The Australia-Asia Debating Guide
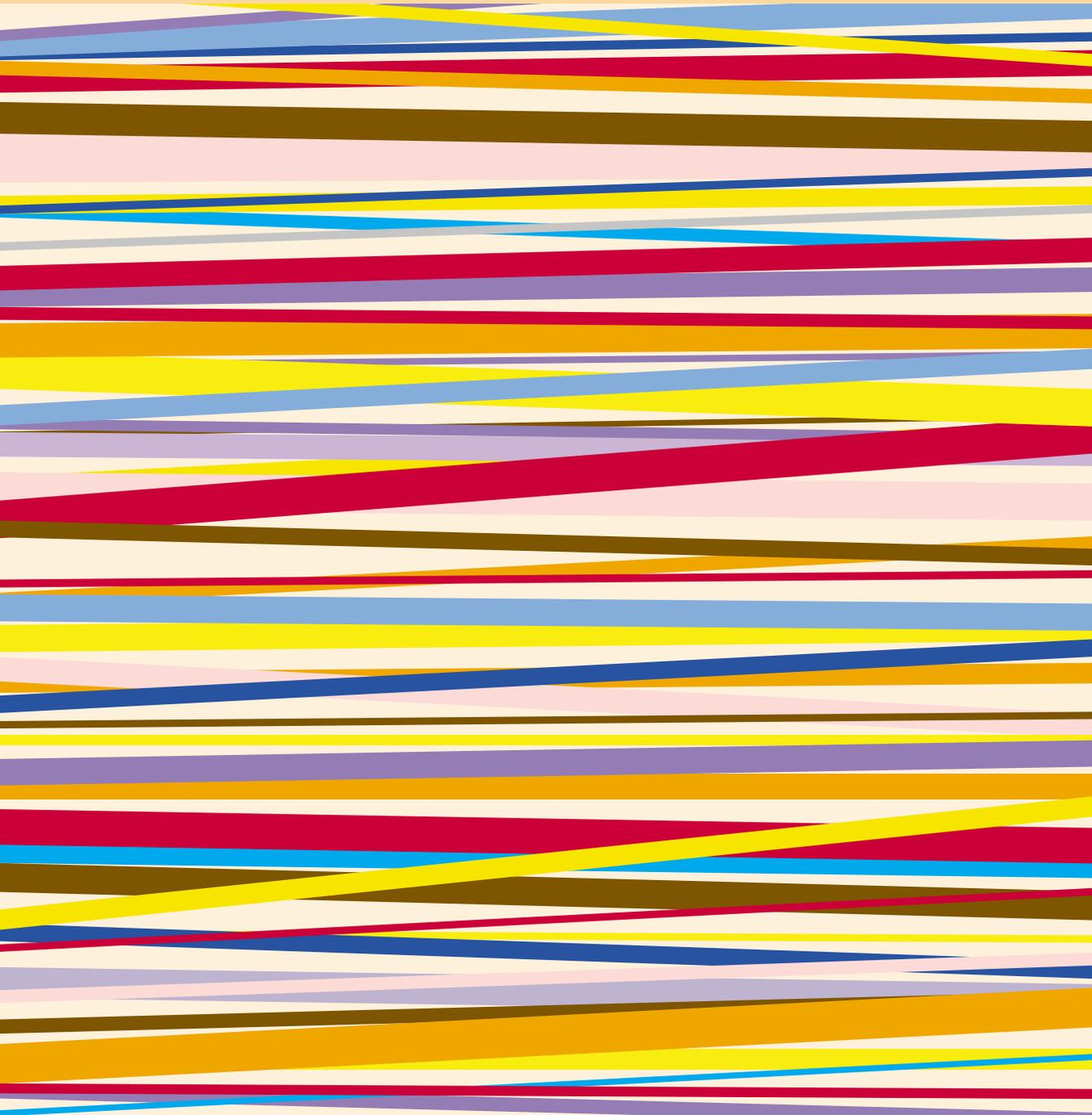## Second Edition

Edited by Ray D'Cruz

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An online version of this guide is available from www.dav.com.au.
Official copies of the handbook may be purchased from the same website.

Please contact Ray D'Cruz (ray@aticus.com) if you require clarification of any part of this guide,
or if you would like assistance translating the guide into a language other than English.

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Foreword

This guide is in its third incarnation. It started life in 1982 as the Adjudicators' Handbook, written by Alan Swanwick and published by the Debaters Association of Victoria. Its publication was a defining moment in Australian debating. It codified conventional debating wisdom in a thorough, detailed and articulate manner. The handbook was the official rules of the Victorian Schools and Adults competitions.

In 1992, the Australian Debating Federation published the Australian Debating Handbook. The new handbook was essentially the Adjudicators' Handbook, with several chapters added. Christopher Erskine authored additional chapters on reply speeches, points of information and two-a-side debates. The handbook became the official handbook of Australian debating and was used at both Australian National Schools and Adults Championships.

Not long after this, the fledgling Australasian Intervarsity Debating Association adopted the handbook as its official rules. At that time, the Australasian Debating Championship community included Australia, New Zealand and Singapore. Through the 1990s that community grew to include Bangladesh, India, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand.

In 1997, key concepts from the guide were incorporated into the Rules of the World Universities Debating Championship. The rules have been subsequently adopted at national debating competitions from Croatia to South Africa to Japan. From its relatively confined beginning as the Adjudicator's Handbook, this guide has had an enormous impact on the world of competitive debating.

The reason for its impact is the integrity of the original text. Nevertheless, it needed to be updated and expanded in 1992 and again in 2002.

Now in 2002, the book takes on its third name – the Australia-Asia Debating Guide. The name change reflects the growth of the impact of the guide.

This guide retains the same view of what constitutes persuasive communication that was laid out in the Adjudicators' Handbook and the Australian Debating Handbook. However, it also makes a number of important changes:

— the matter chapter now includes a section on rebuttal; in the previous edition, rebuttal occupied a separate chapter;

- method is no longer divided into three elements; it now has two elements: responsiveness and structure;

- manner is no longer divided into a large number of elements; it now has two elements: body language and vocal style;

- the definition chapter includes both the *more reasonable rule* and the *unreasonable rule* as both are used at various competitions throughout the world; and

- new chapters have been included on World and American parliamentary debate styles.

In addition to these substantive changes, most chapters now contain an overview section and examples have been updated. The text has been simplified and the length of the guide reduced. In short, it is a more user-friendly guide.

The Australia-Asia Debating Guide has been written with the assistance of a number of people. Tom Hawkins, Praba Ganesan, Wayne Jocic and Andrew Gormly reviewed drafts of this guide. Meg O'Sullivan reviewed drafts, drafted text and engaged in valuable debate and discussion about the content of this guide. Alan Swanwick's Adjudicators' Handbook still forms much of the text and spirit of this guide. Christopher Erskine's work in developing Swanwick's handbook into the Australian Debating Handbook was also very significant. A warm thank you to these people on behalf of the debating community.

Ray D'Cruz

Melbourne, February 2003

Chapter 1

Introduction

Debating is about persuasion. Debating is not about rules.

People are persuaded by various means, rational and irrational, logical and illogical. Persuasion may differ depending on cultural context and local customs.

The purpose of this guide is to provide some objectivity about what constitutes effective debating. It allows debaters and adjudicators to hold certain expectations about how to prepare, present and judge debates.

Debaters will *generally* be more persuasive if they comply with the rules in this guide. However, the guide will not always tell us the answers. Debaters and adjudicators should be aware that each rule has a purpose, and that sometimes the same purpose can be achieved in contradiction of the rule. In these instances, debaters should be rewarded for achieving the objective of the rule.

The rules provide a framework within which adjudicators make objective assessments and limit their subjectivity. Debating is a means by which our community discusses and analyses issues of public importance. Setting out rules that promote fairness between teams and speakers is more likely to lead to better public debate and enhance the reputation of debate as an effective means of communication.

Chapter 2

Adjudicating

Chapter overview

This chapter addresses the role the adjudicator plays in assessing the debate. The adjudicator adopts the role of the average reasonable person. The adjudicator has three functions:

– to decide which team has won the debate;

– to provide an explanation of the reasons for the decision; and

– to provide constructive feedback to the debaters.

2.1 Role of the adjudicator

The adjudicator adopts the role of an average reasonable person, who has the average reasonable person's knowledge of the topic but who, unlike the average reasonable person, has expert knowledge of the rules of debate.

Adjudicators must eliminate any preconceived ideas as to the merits of the issue in debate, and any expert or special knowledge of the subject matter. The average reasonable person is assumed to be intelligent and capable of assessing flaws in arguments; the adjudicator is invested with these qualities.

The assumption of this artificial role is one of the most difficult aspects of adjudication, and imposes a heavy burden on adjudicators. Nonetheless, it is central to the whole notion of adjudication. The alternative of permitting adjudicators to assess a debate from their own personal viewpoint, and to take into account their own expert knowledge, prejudices and preconceptions, would strike at the heart of debating as an exercise in the skills of persuasion.

2.2 Functions of the adjudicator

The adjudicator has three functions:

1. to decide which team has won the debate;

2. to provide an explanation of the reasons for the decision; and

3. to provide constructive feedback to the debaters.

