



*Air Cadet League of Canada*  
**Ontario Provincial Committee**

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## *Air Cadet League of Canada*



### **Debating Competition**

#### **1.1 Officials**

1.1.1 A Director appointed by the Air Cadet League conducting any debating tournaments shall prescribe the resolutions, schedules, composition of teams, speaking times, and Procedural Regulations for the tournament. Where any dispute arises regarding the interpretation of the rules or regulations, his or her decision on the matter shall be final. These General Rules shall govern all debates and the Procedural Regulations prescribed for the tournaments by the Director.

1.1.2 The Director may appoint a Chief Judge to preside over interpretation of any of all of the Debating Contest Rules.

1.1.3 A moderator shall preside over every debate, and wherever possible, shall not also judge or keep time. His or her role is to maintain order and enforce the rules: he or she should not take an active part in the debate unless this is necessary to protect the rights of a participant. Decisions of moderators are final and cannot be appealed; debaters shall accept such rulings without question and should always obey the proper orders of a moderator. The Director may appoint a Head Judge to assist the moderator.

1.1.4 A timekeeper shall be present at each debate: his or her function is to time all speeches, indicate to debaters during their addresses how much speaking time they have remaining, and allow extra time for interruptions. When a debater has exhausted his or her speaking and a 15-second period of grace (if applicable), the moderator shall require the debater to terminate his or her speech.

1.1.5 Debates should be judged by a minimum of two adjudicators (judges), none of which is known to be biased against any team. Judges should sit apart at several different locations in the debate room and should not confer before scoring the contest.

## 1.2 Structure

1.2.1 The topic of every debate (the “resolution”) shall be worded in the positive manner. Resolutions may range from propositions of policy (that is, ones proposing a course of action) to issues of fact, value, prediction, explanation or interpretation.

1.2.2 Place-setting and time-setting are not permitted. Place setting is the setting of a debate of general application in a particular place. Time setting is the setting of a debate of general application in a particular time, past or future. Unless otherwise specifies by the Director, the place shall be deemed to be where the debate is being held and the time shall be deemed to be the present.

1.2.3 Definition of the terms of the resolution must not produce a truism or a tautology or delete an absolute term. A resolution may be defined by paraphrase or interpreted with formal definitions. Defining the terms of a resolution is the prerogative and responsibility of the affirmative team: if it fails to do so expressly or by clear implication during its first speech, it must accept any reasonable definitions proposed by the negative team during its first address.

1.2.4 “Squirreling” is the tactic employed by a debater to define the terms of the resolution, topic or questions in an abstruse fashion inconsistent and disassociated with usual definitions. Squirreling is **not** permitted.

1.2.5 A team that considers the other team’s definitions unreasonable (i.e., in violation of 1.23. or 1.2.4 above) must challenge them in its speech immediately following the conclusion of the speech in which those definitions are introduced; otherwise it is deemed to accept the other team’s interpretation of the resolution. If the first or second speakers for both sides fail to define the terms, the foregoing rules apply to each succeeding pair of speakers. When definitions are disputed for the entire debate, judges will accept the interpretation of the resolution best supported by the reasoning and evidence. If there is no other clash between affirmative and negative cases, the debate must be decided solely on the issue of the interpretation of terms.

1.2.6 Every debate shall involve two opposing teams: an affirmative side that supports the resolution and a negative team that contests its validity or proposes an alternative solution to the problem involved. The moderator shall sit between the teams, with the affirmative side seated to his or her right as he or she faces them.

1.2.7 In every debate, each team shall have an equal amount of speaking time, and in every debate in which individual debaters are competing for

prizes or ranking, each student shall have an equal amount of speaking time.

1.2.8 Debating shall be continuous unless the schedule includes an intermission before official rebuttals begin. Moderators may pause briefly between speeches to give judges an opportunity to make notes and keep their scoring current.

1.2.9 Except for championship, or impromptu rounds, debaters shall argue both sides of a resolution an equal number of times in the same style of debate.

