

British Parliamentary Style

The format of the debate

- The debate will consist of four teams of two persons (persons will be known as "members"), a chairperson (known as the "Speaker of the House" or "Mister/Madame Speaker") and an adjudicator or panel of adjudicators.

In BP there are 4 teams in each round. Two teams represent the Government, and two teams represent the Opposition. The Government supports the resolution, and the Opposition opposes the resolution. The teams are also divided into the Opening and Closing halves of the debate. The teams are organized like this in the room:

Opening Government (OG)	Opening Opposition (OO)
Closing Government (CG)	Closing Opposition (CO)

There are two speakers on each team. Each speaker has a title. The titles are:

OG: Prime Minister Deputy Prime Minister	OO: Leader of the Opposition Deputy Leader of the Opposition
CG: Member of the Government Government Whip	CO: Member of the Opposition Opposition Whip

- Teams will consist of the following members:

Opening Government	"Prime Minister" or "First Government member", and "Deputy Prime Minister" or "Second government member"
Opening Opposition	"Leader of the Opposition" or "First Opposition member", and "Deputy Leader of the Opposition" or "Second Opposition member"
Closing Government	"Member of the Government" or "Third Government member", and "Government Whip"
Closing Opposition	"Member for the Opposition", and "Opposition Whip"

- Members will speak in the following order:

1. Prime Minister	First Speaker, OG
2. Leader of the Opposition	First Speaker, OO
3. Deputy Prime Minister	Second Speaker, OG
4. Deputy Leader of the Opposition	Second Speaker, OO
5. Member of the Government	First Speaker, CG
6. Member of the Opposition	First Speaker, CO
7. Government Whip	Second Speaker, CG
8. Opposition Whip	Second Speaker, CO

- The following format should be used for British Parliamentary Style Debate:

	Preliminary Rounds	Final Round
1 st Government Team Prime Minister	5 min	7 min
1 st Opposition Team Leader of the Opposition	5 min	7 min
1 st Government Team Deputy Prime Minister	5 min	7 min
1 st Opposition Team Deputy Leader of the Opposition	5 min	7 min
2 nd Government Team Member for the Government	5 min	7 min
2 nd Opposition Team Member for the Opposition	5 min	7 min
2 nd Government Team Government Whip	5 min	7 min
2 nd Opposition Team Opposition Whip	5 min	7 min

Debates are presided over by a Speaker, who is often the Chair of the adjudicator panel. The Speaker keeps time and calls debaters to the floor.

Each debater has 7 minutes to speak. The first and last minutes are protected time. This means that no POIs may be offered during this time. The Speaker will give a signal at the end and the beginning of protected time, at the seven-minute mark, and at the end of grace. The Speaker will probably not give time signals otherwise, so it is recommended that debaters bring a stopwatch to time themselves or their partner.

There are no Points of Order, or Points of Personal Privilege.

Roles of the Teams and Speakers

You'll hear a lot about the "roles" of teams and speakers in BP. In order for a round to be able to develop properly, the teams participating in the round must fulfill certain criteria. When they succeed they will have fulfilled their role and they will be developing the debate. If they fail then the debate will suffer in quality because of it, and this will **absolutely** be considered in the adjudication.

Roles of the Teams (Overview)

Opening Government:

- Defines the terms of the debate
- Opens the case for the Government
- Opposes the case of the Opening Opposition when it is presented

Opening Opposition:

- Opposes the case of the Opening Government
- Opens the case for the Opposition

Closing Government:

- Extends the Government case
- Opposes the cases of the Opening and Closing Opposition teams
- Summarizes the debate

Closing Opposition:

- Extends the Opposition case
- Opposes the cases of the Opening and Closing Opposition teams
- Summarizes the debate

Roles of the Speakers (Overview)

Prime Minister (Opening Government):

- Defines the resolution
- Introduces the Government case

Leader of the Opposition (Opening Opposition):

- Rebutts what PM said
- Introduces Opening Opposition case
- **If there's going to be a definitional challenge, the LO must mention it in their speech, otherwise all the other teams in the round must accept the original definition (See: Challenging the Definition)**

Deputy Prime Minister (Opening Government):

- Rebutts what LO said
- Continues Opening Government case

Deputy Leader of the Opposition (Opening Opposition):

