

World Online Debating Championship (WODC) Rules

Part 1— Introduction

1.1 The format of the debate

1.1.1 Each debate will consist of two teams of as many persons as wish to be involved, up to a maximum of ten (persons will be known as "Wisers").

1.1.2 Each team will have a nominated 'team leader' who will be responsible for the team's entry and will conduct all communication with Debatewise.

1.2 The motion

1.2.1 The motion shall be delivered by Debatewise, and ratified by the Chief Adjudicator.

1.2.2 The motion should be unambiguously worded.

1.2.3 The motion should reflect that the WODC is an international tournament.

1.2.4 The Wisers should debate the motion in the spirit of the motion and the tournament.

1.3 Preparation

1.3.1 At the commencement of the round all motions in that round shall immediately be made public and visible to the proposing team only at this point.

1.3.2 Wisers are permitted to use printed, written and electronic material during preparation and during the debate to inform their cases. However, their arguments must be their own; plagiarism is not allowed and may be penalised by disqualification from the competition.

1.4 Points of Information

1.4.1 Points of Information (questions directed to the opposing side) may be asked at any time but are limited to two per team per debate.

1.4.2 To ask a Point of Information, a wiser should write the point in the 'Join the Debate' section of the debate, preceded by the acronym 'POI'

1.4.3 The opposing team should respond to the Point of Information, also in the 'Join the Debate' section and this should be preceded by 'AnsPOI'.

1.4.4 Points of Information should be assessed in accordance with clause 3.3.4 of these rules.

1.4.5 Points of Order and Points of Personal Privilege are not permitted.

1.5 Timing of the stages

- 1.5.1 Cases and summaries should be written within the following allocated 24 hour 'stages'. These stages comprise:
- a) Stage 1: (hours 0-24) The opening of the debate: the motion is announced to the proposition only and they have 24 hours to make their case. Submissions have a character limit of 20,000 characters.
 - b) Stage 2: (hours 24-48) The proposition's case goes public; the opposition has 24 hours to make their case with a character limit of 20,000 characters.
IMPORTANT: The only chance the opposition has to counter the first set of arguments made by the proposition is during this period. Once these 24 hours are over no further entries will be allowed in that space.
 - c) Stage 3: (hours 48-72) The proposition responds to the opposition's arguments and creates new points of their own.
IMPORTANT: this is the only chance the proposition will have to counter the opposition's points from their first phase.
 - d) Stage 4: (hours 72-96) The opposition responds to any new proposition points and makes new points of their own if they wish.
 - e) Stage 5: (hours 96-120) The announcement via email of the summation period for both sides. Both sides post a summation at the same time.
 - e) Stage 4: (hours 120-144) Adjudication takes place; at 144 hours, the public vote is taken, the result and written adjudications are posted.
- 1.5.2 It is the duty of Debatewise to time the debate and notify team leaders via email at the end of each stage.

1.6 The adjudication

- 1.6.1 The debate should be adjudicated by a panel of two adjudicators. Each adjudicator casts one vote and the public vote counts as one vote.
- 1.6.2 At the conclusion of the debate, the adjudicators should state which team they think was best according to the judging criteria. (see Part 5: The Adjudication).
- 1.6.3 There will be a written adjudication of debates after every round of the tournament. The written adjudication should be delivered in accordance with clause 5.4 of these rules.
- 1.6.4 The public vote on the Debatewise site will be the third adjudicator in deciding the outcome of the debate.
- 1.6.5 The Debatewise vote is based on the main vote at the bottom of the page not the votes after each point.

Part 2 – Definitions

2.1 The definition

- 2.1.1 The proposition must start their case by defining the motion.
- 2.1.2 The definition is an outline of the policy put forward by the proposition, stating who should do what about the issue.
- 2.1.3 The definition should also state the meaning of any terms in the motion which require interpretation.
- 2.1.4 The definition must:
 - (a) have a clear and logical link to the motion - this means that an average reasonable person would accept the link made between the motion and the definition
 - (b) not be self-proving - a definition is self-proving when the case is that something should or should not be done and there is no reasonable rebuttal. A definition is may also be self-proving when the case is that a certain state of affairs exists or does not exist and there is no reasonable rebuttal (these definitions are sometimes referred to as "truisms").
 - (c) not be time set - this means that the debate must take place in the present and that the definition cannot set the debate in the past or the future; and
 - (d) not be place set unfairly - this means that the definition cannot restrict the debate so narrowly to a particular geographical or political location that a participant of the tournament could not reasonably be expected to have knowledge of the place.

Part 3 – Text

3.1 The definition of text

- 3.1.1 Text is the content of the debate. It is the arguments a debater uses to further his or her case and persuade the audience.
- 3.1.2 Text includes arguments and reasoning, examples, case studies, facts and any other material that attempts to further the case.
- 3.1.3 Text includes positive (or substantive) material, counterarguments and also the summary. Text includes designated points of information in the comments section (see 1.4), but not any other comments.