1.2.10 Debaters have a duty to clash and judges should severely penalize those who present only canned cases. While “rebuttal” is sometimes used to mean only attack on opposing arguments or evidence, in these rules “rebuttal” is used in a wider sense that includes “refutation”. Rebuttal is not restricted to the official rebuttal periods: debaters may attack their opponent’s arguments or evidence anytime during their speeches. During a final affirmative official rebuttal, however, no new constructive argument or evidence may be introduced.

1.2.11 There are several debating formats. For the purposes of these competitions, the Oxford style is used, where only the first affirmative debater delivers an official rebuttal and all other debaters must incorporate their rebuttal into their speeches. It is traditional in Parliamentary style to employ the Oxford format.

1.2.12 Only debaters and officials may speak during a contest. If able, debaters shall stand to deliver all speeches, points of order and points of personal privilege. The only exception is heckling, which is done seated.

### **1.3 Standards of proof and evidence**

1.3.1 It is impossible for there to be a tie in debating: the side bearing the onus of persuasion must discharge that burden or lose. Except when the negative introduces a Counter-Plan, the onus of persuasion lies upon the affirmative team. In the case of a Counter-Plan, the burden shifts: the negative assumes the onus of persuasion and so must discharge it or lose.

A Counter Plan may be proposed only if the affirmative has already introduced a Plan. A Counter-Plan must be proven to be an alternative solution to the problem addressed by the resolution, significantly different from the affirmative proposal, a significant change from the status quo, and demonstrably more desirable than the affirmative Plan.

1.3.2 Except in a mock trial involving a criminal charge (in which case the accused is innocent until proven guilty “beyond a reasonable doubt”), the

standard of proof required to discharge the onus of persuasion is “on the balance of probabilities” (that is, such a case as would convince a reasonable person that the resolution is more likely to be true than false). Except in the case of an absolute resolution, the team bearing the burden of proof must prove only that the resolution is true in the majority of the cases or as a general proposition.

1.3.3 While judges must consider all the contentions advanced by debaters, they may summarily dismiss unsubstantiated assertions or purely emotional appeals. Though all arguments introduced stand until proven wrong, it is up to the judges to decide how much weight they carry. If one team has posed a serious question relevant to the debate and the other side has neither satisfactorily answered the query nor justified its failure to do so, the point in issue may be considered to have been won by the side that asked the question.

1.3.4 Except for the reasonable role-playing purposes and imagination in impromptu debates, all assertions of fact by debaters must be accurate and debaters must be prepared to cite specific authority (publication, page, author, date, etc.) They must provide the evidence for all such assertions immediately upon being challenged to do so. The actual publication need not be produced or screened in advance of the debate by the moderator. Judges will penalize debaters severely for using inaccurate evidence and, if a judge is certain that debater has deliberately fabricated or falsified evidence, he or she should report this to the Director as quickly as possible. The penalty for fabrication or falsification of evidence is disqualification from eligibility to win any prizes or distinction during the tournament.

1.3.5 Debaters should not read their speeches, though they may make a reasonable reference to notes or read verbatim quotations. Judges shall penalize debaters for excessive reading or memorization that results in stilted or unnatural delivery. Excessive reading does not constitute a breach of the rules of order and cannot be raised as a point of order by the opposing team.

1.3.6 Debaters may not introduce any visual aids or props during the debate.

1.3.7 Debaters should not unnecessarily repeat arguments or evidence. A debater may introduce and review his or her important points with impunity, however, since this repetition can provide emphasis and clarity.

## **1.4 Code of conduct**

1.4.1 Debaters should always conduct themselves with dignity and be courteous towards other debaters and officials. Debaters must not disrupt an opponent’s speech by any interruptions or distractions (such as loud

whispering, shuffling of shoes, rustling of papers, grimacing, affected laughter, etc.)

1.4. Debates should be judged objectively (that is, on the speeches of the debaters as opposed to the previous knowledge, personal opinions, or prejudices of judges).

1.4.3 Debaters may not make personal comments about other debaters; otherwise, they may speak on any topics that do not offend Canadian laws, including those against obscenity, sedition, defamation and contempt of court. They should, however, confine their remarks to the resolution being debated, any Counter-Plan, and the speeches of the other debaters since the judges will reject any comments not relevant to the debate.

