CONNECTICUT MIDDLE SCHOOL DEBATE LEAGUE

Handbook of Parliamentary Debate

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CTMSDL: A Few Questions Answered

What is the CTMSDL and who may participate in CTMSDL competitions?

The Connecticut Middle School Debate League (CTMSDL) hosts competitive interscholastic Parliamentary Debate tournaments for Middle School-aged students throughout Connecticut during the academic year. Participation is open to Middle School debate teams from all types of schools in Connecticut. Students in grades 5, 6, 7, and 8 may compete. The CTMSDL is an approved activity of the CT Student Activities Conference of the Connecticut Association of Schools. We are sponsored by the English Speaking Union, Greenwich Branch.

What is CTMSDL Parliamentary Debate?

The CTMSDL's format is similar to the Middle School Public Debate Program (MSPDP) format begun in 2002. Events are held on Saturdays at member schools. Teams are composed of three students. Teams debate three times at each tournament. Beginning in 2023, we'll have both prep-ahead debates and extemporaneous debates. High School debaters, coaches, teachers, and parents serve as judges.

Prep-ahead debates

Prep ahead motions (topics) are released weeks ahead of scrimmages and tournaments. Debaters prepare both Proposition (for the motion) and Opposition (against the motion) arguments ahead of competitions. Novices debate the prep-ahead motion three times at tournaments: once on PROP, once on OPP, and the third time determined by coin flip.

Extemporaneous debates

Beginning in 2023, Open level debaters will debate the prep ahead motion twice, once on PROP and once on OPP. Before Round 3, judges will be given 2 extemp motions. They will read them to the teams. The winner of a coin flip chooses whether they want to choose side or motion. The team that gets to choose the motion then does so. Then the team that gets to choose side does so. Teams have 15 minutes to prepare the case for their side. No research is allowed. Debaters must use only what's already in their heads. After the judge reads the motion, debaters may ask the judge to define any

terms they are not familiar with. The OPP team preps in the room and the PROP team preps outside the room. At every tournament except the October/ November tournament, all 3 rounds will count toward rankings and awards and qualifying for the Championship. The Final Round will be on the prep-ahead motion, between the top 2 Open level teams after all 3 rounds.

How can teams participate in CTMSDL competitions?

To participate in CTMSDL scrimmages and tournaments, Middle School debate teams should:

- Join the CTMSDL by paying dues. Schools may attend one event prior to joining. Email inquiry@ctmsdl.org for more information.
- Secure the commitment of a responsible adult who will coach students, register them for tournaments online, accompany them and supervise them at CTMSDL events.
- Provide volunteers to judge at competitions.

What if I only have 1 or 2 debaters, not 3?

Let us know ahead of the scrimmage or tournament and we'll try to pair them with students from other teams. If we can't find partners, we'll allow 2 person teams to compete. The debater who speaks twice must deliver the 1st and 3rd speeches.

For More information
More information may be obtained by emailing inquiry@ctmsdl.org

CTMSDL Scrimmages & Tournaments

The CTMSDL holds four events per season. The October/ November event is a scrimmage for Novices and a tournament for Open Level. Tournaments for Novices and Open Level are held in December and February. A Championship Tournament is held in April.

Scrimmage & Tournament Oversight: CTMSDL scrimmages and tournaments are planned and run by CTMSDL Board members. Questions, comments, problems and concerns should be directed to them by emailing inquiry@ctmsdl.org

Novice & Open Divisions: CTMSDL events have two divisions: Novice & Open. The Novice division is for brand new debaters. Coaches will have discretion regarding which category to place debaters in. Debaters must compete in the same division as Speakers and as Team members. Coaches are encouraged to move Novices to the Open Division after they've been to 2 events. Novice teams that go 3-0 (3 wins, no losses) at any tournament should move to the Open Division. We won't publish ranks for the Novice Division. The only awards for novices will be gavel pins for teams that go 3-0.

