

Congressional Debate Procedures

There will be one round and students will debate two bills/resolutions per round. Students can give a second speech on a bill or resolution only if time allows, and everyone in the chamber has had a chance to speak.

Speakers must stand up to be recognized to speak or ask questions. In order to vote, students should stand up as well.

Presiding officers (POs) will be high school students provided by the tournament. That way students can focus on their speeches and learn by example.

Students should give speeches of 3 minutes (with 10 seconds grace period) in length either in affirmation or in negation of the bill or resolution being debated.

After a student completes their 3 minute speech, the presiding officer calls on other students to ask short questions of the speaker who has just spoken, with only one question per each student being called upon at any one time. However, that same student may ask another question(s) once other students who have not asked questions have gone and there is still time left in the questioning period.

The speaker answers those questions very briefly (generally about 10 seconds per response). The questioning period goes on for 1 minute for the first affirmative speech and the first negative speech and 1 minute for every speaker afterwards regardless if it is an affirmative or negative speech with as many students as possible asking questions.

The students are permitted to motion to extend the time of the questioning period, **but this is relatively rare in elementary school**. The motion should be structured as follows: "I motion to extend the questioning period by (state by what amount of time, usually by 1 minute or 30 seconds)." The motion must then be seconded and voted upon by the chamber. If it receives a majority of the votes in the chamber, then it is passed.

This speech process continues back and forth (affirmation speeches, then negation speeches in a cycle) until the students decide to vote on the bill (or table it for possible later additional discussion).

Presiding officers are required to follow standard recency/precedence procedures. First priority is given to speakers who have given the fewest speeches.

Recency, precedence, and questions reset between bills/resolutions.

In addition, the use of any electronic devices such as laptop computers, iPads, and/or cell phones during Congressional debate rounds is not permitted, but students are allowed to have legal pads to take any notes.