



# TDA BP Guide Book

This image shows a full page of handwriting practice paper. It contains ten identical rows of horizontal guidelines. Each row is composed of three lines: a solid blue line at the top, a dashed blue line in the middle, and another solid blue line at the bottom. These lines are evenly spaced across the entire page to help children learn letter height and placement. There is no text or other markings on the paper.

# TDA BP Guide Book

## Introduction

This guide provides a general overview of British Parliamentary (BP) debate. BP shares many similarities with other styles of parliamentary debate, but also has several key differences. To learn more about advanced BP techniques we recommend visiting the Resources page at [www.torontodebateacademy.com](http://www.torontodebateacademy.com).

## About the TDA

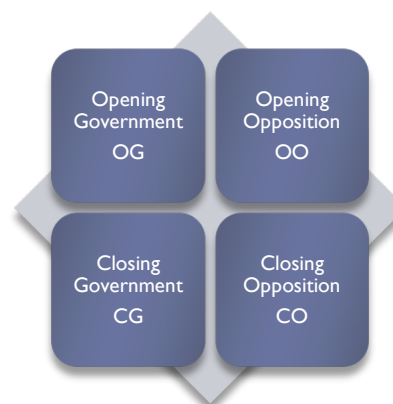
The Toronto Debate Academy provides debate education programming for Jr. High and High School Students. We run open and private tournaments, workshops, and classes.

The Toronto Debate Academy only employs highly experienced debate instructors to ensure that our programming is second to none. Our services are highly customizable and can meet the needs of students at all levels of experience.

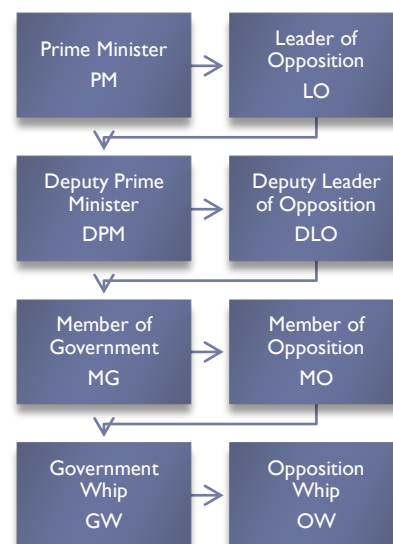
Please contact us at [info@torontodebateacademy.com](mailto:info@torontodebateacademy.com) if you would like to discuss our programming options and how we can work with you to make you or your students *Debate Better*.

## Format

In BP there are 4 teams in each round. Two teams represent the Government, and two teams represent the Opposition. The Government supports the resolution, and the Opposition opposes the resolution. The teams are also divided into the Opening and Closing halves of the debate. The four teams are organized as follows:



There are two debaters on each team and the speeches alternate between Government and Opposition as follows:



## The Speaker and Speech Time

Debates are presided over by a Speaker who represents the Speaker of the House. At University run tournaments, the Speaker is often the Chair of the adjudication panel whereas at other tournaments the Speaker is usually a non-judge volunteer. The Speaker keeps time and calls debaters to the floor. As is customary in Parliament, all speeches are made to the Speaker **and are not made directly at opposing benches**.

**TIP:** A common mistake new debaters make is to face and speak to opposing benches. Remember, no matter how well you debate, you will never convince the opposing bench to agree with you, and even if they did, the judge's opinion is the only one that matters. For these reasons, always focus on the speaker and judges during your speech.

In BP at the high school level, each debater has 5 minutes to speak. The first and last thirty seconds are protected time. During protected time, no Points of Information ("POIs") may be offered (more on POIs later in this guide). At a minimum, the Speaker will give a signal at the beginning and end of protected time and when the five minutes are over. The Speaker will also provide a 15 second "grace period" to conclude the speech after the five minutes. Typically, the Speaker will also provide time signals each minute; however, not all tournaments/all Speakers do this so debaters are advised to bring their own time device.

**TIP:** Because debaters are not allowed to use electronic devices to research the resolutions after they have been given, avoid looking at your phone a lot during prep time. It is now common to use phones as timers both before and during rounds, just ensure it does not look as though you are researching anything.

