

Karl Popper Debate Rules (2011/2012)

Rules of academic debate format "Karl Popper" for debate competitions taking place in the debate season 2011/2012

1 Introductory provisions

1.1 Objectives and principles of the debate program

The objective of the debate program is to aid in developing the skills, capabilities and knowledge of participants in an attractive way. The academic debate should in a balanced way educate, form but also include competitiveness and social aspects. Prioritizing one or several of these requirements to the detriment of other means incomprehension of the basic principles of academic debate. However, because of the age of participants, it is necessary to take the formative part as a key area, because the life attitudes and values are being formed in this age. In view of that, participants agree:

- a) to adhere to the principles of fair play, decent behaviour and mutual respect to the best of their abilities,
- b) not to knowingly use untrue information,
- c) to be willing to debate given resolution.

The adjudicators and coaches of individual teams agree to conduct themselves in the same spirit and, in harmony with that, to prepare and evaluate the debaters.

1.2 Structure of the Competition Documents

The debates in the "Karl Popper" format of Karl Popper Debate Program competitions, which are organized by the Czech Debate Association, abide by these rules. (hereinafter as "CDA"). The adjudicators take into consideration the Adjudicator's handbook when judging the debates. All participants follow the KPDP Code of Ethics.

Competitions organization follows the Rules of the Competition.

Competition documents are valid always for the entire debate season and can be changed only after the season is over and before the first tournament of the next season. The Directorate of Competitions decides about the changes of these documents.

2 Karl Popper Debate Format

Two teams participate in each debate. One team is given the role of the affirmative party, the other one the negative.

The selection of the role (party) shall be conducted in a way announced beforehand to the coaches of both teams by the organizer of that debate.

Each team consists of three to five debaters, three of whom actively participate in the debate. The team at the beginning of the debate shall announce names and the order of the three active debaters.

Debaters of a team can freely change within their team during a competition, albeit not during a debate.

2.1 Roles of Individual Speakers

A1

The first member of the affirmative party (A1) starts the debate. S/he has the right to define the resolution.

S/he introduces the criterion (if the resolution is a proposal resolution), and s/he has the right to also introduce the criterion if the resolution is factual or value one. Then, s/he outlines the structure and

organization of the defence of the resolution. S/he presents the focus of argumentation and then basic arguments of his /her party.

When debating a policy motion, A1 defines the problem, to which is the solution of the resolution directed at, identifies its cause, presents a specific plan for the solution of the problem, or its causes and bring the advantages of the proposed solution.

After A1 finishes his/her speech, s/he is cross-questioned by the third speaker of the negative party (N3). Cross-questioning lasts 3 minutes. The main A1 speech lasts 6 minutes.

N1

The first speaker of the negative party (N1) must accept the given definition, unless it contradicts the rules of the competition. (Compare point 3.2.).

If affirmative party brought criterion, s/he expresses the standpoint of the negative party towards it, i.e. accepts the criterion or rejects it by providing reasons for rejecting it and introduces own criterion, on which s/he shows why the new criterion is more suitable/important in the context of the resolution.

Her/his primary task is to deal with the arguments and proofs of the affirmative party (i.e. to refute or accept them).

N1 has the right to present own constructive line to support the rejection of the resolution anytime during his/her speech, but s/he has to make sure that he mainly managed to fulfil his/her primary task. When introducing own argumentation line by proposal resolutions, s/he always accepts affirmative criterion or introduces criterion of its own, it is his/her own right to introduce criterion for the negative case by other types of resolution.

The first negative speaker attacks some or all points of the affirmative line in the policy resolution.

After finishing his/her speech, N1 is cross-questioned by the third speaker of the affirmative party (A3). Cross-questioning lasts 3 minutes. The main N1 speech lasts 6 minutes.

A2

The second speaker of the affirmative party (A2) primarily supports the arguments of A1, which have been challenged/refuted by N1. S/he refutes the refutation (i.e. rebuts). If the negative party presented their own case, s/he shall refute it. After s/he thinks s/he has managed his/her task, s/he shall continue in the argumentation of the affirmative party i.e. presents new arguments to support the motion and supports existing arguments with other pieces of evidence.

In policy debates, A2 mainly supports the attacked parts of the affirmative case, which can be then supplemented by bringing other advantages of the plan.

After finishing his/her speech, A2 is cross-questioned by the first speaker of the negative party (N1). Cross-questioning lasts 3 minutes. The main A2 speech lasts 6 minutes.