- Rebutts what DPM said
- Continues Opening Opposition case

Member of the Government (Closing Government):

- Extends the Government case
- Rebutts what DLO said

Member of the Opposition (Closing Opposition):

- Extends the Opposition case
- Rebutts what MG said

Government Whip (Closing Government):

- **May introduce new contentions, but it's not generally recommended**
- Rebutts what the MO said
- Summarizes the debate

Opposition Whip (Closing Government):

- **Absolutely no new contentions may be introduced, but new evidence in support of existing contentions may be introduced**
- Rebutts what the GW said
- Summarizes the debate

Role of the Opening Government

The first goal of an OG team is to present a clear, coherent, and above all, contentious case. Remember that the OG case must be contentious enough to last for eight speeches, and 56 minutes of debate. One of the most important things OG teams should keep in mind is that bold cases are generally better to run than squirreled cases that run out of steam within the first few speeches. It is debate, after all. This doesn't mean that you should propose that humans eat their young. But it does mean that you shouldn't be afraid of proposing controversial models or cases. The major point: Propose bold, but not suicidal cases.

The next thing that you must remember as OG is that your case must be within the spirit of the resolution. At most BP tournaments the resolutions are directed. This means that the resolution will hint at the topic that

should be discussed. However, the wording will usually be such that the OG will have a degree of flexibility in how they frame their case. However, a degree of flexibility does not mean that the OG can ignore the resolution (like we do at most CUSID tournaments).

An example of an acceptable and unacceptable interpretation of a resolution:

Resolution: THW Sell its Children

Acceptable: THW Legalize Surrogacy for Profit

Unacceptable: THBT Developing Nations Should Prioritize Economic Development Over Environmental Protection

The reason why the second interpretation is abusive is because the original resolution clearly hints at a topic involving the exchange of children for some benefit. This could be a myriad of things, from surrogacy for profit, to foreign adoption limits. So the OG has a degree of flexibility in choosing a topic relating to the selling of children. With this in mind, the second interpretation clearly goes against the spirit of the resolution.

The Role of the Opening Opposition

The Opening Opposition role is probably the one that debaters new to BP will have the least amount of trouble with. It's fairly similar to the standard CP Opposition, but with different timings. However, there are some extremely important differences between the two.

As the OO team, your role is twofold. You must refute what the OG team has said, but it is not enough to simply poke holes in the OG case. **You must also bring in constructive arguments of your own.** It is not enough to go into a BP round as an OO team and do a rebuttal-only opposition. A good OO case would make sense if the wording of the resolution was reversed, and OO became the OG. You have to bring your own constructive analysis to the round.

Good OO teams will often tie in some of their rebuttal with their constructive points as well. This allows the judges to see that you're engaging with the other team's arguments as well as using them to build up your own. Using this style will also help you stay under the time limit, which is often a difficult thing to do if you're faced with a lot of rebutting and summarizing.

So remember: It's not enough to say why their ideas are stupid, you have to say why your ideas are smart.

The Role of the Closing Teams

The closing positions of the debate are where we see the most significant difference between BP and CP debating. Both closing teams are expected to offer an extension for their opening team's case. What is an extension? An extension can take many forms:

- Switching the focus of the debate from practical to philosophical arguments, or vice versa
- Bringing in new practical/philosophical arguments
- Focusing on a specific case study
- Focusing on an already mentioned argument and expanding on it significantly

This is an incredibly short list of acceptable extensions. The main goal for a closing team is to **differentiate yourself from the opening team, but still support them.** It is very important that you support the opening

team. But at the same time it's still important for your arguments to be better than theirs. So you have to make sure that your case has an over-arching theme that the judges can easily identify, that makes your team distinct from the opening team, and still supports the opening team. This doesn't have to be difficult. Many teams stress themselves out about the closing positions because of the extension, but being on the closing half of the debate has distinct advantages. The closing teams have the ability not only to introduce their own constructive matter and rebut what the other team has said, but also to summarize the debate in their own words.

