

Debating at Chennai Worlds 2014¹

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I. Introduction

This briefing exists to outline how Chennai Worlds 2014 works. The style of debating used at the World Championships uses a small set of rules and tries to focus, as much as possible, on arguments about the motion set for each round.

Before we go any further it is very important to review how the *competition* in the debate works.

*Judges assess which team did the best job at **persuading them** that the motion, in the context in which it was discussed during the round, ought to be affirmed or rejected. Judges do this as an **'informed global citizen'** and consider the strength of the arguments that each team presented. While doing so, judges apply a **small set of technical rules**.*

The rest of this document is simply an examination of the various parts of the above statement, along with some comments on the logistics of the tournament.

II. British Parliamentary Format

When discussing rules, we'll outline what the rule says, what it does not say, and then how judges should assess rule infringements. Keep in mind while reading all of the following that the *aim* of the rules is to facilitate logical argument, not to constrain or displace it.

For a full set of the formatting rules, please see our separate briefing on the British Parliamentary format.

¹ With very many thanks to the Adjudication Team from De La Salle University WUDC 2012 and Berlin WUDC 2013 for this document. Our amendments have been few and minor.

III. Role Fulfillment

a) What is Role fulfillment?

Role fulfillment, in brief, is the name given to the particular duties given to each team on the table, by dint of their position, above and beyond the general duty to 'make persuasive arguments'. These duties exist to ensure fairness.

For the sake of this tournament, we define the aim of each team to **persuade** the judges to affirm or reject the motion. Role fulfillment, then, is the **context in which that persuasion must take place**, i.e. the boundaries that allow each team a fair chance to persuade the judges.

In football ('soccer') a team wins the game by scoring the most goals. But a player must obey certain rules, including those pertaining to conduct, boundaries, and the use of their hands. A football team doesn't win the game by keeping the ball in bounds more frequently or by exemplary conduct, but the rules of the game will define which attempts to score and prevent goals 'count'. For example, a footballer who picks the ball up and carries it into the opposing team's goal will not be credited with a goal. Similarly, a debater who gives an excellent fifteen-minute speech, or submits a persuasive essay or a set of visual aids will not be entitled to credit for doing so, *regardless of how persuasive* the fifteen-minute speech, essay, or visual aids would have been in conveying their reasons for affirming or rejecting the motion. Doing so involves breaking the rules, and cannot entitle them to credit. Role fulfillment is the necessary but not sufficient condition for a team to make persuasive arguments.

b) The Duties of Role Fulfilment

Broadly speaking, the duties associated with role fulfillment are as follows:

- (1) In first proposition, to define the debate (explained in Section IV).
- (2) For the extension speakers, to extend the debate (explained in Section V).
- (3) For all teams, to ensure that their arguments are consistent with all other arguments made by themselves, their teammates, and the other team on their side of the debate (contradiction is referred to as 'knifing').
- (4) For summary speakers, not to add new substantive arguments (explained in Section VII).
- (5) For all speakers, to take at least one point of information during their speeches and to offer points of information on a regular basis (explained in Section VIII).

- (6) To demonstrate proper courtesy to fellow speakers, judges, and tournament officials at all times.
- (7) To speak within the time frame allotted.

c) Addressing Failures in Role Fulfillment

When deciding as a judge how to handle a team's failure to fulfil their role, the precise remedy will depend upon what element of role fulfillment was violated and how grievous the violation was.

The general rule for violations of role fulfillment is that speakers are to lose any advantage that violating their role might have given them and are only to be penalised to the extent to which their role fulfilment created difficulties in the wider debate.

Some worked examples below:

Violation of Role Fulfillment	Suggested Response from the Judge
Adding new substantive arguments in summary speech.	The speaker receives no credit for any new arguments. Any time spent making new arguments is deemed to be time wasted.
Failure to take a POI (or a point of clarification) during a speech, if offered several in the last minute of unprotected time (between 5.00-6.00mins).	<p>Failure to take a POI generally indicates a reduced level of engagement, and judges should penalize teams for that lack of engagement. While this does NOT mean that a team will take an automatic fourth for failing to take a POI, it can (and should) be an important factor in close calls.</p> <p>If a team has clearly won a debate, however, the failure to take a POI should NOT change the team rankings. It may, however, reduce the margin of victory.</p>

<p>Contradicting a previous team on one's own bench.</p>	<p>Time spent making arguments that contradict material presented by the previous team on the same bench is to be judged as time wasted and judges should not consider it as adding any value to debate.</p>
<p>Speaking for longer than seven minutes.</p>	<p>The speaker receives no credit for material brought after seven minutes and fifteen seconds, and judges should not bother writing down any material offered after this fifteen-second grace period. If they speak for longer than 7.45, the speaker should be actively punished.</p>

N.B. This does **NOT** mean that a violation of role fulfillment results in a team taking a last. It is perfectly possible for a team to take first place despite having violated role fulfillment. It just doesn't help you win. All strengths and weaknesses of each team have to be viewed relatively to each other. There are no 'automatic fourths.'

