British Parliamentary Debate

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Overview

- Introduction to BP
- Role Fulfillment
- Adjudication
Only 1 motion is announced for each round.
All teams have 15 minutes to casebuild started right after the Motion Launch.
The government must propose the motion.
The opposition must negate the motion and present an alternative (ie. the status quo or counter model).
Each speaker has 7 minutes to speak.
Points of Information (POI) are allowed between the 2nd and 6th minute.
Order of Speaking

OG – Prime Minister
OO – Leader of Opposition
OG – Deputy Prime Minister
OO – Deputy Leader of Opposition
CG – Government Member
CO – Opposition Member
CG – Government Whip
CO – Opposition Whip
OG – Prime Minister

- PM has to set up the debate. This includes:
  - Presenting a context/problem.
  - Providing a clear and reasonable definition (i.e. debatable and within the context/spirit of the motion).
  - Setting parameters of the debate – what exactly will we be talking about?
  - Propose a solution (model if needed), and explain how it solves the problem.
  - Essentially, when the PM sits down, everyone should have a solid idea of what the debate will be about.
OG – Prime Minister (cont’d)

- It is VERY important that set up is done properly, because:
  - A poor set up tends to result in a messy/bad debate. OG gets blamed for this!
  - A poor set up makes it easier for the closing teams to re-characterize the debate to their advantage. OG risks getting ‘left out’ of the debate.
  - A clear set up makes the OG memorable!

- PM has to indicate the team split – ie. what PM and DPM will talk about (has to be different and consistent).

- PM has to provide arguments in support of the motion.
The LO main role is to set up a clear response from the Opposition bench that creates clash in the debate.

- Problem doesn’t exist (status quo).
- Different cause.
- Solution won’t work.
- Solution has other harms.
- Provide better solution (counter model).

LO may challenge the PM’s definition, but only if the definition is unreasonable.
OO – Leader of Opposition (cont’d)

- LO is also required to:
  - Rebut the PM arguments.
  - Provide substantive arguments against the motion.
  - Indicate the team split – ie. what the LO and DLO will talk about (has to be different and consistent).
The DPM roles are:
- Deliver rebuttals to LO’s arguments.
- Support the arguments made by PM, and respond to the rebuttals from LO (refutation).
- Bring more arguments to support the motion.

At the end of the speech, briefly sums up the OG case:
- What are the key ideas in the debate?
- How does OG approach the debate?
- What are the arguments OG wants to be remembered by?
- Wraps up the opening half.
OO – Deputy Leader of Opposition

- The DLO roles are:
  - Deliver rebuttals to OG’s arguments.
  - Support the arguments made by OL, and respond to the rebuttals from OG (refutation).
  - Bring more arguments against the motion.

- At the end of the speech, briefly sums up the OO case:
  - What are the key ideas in the debate?
  - How does OO approach the debate?
  - What are the arguments OO wants to be remembered by?
  - Wraps up the opening half.
GM and OM have generally similar roles:
- Rebut all arguments from the opposing bench that came in the opening half.
- OM rebuts GM and opening half (OG).
- Deliver ‘extensions’.
  - Move the debate to a different area – ie. new arguments, deeper analysis.
  - Remain consistent with the opening half (OG/OO).
  - Goal: makes their team distinct, without contradicting!
Government/Opposition Whip

- GW and OW have generally similar roles:
  - Rebut the arguments from all opposing speakers that came before them.
    - GW rebuts OM, DLO, LO.
    - OW rebuts GW, GM, DPM, PM.
  - Support their team’s extensions.
    - Using extensions to rebut arguments.
    - Incorporate extensions into each major point of contention/clash.
Government/Opposition Whip (cont’d)

- Reply speech.
- Summarize the entire debate.
- Highlight the important roles of the closing team in the debate.
- No new materials/arguments!
Adjudication

Golden Rule:

“Which team contributes the most to the debate?”
What to look for from each team?

- **OG (Opening Government: Prime Minister + Deputy PM)**
  - Problem – clear? is the scope realistic?
  - Definition – debatable? reasonable?
  - Solution/Model – sufficient to solve the problem?
  - Arguments
  - Rebuttals

- **OO (Opening Opposition: )**
  - Response – clear?
  - Solution/Counter model (if any) – sufficient to solve the problem?
  - Arguments
  - Rebuttals
What to look for from ... ? (cont’d)

- CG/CO
  - Extension – distinct? new? relevant?
  - How they present the extension
    - Flag with POI?
    - Mention as ‘important’/ ‘key issue’ at the start of the speech?
    - Incorporate in rebuttals?
  - Rebuttals
    - Strong?
    - Supporting extension?
  - Are they successful in making their materials the most important and relevant in the debate?
Assessing Arguments (cont’d)

- Relevant v. Irrelevant
  - Focus on **contribution** and **consistency**!
    - Does the argument **contribute** to achieve the goal in the debate?
    - Is the argument **consistent** with how the debate is characterized (problem/actors/etc.)?