The summary is to be done by the second speaker on each closing team. This is an integral part of the role of each closing team. There are many ways to summarize the debate. Some speakers like to identify the main themes that were analyzed during the round. Some speakers like to label each team with a name describing their arguments. One of the easiest ways for debaters new to BP to go through their summary speech is to identify three questions that need to be answered at the end of the round, and say why your side, and particularly your team, brings the best resolution to those questions. Any style you choose is fine so long as it gives a substantive summary of the arguments in the round, and why you won those arguments. As a reminder: **The Opposition Whip is not allowed any new arguments in their speech, and it is highly recommended that the Government Whip focus entirely on summary, as well.**

Basic Tactics and Pitfalls:

POIs:

- **Give two POIs, and take two POIs**
- POIs shouldn't be given for the sole purpose of destroying the other team's case. POIs should build your case up as well.
- If you're in the opening half of the debate your priority in the second half should be to remain involved. Make sure your arguments aren't lost among the second half of the debate. POIs are the best way to accomplish this.
- If you're in the second half of the debate then you should be extremely careful about the POIs that you give to first half teams. Sometimes your opening team may try and steal your extension if you give too much away in your POIs.
- Try to remain involved in the debate by standing on POIs, but do not harass the speaker by continually standing on POIs and saying things like "On Liberty", "On the Geneva Convention", etc.
- It is always better to get in one or two excellent POIs than four or five mediocre ones. One of the best ways to accomplish this is for you and your partner to put a sheet a paper between you with your best POI written down. Then, when the speaker takes either of you you're certain to have an excellent POI.
- Just because everyone else is standing up on a POI doesn't mean you have to, Sometimes when a speaker says something monumentally stupid everyone on opposite benches will stand up. Usually the speaker won't take a POI at that time, but if there's someone who stood up late, they just might let them ask a question. Often, the debater giving the POI will be caught off-guard by this. So don't stand up on a POI just because everyone else is. But if you do, make sure you have a question.
- Let people finish their question before you wave them down, but if they start to make a speech, or refuse to sit down, start waving them down immediately. If they still won't sit down then the speaker will deal with them.
- Finish your thought before you accept a question. It is very easy to forget where you were if you allow someone to interrupt you.
- If you want to get your question taken it is often better to stand at the end of the speaker's point. They'll be more likely to take you.
- If you are in a round with teams of very disparate skills, it may at first seem like a good idea to take POIs from the weakest team. And that can work. But the judges will be more impressed if you give a good answer to a difficult POI than if you smack down a weak POI. So you might want to choose to take POIs from the better team. This will show the judges that you're willing to engage the better team in the round.

Organization:

- At the beginning of your speech tell the judges what you're going to be speaking about.
- More advanced debaters may feel comfortable speaking without numbering their points or signposting where they're going with their speech. But the majority of beginning BP debaters will probably find it helpful to number their points and to make very clear to the judges what they're speaking about. This helps the judges keep track of your most important points, and it helps you cover everything you need to.
- Pay attention to your timing. If you say that you're going to introduce three constructive points and then you run out of time, that will reflect poorly on you.
- **Always fill your time.**

Speaking Style:

- The most important thing is to keep the audience engaged. You don't want them drifting off and thinking you're boring.
- There are many ways to keep the audience and judges engaged. These include humor, intelligent analysis, and delivery.
- Not everyone can be a funny speaker, and that's ok. Most people aren't. But it will help if you can use a few funny quips, or open with a joke.
- Avoid being monotonous. Vary your tone and pace of delivery.
- **Never insult another debater's race, gender, sexual orientation, or religion. Anything offensive will be penalized. Err on the side of caution.**

Analysis:

- Try to introduce facts, case studies, and philosophical analysis instead of statistics.
- Statistics are boring, they can be easily dismissed by the opposition, they generally fall into "specific knowledge", and they're easily falsified.
- Focus on examples. Appropriate examples and case studies will make a case better for the beginning BP debater than any pretty rhetoric can.
- Stay focused. Remember what you are trying to communicate to the audience, and then communicate it. Don't go off on tangents.

Definitional Challenges:

- Definitional challenges are **exceedingly** rare.
- Do not object to a definition of a resolution if it is merely stupid or generally bad.
- The only time you should object to the definition is if it is a truism or tautology.
- The only speaker who can object to the OG definition is the LO. **If the LO doesn't object, no one else can.**
- If the LO objects to the definition then they must substitute their own.
- The remaining debaters then have to decide which definition to use.
- If the remaining debaters use the LO's definition then the debate can continue on like normal.
- If there is still disagreement about the definition then the closing teams must decide which definition to support, or whether to substitute their own.
- This is why it is usually an exceptionally bad idea to challenge a definition that isn't a truism or tautology. It's very messy.

