

Transitioning to Parliamentary Debate

A Parli debate is not much different from a CDA debate. The timing and number of speeches are different. But a constructive is still a constructive and a rebuttal is still a rebuttal. The two real differences concern the motions and the removal of separate time for cross-ex.

Multiple Motions

Debaters will have to deal with three separate motions or resolutions instead of one. But they will all be about the same subject and they will have a standard CDA packet to provide background information. The debaters will have one hour at the beginning of the day to review the motions, read the packet and develop their cases. At the beginning of each round the two teams will flip a coin to choose which motion they will debate and which team will support or oppose the motion.

For example (and this will not be the topic on December 13) the topic might be civil liberties and law enforcement, and the three motions might be:

- This House believes that police authority to stop and frisk individuals should be limited.
- This House believes profiling is a legitimate tool of law enforcement.
- This House believes video surveillance and facial recognition software should not be permitted in public places.

One theme that runs through each of these motions is the clash between public safety and right to privacy and due process. The topic and motions on December 13 will be similarly related to each other. Many of the arguments for or against each motion are the same or similar. Debaters should not think they are being required to construct six cases (three motions, two sides each) but to construct two cases that consider multiple aspects of the same problem.

Each round one team will choose the resolution and one team will then decide which side they will support. It's the debater's version of having two children share a candy bar: one cuts, the other chooses first. During the day a team might debate all three resolutions, or only one; a team might be on the Government (Affirmative or Proposition) and Opposition (Negative) side in different rounds or it might be Government in most of the rounds.

Points of Information

Parli does not have a separate cross-ex period. In order to ask a question of the speaker, a member of the opposing team must rise and wait to be recognized by the speaker, at which point the opposing team can ask a brief question, called a Point of Information. A team should rise to ask a POI several times during each constructive speech and a speaker should accept two to four POIs during a constructive speech. The questioner asks one question and does not get a follow up.

POI's may only be raised during the constructive speeches, not during the rebuttals. The first and last minute of each constructive speech is called "protective time" and POIs may not be asked during these

minutes. This gives the speaker time to properly launch the constructive speech and time to properly summarize.

To accommodate POIs, each speaker should plan for a speech one minute shorter than the time allotted. This way they can accept 2 to 4 POIs during the speech and still cover the arguments they need to cover. Even giving up one minute to POIs the Parli constructive speeches are at least as long as the six minute constructive speech in CDA now.

Learning to rise for a POI and learning to accept a POI are the biggest differences between Parli and CDA debate. Observing CDA debaters at college-sponsored Parli tournaments it is clear that remembering to ask POIs is hard. This is probably the most important point you should discuss during practice.

There are other types of question, a Point of Clarification and Point of Order discussed in the Style Guide, but they are less important.

Prepping for Parli

Review the timing and order of speeches, and think about what you should be doing in each. Remember this is no big deal, it's still a debate, and the force of your arguments and your clash with your opponents are most important.

Don't worry about the fact that there will be three motions (resolutions). They will all be on the same topic and the arguments for and against each will be similar. You will have the same sort of packet and same one hour of preparation you've had at all CDA tournaments.

Do spend some time practicing POIs. Figuring out when to try and interrupt a speaker and what to ask is a new skill. Similarly, knowing when to accept a question and how to answer it without disrupting the flow of your speech is tricky. These are really different and hard to learn. But good cross-ex was always hard.

Why Parli?

We think the CDA should consider moving to Parli format, and this tournament is a chance to try it out. While our current policy debate format is solid, no one uses that format for extemporaneous debate. Nationwide policy debaters use one topic for the entire year!

Parli is one of the most popular formats for college debate, and is the overwhelming choice for debate internationally. West Coast high school tournament include Parli, and on the East Coast Yale and Penn offer a Parli division at their tournaments. Parli is becoming more popular at the high school and middle school level, and moving to Parli would better prepare you for debating in college.

So give it a try, and after the tournament, let us know what you think.