(a) Deciding which team has won

The first task of an adjudicator is to decide which team has won the debate. The adjudicator's role is different from that of an average audience member who asks "was I persuaded?" An adjudicator asks "which team better performed the process of persuasion, in accordance with the rules of debate?"

There are at least three possible results – a win for the affirmative team, a win for the negative team, and a tie. In theory, there is no reason why an adjudicator might not decide that the performance of the teams was entirely even. However, adjudicators should not award a tie – partly because of the difficulties it causes competition organisers; partly because it provides an easy escape from making a difficult decision; and partly because it will be a very rare occasion where two teams are so evenly balanced that no distinction between them can be drawn.

In many debates, the adjudicator is required to award marks to speakers and teams. The adjudicator must make the decision and the marks should reflect that judgment. The marks exist only as a guide to the adjudicator's progressive assessment of the debate.

It's not uncommon in a close debate to find that when the marks are first totalled, they reflect a decision different from the adjudicator's impression of the debate. If this occurs, it means either that the marks are in error or that the adjudicator's impression at the end of the final speech is in error. In this situation the adjudicator should carefully review the notes of the debate and attempt to identify where the marks and impressions differ. It might be that the adjudicator will decide that the final impression was too heavily based on a very strong third negative speech – in which case the adjudicator's decision would be modified to reflect a better weighting for that speaker.

Occasionally an adjudicator will add up the marks incorrectly so that the marks do not reflect the decision which has been announced. In such a situation, the decision announced remains the outcome of the debate.

(b) Explaining reasons for the decision

In delivering the adjudication, adjudicators should highlight the critical differences between the teams rather than replay the whole debate. A useful start is to total the marks in each of matter, manner and method for each team, and to use this as the focus for comment.

There may be one or several strategic issues which were critical in the debate; issues on which the debate was won or lost. Focusing on these strategic issues allows the adjudicator to identify the main reasons for the decision.

At the end of the adjudication, the debaters should have a clear understanding of why their team won or lost. Most complaints arise because adjudicators are not able to clearly identify the reasons for the result.

(c) Providing constructive feedback

Adjudicators are in a position to perform a valuable training function. Particularly with novice or school-student debaters, the feedback offered by an adjudicator is likely to be the most substantial basis for improvement.

Feedback can affect the confidence of individual debaters. Adjudicators must take this responsibility extremely seriously. An overly sarcastic or negative adjudication may undermine the confidence of novice debaters to the point where they are fearful of speaking in public again. Feedback should be couched in constructive terms.

2.3 The adjudication process

Adjudicators must arrive at their decision after careful consideration. This will include listening attentively to all speakers in the debate, taking notes and applying the rules of debating.

Note taking is important because notes allow an adjudicator to resolve issues which emerge later in the debate, for instance, where there is a dispute over the definition of certain terms. Adjudicators must be wary not to enter the debate while making notes by filtering the comments made by speakers. For example, a speaker may provide an argument which has no clear link to the topic. The adjudicator may infer a link and record this inference in their notes, later crediting the speaker with having made the link.

Adjudicators should mark the scores of the speakers as the debate proceeds. Leaving the marking of scores to the end of the debate can be a perilous exercise in recalling the matter, method and manner of earlier speakers. It may result in the adjudicator overemphasising the impact of third speakers.

Matter

Chapter overview

Matter is the content of the speech. It can be contrasted with the presentation style of the speech (manner) and the structure of the speech (method).

Matter includes arguments, evidence presented to support those arguments, examples and analysis. Matter includes substantive matter, rebuttal and points of information. In debates in which points of information are used, both the content of the question and the content of the answer are considered matter.

The elements of matter are:

– logic; and

– relevance.

Particular matter issues discussed in this chapter are:

– rebuttal;

– the onus of proof;

– taking the audience into account;

– assessing the quality of arguments;

– argument by example;

– references to experts;

– new matter from third negative speakers;

– the *invalid* case;

– the *hung* case; and

– humorous arguments.

3.1 Introduction

The adjudicator must assess the persuasiveness of the arguments presented by the speaker. This means assessing not just the presence of matter, but the quality of the matter presented. In making this assessment, the adjudicator adopts the role of the average reasonable person – dispensing with specialist knowledge of the area and asking the question: how persuaded would the average reasonable person be by this argumentation?

Matter includes substantive matter and rebuttal (arguments in response to the other team). Rebuttal is what distinguishes debating from public speaking – it is the point of contact between two teams. Where there is no rebuttal, there is no engagement and there is no debate.

3.2 The elements of matter

(a) Logic

An argument is *logical* if its conclusion follows from the premise. It does not necessarily mean that the premise must be capable of being proved absolutely. While that may be the goal of philosophers, it would certainly bring an early end to the debate! Instead, debaters tend to grapple with issues that are incapable of absolute proof and their cases consist of the gradual accumulation of arguments tending towards one conclusion.

For example, in a debate on the topic *That capital punishment should not be allowed,* the affirmative may state the following premise: that capital punishment will cause wrongly convicted, innocent people to die. The conclusion that the debater would like to lead the audience to is that because the premise is likely to be correct, weight is added to the overall proposition that capital punishment should not be allowed. Good debaters develop the premise into an argument and use evidence to show that the premise is likely to be correct.

(b) Relevance

An argument is *relevant* if it is likely to add weight to the overall proposition that the team is trying to prove. The proposition in turn must be relevant to the issues in contention in the debate.

Relevance is especially important in debates given the short period of time available to each speaker – there is no time for irrelevance.

Sometimes, adjudicators need to approach this element with an open mind, for example when assessing the first affirmative speaker's set up of the debate. While the information provided in this initial positioning stage may not be directly relevant (it won't necessarily add weight to the overall proposition), it may be crucial to the eventual success of the arguments.

3.3 Particular matter issues

(a) Rebuttal

Persuading an audience means that debaters must explain both why their arguments are right, as well as why their opponent's arguments are wrong. Rebuttal may require establishing:

- that the opposing argument is based on an error of fact, or an erroneous interpretation of fact;
- that the opposing argument is irrelevant to the proof of the topic;
- that the opposing argument is illogical (the conclusion does not logically flow from the premise);
- that the opposing argument, while itself correct, involves unacceptable implications; and
- that the opposing argument, while itself correct, should be accorded little weight.

The structure of rebuttal should be assessed in the method category while the content of the rebuttal should be assessed in the matter category.

Inexperienced debaters typically adopt a 'point-by-point' style of rebuttal, listing every argument and example and rebutting them in sequence. This is hard to achieve in the allocated time and it makes no acknowledgment of the relative importance of different aspects of the opposing case. A far more effective style of rebuttal is for the speaker to identify the important strategic issues in the debate and to attack these issues and the important examples which support these issues.

Every speaker after the first affirmative speaker must aim to bring the opposing cases into conflict by engaging in rebuttal. The balance between substantive argument and rebuttal in any speech will depend on the speaker and the nature of the debate. A suggestion, which is by no means prescriptive, is that about 25–30% of a first or second speech might be devoted to rebuttal and that third speakers might spend the majority of their speech on rebuttal. However, the proportion of rebuttal to substantive arguments will really depend on the requirements of the debate.

(b) The onus of proof

In most debates, there is no *onus of proof*. Both affirmative and negative teams must provide arguments. The affirmative team must assert positively that the proposition under debate is true; the negative team must assert positively that it is untrue. It is not enough for a negative team to rely entirely on rebutting the arguments of the affirmative. In some forms of parliamentary debate, it is acceptable for a negative team to rely entirely on rebuttal. This is discussed in chapters 10 and 11.

(c) Taking the audience into account

Speakers should pitch their arguments so that the particular audience can understand their case. Adjudicators may take the audience into account when assessing the persuasiveness of the arguments. However, adjudicators should not take the reaction of an audience into account when making a decision.

(d) Assessing the quality of arguments

Adjudicators must assess the quality of arguments. This requires the adjudicator to distinguish a strong argument from a weak one (from the viewpoint of an average reasonable person).

A weak argument remains weak whether or not the opposing team points out its weakness. Adjudicators should not wait to see whether the opposition attacks an argument before judging whether it is weak or strong. If the opposition effectively attacks it, they will score matter points; if they don't attack it, they will have missed an opportunity to score matter points (and may be penalised in method if the argument was an important one).

(e) Argument by example

The effective use of examples will add persuasive quality to the argument. If an argument is removed from the abstract by the use of familiar or compelling examples, an audience will be more willing to accept the argument.

In some debates, speakers do no more than reel off a list of examples (supposedly to support their conclusion). The opposing team may reel off a list of contrary examples, and the debate degenerates into a contest between the length and quality of the opposing lists. Good speakers identify a few compelling examples, explain their relevance and explore them in sufficient depth.

Properly used, examples are an important aspect of matter. Usually they'll be most effective when used to support an argument which has been already constructed. Examples should be used as a support for argument, not as a substitute for it.

To illustrate this point, it is a useful to think of a team case as a large tree. The overall proposition that the team is trying to establish is like the trunk. The arguments which support the proposition are like branches. Finally, the leaves are the examples which attach themselves to the branches. Trading lists of examples is like shaking the tree, causing some leaves to fall but allowing the tree to remain largely intact. Rebuttal may therefore be more effective if its intention is to attack the trunk and branches, rather than shake the tree. The exception to this is where certain examples raised in debates become crucial to the overall proposition being advanced by a team.