Knifing:

- Knifing is when a closing team, or even a partner on the same team, blatantly disagrees with a fundamental part of the substantive case that they're supposed to be supporting. (Effectively knifing someone in the back).
- In the vast majority of situations you should not knife your opening team. It will be a negative factor for you in the adjudication as supporting your opening team is a fundamental part of your role.
- However, occasionally your opening team will be so shrill and off the mark that you'll have to basically ignore what they said in order to salvage your side of the round. You may have to twist what they said in order to make sense of their case. Be careful with this strategy. You probably won't take a first, but you may be able to salvage a point or two out of the round.

Tactics for High Bracket Rounds:

- While it is always a good thing to take a first place in a BP round, once you get into the high bracket rounds the most important thing is to avoid taking the fourth..
- When you get into high rooms you'll find that the competition between the teams becomes that much closer. So it's important not to give the judges an excuse to drop you. Watch the small things as well as the big ones. Be careful with timings, signposting, and rebutting what your opponents have said.
- Do not stress out about your position in the round, or whether other teams are really good. Concentrate only on staying involved in the round, and demonstrating good analysis and argumentation. A lack of confidence will show through.

Rules for British Parliamentary Style Debate

- In general most debates are in English. The main competitions are all in English but occasionally there are other Language debates usually in conjunction with some other event/soc. Debating in Europe, Asia, etc. tends to be in the local language. At Worlds there is an English as a second language competition.
- The “house”, which will often be referred to, is basically the chairperson competitors audience etc.
- No amendment to the motion is permitted. You must debate the motion as presented and interpret it as best you can. You cannot define a motion in a Place/Time Specific sense (i.e. you cannot set the debate in Dublin 1916 and therefore attempt to limit the scope of the debate and information which the other teams can use)
- Members are permitted to use printed or written material during preparation and during the debate. Printed material includes books, journals, newspapers and other similar materials. The use of electronic equipment is prohibited during preparation in the debate. It should be borne in mind that the use of printed material during a debate could affect a member’s manner.
- The speakers are evenly divided on both sides of the motion. Speakers for the motion are the “Proposition” or “Government”, speakers against are the “Opposition”.
- The opening Prop speaker (sometimes called “Prime Minister”) has to define or interpret the motion. The definition should state the issue for the debate rising out of the motion and state the meaning of any terms in the motivation which require interpretation. The Prime Minister should provide the definition at the beginning of his or her speech. The definition of the debate should not be self proving (truistic or tautological). A truistic definition is self-proving when the case is that something should (or should not) be done and there is no reasonable rebuttal and no reasonable opposing substantive case (e.g. The sea is full of water is pretty hard to reasonably argue against). A tautological definition is self-proving when the case is that a certain state of affairs exists (or does not exist) and there is no reasonable rebuttal and

no reasonable substantive opposition. The definition should have a clear and logical link to the motion. Squirreling (choosing a definition which does not have a reasonable link to the motion and is obviously pre-prepared) is prohibited. Time and place setting the debate is prohibited. Specialized knowledge should not be used to unfairly define a motion. If you are a Legal, Scientific, Management, Computer, etc. student then you must remember that others in the debate may be “experts” in another field of study. Unfair definitions would include things like why the case of Smith versus Jones is more important to company law than Ryan versus Kelly (these are just examples, I have no idea if these cases even exist).

