

# Judging SEDA Debates

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**Saskatchewan Elocution  
and Debate Association**

# What is a debate?

The contrast of two differing positions on topic (**motion**)



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graph TD; A["The contrast of two differing positions on topic (motion)"] --> B["Proposition  
• 2 speakers  
• agree with resolution"]; A --> C["Opposition  
• 2 speakers  
• disagree with resolution"];
```

## **Proposition**

- 2 speakers
- agree with resolution

## **Opposition**

- 2 speakers
- disagree with resolution

# What is a Motion or Resolution?

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- general issue where there are two commonly understood positions (euthanasia)
- stated as “This House believes in voluntary euthanasia”
- NOT specific programs or proposals
  - debate of a principle
- no model or plan required

# Order of Speeches

## **Constructive Speeches**

First Proposition Speaker  
(8 minutes)

Second Proposition Speaker  
(8 minutes)

## **Constructive Speeches**

First Opposition Speaker  
(8 minutes)

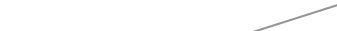
Second Opposition Speaker  
(8 minutes)

## **Summary/Rebuttal**

First Proposition Speaker  
(4 minutes)

## **Summary/Rebuttal**

First Opposition Speaker  
(4 minutes)



# Big concepts #1 - Construction

**Construct an argument** - build an idea through:

- stating it
- elaborating on it (building it on accepted principles not restating in different ways)
- give evidence (usually examples, statistics, case studies or authorities)
- explain how it proves the caseline

# Big concepts #2 - Deconstruction

**Deconstruct an argument (Clash)** – attack an argument by:

- showing how the principles the other side is based on are logically flawed
- attacking the caseline
- finding logical fallacies or inconsistencies on the other side or between the other speakers
- identifying and attacking assumptions the other side has made

Good deconstruction is NOT concentrated on attacking the examples the other side raises.

# Big concepts #3 – Case Coherence

**Case coherence** – how well the case fits together:

- case has a clear thesis
- thesis is very different from the other side, and on the correct side of the resolution
- two speakers work as a team on argument division and deconstruction
- case is not contradictory
- underlying principles of the case do not shift during the debate

# What each Speaker needs to do:

## First Proposition

- define terms
- establish the caseline (thesis statement)
- give the case division (who covers what points)
- build two or three constructive arguments

*If it is well done, a judge sees:*

- *a crystal clear position*
- *a well structured, easy to follow speech*
- *arguments that are well developed*

# What each Speaker needs to do:

## First Opposition

- contest definition (hopefully not, done very occasionally)
- clash with the points just made by the first proposition
- establish the caseline
- give the case division (who covers what points)
- build two constructive arguments

*If it is well done, a judge sees:*

- *the proposition arguments seem much less valid*
- *a crystal clear position that is clearly differentiated from the proposition*
- *a well structured, easy to follow speech*
- *arguments that are well developed*

# What each Speaker needs to do:

## Second Proposition

- clash with the points just made by the first opposition
- reconstruct first arguments and reinforce caseline
- build one or two constructive arguments

*If it is well done, a judge sees:*

- *the opposition arguments seem much less valid*
- *all argument necessary to prove the caseline of the proposition are made and supported*
- *a well structured, easy to follow speech*
- *arguments that are well developed*

# What each Speaker needs to do:

## Second Opposition

- clash with the points just made by the second proposition
- reconstruct first arguments and reinforce caseline
- build one constructive argument

*If it is well done, a judge sees:*

- *the proposition case is flawed*
- *all argument necessary to prove the caseline of the opposition are made and supported*
- *a well structured, easy to follow speech*
- *arguments that are well developed*

# What Rebuttal Speaker needs to do:

- take a broad approach to the issues of the debate (avoid delving into fine detail)
- summarise their own case either as part the analysis of the issues or as a separate section (usually at end)
- distil the debate to main themes or questions

No new arguments allowed except by the proposition debater replying to new arguments in the second opposition speech.

# The power of Questions. . .

Questions (Points of Information) allow debaters to show how quickly they can think and get to the heart of the debate

- opposing debaters stand to show they have a question
- the speaking debater chooses to answer question or not
- good debaters will “give at least 2, take 2” in a speech