N2

The primary task of the second speaker of the negative party (N2) is to deal with the argumentation of the affirmative party mainly in a way, how it was rebutted and supported by the A2 speaker, i.e. challenges/refutes the rehabilitation of arguments presented by A1 and new arguments brought by A2, eventually informs about the absence of affirmative rehabilitation. S/he deepens the analysis, but does not bring a totally new approach to the rebuttal.

If N1 presented negative constructive line, continues in the argumentation already presented, s/he could not support the line with further new arguments, but s/he can support what has already been said by new specific pieces of evidence. When choosing the best strategy, s/he shall make sure that s/he mainly sufficiently fulfilled his/her primary task.

After finishing his/her speech, N2 is cross-questioned by the first speaker of the affirmative party (A1). Cross-questioning lasts 3 minutes. The main N2 speech lasts 6 minutes.

A3

A3 is the last speaker of the affirmative party and his/her goal is to conclude the argumentation of his/her party. S/he determines and analyses main/key clash points in the debate from the affirmative point of view and shows, how the affirmative party managed to prove the resolution by means of its argumentation. A3 challenges statements of N2, who challenged affirmative arguments.

If negative constructive line was presented in the debate, s/he shows why this line did not clash/challenge resolution's defence.

S/he does not bring any new arguments or pieces of evidence, except for the reaction to the new ways of rebuttal potentially presented in N2.

If there was a clash of two criteria in the debate, s/he shows why the affirmative criterion was in the context of the resolution more important and what role it played in the motion's defence.

The speech lasts 5 minutes.

N3

N3 concludes the debate from the negative point of view and the debate as such. His/her goal is to finish clashing/challenging resolution defence and reconstruct own argumentation (if it was introduced).

S/he determines and analyses main/key clash points in the debate and shows why the negative party managed to clash or significantly challenge affirmative argumentation during the debate and explains how this argumentation challenge supported the negative construction line (if it was introduced).

S/he does not bring in any new arguments or pieces of evidence.

If there was a clash of two criteria in the debate, s/he shows why the negative criterion was in the context of the resolution more important and what role it played in the motion's defence.

The speech lasts 5 minutes.

A1	6 min	
N3 - A1	3 min	
N1	6 min	
A3 - N1	3 min	
A2	6 min	Preparation time:
N1 - A2	3 min	aff. party 5 minutes
N2	6 min	neg. party 7 minutes
A1 - N2	3 min	
A3	5 min	
N3	5 min	

2.2 Three-a-side Debating

Team debating is characterized by a division of roles among all three members of the team (introducing argumentation line, challenging opponent's line/reconstruct own line, synthesizing conclusion). Team's argumentation unity and concurrence of individual speeches is the most important. The team works in a unified way; it is not a group of individuals. The adjudicator will evaluate how well the team members fulfilled their roles.

2.3 *Preparation time, communication during a debate*

During the course of the debate, the affirmative team has the right to take 5 minutes and the negative team 7 minutes for preparation between individual presentations. The way of taking the preparation time shall be agreed before the start of the debate with the timekeeper.

The debaters of one team can speak together only in the time allocated for the preparation of any of the two teams. However, they are not allowed to speak to each other during the course of the debate.

The use of electronic devices (laptops, cell phones, PDAs, etc.) is strictly forbidden during the course of the debate with the exception of devices for keeping time (stopwatch). The organizer of debates in the Debate Cup competition can allow the use of electronic devices during the debate.

It is not permitted for the team to communicate with a person that is delivering a speech or being cross-questioned. Coach - team communication of any form is not permitted during the course of the debate (from its beginning till the end of N3's speech).

The only exception is when the coach has the function of the timekeeper in the debate – s/he can give standard time-keeping signals.

2.4 *Resolution Types in the Karl Popper Debate Format*

2.4.1 Proposal motion

The proposal resolution proposes to take an action, change the current state of affairs. There is obviously included some sort of procedure in the formulation of these resolutions, which is most commonly, represented as a general idea without concrete details of this procedure. Most often, but not necessarily always, there is an expression “we should” or, “we should not”. Examples: “The death penalty should be abolished.”, “Marijuana should be legalized.”

2.4.2 Policy resolution

Policy resolution proposes a change of the current state of affairs. It requires a proposal of a specific procedure (plan) in order to solve the problem, which results from its wording. It is distinguished from the proposal resolution by stating the note “(policy)”.