- The Leader of the Opposition may challenge the definition if it violates the rules. The Leader of the Opposition should clearly state that he or she is challenging the definition. The Leader of the Opposition should substitute an alternative definition after challenging the definition of the Prime Minister.
- Speeches will be seven minutes in duration (this should be signaled by two strikes of the gavel). Speakers exceeding this may be penalized but should never be substantially less than this. In general you should speak for at least 6:45 and generally no more than 7:20-7:30. Ideally stay on your feet until you hear the 7th min bell then finish (i.e. Mr. Speaker sir, I beg to) and be in your seat by 7:15. Your times will be recorded by the timekeeper and given to the adjudicators as they leave to make their decision.
- Remember you do not necessarily have to believe the side of the motion you are on. You just have to make it appear as though you strongly believe in it for 7 min. In competitive debates you will have very little choice as to which side of a motion you get.
- Points of Information (question directed to the member speaking) may be asked between the end of the first minute and the 6 minute mark of the speech (speeches are given seven minutes in duration – this period will be signaled by one strike of the gavel at the first minute and one strike of the gavel at the sixth minute). To ask a Point of Information, a member should stand. The Member may place one hand on his or her head and extend the other to the member speaking. The member may announce that they would like to ask a “Point of Information” or use other words to this effect. The person who is speaking may allow the offeror to make the point of information or may decline to take the point of information. Points of information should not exceed 15 seconds in length. The Member who is speaking may ask the person asking the point of information to sit down where the offeror has had a reasonable opportunity to be heard and understood. Members should attempt to answer at least two points of information during their speech. Members should also offer points of information. Points of Information will be assessed according to the effect they have had on the persuasiveness of the case of both the members answering the point of information and the member offering the point of information.
- Points of Order and Points of Personal Privilege are not permitted. Points of order concerning the procedure of the debate must be addressed to the chair. These can be brought at any time and take priority over all other speeches. However, these are only used in exceptional circumstances when the rules and standing orders are being abused and the speaker making the point must be certain that the point of order is appropriate. In British Parliamentary there is no such thing as Points of Personal Privilege (which are used in the US/Canada). At Worlds/European it is made clear to the competitors in briefing that ONLY points of information can be offered. Repeated attempts to offer any other sort of Point can be heavily penalized by the adjudicators.
- Speakers must observe parliamentary language (i.e. bad language is not permitted).
- The use of props is not permitted in a debate.
- Be careful to avoid leaving statements hanging in mid-air. If you say something important back it up. Just because you know something is true and where it came from, that doesn’t mean the

audience/adjudicators know where it came from and why it's true. To a certain degree the safest bet is to assume that the audience know little or nothing about the subject.

- If you can use humour it can be extremely effective in a debate. You can ridicule and destroy an opponent's whole speech with a one-line joke attacking it. But don't go over the top, while humour helps, adjudicators may not be impressed by stand up routine with little substance. Although humour can be an advantage, don't worry if you can't crack a joke to save your life (or speech). You'll be surprised at the number of speakers who have to really struggle to include humour in a speech while others do it with ease.
- You don't have to be a genius for facts and figures to do well. If you can remember an example or fact which you researched to back up your argument, use it. However, if you get stuck and can't remember the exact details of the fact you want to use, don't worry about it. If the underlying details of the report, research, etc. are correct then chances are you will not be challenged and the point will be made. If an opposing member corrects you and gives you the correct name of the report, researcher, institute, etc. then they are an idiot for backing up your case.
- Heckling is also common in some debates. This involves members of the audience offering some good-humoured abuse to the competitors. However, there is a fine line between heckling and barracking and members of the audience should remember to respect the audience. Heckling can be scary at first but you will soon get used to it.
- The last speaker on each side is expected to sum up his/her side's argument and rebut or refute the arguments of the other side. Generally this speaker will not add a great deal of new information to the debate.
- Rebuttal is vital in any competitive speech. Any argument left unchallenged is allowed to stand. The later you come in a debate the more rebuttal you must use. Rebuttal basically involves ripping the opposing side's argument apart and exposing its weak points. However, don't forget to make your own argument and ideally use that to rebut. It is important to also point out that unlike the style of debating in some countries you do not have to defeat every one of the opponents' points (but of course all the Key ones must be knocked down). If the Government makes 19 points and you only manage to hammer 17 in the time allowed then you will win and any attempt by the Government to point out that 2 of their arguments are left standing is basically grasping at straws.

The adjudication

- The debate should be adjudicated by a panel of at least three adjudicators, where this is possible.
- At the conclusion of the debate, the adjudicators should confer and the teams, from the first placed to the last placed.
- There should be no verbal adjudication and the results of the debate should not be released.
- At the conclusion of the debate, the adjudicators should rank the teams from first place to last place:
 - first placed teams should be awarded three points;
 - second placed teams should be awarded two points;
 - third placed teams should be awarded one point; and
 - fourth placed teams should be awarded zero.
- Teams may receive zero points where they fail to arrive at the debate more than five minutes after the scheduled time for debate without reasonable cause.

