British Parliamentary or BP is the second style that most debaters are introduced to. BP is currently used in SEDA in several workshops, and the qualifying tournament for Oxford Cup Qualifier (a national tournament in BP style to choose the team that will represent Canada at the Oxford Cup). This lesson is designed to help high school students become accustomed with British Parliamentary style.

**The basics**

- British Parliamentary (BP) has two sides to a motion: government and opposition each with a front half and a back half team. In total there will be eight debaters in the room at once.

- Each speech is 6 or 8 minutes depending on the host preference. BP rounds take a long time to finish, so sometimes hosts opt for a shorter time.

- You objective is to be the top ranked team in the room. That means you must defeat both opposing teams, and the team on you side without actually arguing with them.

- Front half teams need to stay relevant by having the most important arguments, and asking tons to POIs. This helps them with rankings, and allows them to defeat their back half team.

- The members in a BP debate and their shortcuts
  - Opening government (OG)
    - Prime minister (PM)
    - Deputy prime minister (DPM)
  - Opening opposition (OO)
    - Leader of the opposition (LO)
    - Deputy leader of the opposition (DLO)
Closing government (CO)

- Member of government, also called the shadow minister/extension speaker
- Government whip

Closing opposition (CO)

- Member of opposition, also called the shadow minister/extension speaker
- Opposition whip

BP places heavy emphasis on role fulfillment. In nationals, what your role is as each speaker is judged more laxly, and you can be more diverse in your approach to a round. In BP, each team and their speakers have very specific roles that matter to the outcome of the round. As a result, debaters need to be conscious about their role fulfillment:

Prime Minister (OG)
Same elements as the first proposition speaker in a nationals round.
- Model and definitions
- Establish opening government’s case stance
- 2 constructive arguments

The difference being it is much more important that you do a good job clearly setting up the round. In BP if the opening gov team sets up the round incorrectly, it makes a bad debate for three other teams, it is often considered an automatic loss.

Leader of the Opposition (OO)
Same elements as the first opposition speaker in a nationals round.
- Establish opening opposition’s case stance
- 2 constructive arguments
- Refute PM material

Deputy Prime Minister (OG)
Same elements as the second proposition speaker in a nationals round
Basic strategy

Opening government

Opening government is difficult to win from for two reasons. Firstly, there is a lot of pressure on OG to set up a very clear debate. Messy rounds are usually blamed on OG. Second, it is easy for front half teams to be forgotten about. This is particularly bad for OG because they have three teams speaking after them, not two. If you can avoid both of
those problems, you will be ranked highly in a round. Make sure that your model and worldview are clear, and that you select and develop the big arguments in the round. Closing opposition is your main opponent because you lack control over their speeches. As OG you influence your back half through argumentation. Try to grab all the best arguments and develop them solidly. You can attack OO directly in your speeches. For CO, accept their POIs and offer them lots, that is the only way you can interact with them in the round.

Opening opposition

Try to play ball with your OG, even if their case is strange. Only separate yourself if the round is truly off kilter. A slightly funky model isn’t the end of the world, and you will get more points for sticking to the round. Just like OG, clarity is rewarded. Make sure you have substantive material (constructive arguments that are positive in nature). A big problem for lots of opposition teams is to just take down government’s arguments, make sure you are bringing something to the table.

Extensions

Extensions are a single argument presented by back half that is logically consistent with front half, but analyses the round from a different angle. There are a few typical methods for generating an extension.

1. Find a completely new argument that no one has talked about yet.

This is your best option as an extension speaker. If you can bring new material into the round that is great! In order to work, the argument needs to be important. If you have thought of a very small point that isn’t critical to interpreting the motion, opt for something else. In your extension, make sure to discuss why you think this new argument is the most important point in the round.

2. Develop an argument from front half that wasn’t well developed

Sometimes an opening team is trying to burn the ground (take all the arguments away from back half) they miss some key pieces of argumentation under a certain point. If you can’t think of a unique argument, selecting an undeveloped argument and reanalyzing it is your next best option for an extension.

In your prep for a round, spend some time thinking of what would be argued in a typical round of debate, and then try to think of three or four other arguments that you could make as an extension. Unintended harms, or specific actors are often good places to begin looking for an extension. When you get into the round use your two lists when your front
half is speaking. As your front half speaks, check off any arguments that are talked about. If your front half misses one of the big arguments, make that argument your extension; otherwise pick the extension that you like best.

Whips

If you like refutation, whip is the position for you. The whip has two major goals: refute everything that was said on the other side in an efficient and organized matter, and make your partner’s argument look important. Whips tend to organize their speech by theme (like themes/question in a reply) or speaker by speaker. Experiment and find the best method for you. Whichever method you choose, you should be able to demonstrate a firm grasp of the major issues in the round and prove why your team had the best responses.

On refutation- refutation in a whip should be devastation. Try grouping arguments together and clashing using multiple responses. Make sure not to actually refute your front half. The correct way to deal with your front half is to explain why your arguments and responses were more important.

Framing the extension- by the end of your speech, everyone should think your partner is a genius. Your responses and final pieces of crystallization after each theme or speaker should be framed by the arguments your partner established. When possible, cite your partner as the one who gave a response, or already dealt with an argument. This needs to be somewhat true; you can’t just lie and say your partner said everything. However, if your partner briefly mentions something, you can develop the idea and cite your partner.

Whips are very strategic, your material should focus on what will win you are the round. Highlight your team’s strengths, and make sure you engage with the big themes in the round. Like a reply, make sure you clearly demonstrate to the judges why you have won.