Connecticut Middle School Debate Association

Handbook of Parliamentary Debate

September 2015
Updated May 2016
Updated July 2017

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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) is an organization that 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. Motions to be debated are released weeks ahead of scrimmages and tournaments. Debaters prepare both Proposition (for the motion) and Opposition (against the motion) cases ahead of competitions. Each team is composed of three students. On competition days, teams debate three times; once on Prop, once on Opp, and the third time determined by a coin flip. High School debaters serve as judges whenever possible.

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 time and judge at competitions, if necessary.

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 one scrimmage (October) and three tournaments (December, January and April) each school year.

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

Scrimmage Structure: The CTMSDL's first event of the year, usually in October, is a scrimmage. No awards are given. The purpose is mainly to introduce new debaters to the activity although those who aren't brand new are welcome to scrimmage too. We suggest that those who have won awards at previous tournaments to sit this one out and maybe coach their newer debaters. The day includes a demonstration debate, a skills-building workshop, and two rounds of debate on a previously released motion.

Tournament Structure: CTMSDL Tournaments have one Open Division (no novice and varsity divisions). There are three competitive rounds. The first two are randomly matched; the third is 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 championship round between the top two teams. At the end of the day, trophies are awarded to the top 5 teams and the top 5 speakers. Debaters who win all 3 rounds receive gavel pins. Coaches receive copies of judges' ballots.

Invitations: CTMSDL members are invited to all CTMSDL events by email. Invitations are also posted on our website: ctmsdebate.org. Prospective teams should contact the CTMSDL at (inquiry@ctmsdl.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 may be asked to provide judges and timers whom CTMSDL coaches should train before events. Volunteer judges and timers will receive additional training at CTMSDL events.

Supervision: To attend any CTMSDL event, students must be accompanied by adults who agree to be responsible for supervising them and who possess their emergency contact information. Those adults must also abide by their teams' and schools' supervision policies.

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

Description of Tournament Debate Rounds: For the first two rounds, teams of three debaters are assigned Proposition side (Prop, in support of the motion) or Opposition side (Opp, against the motion). Teams assigned Prop in the first round are assigned Opp in the second round and vice versa. The judge flips a coin to determine side in the third round. The two highest ranked teams compete in a fourth, public round.

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	4 min
Prep time	1 min
Proposition Rebuttal	4 min
TOTAL	32 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. No more prep time than what is specified above may 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 "Speakers" (as in Speaker of the House). Judges listen to all speeches, take notes, choose winning and losing teams, assign points and rank in room to all debaters, and provide short verbal critiques and written critiques on ballots.

Constructive Speeches: Lines of reasoning are presented during the Constructive phase of the debate. The first Proposition speaker defines all of the terms in the Motion. If the Proposition team proposes a plan, 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: There are two types of Points of Clarification (POCs). Time is paused while POCs are being asked and answered.
1. 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" or "POC." 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.
2. If a speaker says something unintelligible or inaudible, at any point in a round, an opponent may rise and ask for clarification.

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.

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

Rebuttal Speeches: The order of speeches changes so that the Proposition team has the last word. No new lines of argument may be presented during rebuttal speeches unless they are in direct refutation to new arguments presented in the 2nd Opp Constructive. Speakers may support arguments and lines of reasoning already presented with new examples or 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. The CTMSDL expects coaches to instruct their students to speak instead of read. We understand that Middle School students may take time to develop the confidence to speak without reading; so while reading is strongly discouraged, it is not banned.

Speaker Burdens: The following table provides a checklist of what each speaker should accomplish in his or her speech (called burdens).

Speech	Burdens
1st Prop Constructive	1. Provides clear definitions of the terms of the Motion 2. May lay out an action plan 3. Provides 2-4 clear arguments, each with a topic sentence, an explanation with explicit link to the Motion, reasoning, evidence and impacts 4. Speaks instead of reads 5. Answers 1-3 POIs (if offered)
1st Opp Constructive	1. Clearly states Opp's case 2. May lay out a counter-plan 3. Provides 2-4 clear arguments, each with a topic sentence, an explanation with explicit link to the Motion, reasoning, evidence and impacts 4. Explicitly refutes all Prop arguments, including restatement of the Prop argument along with a directly related refutation of it 5. Speaks instead of reads 6. Answers 1-3 POIs (if offered)

2nd Prop Constructive	1. May introduce new Prop arguments 2. Rebuilds and extends 1st Prop's arguments with new analysis and 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 Opp Constructive	1. May introduce new Opp arguments 2. Rebuilds and extends 1st Opp's arguments with new analysis and examples 3. Refutes Prop's refutations 4. Explicitly refutes all Prop arguments 5. Speaks instead of reads 6. Answers 1-3 POIs (if offered)
Opp Rebuttal	1. Highlights most important points of the round and explains why each of these are more effectively dealt with on the Opp side 2. Crystallizes the whole round down to 1 or 2 central values or big ideas and demonstrates why Opp wins 3. Speaks instead of reads
Prop Rebuttal	1. Responds to any new Opp points introduced in the 2nd Opp constructive 2. Highlights most important points of the round and explains why each is more effectively dealt with on the Prop side 3. Crystallizes the whole round down to 1 or 2 central values or big ideas and demonstrates why Prop wins 4. Speaks instead of reads

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. Announce when the grace period has ended. Announce when prep time begins and ends. Note speech times on your flow.