- Teams may receive zero points where the adjudicators unanimously agree that the Member has (or Members have) discriminated against another debater on the basis of religion, sex, race, colour, nationality, sexual preference, social status or disability.
- Adjudicators should confer upon team rankings. Where a unanimous decision cannot be reached after conferral, the decision of the majority will determine the rankings. where a majority decision cannot be reached, the Chair of the panel of adjudicators will determine the rankings.

Marking the debate

- The marks awarded to member and team should reflect the adjudicators' impression of debate.
- The marks awarded to a team should be the total of both members' marks when added together.
- The chair should allocate the marks to members and teams in consultation with the other members of the majority. Where the Chair dissents from the majority decision, he or she will nominate another to allocate marks in consultation with the remainder of the majority.
- Marks should be accorded the following interpretation:

In BP there are two categories that you are judged on as a speaker. Matter is the content of your speech, and manner is how you present that content. Matter and manner are weighted equally. The lists include some of the more common elements of matter and manner, but are not exhaustive.

Matter Includes:

- Substantive arguments for your side
- Rebuttal arguments
- Case Studies / Facts
- POIs

Manner Includes:

- Humor
- Appropriate language
- Engaging the audience

Matter	Manner	Total	Meaning
50	50	100	Flawless
47½	47½	95	Excellent
45	45	90	Very good
42½	42½	85	Good
40	40	80	Above average
37½	37½	75	Average
35	35	70	Below average
32½	32½	65	Poor
30	30	60	Very poor
27½	27½	55	Bad
25	25	50	Very bad

2004 CUSID BP Debating Championships

Mini BP Style Guide: Issues for Canadian Debaters

edited and compiled by Rahool Agarwal

This is not intended to be a comprehensive guide to debating in British Parliamentary style for Canadians. It is simply the aggregation of comments I received from several CUSID debaters (thanks, guys!) who have had success at Worlds. I have simply put the information together, with a few observations of my own along the way. Hopefully, this is helpful in preparing for Ottawa Worlds Prep, BP Nats, and Worlds. If you are looking for an introductory guide to debating in BP, it is probably best to check out Colm Flynn's website:

www.debating.net/flynn.

1. Making Good Arguments

Debating always starts and ends with making good, compelling arguments. That, I think, is quite self-explanatory. However, often times what constitutes a good argument in Canada may not necessarily be received quite as well in BP debating. To be fair, at the end of the day all that matters in any debate round is what the judge thinks of your arguments. Nonetheless, there are some general observations that can be made about the difference between CP and BP with respect to argumentation.

The most consistent comment that I received from successful Worlds debaters was that good arguments in BP require substantial amounts of development and analysis. What often happens in CP is debaters make shallow, "one-liner" type arguments (sometimes referred to as the "shotgun" approach) that remain part of the round and the adjudication. In BP, this is not the case. Judges are looking for sophisticated, "deeper" arguments. In fact, many judges will simply ignore arguments they felt were irrelevant or poorly made. It is recommended debaters choose 2 or 3 broader arguments that require a longer time to develop and that are generally more "meaty." Use examples and evidence to support your arguments. Take the time to place the argument in the context of the round and the issue, demonstrating how it is relevant. Essentially, show off how smart you are, not how fast you can speak.

2. Picking the Right Argument

Many debaters will speak of the importance of strategy in BP debating, ie. shutting teams or speakers out, "taking the second" by hiding from strong teams, etc. This, I think, is not exactly accurate. The key to the "strategic" dimension of BP is finding out where the most important arguments or issues are and then moving your team as close to that area as possible. It is true that strategy plays a role, but only in so far as it allows your team to stake out the important analytical ground in the debate. Most successful BP debaters frown on shutting teams out or avoiding strong teams just for the sake of doing so. Rather, it is better to engage the best teams in the round on the best and most interesting arguments—if that results in a team being excluded, then so be it. In addition to making "good" arguments (see above), take the time to think about which arguments you want to make and choose the most compelling. Basically, make yourself as relevant as possible.

