



The Collegiate Society of America

- CSAmerica Debate Style Guide -

The CSAmerica debate style uses parliamentary format and adheres (in part) to the latest edition of Robert's Rules of Order. This brief overview of the CSAmerica debate style is intended to get you ready to participate in your first CSAmerica style debate.

Roles

1. Moderator: *a neutral individual who manages the procedural aspects of the debate or dialogue session*
2. Pro Main Speaker: *the individual speaking in support of the resolution; gives opening and closing speeches*
3. Con Main Speaker: *the individual speaking in opposition of the resolution; gives opening and closing speeches*
4. Subsequent Speakers: *speakers from the floor of the debate who speak on behalf of either the pro or con; subsequent speakers alternate between pro and con*

Beginning the Debate

1. The moderator calls the debate to order and reads the resolution.
2. The moderator then introduces each of the main speakers, identifying them as either affirmative or negative.
3. The moderator appoints a time keeper who will notify each speaker of how much time they remaining by holding up as many fingers up as minutes the speaker has left. The timekeeper will also indicate when the speaker has 30 seconds left and countdown the last ten seconds of a speaker's time using their fingers.

Debate Follows the Following Format

Main Speakers

1. The moderator recognizes the main affirmative speaker for a six minute opening speech.
2. Following the affirmative speech, the moderator asks the time keeper how much time the speaker has remaining. If the remainder is greater than 30 seconds, the speaker has three options:
 - a. Yield to questions (the moderator will call on the questioners from the audience; time is deducted for the questions and the answers).
 - b. Yield to another speaker on the same side of the issue.
 - c. Yield the remainder of his or her time to the chair.

When the speaker's time has elapsed, the moderator asks if there are any motions on the floor. A common motion at this point is a motion to extend the speakers time by a certain amount of time. This motion must be seconded and then the moderator asks all those in favor of the motion say aye, and then all those against the motion say nay. In the judgment of the moderator, two-thirds of the people must support the resolution in order for it to take effect.

After the affirmative speaker is finished, the moderator recognizes the main negative speaker for a six minute opening speech. The speaker has the same options at the end of his or her speech as the affirmative opening speaker and his or her time can be extended in a similar manner.

Subsequent Speakers

After the main negative speaker is finished, the moderator recognizes someone from the audience to give a three minute subsequent speech for the affirmative position. This speaker has the same options at the end of his or her speech and their time can be extended through an approved motion.

Then the moderator recognizes a subsequent speaker for the negative side. If there is no one who wants to make a speech on either side, motions can be made to let the group caucus, in order to try to find someone to give a speech, or a motion can be made to suspend the rules and let there be two speeches in a row for a given side.

Both of these motions must be seconded and approved by a two-third voice vote. The subsequent speeches will alternate between pro and con until someone motions to the previous question and that motion carries.



Closing Speeches

The moderator then recognizes the main negative speaker for a three minute closing speech. This speech cannot be extended and any extra time must be yielded back to the chair. Then the main affirmative speaker gets a three minute closing speech.

The moderator then asks all those in favor of the resolution to rise and asks them to count off, recording the final number. Then all those against the resolution are asked to rise, count off, with the moderator recording the number. Finally, all those who abstain from voting are asked to rise, count off, with the moderator recording the number.

The moderator announces by a vote of affirmatives-negatives-abstainers (i.e., 27-18-6) and states, based on the votes, if the resolution passes or fails. A resolution has to win 50% +1 vote of all the affirmative and negative votes added together to pass. The abstentions have no real impact on whether the resolution passes or fails.

Finally, the moderator passes out slips so the audience can select who they thought was the most outstanding orator. All main and subsequent speakers are asked to rise and say their name so that attendees know the name of who they want to vote for.

The outstanding orator can be announced later in the CSAmerica meeting, at a later meeting, or at an award ceremony later in the semester.



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