IV. Defining the Debate

a) What is a legitimate definition?

The first government speaker (a.k.a. the Prime Minister) defines the debate. This means they tell the rest of the people in the room exactly what will be debated. They need to say whether there is a *policy* (i.e. whether someone is doing something) and what that policy is, if it exists. Remember, **debates are about the motion as defined by the opening government.** It is not about what you thought the words in the motion meant.

The definition forms the subject matter of the debate. If THW Privatise Education is defined as ‘making all universities privately run, for-profit business,’ (a fair definition) then that is what the debate is about for the remainder of the eight speeches, regardless of what the speakers or judges expected to happen when they heard the motion. Teams would still be entitled to make ‘general’ arguments against privatisation (e.g. ‘privatisation of all public services is bad’) provided that those still speak to the model. General arguments, like any arguments, must give the judge reasons to support or oppose the policy. To the extent to which they do so, they are successful.

Generally speaking, the motions that we’re going to set at Chennai Worlds will make it clear as to the direction we want the debate to take. That’s not to say that there will be no creative room in the definitions that teams try to use, but it does mean that definitions can generally be kept fairly brief (usually between 15-60 seconds) and still enable all teams to understand the subject matter.

In some cases, merely stating the motion can constitute sufficiently ‘defining the debate’ as that sentence may be enough to do all of the above. On the other hand, the definition might involve a many-pointed model or some extensive caveating/parameter setting. It may be that the same motion could be usefully defined in *either* of these ways, producing different legitimate debates. In other words, OG needs to do enough to explain what the person, organisation, group of people etc. is doing.

It is not the job of the judge to attack the definition. If the definition *is* successfully attacked as being insufficiently explanatory, the OG team should be penalised **only to the extent to which a lack of detail prevents teams from making arguments.** Judges should give other teams the benefit of the doubt relative to OG where such a deficiency poses a problem and allow other teams to

'read-in' any fair and reasonable assumption about the definition that the first proposition team hasn't fully spelled out.

Worked Example: THW Allow Prisoners to Vote

Example 1:

PM: 'We define this motion as allowing prisoners the right to take part in elections.'

LO: 'The Prime Minister has failed to confine this motion to adults in prison. Thus we must assume that children who are imprisoned will be allowed to vote, which is wrong as children are unfit to vote.'

DPM: 'That's clearly silly. Obviously child prisoners won't be allowed to vote.'

The Judge Should Conclude. The DPM is correct. The assumption made by the LO is unreasonable and should be rejected. The team in first opposition should receive no credit for making a frivolous challenge.

Example 2:

PM: 'We define this motion as allowing prisoners the right to take part in elections.'

LO: 'The Prime Minister has failed to tell us which sorts of prisoners are allowed to vote. This definition is illegitimate because it doesn't tell us which, and that might include murderers!'

DPM: 'That's silly! Of course our model doesn't extend to murderers and the like, that would be completely unreasonable!'

The Judge Should Conclude. Neither the DPM nor the LO are correct. There was nothing *wrong* with the Prime Minister's definition, but it is reasonable to assume that by using the term "prisoners," without any caveats, the PM meant to include all prisoners. It is not fair for the DPM to try to caveat this definition in her speech. Opposition is free to make arguments about *why* allowing murderers to vote would be a bad idea, but pointing out that the PM's definition did not specifically mention murderers does not make it a bad or illegitimate definition.

b) What parameters can I set on a debates?

As outlined above, teams have some freedom in defining the debate, but there

are certain things you may not do. You may not time or place set a debate (e.g. you cannot turn THW allow abortion into a debate about whether the judges in Roe v Wade should have reached the decision they did then).

You should debate at the **level of generality** implied in the motion. It is **legitimate** to exclude anomalous examples ('we're banning cosmetic surgery like the motion says, but not for burns victims'). It is **not legitimate** to include only anomalous examples ('we're banning cosmetic surgery like the motion says, but only for children'). Nor is it legitimate to narrow debates to one country, or one isolated instance of a wider phenomenon described in the motion. If we wish a debate to be solely about a specific country (or a specific set of countries) we will state this in the motion.

c) When and how can I challenge a definition?

We strongly advise that teams do *not* challenge definitions OR if they do, as far as possible, that they attempt to continue debating the motion the way it was defined anyway.

If the definition provided by the opening government is illegitimate, then it can be challenged. This must be done during the **first opposition speech**. The criterion for legitimacy is liberal: '*is this one reading of the motion that does not do violence to the words in the motion, including not unduly narrowing the scope of those words*'. If the leader of the opposition's speech passes without a definitional challenge, no other speech is allowed to raise a definitional challenge. Only if opening government's definition is **tautological or forces a team into a position that is unconscionable or impossible** to argue can anyone else change the debate after this point.