(f) References to experts

Debaters will occasionally find that an expert on an issue has expressed a view which supports their team's argument. Citing an expert in support of a case is legitimate and is an aspect of matter to be acknowledged by adjudicators.

However, the same caution must be exercised in regard to expert opinion as has been explained in relation to the use of examples. Authorities should be cited in support of an argument, not as a substitute for argument. The fact that an expert holds an opinion usually proves no more than that the expert holds that opinion.

Unless the reason for the opinion can be fully explained and independently assessed, the opinion carries only minor weight in the process of persuasion.

(g) New matter from third negative speakers

The final speaker in the debate may not introduce new matter.

This rule causes a great deal of confusion and controversy, mainly around what constitutes *new matter*. The difficulty created by the rule is resolved by examining the purpose of the rule. Once the purpose is understood, the type of material which is excluded is clearer.

The purpose of the rule is to prevent unfairness in the debate. It is unfair for an issue to be raised at a point in the debate when the opposing team has no opportunity to respond. Without this rule, a negative team would be able to allocate a substantial part of its case to the final speaker, and the affirmative team would have no opportunity to respond.

A number of conclusions follow from identifying the purpose of the rule:

1. the use of fresh examples to further illustrate an earlier argument is not new matter;

2. an argument which rebuts opposing arguments or defends the negative case is not new matter; and

3. new matter generally consists of an entirely new issue which has not been canvassed in the debate.

However, there are a number of marginal cases which are not clear-cut and in such cases the adjudicator must make a judgment as to whether, in the context of the debate, it was fair or unfair for the argument to be raised by the final speaker.

For example, an early speaker may make a brief, passing reference to an argument, but not develop it at any length or place much emphasis on it. If the third negative speaker then elevates the argument to a central role in the negative case and reveals implications which had not been explained, is it new matter? There is no definite answer. In one sense, the issue has already been raised (albeit briefly), so strictly speaking it is not a new issue.

But perhaps it is unfair for the final speaker to give entirely new emphasis and significance to the argument. This must be left for the judgment of the adjudicator, using the yardstick of *fairness*.

Where new matter is introduced, the adjudicator simply *does not hear* such material, and it scores no matter marks. The speaker may also incur a method penalty for a failure of organisation – the argument should have been led earlier in the debate.

(h) The 'invalid' case

A failure of relevance occurs when teams adopt arguments which, even if accepted as true, simply fail to address the topic under debate. This is a particular risk for negative teams when they incorrectly predict the approach of the affirmative team.

In a debate on the topic *That we would prefer small government*, the affirmative may argue that small government is preferable to big government. It would be an invalid for the negative to argue that big government can be effective (without reference to the benefits or otherwise of small government). It is invalid because the negative team's arguments can be accepted without rejecting the arguments of the affirmative team.

(i) The 'hung' case

In a hung case, the first speaker establishes a premise, the second speaker establishes another premise, and only after the second premise can the conclusion be drawn. In other words, it's not possible to prove a final conclusion at the end of the first speaker's speech.

For example, in a debate on the topic *That euthanasia is wrong*, the affirmative structures its case such that the first speaker argues that euthanasia means the taking of life; the second speaker argues that taking life is wrong in all circumstances. If the premises are valid, the conclusion follows that euthanasia is wrong in all cases.

In this example, it's impossible to conclude that euthanasia is wrong after the first speech – it is only by considering the first and second speeches together that the conclusion can be drawn. This structure does not allow each speech to affirm or negate the topic in itself. Hung cases are not permitted.

(j) Humorous arguments

Humorous arguments should be judged according to the same requirements as all other arguments – they must be relevant and logical. Humour will also have an impact on the assessment of manner.

Chapter 4

Method

Chapter overview

Method is the structure and organisation of the speech. It can be contrasted with the presentation style of the speech (manner) and the content of the speech (matter).

Method includes the fulfilment of speaker roles, the management of speaking times, the allocation of arguments between speakers and the cohesion of the team. It includes the capacity of speakers to adapt their structure to respond to the dynamic issues of the debate.

The elements of method are:

– responsiveness; and

– structure.

Particular method issues discussed in this chapter are:

– under-time and over-time speeches;

– new matter from third negative speakers; and

– over-emphasis on method in marking.

4.1 Introduction

Method is the structure and organisation of the speech. An average reasonable person will be more likely to grasp and recall structured and organised arguments. Method is also about responsiveness: any strategy adopted by a speaker or team should be adapted to the dynamic nature of the debate.

Adjudicators should assess the quality of individual and team method. For example, too many adjudicators look for the presence of a definition rather than examining the quality of the definition. The same can be said for team splits and other duties performed by individual speakers or the team. The rules require adjudicators to examine the effectiveness of method.

4.2 The elements of method

(a) Responsiveness

The structure of one speech will be affected by previous speeches and will affect subsequent speeches. Debaters must organise their speech to support their team and respond to their opposition. This interaction makes for a good debate, whether it's a parliamentary, school or pub debate.

The adjudicator must assess whether speakers have responded dynamically to the strategic issues which have emerged during the debate. For example, adjudicators must assess the extent to which the speaker's rebuttal was prioritised to address the strategic requirements of the debate.

A good example of this aspect of debating is when one team makes a concession. For example, in a debate on the topic *That smoking should be banned*, the affirmative may concede that smoking causes health problems such as cancer. They may instead focus the debate on the downside of banning a substance with such high levels of consumption.

It's possible in preparing for this debate that the negative team allocated part of their team case to showing the link between smoking and health problems such as cancer. However, given the concession, it would be a waste of time for the negative team to focus on the link – a strategic error. Instead, the negative should focus on the issues in contention. Having said this, it's also important for the adjudicator to assess the concession in terms of its impact on the persuasiveness of the overall propositions being advanced by both teams.

It's impossible to list every conceivable example of a strategic failure. Adjudicators should be aware that through the course of a debate, the strategic onus will shift back and forth between the teams. If speakers and teams do not adapt to the strategic needs of the debate, they should be penalised in the method category.

There is a fine line between an adjudicator identifying a strategic issue, and an adjudicator *entering into the debate* and implicitly insisting that teams argue their case in accordance with the adjudicator's preferences.

Responsiveness impacts on both method (for the reasons above) and matter. In terms of matter, the response should be assessed for its logic and relevance.

(b) Structure

The second element of method is structure. Without wanting to force speakers into a rigid or stereotyped style of speech, it is true to say that there are certain structural elements of a speech which will tend to enhance its effectiveness (and the absence of which will tend to reduce its effectiveness). This is true of any speech, whether it be a debate speech, a toast or a seminar paper.

(i) Speech structure

An effectively structured speech will tend to have the following features:

– an interesting opening, which captures audience attention and builds rapport;

– a clear statement of the purpose and general direction of the speech;

– a logical sequence of ideas which is easy for the audience to follow;

– prioritised arguments with time allocated according to their strategic importance; and

– a conclusion or summary of the major points made in the speech.

It is strongly emphasised that adjudicators should not attempt to force speakers into a stylised approach to structuring their speech. The test is whether the structure was effective in persuading the audience.

A second aspect of a speaker's structure is the performance by each speaker of certain duties. Failure to perform these duties may detract from the effectiveness of the team performance. A summary of these duties is set out in the table below:

Speaker	Duty
First affirmative speaker	Define the topic – set out affirmative's interpretation of the topic – identify issues which will be in contention
	Present team structure – team line – team split
	Present arguments allocated to the first speaker
First negative speaker	Identify major areas of initial disagreement with the affirmative case – include any disagreement about the definition – rebut the major affirmative arguments.
	Present team structure – team line – team split
	Present arguments allocated to the first speaker
Second speakers	Identify the major areas of disagreement with the other team – include definitional issues which are still in contention – rebut major arguments
	Defend own case against rebuttal by previous speaker(s)
	Present arguments allocated to second speaker
Third speakers	Present an overview of the debate – identify the essential issues upon which the teams disagree – rebut the important aspects of the opposing team's case – defend own team's case against attack – summarise own case.

There is a great deal of flexibility as to precisely how and when in the course of a speech each of these duties is to be performed. The fact that a list of duties can be specified should not be taken to mean that there are rigid segments of a speech.

Debaters must be allowed reasonable latitude in the performance of their duties where their approach enhances the effectiveness of their speech. Adjudicators must assess the quality of performance of the duties; not mere performance. For example, a speaker who chooses to intersperse rebuttal and substantive argumentation should be rewarded if this approach enhances the overall effectiveness of the team's proposition.

(ii) Team structure

Debates do not consist of individual speeches in isolation from each other. Debating is a team activity and each speaker must be considered in their team role as well as their individual role. In considering team method, adjudicators assess whether the structure adopted by the team was effective.

A team structure will be most effective when it possesses a single, consistent theme (sometimes referred to as a *team line*), chunks of which are assigned to each speaker (sometimes referred to as the *team split*).

A team line is important for several reasons. Firstly, each team is attempting to establish that their overall proposition is likely to be correct. Secondly, a cohesive approach means that the speakers are more easily able to link their individual arguments to the overall proposition. Thirdly, the audience members (who do not take notes) will be better able to recall the major arguments advanced by the team if themes are consistent across all speeches.

