How to Debate

The Guidelines, Rules and Procedures of the Orange County Debate League

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Statement of Purpose

This ***How to Debate*** guide is designed to supplement the official OCDL Rules by providing an overview of key guidelines and procedures, along with additional examples and clarifications to support participant understanding. However, this guide is not a substitute for the official rules. For all official rules, procedures, and requirements, please refer to the official **OCDL Rules Document**.

What is Debate?

A **debate** features two sides arguing a given controversial topic, which may also be referred to as a **resolution**. In debate, the two sides take turns giving speeches for or against the resolution. Resolutions may be statements of fact, policy or value. Examples of controversial topics include the following:

- The death penalty is immoral (fact)
- Schools should require student uniforms (policy)
- Television does more good than harm (value)

Use of Evidence in Debates

One key part of debate is evidence, which is critical to making a good argument. One of the skills expected of debaters is learning to use facts, examples, and other evidence to support arguments or points. This is an important skill because arguments should be supported by facts and experience (not just one's own opinion). Debaters in the OCDL have several weeks to thoroughly research the predetermined topics for tournaments, and as such they will be expected to reference back to articles and reports (both primary and secondary) that support the given claims. It is not acceptable to fabricate research or make false source claims, as this would undermine the credibility of debate. Students who intentionally fabricate information or falsify sources may be barred from further debating opportunities in the league.

Logic and the Burden of Proof

Another important part of debate is logic or reasoning. Like evidence, understanding logic is an important skill because arguments must *make sense*. Debaters are expected to point out flaws in the logic of or contradictions between opponents' arguments.

One important component of debate logic is the **burden of proof**, a logical principle that the person making a claim must support and prove the claim. In debate, the proposition (the team arguing for the resolution) is making the claim and has the burden of proving the resolution. If the proposition cannot prove the resolution, it does not win the debate. The opposition (the team arguing against the resolution) does not need to prove anything; it must simply prevent the proposition from meeting the burden of proof.

OCDL Debate Format

The Orange County Debate League exclusively uses the modified parliamentary style of debate. This style allows for more participants in each round and is the preferred style for students in the middle grades.

Distinguishing the Sides

The two sides (or teams) in OCDL debate are the **proposition** and the **opposition**. The proposition side speakers argue for the resolution, while the opposition speaks against the resolution. Teams cannot choose the side they prefer; rather, they must accept the side on which they have been assigned by the tabulation software.

Number and Order of Speeches

Each team, both proposition and opposition, includes a maximum of 3 students. Each student must speak at least once for a total for 6 speeches, ordered as follows:

- Proposition first speech
- Opposition first speech
- Proposition second speech
- Opposition second speech
- Opposition third speech
- Proposition third speech

The first four speeches of the debate are called **constructive** speeches. The last two speeches are called **rebuttal** speeches. Besides the limit on time, the only rule for speeches is that rebuttal speakers cannot advance arguments not already started by previous speakers. Simply put, rebuttal speakers cannot advance new arguments.

The general sequence of discussion for an argument is as follows: an argument is advanced the argument is responded to by opponents (a refutation) the refutation is responded to by the team first advancing the arguments (a rebuttal). It follows then that the first speakers for each team will usually advance arguments for his or her team while the second speakers will usually refute the opponents' arguments and the third speakers will rebut his or her own team's arguments.