If the motion *is* challenged, and it does change, then judges must weigh the contributions teams made to the debate *as they found it at the time*. That is, if OO won very clearly, and made substantial contributions to, the debate that OG set, but CG successfully changed the definition based on the fact that it was tautologically untrue and made a significant contribution to this 'new' debate, then we must compare OO's contribution to the debate they were involved in with CG's contribution to the debate that they were involved in. We should **not** disregard OO because 'the debate became about something else'. This is not their fault. Of course, it may be that moments where OO and CG engage directly (say, on POIs) may be particularly important to the comparison.

If a team challenges the definition, they must explain their challenge. That is, they must argue that the definition is illegitimate and explain why. In challenging the definition, the leader of the opposition has two choices:

- (1) First, she can complain about the motion having been defined unfairly but proceed to debate it anyway. This is preferable if the motion proposed is not a fair reading of the motion but is still debateable.
- (2) Second, she can discard the motion and redefine it. She should tell the judge and the other debaters what a proper definition would be and should then proceed to argue against that case.

Don't punish teams for having a 'definitional debate'. This might be boring, but being boring doesn't automatically imply that you lose.

N.B. Please bear in mind that definitional challenges are incredibly rare and more a 'last resort' than a first-line of defence against a proposition case.

Worked Example: *THW Allow prisoners to vote*

Example One:

PM: We will allow all prisoners who have less than one week remaining in their prison sentence to vote in elections.

LO: This is clearly unfair as a definition of the motion as it unduly narrows the scope of the debate, but we'll oppose it anyway.

The Judge Should Conclude: The Leader of Opposition has made a correct challenge to the motion and the Prime Minister should be penalised.

Example Two:

PM: We would allow all wrongfully-accused prisoners to vote, after having released them from prison.

LO: This is a completely unacceptable narrowing and twisting of the definition which creates a completely impossible debate. We're redefining: the correct debate allows prisoners of all sorts to vote, some of whom may have committed crimes. We oppose such a policy for the following reasons...

The Judge Should Conclude: The first opposition team has done the right thing by replacing the unworkable definition with a workable one. Teams should follow

first opposition's lead and debate the motion as they have set forth.

V. The status quo and the opposition

a) What is the role of the opposition teams?

So, government gets to decide what they want to *do* (i.e. a policy) or what they want to *say is true* (if a motion does not require a policy). What about opposition?

In a debate about a policy, the opposition must say that we shouldn't do it; that is, that *something is better than doing this policy*.

This can be the status quo in some countries, or it can be something which is currently done nowhere. It may be described as 'doing nothing' rather than 'doing the policy' (though naturally, teams doing this don't necessarily recommend wholesale government inaction, but are running the comparative 'whatever other broadly sensible relevant policies one is carrying out, the addition of this one makes things worse'). So long as opp provide reasons not to do the policy, this is fine. There are many ways for someone to disagree with a policy, and – as long as they *actually constitute disagreements* – the judge should be willing to accept them.

Keep in mind that at an international tournament like this, there is no domestic policy status quo of significance. There are, obviously, material conditions in the world which are relevant to the debate.

b) Can I provide a 'counter-proposal'?

There is no requirement to have a 'counter-prop' – the vast majority of debates involve first opposition simply disagreeing that the policy proposed is a good one.

A counter-proposal which is **not mutually exclusive** with the policy is **not acceptable**. This isn't disagreeing with the policy.

Worked Example:

Motion: THW Invade Syria.

First proposition: We believe that the United States should invade Syria at once and install a new government.

First opposition: We believe that the United States should invade Syria at once, but they should also give economic assistance to a new Syrian regime.

The Judge Should Conclude: First Opposition's counterprop is not mutually exclusive with first prop's. First opposition should be penalised for this.

VI. Extension Speeches

a) What is an extension?

The third speaker on each side of the debate (the first speaker on each of the second proposition and the second opposition teams) is responsible for contributing an extension to the debate.

An *extension* is defined as anything that hasn't yet been said by that side of the debate. An extension can take a number of forms including:

- (1) New arguments which have not yet been made in the debate.
- (2) New rebuttal.
- (3) New examples.
- (4) New analysis or explanation of existing arguments.

In short, any material that goes beyond the material presented in the first half – in some sense – constitute an extension.

b) How do you assess extensions?

The requirement of an extension helps us to better understand the second-half's contribution by assigning the third speaker credit *only* for those arguments (or portions of arguments) which are meaningfully different from those which have already been made.

As a result, extension speakers do not defeat the first team on their side of their debate merely by 'having an extension' (any more than first proposition teams win the debate for 'having a definition'). A high-quality extension will bring out material (substantive, responsive or otherwise) that contribute significantly to persuading the judge that the motion should be affirmed or rejected.