Speakers must present distinct arguments united under a team line. This division of arguments (team split) may be thematic or may consist of a series of individual points or arguments, allocated randomly to the speakers. The thematic approach is preferred for several reasons. Firstly, team splits allow teams to avoid repetition and stress complementarity between speakers. Secondly, team splits allow speakers to prioritise their arguments strategically.

To illustrate the use of team lines and team splits, consider a debate on the topic *That US bases should get out of Asia.* The affirmative team may adopt a team line about the capacity of Asia to best handle regional tensions. The affirmative team may also add that America tends only to inflame tensions. This overall theme (suggesting Asia can best handle regional tensions) could be divided amongst the first two speakers as follows: the first speaker could focus on diplomatic and military reasons why US bases should get out of Asia (such as improvements in relationships between Asian nations through increased regional cooperation).

The second speaker may focus on the social reasons why US bases should get out of Asia (such as the extent to which local populations are antagonised by the presence of US forces).

This example shows a clear team line and team split. The team split is clearly linked to the topic and is prioritised in anticipation of the likelihood that diplomatic and military considerations will be paramount in this debate.

4.3 Particular method issues

(a) Under-time and over-time speeches

In a debate, each speaker is allocated time to deliver their speech. The allocation usually takes the form of a minute mark (for example eight minutes), with a warning bell sounded one or two minutes before this time.

One aspect of effective speech organisation is the speaker's ability to complete the material within the allocated time. It follows that a speaker who goes *significantly* over the allotted time should be penalised in method. Moreover, in fairness to other speakers who abide by the time limit, material delivered by the speaker after the time limit should not be awarded any matter marks.

Before a penalty is imposed a speaker is usually allowed a small amount of leeway – but no more than about 30 seconds. The speaker should use this period to finish the point being made and close their speech.

A speech which finishes before the warning bell will usually indicate poor organisation and will usually attract a method penalty. However, there are exceptions. In a debate in which the two teams adopt entirely divergent definitions and debate in parallel without ever coming into conflict on the basic issues, the final speaker will justifiably be able to say that there was only one issue between the teams – the question of definition. If the final speaker dealt with that issue thoroughly and decisively and finished his speech before the warning bell, the adjudicator may reward the speaker in method for appreciating that there was only one issue and not filling up time with irrelevant argument. This is exceptional but indicates that some flexibility is required in assessing method.

A short speech may also affect matter marks through a lack of argument. Conversely, a short speech packed with strong arguments might score as well as or better than an unconvincing or repetitive full-length speech.

(b) New matter from third negative speakers

This issue is fully discussed in the matter chapter. Briefly, a third negative speaker is not permitted to introduce any new matter. If any new matter is introduced, it does not score any matter marks and it will usually attract a method penalty. The reason for the method penalty is that it's a wasted period of the speech – a failure of both organisation and strategy. The magnitude of the penalty will depend on the importance of the new matter in the context of the speech. If it is a brief, passing reference, it may attract no penalty at all. If it is a crucial point in the speaker's argument or occupies a significant period of the speech, it will attract a substantial penalty.

(c) Overemphasis of method

It may have once been the case in debating that adjudicators gave all speakers virtually the same method mark. These days it is common to see adjudicators give high or low method marks (13 or 17) and to adopt a far more conservative approach to marking manner and matter (rarely deviating between the marks of 28 and 32). The answer to this over-use of method is to restore balance to the marking of debates and to achieve some parity in method marking versus matter and manner marking. Adjudicators should remember that a 13 in method is the equivalent of 26 in manner, while a 17 in method is equivalent to 34 in matter.

Chapter 5

Manner

Chapter overview

Manner is the presentation style of the speech. It can be contrasted with the content of the speech (matter) and the structure of the speech (method).

Manner includes the aspects of a speaker's presentation which contribute to or detract from their effectiveness as an oral communicator.

The elements of manner are:

– body language; and

– vocal style.

Particular manner issues discussed in this chapter are:

– humour;

– personal attacks on opponents; and

– dress.

5.1 Introduction

The assessment of manner is probably the most subjective assessment an adjudicator will make. The main questions that adjudicators must ask themselves in assessing manner is "was it effective?" and "did the speaker's style contribute to or detract from the force of their arguments?"

The variety of speaking styles is infinite. Some speakers use a forceful and authoritative style; others are quiet and calm in their presentation. Some use theatrical gestures and stride about the stage; while others are relatively reserved in their presentation. Some speakers are rapid in their delivery; others speak slowly and deliberately. Some speakers use notes while others speak without them.

In any particular debate, these elements may add to or detract from a speaker's performance. There is no rule that speaking loudly is better or worse than speaking softly, or that avoiding notes is better than using notes. The test is whether the aspect of the speaker's manner contributed to or detracted from the force of their arguments.

There has been a tendency in recent times for adjudicators to ignore manner (and to assess debaters on the basis of the matter and method). It is important to remember that manner is an extremely important factor in assessing the persuasiveness of a speaker. Research into the elements of communication consistently demonstrates that the speaker's style of presentation has a large impact on their perceived credibility. A confident and fluent speaker will generally be more believable than an uncertain and stuttering opponent. Similarly, in many cultures, eye contact will be seen as an indication of sincerity.

One very powerful example of the power of manner was the 1960 US presidential debate between John F Kennedy and Richard Nixon – the first televised presidential debate. In their assessment of the more credible and believable candidate, the audience was divided. Television viewers felt that Kennedy was more credible; radio listeners thought that Nixon was more credible. One important factor that has been identified as having made Kennedy more credible to the television audience is that he made eye contact with the cameras, while Nixon's eyes were largely focused on the interviewer. Kennedy looked sincere and trustworthy; Nixon looked insincere and shifty. Kennedy won a very close election.

Debating is an exercise in persuasion and must reflect the realities of interpersonal communication. There are many adjudicators who award equal manner marks and fail to distinguish between the qualities of the speakers' style. Perhaps the main reason for this is that distinguishing between speakers with good manner and speakers with poor manner may be hurtful to weaker speakers. Often, the weaker speaker already suffers from a lack of confidence and the adjudicator feels that giving them a low score in this area would be distressing for the speaker. This is a thoughtful but not necessarily helpful position to adopt. Improvement comes with recognition of speaking deficiencies. If a weak manner speaker continually receives 30 marks (the average) for manner, how are they to recognise that there's work to do?

Instead, adjudicators should award marks based on performance. They shouldn't second guess what would motivate the speaker to perform better. They should couple this honesty with encouraging feedback, highlighting the strengths and providing some insight into how to address the areas for improvement.

5.2 The elements of manner

(a) Body language

The body language of a speaker is a very important element of their speaking style. As the expression indicates, *body language* is a language of its own. It can have a significant impact on an audience and can create powerful impressions such as confidence, trust and credibility. It should go without saying that failing to create these impressions can be very damaging to the persuasiveness of a speaker. The Kennedy–Nixon debate is an example in which body language was crucial – eye contact created trust.

Some of the elements of body language include:

– eye contact (and the use of notes by speakers);

– gestures; and

– stance.

Eye contact is associated with confidence and sincerity; an audience is more likely to believe someone who is willing to look them in the eye. Debaters should attempt to maintain eye contact with their audience by moving their eyes over the audience as a whole, without becoming fixated on a single member of the audience, the adjudicator or an inanimate object in the room.

The overuse of notes limits the eye contact and reduces the capacity of the adjudicator to engage with the audience. Adjudicators should discourage speakers from reading their speeches – a debate is not an essay-reading competition; it is an exercise in persuasion that requires engagement with the audience. Notes should not become obtrusive or distracting – either to the audience or to the speaker. One way of avoiding this is to record only key words or headings rather than the whole text of the speech.

There are no rules regarding gestures, except that they should be natural and appropriate to the point being made. Overly dramatic or theatrical gestures may appear forced and unnatural, and distract an audience. Adjudicators assess the effect of gestures, determining whether they enhanced the speech or distracted the audience.

Speakers may stand to deliver their message in a variety of ways: some remain still, other move about the stage. Once again, the adjudicator will assess whether the speaker's stance was distracting, or whether it was appropriate and effective in the context of the speaker's total presentation. Speakers should find a stance with which they are comfortable.

(b) Vocal style

The second element of manner is the vocal style of the speaker. All speakers must have their message heard and understood. Vocal style is central to this goal.

Some of the elements of vocal style are:

– volume and pace;

– tone; and

– clarity and the use of language.

The volume of delivery should be such that the speaker can be clearly heard by the whole audience, without doing permanent aural damage to those in the front row. The pace of the delivery should be neither so slow as to be ponderous nor so fast that the audience feels overwhelmed or is unable to keep up with the speaker.

A certain amount of *light and shade,* or pausing to draw attention to crucial passages, and then dropping back to a conversational tone, can be very effective. However, it should not become artificial or theatrical. The objective is persuasion, and most people find artifice unconvincing.

The tone of the speech should be confident and conversational. Adopting such a tone will allow the speaker to build rapport and trust with the audience. Some speakers have an ability to lose the favour of the audience by being overly antagonistic or arrogant. It should come as no surprise that this affects their capacity to build rapport and trust with the audience.

