

ENGWEEK 2025



Debates

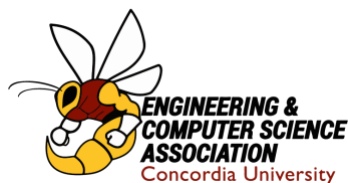
Presented by:

**Concordia Engineering Games
Engineering and Computer science Association Concordia**

Rulebook edited from the 2021+1 Engineering Games Competitions Handbook

Tracy Khawand (VP Sports & Competitions | ECA)

Louis-Charles Penelle (VP Competitions | Engineering Games)



ENGINEERING GAMES
CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

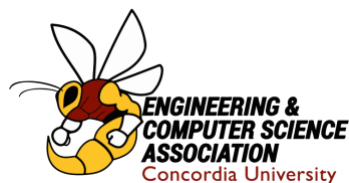
Introduction

Debates come in many forms. Some formats are strict and fussy, others are more open and accessible to the general public. In an engineering context where most debates will take place in an informal and open manner, some flexibility is brought to the structure of the debate competition. The debates here consist of the application of analytical, popularization, and argumentation techniques in a context that is understandable to any individual from the engineering community and comes from very quick thinking and criticism. Since the goal is to evaluate the ability to reason quickly and to demonstrate an outstanding sense of repartee, the participants have only a very short preparation time between learning about the subject and the actual debate.

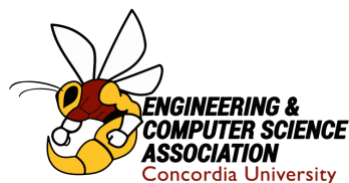
Participants will be evaluated on the relevance of their arguments, the clarity of their ideas, their repartee, the neatness and professionalism of their presentation, their ingenuity, their originality, the structure of their arguments and their eloquence. The debate will be between two teams, the proposal and the opposition. This document will therefore cover the logistics of the competition, the content - such as process, procedural points, decorum and evaluation. The time allowed for the preparation of the argument has been increased to five minutes this year.

Elements and rules of the debate

- One team will represent the government, who is arguing in favor of the proposition, the other will represent the opposition. These positions are drawn at random before the motion is revealed, so that the topic does not influence the teams' positions.
- A plan of argument must be stated by the first speaker of each team during their opening speech. All the elements in the argument plan must be brought forward. It is not possible to add arguments that are not in the original plan.
- All of a team's arguments must be made in their first two speeches. Parties may not introduce a new argument in their conclusion. Opening a new argument that the opposing party will never have a chance to respond to is a serious breach of the spirit of debate. Teams are, however, free to bring in new examples and illustrations or to refute and reconstruct the arguments brought in. However, it is possible to bring a new element if and only if it amplifies or directly opposes an idea previously expressed.
- At all times, speakers must address the Chair, and may not speak directly to the opposing team.
- Debaters owe courtesy and respect to the judges and the chairperson as well as to their opponents. It is not discourteous for a speaker to describe the confusion, error, sloppiness, inadequacy or poor judgment of the opposing team, as long as such remarks do not involve profanity, swearing, abusive or gratuitous characterizations, expressions of a discriminatory nature, or attacks on a person's integrity or appearance.



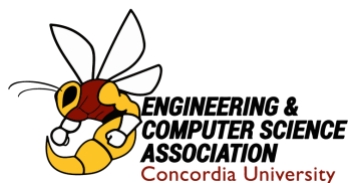
- The participants may not compliment or try to influence the judgement of the judges of the debate. However, they may compliment the timekeeper, as the timekeeper cannot have an impact on the result of the debate.
- Team members who wish to communicate with each other should preferably do so in writing. They may, however, occasionally exchange a few whispers if these are not intended to disturb the current oratory. However, it should be noted that brief interjections used sparingly are permitted; these should be intended to add life to the debate, without being disrespectful to the opponent.
- Questions:
Participants can and should ask questions of opposing speakers. To indicate their willingness to ask a question, the participant must raise their hand clearly and wait for the speaker to grant them the right to ask their question with a hand gesture. If the speaker who has the right to speak does not want to take the question, they should indicate this with a hand signal or a verbal response to that effect. Furthermore, the time taken by the question to be asked is not taken into account by the timekeeper. However, the time taken by the speaker to answer the question is taken into account by the timekeeper. Questions may not be asked in the first 30 seconds or the last 30 seconds of a speech and must not take more than 15 seconds, otherwise the chair will cut the speaker off, and the debate will continue without the question. Questions must be something that can be answered by the speaker. It cannot be used to make an argument, or a rhetorical question. After getting the question, the speaker is also allowed to answer with “I have no answer to this” if they would rather not answer or they don’t know what to answer. However, this is still taken into account by the timekeeper.
- The audience and the participants may show support, contentment, and joy, but this may only be done by raising their hands and shaking them (jazz hands), so as to not impede the judges’ understanding of the speaker’s voice.
- A team clearly and unequivocally attempting to distract the opposing speaker will be subject to severe sanctions on the evaluation grid.



