

Middle School Congressional Debate Rules

1. Preparation

- a. Teams will receive a copy of the proposed legislation at least one week prior to the competition.
- b. Competitors will conduct research on the topic and
 - prepare a 1- to 3-minute speech supporting (AFF) or opposing (NEG) the bill. A competitor will only use this prepared speech if they are assigned to speak first or second.
 - prepare outlines and notes using credible sources to support (AFF) or oppose (NEG) the bill. All competitors who speak *after* the first AFF and first NEG speeches will speak extemporaneously based on their research and considering what the previous speakers have said (so take notes/listen carefully). Speakers may use paper or notecards to craft their speaking points during the session, but should be prepared to speak immediately when their turn is called.
 - Affirmative: I agree with all parts of the bill as presented.
 - Negative: I disagree with any or all parts of the bill.
- c. No electronic devices will be allowed during the debate other than for timing purposes; have all of your resources printed.
- d. Competitors should present their arguments or reasons for supporting or opposing the legislation. Each point should be clear, concise, and supported by evidence or examples.

2. Judging

- a. Each Congressional session will have three judges.
- b. Judges will agree on one judge to be the parliamentarian who keeps things in order and ensures each debater speaks at least once.
- c. When multiple students want to talk or ask a question, the parliamentarian will choose based on who hasn't spoken, who's spoken less, and who spoke least recently.
- d. Judging Criteria
 - ORIGINALITY OF THOUGHT: extent to which speech advances debate vs. merely repeats previously stated ideas; whether speaker refutes opposing arguments
 - ORGANIZATION AND UNITY: while speeches that respond to other arguments advanced in the session are often spontaneous and extemporaneous, the speaker should attempt cohesiveness
 - EVIDENCE AND LOGIC: cites credible sources and warrants claims accordingly
 - DELIVERY: extemporaneous vs. reading a manuscript, seriousness, style, and poise
 - ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS: shows preparedness, has a working knowledge of the subject, uses logic
- e. Competitors will be ranked with best speaker earning a 1.

Speech Organization

Below is a suggested time allocation and structure for speeches in Congressional Debate.

- I. **Introduction** (15 to 30 seconds)
 - A. Relate the speech to ideas that are, or might be, brought to the floor for debate.
 1. Use a quotation; and/or
 2. Use an analogy; and/or
 3. Use statistics to raise awareness of a problem
 - B. State purpose/thesis (about 10 seconds)
- II. **Body** (approximately 2 minutes)

Each claim you make (whether constructive or refuting the opposition) should be *supported* with analytical reasoning and/or evidence with a good combination of quantitative statistics or facts, and qualitative case studies and quotations from experts. Be sure to state the importance, or *impact* that claim has for the overall topic of debate and why it supports or opposes those views. Example structure:

 1. **Claim:** issue of debate; point or points that are in conflict.
 2. **Proof:** evidence and reasoning to support the argument; *explain* how the proof relates to the claim (link).
 3. **Impact:** why the argument is important/significant, especially to the particular side debated. Challenge the opposition to respond to an issue.

Give two to three meaningful arguments.
- III. **Conclusion** (about 30 seconds)
 - A. State primary points and issues
 - B. Summarize key arguments

3. Competition Procedures

- a. At the beginning of the round, students will tell the parliamentarian if they are supporting (affirmative) or opposing (negative) the legislation. The parliamentarian will write a speaking order so a supporter (AFF) speaks first. The remaining speakers will be ordered NEG, AFF, NEG, AFF, etc. If it becomes impossible to alternate positions, the remaining speakers will be slotted to speak last.
 - Example: AFF, NEG, AFF, NEG, AFF, AFF, AFF, AFF
- b. If no one is a supporter (AFF), the round cannot start. One speaker must choose to support the bill and speak in favor of the bill for the round to start. If a round does not start, there will be no score for any speaker.
- c. The parliamentary judge will assure students know the speaking order prior to the first speech.
- d. All speakers will both speak and answer questions.
- e. Then, Robert's Rules of Order will be enacted to debate the bill. Each time someone speaks during this portion of the debate, they may only speak on one item at a time. Competitors may propose multiple changes, ask multiple questions, and respond multiple times, but they should remember that they will have to wait their turn to speak until all other speakers have had a chance to participate in this portion of the session. (Prioritize your best points, ideas, and questions; you may not get to say everything you want.)

4. Speaking Procedures

- a. Congresspersons will be seated when they are not actively speaking.
- b. Congresspersons who are presenting their speech and answering questions will stand at the front of the room and face the chamber.
- c. Congresspersons who are asking questions must request permission from the parliamentary judge (raise hand) and be granted permission to speak.
- d. During the debate portion of the round, Congresspersons do not need to request permission to speak and should take care to take turns.