The clarity of enunciation should allow the speech to be understood without difficulty, and without causing the audience to strain to comprehend the words. While speakers should be reasonably fluent, and cautious of over-using "ums" and "ahs", debating is not about getting things word perfect. It's about adopting a fluent and comfortable conversational tone.

Debaters should not use overly complex language and should steer well clear of jargon which the audience may not understand. This is particularly the case with acronyms which the audience may be unfamiliar with. Speakers at international competitions should take particular care as the audience or the adjudicator may come from a cultural background different from that of the speaker and may not be familiar with the use of certain language.

5.3 Particular manner issues

(a) Humour

Humour is a valuable tool in the speaker's kit. Even the most relentlessly serious topic can usually be lightened with humour.

Speakers who are able to assist the audience's enjoyment of the debate may increase the willingness of the audience to accept their argumentation. It's part of the process of developing a rapport with the audience. Sarcastic or insulting humour may even have a negative effect on the audience.

(b) Personal attacks on opponents

Audiences generally do not appreciate a speaker who makes derogatory personal references about the opposing debaters. Such personal references should be firmly discouraged, usually by a manner penalty, since their effect is to create sympathy for the opponent and hostility to the speaker.

(c) Dress

Dress should generally not be taken into account when assessing the debate. There is no doubt that dress is taken into account in our everyday life, whether it's an impression created at a job interview or social occasion. Yet in debating, dress should only be considered if it distracts the audience from the arguments that the speaker is presenting. That said, it should be a significant distraction and not merely the reflection of the adjudicator's personal views on what is appropriate dress.

Chapter 6

Definitions

Chapter overview

The purposes of the definition are to:

– identify the issues to be debated; and

– clarify the meaning of words in the topic.

Prohibited definitions are:

– without a clear and logical link to the topic;

– self-proving or truistic;

– time set; or

– unfairly place set.

Definitional debates occur when the teams cannot agree on the definition. Where there is a definitional dispute, either of two rules may apply, depending on the competition. The first is the *more reasonable* rule. Under this rule, a team may challenge the other team's definition if its definition is more reasonable. The second is the *unreasonable rule*. Under this rule, a team can only challenge the definition of the other team if the other team has defined the debate unreasonably.

6.1 The purposes of the definition

(a) Identifying the issues to be debated

The purpose of the definition is to specify the issue or issues which arise from the topic and which are to be resolved by debate between the teams. Defining the topic is one of the first tasks to be undertaken by each team. There is no point in arguing the merits of an issue before the nature and scope of the issue have been determined.

Sometimes, this will be obvious because the wording of the topic will make clear the issue to be debated. For example, in a debate on the topic *That Australia should accept more humanitarian refugees,* the issue of the debate is whether Australia should increase (or maintain or reduce) its humanitarian refugee intake.

On the other hand, many topics do not have a clear and unequivocal meaning. Debates on topics such as *That the state of the union is stuffed, That the glass is half full* and *That the invisible hand has arthritis* are clearly susceptible to a range of possible meanings. Whatever the nature of the topic, the affirmative team should clearly state what issues will be argued between the teams.

Some debating topics are phrased as absolute propositions, appearing to require absolute proof of the proposition for every single case – for example, *That conformity makes cowards of us all* and *That we are all in the same boat.* In such cases, absolute proof is not required. It is enough to show that the proposition is generally true.

(b) Clarifying the meaning of words

Every topic contains a series of words, some of which need to be defined. Even topics with words that appear to be obvious in their meaning may require definition. A debate on the topic *That we should legalise euthanasia* requires clarification. What does "euthanasia" mean? Does it refer to active euthanasia (for example, lethal injections) or does it refer to passive euthanasia (for example, switching off life support machines)? What does "legalise" mean? Does legalise mean that euthanasia will be available on demand or that it will be allowed only with the permission of medical specialists? These are important words to agree on before arguing the merits of their case.

Debaters will need to anticipate the words in the topic that may become significant and clarify their meaning to avoid ongoing confusion.

6.2 Prohibited definitions

(a) Definitions without a logical and relevant link to the topic

Definitions must have a *logical and relevant* link to the topic. This is to be assessed (as with other parts of matter) from the viewpoint of the average reasonable person. The team defining the topic should be prepared to show explicitly the link between the topic and the issue or issues that will be debated. The quality of this link must be assessed in the same way as any other matter in the debate – in terms of logic and relevance.

If a team adopts a definition which is unexpected, or which appears to be contrary to the normal interpretation of language, a credibility gap may be created in the mind of the average reasonable person. In this situation, the team should give extra attention to bridging that gap by careful argument.

(b) Self-proving or truistic definitions

Teams should not adopt definitions which effectively prevent the other team from participating in the debate. While philosophers search for truths, debaters must avoid them or risk bringing an early end to the debate.

An example of a truism in a debate on the topic *That tomorrow is another day* is where the affirmative defines the word "tomorrow" as being the day after today, which by definition is another day – the definition contains its own proof of its truth. Another example may be in a debate on the topic *That we should eat, drink and be merry* where the affirmative team defines the issue of the debate to be whether humans need to eat and drink to survive and whether it is better to be happy than sad. The approach of the affirmative team allows little room for the negative team to move.

(c) Definitions which time set the debate

Definitions which time set the debate in the past or future are prohibited. For example, in a debate on the topic *That prohibition does not work,* it would be prohibited to confine the debate to the period of prohibition in the United States during the 1920s. While prohibition during the 1920s could be used as an argument or example to support the team, it could not be used as the definitional arbiter of what the debate could and could not include.

Similarly, in a debate on the topic *That genetic engineering should be welcomed and not feared,* it would be prohibited for the affirmative team to define the debate to be in the next century where genetic engineering had solved world hunger problems and a myriad of diseases. The definition should locate the argument on the day and hour of the actual debate.

(d) Definitions which place set the debate unfairly

Definitions which place set the debate unfairly are prohibited. While the debate can be narrowed to a particular place, situation or organisation, it cannot be narrowed unfairly. Consider the possible definitions in a debate on the topic *That the state of the union is stuffed.* It may be reasonable to define the debate to be about federalism, or the European Union or ASEAN or any other number of national or transnational unions. It may be reasonable to define the debate to be about the trade union movement. Undoubtedly these debates have been place set, but not unfairly.

The interpretation of what constitutes an unfairly place set debate will depend on the venue of the debate, the participants and the audience. A debate in Australia with Australian teams might fairly set the debate in the Australian workplace. The same definition may not be fair in front of a Japanese audience, with an Australian team on the affirmative and a Malaysian team on the negative.

Teams need to carefully consider the venue, the audience and the participants before place setting the debate.

6.3 Definitional debates

As the definition is considered part of matter, the adjudicator does not wait to see if the definition is attacked before deciding whether or not it is persuasive. However, just as debaters should seek to avoid making the definition an issue of contention, so too should the adjudicator where both teams are happy to get on with the debate.

(a) The more reasonable definition rule

In many Australian competitions, a negative team may challenge the affirmative's definition where it believes that its definition is *more reasonable* than the affirmative's definition. Therefore, under this rule, no team has a *right* of definition.

The test of what is more reasonable is to be resolved by argument. It is not enough for the first negative speaker to say "we disagree with the affirmative's definition, here is a better one". Adjudicators should insist that a change of definition be the result of argument, not the mere expressions of disagreement.

The presentation of a prohibited definition (discussed above) will strongly indicate to the adjudicator that the challenge of the negative team is reasonable. In addition to this, the negative should advance arguments as to why their definition is more reasonable.

While winning the definitional argument will propel a team well down the path to winning the debate, it will not always ensure victory. It's possible for a team to lose the definitional argument but win the debate. This is because the definition is regarded as being one of many arguments, though it will be a strategically important one if it holds the ongoing attention of both teams.

(b) The unreasonable definition rule

In many competitions outside Australia, definitions can only be challenged when the affirmative team adopts one of the prohibited definitions above. Such a definition is called an *unreasonable definition*. Where the affirmative team adopts an unreasonable definition, the negative team needs to explain why the definition is unreasonable and provide its own (reasonable) definition. Under this rule, the affirmative team has the *right* of definition provided it does not adopt a prohibited definition.

6.4 The *even-if* argument

When a definitional debate arises, it's tempting for debaters challenging the definition to focus on the definition and ignore the remainder of their opponent's arguments. Where the definition is a truism there's no alternative but to ignore the arguments.

However, the arguments of the other team should be challenged where possible. For example, if the challenge is launched because the affirmative's definition has no clear and logical link to the topic, it may still be possible to rebut the affirmative's arguments. In this situation, after challenging the definition, the negative speaker may say "even if their definition is more reasonable, their case is still weak because … [rebuttal].…"

There are a number of reasons why it's undesirable for teams to ignore opposing arguments which are rebuttable:

– The aim of the debate is to foster a clash of ideas. If the two teams refuse to debate the merits of their opponents' views, the debate will become a sterile series of speeches in parallel, conflicting only over the definition.

– Debaters can never be sure that the adjudicator has accepted their definition. It is strategically wise to spend some time attacking the opposing case on its own merits.

As noted above, the definitional issue is not decisive of the outcome of the debate – though it's more likely to be decisive where an even-if argument cannot be presented.

Chapter 7

Marking the debate

Chapter overview

The marking scheme allows a maximum of 100 marks to be awarded for each speaker, subdivided into 40 marks for each of matter and manner and 20 marks for method.