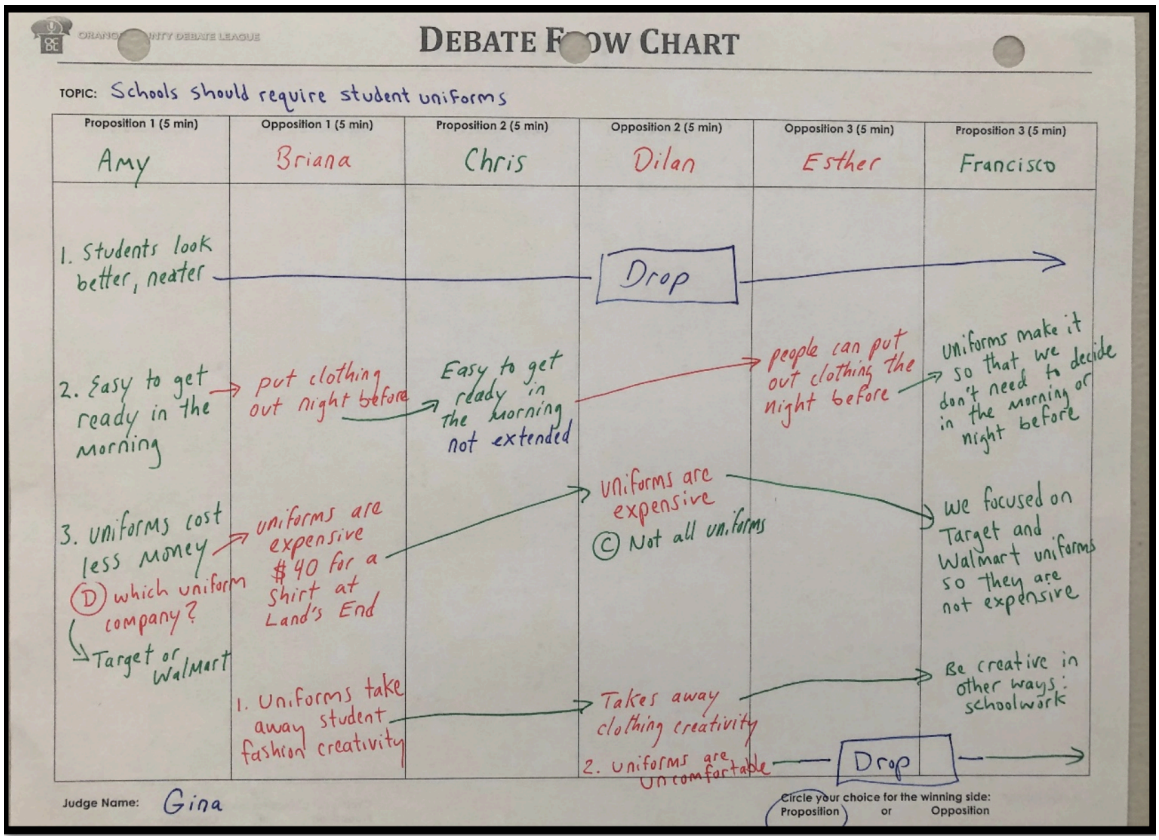
A list of typical activities for each speaker listed in the table below:

Speaker	Typical Activities of the Speaker
1st Proposition Speaker (Constructive)	• Introduce the resolution • Offer a specific interpretation of the resolution • Provide arguments in support of the resolution
1st Opposition Speaker (Constructive)	• Introduce the resolution • Offer a specific interpretation of the resolution • Provide arguments against the resolution • Begin responding to arguments presented by the other team
2nd Proposition Speaker (Constructive)	• Provide or complete arguments in support of the resolution • Support the arguments presented by the first proposition speaker • Bring in new information to support the proposition • Respond to all arguments made by the 1st opposition speaker • Begin rebutting the refutations made by the 1st opposition speaker

2nd Opposition Speaker (Constructive)	• Provide or complete arguments against the resolution • Support the arguments presented by the first opposition speaker • Bring in new information to support the opposition • Respond to all arguments made by the proposition team • Begin rebutting the refutations made by the 2nd proposition speaker
3rd Opposition Speaker (Rebuttal)	• Continue to refute proposition's arguments • Rebut the refutations made by the proposition • Explain how, given the arguments advanced in the debate, the opposition wins the debate
3rd Proposition Speaker (Rebuttal)	• Refute the arguments advanced and extended by the opposition side • Rebut the refutations made by the opposition • Show how, given the arguments advanced in the debate, the proposition wins the debate

Keeping Notes: The OCDL Flow Chart

Below you will see a sample flow chart, the graphic organizer where students (and judges) keep notes for the debate.