3. Knowledge

Much has been said of “knowing stuff” in order to be successful. Obviously, having a lot of knowledge will be helpful, as it would be in any debating round. That being said, many debaters have done very well without doing any in advance preparation, and many debaters have not done well in spite of doing lots of preparation. Many debaters think having knowledge is essential, while some think it is simply a bonus. I tend to think that a good debater will remain a good debater at Worlds regardless of her knowledge level, but preparing simply reduces the chance of running into something you would otherwise not be prepared for. In the end, know your own capacity. It is fair to say at least 50% of the motions at Worlds will have to do with international political issues. Many teams from other countries will have literally bags of information they cart around. If you want to ensure you know about the issues, it may be worthwhile to spend some time reading magazines or newspapers, or watching news broadcasts. Or even preparing a “Worlds binder.”

If you are going to prepare, make sure to do it right. If you want to make a binder or something equivalent, know how to use it. Don't put stuff in there unless you or your partner has read it and understand it. You have got to understand the material that you are preparing, and understand it in the context of a debating round. Perhaps brainstorm a list of potential issues that might come up *and that are debatable*, and then organize your research around that list. Most importantly, do not become reliant on your research. Remember, debating is about your analytical and critical thinking skills, not what you can read off a piece of paper (it may just be that the piece of paper helps your critical thinking and analysis).

4. Taking a Position

An essential part of BP debating is being clear on what your “team” position or stance is in the debate. No matter what position you are in, you will only be better served for staking out a clear, discernible position. The judges should be able to say at the end of the round, “that team stood for [blank]”. That position should be able to be stated in 1 or 2 sentences, and it should be obvious. Now, that does not mean in Opposition you must run a counter-case or new policy. Rather, just be clear on what principle you are standing for—it could be the status quo, a new proposal, or simply that the Government plan is flawed. But make sure to take the position and not waver.

Part of taking clear position, or standing on a principle, or planting a flag, or whatever, is being consistent. In CP, especially in Opposition, debaters often “cut their partners loose” and are not penalized. The LO can stand up and make 7 new arguments, perhaps mention a word the MO said, and still win. In BP, it is essential to back up your teammate by supporting the broad stance he or she took in the first speech. I know this sounds pretty straightforward, but many good debaters still make this mistake.

Finally, all debaters commented on the need for themes. When staking out a position, ensure that position advances a general principle, concept, idea, or—yes, that's correct—theme. Also, when making arguments in support of that position, ensure they all relate to that general principle or theme. Sometimes in CP, teams will just throw a whole bunch of arguments on the table and see what happens. Unless you can create a broader unifying theme tying everything together, be wary of such an approach in BP.

5. Case-building in First Proposition

One thing everybody mentioned was case-building as First Proposition. First off, remember that dealing with straight motions is difficult for everybody. You don't have three

days to prepare a case—it's going to be somewhat harder to manage than a squirrely case in CP. The key is to know what strategy to implement when presented with straight motion. Two main strategies were identified: 1) running a wide open, straight up, super-contentious case, and 2) narrowing or limiting the debate. Now, I think we all know that doing the former is more fun and more true to the spirit of debating. However, you must be careful. A lot of people will say, "going balls-up, that's the way to go." That's fine, but you have to ask yourself, am I exposing myself too much to opposition benches? If you feel confident that you know where the debate is going to go, and you can respond in an appropriate way, do it. At the same time, do not be afraid to limit the debate if you feel you are capable of doing so. Many teams at Worlds are very successful when employing this model.

One debater gave me a good example of such narrowing. The motion is THW force news reporters to reveal their sources. First proposition limits the debate by arguing that only those sources that are able to identify and help convict international war criminals should be revealed by the media, with the stipulation that sources will have ready access to protection programs.

The major problem with this approach is that Canadian teams have very little practice doing this type of case-building. I have no hesitation in saying that this is very large trouble spot for Canadians at Worlds, and we need more practice. If you are going to Worlds, I sincerely recommend looking at motions from past Worlds and sketch out how you would argue the motions from 1st Prop.