3.2 The elements of text

- 3.2.1 Text should be relevant, logical and consistent.
- 3.2.2 Text should be relevant. It should relate to the issues of the debate: it should support the case being presented and refute the case being presented by the opposing team. The wiser should appropriately prioritise and apportion text to the central issues on which the two sides clash.
- 3.2.3 Text should be logical. Arguments should be developed logically in order to be clear and well reasoned and therefore plausible. The conclusion of all arguments should support the member's case.
- 3.2.4 Text should be consistent. Wisers should ensure that the text they present is consistent within their arguments, by the time the twenty four allocated hours for each stage have passed.
- 3.2.5 Text should be evidenced. There is a referencing facility on the site which can be used to provide footnoted sources and links that support the factual basis for arguments.

3.3 Assessing text

- 3.3.1 The text presented should be persuasive. 'The elements of text' should assist an adjudicator to assess the persuasiveness and credibility of the text presented.
- 3.3.2 Text should be assessed from the viewpoint of the average reasonable person. Adjudicators should analyse the text presented and assess its persuasiveness, while disregarding any specialist knowledge they may have on the issue of the debate.
- 3.3.3 Adjudicators should not allow bias to influence their assessment. Debaters should not be discriminated against on the basis of religion, sex, race, colour, nationality, sexual preference, age, social status or disability.
- 3.3.4 Points of information should be assessed according to the effect they have on the persuasiveness of the cases of both the member answering the point of information and the member offering the point of information.

Part 4 — Manner

4.1 The definition of manner

- 4.1.1 Manner is the presentation of the argument. It is the style and structure a wiser uses to further his or her case and persuade the audience.
- 4.1.2 Manner is composed of many separate elements. Some, but not all, of these elements are listed below.

4.2 The elements of style

4.2.1 Language should be clear and simple. Wisers who use language which is too verbose or confusing may detract from the argument.

4.2.2 Wisers will be adjudicated on the style and language of the debate insofar as it prevents the point of the argument from being understood by a non-expert, multinational audience.

4.3 The elements of structure

4.3.1 The structure includes the structure of the points of the argument and the structure of the overall argument made by the team.

4.3.2 The text published by the team must be structured. The team should organise their text to improve the effectiveness of their overall debate. The team should:

- (a) organise their points into a persuasive, fluent case; and
- (b) maintain a consistent approach to the issues being debated.

4.4 Assessing manner

4.4.1 Adjudicators shall give credit for the clear, simple, organised and consistent exposition of their case. This will ensure that persuasive communication, not proficiency in English, is the basis for adjudicating manner.

4.4.2 Adjudicators should not allow bias to influence their assessment. Members should not be discriminated against on the basis of religion, sex, race, colour, nationality, language (subject to Rule 4.2), sexual preference, age, social status or disability.

Part 5 — The Adjudication

5.1 The role of the adjudicator

5.1.1 The adjudicator must:

- (a) Determine a winner out of two teams in each debate;
- (b) Provide a written adjudication (see Rule 5.4).

5.1.2 Adjudicators should acknowledge that adjudicators on a panel may form different or opposite views of the debate. Adjudicators should therefore base their conclusions exclusively on these rules in order to limit subjectivity and to provide a consistent approach to the assessment of debates.

5.2 Ranking teams

- 5.2.1 Teams will be ranked first and second by each adjudicator.
- 5.2.2 Teams may receive an automatic second place if they fail to provide any text twenty four hours after the motion has been made public.
- 5.2.3 Teams may receive an automatic second place if the adjudicators unanimously agree that one or more of their Wisers have harassed another debater on the basis of religion, sex, race, colour, nationality, sexual preference or disability.
- 5.2.4 Where a unanimous decision is not reached by the adjudicators, the decision of the public vote will determine the rankings. The mark given by the voting on Debatewise shall be given to whichever team gains more votes in the main vote at the bottom of the debate.
- 5.2.5 Where the adjudicators and public vote are both split fifty/fifty, the Chief Adjudicator shall determine the result.
- 5.2.6 The result shall be justified based upon the elements of Text and Manner, as laid out under parts 3 and 4; adjudicators should take a holistic view and produce a result based on the overall impression of the persuasiveness of the two sides.

5.3 Written adjudications

- 5.3.1 Each adjudicator should provide a written adjudication of the debate.
- 5.3.2 The written adjudication should be delivered via email to Debatewise by each member of the adjudication panel.
- 5.3.3 The written adjudication should:
 - (a) identify the order in which the teams were ranked
 - (b) explain the reasons for the rankings of team, ensuring that each team is referred to in this explanation; and
 - (c) provide constructive comments to each team where the adjudication panel believes this is necessary.
- 5.3.4 The written adjudication should not exceed 300 words.
- 5.3.5 The Wisers must not harass the adjudicators following the written adjudication.
- 5.3.6 The Wisers may approach an adjudicator via email for further clarification following the written adjudication; these inquiries must at all times be polite and non-confrontational.