There are three rounds at Tournaments. The first is randomly matched; the second and third are power-matched (2-0 teams compete against 2-0 teams, 1-1 teams compete against 1-1 teams, and 0-2 teams compete against 0-2 teams). There is a fourth public round between the top two Open teams. Trophies are awarded to the top 5 Open division teams and the top 5 Open division speakers. Open debaters who win all 3 rounds but not trophies receive gavel pins.

Novice Scrimmage Structure: The CTMSDL's first event of the year is a scrimmage for Novice debaters. No awards are given. The purpose is to introduce new students to competitive debate. The day includes a demonstration debate, a skills-building workshop, and two rounds of debate on a previously released motion.

October/ November Tournament Structure for Open Level Debaters:
In 2023 Open teams will debate once on PROP and once on OPP. Round 3 will be extemp as described above. Awards and qualifying for the Championship will be based only on Rounds 1 & 2. Round 3 will be a scrimmage. There will be no Final Round between the top scoring teams.

Qualifying for the Championship Tournament
The Championship Tournament will have one Open division. Debaters qualify by being part of an Open division team that went 3-0 at one or more tournaments OR by placing 1st through 10th as an Open division Speaker or team member at one or more tournaments. Debaters qualify as individuals, not as teams, so coaches may reorganize teams and add debaters if necessary to make teams of 3. Only 3 person teams may compete at the Championship Tournament.

Invitations: CTMSDL members are invited to all CTMSDL events by email. Invitations are also posted on our website: ctmsdebate.org.

Registration: Member teams register through Tabroom.com. Coaches receive the motion and invitations to events well in advance of events by email and website posting.

Providing Volunteers: CTMSDL teams provide judges whom CTMSDL coaches should train before events. Volunteer judges receive additional training at CTMSDL events.

Supervision: Students must be accompanied at CTMSDL events by adults who agree to be responsible for supervising them and who possess their emergency contact information. Those adults must also abide by their schools' policies regarding permission slips, up to date health forms, medications such as epi-pens, etc.

Observing CTMSDL Policies: All scrimmage and tournament attendees are responsible for knowing and observing CTMSDL policies. Each team's coach is responsible for ensuring that their attendees are aware of and abide by these policies (see Important CTMSDL Policies in this Handbook).

CTMSDL Parliamentary Debate Format

Speeches: Each speaker presents one speech per round. Each team is allotted two minutes of preparation time during a round, as designated in the chart below.

Order of Speeches in Each Round

Speech	Duration
1st Proposition Constructive	5 min
Prep time	1 min
1st Opposition Constructive	5 min
Prep time	1 min
2nd Proposition Constructive	5 min
Prep time	1 min
2nd Opposition Constructive	5 min
Opposition Rebuttal	5 min
Prep time	1 min
Proposition Rebuttal	5 min
TOTAL	34 min

Grace Periods: Every speech has a 15 second grace period. Judges stop flowing and cut debaters off when the grace period ends.

Monitoring Time: Time-keepers (if available) and judges are responsible for timing speeches and prep time. Debaters are also encouraged to time their own speeches.

Prep Time: Prep time is built into the structure of the round; teams do not request prep time. Prep time in addition to what is specified above may not be taken. (Notice that 2 minutes are given before Opp speeches and 2 minutes are given before Prop speeches.)

Judges: Debaters refer to judges as Judge or Speaker. Judges listen to all speeches, take notes on paper other than the ballot (flow), choose winning and losing teams, assign points and rank in room to all debaters, and provide short verbal critiques and written critiques on ballots. Judges do not disclose the winner or speaker points in the room – they do so on the ballot only.

Constructive Speeches: Lines of reasoning are presented during the first four speeches of the round, called the Constructive phase of the debate. The first Proposition speaker defines terms in the Motion. If the Proposition team proposes a plan (details on how they would implement the motion), they must do so in the first Proposition speech. If the Opposition team proposes a counter-plan, they must do so in the first Opposition speech.

POCs: Time is paused while Points of Clarification are asked and answered. If the Opposition team requires clarification of the definitions offered by the first Proposition speaker, an OPP debater should rise after definitions are presented and say "Point of Clarification." The first PROP speaker should then answer all of OPP's questions about the definitions. This type of POC saves the round from becoming a long argument about what PROP's definitions were or what they meant.