Timing the Debate

In modified parliamentary debate, all debaters are allotted five minutes to speak but aren't required to use the entire time. The debate round will have a timekeeper to help keep time, but if there is nobody available to time, the judge will keep time. Timing for all speeches is kept in this way:

At the 1st and 4th minute marks, the timer will raise his or her hands and signal a "1" with their index finger. When 30 seconds are remaining, the timer will hold up his or her hand and form a "C". With 10 seconds remaining, the timer will use his or her 10 fingers to count down the remaining time. When time is up, the timer holds up a fist (to show that the debater should stop talking) and says "time" to let the debater and judge know that time is finished. After "time" no further argumentation/refutation will be considered. There is no grace period at the conclusion of the speech.
Once a speaker's time has elapsed, the judge will disregard information stated.

Constructive speeches' first and last minutes are in **protected time**. Points of information (discussed later) are not permitted during this period. The entirety of both rebuttal speeches is also in protected time. The timer will signal the end of protected time (when the first minutes has elapsed) by audibly slapping the table. Similarly, the timer will slap the table when the last minute of the constructive has begun so that debaters know any points of information will be out of order.

Interrupting the Speaker: Points of Information and Heckles

OCDL style debate allows for interruptions of the speaker by any member of the non-speaker team. These interruptions are known as **points of information** and **heckles**. Both kinds of interruptions are vocally directed towards a judge rather than the opponent. Similarly, any response by the speaker is directed towards the judge.

Points of Information

A point of information (POI) is a request to the speaker that holds the floor to yield up to 15 seconds. If accepted, the requester may ask a question or make a comment. The POI is an essential element in modified parliamentary debate as it can be used to clarify the opponents' position or to refute or rebut arguments.

To begin a POI, the requester stands up. The requester can make a POI either non-verbally by simply standing up, or verbally by saying something like "POI," "Information," or "On that point." Verbal requests should be made only once. The speaker may decide to accept or reject POIs at the time they are requested by saying "no thank you," or by waiving off the POI with his or her hand.

There is no rule about how many should be offered, or how many must be taken, but since arguing and responding increases the level of argumentation and refutation, every debater should plan to request or accept POIs to earn higher scores. In addition, debaters should wait approximately 15 seconds after a POI has been made or attempted before attempting another one. Proficient debaters should display control of the floor and a strong understanding of the resolution, which can be demonstrated in taking and responding to at least one POI. As indicated in the speaker performance rubric, it is considered weak for a speaker to accept or reject all points.

Heckling

Heckling is permitted in OCDL debates. Heckling is when the team which does not hold the floor simply yells out a 1-3 words abridged statement in lieu of a longer, argumentative point. Done well, heckling improves debates by increasing the number of refutes/rebuttals throughout the course of the debate. Because of this, only "argumentative" heckling is permitted. Debaters may use positive heckles to encourage or support their own teammates. For example, a debater knocks on the table or says, "hear, hear" to signify his/her support for an argument made by his/her speaker teammate. On rare occasions, debaters may also use negative heckles. For example, a debater may say "shame" in a low voice to signify his or her feeling that a speaker has misrepresented one of his or her arguments.

Some forms of heckling are not acceptable in modified parliamentary debate. Heckling for the purpose of being disagreeable (i.e. saying "not true" or "wrong"); heckling intended to disrupt the speaker; or heckling to prevent the speaker from being heard are all examples of unacceptable heckling. Interruptions of this nature will result in the judge not awarding the heckler a higher speaker point score and/or asking the heckler to stop. Debaters must avoid disruptive behavior during the debate.

All heckles should be done judiciously and with care. Disruptive heckling is not permitted. Audience members are not permitted to heckle during the debate.