1.4.4 **Debaters must not be coached during the debate.** Coaches are permitted to observe their teams during the debate and are permitted to assist with logistical issues (e.g., where should they sit). However, coaches must remain silent from the time the debate is called to order until the debaters are dismissed from the room. In particular, coaches may not engage in discussion with judges or contest any decisions by the moderator. Any concerns about judging or procedure are to be brought to the attention of the individual who has been assigned by the Director to address such concerns. Debaters may not communicate with or prompt a colleague who is speaking, nor shall such a speaker consult them for assistance. **Debaters are expected to prepare for impromptu topics with minimal assistance from coaches** and shall do their own research for prepared topics. No laptop computers are allowed during any debates except in the case of a debater with a disability requiring the use of such a device. The only research materials permitted in an impromptu debate are a dictionary, thesaurus, and a collection of quotations.

## 2.0 Parliamentary Style Debating

Debates are carried out in the Parliamentary Style

**2.0.1** Parliamentary style debating is a more formal style of debating similar to that used in the House of Commons. There is a Prime Minister and Second Government member on one side and a Leader of the Opposition and First Opposition member on the other. Points of Order, Personal Privilege and heckling are allowed. Points of information are not permitted.

**2.0.2** There will be two teams in each debate. Each team will consist of two members:

### **The Government**

- ***Prime Minister (PM)***

- *Minister of the Crown (MC)*

### **The Opposition**

- *Member of the Opposition (MO)*
- *Leader of the Opposition (LO)*

**2.0.3 Speaker of the House** - The Speaker of the House acts as the moderator described in section 1.03. It is the job of the Speaker to introduce each member before he/she speaks and to thank him/her after the speech. A member may not rise to speak unless recognized by the Speaker and must immediately retake their seat if instructed to do so by the Speaker. The Speaker may also be called upon to make a ruling if one team thinks that the other team has broken a rule. The Speaker will be seated between the two teams with the Government on the Speaker's right and the Opposition on the Speaker's left. In each room, a Head Judge will be appointed to assist the Speaker. The Speaker may seek guidance from the Head Judge in the room in making a ruling. However, once made, the ruling of the Speaking is final. It is not subject to further discussion or appeal.

**2.0.4 Timer** - A timekeeper shall be present at each debate. His/her function is to time all speeches, indicate to debaters during their addresses how much speaking time they have remaining, and allow extra time for interruptions. When a debater has exhausted his or her speaking and a 15-second period of grace (if applicable), the moderator shall require the debater to terminate his or her speech. Members speaking who exceed the time limit by more than 20 seconds will face marking penalties of one point for each second over the limit to a maximum of 7 points. Timekeepers will advise the adjudicators of time faults at the end of the round.

The timekeeper will give time signals with two minutes, one minute, thirty seconds to go in time limit for each member's speech. When the time has expired the Timekeeper will stand for a fifteen second grace period. At the end of the grace period the time keeper will sit down and the member speaker must immediately cease to speak and sit down as well. If the member does not immediately retake his/her seat, the Speaker of the House shall interrupt their presentation and direct him/her to be seated.

**2.0.5 Judges** - Debates will be judged by a minimum of two adjudicators, none of which is known to be biased against any team. Judges should sit apart at several different locations in the debate room and should not confer before scoring the contest.

**2.0.6 Role of Teams** - The role of the Government teams is to support the resolution. They must provide constructive material and arguments in support of their case. The role of the Opposition is to oppose the resolution.

Their role is to contest the arguments put forward by the government. They are not required to present an alternative case in order to win the debate, but can do so if they wish.

### **2.0.7 Order of Speaking and Debating Roles**

1. Prime Minister's (PM) Introduction  
5 minutes (prepared)/ 3 minutes (impromptu)

The Prime Minister should define the terms of the resolution and outline the Government's case, giving necessary background information. The PM is also expected to outline several points in detail and provide evidence to support them.