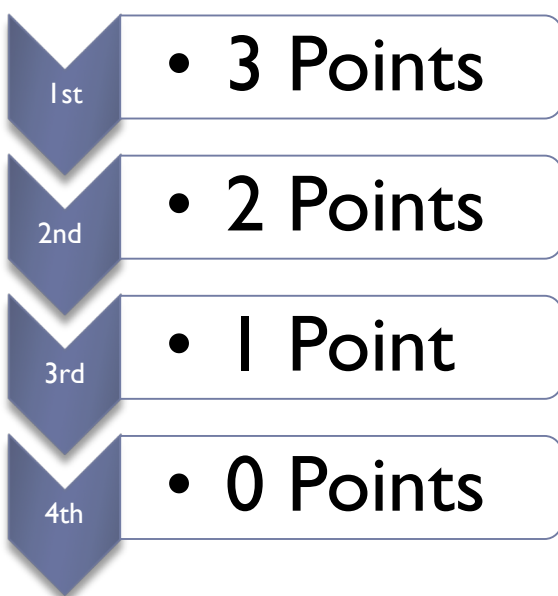
There are no Points of Order or Points of Personal Privilege in BP.

## Judging

A round of debate will have 1 to 5 judges. The judges will determine the team rankings and the individual speaker scores. Judges base their rankings primarily on how well a team debated their position and fulfilled their role. The majority of this guide focuses on the elements that debaters should focus on to succeed in the eyes of judges.

## Rankings

At the end of each debate, the judges will rank the four teams from first place to fourth place. Each ranking has a point value associated with it. The point values used are as follows:



### Bracketing

At most tournaments, a team's points are used to determine the pairings for the next round (i.e. teams will face other teams with the same number of points). This ensures that the skill level in each room is evenly matched. It also ensures that the teams in contention for the "break" will face each other.

At the end of the bracketed rounds (also referred to as "closed rounds") the top teams will break to elimination rounds (also called "open rounds"). The size of the break will depend on the size of the tournament. Smaller tournaments take the top 8 teams and break to two semi-finals. The World University Debate Championships, which typically has 300-400 teams, breaks to a 48-team partial double-octo-final.

In open rounds, the teams usually are not ranked. Instead, the judges only choose the top two teams in the round to proceed to the next round. In the final round, the judges typically only choose one team to be the

champion and the other teams all receive finalist awards.

### Speeches and Team Roles

In BP, it is not sufficient to simply give a good speech. Each speaker position has a defined role that must be fulfilled. As a result, it is not only important to have good content and style, but also to fulfill your role in the debate.

### Style and Content

While most judging is holistic rather than formulaic, in general there are two broad categories that judges will consider when scoring a speech: style and content (also referred to as matter and manner). Content is the substance of your speech, and style is how you present the content. Judges are usually advised to weigh style and content equally; however, parent/teacher judges more commonly show a preference for style and university judges show a preference for content. The following lists provide some examples of categories of style and content.

#### Content Includes:

- Constructive Arguments
- Refutation
- Rebuilding (i.e. responding to refutation)
- Examples/Case Studies
- Points of Information (POIs)

#### Style Includes:

- Presence (eye contact, body language, etc.)
- Engaging speaking style (tone modulation, emphasis, etc.)

- Humour/Wit
- Appropriate Language
- Respectful behaviour towards other debaters and judges

## Roles of the Teams and Speakers

You'll 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 will have fulfilled their role and helped to ensure that a good round of debate takes place. If they fail

then the debate will suffer in quality because subsequent speeches will be adversely affected. The judges take role fulfillment very seriously.

**TIP:** It is common for new debaters to struggle to develop enough content for their speeches; however, any debater, regardless of experience, can learn the speaker roles in BP. Often, rounds with mostly novice debaters will be won by the team that does the best job of fulfilling its role.

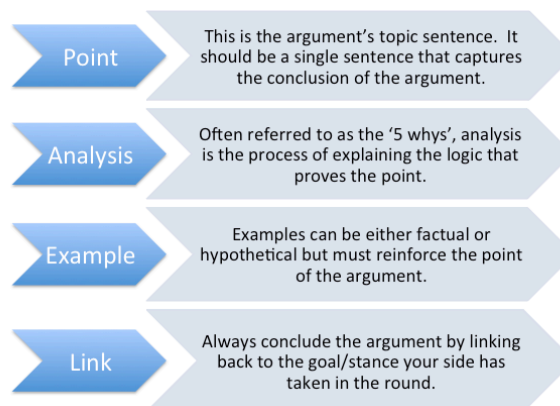
The roles of each speaker are set out in the following chart:

PM	LO	DPM	DLO	MG	MO	GW	OW
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction</li> <li>• Model</li> <li>• Roadmap</li> <li>• 2-3 Points</li> <li>• Conclusion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction</li> <li>• Roadmap</li> <li>• 2-3 Points</li> <li>• Ref PM</li> <li>• Conclusion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction</li> <li>• Roadmap</li> <li>• [Optional Point]</li> <li>• Ref LO</li> <li>• Reb PM</li> <li>• Conclusion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction</li> <li>• Roadmap</li> <li>• [Optional Point]</li> <li>• Ref PM/DPM</li> <li>• Reb LO</li> <li>• Conclusion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction</li> <li>• Roadmap</li> <li>• Extension</li> <li>• Ref OO</li> <li>• Conclusion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction</li> <li>• Roadmap</li> <li>• Extension</li> <li>• Ref MG</li> <li>• Ref OG</li> <li>• Conclusion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction</li> <li>• Roadmap</li> <li>• 2-3 Questions</li> <li>• Conclusion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction</li> <li>• Roadmap</li> <li>• 2-3 Questions</li> <li>• Conclusion</li> </ul>

## Constructive Arguments

**TIP:** A lot of the material in the next few pages is covered in more depth in the TDA Beginner Debate Guide

Good debating flows from constructive arguments. The typical PM and LO speeches will have 2-4. There are many ways to present a good constructive argument; however, for beginners it is best to use the following structure:



### Example

*THW Join the Debate Team*

P: Debate develops critical thinking skills that benefit students.

A: [How?] Debate involves explaining and contrasting complicated ideas in a

concise way. To be successful at this, debaters must practice critical thinking. Practicing critical thinking leads to improved critical thinking. This matters because improved critical thinking not only benefits students during debates, but also helps them be more successful in other academic disciplines. Success in academics opens up more opportunities for scholarly and professional advancement which helps to improve the debater's life overall.

E: Most debaters get very high grades in school and this can be in part attributed to their highly developed critical thinking abilities.

L: Therefore, by joining the debate team, you can improve your critical thinking skills which will in turn lead to numerous positive benefits.

### Organization - Road Mapping

All speeches should include a road map immediately following the debater's introductory remarks.

A road map sets out what the debater is going to say and in what order. Roadmapping is important for several reasons:

1. It focuses the debater's speech and puts the arguments in context.
2. It helps the judge know what to expect and how to organize their notes.
3. It helps the other debaters organize their notes and ensures that each point can be identified and responded to in subsequent speeches.

### Example

"I will be presenting three points in my speech. First, why X is important. Second, why Y injures X. And third, why the only way to protect X is to ban Y."

Roadmapping can feel clumsy at first but with practice it can become an effective way to not only organize the speech, but also to make the speech more persuasive.

### Organization - Flagging

A critical component of roadmapping is flagging. Flagging is a term used in debate to describe how a debater signals to the judge that the debater is moving from one point to the next. Typically, flagging only requires a few transition words such as "my second point is..." or "in response to the LO's second argument..."

As with roadmapping, flagging helps the judges and other debaters keep track of what the debater is saying in their speech and why they are saying it. This increases the clash between arguments and keeps the round focussed on the key ideas.

### Modeling

The OG is responsible for modelling the resolution. Few things will cause a team to lose a round faster than poorly modeling and presenting the resolution.

Models provide the who, what, where, when and how of the resolution. The first thing to determine is the who. The House is usually the country the round is taking place in but it can be the federal or provincial government. Alternatively, some resolutions are more suitable to being run in general (i.e. everyone

should do this). The model also needs to include details about what is going to happen, when it will happen, and, in some cases, how it will happen. Each resolution requires a different combination of these elements to be run effectively.

A good model ensures that any vagueness inherent in the resolution is clarified. Some resolutions are relatively straightforward and require only a brief model. Other resolutions are deliberately vague or “loose” and require extensive modelling.

The following two examples illustrate a straightforward resolution and a more difficult resolution:

#### Example 1

*THW raise the minimum wage in Ontario to \$15/hr*

Model 1: “The resolution is straightforward, this house, being the government of Ontario, would raise the minimum wage, which is the lowest amount that can be paid to any employee working in Ontario, to \$15 per hour.”

#### Example 2

*THW ban pets*

Model 2: “This model is more complicated, the federal government should pass a law banning the ownership of attack dogs as pets. Attack dogs are any dogs that have been bred for fighting and which have the capacity to cause severe injury to humans. Examples of attack dogs include Pitbulls and Dobermans. The government will immediately implement a registry for all existing attack dogs, evaluate existing attack dogs to ascertain whether they pose a threat to society, and make any

additional ownership of attack dogs illegal.

While modeling provides some flexibility to the OG, teams should take care to ensure that the debate they set out is in the spirit of the resolution.

### Goals

Far too often, novice debaters fail to include a goal at the end of their model. The goal is the reason that the debate is taking place. While goals can be inferred from constructive arguments, it is far more effective to have a clear goal that is set out at the start of the PM speech and can be linked to at the end of each argument.