Points of Procedure

To make a point of procedure, a member of the opposing team must stand up, say "point of procedure" in a loud voice, wait for the chairperson to recognize them, and then clearly indicate the nature of the point to the chairperson. Acceptance or rejection of the point of procedure is then voted by each judge, with no consultation between them, who can accept, reject, or be neutral with a thumb up, sideways, or down. If this vote ends in a tie, the director of the competition will decide. This decision is final and cannot be contested. Please note that time is stopped during a point of procedure and will resume when the chair restores the right to speak. The following is a list of procedural points allowed:

- **Truism:** This procedural point is undoubtedly one that can overturn a debate. A case of truism occurs when the proposition is redefined in such a way that a debate cannot take place because it states a fact or a tautology. To raise this procedural point, the team that wants to make it must wait until the speaker who committed the truism has their speech and then report it to the chair. If accepted, the case of truism will give the opposing team the power to redefine the proposal and thus give the opportunity to totally invalidate the speech already made. If it is rejected, the debate will continue with the redefinition chosen.
- **Specific knowledge:** In order to ensure a quality debate and to give all debaters a chance, the debate must be on a topic that is accessible to the average engineering student. Therefore, if an aspect of the redefinition or an argument involves knowledge that the average engineering student does not possess, there is a specific knowledge case. To raise this procedural point, the team may choose to report it to the chair immediately or may wait to do so until the end of the speech of the speaker who committed the specific knowledge. If accepted, it will empower the opposing team to redefine the terms of the specific knowledge and thus give the opportunity to invalidate that portion of the redefinition or for an argument, the chair will ask the offending speaker to withdraw or modify the argument and ask the judges to disregard it. If it is rejected, the debate will continue with the argument made.
- **Misquotation:** If a debater is misquoted by another speaker, they may notify the Chair immediately. If the point is accepted, the Chair will ask the offending speaker to withdraw or amend the quote and ask the judges to disregard the original quote. If it is refused, the debate will continue with the quote as is.
- **New argument:** The responsibility for setting up an argument plan lies with the first speaker. Thus, if a second speaker introduces a topic of argument that was not previously introduced by the first speaker, it is a foul. Additionally, it is strictly forbidden to bring a new argument on a concept not addressed during the debate in the closing speech. To raise this procedural point, the opposing team must immediately report it to the chair, who will stop the debate. If the point is accepted, the chair will ask the offending speaker to withdraw the argument and ask the judges to disregard it. If the point is rejected, the debate will continue, considering the argument made.



- **Unprofessional or offensive behavior:** If a speaker demonstrates unprofessional behavior by being vulgar, inappropriate or simply lacking in class, there is a clear breach of decorum. In this situation, the Chair will ask the offending speaker to correct the situation, as such behavior may result in the team being disqualified if the person refuses to comply.

Resolutions

The Competition Director will decide on the nature of the propositions. They will touch on points on which the average engineering student should be able to defend an opinion without any preparation. Propositions will not include truisms (self-evident truths) and will avoid the use of words of absolute nature such as "all", "everyone" and "always". (e.g., "Let it be resolved that all engineers find math easy" is not a good proposition since there are always exceptions). Once the 2 teams have read the resolution, they will have 5 minutes to prepare for the debate. The nature of the propositions can be very serious or very silly. The debaters are allowed to ask for the question to be repeated or translated to French if they did not understand it the first time.