2. First Member of the Opposition (MO) Speech  
5 minutes (prepared)/ 3 minutes (impromptu)

The Member of the Opposition must do two things:

1. Rebut all of the points raised by the Prime Minister.
2. Summarize why the Government's resolution must fail.

Note: if the Opposition wishes to propose a counter-plan it must be done at this time. However, such a plan is not required and there are no penalties for not introducing one.

3. Minister of the Crown (MC)  
5 minutes (prepared)/ 3 minutes (impromptu)

The Minister of the Crown must do three things:

1. Rebuild the government's case by reinforcing the points raised by the PM and rebutting the points raised the MO.
2. Bring up one or two new constructive points for the Government's case,
3. Summarize by explaining why the Government's case still stands.

4. Leader of the Opposition (LO)  
7 minutes (prepared)/ 4 minutes (impromptu)

The Leader of the Opposition is the last speaker against the resolution.

They:

1. Rebuild the opposition arguments against the resolution by rebutting arguments and evidence raised by the MC and reinforcing the rebuttal of the PM made by the MO.
2. Summarizing why the Government's resolution must fail.

5. Prime Minister's (PM) Rebuttal  
2 minutes (prepared)/1 minute (impromptu)

This is the final summary of the Government's case and evidence. The Prime Minister is expected to rebut arguments raised by the Opposition and summarize why the Government's case must ultimately stand. No new information can be introduced at this point, except in direct refutation to something brought up by the LO. It is generally more effective to pick 2-3 main arguments in favour of the resolution and show why they still stand or critically undermine the arguments presented against the resolution by the Opposition rather than trying to hit everything in just 2 minutes.

### **3.0 Rules for Parliamentary Debate**

3.0.1 The Moderator of a Parliamentary debate is called the "Speaker" and all debaters must address themselves to "Mr. [or Madame] Speaker" at the beginning of their speeches. The affirmative side is called the "Government" while the "Opposition" represents the negative. Participants in the debate and members of the audience are referred to collectively as the "House" while the resolution is simply termed the "Bill".

Debaters must always refer to one another in the third person (for example, "the Prime Minister", "Leader of the Opposition", "Minister of Communications", "Honorable Member from Ecum Secum", "second speaker for Her Majesty's loyal Opposition") preferably by position. They must not call other debaters by their real names or address them as "you".

3.0.2 The House shall be assumed to be a government in Canada at the present time unless otherwise specified by the Director or indicated by the resolution, though debaters are not assumed to be the particular politicians or parties currently in power or opposition. After rising and addressing himself or herself to the Speaker, a member must wait for the Speaker to recognize him/her before saying anything else.

3.0.3 Debaters shall not use any unparliamentary language (that is, foul, profane or offensive language or words abusing the House, any member thereof, the King or Queen, or a government official.)

3.0.4 Only one debater at a time may hold the floor of the House. As soon as another member rises and addresses himself or herself to the Speaker, an interrupted debater shall surrender the floor by sitting down. When the Speaker rises to his or her feet, all debaters must immediately cease speaking and resume their seats.

3.0.5 Except for heckling, every debater desiring to speak shall rise in

his or her place with his or her head uncovered (with the exception of religious headgear) and address himself or herself to the Speaker. Such a debater shall not continue to speak until being recognized and called upon to do so by the Speaker.

3.0.6 Only verbal heckling by debaters is permitted, but this is encouraged as long as it is pertinent, humorous, brief and infrequent. While it is welcome, however, it should not be used just to disrupt the delivery of an opponent and the judges will severely penalize debaters who lower the level of debate through excessive or thoughtless heckling (such as inane use of the question “Source”). Debaters may heckle only opponents who hold the floor; no cross-bench heckling is allowed. Heckling is not permitted during the Prime Minister’s rebuttal speech.

3.0.7 A member may raise only two types of points: Points of Order and Points of Privilege. There may be only one point on the floor at a time; points are not debatable and the Speaker will rule on each independently. The time taken to raise, consider and rule on any point shall not be included in the debaters speaking time. Continual use of trivial points should be penalized.

(a) A Point of Order may be raised to draw the Speaker’s attention to a breach of any of the rules of debating except repetition or irrelevance, and may involve misconduct by a person other than the debater interrupted. While a debater must raise such a point immediately after a rule has been contravened, the Speaker may also call a member to order his or her own initiative.