It is not appropriate to ask a POC if you don't understand the points your opponent is trying to make or if you think the speaker is speaking too quickly. POCs are not to be used to argue about definitions; that should be done by the first OPP speaker.

POIs: During constructive speeches, speakers should be interrupted by questions and/or remarks made by their opponents in order to weaken the speaker's case, called Points of Information (POIs). A debater making a POI must stand. POIs are permitted during the middle three minutes of constructive speeches — the first and last minute and grace period are protected time. Speakers may accept the POI, dismiss it (with a hand gesture or a "not now") or postpone it ("later"). Speakers must respond to accepted POIs. The best speakers weave responses to POIs into the flow of their speeches. It is considered poor form for the speaker to accept no POIs and for opponents to offer no POIs. Time is not paused for POIs.

POOs: The CTMSDL allows one type of Point of Order. If a debater believes the opposing team's Rebuttal speaker is making a new point, she or he may stand and say "Point of Order." (As explained below in the Rebuttal Speeches section, new points are only allowed in the PROP Rebuttal speech

if they are in response to new points introduced by the 2nd OPP speaker.) The judge will stop the clock. The judge may ask the debater who called the POO to explain why he or she believes it is a new point. The judge should then ask the speaker to explain why it is not a new point. The judge will then say:
"point well taken" if the judge agrees that the Rebuttal speaker introduced a new line of reasoning.
"point not well taken" if the judge disagrees and believes that it was not a new line of reasoning; or
"point taken under consideration" if the judge needs to review her or his flow to determine if it was a new point or not.

Heckling and POPPs: Heckling and Points of Personal Privilege (POPPs) are not used in the CTMSDL.

Rebuttal Speeches: The first four speeches of a round are called the Constructive Phase of the debate because teams are constructing their cases for and against the motion using arguments and clash (refutations). The last two speeches are called the Rebuttal Phase. This is a bit of a misnomer because teams must rebut each other's arguments in the Constructive Phase. Rebuttal speeches are for explaining to the judge why your team's case wins the round for you. Rebuttal speakers do this by summarizing the clash, crystallizing the most important points in the round, and weighing the arguments. An excellent Rebuttal speech essentially writes the ballot for the judge. The OPP rebuttal speaker goes first, after the 2nd OPP Constructive speaker (called the OPP block). No new lines of argument may be presented during rebuttal speeches unless they are made by the PROP Rebuttal speaker to refute new arguments presented in the 2nd Opp Constructive. (The 2nd OPP speaker should refute arguments introduced by 2nd PROP.) Rebuttal speakers may support arguments and lines of reasoning presented during the Constructive phase with new examples and illustrations as long as the underlying argument is not new.

Pre-written speeches: Debaters are expected to speak from notes and not to read from pre-written speeches. Coaches should instruct their students to speak instead of read. We understand that Middle School students may

take time to develop confidence so while reading is strongly discouraged, it is not banned. Debaters should understand they will not receive as high of a score if they read.

Speaker Burdens: Checklist of what each speaker should accomplish in speech. All offer POIs.

Speech	Duration	Burdens
1st Proposition Constructive	5 minutes	1. Provides clear definitions of the terms of the motion. 2. May lay out a plan. 3. Provides 2 or more clear arguments, each with a topic sentence, reasoning, evidence & impacts. 4. Speaks instead of reads 5. Answers 1-3 POIs if offered.
1st Opposition Constructive	5 minutes	1. Clearly states Opp's case. 2. May lay out a counter-plan. 3. Provides 2 or more clear arguments, each with a topic sentence, reasoning, evidence & impacts. 4. Explicitly refutes all Prop arguments, including restatement of the Prop argument with a directly related refutation of it. 5. Speaks instead of reads. 6. Answers 1-3 POIs if offered.
2nd Proposition Constructive	5 minutes	1. May introduce new Prop arguments. 2. Rebuilds and extends 1st Prop's arguments with new analysis & examples. 3. Refutes Opp's refutations. 4. Explicitly refutes all Opp arguments. 5. Speaks instead of reads. 6. Answers 1-3 POIs if offered.
2nd Opposition Constructive	5 minutes	1. May introduce new Opp arguments. 2. Rebuilds and extends 1st Opp's arguments with new analysis & examples. 3. Refutes Prop's refutations. 4. Explicitly refutes all Prop arguments. 5. Speaks instead of reads. 6. Answers 1-3 POIs if offered.
Opposition Rebuttal	5 minutes	1. Highlights most important points of the round & explains why each of these are more effectively dealt with on the Opp side. 2. Analyzes why OPP's impacts are more important/meaningful. 3. Crystallizes the whole round down to a central value(s) or key issue(s) and demonstrates why the Opposition wins.

