

Parli Debate for Novices

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Parli debate is so much fun, and the league always welcomes new debaters!! This document is an extremely helpful guide for all Parli debaters, especially newcomers! Parli does not require any research. You can show up to a Parli tournament with no prior debate experience and do really well. You can also find instructional videos and guides about Parli on our website and [YouTube Channel](#). As always, please email nyparli@gmail.com if you have any questions!

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Part One: Logistics

a. Tabroom

Summary: there is a website called [Tabroom](#) that organizes all debates. This website tells you where to go, who your opponents are, etc. Search Tabroom for the debate that you are at, and you will find the pairings, room numbers, etc.

More detailed instructions: [Tabroom](#) is the website that organizes all debates. We highly recommend that--before you get to a debate or at the beginning of a debate--you sign up for a feature called Live Updates on Tabroom. This feature will send you texts throughout the debate that tell you where to go, so you don't constantly have to reload the page. This is how to sign up for Live Updates:

Step one: go onto Tabroom.com and search for the name of the debate. Click on it

Step two: there will be a tab that says "Live Updates"; click on this tab

Step three: find your team name, and click on it

Step four: enter in your contact information

You will now receive texts/emails with your room number, the names of your opponents, the name of your judge, etc.

Some tournaments don't have Live Updates. That's okay--you can still check Tabroom to see where you're supposed to be. Instead of Live Updates, there will be a tab on the tournament page that says "pairings." Click on this tab, and the correct round (e.g. if it's the second round, make sure to click on the tab that says round two) to check your information.

b. Motions

Summary: there are three different motions per round; in the coin flip, one will be chosen for each round. On Tabroom, there will be a link to a document through which you can see the round's motion options.

The motions document will give three different motions for each round. (The document updates throughout the tournament, so that you can't see future motions. For example, if it's only round one, I can't see the motions for round five.) The way you get to the motions document is through your tournament's page on Tabroom. There will be a link to a Google Doc, which will list the motions. If you want to know how to choose motions, see the [Coin Flip](#) section of this document.

Each motion begins with "TH..." TH stands for this house. The pro team has to come up with definitions for what that means (see the definitions section for more); it will most likely mean the government, or a reasonable person. Here are some common abbreviations at the beginning of resolutions:

THW - this house would

THR - this house regrets

THS - this house supports
THP - this house prefers
THBT - this house believes that

c. Speech orders/timing

Summary: see the chart below

GOV = pro

OPP = con

This is the order of the speeches

GOV, first speaker: 7 MINUTES - CONSTRUCTIVE

OPP, first speaker: 8 MINUTES - CONSTRUCTIVE

GOV, second speaker: 8 MINUTES - 2nd CONSTRUCTIVE

OPP, second speaker: 8 MINUTES - 2nd CONSTRUCTIVE

OPP, first speaker: 4 MINUTES - REBUTTAL

GOV, first speaker: 5 MINUTES - REBUTTAL

Each speech has a 30 second grace period at the end. (So that means that a 5 minute speech is actually 5 minutes and 30 seconds long. You don't have to go into your grace period--it's just there in case you run out of time.)

d. Coin flip

Summary: You and your opponents will flip a coin before every round. Whoever wins the coin flip gets to choose whether they pick the topic to debate, or the side to debate (pro/con). If you choose side, you reserve the right to choose AFTER the other team chooses the topic. You almost always want to choose side.

Read the summary above ^ to get a general sense of the coin flip. Choosing side is almost always an advantage, unless you happen to know everything about a certain motion.

If you must choose the topic, then you and your partner have one minute to discuss which topic you want to debate. If you must choose the side, then you and your partner have one minute to discuss which side of the debate you want to be on.

If you get to choose the side, you do not have to choose which side you are on until AFTER the other team has already chosen the topic.

e. Prep time

Summary: You have 15 minutes of prep before each round.

After you know which side you're on, you should start your preparation time. The opp team usually leaves the room during prep time. You have fifteen minutes to prepare your case (see

[part two](#) to know what to put in your case). You can't use the internet, talk to your friends, or talk to any adults during prep--all of that is considered cheating.

Part Two: What goes on in each speech

a. Opening speech (constructive speech)

Summary: The first speaker gives this speech. If you are on gov, your opening speech should have framework, definitions, and contentions. If you are on opp, your opening speech should have contentions and some responses to gov's case.