Calling the Debate: Winning Side and Speaker Scores

At the conclusion of a debate, the judge will ask debaters and guests to exit the room while the judge examines his or her flowsheet notes and decides which side was more convincing. After a few minutes, everyone returns to the room, and the judge **discloses**, or reveals, which side won and how many points each debater earned. Judges use the **speaker performance rubric** to determine how many points a debater earned based upon his or her argumentation, refutation, organization and presentation. Speaker points do not necessarily correlate to the debate team victory, and it is possible for a team with higher speaker points to lose the round. Judges then record the win, the speaker scores and written feedback on a ballot that is delivered to the tournament tabulators to be added into the database for award calculations.

How Does a Judge Decide Who Wins?

The debate round is won when one side convinces the judge of their arguments. More specifically, Proposition wins the round if they prove their case while Opposition wins by preventing Proposition from successfully proving the resolution. Arguments must be raised in both the constructive speeches and the rebuttal speeches to count in for victory. A judge considers refutations and rebuttals to determine which arguments remain standing at the end of the debate. Then, the judge bases their decision upon a preponderance of the evidence along with the number of and impact of the remaining arguments of the round.

Judges are volunteers who have completed a comprehensive training program. This training program ensures that judges are a blank slate or "tabula rasa," meaning the judge should not use preconceived ideas or knowledge of the topic as a factor in their opinion (judgement). It is up to the students to explain to the judge which arguments are most important and why. The role of the judge is to listen, flow the debate, and ultimately decide which side was more convincing based solely on the information presented by the debaters. The judge also serves to enforce any tournament rules, promote good behavior, and keep the debate moving.

The OCDL Tournaments

OCDL tournaments typically feature four rounds, including all prepared topics and at least one impromptu topic.

In the OCDL, debaters must have all research information printed prior to the tournament start. Once the topic is announced, debaters have 20 minutes to write their research/information on a designated colored sheet of paper. No electronics are allowed during the prep time, and students are only allowed to use in the debate room the papers they produced during the preceding prep period. If a debater is found using their pre-printed research/notes materials (or electronics during the prep time) their team will face disqualification.

Preparing for Tournaments

OCDL debate topics are complex and often relate to society in a way that may not have been introduced in the middle school curriculum. In the weeks leading up to a tournament, students should research the debate topics, gather evidence, write arguments, anticipate refutations and consider the impact of the arguments; in short, students should show up to a tournament prepared and ready to debate. A debater's research may include (but is not limited to) the following questions:

- What do all the words in the motion mean?
- What are the outcomes of both sides?
- Who are the victims? What is to gain?
- What is the result of the status quo?
- What are the common examples pertaining to the resolution?
- What are the arguments for and against the resolution?

Debaters should take notes on the evidence they find in a format that is consistent with all team members. Evidence should have citations clearly noted. A well-prepared team will have several pieces of evidence for each argument and counter argument. Debaters in the OCDL have several weeks to thoroughly research the given topics for tournaments, and as such they will be expected to reference back to articles and reports (both primary and secondary) that support the given claims. Although debaters cannot bring written, prepared speeches into the debate room, writing out arguments and refutations ahead of time is good preparation as it helps a debater to formulate the arguments and notice holes in the arguments. Successful teams work together and communicate effectively with one another, and as a result, they will be better able to present cohesive arguments and meaningful impacts.

Debate Chambers (the classroom)

Debate chambers are typically a classroom on the given host site campus. In a debate room, the two teams sit at separate tables (facing the judge) with a designated place where each debater will come up to speak. There is no specific order in which the speakers must sit at their tables. Judges will usually sit in the back of the classroom (behind any audience members) and may often ask a spectator to serve as the time-keeper of the round. Use of podiums are welcome but not required.

The Debate Audience

Spectators, known as the **peanut gallery**, are allowed to be in the debating rooms. They are allowed to take notes (keep a flow chart) of the debate proceedings, but they may not film, audio record, or take pictures of the debaters during the round. The audience may only use positive heckles and may not participate in any other way; this includes helping

debaters and interacting with the teams during the round. The only exception to this is during the final public debate of a tournament. Audience instructions for the final public debate will be given prior to the actual event. Members of the peanut gallery who break any of these rules will be asked to leave by the judge and risk their welcome at future OCDL tournaments.