- questions should be brief
- questions should be focused on what the speaker just said
- no questions allowed when debaters are
  - in the first or last minute of the constructive speeches
  - delivering rebuttals

# As a Judge I . . .

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- am objective and unbiased
- acknowledge that certain arguments must be made on certain sides, even if they seem unpopular
- reward understanding big ideas, not focusing on many specific little details
- remember that debate is a mix of building and attacking arguments. Good teams do both well

# Scoring / 100

## 50 – 59

- States an idea, but gives no explanation or supporting evidence
- Shows no evidence of listening or responding to opponents' speeches (no clash)
- Summarizes debate point by point, but incompletely and with no analysis
- Does not ask or answer any questions or takes too many POIs, which is distracting
- Uses less than half of allocated time
- Relies completely on notes and does not engage the audience
- Does not work well with partner, will not win the debate

# Scoring / 100

## 60 – 69

- Presents arguments that are incomplete, lacking either explanation or evidence
- Clash is direct and in response to some of their opponents' points, but does not discredit some or any of their opponents' arguments; does not rebuild after attacks on their case
- Summarizes the debate point by point, with little new analysis
- Asks or offers only one question or offers an excessive amount of questions; and answers a few questions, but questions and responses do not add to the debate
- Uses at least half of allocated time
- Delivery is reasonable, but refers to notes and does not stand out
- Shows some team work, but is not likely to win

# Scoring / 100

## 70 – 79

- Presents clear arguments with explanations and evidence, but does not show the overall relevance to their case (no tie-backs)
- Clashes and tries to use various strategies of clash, but does not discredit all of their opponents' arguments or their case; leaves weaknesses open in their own case
- Attempts to group ideas in summary, and offers some new analysis
- Asks and answers questions, but does not always add to the debate
- Uses most or all of allocated time
- Engaging for the majority of the speech and occasionally refers to notes
- Works well with their partner

# Scoring / 100

## 80 – 89

- Presents well organized arguments with complete explanations and evidence and shows an overall relevance to their case (good tie-backs)
- Clash shows a depth of analysis in response to each of the opponents' arguments and uses more advance strategies of clash (global and case line); provides strong defence and rebuilding of their case against their opponents' attacks
- Summary re-packages the arguments of the whole debate by addressing the underlying themes and shows thorough analysis of the issues raised in the debate
- Asks questions that significantly add to their case and team position or attack a critical weakness in their opponents' case
- Uses time effectively
- Persuasive and very engaging and does not rely on notes
- Makes reference to partner's material and the team's case is cohesive

# Scoring / 100

## 90 – 95

- Arguments are compelling and unexpected, and show a deep understanding of issues
- Clash obliterates the opponents' case, while strategically strengthens their own case
- Summary transcends a conventional understanding of the issue
- Asks and answers questions that have a major impact on the direction of the debate
- Highly memorable and persuasive

# Scoring / 100

## **49 or Lower**

- Presents completely offensive material
- Stands up, says one or two words or nothing at all and sits down
- Shows absolutely no effort
- Intolerable behaviour

# Completing your ballot

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## **Top of the ballot completed before the debate starts:**

Adjudicator name: \_\_\_\_\_


Resolution: \_\_\_\_\_

Round: \_\_\_\_\_ Room: \_\_\_\_\_

# Completing your ballot

## Evaluating Teams after the debate:

Please check your adding



Proposition Team: \_\_\_\_\_

Name	Construction /40	Deconstruction /40	Style /20	Total /100
			Grand Total	/200

Opposition Team: \_\_\_\_\_

Name	Construction /40	Deconstruction /40	Style /20	Total /100
			Grand Total	/200


# Completing your ballot

## Choosing a winner:

The winner is: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments:

Team with the highest points when you add scores of the two speakers



Please **do not** confer with any other judges before completing your ballot.

# Reminders for Debaters

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- no time/place sets
- no interruptions other than POIs (Heckles, Points of Personal Privilege)
- order of construction and deconstruction is up to debaters
- just standing asks the POI. You don't need to say "on that point" or touch your head, although you can
- "no thank you" or a wave down is an acceptable way to refuse a POI