Gov and opp's opening speeches look a little different. They both contain things called contentions; a contention is just an argument.

Gov's opening speech: If you are on gov, you need to remember to do three things

1. Framework
2. Definitions
3. Contentions

First: What is framework? A framework is a way that you can weigh who wins the round. The most common framework is **utilitarianism**, which says that the best thing to do is whatever does the most good for the most people. We highly recommend that you use utilitarianism in almost every round. Here is a way that you can introduce framework into the round: "Judge, the way that we would like to weigh this round is through utilitarianism. Whichever team provides the most benefits to the most people should win this round."

Second: What are definitions? Many parlimentary motions are intentionally vague. It is the job of the government team to define what "this house" is in every round. For example, you might define this house as the people in the room, a reasonable individual, or the US Federal Government. If you make your definitions totally insane, the other team will call you out for it (this is called making an abusive definition).

Third: What are contentions? Contentions are just arguments. We recommend that you have at least two contentions (and a maximum of five) per round. Each contention should have a logical explanation of why it happens. And at the end of each contention, there should be an impact: why does this argument matter? Does it hurt anyone? Does it slow climate change, alleviate poverty, give people jobs, etc.? The impact is the "so what" of the round.

Opp's opening speech: If you're on opp, here is what you need to do

1. OPTIONAL: if gov forgot to do any definitions/framework, then you should set those up

2. Contentions
3. Some responses

First: if you notice that the gov team did not provide any definitions or didn't set up a framework, then you should do that at the beginning of your speech.

Second: set up your contentions (arguments).

Third: in the final few minutes of your speech, make some responses to your opponents' case. Depending on how much material you have for your own case, you might spend more/less of your time on refutations.

B. Refutation speeches: (second constructive speeches)

The second speaker gives this speech. Respond to what your opponents have said about your case, and then respond to their case.

Gov and opp refutations might look a bit different, but here is the basic structure:

1. If your opponents have said anything about your case, spend a few minutes defending your case
2. Make responses to your opponents' case

C. Final speeches (rebuttals)

Summary: talk about the most important points of the round. Then weigh the round--talk about your impacts. You're not allowed to bring up any new points; but you can use new examples to illustrate points that you have already made.

I recommend that you structure your final speech like this:

1. Talk about the best parts of your own case
2. Talk about the most important responses that you made to your opponents' case--why they're wrong. If your opponents have made the round about one specific point, then make sure to respond to that point!
3. Weigh. Weighing is explaining why your impacts matter more than your opponents' impacts. Remember the framework that you set up (most likely utilitarianism)--whoever has provided the most good to the most people will win. This is your chance to prove to

the judge why your impacts are more important: do they affect more people, make a more meaningful impact, have a higher probability?

Remember: you can't talk about anything new. If an opponent brings up something new, call a [POO](#).

Part three: Questions

a. POIs

Summary: a POI is a question that pokes a hole in your opponents' case. If you would like to ask a POI, stand up and wait for your opponent to call on you.

The way to ask a POI is just to stand up (you can raise your hand while standing too) while your opponent is speaking. Once your opponent calls on you, you can ask the question. Don't stop the clock when you're taking a POI.

You can ask POIs only during the first four speeches of the round; you are not allowed to ask any POIs in the final speeches. Also, during those first four speeches, you cannot ask POIs during protected time. Protected time includes the first and last minute of every speech. (So if it is a seven minute speech, do not ask POIs during times 0:00-1:00 or during 6:00-7:00.)

If you are the one giving the speech, you are not obligated to accept a certain number of POIs. If your opponent is asking too many, you can just say, "not at this time."

We recommend that you and your partner ask at least one POI each during every speech. POIs are really helpful, and they boost your speaker points.

b. POCs

Summary: POCs happen at only one point during the round: right after the gov sets up definitions. If the opp is confused about a definition, they can call a POC. These are pretty uncommon.

If you are on opp and are really confused about a definition that the gov has set up, call a POC (but don't do this too often--it's only if you really need clarification).

If the opp calls a POC on your definitions, stop time--POCs don't count towards your speech time.

c. POOs

Summary: POOs happen only in the final two speeches of the round. Call a POO when your opponent makes a new point in one of the two final speeches.

If your opponent says something new in the final two speeches, just say, "I'd like to call a POO." Everyone will stop the time, and you will say, "x argument is new." The judge will most likely say, "taken under consideration." Then time continues.