



World Schools Debate **Format** Explained.

For students and parents meeting World Schools for the first time. Learn who speaks when, how long each speech lasts, what a Point of Information is, and what each speaker is expected to do.

The big picture

World Schools debate is a team format built around a single motion. One team is the **Proposition** (also called Government) and the other is the **Opposition**. Each team has **three speakers** in a given round. Teams may bring more than three members to a tournament, but only three can speak in any one debate, and the others may help prepare beforehand but cannot communicate with the speakers once the debate starts.

The format blends prepared and impromptu debating, rewards clear speaking and real-time engagement with the other side, and is judged on how persuasive each team is overall, not on technical jargon.

Always check your tournament

The times below match the National Speech & Debate Association (NSDA) World Schools guidance. Some leagues and tournaments adjust details such as prep time or reply order, so read your event's rules before the round.

Speech order and times

ORDER	SPEAKER	LENGTH	POIS ALLOWED?
1	First Proposition	8 minutes	Yes (minutes 1 to 7)
2	First Opposition	8 minutes	Yes (minutes 1 to 7)
3	Second Proposition	8 minutes	Yes (minutes 1 to 7)
4	Second Opposition	8 minutes	Yes (minutes 1 to 7)
5	Third Proposition	8 minutes	Yes (minutes 1 to 7)
6	Third Opposition	8 minutes	Yes (minutes 1 to 7)
7	Opposition reply	4 minutes	No
8	Proposition reply	4 minutes	No

Notice the order flips for reply speeches: the **Opposition replies first**, and the Proposition gets the last word. Each reply is given by either the first or the second speaker of that team, not the third.

Points of Information in one minute

A **Point of Information (POI)** is a short question or comment, kept to about 15 seconds, offered by a member of the opposing team while someone else is speaking. The first and last full minute of each 8-minute speech are protected, so POIs can only be offered between the 1:00 and 7:00 marks. The speaker may accept or politely decline. NSDA norms say a speaker usually takes about two POIs per speech. There are no POIs during replies.

What each speaker does

SPEAKER	MAIN JOBS
1st Proposition	Define the motion, outline any model or policy, preview how the team splits its arguments, deliver the first arguments
1st Opposition	Accept or challenge the definition, preview the team split, answer the Proposition, deliver the first Opposition arguments
2nd speakers	Rebuild their own case, answer the opponent before them, extend the team's arguments
3rd speakers	Focus mostly on responding to the other side and comparing the two cases; new main arguments are risky unless the team announced them in its split
Reply speakers	Step back and explain why your team won the debate: the key clashes, how the cases compare. No new arguments

Quick-start checklist for a first round

- ☐ I can name my side (Proposition or Opposition) and my speaker position.
- ☐ I know my speech length and when POIs are allowed.
- ☐ My team has agreed on a split of arguments between speakers.
- ☐ I have a plan for taking at least one POI.
- ☐ I know whether I am replying, and who prepares that speech.
- ☐ I have a watch or timer that makes no noise.

Want a plan built around your debater?

Scholar Coach offers a free consultation for families who want help choosing the right format and building a practice routine. Book through the link below.

Built from public guidance: NSDA USWSDI Manual (2023) · NSDA World Schools Norms (2023) · NSDA World Schools Adjudicator Guide. Rules change by league and tournament, so always confirm against your tournament invitation and current league rules.

NOTES

Want a plan built around **your** debater?

Book a free consultation. The short intake takes about a minute and opens right away.

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