ONTARIO PRO-CON

DEBATING FORUM

Constitution & Moderators’ Handbook

www.procondebating.com

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**Purpose:**

This document is intended to outline the structure of the Ontario PRO-CON Forum. All league rules are listed here. All moderators are responsible for being familiar with these rules. You are also expected to make sure that all debaters and judges are familiar with and adhere to the rules that affect them.

**1. General:**

a) Each year there are four or five debates plus the Championship Tournament. You will receive information about each debate in advance. Please be sure to email or fax the host school and register your teams as early as possible. Registration at each debate is limited to the availability of classrooms at the school, and will vary from one debate to the next. Every effort will be made to accommodate member schools. Details on registration are provided in Section 3.

b) All debate tournaments will consist of two rounds of prepared debate, plus a third round which will be impromptu. Each debate should follow approximately the following schedule:

8:15 -- 9:00 Registration

9:30 -- 9:45 Judges’ and Debaters’ briefings

10:00 --11:00 Round One (Prepared)

11:00 --12:00 Round Two (Prepared)

12:00 -- 1:00 Lunch and Preparation for Round Three

1:00 -- 2:00 Round Three (Impromptu)

2:00 – 2:30 Coaches’ Meeting

3:00 – 3:15 Awards Presentation

**2. Fees**

a) The fee to join the PRO-CON FORUM is $175. This will allow you to enter Novice, Junior, and Senior teams at all of the year’s debates. If you are paying by cheque, please make it payable to the “ONTARIO PRO-CON DEBATING FORUM”. Please give all payments to the league Treasurer.

**3. Registration**

a) Each school is invited to enter one four person team in each of the three divisions, and one friendly division, subject to the Eligibility Rules in Section 4. The total number of teams that will be allowed to register will depend on available space. This will vary from one debate to the next. Under no circumstances will you be allowed to enter more than one team in a division.

b) Each school must register with the host school by the specified deadline. The host school will set this date. Normally it will be one week previous to the debate. If you arrive at a debate and have not registered previously, you will not be allowed to enter.

c) Please note carefully that registration ends at 9:00 a.m. This means that all judges and debaters must arrive and register by this time. If you are late, you will not be allowed to register. If you are unable to provide a qualified judge, then you will also not be allowed to register.

d) If you are unable to attend a debate and have already registered, you must notify the president of the league (president@procondebating.com) to cancel your registration no later than the Thursday before the debate.

e) Students are not to debate in school uniforms or clothing that identifies the school to which he or she attends. This rule is to ensure that judges are perceived to be impartial in their scoring. Students will not be permitted to register for the debate in uniform.

f) Each school should bring one student timekeeper to reduce the burden on the host school.

**4. Eligibility:**

a) Any member high school is eligible to enter a team in a PRO-CON debate. No students who are registered in a grade below grade 9 will be allowed to debate in the PRO-CON Forum. Similarly, no debater who has graduated from high school will be allowed to debate in the PRO-CON Forum.

b) An eligible team will consist of four debaters, all of whom must attend the school that they represent. Each team will enter a division such that all debaters follow the rules of part c) and d) below. Failure to observe these rules will result in disqualification.

c) There are three separate divisions in the PRO-CON Forum.

i) All debaters who are currently registered in grade 9 are considered to be a Novice debater. As well, any student who is registered in grade 10 and did not participate in any PRO-CON debate while they were in grade 9 are also considered to be Novice debaters.

ii) All debaters who are registered in grade 10 and participated in a PRO-CON debate while in grade 9 are considered to be Junior debaters. Any debater who is registered in grade 11 is also considered to be a junior debater.

iii) All debaters who are registered in grade 12 are considered to be Senior debaters, regardless of their experience.

d) All debaters are characterized into one division as outlined by the above criteria. A debater may “move up” to a higher division. Should a debater compete in two debates in divisions which are higher than they are eligible for, that debater forfeits the right to return to his/her original division.

e) Moderators are responsible for making sure that all students debate in their proper divisions. If you are unsure as to a debater’s eligibility, please check with the league statistician. Failure to comply with these rules will result in disqualification.

