

BRITISH PARLIAMENTARY – STYLE GUIDE

This guide is designed to provide some basic instruction on British Parliamentary debating, as well as to clarify tournament rules and specifics of the tournament style, and policies.

The Basics

In BP there are 4 teams in each round. There are two teams that represent the Government, and two teams that represent the Leading Opposition. The Government supports the resolution, and the Leading Opposition opposes the resolution.

Each Debater has 5 minutes to speak. The first and last minutes are protected time this means that no POIs can be offered during this time. The speaker will indicate the end and the beginning of protected time.

There are no points of order, or personal privilege.

At the end of each debate, the teams will be ranked from first place to fourth place. Each ranking has a point value associated with it.

First place= 3 points Second place=2 points Third place=1 point Fourth place=0 points

General

With four teams in the room, doing well in a BP round often comes down to which case sticks with the judge. Capturing their attention requires that you differentiate yourself from the others teams (i.e. pick a clear and unique stance and stay consistent with it) and make yourself relevant (engage with the biggest and most crucial issues in the round, don't ignore the better team in favour of beating up on a weaker one). At the end of the round, you want your arguments to be the ones that were most important to the round as a whole.

Roles of the Teams and Speakers

You will hear a lot about the “roles” of teams and speakers in BP. In order for a round to be able to develop properly, the teams participating in the round must fulfill certain criteria. When they succeed they have fulfilled their role and they will be developing the debate. If they fail then the debate will suffer in quality because of it, and this will absolutely be considered in the adjudication.

First Government

This tournament will operate with straight resolutions; it should be fairly clear from the motion as to what debate we want you to have. There is no such thing as an automatic drop at this tournament, but straying too far from the spirit of the motion is a dangerous tactic and one that you are likely to be penalized for. That being said, within the general intent of the resolution, teams have leeway to define the terms of the round. You may run a very straightforward, theoretical, and open case, or you may decide to narrow the topic by creating a model under which your proposal will operate, or by choosing a specific geographic area in which you wish to frame the round. All of these are acceptable decisions, though they may be viewed as more or less legitimate in a particular round depending on the motion given. Time-place sets, however, are not allowed.

The first goal of a first Government team is to present a clear, coherent, and contentious case. Remember that this case will need to be remembered by the judges for eight speeches, and 40 minutes of debate.

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First Leading Opposition

First Leading Opposition is expected to have a clear stance in the round that they can argue for in a positive way; this stance can be a counter proposal or (probably more likely) the status quo, but there must be a unified position for which the team advocates. This is particularly crucial if they choose to concede the need that First Government has outlined; in such cases, it is likely that they will need to provide some type of alternative mechanism to solve for that need, unless they can successfully argue that the harms of First Proposition's plan would be worse than inaction.

As the opening opposition your role is twofold. You must refute what the opening government has said, but it is not enough to simply clash. **You must also bring in your own constructive arguments.** It's not enough to say why their ideas are wrong, but you have to say why your ideas are good.

The second speaker for First Leading Opposition is encouraged to provide a brief summary of the round at the end of their speech, clarifying their team's position and the criteria upon which they believe they have beaten the proposition team.

Second Half of the Room

The first speaker on each back-half team is expected to provide the "extension" for their side. What this really means is something new in the round, whether it be a new philosophical perspective, a theoretical framework, case studies, or other types of substantive material. While there is no hard and fast rule as to exactly what constitutes an extension, teams should bear in mind that judges will be evaluating whether or not a team has sufficiently differentiated themselves from their front half counterpart. To that end, it is important to do more than simply repackage your first half's arguments. It is also particularly important that the extension be very clearly flagged, so that judges never have to go looking for it. Most importantly, a back half team must never contradict their front half counterpart. Extensions are NOT new cases, nor are they proposals or arguments that are directly inconsistent with the front half team's case. The goal is to differentiate yourself from the opening team, but still support them.

Because so much information is covered during the debate and each speaker only has five minutes the second half teams are not expected to systematically clash with every argument brought forth by the opening half. There are two reasons for this the first being that there is not the enough time, the second being that in British Parliamentary debate we are trying to elevate the level of debate by bringing out the most important themes and issues. For these reasons debaters are expected to deal with the main themes brought out or any important material that was not clashed with. The goal in doing clash should be to do thematic clash instead of systematic in order to address the most important issues in the debate.

The second speaker for each back half team is commonly referred to as the Whip speaker, and their role is to summarize the round in their own words. These summaries should present the most important arguments and issues in the debate in light of their partner's contribution and should ultimately try to persuade the judges that they have won the round. Whip speeches can be organized in two main ways; by a breakdown of what each team said, or by themes or broad issues in the round. The latter is often a better way to analyze a round holistically, but the former can be helpful with organization for those less experienced in delivering these speeches. The Government Whip is allowed to present some new constructive material, while the Opp Whip is not, but debaters should bear in mind that the primary role of this position is summary and not new argumentation.

Points of Information

POIs are a necessity, not an option, in BP rounds. For a first half team, they are the way you continue to be relevant and to ensure your arguments are discussed in the second half. For a back half team, they are useful in establishing your ground early on and being seen actively before you get up to speak. However back half teams should be careful because sometimes your opening team may try and steal your extension if you give too much away in your POIs. The general guideline of give two, take two applies. A team should strive to remain active without engaging

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in barracking (continual and disruptive rising on POIs). They should also refrain from speaking before recognized by the speaker, including the use of verbal tags like "On India". "On that point" may be appropriate if you believe the speaker hasn't noticed you standing, but otherwise standing silently is generally preferable. You are permitted to use "Point of Clarification" as a verbal flag, and speakers are encouraged to take such a question as long as the privilege is not abused.

Further Advice

BP is less stylistically rigid than CP debating, in that there is no constructive/rebuttal/rebuilding formula for a speech. However, teams are encouraged to clearly flag their stance or extension, and to roadmap wherever possible for clarity's sake. Novice debaters are encouraged to use formulaic speech structures to enable them to spend the majority of their prep time focusing on the constructive material in the round (what am I going to say?) and not the structure of their speeches (how am I going to say it?).

Additionally, BP often has a higher burden of knowledge than CP debate, especially because of the often-international nature of topics. The use of examples is also very effective and something you should be trying to incorporate. Teams who can incorporate relevant and instructive examples into their analysis will be rewarded for doing so. However, this tournament will place a lighter emphasis on knowledge and a greater emphasis on logic and argument construction. The adjudication team will endeavour to select "research-neutral" topics.