Proposition Rebuttal	5 minutes	1. Responds to any new Opp points introduced in 2nd Opp constructive. 2. Highlights most important points of the round & explains why each of these are more effectively dealt with on the Prop side. 3. Analyzes why PROP's impacts are more important/meaningful. 4. Crystallizes the whole round down to a central value(s) or key issue(s) and demonstrates why the Proposition wins.
Total		Speeches: 30 minutes, Prep time: 4 minutes. Total: 34 minutes

Fundamental Principles of Parliamentary Debate

Arguments and Refutations: Debaters' cases should be supported with sound reasoning. Each team has the obligation to clash with the arguments presented by their opponents (i.e. they should respond to opponents' arguments specifically and in detail). Good debaters listen to their opponents and respond directly to their contentions, reasoning, evidence and examples. Teams are encouraged to point out when opponents have dropped arguments (offered no refutation) and judges should count dropped arguments against teams that drop them.

Contentions: Arguments should be clear and concise. Good contentions always answer the question "why" for the Proposition and "why not" for the Opposition in response to the motion. There is no correct number of contentions to offer but one is probably too few to support a case and five is probably too many to defend adequately.

Organization: Arguments should be presented in an orderly, logical way that's easy to follow. Speeches should be "signposted" (for example, "my 2nd contention is…" or "in response to Opp's 3rd contention…" or "in response to Prop's refutation of our example concerning…").

Presentation: Debaters should address judges and audience members, not their opponents. They should make eye contact with judges and speak with conviction. Good debaters use all of their time effectively. The very best debaters use a wide range of vocabulary, wit and tone and volume to emphasize points. Debaters should not read pre-written speeches. Team members may confer with each other but they should do so quietly so they

don't disrupt the speaker. Team members may not speak to their team's speaker while that speaker is at the podium.

Asking POIs: Teams should offer several POIs during both of their opponent's constructive speeches. POIs can be used to:

- ask for clarification of arguments or evidence or examples;
- point out a contradiction in an opponent's case;
- respond to an argument;
- point out a factual error or misstatement;
- preview an upcoming argument;
- inject some humor into the round.

Answering POIs: Each constructive speaker should accept 1-3 POIs if they are offered. Obviously, speakers should not be penalized for not accepting POIs if their opponents don't offer them. Speakers should not interrupt the flow of their speeches to accept POIs; instead, they should wait until finishing their idea before accepting. It is ok to wave a POI down or tell an opponent you'll accept the POI later. Good debaters are not derailed by POIs, rather they turn them to their advantage.

Civility: Debaters should be polite and respectful. They should be emphatic but never rude.

Fundamental Principles of Judging Parliamentary Debate

Before the Round: Have a ballot, flowchart and either a person to time for you or a time keeping device. Fill out the information on the ballot.

During the Round: Flow! Coaches and debaters can teach you how to keep track of arguments before you judge for the first time. Judges are responsible for timekeeping if no timer is assigned to the round. Use silent hand signals warning students that their time is running short. Use a clap or knock to announce when the grace period has ended, and announce when prep time begins and ends.