Awards Ceremony

The OCDL hosts an awards ceremony at the end of every tournament. Factors determining rankings include both victories and speaker points. The tournament administration awards trophies/medals to approximately the top 30% of a tournament for individual speakers, teams, and entire squads. Because the OCDL features students in 5th through 8th grade, the OCDL usually has a top speaker award granted to the top speaker by grade level.

Common Debate Strategies

There are many ways to engage in a debate, and students are welcome to argue a given side as they wish; however, coaches typically teach their students certain methods that are often employed during debates. Listed below are several common elements of debate found in the OCDL.

Making an Argument

Assertion, Reasoning, Evidence, Impact (AREI)

To win a debate, both sides need to present an array of assertions, or arguments. While argument construction can take many forms, one of the most common argument structures used by OCDL debaters is A-R-E-I. AREI is a formal way to form a complete argument and is comprised of four components:

The **assertion** is a claim, or a simple statement, in support of a given side in the topic:

- "Homework should be banned because there is often just too much of it."
- "Eating meat is wrong because we have alternative sources of nutrition."
- "Autonomous weapons do more good than harm because they save the military money with personnel costs."

An assertion itself is not a complete argument. It has no support, and so by itself it's a baseless claim.

The argument's **reasoning** is the connection between an assertion and the evidence. Reasoning is essential to making arguments:

- Homework should be banned because there is often just too much of it. (Reasoning) **Many students and parents report having spent too many hours every night with hours' worth of homework and studying for school.**
- Eating meat is wrong because we have alternative sources of nutrition. (Reasoning) **Plenty of foods fulfill all the nutritional requirements of meat without the need to kill an animal.**
- Autonomous weapons do more good than harm because they save the military money with personnel costs. (Reasoning) **Autonomous weapons do not require food, shelter, pay or benefits and can be shipped across continents at a fraction of the cost of transporting a live soldier.**

Adding reasoning to the assertion helps to make it a complete statement; however, the claim will still need hard examples or evidence to convince a judge.

Evidence and examples provide proof of the assertion and reasoning. Evidence can take many forms such as

university, corporate and/or government studies, polls, news story examples, and yes, even personal anecdotes (stories). But while personal anecdotes are acceptable in debate, some forms of evidence may be seen as less impactful to judges than others. This might be especially true for personal anecdotes.

Returning to the examples above, we offer the following examples and evidence for the claims:

- Homework should be banned because there is often just too much of it. Many students and parents report having spent too many hours every night with hours' worth of homework and studying for school. (Evidence) **A 2018 study by the Better Sleep Council said that 74% of teens are stressed out from the demands of homework, which can take up to 15 hours a week for most teens**.
- Eating meat is wrong because we have alternative sources of nutrition. Plenty of foods fulfill all the nutritional requirements of meat without the need to kill an animal. (Example) **One key nutritional element for meat is protein, but protein can be found abundantly in foods like nuts, beans, cheese and yogurt.**
- Autonomous weapons do more good than harm because they save the military money with personnel costs. Autonomous weapons do not require food, shelter, pay or benefits and can be shipped across continents at a fraction of the cost of transporting a live soldier. (Evidence) **In a 2013 article published in The Fiscal Times, David Francis uses Department of Defense numbers to show that each soldier in Afghanistan costs the United States $850,000 or more per year while the TALON robot, a small rover that can be outfitted with weapons costs only $230,000.**

As we can see above, evidence is a crucial component of any claim as it provides support for what has been stated.

