

# A Modest Précis re: Worlds Style Debating

(1) Worlds style debating differs from Parliamentary debating significantly even though the format appears, at first blush, to be similar. There are two sides (called proposition and opposition) and three debaters per side. The proposition advances definitions and a case with three arguments. The proposition speaks last. Rebuttal takes place.

(2) The differences are, however, much more striking than the similarities.

(a) The burden of proof, while real, is much less significant than in parliamentary debating.

(i) In worlds style, both sides present a caseline and (usually) three arguments.

(ii) There are two (count 'em) two cases on the floor – The most compelling case wins. There are no ties and the proposition does not carry a significant burden. In practice, if the proposition makes a clear and prima facie case in the first speech, they have fully discharged the burden of proof.

(iii) The debate is concluded by the reply speeches (not rebuttals) – starting with the opposition team. The first or second speaker per side will deliver the reply speech.

(iv) The reply speech is not a rebuttal - but an attempt to put the arguments in a proper context by outlining the underlying logic of each caseline.

(3) Each speaker has 8 minutes to accomplish different tasks.

(a) The first proposition speaker has to define the terms – always straight (no squirreling) – and to establish the caseline and to give the case division (who covers what points) – normally the first speaker deals with arguments 1 and 2 while the second speaker covers the 3rd argument. The point is that the first speaker must make the team's approach crystal clear.

(b) The first opposition speaker must allow only two minutes to clash with the points just made by the first proposition and use six minutes to advance the caseline, case division and the first two arguments of the opposition side. This is critical.

(c) The second proposition has two to three minutes to clash with the opposition case and to use five or six minutes to finish the proposition arguments. This is critical.

(d) The second opposition has to use four minutes to clash and four minutes to finish the opposition case. This is critical.

(e) The third proposition will use two minutes to summarize and rebuild the proposition's case and six minutes to give the rebuttal. This is critical.

(f) The third opposition will use one minute to rebuild and seven minutes to rebut. This is critical.

(g) The opposition (first or second speaker) gives a four-minute reply speech. The reply speech is distinct from the just-completed rebuttal. It demonstrates an alteration in mood and power. The reply speaker tries to put the debate in context. The debater explains the 'crux' or the internal logic of both cases and explains why, on this basis, the opposition has to win.

(h) The first or second proposition debater gives the reply speech. This is the concluding speech in the debate.

(4) Each debater (with the exception of the reply speeches) will be subjected to points of information (POI's) in the middle six minutes of their speeches – the first and last minute being 'protected time.' It is expected that each debater will accept at least two POI's during his/her remarks. Each debater on the opposing team should offer, at least, two POI's to the debater delivering the speech. Adjudicators are instructed to deduct one or two marks if the lower limits are not attained!! How well a debater handles themselves in the rough and tumble of offering and accepting POI's is key in worlds style debate.

(5) There are three adjudicators per debate.

(6) Team standings are based on the win/lost record with the number of adjudicator ballots (number of judges voting for the team over the course of the competition) as the first tiebreaker. For example if two teams are tied with a 5 (wins) and 1 (loss) record over a six

round tournament and the first team has received a total of 13 adjudicator ballots (out of a possible 15), and the second team has only 11 ballots, the first team is placed above the second. If the two teams are still tied, total points are used to decide their relative standing.

(7) The marking scheme is: based on 100 per debater with effective (allowed) scores being between 60 and 80.

(a) The categories are presentation, content and strategy with 40 points for the first two and 20 for the last.

(b) **Presentation** is marked from a purely public speaking perspective: How did the debater actually deliver the speech? Was the tone correct? The rate of speech? The pitch? The pauses? The eye contact? The confidence? Etc. The presentation mark is between 24 and 32 with a score of 24 being very weak and a mark of 32 being spectacular.

(c) **Content** is also marked out of a possible 40 points. The content mark is scored *as if* the speech was submitted in essay form. It has everything to do with logic, preparation and analytic skill and has *nothing* to do with the presentation. A mark of 24 is indicative of very little success and a score of 32 is truly and unusually outstanding.

(c) **Strategy** is marked out of 20 points with the range being between 12 and 16. Strategy refers to the success the debater has in clashing with the arguments of the opposing team. Has he/she thoroughly understood the presented arguments and have they responded effectively, logically and comprehensively in refutation. Was control established and maintained?

(e) **The reply speech** is, of course, also marked on presentation, content and strategy with the effective mark range between 12 and 16 for both presentation and content and between 6 and 8 for strategy. The reply speech is therefore marked out of 50 points — 20 points presentation, 20 for content and 10 for strategy with (in practice) a top score of 40 and a low of 30.

Example of the worlds ballot:

	Presentation	Content	Strategy	Totals
1st debater	31	30	15	76
2nd debater	27	28	13	68
3rd debater	30	29	14	73
Reply	15	14	7	36

The team above would have scored 253 out of a possible 280. If this total exceeds the total for the opposing team, they are awarded the win. For the hypothetical debater referred to above, a 76 (out of a perfect 80) is considered a very good mark. A score of 68 is considered a relatively weak result. A mark of 73 is somewhat above average.

The reply mark counts in terms of the team score but is not counted vis-a-vis the individual rankings since only some debaters will give these speeches in the course of a tournament.