6. Back-half Debating

For debaters new to BP, the second-half positions can often be quite difficult. While the only way to become more comfortable in the back-half is practice, here are two important pieces of advice that should provide some assistance:

(a) Extensions

When you are either 2nd Prop or 2nd Opp, you are expected to have an "extension." All that means is that you have to bring something new to the debate. It could be a new argument, a new perspective on the round, a deepening of arguments presented in the front half—it could be any number of things. I think the general rule is: contribute something new and interesting to the round that is not inconsistent with what your "partner team" has said. That may be too broad of a formulation, but it is the best I can do without listing off a hundred different examples. Remember two things: (1) be very clear on what your extension is—judges do not want to have "find" your extension amongst a pile of rubble, and if they have to do that it will undoubtedly count against you; and (2) the judges know you have had an extra half an hour to think about the issue—hit the yet-untouched obvious arguments, if there are any, and think of something good to say as well. It is kind of unfair, but judges expect a little more from you because you have had so much time to think.

(b) Summary or Whip Speeches

The last speaker on both sides are the Whips, and are expected to give a "summary" speech. The Government Whip is allowed to introduce some new positive matter, while the Opposition Whip cannot. Now, a summary speech does not mean literally summarizing the whole debate. Your goal is still to try and win the debate. In that sense, I think of it more as like a big-long Prime Minister's rebuttal. Your job or "role" is to identify what the major issues and arguments were in the debate, and to boil the discussion down to those issues and arguments. While doing that, you may realize

that one team contributed nothing to the round. In CP, if say the MO said nothing, you might just ignore the speech altogether and pretend it didn't happen. In BP, some judges will let you do that while others might not, claiming you have not adequately summarized the debate. My suggestion is to at least mention the team, say they have contributed nothing, and then move on. At least you are covering your bases.

There are two main approaches to a summary: (1) a team-by-team approach, finishing with your team's matter and why you win, or (2) a thematic approach, organizing your speech into major themes or questions that have been discussed in the debate. I personally think the thematic approach is much more effective, and much easier to organize. However, do whatever is comfortable for you, but remember your goal is to WIN (or not get a 4th).

7. Miscellaneous

There are also some miscellaneous issues that a number of people flagged.

Practice

As I alluded to before, practice is paramount in BP debating. Don't get me wrong—some people have just walked into Worlds or a BP tournament with very little prior experience and done very well. Chances are you will not do that. Therefore you need to practice. There is only so much you can read about debating, especially BP. In order to get better, you need to get inside a round and see how the mechanics work. There is not much more I can say about that.

Organization, Roadmapping, and "the flow"

One thing to keep in mind in BP debating—and any debating, for that matter—is that organization is **always** good. Some experienced BP debaters will talk about how BP debating lends itself to more free-flowing, less organized speeches. This is true—when compared to CP. In CP, debating has become somewhat formulaic. A person could stand up, say "I will construct, rebut, and reconstruct" and get a 38. In BP, especially at Worlds, there is no real formula. You don't have to do your speech a certain way. Obviously, you need meet basic requirements, which includes things like having an identifiable extension and doing a summary in the whip speech. However, you don't need to apply a formula to your speeches. Further, there is no such thing as "the flow" in BP. Judges are not looking to see whether you have hit all the points on their flowsheet. Rather, they are looking for who made the most compelling arguments with the most persuasive style. That being said, having a roadmap is very beneficial. In a round with 4 teams, it is essential for you to clearly demonstrate for your judges where you are planning to go. You don't have to spend 2 minutes outlining your speech, but you can let the judges know what the broad theme is and what your arguments are going to be.

"Staying in the round"

The use of POIs is not an added bonus in BP—it is a necessity. The "take-two, give-two" rule we use in Canada is generally the same in BP, but POIs are much more important in BP. When you are in the front-half, you want to make sure your matter stays relevant. When you are in the back-half, you want to draw attention to your team and your matter. The only way to stay active throughout the entirety of the debate is with POIs. It's pretty simple. Get up lots and ask good questions that relate to your team's "case" or position. Even if you are not getting your questions taken, get up anyway and look active. One of the worst things a judge can see is someone just sitting there and looking uninterested.

If you have any further questions about BP debating, the best time to ask will be at the debaters' briefing at either Ottawa or Hart House, or even Worlds. However, please feel free to contact me as well at rahoor.agarwal@utoronto.ca. If I cannot answer your question, I will find someone who can, as well ensure that it is addressed in the briefing at Hart House if necessary.