

British Parliamentary

- British Parliamentary (BP) is so called because it is modelled on the way that debates take place in the British parliament.
- There are four debaters on each side, competing in teams of two (so four teams in total).
- Speakers alternate between proposition and opposition.
- Speeches are five minutes each, with the first and last minutes protected. In the middle three minutes, anyone on the opposite side may make points of information.
- There are no speeches from the floor.
- Marks are awarded for content of the speeches only, not for speaking style.

- The speakers are given specific names to reflect the origins of the format in the British Parliament:

First proposition = Prime Minister

First opposition = Leader of the Opposition

Second proposition = Deputy Prime Minister

Second opposition = Deputy Leader of the Opposition

Third proposition = Member of the Government

Third opposition = Member of the Opposition

Fourth Proposition = Government Whip

Fourth Opposition = Opposition Whip

(This incidentally allows you, when you are doing a BP debate, to pretend that you are actually in the House of Commons, debating something that might become law and change the course of history.)

- Titles of motions are not announced until just before the debate. Teams are given only fifteen minutes to prepare, forbidden to talk to anyone but each other, and with no access to any kind of electronic device.

You can pretend that you are actually in the House of Commons

- The teams consist of:

Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister.

Leader of the Opposition and Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Member of the Government and Government Whip.

Member of the Opposition and Opposition Whip.

- You debate on the same side as people you are competing against. You should not obviously undermine them, but equally you need to look better than them.
- Each speaker has very specific responsibilities, depending on their title / position in the debate. A large part of the judges' verdict will be based on how well you fulfil these responsibilities. We will learn more about this in Chapter 4, Roles and Team Work.
- Judges award each of the speakers 'speaker points'. They add them together to award points to each team. They then put the teams in rank order (first, second, third and fourth) according to how many points they have, and announce this rank order.
- In some BP competitions, there are several debates over the course of a day (usually four, to allow each team to have one go at each position). Teams are ranked at the end of the day first by team points, which are awarded as follows: four for first place, three for second place, two for third place, one for fourth place. If they tie on team points, position is decided by speaker points. The team that comes top of this ranking wins the competition.

Mace is a good format for beginning debaters, because of the longer time you have for preparation, and because it tends to be slightly gentler in style.

BP is more challenging, with more cut and thrust, but also perhaps more exciting.

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