5. Questions & Answers

- a. Questions should be brief and to the point. No long statements.
- b. Answers should be brief and directly answer the question showing a working knowledge of the topic. Do not stray from answering the question directly.

6. Timing

- a. First AFF: 3 minutes + 2 minutes of questions
- b. First NEG: 3 minutes + 2 minutes of questions
- c. Remaining speakers: 3 minutes + 1 minute of questions
- d. Debate: Use remaining time to debate the bill using Robert's Rules (below).
- e. Vote: Parliamentary judge will give a 3-minute warning. With 3 minutes remaining in the round, someone must Call to Question a vote on the bill. Results of the vote will not impact rankings.

7. Robert's Rules

- a. Motion: To introduce a new idea or propose a decision or action, a motion must be made by a group member ("I move/motion that....."). A second motion must then also be made (raise your hand and say, "I second it."). After *limited* discussion, the group then votes on the motion. A majority vote is required for the motion to pass.
 - Speaker A: "I move/motion to amend Section 2. Instead of _____, it should read _____ because..."
 - Speaker B: "I second it." (Only second something you agree with.)
 - When debating, alternate turns respectfully and without interrupting.

b. Ideas for Motions

- Motion to Amend: suggest changes to the bill using valid reasoning and referencing the exact sections and line(s) to be changed along with the proposed changes
 - Ex: I move/motion to amend the bill by removing Section 1, Clause A because...
- Motion to Table: to put the current line of discussion aside for now, but leave it available to revisit
 - Ex: I motion to table this discussion until later because... (not enough evidence, not enough support, too contentious)
- Motion to Postpone Indefinitely: to put the current line of discussion down forever
 - Ex: I motion to postpone indefinitely the idea of ____ because...
- Call to Question: to end the debate on the current discussion and take a vote
 - Ex: I call the question to approve this change.
 - Votes for amendments only need a majority (more than half) to be approved.
 - Votes to approve the bill need two-thirds or more to be approved.

c. When all debate has ended or there are only 3 minutes remaining in the round, someone must Call to Question so that the bill can be voted on and the meeting can end.

- Speaker A: "I Call to Question the _____(bill title)_____ for approval."
- Speaker B: "I second the motion."
- Parliamentary Judge: "All in favor say AYE and raise your hand."
- Parliamentary Judge: "All opposed say NAY and raise your hand."
- Parliamentary Judge: $\frac{2}{3}$ of the chamber must vote in favor of the bill for it to pass. "The motion passes/fails, and the bill is approved/denied."
- Speaker A: "I motion to adjourn." (end the round)
- Speaker B: "I second the motion."
- Parliamentary Judge: "This session is adjourned." (The round is over.)

EXAMPLE JUDGING SHEET

Competitor Name & Number	AFF/NEG	Speech	Answers	Add'l Speaking	Add'l Speaking	Add'l Speaking	Add'l Speaking	Debate	Rank
1. Susie S. (A9)	AFF	6 /10	6 /10	✓	✓			6 /10	5
2. Jack S. (D4)	NEG	8 /10	7 /10	✓	✓	✓	✓	7 /10	3
3. Lucy D. (R2)	AFF	7 /10	6 /10	✓	✓			6 /10	4
4. Max R. (B9)	NEG	7 /10	3 /10	✓	✓	✓		3 /10	6
5. Dylan H. (M2)	AFF	6 /10	4 /10	✓	✓	✓		3 /10	7
6. Adaal P. (B2)	NEG	9 /10	9 /10	✓	✓	✓		7 /10	2
7. Maryanna D. (K3)	NEG	9 /10	10 /10	✓	✓	✓	✓	8 /10	1
8.		___/10	___/10					___/10	
9.		___/10	___/10					___/10	

MIDDLE SCHOOL CONGRESSIONAL DEBATE JUDGING SHEET

Competitor Name & Number	AFF/NEG	Speech	Answers	Add'l Speaking	Add'l Speaking	Add'l Speaking	Add'l Speaking	Debate	Rank
1.	AFF	___/10	___/10					___/10	
2.	NEG	___/10	___/10					___/10	
3.		___/10	___/10					___/10	
4.		___/10	___/10					___/10	
5.		___/10	___/10					___/10	
6.		___/10	___/10					___/10	
7.		___/10	___/10					___/10	
8.		___/10	___/10					___/10	
9.		___/10	___/10					___/10	

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