A debater who speaks at the expected level for the grade in each of manner, manner and method should receive a score of 30–30–15=75.

The following guidelines should help adjudicators decide the margins by which teams win or lose debates:

– Margin 1–4 points: a very close debate, with only minor differences separating the two teams.

– Margin 5–9 points: a relatively clear decision, with one team having an obvious advantage.

– Margin 10+ points: a very clear win, with the losing team probably having failed in one or more fundamental aspects of its argument or presentation.

7.1 Introduction

The marking scheme allows a maximum of 100 marks to be awarded for each speaker, subdivided to allow a maximum of 40 points for each of matter and manner, and a maximum of 20 points for method. A detailed analysis of matter, manner and method is provided in preceding chapters. This chapter is confined to the marking system itself.

7.2 Selecting a starting point

Debaters will want to compare their speeches from debate to debate. If an adjudicator allocates a score of 75 for one speech and another adjudicator allocates 65 for the next, the debater may conclude that their debating has deteriorated. In fact, it may only mean that two adjudicators adopted different starting points. Consequently, adjudicators have adopted a uniform starting point for scoring which is related to the expected standard for the grade.

A debater whose overall performance is at the expected level for the grade in which they are debating should receive a score of 75 marks.

There is nothing magical about the score 75. However, if all adjudicators adopt it as their expected standard for any grade of debate, then it will be possible to compare scoresheets from different debates and different adjudicators. For example, if a debater at the Australasian Intervarsity Debating Championships performed at about the average standard expected for that competition, they would receive a score of 75. Similarly, if a debater at a National Schools Championship performed at the expected standard for that competition, they would receive a score of 75.

Inexperienced adjudicators may have little knowledge of the average standard of debate in a particular grade. This knowledge comes only with experience. Until adjudicators develop a *feel* for the standard of a grade, it is suggested that the first speaker in the debate be assumed to be of average standard, and all subsequent speakers be marked relative to the standard established by that opening speaker. Marks can always be adjusted later.

7.3 Dividing the points

The marking scheme allows a maximum of 100 marks to be awarded for each speaker, subdivided to allow a maximum of 40 points for each of matter and manner, and a maximum of 20 points for method.

A debater who performs at the expected level for the grade in each of manner, manner and method should receive a score of 30–30–15=75.

Using this as the general principle, we can set some slightly more detailed guidelines for adjudicators as to what individual marks mean:

Matter or Manner	Method	Meaning
26	13	Poor
27-29	14	Below average
30	15	Average or expected standard
31-33	16	Above average
34	17	Excellent

The table above indicates that the lowest score for a speech is 65 marks, while the highest score is 85 marks. Most speeches will score between 70 and 80 marks. For example, a debater could expect to receive 70 marks for a speech at the lower end of the expected range for that grade, and 80 marks for a speech at the higher end of the expected range. Marks above or below these are rarely necessary and would indicate an exceptionally good or exceptionally poor performance.

7.4 Determining the margins

Adjudicators should adopt a roughly identical approach to determining a margin of marks for the same reasons provided for selecting a consistent starting point.

Adopting a marking scheme for the margin means that it's possible to say something about the total winning and losing margin of the debate. In most cases, there will be a mixture of strengths and weaknesses on both teams. The following guidelines will assist adjudicators to decide the margins between teams:

Margin	Meaning
1–4 marks	A very close debate, with only minor differences separating the teams
5–9 marks	A relatively clear decision, with one team having an obvious advantage
10+ marks	A very clear win, with the losing team probably having failed in one or more fundamental aspects of its argument or presentation

Chapter 8

Reply Speeches

8.1 Introduction

In some competitions, at the end of the third speeches, each team has an opportunity to present one more speech, the reply speech. The purpose of the reply speech is to allow teams to provide an overview of the debate and to compare and contrast the approaches of both teams.

The reply speech usually lasts for half the speaking time of the principal speeches and is given by the first or second speaker – it cannot be given by the third. Reply speeches go in reverse order, with the negative reply first and the affirmative reply last. It is normal to announce at the start of the debate which speaker who will give the reply speech. However, teams should be permitted to alter this decision during the debate.

8.2 Particular reply speeches issues

(a) Marking

Since a reply speech is traditionally half the length of the principal speeches, it is marked out of half the marks of the principal speeches: each speech is marked out of 50, with 20 for matter and manner and 10 for method). In practice, adjudicators should mark reply speeches out of 100 and then halve the marks –half points are therefore allowed.

The marking range for a reply speech is:

Matter or Manner	Method	Meaning
13	6.5	Poor
13.5 – 14.5	7	Below average
15	7.5	Average or expected standard
15.5 – 16.5	8	Above average
17	8.5	Excellent

Adjudicators must remember that reply speeches are worth only half marks and should not be regarded as being as significant as the main speeches. However, this does not mean that a reasonably close debate cannot be swung by a convincing reply speech. If reply speeches could not have an impact on the result of the debate, there would be little point having them.

(b) Method

The presence of reply speeches alters the method of the third speaker (but not the first two speakers). Instead of having to combine both detailed rebuttal and a broad overview of the issues, the third speakers should concentrate on the detailed rebuttal and leave the summary and overview to the reply speech.

As the reply speaker for the negative team immediately follows their third speaker, the negative team will have to work hard to ensure that the reply speaker does not become repetitive. One way might be for the third speaker to focus on detailed rebuttal and for the reply speaker to compare and contrast the approaches of both teams to the major issues in contention.

(c) New matter

The rule prohibiting the introduction of new matter by third negative speakers is not varied by the presence of reply speeches. The no new matter rule applies strictly to reply speeches. The role of a reply speech is to provide a broad overview and not an examination of detail. It is also unfair, because it gives either a very limited opportunity for the affirmative team to rebut the new matter (if introduced by the negative reply) or no opportunity at all for the negative team (if introduced by the affirmative reply).

(d) Points of information

Points of information or other interjections are not allowed in reply speeches. Points of information are discussed chapter nine.

Chapter 9

Points of Information

9.1 Introduction

A point of information is a formal question by a member of the opposing team. Points of information allow members of the opposing team to rise in their place and ask a question of the speaker. The speaker can accept or decline the point of information. Accepting the point of information means listening to the point and responding. Declining the point of information means that the offeror cannot even ask the question.

A point of information is a significant opportunity for the offeror to expose a flaw in the speaker's argument or to introduce rebuttal. It's also an opportunity for the speaker to strengthen their case and answer points of rebuttal.

Interjections (which are informal, audible comments) are allowed in some competitions on condition that they are brief, pertinent and witty. The rules of those competitions usually allow adjudicators to penalise interjectors whose behaviour constitutes heckling.

9.2 Asking a point of information

There are a number of requirements of the debater asking the point of information:

– Points of information may not be asked in the first or last minute of a speech. These protected minutes allow the speaker to establish and summarise arguments without interruption.

– Points of information may only be offered to speakers on the opposing side.

– It is standard for the offeror to stand in their place, place one hand on their head, extend the other hand forward and state "point of information". It is also acceptable for offerors to simply stand in their place as the only inference that a speaker could draw from this is that their opponent intends to ask a point of information.

– Points of information must be brief. At most they should last 15 seconds. Long and verbose points of information are more easily evaded as the audience can become confused about their nature. Points of information exceeding 15 seconds should be stopped by the chair of the debate, and may also attract penalties from the adjudicator.

– Points of information should be expressed as a question so that the speaker is required to provide an answer.

– Debaters should not use points of information to badger or heckle their opponents or they may find that they are penalised in the same way that they would be penalised for a personal attack on their opponent. Adjudicators should exercise discretion where such interjections take place and should first attempt to discourage this behaviour before imposing penalties.

– Points of information should be offered regularly and throughout the course of the debate. Offering points of information suggests that the speaker understands the issues through the course of the debate. Failing to offer points of information indicates a lack of understanding.

– Points of information are not allowed in reply speeches.

Points of information are a valuable opportunity to attack an opposing argument. In the same way that rebuttal may be more valuable where it undermines the foundations of an argument, points of information will be effective where they attack a strategically important argument or a significant example. Points of information should not be wasted; they should address critical issues in the debate.

9.3 Answering a point of information

Answering a point of information gives the speaker an opportunity to strengthen their arguments and resolve issues in the face of criticism or confusion.

There are a number of requirements of the debater answering the point of information:

– Speakers are entitled to decline to hear the point of information. However, once the speaker accepts a point of information, they must give the offeror a reasonable opportunity to be heard.

– Speakers must answer a reasonable number of points of information offered. A speaker who declines all points of information may be viewed as lacking the confidence to defend their arguments or trying to shut the other team out of the debate. Such a speaker may be penalised in matter and in method. As a general rule, speakers should accept two to three points of information during their speech. In Worlds style (four team) debates, accepting at least two points of information means that the speaker can take at least one point of information from opening and closing teams.

– Speakers must ensure that their speech is not dominated by points of information. A speaker who becomes a prisoner to constant interruptions may score poorly in method (for poor organisation), matter (for being unable to introduce sufficient arguments) and perhaps manner (for losing control of the speech). An audience is quick to tell if a speaker has lost control, and the effectiveness of the speaker is then much reduced.

– Speakers must attempt to answer the point of information clearly and succinctly. While they should take time to resolve the point of information, they should not become overly distracted from the development of their arguments.