The goal can be simple, such as to help students or children or the elderly, or even to improve society in general; however, even if the goal seems obvious, it should still be explicitly stated.

If you are struggling with determining your team’s goal, try making a list of all the stakeholders (i.e. the groups that will be affected by the resolution) and determine which of these groups are being helped.

#### Example

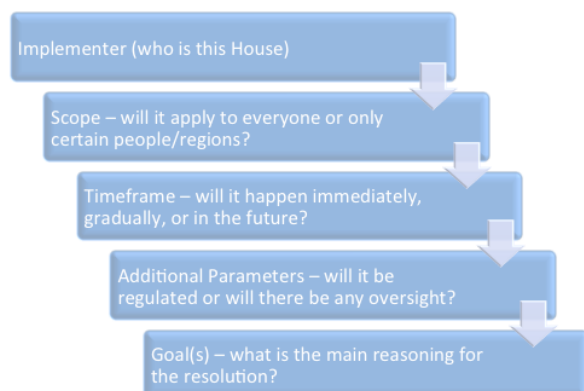
*THW Ban Child Beauty Pageants*

Stakeholders:

- Children in pageants
- Other children
- Parents of children in pageants
- Pageant organizers



## Summary of Modeling



**Note:** The Opposition side must pay close attention to the model outlined by the PM. If any aspect of the model remains unclear, it is imperative that the Opposition stand for a POI and state “Point of Clarification”. If the question is accepted (which, for a clarification it always should be) the Opposition should quickly ask their question and then sit to allow the PM to answer. Points of Clarification can only be genuine questions about what the model is and should never be arguments.

## Refutation

Refutation is just as important as coming up with arguments. It ensures that both sides of the debate clash with each other and makes for a more engaging debate overall. Refutation is simply a response to an argument brought up by the opposing team and can take several forms:

1. Factual errors – factual statements that are known to be untrue.
2. Contradictions – even if two points are each true in isolation, if they contradict each other the opposing team’s arguments are weakened. It is sometimes necessary to take a wider view of their perspective and see if everything fits together as neatly as they say it does.
3. Logical fallacies:
  - a. Slippery Slope – the assertion that if A occurs, B and C will also occur;
  - b. False Analogies – the comparison of two events that are distinguishable;
  - c. Appeals to Tradition – the argument that something is preferable because it has always been used;
  - d. Correlation vs. Causation – the assertion that two events that occur simultaneously must both be caused by one or the other events;
  - e. Strawmanning – the selective interpretation and response to an argument to make it sound weaker.
4. Assumptions/Assertions – stating conclusions without providing sufficient logical support.

The following are examples of logical fallacies using the resolution *THW ban cosmetic surgery*:

	Argument	Refutation
Factual error	Cosmetic surgery is very dangerous.	Advancements in technology have ensured that procedures are safe.
Contradiction	Argument 1: Cosmetic surgery leads to lower self-esteem;  Argument 2: Low self-esteem from	These two arguments contradict each other. Government cannot simultaneously argue that low self-esteem is caused by both cosmetic



	body issues is caused by the media and is unrelated to an individual's appearance.	surgery and the media.
Slippery Slope	If the government bans cosmetic surgery, pretty soon all beauty products will be banned too.	There is no conclusive evidence to link banning cosmetic surgery to an inevitable ban of all beauty products.
False Analogies	Cosmetic surgery is addictive like an illegal drug and so should also be illegal.	Illegal drugs create a physical addiction. Cosmetic surgery cannot create a physical addiction so this analogy is false.
Appeals to Tradition	Cosmetic surgery did not exist until the mid-20 <sup>th</sup> century so why do we need it?	Just because something is new or different does not mean that it does not have any merit.
Correlation vs. Causation	Psychological disorders relating to body issues have gone up since the use of cosmetic surgery began.	There are lots of reasons that psychological disorders could have gone up over the past 60 years including modern media, better diagnoses, etc.
Strawmanning	<p>[OPP argument: An individual has the right to bodily integrity and the state should only intervene if the person lacks the capacity to make decisions in their own best interests. For example, if the person has a mental disorder or a form of severe addiction.]</p> <p>Gov response: Opposition says that people can do whatever they want with their bodies but we ban illegal drugs so this is not true.</p>	Government did not engage with our rights analysis and ignored that we acknowledged that the government had a limited right to intervene when a person was incapable of following what is in their best interests.
Assumptions/ Assertions	Cosmetic surgery is addictive.	Anecdotal evidence that some people have too much cosmetic surgery does not mean that it is addictive.