2.4.3 Factual resolution

The factual resolution tries to classify and define a certain sequence of things, actions or opinions. Examples: “UFO exists.” “Criminal behaviour is genetically predetermined.”

2.4.4 Value resolution

The Value resolution states qualitative judgments about value in a given topic. The character of these topics may be esthetical, procedural or ethical. Resolution itself includes some sort of evaluation expression, whose meaning is subjective and about whose explanation may be argued in the debate. Examples: “Corporal punishment is justified.” “Smoking ban in public is right.”

3 Rules of a Debate

3.1 *Criterion*

The purpose of the criterion in the debate is to delimitate and shelter the argumentation line in the debate.

Criterion can be understood as a goal, sense or purpose of change, which is proposed by the party, which is debating a proposal resolution. Criterion in the sense of a goal clarifies, which values the affirmative/negative party is debating and what is the party going to achieve during the debate. The goal should be generally accepted, whose achieving should be desirable and idea included in it should be positive. Stated goal should be at the same time realistically achievable, sufficiently concrete and significant in relation to a given motion. It is obligatory for both affirmative and negative parties to bring criterion when debating proposal resolutions.

The criterion is understood most frequently as a standard in value or factual resolution. Such criterion as standard is the tool to evaluate whether resolution has been proven or not, it provides some sort of

measurable value. The criterion by value resolution is most often the explanation of the evaluation expression. It is a right (not obligation) to bring criterion in value or factual resolutions for the one, who is bringing the constructive line.

The negative party does not need to agree with a given criterion. In such case they explain, why they do not agree with the criterion, introduce criterion of their own and explain, in what aspect is this criterion better.

In case that the negative party introduces own constructive line in the debate, they either accept the criterion of the affirmative party as their own or they introduce own criterion for their constructive line. The affirmative party does not have to also agree with the negative criterion, if they however proposed at the beginning their own criterion, they could not propose a new one.

The criterion clash or arguing about two criteria is in terms of two constructive lines a part of the argumentation and challenging of the resolution, therefore it can be executed by all debaters, provided that the criterion is challenged in the N1 speech, or A2, later criterion challenge is not acceptable.

Challenging criterion without sufficient explanation of this step and its use during debate is not purposeful and would be evaluated as a wrong strategy.

If one party chooses a criterion, then the constructive line has to be directed towards its proving/fulfilling. Not meeting this obligation is fatal strategic and content mistake, which means not being able to prove the validity of the constructive line.

The criterion should be formulated by those speakers that present the constructive line from their party (A1, N1), or those who react as the first one on the presented line (N1, A2) provided that they do not accept presented criterion of opponents.

3.2 *Definitions*

The purpose of the definition is to explain how the affirmative party understands the resolution and what they want to discuss.

The affirmative party has the right to define the resolution in any way provided that:

- a) the definition does not depart from the common meaning of the resolution;
- b) the meaning of the words is not twisted purposefully;
- c) the definition is "reasonable".

The negative party is allowed to challenge the definition only if the definition in question does not conform to the above-mentioned rules. If the negative party challenges the definition, this must be done by N1, who will explain why the definition does not conform to the rules and will offer a revised definition.

Negative strategy is considered fallacious if the team challenges the definition without explaining the necessity of doing so during the course of the debate (purposeless challenge for challenge only). The clash in a competitive debate should be over arguments, not over the definition.

A2, event. N2 (if the definition was presented later by the negative party and A2 revised it) may challenge the revised definition only when it does not conform to the above-mentioned rules. The debater is not entitled to bring new definition when challenging revised definition, but s/he can only argue for the definition that was originally proposed by his/her party.

The right of definition is a right (not necessarily a duty) of the affirmative party. If the affirmative party does not provide the definition, this right is passed on to the first speaker of the negative party. If s/he wants to use this right, s/he can do so provided s/he conforms to the above-mentioned rules.

In policy resolution, the delimitation of the problem is understood as the definition. The N1 can challenge the delimitation of the problem, if the problem brought up by the affirmative party is not anyhow evidently related to the motion. If the negatives prove, that the problem delimited by the affirmative party is not related with the motions, then they win the debate.

3.3 *Burden of proof*

Where the resolution is expressed as a factual one, the affirmative party must prove that resolution holds true *in a decisive/persuasive number of cases*, which has been specified by the definition (criterion) and accepted by the negative party.

