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.