(b) Points of Privilege include misquoting or misrepresenting an opponent (but not misinterpreting his or her remarks). Referring to a member incorrectly and slandering a member. No member may raise such a point on behalf of another member.

To raise a Point of Order, a debater shall stand and say “Mr. [or Madame] Speaker, I rise on a Point of Order.” A debater who is interrupted by such an objection shall immediately surrender the floor by sitting down. The Speaker will then recognize the complainant and request, “Please explain your point.” After the complainant has explained his or her objection, the Speaker shall rule whether the point was “Well taken” (valid) or “Not well taken”. Finally, the Speaker will call upon the interrupted debater to continue delivering his or her speech. Similar procedures are to be followed for Points of Privilege. If a debater raising a Point of Order proceeds to explain their point before being recognized by the Speaker, their point will be automatically ruled out of order. The timekeeper shall stop the clock while the point is being assessed (from the moment the member rises to the moment that Speaker returns the floor to the debater who was interrupted).

3.0.8 When reprimanded by the Speaker, a debater should immediately apologize to the House. If a member becomes unruly or refuses to obey the Speaker, the Speaker shall call upon the Head Judge who will remind the member that rulings of the Speaker are not subject to discussion and that it is their duty to respect the speaker and obey their instructions. The Head Judge will further caution the member that further disruption may result in forfeiture of the debate for their team (i.e., a score of 0 for both members). If the member continues to disregard the rules of the House, the authority of the Speaker and the Head Judge, the Head Judge shall stop the debate and instruct the timekeeper to seek out the tournament Chief Judge. The Chief Judge shall confer with the Head Judge to determine whether the debate may continue or whether the team containing the offending member shall forfeit the round. The decision of the Chief Judge shall be final and is not subject to appeal.

#### **4.0 Marking of Speeches**

4.01 Each speech will be marked out of 100, divided into three categories.

- **Argument & Evidence**                      **40 marks**
- **Organization**                              **40 marks**
- **Delivery**                                      **20 marks**

An average score is 75-80 marks. The main criterion for marking any speech is how persuasive it is in support of its side of the resolution, in the context of the debate and the role assigned to the speaker (see section 2 for a description of roles). The marking categories exist to assist judges with the evaluation of this.

4.0.2 **Argument & Evidence** - Marks will be awarded for the ability to present logical and evidence based arguments that directly support the case being presented. A substantial portion of the mark is the ability to rebuild the case after it has been attacked by the other team.

4.0.3 **Organization** – Relates to the coherency of the presentation, the logic of the order in which arguments are presented and the ability to bring it all together into a tight conclusion

4.0.4 **Delivery** – is the effectiveness of the debater’s style and includes elements such as eye contact, cadence and rhythm of the presentation, overall confidence and appropriate use of tonal variations, hand gestures and humour.

## **5.0 Decision of Debate**

5.0.1 The organizers prior to each round will allocate the adjudicator(s) of each debate.

5.0.2 Each adjudicator will record her or his scoring of the speeches in the debate on the form provided by the organizers.

5.0.3 Once the debate is concluded, judges shall independently score the debate. After all judges have completed their marking, the Head Judge in the room will collect the scoring sheets. The Head Judge is then responsible for making sure that they are delivered to the central scoring location once the debaters have been dismissed and within 20 minutes of the debating being concluded.

5.0.4 Judges shall not confer with each other while they are marking the debate.

**5.0.5 The results of the debate (win/loss) shall NOT be announced by the judges, with the exception of the final round which will be announced by the Chief Judge.**

5.0.6 Judges may, at the discretion of the Head Judge in the room, make general construction comments regarding the debate. However, they may not express personal opinions regarding the resolution or engage in debate by disputing any of the arguments or evidence raised.

5.0.7 The ranking of teams, with the exception of the top two who will participate in the final round, will be determined on the basis of cumulative team scores through the rounds of debate. The ranking of the top two teams will be determined by their team scores in the final round.

5.0.8 The Chief Judge, whose decision will be final, will decide any dispute concerning the interpretation of these rules.

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