3.4 *Who Wins the Debate*

The debate is won by the affirmative party if, on the basis of its argumentation, it upheld the resolution debated. The debate is won by the negative team if, on the basis of its argumentation, it disproved the affirmative case or put it into serious doubt. When the debate is evaluated, the “strength” of the arguments is taken into consideration (see 4.1. and 4.3.1.).

The negative party does not necessarily have to disagree with all of the steps in the affirmative party’s process of supporting the resolution. As long as it proves the invalidity of the conclusions derived from this process, it can still win the debate. Apart of this fundamental rule there exist other co-rules for the evaluation of the debate (See 4).

The affirmative party wins when debating a policy motion, if it can prove the validity of its line of argumentation based on its argumentation. The negative party wins in a policy debate, if it can disprove at least one part of the logical chain of the affirmative case (problem, cause, plan and advantages), or if it can prove that the affirmative case is not related with the motion.

3.5 *Negative case*

The negative party does not have to present its own case in the debate. It should concentrate on attacking the affirmative party’s case. However, if the negative party does decide to present their own case, it is still their task to prove that the affirmative case is not valid and, at the same time, to prove that their own case is valid. If the negative team fails to prove validity of its own negative line, it still has a change to win the debate, if they prove invalidity of affirmative line (see 3.4.). Affirmative party has then obligation besides the primary goal to prove its case to disprove also the negative case. Affirmative and negative cases must be mutually exclusive - they cannot coexist side by side and be both valid at the same time.

The negative party is not entitled to bring up negative case into the policy debate. However, negatives can bring own disadvantages of the plan.

3.6 *Argumentation*

Teams should concern themselves with using logical arguments supported by relevant evidence.

3.7 *Refutation*

The task of the negative party is to refute or put into a serious doubt the affirmative case as a whole. If the affirmative party has used a number of pieces of evidence to support one argument, and the negative party is able to refute that main point with one counterargument, the negative team can this way refute the whole group of pieces of evidence together. However, to disprove a piece of evidence does not necessarily mean disproving the argument.

3.8 *Generally known and surprising realities*

If the evidence is considered to be a generally known fact, it is not necessary for individual speakers to explicitly prove its reliability. (Basic annotation is still a necessity though).

However, if the party is introducing surprising facts, statistics, etc., it must be ready to prove the authenticity of their evidence to the adjudicators. The adjudicator can right after the debate ends ask for the proof presented in the debate, which can be given to him also in an electronic form.

3.9 *Impromptu debate*

The impromptu motions shall be announced 60 minutes prior to the debate.

The teams are not allowed to communicate with their trainers, coaches, adjudicators, etc. during the preparation in the impromptu round, only the members of the team, which are assigned to the team in the tournament can take part in the preparation. Names and order of the three active debaters of each team shall be announced after the preparation finishes.

The debaters are allowed to have 1 translation vocabulary and 1 encyclopaedia of their choice during the preparation for the impromptu round.

The preparation time and procedure for the impromptu debate are determined by the organizer of the debate provided that:

- a) both teams receive the resolution at the same time and
- b) both teams are provided with similar preparation conditions.

4 Evaluation

4.1 Content

Content means the arguments that are used, and it is separate from style. Thus, the “strength” of the arguments should be measured without reference to the quality of the oratory and presentation. The strength is understood as an arguments logical correctness, relevance to the resolution, and its social and ethical dimensions. Relevant is considered only such an argument that contains *explicitly* expressed conclusion regarding validity/non-validity of the argument and impact of such a conclusion to the validity of the line/resolution.

Argumentation is regarded as obviously weak, if individual speakers of the team would be clashing significantly each other. It is sufficient for the opposition team to disprove/challenge such weak argumentation just by showing this strategic mistake.

The content category will also include an assessment of the success/failure of the debaters to refute/rebut. This evaluation must be done from the standpoint of the average reasonable person.

The adjudicator’s job is to assess the “strength” of the arguments used as well as the validity of refutation. If a team introduces a plainly weak argument, they will not gain a high number of points in the “content” category; on the other hand, such an argument will still count if the opposing party does not refute it.

If a debater continues in argumentation or rebuttal after the time allocated for his/her speech has passed, the content of what has been said will not be taken into consideration by the judge apart from finishing the idea or sentence. Such effort is further negatively reflected in strategy evaluation.