After the Round: You may offer the debaters verbal feedback either as a group or to each individual. Then ask debaters to leave the room and fill

out the ballot in privacy. Results are confidential and are not to be disclosed until after trophies are awarded. Decide which team won based on Judging Instructions. Then, following the directions on the ballot and score rubric chart, rank speakers from 1st to 6th and assign speaker points. Debaters may tie on speaker points but not rank. The losing team may have more points than the winning team (a low point win). We ask judges to explain low point wins to Tab. Take your ballot to the tabroom immediately after filling it out, before the next round.

Questions, concerns: Talk to any CTMSDL Board member. After a tournament, email inquiry@ctmsdebate.org with questions, comments, suggestions, etc.

Civility: Judges, as well as debaters, should always be polite and respectful. Judges may caution any debater who the judge believes is not behaving properly. Judges should note that debates are competitive and exciting. Judges shouldn't discourage enthusiasm and passion.

Tips for Effective Judging:

- Avoid bias. Don't allow your personal opinions on the motion being debated to enter into your decision. Base your decision only upon what you heard the debaters say.
- Debaters can't be expected to know what you know so don't hold them to that standard.
- Don't interrupt the debate except to stop time for POCs, & POOs. Use common sense to handle any interruptions that happen.
- Terms should be defined by the 1st Proposition speaker. 1st Prop has the right to present reasonable definitions. 1st Opp may define terms not defined by 1st Prop and may dispute what they think are unreasonable definitions and offer their own, reasonable ones.
- New arguments may be raised in any Constructive speech. New arguments may not be made in Rebuttal speeches unless the 2nd OPP speaker introduced a new argument: those should be refuted in the PROP Rebuttal speech. 2nd OPP should refute any new points introduced by 2nd PROP.
- During Rebuttal speeches, debaters should support existing

arguments with new illustrations and examples as long as the underlying reasoning is not new.

- A dropped argument is an argument that the opposing team ignores. Those arguments are won by the team that made them.
- Please write legibly so that debaters can read your comments.
- Debaters' attire is not to be commented upon or considered when judging a round.

CTMSDL: Judging Rubric for Individual Speakers – 2018

Score	Description - applies to:	Argumentation - all debaters	Refutation - all except 1st Prop	Rebuttal - 3rd Opp and 3rd Prop	Organization - all debaters	Presentation - all debaters	POIs - all debaters
29 29.5 30	**Superior**: Extraordinary, almost perfect; superior understanding of debate topic and techniques; **Must justify to Tab**	-Perfectly clear -Exciting and original analysis -Claims, warrants and impacts are always present and strong and connect clearly to the motion.	-Rebuilds and extends with new analysis and examples -All points soundly and irreparably smashed	- Crystallizes to central value(s) /key issue(s) -Weighs impacts -Demonstrates why side wins -Wins new points (3rd Prop) -Not one bit repetitive -Essentially writes judge's ballot	-Structure laid out clearly at beginning -Follows structure exactly -Doesn't seem hurried	-Fluent -Wide range of vocabulary and idiom -Wit, tone, volume used well to emphasize points - Great use of eye contact & body language	Offered AND answered (if possible) with precision and wit.
27 27.5 28 28.5	**Strong to accomplished:** Consistently strong; fulfills all or almost every single speaker's burden	-Solid -Claim, reasoning, evidence, and impacts are present, strong & clearly connect to motion	-All points clearly addressed and most are won	- Mostly successful crystallizing central value(s)/ key issue(s) - Mostly successful analyzing and weighting impacts -Talks about why side wins -Responds to new points (3rd Prop) - Not repetitive	-Structure is clear and easy to follow -Uses time well	-Clear and fluent -Above average vocabulary -Good use of eye contact & body language	Offered AND answered (if possible) at least 1 effectively.
25 25.5 26 26.5	**Solid, average to above average**: Fulfills most of speaker's burdens	-Contains most elements-- claim, reasoning, evidence, impact	-Most points refuted -Some points may be unclear or inadequately addressed	- Attempts to boil debate down to key issue(s)/value(s) - Attempts to analyze and weigh impacts - Might not respond to new points (3rd Prop) - Might be mostly line-by-line refutation	-Somewhat organized -Some parts may be unclear -Time generally used well	-Clear -Middle school vocabulary - Presentation is serviceable	Offered OR answered (if possible) at least 1. They could have been more effective.
23 23.5 24 24.5	**Developing**: Some or most of speaker's burdens are unmet; may miss important issues, weak case or little clash	-Weak -Lacks definitions, reasoning, evidence, impacts or explicit connection to motion	-Points are dropped -Refuting arguments are weak or unclear	-May miss key points -Missing crystallization of central value(s) / key issue(s) - Impact analysis is missing, unclear or weak - May deal almost entirely with one side - May be repetitive - Mostly line-by-line refutation	-Generally disorganized - Signposting may be missing - Time is over or under used	-Speech may be hard to understand -Vocabulary may be limited -General lack of effective presentation - May read instead of speak	May have failed to ask or answer POIs. If they were offered or answered, they weren't effective.