Experienced speakers become very good at handling points of information. They accept questions when convenient (usually at the conclusion of an argument) and answer questions convincingly, clearly and succinctly.

9.4 Assessing points of information

Points of information affect the speaker and the offeror as follows.

(a) Matter

The point of information can reduce the persuasiveness of the speaker's arguments, in which case the offeror should be rewarded. If the speaker answers the point of information clearly, and manages to maintain (or even increase) the persuasiveness of their argument through their answer, then they too should be rewarded. A speaker who fails to effectively answer the point reduces the persuasiveness of their case and can have marks deducted in the matter category.

A speaker who fails to take an adequate number of points of information may also have marks deducted in the matter category on the basis that they are avoiding having the persuasiveness of their arguments tested. This must create doubts in the mind of the average reasonable person as to the strength of the speaker's arguments.

(b) Method

The inclusion of points of information can affect the structure and organisation of a speech. A speaker who takes too many points of information may experience significant interruptions and this may adversely affect the clarity and coherence of the speech. Accordingly, a speaker may have method marks deducted for poor organisation. In contrast, a speaker who takes an appropriate number of points, and takes them in such a way as to not interrupt the flow of their speech, should be awarded method marks.

(c) Manner

The manner in which points of information are either asked or answered can also affect the assessment of manner. A speaker who becomes flustered and appears nervous while answering a point of information may have manner marks deducted; their nervousness would not imbue an audience with confidence in their arguments. On the other hand, a speaker who confidently and clearly answers a point of information should be awarded manner marks.

The offeror should similarly be judged according to the confidence and clarity with which they ask the point of information. They should be careful not to hector or unduly interrupt the speaker or they may come across as overly aggressive. In extreme cases of hectoring, the offeror may have marks deducted on the basis that such behaviour would alienate average reasonable audience members.

9.5 Chairing the debate

In this style of debating, the role of the person chairing the debate is critical. The chair must keep control of the debate and stop lengthy points of information. If an offeror is going on too long, the chair of the debate should interrupt and tell the speaker to finish the point or sit down.

Someone sufficiently experienced and confident in this style, and capable of intervening where necessary, should chair the debate.

Chapter 10

World Parliamentary Style

10.1 Introduction

World Parliamentary style debates have four teams of two speakers. The World Universities Debating Championships and World Masters are conducted in this style. It is a common style of debate in many parts of the world and is based on British Parliamentary style debating.

World Parliamentary style contains elements of traditional parliamentary debate (including participant titles and certain formal observances) in a dynamic, interactive and sometimes robust setting.

The following description of Worlds style is based on the Rules of the World Universities Debating Championship.

10.2 Format

In a Worlds style debate, four teams, each of two speakers, debate a motion (topic). The motion is expressed as a motion before the house of parliament, for example *That this house would support the introduction of capital punishment* or *That this house would support the lowering of trade barriers.*

Two teams are positioned on the government (affirmative) side of the debate: the Opening Government and the Closing Government. Two teams are positioned on the opposition (negative): the Opening Opposition and the Closing Opposition.

Members speak in the following order:

– Prime Minister (first member of the Opening Government team)

– Opposition Leader (first member of the Opening Opposition team)

– Deputy Prime Minister (second member of the Opening Government team)

– Deputy Opposition Leader (second member of the Opening Opposition team)

– Government Member (first member of the Closing Government team)

– Opposition Member (first member of the Closing Opposition team)

– Government Whip (second member of the Closing Government team)

– Opposition Whip (second member of the Closing Opposition team)

All speeches are for seven minutes, with the first and last minutes protected from points of information.

The chairperson is referred to as the Speaker of the House or Mister or Madame Speaker and the audience as Members of the House.

10.3 The onus of proof

The motion will be worded to require the government to support a proposition. The government must demonstrate that, on the balance of probabilities, the proposition should be accepted. Conversely, the opposition must demonstrate that the proposition should *not* be accepted. There is no onus on the opposition teams to provide an alternative proposition. For example, in a debate on the motion *That this house would legalise prostitution,* the opposition would only need to show that, on the balance of probabilities, legalising prostitution would be detrimental. There is no requirement for the opposition to demonstrate some other approach to the issue of prostitution.

This is a reflection of the Westminster parliamentary system, where the government proposes change and presents arguments in favour of the parliamentary bill passing the house. The opposition will provide reasons why the bill should not pass the house, without necessarily proposing their own bill. Of course, there is often agreement in parliament, but never under the rules of debating, where teams adopt adversarial positions in the interests of argument.

10.4 The roles of teams and speakers

(a) Opening Government

The Opening Government will set up the debate, by defining the motion and introducing arguments to support their proposition. In Worlds style, the definition presented by the Opening Government can only be challenged if it is *unreasonable.* This is in contrast to Australian style in which a negative team can challenge the definition if it believes that its definition is *more reasonable* than the definition presented by the affirmative. Both approaches are covered in the Definitions chapter. This means that there are fewer definitional debates in Worlds style and that oppositions must be more flexible in the way they adapt to a definition which they may not have anticipated.

Both first and second speakers for the Opening Government should present arguments. Generally, the Opening Government will introduce the strongest, most obvious arguments in favour of the motion. These arguments should form the main contentions contested throughout the debate. The danger in using arguments which are less obvious is that the closing team will introduce the strongest, most obvious arguments and consign the Opening Government's case to irrelevance.

(b) Opening Opposition

The Opening Opposition must respond dynamically to the Opening Government. It will not always be possible for the Opening Opposition to anticipate the precise nature of the debate, yet they must position their team to provide an effective opposition to the arguments presented by the government. The Opening Opposition can only challenge the definition where it is unreasonable.

The Opening Opposition should rebut the arguments of the Opening Government. In addition to this, they may introduce substantive arguments against the motion (arguments which are not rebuttal). There is no requirement for an opposition team to provide substantive arguments but it may be wise tactic when there are strong arguments against the motion which would not come to light solely through rebuttal.

(c) Closing Government

The Closing Government must remain consistent with the general approach adopted by the Opening Government. They should build on and expand the case presented by the Opening Government. This should include introducing new arguments to support the motion, and may also include the development of existing arguments which have come under attack from the opposition.

The arguments introduced by the Closing Government must be within the parameters of the debate established by the definition. For example, in a debate on the motion *That this house would engineer genes,* if the Opening Government defines the debate to be about human genetic engineering, the Closing Government would not be permitted to introduce arguments on the subject of plant genetic engineering.

To continue the parliamentary analogy, the closing teams occupy a similar role to a coalition partner. While the coalition partner broadly agrees with the approach of its ally, it will have separate and additional reasons for its position.

(d) Closing Opposition

The Closing Opposition must remain consistent with the approach taken by the Opening Opposition. Their main task is to provide an effective opposition to the Closing Government (which should have extended the debate beyond the arguments of the opening teams). Adjudicators should expect the Closing Opposition to provide excellent analysis of the significant issues in the debate as this team has had an ample opportunity to prepare their speeches.

The final speaker of the debate, the Opposition Whip, is prohibited from introducing new matter, in the same way that a third negative speaker is prevented from introducing new matter in the Australasian style. Refer to the matter chapter for an explanation of what constitutes new matter.

10.5 Particular Worlds Style issues

(a) Points of information

Points of information are a central part of Worlds style and are discussed in chapter nine.

(b) Role of the adjudicator

In this style of debating, the adjudicator must rank all four teams from first place to last place. The adjudicator must still provide reasons for these rankings and should also provide the speakers with constructive feedback.

(c) Panel decisions

In the Australasian style, where there are just two teams, the team that wins is the team which gains the favour of a majority of the adjudicators. Many competitions in Worlds style also have panels of adjudicators. Where there is a panel in a Worlds style debate, the adjudicators confer and attempt to reach consensus (where possible) on the rankings of the teams. While panel members will interpret debates differently, their subjectivity must be limited by the rules. Where no consensus can be reached, a majority consensus decision will be allowed and the minority will dissent from the decision.

An effective conferral is one in which all members of the panel listen to each other and take each other's views into account. It is possible in a complex four team debate for adjudicators to miss issues and the ability to confer and discuss the debate should be viewed positively as an opportunity to thoroughly analyse the debate and reach a justifiable decision.

(d) Marking the debate

The marking of Worlds style debates differs to the marking scheme set out in chapter eight. Under the Rules of the World Universities Debating Championships, there are only two criteria: matter and manner. Method (as we know it in the Australian style of debating) does not exist in its own right, but the elements of method find their way into both matter and manner. The element of method known as *responsiveness* is considered part of matter in this style. The element of method known as *structure* is considered under the manner category as it reflects the presentation of the arguments.

Consequently, both matter and manner are marked out of 50 while the speaker's overall mark will be out of 100. The marking scale adopted in Worlds style is also wider, with marks ranging between 50 and 100 and commonly spread between 60 and 90; 75 remains the average mark for a speaker who has a roughly equal proportion of strengths and weaknesses. Team marks will therefore range from 100 to 200, with 150 being the average.

Chapter 11

American Parliamentary Style

11.1 Introduction

American Parliamentary style debates have two teams of two speakers. It is a common style of debate through many parts of the world, particularly North America. The four speaker debate is more convenient format when the dynamic nature of parliamentary debating is sought, but there is not enough time (or speakers) to arrange a four team parliamentary debate.

