



## The Basics of British Parliamentary Debating

The debate is divided into **the Government** (also known as the Proposition) and **the Opposition**. The Government proposes what is called a **Motion**, while the Opposition's role is to come up with counterarguments and rebuttal against the Government's points.

A motion always begins with "this house," followed by the government's proposal. A motion might be a political or ethical idea, or a suggestion of government policy. **Example:** "This house would educate more male teachers"

### The Table

Each debate has 8 people: 4 teams of 2 people. Each team is randomly assigned to the **Government** (Gov) or **Opposition** (Opp) side, and then 1st or 2nd position within their own side. For example, "2nd Gov" would be the last 2 speakers of the Government (5 & 7). Inside the team the members can freely choose their roles. After the motion is announced, the teams have 15 minutes to prepare their arguments for the debate.

The debate starts with the 1st speaker of the 1st Gov (Prime Minister). The opposition leader (2) will then rebut the government and present new arguments. **The current speaker** always stands at the end of the table.

A speech in a debate is usually 5 minutes long. The usual speech begins with rebuttal to the previous points, which lasts a minute or two at most, and then the speaker introduces around 2-3 new arguments. Exceptions to this structure are the Prime Minister and the Summary Speakers (see Speaker Roles), who have roles that require another kind of structure.

A timekeeper will hit the table at the 1st and 4th minute, which marks the first and last minutes of the speech. These minutes are protected time, so **Points of Information** cannot be presented. A POI is a short question or comment presented by a debater on the other side. To make a POI the person needs stand up and asks for permission. The speaker is not obliged to take POIs, though it is recommended.

### Speaker Roles

The first person, the **Prime Minister**, has a special role in providing a **Model** that the government is proposing. This means how the government plans to implement the motion. A well-thought model can be very important for the government's case. For example in the motion that was used as an example above, a model could be to set a quota for male students in teaching, or to have lower acceptance requirements for men who apply to teacher education.

The third person on each side (5 & 6) is expected to provide an **Extension**, which means an in-depth argument or new perspective that the first two speakers of that side have not talked about.

The last speaker (7 & 8) on each side is called a **Summary Speaker** (also known as the **Whip Speaker**). This debater should avoid introducing new ideas and instead focus on convincing the audience of their side's arguments, while criticising the other side's case. The summary speaker should arrange the arguments under the central themes of the debate, and explain why their side's arguments are better.