Not everyone thinks the same way. We all come from different backgrounds, and we each have a different mindset; thus, the debate **impact** explains to a judge why a particular assertion and reasoning matter. Concluding our examples above, the following are good examples of impacts:

- Homework should be banned because there is often just too much of it. Many students and parents report having spent too many hours every night with hours' worth of homework and studying for school. A 2018 study by the Better Sleep Council said that 74% of teens are stressed out from the demands of homework, which can take up to 15 hours a week for most teens. (Impact) **Since sleep and stress are two common elements in one's health, we can assume that less homework would make for happier and healthier young people.**
- Eating meat is wrong because we have alternative sources of nutrition. Plenty of foods fulfill all the nutritional requirements of meat without the need to kill an animal. One key nutritional element for meat is protein, but protein can be found abundantly in foods like nuts, beans, cheese and yogurt. (Impact) **If alternatives for our dietary needs exist, and if these alternatives don't require an animal to die, we should be using these alternatives. Animals should not be killed needlessly.**
- Autonomous weapons do more good than harm because they save the military money with personnel costs. Autonomous weapons do not require food, shelter, pay or benefits and can be shipped across continents at a fraction of the cost of transporting a live soldier. In a 2013 article published in The Fiscal Times, David Francis uses Department of Defense numbers to show that each soldier in Afghanistan costs the United States $850,000 or more per year while the TALON robot, a small rover that can be outfitted with weapons, costs only $230,000. (Impact) **By using robots like the TALON, the US military could save a lot of money every year that could be used for more important things such as higher salaries for current members of the military.**

Impact represents the “so what?” factor in an argument. In explaining impact explicitly, a debater answers the necessary question: How does the reasoning and evidence in an argument make a difference?

Direct and Indirect Refutation

Good debates feature an abundance of “clash” between arguments and opposing sides. It is not enough for debaters to simply deliver impassioned speeches about their side of a motion; rather, debaters must also refute the arguments made by the other side and show why the balance of arguments means their side wins.

The speaker performance rubric makes reference to direct refutation and indirect refutation. Responding to an opponent’s arguments with one’s own counter-points is called “indirect refutation”. The speaker is not directly contradicting what their opponent is saying but rather is attempting to outweigh the opponent’s case with the strength of their own arguments. Disputing the argument analysis or fact claims of a speaker is called “direct refutation”. With this kind of refutation, the speaker is attacking some aspect of their opponents claim, and the refutation can take the form of any (not exclusively) the following:

- Evidence is absent/incorrect/misunderstood
- The impact is immaterial (insignificant)
- The assertion actually is supporting the opposite side in the debate
- The argument’s logic is faulty or nonsensical

While both types of refutation are acceptable to use in debate, higher level speakers will tend to employ both direct and indirect refutation throughout the debate.

Four Step Refutation

An effective refutation technique is called **four step refutation**. It’s common for OCDL coaches to train debaters to use the process as follows:

- “They say...” (Briefly repeat the argument of the other side)
- “We disagree.” (Simply put)
- “Because...” (Gives a reason for her disagreement or counterargument)
- “Therefore....” (Explains the consequence of the reason for disagreement)

In debate, refuting the claims of one’s opponent is required, as without clash there is no “debate”. While structured refutation enhances clarity, using the four-step technique is optional.

Argument Extensions: Making the Argument Stronger

The offense-driven twin of argument refutation is **argument extension**. Arguments are *extended* when subsequent speakers develop an argument raised in earlier speeches. Argument extension includes restating an argument, answering objections to the argument (rebutting) and developing the argument through new examples.

In good debates, arguments grow through the process of extension: debaters answer the objections from the other side and use those objections as springboards to elaborate and clarify their side’s position. Rebuttal speakers are also expected to extend the arguments made by their teammates; in fact, for an assertion to be considered valid by the judge, it must be raised in one of the first four constructive speeches *and* in the rebuttal section.

Weighing the Impacts

In any debate, two sides may both have convincing arguments that are not successfully refuted (and thus remain standing) at the end of the round. One strategy used (most often by third speakers) is weighing (or comparing the arguments) of the two sides: proposition and opposition. In order to weigh the arguments, the debater may use one of the following mechanisms:

- **Probability and risk:** How likely is it that a given instance will happen?
- **Magnitude**: What is the significance of the good/harm? How many things/people will be affected?
- **Timeframe**: Will the impacts happen now or at a future date?
- **Morality/Ethics**: Is it morally right or wrong?

