

British Parliamentary debate

Four teams of two, eight speeches, 15 minutes of prep. The format of the World Universities Debating Championship and many university and high school tournaments.

4 teams

2 Government, 2
Opposition

2 each

speakers per team

8

speeches, no replies

7 min

each speech

15 min

prep

Speech order

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | Prime Minister (OG) | 7 min |
| 2 | Leader of the Opposition (OO) | 7 min |
| 3 | Deputy Prime Minister (OG) | 7 min |
| 4 | Deputy Leader of the Opposition (OO) | 7 min |
| 5 | Member of Government (CG) | 7 min |
| 6 | Member of Opposition (CO) | 7 min |
| 7 | Government Whip (CG) | 7 min |
| 8 | Opposition Whip (CO) | 7 min |

Signals: single at 1:00 and 6:00 (POI window), double at 7:00 (time). About 15 seconds of grace; judges ignore anything after 7:15.

Tips and common mistakes

- **Opening teams:** a clear model and strong first arguments.
- **Closing teams:** plan two or three extensions in case one is taken.
- **Compare** your points with every other team's, including your own bench.
- **Never knife** your opening team.
- **Offer POIs early** so a closing team stays visible.

The four teams

Opening Government (OG) and **Closing Government (CG)** support the motion. **Opening Opposition (OO)** and **Closing Opposition (CO)** oppose it. Teams on the same side (a bench) must not contradict each other, but each is ranked on its own.

Points of information

- Offered by either team on the other bench, between 1:00 and 6:00.
- Up to 15 seconds; don't cut it off early.
- Accept at least one, ideally two.
- Wait about 10 seconds after a decline before offering again.

Motions and prep

Announced 15 minutes before the round, often with an info slide. Partners prepare together, with no coaches or internet.

Before the round

- ☐ Our position (OG, OO, CG or CO) and role known
- ☐ Definition or model agreed (opening teams)
- ☐ Two or three possible extensions listed (closing teams)
- ☐ Likely arguments of the other bench and answers ready
- ☐ Who speaks first decided
- ☐ Timer and POI signals agreed

What each speaker does

OPENING GOVERNMENT

Prime Minister

Defines the motion and sets out the model, then presents Government's first arguments.

OPENING OPPOSITION

Leader of the Opposition

Rebuts the PM and presents Opposition's first arguments. The only speaker who can challenge an unfair definition.

OPENING GOVERNMENT

Deputy Prime Minister

Rebuts the Leader of the Opposition, rebuilds and deepens the case, often adds one more argument.

OPENING OPPOSITION

Deputy Leader of the Opposition

Same job for Opposition: defends and adds to the opening case.

CLOSING GOVERNMENT

Member of Government

Brings the extension: new material Government has not offered yet. Rebuts without contradicting OG.

CLOSING OPPOSITION

Member of Opposition

Brings CO's extension and answers both Government teams, consistent with OO.

CLOSING GOVERNMENT

Government Whip

Sums up for the Government bench by clash. New examples and rebuttal are fine; late new arguments are discounted if unfair.

CLOSING OPPOSITION

Opposition Whip

Sums up for the Opposition bench. Last speech of the round, so no new arguments.

How judges decide

RANK	TEAM POINTS	SPEAKER SCORES
1st	3	Each speaker gets 50 to 100. An average speech is 75; most fall between the high 60s and low 80s. Scores must match the ranking: the 1st team has the highest combined score.
2nd	2	
3rd	1	
4th	0	

No ties. Judges act as an "ordinary intelligent voter" with no fixed views. A panel aims for agreement, then votes; the chair breaks a tie on an even panel.

Key terms

Bench

The two teams on the same side.

Extension

New material a closing team brings.

Info slide

Background shown with the motion.

Model

Government's plan for how the motion would work.

Knifing

Contradicting a team on your own bench.

Protected time

First and last minute of a speech; no POIs.

Flow sheet

Note each team's main points as they are made, and the answers they get. Print as many copies as you need.

OPENING GOVERNMENT	OPENING OPPOSITION	CLOSING GOVERNMENT	CLOSING OPPOSITION

My ranking: 1st _____ 2nd _____ 3rd _____ 4th _____