- Strong v. Weak
  - AREL
  - Focus on the **reasoning**!
    - Deductive → all premises must be proven conclusively.
    - Inductive → credibility/persuasiveness of examples must be proven.
      Use of compelling supporting data/facts.
Assessing Arguments (cont’d)

- Significant v. Insignificant
  - Focus on importance!
  - Is the argument substantially discussed by teams in the debate?
  - Did the argument manage to stay in the debate → ‘airtime’ is usually a good indicator.
Assessing Rebuttals

- Does it attack the reasoning?
  - **Deductive**
    - Should not target the conclusion.
    - Target the premises, prove them false – ie. through argumentations, not mere statements.
  - **Inductive**
    - Attack the credibility of the examples – ie. by arguing that the examples given are false/don’t apply, not merely giving counter examples.
    - Attack the relationship between examples and conclusion – ie. by showing there are other factors at play.
LISTEN!!!

Don’t think for the debaters!
- Awareness → what happens in the debate v. what happens in your head.
- Don’t finish their arguments for them.
- Don’t rebut their arguments.
- Handy tips: in your note, make a box for your thoughts.
Handy to keep in mind... (cont’d)

Judging is not coaching!
- Don’t expect arguments.
- Don’t try to think of better arguments the debaters could have presented.

Manner – Matter
- Don’t automatically buy arguments just because of good manner.
- If the manner is bad, don’t strain yourself to understand the matter.
Duties of an adjudicator...

- Confer and discuss the debate with the other adjudicators.
  - The adjudication panel should attempt to agree on the adjudication of the debate. Therefore, confer in a spirit of cooperation and mutual respect.
- Determine the ranking of the teams.
- Determine the teams’ grades.
- Determine the speakers’ scores.
- Provide a verbal adjudication.
- Complete documentation required by the tournament.
Ranking

- Teams should be ranked from first place to fourth place.
  - 1\textsuperscript{st} – 3 points
  - 2\textsuperscript{nd} – 2 points
  - 3\textsuperscript{rd} – 1 point
  - 4\textsuperscript{th} – 0 point.

- Adjudicators should confer upon team rankings.
  - When a unanimous decision cannot be reached after conferral, the decision of the majority will determine the rankings.
  - When a majority decision cannot be reached, the chair of the panel of adjudicators will determine the rankings.
Grading and Marking (cont’d)

- The panel of adjudicators should agree upon the grade awarded to each team.
- Each adjudicator marks each team at their own discretion, but the marks should fall within the agreed grade for the team.

**REMEMBER** : The Higher the Rank, the higher the score, but the grade is not necessarily the Best.
Grading and Marking (cont’d)

Grades are interpreted as:

- **A = 180 – 200.** Excellent to flawless. The standard you would expect to see from a team at the Semi Final/Grand Final of the tournament. The team has many strengths and few, if any, weaknesses.
- **B = 160 – 179** Above average to very good. The standard you would expect to see from a team at the finals level or in contention to make to the finals. The team has clear strengths and some minor weaknesses.
- **C = 140 – 159** Average. The team has strengths and weaknesses in roughly equal proportions.
- **D = 120 – 139** Poor to below average. The team has clear problems and some minor strengths.
- **E = 100 – 119** Very poor. The team has fundamental weaknesses and few, if any, strengths.
Grading and Marking (cont’d)

- Each adjudicator marks individual speakers at their discretion, but must ensure that the aggregate points of the team members is within the agreed grade for that team.

- Individual marks are interpreted as:
  - A = 90 – 100. Excellent to flawless, standard of a speaker in the final of the tournament.
  - B = 80 – 89. Above average to very good, standard of a speaker in contention to make to the finals.
  - C = 70 – 79. Average, weaknesses and strengths in equal proportion.
  - D = 60 – 69. Poor to below average, clear problem.
  - E = 50 – 59. Poor, fundamental flaws.
Verbal

- Announce ranking.
- Provide general assessment of the debate.
- Explain the determinant considerations for the ranking.
- Go team per team:
  - Explain the reasons behind their ranking (in comparison to how other teams rank).
  - Explain what they did well and what they lacked.
  - Provide suggestions of what they can improve in next debates.
- Keep it concise!
- Offer personal assessment outside the room.