Debaters will use these weighing mechanisms to compare arguments given from both sides of the topic to explain why their side wins.

Other Optional Strategies

Narrowing and Defining the Terms of the Resolution

The proposition team may reasonably interpret, shrink or clearly define the topic: this is called a **narrow**. Narrowing a topic also makes a resolution reasonably debatable within a thirty-minute time frame. Sometimes debates are narrowed to a specific aspect of a resolution even when neither side explicitly mentions anything about it. For example, a debate about the fast food industry may focus heavily on McDonald's® since this business is such a large entity in the industry even if neither side explicitly narrows the topic.

The concept of narrowing and defining may be illustrated in the resolution "Junk food should be banned in schools." In this resolution, "school" is very broad: there are many kinds of schools in the world: elementary school, high school, driving school, clown college, etc. The resolution could be referring to the banning of junk food at schools with children or adults. The proposition could narrow the topic to a specific age group or school (elementary, middle, high). If the proposition team *doesn't* narrow the topic, the opposition team has the benefit of attacking the resolution in any manner they wish.

If applicable, it is customary for the first speaker of the proposition to narrow the topic. A second speaker may narrow the topic, but it will not be as effective as if the first speaker had narrowed the topic. The debater can make it clear that they are narrowing the topic by using words similar to the following:

- We narrow the topic to…
- We further define/focus the topic as…

Similar to narrowing the topic, a debate team may want to define unclear terms. For example, what constitutes "junk food"? Is it high sugar/fat items? Is it empty-calorie foods? What about diet GMO processed foods? In another example, if the topic is "LA is a much better place to live than NY", a proposition could define "LA" as Los Angeles, Los Alamitos, or even the state of Louisiana!

Challenging a Definition/Narrow

The opposition is entitled to challenge a narrow or definition that they consider unfair. An opposition team may feel that an opponent defined the terms in a strange way or that the narrow is “too narrow” to allow for a fair debate. In this case, they can challenge the narrow by arguing *why the narrow is unfair*.

The judge assumes a passive role: they cannot deem the narrow unfair unless the opposition team provides clear reasoning as to *why* it is unfair (or too narrow, etc.); in other words, it’s the debaters’ responsibility to challenge the narrow.

Framework - What Should be Prioritized in the Decision

Debaters may reference something called a **framework** to influence the judge’s decision. A framework sets up what should be the most important factor in making their decision. The idea may be best illustrated in a restaurant example:

When choosing a restaurant, what factors do you consider?

- The food?
- The service?
- The ambiance?
- The prices?
- A combination of all of them?

We all have internal frameworks: we may like to go to “Seaside Restaurant” because it has a breathtaking view of the ocean and super comfortable table booths, but we may not like to eat there because the food is mediocre and the waitstaff is downright rude! In making a decision to eat there, one prioritizes a single aspect of the decision (the ambiance) over others (food and service). Debates can have a similar prioritization of decision-making. A framework in a debate tells the judge which features of a decision should be prioritized. In this sense, the framework is similar to a pre-weigh of the major issues in the debate. Either side, proposition or opposition, can set up a framework for the debate. They simply need to explain to the judge what issue (or issues) they feel is most important and why.

Plans

Modified parliamentary style debate allows for plans, and they are used for policy topics. Plans for value and fact topics usually don't make sense. Proposition teams would include a plan to proactively protect against a strong opposition argument or arguments. For example, if the topic is "A bridge should be built" proposition could include a plan for a bridge toll or a plan for a bond measure. These plans reduce the impact of an opposition argument about cost. Note that the proposition team is not obligated to include any additional plans, beyond the topic itself. Like any argument, opposition can respond to the plan with questions, POIs, heckles, refutations, and even arguments that show the negative impacts of the plan.