## Extensions

Both closing teams are expected to offer an extension of the case for their side. Extensions are usually new constructive arguments but they can take many forms.

Effective extensions provide unique analysis to the round and improve on their side's case.

**TIP:** While it is sometimes tempting to run two or more arguments in the MG or MO speech, it is almost always better to focus on just one so that it is properly

fleshed out and so that there is sufficient time to provide refutation in the speech.

There are four general categories of extensions:

1. New constructive arguments – a stand-alone constructive argument that could have been used in the opening half but was not. New arguments are usually most effective when they change the scope of the debate by introducing a new stakeholder.
2. Deeper analysis of an existing constructive argument – sometimes the opening half states an argument but does not provide sufficient analysis to support it. An extension can be made from the deepening of the existing argument provided that the debater makes it clear that new and unique analysis is being added to the round.
3. Case studies/examples – sometimes a thorough review of a case study or example can provide much needed factual evidence to the round.
4. Unanswered questions – sometimes the arguments in the front half will not be sufficiently resolved. For example, the two sides might argue about whether or not a disputed right exists, but neither side will provide analysis for when that type of right arises. This is an unanswered question and these are often the best extensions, if they are identified and answered.

**TIP:** For new debaters, the best strategy for developing extensions is to prep the case as if you are the OG and brainstorm as many points as possible. Once OG presents their arguments, you can cross them off your page and decide which of

your remaining arguments should be your extension.

## Whip Speeches

The whip speech is the last speech for each side and an integral part of the closing team's role. The whip speech must summarize the round in a way that shows that their side, and in particular, their team, has won the round. Although it may feel strange at first, it is entirely acceptable, and even encouraged, for whip speeches to use explicit language such as "Side government, and in particular closing government, won this argument because..."

There are many ways to summarize the debate. Some speakers like to identify the main themes that were analyzed during the round. One of the easiest ways for new debaters to go through their summary speech is to identify two or three questions that need to be answered to determine the winner of the debate, and say why your side, and particularly your team, answered those questions the best. Any style you choose is fine as long as it gives a substantive summary of the arguments in the round and why you won those arguments.

### Example

#### *THW Ban Tobacco*

- 1) Do individuals have a right to use tobacco?
- 2) Will banning tobacco help current smokers?
- 3) Will banning tobacco reduce the number of people who take up smoking?

These questions could be used by the government or opposition whip speech, although the questions used by each whip

speaker do not need to be the same. Good whip speakers will stick to the content of the round but will organize the material in the way that best helps their side win.

Another approach is to divide the round into key elements. The following example illustrates this method:

Example 2

*THW Ban Tobacco*

- 1) Is there an important reason to ban tobacco?
- 2) Will a ban on tobacco achieve the government's stated goal?
- 3) Is a ban on tobacco the best way to achieve the government's goal?

The most important element of whip speeches that is often missed by beginner debaters is to include sufficient refutation. A whip speech cannot just restate what your side has said. The best approach is to start your analysis of each question with the main contentions of the opposing teams, refute them using what was said in the round and any new refutation you have, and then discuss why the constructive material brought by your side was a) more logical; and b) more impactful.

### Points of Information (POIs)

POIs are questions asked by the opposing benches during a speech. POIs can only be offered between the first thirty seconds and last thirty seconds of a speech.

To offer a POI, stand with your arm forward and state “on that point” or “sir/madam”. Alternatively, you can just rise silently. Accepting POIs is entirely at the discretion of the speaker; however, speakers are

expected to accept 1 to 2 POIs during their speech. To accept a POI, the speaker should acknowledge the person standing and say something to the effect of “go ahead”.

A POI is a brief question. For this reason, you should know what you want to ask before you stand to offer your POI. If your POI takes too long, the speaker is allowed to waive you down and continue with their speech. Ten to fifteen seconds is the longest any POI should take to ask.

TIP 1: If you are the speaker, do not leave people standing for too long. Either accept their POI or waive them down with your hand.

TIP 2: Remember, you do not have to accept every POI offered and it is strongly advised that you only accept POIs at times when the question will not disrupt the point you are making.

POIs generally fall into two categories:

- 1) Refutation of the constructive argument currently being made by the speaker;
- 2) Questions regarding material that the team asking the question has either previously raised or intends to raise.

### Conclusion

The material covered in this guide is more than any debater can learn all at once. The best way to use this guide is to print a copy and review it often, in particular, while preparing for a round of debate.

For additional debate resources, please visit the Toronto Debate Academy website at [www.torontodebateacademy.com](http://www.torontodebateacademy.com).