**5. Judges**

a) You are required to bring one qualified judge ( this may be the moderator ) for each division in which you have entered a team. If you are unable to provide a qualified judge, you will not be allowed to enter the tournament. Host schools cannot be expected to have extra judges for your team.

b) For the Senior and Junior divisions, each team must be accompanied by an adult judge. This may be a former debater who has graduated from high school. You may not send a student to judge the Senior or Junior divisions.

c) For the Novice division only, you may send a Senior level debater who has at least one year of debating experience only if an adult judge cannot be found.

d) We ask that you send the most experienced judges whenever possible. There is also a judge’s guide enclosed. It is your responsibility to make sure that your judges are familiar with the rules and guidelines.

**6. Substitute Debaters**

a) Hybrid teams are permitted to be made up of students only from different schools enrolled in the Pro-Con Forum of Ontario. Their team scores will not count but individual scores will count.

**7. Scoring Systems and Prizes:**

a) At each tournament, each debater will receive a score in each of the three rounds which will be out of a maximum of 50 points. A debater’s final score will be the sum of the highest scores and will be out of 150 points. Certificates or ribbons will be awarded for first, second and third places. As well, some honourable mention ribbons will be awarded. The number of honourable mention ribbons awarded will vary and will depend on the quality of the scores and the total number of debaters entered in that a division.

b) Also, a trophy or plaque will be awarded to the first place team in each division. Standings will be determined by win-loss records. If there is a tie in wins, then the tie is broken by total points from all three rounds for all four debaters. Should this be tied, the tie will be broken by point differential counting only the debates in which the tied teams debated each other ( if any ). If this is still tied, or if they did not debate each other, a tie will be declared and both teams will be awarded a trophy.

c) Every debater is eligible for the Debater of the Year Award. In order to qualify, one must enter three debates in the same division. For this award; one’s score is determined by adding up the results from all three rounds. A debater’s best three results for the entire season are counted. The first place winner in each division will receive a trophy. The top ten in each division will receive a certificate. Any debater who debates in a division in which he/she is not eligible to debate will automatically be disqualified from winning one of these awards for that academic debate year.

**8. Championship Tournament**

a) The final debate of the year is the PRO-CON FORUM Championship Tournament. The top four teams in each division will be invited to compete. These teams will be determined by each team’s best three out of four or five win-loss records. If there is a tie, then total points will be used to break the tie. Any team that enters only two debates will be eligible to participate in the finals if they have a sufficient number of wins from their two debates compared to the best three debates of all other schools.

Exception: If a team is disqualified from a debate, their wins (if any) cannot count towards the overall records that will be used to determine which teams qualify for the Finals.

b) Should a team not be able to attend the Championship Tournament, the team with the next highest record will be invited.

c) This tournament alone will decide the overall winners for the year. The results from the first four or five debates will have no bearing on the results of the Championship tournament.

d) This tournament will have more than one judge in each room. This will vary depending on the availability of judges. Hopefully, there will be three or four in every room. Every debate within the same division must have the same number of judges.

e) The winning school in each division will be allowed to keep the championship trophy until the Finals in the next year. Each individual on a winning team may also receive a prize that they can keep. This however will vary from year to year.

**9. Penalties**

a) If a debater competes in an ineligible division, that debater will be ineligible to win an individual award from that day’s tournament. As well, that debater is ineligible to win a Debater of the Year Award (i.e. a top ten certificate) for that academic year.

b) Any team which has one or more ineligible debaters will be disqualified from the tournament. All individual debates that were won by either half of the team will be overturned, and a win will be awarded to their opponents.

1. Each team that was not cancelled will not be allowed to enter the next debate.
2. Calling the host school to cancel the day before the debate is equivalent to not cancelling at all.
3. However, you will be given one “free one”. That is, you may neglect to cancel only one team without penalty.
4. Failing to cancel all three teams in one debate means that you have used up your “free one” and will be penalized for the other two teams that you did not enter.

**10. Appeals**

Occasionally the results of a tournament may have an error in them. If you find any error such as error in addition, incorrect score recorded, etc. you must notify the league statistician according to the following procedure.

