

BP Debate Judging Guide

What is it?

British Parliamentary (BP or Worlds) involves four two-person teams. Two teams (“government”) support the resolution (the topic) and two teams (“opposition”) oppose. BP is about using good speaking skills to present logical arguments, and teams are encouraged to incorporate philosophical arguments into the debate. The first six speeches in the round feature a mix of constructive arguments (new arguments for one’s side) and rebuttal arguments (refutation of the arguments presented by one’s opponents). A BP debate round concludes with two “whip” speeches, where each side summarizes the significant arguments presented throughout the round and presents reasons why their team should win the debate.

Resolutions & Preparation Time

BP debate is a “limited preparation” format that uses resolutions based on current events. Resolutions are generally announced at a central gathering location 15-20 minutes prior to the start of the debate. Teams prepare individually, and the second proposition and second opposition teams must introduce new arguments and/or new perspectives to the debate. During the preparation time, debaters can consult any research materials that they have gathered in preparation for the tournament. However, debaters should not consult with coaches, judges or other debate teams during the preparation time.

The Structure of a British-Parliamentary Debate

1. *Opening Government, Speaker 1 (Prime Minister) – 7 minutes*
2. *Opening Opposition, Speaker 1 (Opposition Leader) – 7 minutes*
3. *Opening Government, Speaker 2 (Deputy Prime Minister) – 7 minutes*
4. *Opening Opposition, Speaker 2 (Deputy Opposition Leader) – 7 minutes*
5. *Closing Government, Speaker 1 (Member of Government) – 7 minutes*
6. *Closing Opposition, Speaker 1 (Member of Opposition) – 7 minutes*
7. *Closing Government, Speaker 2 (Government Whip) – 7 minutes*
8. *Closing Opposition, Speaker 2 (Opposition Whip) – 7 minutes*

There is no preparation time for speakers during the debate. When it is their turn to speak, the next speaker should rise and immediately follow the previous speaker. Judges should give a time signal at 7 minutes to mark the end of the speakers time and should signal again at 7 minutes and 15 seconds, where they should also stop giving the speaker credit for anything they are saying.

Points of Information

During any of the eight speeches (after the first minute of a speech and before the last minute of a speech), an opposing team may ask a question of the current speaker. The “question” may be more of the statement and should not last more than 15 seconds. Judges should give a time signal at the end of the first minute, and beginning of the sixth minute to mark the start and ends of protected time.

Criteria for Ranking Teams

Judges should consider all of the following criteria when making decisions about how to rank teams in the rounds:

- Did the teams/speakers meet their responsibilities in the debate round?
- Were the arguments presented by the teams clearly explained, well supported, and relevant to the topic?
- Did the speakers organize and deliver their speeches in a persuasive manner?

No Automatic “1” or “4” in a Round

While it is crucial for judges to consider the quality of arguments presented during the debate round, it is also important to understand that no one argument can result in an automatic “1” in the debate round. Individual teams and speakers should be given credit for bringing convincing arguments into the debate, but adjudicators must consider the body of a team’s work when ranking the teams. In addition, there are no arguments or actions in a round that should result in an automatic “4” in the debate round. There are certainly some approaches that can and should hurt a team’s final ranking (i.e. A first government team that sets up an unclear debate or a second half team that “knives” the opening team on their side), but once again the judges should consider the body of a team’s work when deciding on final rankings.

ROLES OF SPEAKERS IN BRITISH PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE

*Each speaker in a British-Parliamentary Debate round has a role and each speech should have a purpose. While fulfillment of roles and responsibilities is important, judges should also consider the overall strength of each team's arguments. All speakers, except the final speakers for the government and opposition (government and opposition whips), should introduce **new material** into the debate.*

OPENING GOVERNMENT TEAM

PRIME MINISTER

- 1) offer a reasonable interpretation of the motion, and
- 2) present a case supporting that interpretation (a case is simply one or more arguments supporting the Opening Government's interpretation of the motion)

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

- 1) reestablish the Opening Government's case by confronting any refutation presented by the Leader of the Opposition,
- 2) refute some or all of the arguments presented by the Leader of the Opposition, and
- 3) further develop the case presented by the Prime Minister by presenting at least one new argument

OPENING OPPOSITION TEAM

OPPOSITION LEADER

- 1) directly or indirectly refute part or all of the government's case, and
- 2) make at least one argument that demonstrates why the Opening Opposition team opposes the motion as interpreted by the Prime Minister

SPECIAL NOTE: The Opposition Leader may also challenge the interpretation of the government's case if it is unreasonable (if it completely misinterprets the motion or severely inhibits meaningful debate).

DEPUTY OPPOSITION LEADER - The Deputy Leader of the Opposition's responsibilities include:

- 1) continue refutation initiated by the Leader of the Opposition,
- 2) reestablish the Leader of Opposition's arguments against the motion, and
- 3) initiate at least one new argument against the motion as interpreted by the Opening Government team

The Closing Government and Closing Opposition teams are required to work WITH the first teams without knowing exactly what the first teams will do prior to the start of the debate. The second half teams have to be particularly careful to avoid "knifing" the first team on their side of the debate. This happens when a Closing Government or Closing Opposition team takes an approach that is inconsistent with or directly in conflict with the approach laid out by the first team.

CLOSING GOVERNMENT TEAM

MEMBER OF GOVERNMENT - The responsibilities of the Member of the Government include:

- 1) briefly support the case developed by the Opening Government team, and
- 2) introduce a unique argument, sometimes called an extension, which is consistent with yet different from the positive matter introduced by the Opening Government team

GOVERNMENT WHIP - The responsibilities of the Government Whip include:

- 1) support any new arguments introduced by the Member of Government,
- 2) refute any new arguments introduced by the Member of Opposition, and
- 3) summarize the debate from the perspective of the government teams, especially from that of the Closing Government

NOTE: The Government Whip should not introduce new arguments into the debate

CLOSING OPPOSITION TEAM

MEMBER OF OPPOSITION - The responsibilities of the Member of the Opposition include:

- 1) briefly support one or more arguments introduced by the Opening Opposition team,
- 2) provide direct and/or indirect refutation to the extension presented by the Member of Government, and
- 3) introduce a new argument, compatible with, but different from that of the Opening Opposition Team

OPPOSITION WHIP - The responsibilities of the Opposition Whip include:

- 1) to support any new arguments introduced by the Member of Opposition,
- 2) to refute any of the new rebuttal arguments presented by the Government Whip, and
- 3) to summarize the debate from the perspective of the Opposition Teams, especially from that of the Closing Opposition

NOTE: The Opposition Whip should not introduce new arguments into the debate