4.2 Style

The “style” category refers to:

- a) language use (rich vocabulary, ability to formulate ideas, composition of the speech and its style, use of figures of speech, etc.);
- b) manner of speaking. This includes both diction (articulation, intonation, phrasing, pace, etc.) and the nonverbal communication (facial expression, gestures, postures, eye contact with the audience, etc.);
- c) fluency and persuasiveness – i.e. if the speech has an interesting introduction and conclusion, if it could attract and warn the audience about key points of the speech (e.g. by its readiness or sense of humour) and to what extent was the speaker able to eliminate boring phrases and formalities in his/her speech;
- d) the dress code belongs in debate also to the art of speaking – the adjudicator evaluates in the style category, how was the dress code suitable.

The usage of colloquial (or even worse) English should be discouraged by lower marks in style. Debaters shall address each other politely and dress formally.

4.3 Strategy

The category of strategy basically involves two elements:

- a) the structure and timing of the speech and
- b) the speaker’s understanding of the issues of the debate.

4.3.1 Structure and Timing

A good speech has a clear introduction, body and conclusion. Along the way there should be signposts to help us see where the speaker is heading. The sequence of arguments should be logical and flow naturally from point to point, which applies to the speech of each individual debater and the three speeches of the team together.

Members of one team must not contradict each other and must support each other, i.e. must develop their case. If the team is not unified, the adjudicator must consider it a major mistake.

Under the strategy category the adjudicator shall appreciate clarity, case division and organization of the speech. Unfocused speech (failing to indicate where it is going) should not be highly rewarded.

The organization and cohesion of the case is considerably improved by a criterion. It is therefore recommended (except for the policy debate) to establish a criterion providing the resolution allows one. If the criterion is not brought up when debating proposal motions, then it is regarded by the adjudicator as a significant strategic mistake.

It is also considered to be a poor strategy to put forward less than two and more than five arguments (their matter-of-factness and factual value are to be assessed under the content category), and not making use of the information gained during the cross-questioning.

The speech structure comes from the prescribed structure of the logical chain of the affirmative case by policy resolutions (problem, cause, plan, benefits). A suitable strategy is internal division to separate parts (e.g. to separate areas of advantages). With regard to the rules about the winner of a policy debate (point 3.4), it is not a strategic mistake if the negative party (especially N2 speaker) would focus only on one or several parts of the chain, in which s/he considers his/her arguments to be stronger and omits the other points.

Within timing we distinguish two aspects:

- a) speaking within the allowed time limit. A speaker who goes significantly over/under time (+/- 30 sec) will receive lower marks within the strategy category. Lower marks receives also a speaker that continues further on with his/her argumentation/challenge after the time limit is up, instead of just finishing his/her sentence or idea (regardless if s/he has done so in 30 seconds).
- b) giving an appropriate amount of time to the individual issues in the speech. As for the second aspect of strategy, speaker shows that s/he has understood the resolution by giving priority to important issues and leaving the unimportant ones for later. The adjudicator, therefore, must evaluate not only the "strength" of the arguments under the content category, but also the use of time and the proper understanding of priority under the strategy category.

4.3.2 Understanding Issues of the Debate

Closely related to the last point is that debaters should understand what the focus of the debate is and be able to distinguish between the essential and non-essential issues. It is a waste of time for rebuttal speaker to deal with trivial points if crucial arguments are left unanswered. Such a speaker does not understand what the debate is about (is not following the debate well), and should not score well in strategy. By contrast, speaker who understands what the essential issues are and deals with them thoroughly should score well under strategy.

4.4 Watching Opponents' Debates

Members of any team can, as observers, watch any debate.

4.5 Cross-questioning

The purpose of cross-questioning is:

- a) to help reveal and point out the weaknesses in the argumentation of the previous speaker (opposing speaker);
- b) to clarify unclear points from the previous speaker's speech;
- c) to prepare room for argumentation of one's team.

The questioner asks and the addressed person responds. Questions and responses must be brief and clear. The questioner may ask about *anything* provided that s/he shows in the further course of the

debate a connection between the questions and the resolution debated. The addressed person may refuse to answer personal questions. The questioner may interrupt the response, if the person is not speaking to the point.

Pieces of information obtained from cross-questioning are not relevant part of argumentation/challenging of the resolution, unless they are used in the main speech of any of debaters. The adjudicator is in such case not taking them into consideration when judging the debate.

Points for cross-questioning are actually represented in a distinct part of the evaluation; the speakers will get points as individuals for cross-questioning. Making use of the information obtained during cross-questioning is evaluated under the strategy category (see 4.3.1).
