

British Parliamentary (BP) debating

Format basics

In BP debating, every debate has two sides. The side in favour of the motion (the statement being debated) is called Government and the side opposing the motion is called Opposition. On each side, however, there are two teams - the opening team and the closing team. In total there are four teams in every debate, each team having two speakers means that there are eight speakers in total.

Speeches

BP speeches are either 5 minutes or 7 minutes each (schools' debating has 5 minute speeches while university debating has 7 minute speeches). The first and last minute of all speeches are called 'protected time' in which questions (called 'points of information') may not be asked of the speaker.

POIs

When a speaker on the opposing team is speaking (and not in the first and last minute of their speech) you can ask a point of information. This is a short question (which may last no longer than 15 seconds) about a point the speaker has made. To make a POI a speaker on the opposing team should stand up and say something like 'POI', 'Question', 'Objection' or 'On that point'. The person speaking can either accept or decline the question (they may do this by saying 'declined' or 'no' or in some cases just waving their hand). After a point of information has been delivered (or one has been given) there is a mandatory waiting period of 15s before another POI can be given (by anyone). Failure to observe this is called badgering.