

# DEBATE GUIDE: RESOURCE 11

## Parliamentary Debate Format

**Parliamentary Debate is modeled after British parliamentary procedure and is an academic debate format used in competitive high school and university tournaments.**

There is quite a bit of literature on strategies and techniques related to Parliamentary Debate (or “parli”), so this guidance sheet is intended as an overview for beginners to get started or for those interested in incorporating debate as an activity or exercise.

### Protocol:

There are a few variations on parliamentary debate speech timing, but one common iteration is:

20 minutes of preparation time, followed by...

- Opening Speeches: Person A
  - o Affirmative (Pro): 7 minutes
  - o Negative (Con): 7 minutes
- Responses: Person B
  - o Affirmative (Pro): 7 minutes
  - o Negative (Con): 7 minutes
- Closing Speeches: Person A
  - o Negative (Con): 5 minutes
  - o Affirmative (Pro): 5 minutes

### Parli Topics:

Given how widespread parliamentary debate is, it is fairly easy to find lists of topics online with in-depth guidance on facilitating parli rounds. By adding “for middle school” or “for high school” to your search, you can find topics that are good for beginners of any age. In general, topics can fall in the categories of “fact”, “value”, or “policy”, and should have equal ground on both sides. It’s also good to draw inspiration from Op-Ed articles and editorials about current issues, or think about important issues that no one is really talking about.

Here are some starters to create your own topics:

- Fact:
  - o “\_\_\_\_\_ is better than \_\_\_\_\_.”
  - o “All \_\_\_\_\_ are \_\_\_\_\_.”
- Value:
  - o “\_\_\_\_\_ ought to be valued over \_\_\_\_\_ in cases of \_\_\_\_\_.”
  - o “\_\_\_\_\_ have a moral obligation to \_\_\_\_\_.”
- Policy:
  - o “The government should substantially increase funding for \_\_\_\_\_.”
  - o “\_\_\_\_\_ should ban \_\_\_\_\_.”

## Opening Case Example:

To get started, here is a specific example of how you might structure your opening speech during your 20 minutes of preparation time:

Case Outline	Examples
An introductory explanation about why this is an important topic.	"Today we will be discussing the issue of... This is an important issue because..."
State the exact wording of the topic and state your side.	"Therefore, the topic for today is... We take the affirmative/negative side of this topic."
State the definitions of key terms.	"We would like to define..."
Describe the "standard" for the round, or what is the most important goal or value we are trying to achieve.	"This round should be judged based on which side achieves... Therefore, the standard for the round is...."
State your first argument and prove it with reasoning and an impact.	"Our first contention is...." "This is true because..." "This is important because..."
State your second argument and prove it with reasoning and an impact.	"Our second contention is...." "This is true because..." "This is important because..."
Close your speech by reminding us what is most important in the round.	"Judge, you should vote affirmative/negative because we have shown that we are able to achieve the most important goal of..."
Give a strong final sentence.	"For all these reasons, we urge your affirmative/negative vote."