22 22.5	**Unacceptable**: For foul language or bad behavior only; **Must justify to Tab**						

Important CTMSDL Policies

Motions: The CTMSDL Board is responsible for choosing motions for scrimmages and tournaments. They may solicit ideas from debaters and coaches at scrimmages and tournaments but they are not obligated to choose from among those. The Board will do its best to release motions four weeks prior to a scrimmage or tournament.

Judges: The CTMSDL Board will do its best to recruit Varsity CDA debaters to judge. Next, if necessary, CTMSDL coaches will be asked to judge. When there aren't enough student or coach judges, coaches will be asked to bring additional adults to judge. Coaches are expected to provide their judges (including High School debaters) with this Handbook and Judging Instructions well before events. The CTMSDL will hold judges' training workshops at tournaments before competition begins.

Supervision of Students: To attend any scrimmage or tournament, students must be accompanied by an adult who possesses their emergency contact information and agrees to be responsible for supervising all students in their charge. Those adults must follow their teams' and schools' rules regarding supervision and acquisition of permission slips and emergency contact information.

Policy Regarding Observers: We want to encourage debaters to become comfortable speaking in public. We welcome observers to watch CTMSDL rounds.

Policy Regarding Ethics in Argumentation and Evidence: Debaters are expected to be truthful and honest with respect to the arguments they make and the evidence and examples they cite. Debaters should not lie or fabricate evidence or examples or use evidence or examples that they know to be untrue. Judges should not penalize students for misspeaking or for honest mistakes. However, blatant or flagrant dishonesty should be penalized in judging a round. The CTMSDL Board may expel students who repeatedly violate these standards. Any further disciplinary actions are at the discretion of the CTMSDL Board.

Policy Regarding Rudeness: Debaters, judges and coaches are expected to be polite and respectful to each other. Shouting, bullying, harassment, threats, violence, name-calling, insults, unbecoming language or any similar behavior is never appropriate at any time during debates. Debaters may be emphatic but not rude. A Judge may caution debaters, who, in the opinion of the Judge, overstep the bounds of acceptable behavior. The appropriate penalty for rude behavior is a reduction in speaker points and a corresponding reduction in ranks on the ballot, or, in extreme cases, directed loss. A Judge may, in the face of flagrant misbehavior, end the debate and declare a directed loss against the offending team. Incidents of rudeness should be reported to the CTMSDL President. Any further disciplinary actions are at the discretion of the CTMSDL Board.

Policy Regarding Student Attire: There is no CTMSDL dress code. For all CTMSDL events, students are expected to uphold their team's and or their school's dress code standards. Judges should not speak to students about students' attire and students' attire is not to be considered in judging the rounds.

Policy Regarding Electronic Devices: The use of electronic devices for research by debaters and coaches is prohibited during CTMSDL Rounds. It is allowed before and after rounds. This includes, but is not limited to, computers and phones and any other electronic device that could be used for the collection, preparation and/or storage of data. Students may use phones and other time-keeping devices to time their speeches. Students with accommodations for handwriting difficulty may use computers to flow.

Policy Regarding Hardcopy Resources: Students may bring hard copies of notes, speeches and sources with them into debate rounds.