

## Middle School Debate Format

We will use the Middle School Public Debate Program (MSPDP) format, which is becoming popular across the country. For more information see: <http://middleschooldebate.com/index.htm>.

1. Modeled after Parliamentary debate format, the most common format world-wide. It is also one of the two most common debate formats at the college level, and becoming more common
2. Two teams of three debaters each debate a resolution or motion
  - a. The side that argues in support of the motion is called the Government, Proposition or Affirmative
  - b. The side that argues against the motion is called the Opposition or Negative
  - c. The motion will be released to the participants well ahead of the event so they have time to research the topic and practice their speeches
3. The debate consists of a series of timed speeches which total to 26 minutes. Each team has three opportunities to speak, so each debater on the team gives one of the speeches.
  - a. First Government constructive—5 minutes
  - b. First Opposition constructive—5 minutes
  - c. Second Government constructive—5 minutes
  - d. Second Opposition constructive—5 minutes
  - e. Opposition rebuttal—3 minutes
  - f. Government rebuttal—3 minutes`
4. During the constructive speeches, the speaker may be interrupted by the other team who may raise “Points of Information” or POIs, questions or remarks intended to weaken the speaker’s case.
  - a. POIs are only permitted during the middle three minutes of the speech—the first and last minute are protected time.
  - b. The Questioner must stand with one hand on his head and one hand outstretched, in imitation of English Parliamentary practice.
  - c. The Speaker may accept the question, postpone it (“I’ll take you question in a second”), or dismiss it (“Not now” or wave it away with a hand gesture.
  - d. If the Speaker accepts the POI the Questioner has 15 seconds or less to ask the question or state his point.
  - e. The Speaker should then respond. The best Speakers will weave the response into the flow of his arguments and continue to make his case.
  - f. It is considered poor form if the Speaker does not accept one or two POIs, and if the other team does not offer at least twice as many, during a constructive speech.
5. The debate is observed by a Judge, sometimes called the Speaker, who listens to the arguments of both sides, takes notes, and decides the winner of the debate.
  - a. The Judge should award the debate to the team who the Judge felt did the best job overall supporting their side of the motion, considering all speeches and POIs.
  - b. The Judge provides a short verbal critique intended to help the debaters improve their skills.

- c. The Judge also fills out a ballot awarding points and speaker ranks, and which has room for a more extensive written critique.
- d. The ballot is returned to the tab (for tabulation) room where the results of all the debates are collected and compiled.
- e. Copies of the ballots are returned to the coaches at the end of the event so they can review their debaters' performance with them.