Preparation

This period lasts five minutes. During this time, the participants may discuss within their team to identify their arguments for the debate. They can note these down on the paper provided. However, the participants are not allowed to use any electronic devices or to consult anyone outside the team during their preparation. The questions are made to be accessible by a normal engineering student, and must not require any specific knowledge, as that would be a point of procedure.

Role of the government

The government should redefine the motion, i.e., reduce the proposition so that the debate is focused on a single major issue. It is important for the government to avoid turning resolutions into truisms (see section on procedural points). The redefinition should also avoid debate on topics that require specific knowledge.

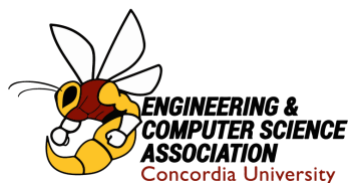
Advantages

- The government can redefine the proposition as it sees fit, without drastically changing the meaning of the terms (e.g., a table cannot become an elephant). This redefinition is intended to hinder the preparation of the opposition.
- The government opens and closes the debate, giving it the first and last words.

Disadvantages

- The government has the burden of proof. This means that they must show beyond a doubt to the judges that the proposition is better than the status quo.

1st speaker: The first speaker of the defense opens the debate. They outline the topic, make appropriate redefinitions, outline the plan of argument, and make the first arguments. They are also the one who closes the debate.



2nd speaker: The role of the second speaker is to refocus the debate and reinforce the position of their team. This person must complete the team's argumentative plan and refute the opposition's arguments.

Role of the opposition

The opposition must counter the proposition by all means. They must create reasonable doubt for the judges that the proposition is less good than the status quo.

Advantages

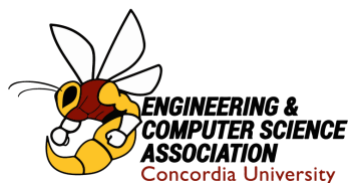
- The opposition does not need to demonstrate the merits of its own position, it can simply content itself by destroying the merits of the opposing position. They must show that the motion has more disadvantages or fewer advantages than the status quo.
- The opposition has the time of the first speaker of the government to refine its argument before taking the stage.

Disadvantages

- Redefinition by the government can seriously undermine the opposition's preparation.

1st speaker: The first speaker of the opposition states their team's position on the proposed subject. They must present their team's argumentative plan, make their arguments and refute the arguments already made. They must also close the opposition's view of the debate.

2nd speaker: The role of the second speaker is to refocus the debate and reinforce the position of their team. They must complete their team's argumentative plan and refute the defense's arguments.



Time announcement

To indicate the time of a speech, the timekeeper has multiple signals:

- **First 30 seconds (the floor is now open to questions):**



- **1 minute:**



- **Last 30 seconds (the floor is now closed to questions):**



- **Last 15 seconds (moving down gradually until 0):**



Extra time

Every speaker is allowed to ask for an extra fifteen seconds at any time during their speech. To do so, they or their teammate must knock on the table. This knock can only be done once per speech.

Structure of the debate:

Preparation

Drawing of positions: < 30 seconds

Disclosure of proposition: < 30 seconds

Preparation of the debate: 5 minutes

Debate

First speaker for the defense: 2 minutes

First speaker of the opposition: 2 minutes

Second speaker of the defense: 2 minutes

Second opposition Speaker: 2 minutes

First opposition speaker for the conclusion: 1 minute

First defense speaker for the conclusion: 1 minute

Extra time for the defense: 15 seconds

Extra time for the opposition: 15 seconds

Judgment

Individual decision by each judge: 4 minutes

TOTAL: 19 minutes 30 seconds

Language

If both teams would rather have the debate in French, the proposition can be made to the director of the competition. The judges and the director of the competition can decide if they accept or refuse the motion. The only language, other than English, that can be proposed is French, as it is the province's official language. Both teams, the judges, and the director of the competition must be completely in agreement with the debate being in French, or it will remain in English.

Material

Teams are allowed to have pencils, paper, and a list of the points of procedure with their description and their method of application. These will be provided by the organizing committee to both teams.