1. You must notify the league statistician no later than the Friday after the debate. This is best done by email or phone.
2. After contacting the league statistician to inform him/her of an error, you will be instructed to mail in a letter outlining the error, as well as any relevant documentation. This must be received no later than three weeks after the debate. Any appeal that does not contain appropriate documentation ( i.e. the ballot in error), or clearly outline the mistake, will be denied.
3. Unless there is an appeal in progress, the results of a debate will be declared final exactly one week after the debate. All appeals received after the one week period will be rejected.
4. Moderators may appeal any decision made by the league executive, or an irregularity in the debate. This must follow the same procedure as above. If it regards a matter more complicated that an error in the results, please address the appeal to the league President (or Co-Presidents )

**11. Amendments**

1. The Constitution and its articles will be approved by the coaches and executive at a year-end meeting to be held at the fourth tournament. Approval is determined by majority vote of coaches who attend the meeting. Voting by proxy is not permitted.
2. Coaches are those who registered with their school at the start of the Pro-Con season or who officially replaced coaches who have chosen not to continue in their position.
3. Any coach may propose an amendment in writing to the League President one week before the Meeting. The proposed amendment should briefly explain what article should be amended, deleted, or added.
4. The statistician to produce new copies of the Constitution for all coaches in a timely manner. The Constitution will be posted on the web site.
5. The League President will chair the meeting. If he/she is absent, then a member of the Executive will chair.

**PRO-CON Forum**

**Debater’s Rules**

All debaters are responsible for being familiar with the following rules.

A team consists of four debaters, two to debate the affirmative side and two to debate the negative side. You will not change sides throughout your three rounds of debate. Also, you may not switch between first and second speaker during the tournament.

1. Defining the resolution. It is the responsibility of the first affirmative to define the resolution, or outline the terms of the debate. It must be defined in a reasonable and straightforward manner. You are not allowed to “squirrel” the resolution ( define it in such a way that you are actually debating for the other side ) or define it in an outrageous and ridiculous manner. You are also not allowed to define it in such a way that it becomes undebatable ( this is called a truism ). You will be penalized for doing this, with the maximum penalty being loss of the debate. The negative team however must accept the definition and debate on those terms. If they strongly disagree they are allowed to state their displeasure during their speeches. The judge will take this into consideration when scoring. When delivering your speeches, you should not read your material, nor should you have it memorized. You will also be marked on tone, style, deportment, persuasiveness, eye contact and mannerism.
2. Each constructive speech will be five minutes in length. In this speech, you are expected to introduce arguments supporting your side of the resolution. The negative side is also expected to refute the arguments of the affirmative side. If they fail to do this then they cannot win the debate. You are allowed 15 seconds grace at the end of your speech to finish your concluding remarks. After this grace period, the timer will stand and you must stop talking. Should you continue to speak beyond the grace period, you will be penalized. The same holds true for the rebuttal, which is three minutes in length. You are not allowed to introduce new information in your rebuttal.
3. There are a few rules that apply to the cross examination.
4. You must ask direct questions. You are not allowed to make statements in the hope that it will strengthen your argument. If you wish to comment on what the witness has said during his/her answering, then you must wait until your speech or rebuttal.
5. You are not allowed to simply demand a “yes or no” answer. The witness is allowed to justify his/her answer.
6. You must answer all questions as asked. If you evade a question, you will be penalized. However, you are not required to answer questions of a personal nature.
7. You are allowed a maximum of approximately 30 seconds to answer a question. Should you exceed this and not allow the next question to be asked, then you will be penalized. However, if you answer the question appropriately before 30 seconds, and continue to babble and not allow the next question to be asked, then you will also be penalized.
8. The examiner is not allowed to cut off the witness before he/she has had time to appropriately answer the question. However, after the question has been answered, or after 30 seconds, you are allowed to stop the witness with a “thank you” and continue with the next question.
9. The witness is not allowed to ask any questions. If the examiner points this out to judge, then the witness will be penalized. However, the witness is allowed to ask the examiner for clarification.
10. The examiner should ask only relevant questions ( or be leading up to a relevant question ), and must not be discourteous in any way.
11. You are not allowed to use visual aids such as pictures, props, audio or video devices. You are allowed to bring newspapers, books etc. from which you may read a quotation.
12. In general, all debaters must act in a courteous and polite manner. You must not attempt to browbeat, belittle or insult an opponent. Remember, “Attack the point, not the person”. You are not allowed to heckle, or speak when someone else has the floor. If a debater lowers the tone of the debate, he/she will be penalized. If, in an extreme case, your opponent is very obnoxious and insulting, please feel free to contact a member of the executive, or the convenor of the tournament before the tournament is completed.
13. You will not be given any comments from the judges. You will receive all ballots and score sheets after the awards have been given out. If there has been a mistake in any of the results, or if you have a complaint, please feel free to contact the appropriate personnel.

