Lesson 1 Welcome to Parliamentary Debate

What is parliamentary debate

Parliamentary debate, often called **Parli**, is a fast-paced team debate format where students work with a partner to argue either **for** or **against** a motion. Unlike some other debate formats, there is usually **limited preparation time**, so students learn to think clearly, organize ideas quickly, and respond in real time.

In a typical round, one team supports the motion and the other team opposes it. The goal is not to know everything about a topic. The goal is to build the clearest, smartest, and most persuasive case you can in the time you have.

Parli helps students practice:

- public speaking
- critical thinking
- teamwork
- listening
- quick analysis
- confidence under pressure

How does a round work

A parliamentary debate round usually includes:

- **2 teams of 2 students**
- one side supporting the motion
- one side opposing the motion
- a series of speeches from both teams
- a judge who decides which side debated more effectively

The two sides are commonly called:

- **Government / Proposition**: supports the motion
- **Opposition**: argues against the motion

Each speaker has a different role, but everyone is trying to do three things:

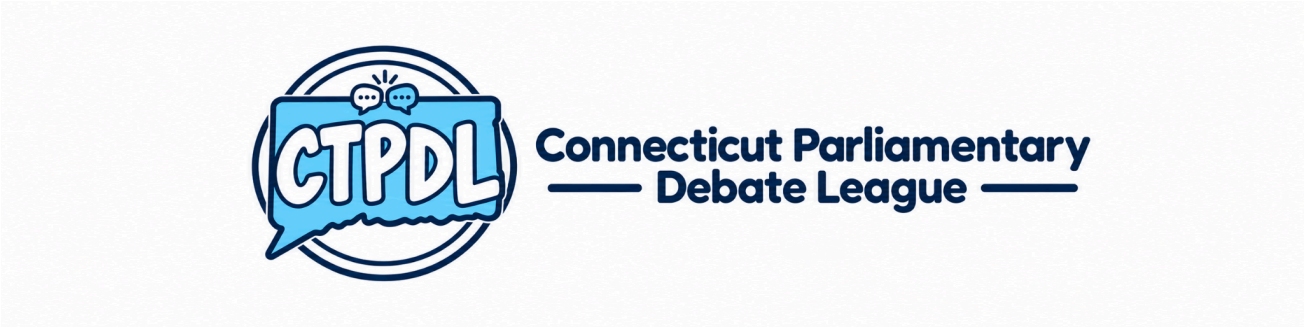
1. make arguments
2. answer the other side's arguments
3. explain why their side should win

What is a motion

A **motion** is the topic for the round. It tells both teams what they are debating.

Examples:

- *This House would ban single-use plastics.*
- *This House believes that social media does more harm than good.*



- *This House would make Election Day a national holiday.*

Some motions are about policy. Some are about values. Some ask debaters to compare ideas, systems, or choices.

What makes a good debater

Good debaters do **not** need to sound perfect or know everything. Strong beginners usually do these things well:

- stay organized
- explain their ideas clearly
- listen carefully
- respond directly
- stay calm under pressure
- work well with a partner

Quick example

Motion: **This House would require school uniforms.**

A Government team might argue:

- uniforms reduce pressure to wear expensive clothes
- uniforms improve school focus
- uniforms can create a stronger sense of community

An Opposition team might argue:

- uniforms limit self-expression
- uniforms do not solve deeper school issues
- families may still face extra costs buying required clothing

Notice that both sides can make reasonable arguments. Debate is about **comparing which side gives the stronger case**.

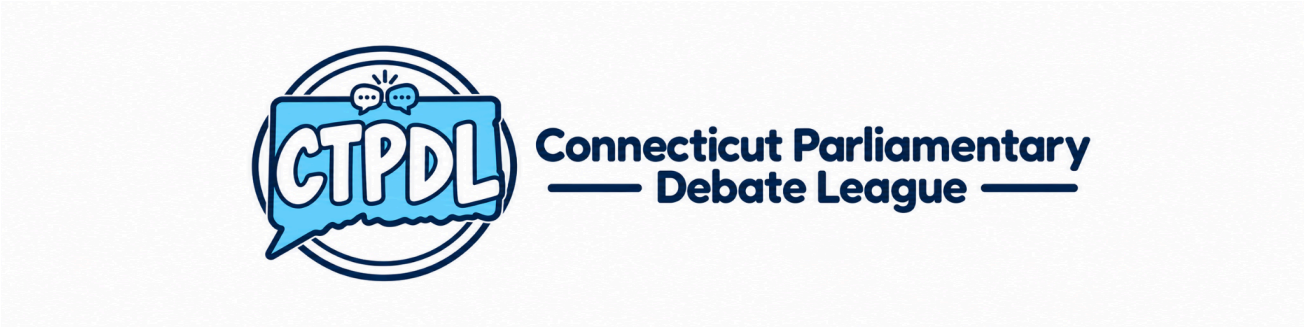
Try it yourself

Pick one of the motions below and spend **2 minutes** thinking about arguments for both sides.

- This House would ban homework on weekends.
- This House believes students should not use phones during class.
- This House would make school lunch free for all students.

Ask yourself:

- What would the Government side say?
- What would the Opposition side say?



Key takeaway

Parliamentary debate is a team activity where students argue both sides of interesting issues using logic, structure, and quick thinking. You do not need to be an expert to begin — you just need to be willing to think, speak, and improve.

Coming next

In Lesson 2, you'll learn how to build a strong argument.