VII. Summary Speeches

a) What is a summary speech?

Summary speeches should summarise the debate from the perspective of their side. A good summary speech will note the major disagreements in the debate (points of clash) between the two sides and will make use of the best arguments from *each* team on their side to make their case that the motion ought to be affirmed or rejected.

A summary speaker which makes effective use of arguments that were introduced in the first half should receive credit for doing so, if those arguments are employed successfully. A summary speaker who ignores or minimises arguments made by the first-half is not effectively capturing the debate that occurred, and as a result is likely less persuasive than one who effectively summarizes the debate.

b) Can I make new arguments in a summary speech?

Debating is unfair if teams can make new arguments in the last speeches, to which no one can respond. So they aren't allowed to do that. Proposition summation speakers are also not permitted to make new arguments.

What do we mean by a 'new argument'? Debates are about doing things, or arguing that things are true. Therefore, we mean new reasons to do things, claims that new things will happen, or claims that new things are true.

We DO NOT mean:

- New defences of arguments already made.
- New explanations of previously-made arguments.
- Rebuttal
- New examples to support existing arguments
- Anything the other side can reasonably be expected to understand that team intends from the 3rd speech.

At times, it's often difficult to assess the difference between new rebuttal and analysis (which are permitted) and new arguments (which are not). The good judge will consider whether or not making a claim raises a new issue, to which the other side has no ability to effectively respond.

c) How do you assess new material in 4th speeches

If a team makes a new argument in the 4th speech, ignore it. That is **all you should do**. Don't penalise it, don't make them lose. Just ignore it.

New material in the 4th speech is just bringing material in such a way that it can't be credited. Therefore, teams are advised to avoid wasting their time by doing so.

VIII. Points of Information

a) How do I Offer POIs?

Points of information (POIs) can and should be offered by each speaker in the debate when the other teams are speaking. Every debater on the opposing side should offer at least one point of information during each speech from the other side. They should not offer more than one point of information every 15-20 seconds (barracking) as doing so can be very distracting.

When offering a POI, a speaker should rise and say, 'point of information', 'on that point', 'sir/madam', etc. Debaters who are offering numerous points of information should rise silently to avoid distracting either the speaker or the judge. Debaters should not attempt to distract the attention of either the speaker or the judge when another speaker holds the floor, by carrying on audible conversations with their partner, pulling faces, wild gesticulations, laughter, cries of 'shame!', smacking their lips, exaggerated sighing, or other conduct designed to divert attention away from the speaker.

b) When can I accept a POI?

Points of Information may be offered and accepted from the end of the first minute of a speech (1:00), until the start of the last minute of the speech (6:00). The latest that the speaker can accept a POI is immediately at the six-minute bang (i.e. the start of protected time). A POI cannot be accepted at a later point.

Every debater should accept at least one point of information from the opposing side.

c) How should POIs be judged?

The choice of which team(s) the speaker selects to offer points of information should be integrated into the judge's consideration of whether or not a speaker has engaged well with other teams. When analysing and comparing the arguments that have been made by the teams, the judge must have consideration as to how thoroughly and effectively the teams have engaged with each other. Particularly when making comparisons between second-half and first-half teams on different sides (the 'diagonal'), it is well for the judge to consider the opportunities that first-half teams have had to challenge new material appearing in the other side's extension.

d) What happens if I do not take a POI?

A speaker that fails to take a POI (or a point of clarification) during their speech, should be punished by judges if they were offered several in the last minute of unprotected time (between 5.00-6.00mins). Failure to take a POI generally indicates a reduced level of engagement. While this does NOT mean that a team will take an automatic fourth for failing to take a POI, it can (and should) be an important factor in close calls.

Thus in a very close debate, if the judge is deciding between two comparably matched team, we would generally expect the team that failed to take a POI to place behind the team where each speaker accepted at least one POI. If a team has clearly won a debate, however, the failure to take a POI should NOT change the team's ranking. It may (and probably should) reduce the margin of victory

N.B. If a speaker does not take a point of information but was not given the opportunity to accept a point of information, particularly later in their speech, the judge should waive any penalty normally associated with their failure to take a point of information.

IX. A Brief Word on Equity and Conduct

Speakers and judges are expected to be of upstanding conduct at all times during the tournament. Judges may legitimately decide to penalise speakers and teams who are obnoxious, use rude language, or are otherwise offensive to participants during the debate, whether or not the objectionable conduct exhibited by the speaker rises to the level of a violation of the Equity Policy. You should penalise these violations to the extent to which they make a speaker unpersuasive and/or are unfair on other teams or speakers.

If an equity violation does occur during a round, the maximum penalty that can be levied against a speaker is to reduce their speaker marks to 50.