ONTARIO PRO-CON DEBATING FORUM

**Official Guidelines for Judges**

The following is a general guideline with which all judges are expected to be familiar before judging a debate. This document is intended to not only inform judges for what they should be looking, but also to help make the judging consistent among all of the judges.

You will be given one ballot for each round that you are to judge. Before the debate begins, fill in all of the information required at the top of the ballot. Please be sure to print all names clearly and do not forget to write down the team number.

The ballot consists of five different categories. The following is a brief description of each.

**Delivery (10 marks) –** look for tone, style, deportment, persuasiveness, eye contact, mannerism and ability to speak without dependence on notes.

**Content (20 marks) –** look for organization, reasoning, creativity, logical conclusion, validity of facts, refutation of opponents’ arguments (when appropriate), and propriety. If the negative team does not refute the arguments of the affirmative team, they cannot win the debate. The resolution should be defined by the first affirmative in an appropriate manner. The negative team has to debate the topic as defined by the affirmative. There is no squirrelling allowed. You should penalize him/her if the definition is outrageous or ridiculous. If the definition is inappropriate, take this into consideration when scoring.

**Questioning (6 marks) –** questions should be logical, relevant and concise. The examiner is not allowed to force a definite “yes or no” answer. If the examiner cuts off the witness before he/she has had time to answer properly, then the examiner should be penalized. A debater should also be penalized for “speechmaking”. The debaters should be polite at all times.

**Answering (6 marks) –** should be logical, consistent and not evasive. The witness is allowed a maximum of about 30 seconds to answer a question. If a debater should exceed this and not allow the next question to be asked, then he/she should be penalized. However, if a debater answers the question appropriately before 30 seconds and continues to babble and not allow the next question to be asked, then he/she should also be penalized. The witness is not allowed to ask questions, except for clarification.

**Rebuttal (6 marks) –** look for refutation of opponents’ arguments as well as summation of own arguments, followed by concluding remarks. A debater should be penalized if he/she introduces new information in the rebuttal.

Once you have heard all of the debaters, add up all scores and double check the marks. Following is a chart describing what percentage of marks should be given in each range. This is a general guideline, the purpose of which is to make the judging consistent.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Score** | **Description** | **Approximate % of Scores** |
| 50 | Impossible | 0 |
| 48 - 49 | Incredible, astounding | 0.5 |
| 45 - 47 | Excellent, superlative | 4 |
| 40 - 44 | Very good | 25 |
| 36 - 39 | Good, average | 45 |
| 33 - 35 | Satisfactory | 15 |
| 30 - 32 | Below average | 7 |
| 26 - 29 | Poor | 3 |
| 25 and under | Unprepared, violates the rules | 0.5 |

Any debater who lowers the tone of the debate should be penalized

Once the debate is over you must determine which team has won the debate. Calculate each debater’s score and mark it in the appropriate spot on the ballot. There are to be no ties awarded. If you cannot decide which team has won, then you should award the debate to the negative team, and the score should indicate this.

A final score should not contain a half mark. It is permissible however to award half marks for an individual category. For example, you may give a debater 8.5 for delivery, but you must give him/her a half mark somewhere else.

The times for the main constructive speeches are five minutes, and three minutes for rebuttals. The debaters are allowed 15 seconds grace in each case. After the grace period, the timer will stand, and the debater must stop talking. If he/she continues to speak, then the debater should be penalized. If a questioner is asked a crossed examination as time is expiring, the witness must answer the question briefly.

After the debate is over, do not give comments or a critique, or in any way indicate who may have won the debate. The comments that you have made on your ballot are sufficient.

FORMAT AND SPEAKING TIMES  
  
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**PREPARED ROUNDS:**

1st Affirmative constructive speech 5 min.

1st Affirmative cross-examined by 2nd Negative 3 min.

1st Negative constructive speech 5 min.

1st Negative cross-examined by 1st Affirmative 3 min.

2nd Affirmative constructive speech 5 min.

2nd Affirmative cross-examined by 1st Negative 3 min.

2nd Negative constructive speech 5 min.

2nd Negative cross-examined by 2nd Affirmative 3 min.

Preparation for Rebuttals 5 min.

1st Negative rebuttal 3 min.

1st Affirmative rebuttal 3 min.

2nd Negative rebuttal 3 min.

2nd Affirmative rebuttal 3 min.

**IMPROMPTU ROUND:**

The order of speakers remains the same. All constructive speeches are 5 minutes in length, cross-examination is 3 minutes in length, and rebuttals are 3 minutes long.