Like Worlds style, this style contains elements of traditional parliamentary debate (including participant titles and certain formal observances) in a dynamic, interactive and sometimes robust setting.

The following description of American parliamentary style is based on the Rules of the American Parliamentary Debate Association (rules)[1]. These rules differ from other rules discussed in this guide, particularly in relation to speaking times, definitions, permitted interruptions and marking. These differences are addressed below.

11.2 Format

In an American parliamentary debate, two teams (government and opposition), each with two speakers, debate a motion. The members speak in the following order:

– Prime Minister (first member of the government): seven minutes

– Opposition Leader (first member of the opposition): eight minutes

– Government Member (second member of the government): eight minutes

– Opposition Member (second member of the opposition): eight minutes

– Opposition Leader (reply speech for the opposition): four minutes

– Prime Minister (reply speech for the government): five minutes

The chairperson is referred to as the Speaker of the House or Mister or Madame Speaker and the audience as Members of the House.

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1 A complete version of the Rules of (American) Parliamentary Debate can be found at the official website of the American Parliamentary Debate Association, www.apda.anadas.com.

11.3 The onus of proof

The onus of proof is outlined in chapter 10.

11.4 Definitions

In American Parliamentary debates, the position adopted by the government is referred to as the *case*. The Prime Minister of the debate must link the case of their team to the topic – or *resolution*.

(a) Linking the resolution and the case

This link may be regarded as *loose, tight* or *straight,* depending on the extent to which the case relates to the wording of the resolution. A *loose link* is where the debate bears little resemblance to the wording of the resolution; these cases are often adopted where the resolution is vaguely worded. A *tight link* is one in which the debate addresses a specific issue while still having a logical and relevant link to the resolution. For example, in a debate on the resolution *That this house would legalise freedom,* the government could provide a tight link by defining the debate to be about whether cannabis should be legalised. Finally, a *straight link* is where the case adopted literally reflects the resolution. For example, in a debate on the resolution *That this house would return the Parthenon marbles,* the government would provide a straight link by arguing in favour of the British Museum returning the Parthenon marbles to the Acropolis.

(b) Prohibited definitions

There are three types of prohibited definitions in American Parliamentary debate:

1. definitions which are truistic;

2. definitions which allow the government to argue the status quo; and

3. definitions which allow the government to use specific knowledge.

Firstly, the government must not propose truisms (truisms or self-proving definitions are discussed in chapter six).

Secondly, the government must not argue the status quo; they must propose change. Current laws and traditions constitute the status quo for the purpose of this rule.

Thirdly, the government must not define the debate to be about a subject which the government has specialist subject matter knowledge and for which the opposition cannot reasonably be expected to have similar subject matter knowledge. This is a difficult assessment for any adjudicator to make, because it requires the adjudicator to determine what is reasonable subject matter for a participant in the debate.

The adjudicator will have to take into account the background of the debaters and the competition in which they are debating in making an assessment. For example, judging a debate between medical students on a resolution which lends itself to a medical focus will be quite different from judging a school debate on a more general topic. It is an additionally difficult assessment where a government team may simply have superior general knowledge. In such cases the government should not be punished for acquiring knowledge (presumably they may in fact be rewarded for developing arguments which are well supported by evidence).

To allow for this complexity, the rules of the American Parliamentary Debate Association states that a "well informed [debater in that particular grade or competition] should be able to debate the topic".

(c) Time-space definitions

A major difference between this style and the other two styles of debate discussed in this guide is that time-space definitions are permitted in American Parliamentary debates. In time-space debates, the government team may place the adjudicator in the role of particular person or decision-maker at a particular place and time in history. For example, in a debate on the motion *That this house would support strong dictatorship over weak democracy,* the Prime Minister may state "You are President Suharto. It is 1975. You have uprisings in provinces of Indonesia. You should do all that is necessary to quell these uprisings to preserve the integrity of the Indonesian nation state".

The debate is *partially* time-space set when no particular person is nominated. In these situations, the adjudicator should assume that he or she is to adopt the position of the average reasonable person. Where the time is not specified, the adjudicator should assume that the debate is taking place in the present.

There are two limitations on time-space definitions:

Firstly, governments providing time-space definitions must be careful that they do not identify a personality whose personal and circumstantial characteristics are such that it would be impossible for the other side to argue the case. In other words, there is a danger that in being so prescriptive, the government will argue a truism or self-proving proposition.

Secondly, if the debate is set in the past, events which have occurred subsequent to that date cannot be used in evidence. The exception to this is where the government time-space sets the debate and then provides factually *incorrect* evidence on the basis that factually *correct* evidence only came to light subsequent to the period in which the debate was set. This is clearly a misuse of the rule allowing time-space debates.

11.5 The roles of teams and speakers

(a) Government

The government sets up the debate by defining the resolution and introducing arguments to support their proposition.

The Prime Minister defines the resolution, provides relevant background and presents arguments in favour of the proposition. The American Parliamentary rules suggest that the Prime Minister will ordinarily have three to five arguments.

The Government member introduces any remaining substantive arguments. According to the rules, this is a priority because it is the last opportunity that the government has to introduce substantive matter. Once the Government Member has introduced remaining arguments, they must respond to the opposition, first rebutting the opposition and finally defending and reconstructing the government's arguments.

(b) Opposition

The opposition must respond to the government. The Leader of the Opposition states any objections to the definition proposed by the government. These objections must be clearly explained and justified, as with any definitional challenge. The Leader of the Opposition then constructs the substantive arguments of the opposition and rebuts the government's arguments. The rules do not state whether the Leader of the Opposition is absolved from the responsibility of introducing substantive matter where the definition of the government would have been difficult to anticipate.

In addition to substantive arguments, the opposition is also permitted to argue a *counter-case* – to propose an alternative solution to that proposed by the government. Counter-cases must be mutually exclusive of the government's arguments. For example, in a debate on the resolution *That this house would legalise drugs,* if the government argued that all drugs should be legalised, it would not be acceptable for an opposition to run a counter-case which suggested education programs as an alternative to legalising drugs. This is because the legalisation of drugs and the development of an education campaign are generally not mutually exclusive.

The Opposition Member must first introduce any new arguments that the opposition wishes to raise. The Opposition Member must then respond to the arguments of the Government Member and any remaining government arguments which have not been responded to. The opposition should not pack the Opposition Member's speech full of strong arguments at the expense of the Leader of the Opposition in order to hide the strong arguments until late in the debate.

(c) Reply speeches

Both teams have the opportunity to give reply speeches. The opposition provides the first reply speech while the government gets the last word. Both reply speakers will try to *crystallise voting issues.* These are the clear reasons why the debate should be awarded to their team. This will generally involve comparing both teams' approach to the key issues of the debate. Neither reply speaker is permitted to introduce new matter. The Prime Minister has the additional responsibility of responding to substantive arguments raised by the Opposition Member. This is the first opportunity the government has to respond to these arguments and is a likely reason why the Prime Minister has a five minute reply speech while the Leader of the Opposition has only four minutes. (This is balanced by allowing the Prime Minister only seven minutes in their substantive speech while the Leader of the Opposition is allowed eight minutes).

11.6 Particular American style issues

(a) Points of information

Points of information are a central feature of American style debates and are discussed in chapter nine of this guide.

(b) Points of order

Points of order are allowed in this style. Points of order may be made when the member speaking exceeds their time or introduces *new matter* during one of the reply speeches (the definition of *new matter* is covered in detail in chapter three). When raising a point of order, the debater stands and says "point of order". The member speaking must stop speaking and the adjudicator must decide whether the point of order is valid or invalid. If valid, the adjudicator remarks "well taken"; if invalid, the adjudicator remarks "not well taken". Where the point of order relates to the inclusion of new matter, the adjudicator has the additional option of remarking "under consideration" if the adjudicator would prefer to determine the validity of the point at a later time. Other rule violations should not be raised through points of order.

(c) Points of personal privilege

Points of personal privilege are allowed in this style. Points of personal privilege may be made when the member speaking makes an intentional personal attack on an opposing member. Points of personal privilege are rarely used. To make a point of personal privilege, the offended debater rises and says "point of personal privilege". The adjudicator will remark "well taken" or "not well taken".

(d) Maintaining a fair and orderly debate

Adjudicators in this style of debate may be required to intervene in the debate through the use of points of order and points of personal privilege. This intervention goes to maintaining a fair and orderly debate.

(e) Deciding who won the debate

The adjudicator should assess the debate by asking the question "which team debated better?" While the American parliamentary rules provide a basic framework for reaching this decision, the chapters in this guide on method, matter and manner also constitute an appropriate framework for decision-making. This framework should of course be adapted to the particularities of the style, most of which are outlined above.

(f) Panel decisions

In the American parliamentary style, where there are just two teams, the team that wins is the team that gains the favour of a majority of the adjudicators.

(g) Marking the debate

The marking of American Parliamentary style debates is different from other styles of debate. Under the Rules of the American Parliamentary Debate Association, there is no division between categories such as method, matter and manner. A single mark of between 21 and 28 is awarded to each speaker in the debate. Like most styles of debate, the team with the higher score will win the debate. Team marks will therefore range between 42 and 56.

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