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. 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. 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.
- 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 also dispute unreasonable definitions.
- New arguments may only be raised in the Constructive speeches.
- During Rebuttal speeches, a team may support existing arguments with new illustrations and examples as long as the underlying reasoning is not new.
- If new arguments were raised in the 2nd constructive speeches, they should be refuted in the Rebuttal speeches. Those wouldn't be considered new lines of argument.
- A dropped argument is an argument that the opposing team ignores. This weighs against the scoring of the team that dropped it.
- Please write legibly so that debaters can read your comments.
- Debater's attire is not to be considered when judging a round.

CTMSDL: Judging Rubric for Individual Speakers – 2017

Score	Description	Argumentation	Refutation	Rebuttal	Organization	Presentation	Points of Information	Overall Points
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 **P1 O1 P2 O2 O3 P3**	-Rebuilds and extends with new analysis and examples -All points soundly and irreparably smashed **O1 P2 O2 O3 P3**	- Crystallizes to central value(s) /key issue(s) -Weighs impacts -Demonstrates why side wins -Smashes new points -Not one bit repetitive -Essentially writes judge's ballot **O3 P3**	-Structure laid out clearly at beginning -Follows structure exactly -Uses all of time, but doesn't seem hurried **P1 O1 P2 O2 O3 P3**	-Fluent -Wide range of vocabulary and idiom -Wit, tone, volume used well to emphasize points - Great use of eye contact & body language **P1 O1 P2 O2 O3 P3**	Offered AND answered (if possible) with precision and wit. **P1 O1 P2 O2**	**P1** **O1** **P2** **O2** **O3** **P3**
27 27.5 28 28.5	**Above average:** Consistently strong; fulfills all or most of speaker's burdens	-Solid -Claim, explanation, reasoning, evidence, and impacts are present, strong & clearly connect to motion **P1 O1 P2 O2 O3 P3**	-All points clearly addressed but maybe not convincingly won **O1 P2 O2 O3 P3**	- Some success crystallizing central value(s)/ key issue(s) - Some success analyzing and weighting impacts -Talks about why side wins -Responds to new points - Not repetitive **O3 P3**	-Structure is clear -All or almost all of time is used **P1 O1 P2 O2 O3 P3**	-Clear and fluent -Above average vocabulary -Good use of eye contact & body language **P1 O1 P2 O2 O3 P3**	Offered AND answered (if possible)at least 1 effectively. **P1 O1 P2 O2**	
25 25.5 26 26.5	**Solid, average**: Fulfills most of speaker's burdens	-Contains most elements-- claim, explanation, reasoning, evidence, impact **P1 O1 P2 O2 O3 P3**	-Most points addressed -Some points may be unclear or inadequately addressed **O1 P2 O2 O3 P3**	- Attempts to boil debate down to key issue(s)/value(s) - Attempts to analyze and weigh impacts - Might not respond to new points - Might be a little repetitive **O3 P3**	-Some organization evident -Some parts may be unclear -Time generally used well **P1 O1 P2 O2 O3 P3**	-Clear -Middle school vocabulary - Presentation is servicable **P1 O1 P2 O2 O3 P3**	Offered OR answered (if possible) at least 1. They could have been more effective. **P1 O1 P2 O2**	
23 23.5 24 24.5	**Developing**: Some or most of speaker's burdens are unmet; may miss important issues, may be significantly under time	-Weak -Lacks definitions, explanations, reasoning, evidence, impacts or explicit connection to motion **P1 O1 P2 O2 O3 P3**	-Points are dropped -Refuting arguments are weak or unclear **O1 P2 O2 O3 P3**	-May miss key points -Missing impacts or 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 **O3 P3**	-Generally disorganized - Signposting may be missing - Time is over or under used **P1 O1 P2 O2 O3 P3**	-Speech may be hard to understand -Vocabulary may be limited -General lack of effective presentation - May read instead of speak **P1 O1 P2 O2 O3 P3**	May have failed to ask or answers POIs. If they were offered or answered, they weren't effective. **P1 O1 P2 O2**	
22.5 22	**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. The CTMSDL will hold a judges' training workshop at each tournament before competition begins.

Timers: Teams may be asked to bring one volunteer timer per every six debaters.

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: For all CTMSDL events, students are expected to uphold their team's and or their school's dress code standards. If a judge feels that a student's attire is inappropriate, he or she should bring it to the attention of the CTMSDL President who will talk to the student's coach. 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 poor handwriting may use computers to flow.

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