Proposition teams that choose to create a plan may want to keep the following in mind:

- Who will it affect?
- When will it happen?
- Where will it take place?
- How will it be carried out?
- Who will control, execute, or regulate?

The opposition is allowed to offer a counterplan, or plan of their own, regardless of whether the proposition proposes their own plan or not. Like an argument, a plan or counterplan should be introduced by the constructive speakers.

General Rules of OCDL Tournaments

The OCDL is an "education first, competition second" organization; the league exists to educate students, not simply to provide a forum for competition. As such, there is no place at debate events for anger, shame, bullying, unprofessional favoritism, or gossip. All attendees will be reminded at the beginning of each event that it is appropriate to communicate respectfully and professionally with other parties. In order to provide for a good tournament experience, all participants, coaches and audience members (family/friends) must adhere to the following rules. In the event that a particular host school's rules directly conflict with those listed here, the OCDL rules will supersede that of the individual school.

- Students and coaches must arrive at the tournament site before the conclusion of the registration period (8:00 AM), and they are not allowed to leave until the last round of debate has concluded.
- No filming/photography/audio recording of debates is permitted, except by the official photographer contracted by the OCDL Board of Directors.
- Neither debaters nor parents may enter the debate chambers (host school classrooms) without BOTH a judge and another student present.
- Debate students, parents, and judges must respect the property held within each classroom and school. Tampering with or taking the personal belongings of students and teachers found in/on desks and in/around lockers is not permitted.
- No one may enter or exit a debate chamber in the middle of a given debater's speech. If a debater or an audience member must leave the debate chamber for any reason, he/she must do so in between given speeches.
- Only water is permitted in debate chambers - no food or other beverages.
- Students may consult with coaches, friends, and parents during the twenty-minute prep round prior to the debate, but the debate audience must not participate in the debate event with the exception of knocking on the desk for a good argument (positive heckling).
- Once the debate has started, students may only have access to the colored paper of the round and a blank flow chart. Students using unauthorized paper resources during the debate round will have their team disqualified for the given round.
- In the event that a given team does not show up on time for a given debate, that team may be disqualified.
- No one is to address the judge except to show appreciation and to ask questions for the purpose of learning and improving. Statements that question the judge's decision or put him/her on the spot are not permitted.

Alternative Team Arrangements

Two-person Team Rules

At OCDL tournaments, three-person teams are expected and preferred. A two-person team is allowed when a school does not have enough students attending to fill another three-person team. Judges will give individual scores for each speech when judging a 2-person team, so there will be three separate scores, one for each role in the debate (first speaker, second speaker, and rebuttal speaker). The two separate scores will be averaged as part of the student's final score. A squad cannot submit more than two two-person teams.

Scramble Teams

If more than one coach has a student without teammates at a tournament, the league has the authority to create a scramble team, or a mixed team of students from up to three different squads. The scramble team competes independently of any of its members' schools. This team would be created only if the need arises, but it would allow any students whose partner(s) did not appear at the event the chance to still compete. This scramble team is eligible for team and speaker awards. The OCDL prefers not to employ this practice.

Alternates

At tournaments, OCDL requires students to make a commitment for the entire day. It is not possible to have a substitution or alternate student swap places with another student during a tournament: the same three people must debate together the entire day. In instances where a student becomes ill and can no longer compete, the two remaining students can continue debating as a two-person team.

The substitution rule only applies after the first round of the tournament has begun. A school may rearrange teams before the first round begins. After this point there may be no further alterations to teams.

Grievance Process

In the event that students or audience members have a complaint or concern about a judge or another team/school, or a rules violation, the party making the complaint should relay this information to their coach. If the coach feels the complaint is valid, he/she may then petition a tournament official.

Conclusion

This guide is open to change on an annual basis based upon suggestions of coaches, debaters, administrators and spectators. Please refer to the OCDL Rules document for official rules and regulations. Whatever situations and terms not defined in the rules and guidelines will be decided upon by the league administration and board of directors in the best interest of the students and the organization.