

# 19<sup>th</sup> Century U.S. History Debate Rules

**Please read these rules carefully.  
You are responsible for knowing them.**

## **The Procedure**

For this assignment, resolutions will be debated. Two students will defend (affirmative side) and two will attack (negative side) the resolution, respectively. Debate speeches should be well-structured and free from personal attacks on members of the opposing side. Brief notes may be used, but please do not read your speech.

For the first part of class, the debaters will argue their points.

During the second part of the class, the jurors will be excused from the room and they will vote on who won the debate.

Finally, the commentators will briefly raise their questions and make their comments. After that I will moderate further discussion about the topic. At the end of the class a second vote will be taken on the proposition.

## **The Formal Debate**

The moderator begins the debate by introducing the speakers and announcing the resolution. Each speaker stands and presents his or her argument when invited to do so by the moderator. The order of speeches is as follows:

1. The first member for the negative side (3 minutes)
2. The first member for the affirmative side (3 minutes)
3. The second member for the negative side (3 minutes)
4. The second member for the affirmative side (4 minutes)
5. The first member for the negative side (1 minute)

Time will be kept by a volunteer from the audience who will hold up cards indicating the time remaining for each speaker. When the time is up, if the speaker is still talking, the time-keeper will stand. The speaker must conclude his or her remarks immediately.

# 19<sup>th</sup> Century U.S. History

## Debate Rules

### Points of Information

Speeches may not be interrupted except by members of the opposing side who feel that they have been misquoted or who have a documented piece of information which is directly relevant to a claim being made. If you feel you have been misquoted you may stand and say “**Point of privilege, Moderator**”. When acknowledged by the moderator you should explain how you have been misquoted by the speaker. You can also raise a “**Point of Information**” - if you have a piece of information that contradicts or otherwise bears on something just said by the opposing speaker. Your complaint or point of information will then be ruled on by the moderator. The raising and resolution of such appeals are not included in the time of the speech (i.e. the time-keeper stops his or her watch). You may interrupt a speech only when you have been misquoted, or have a relevant point of information, not when you disagree with a point made. You must raise points of privilege or information when they are immediately relevant. In fairness to other speakers you can’t interrupt their speeches about something they said thirty seconds ago.

If you mention another debater in your speech, you should name him or her as “the first (or second) affirmative (or negative) speaker”. Don’t use their names or “you”, “he”, or “she”.

At the end of the debate the moderator will invite the judges to leave the room for 5 minutes. During this time they should decide who has won the debate and what questions will be asked when they return to the room. In their absence, members of the audience should vote on who won the debate.

### Instructions for Debaters

Be sure to meet with your partner *before* the debate to plan a strategy. Your arguments should work together. Be sure that each speaker in the team uses arguments which work together, but be careful not to be merely repetitive. I encourage you to come and share your arguments with me before the debate. You should decide who will be the first and who the second member, and plan your speeches accordingly.

Please restrict your speeches to the time allotted. It is a good idea to practice - 3 minutes is a lot shorter than it seems at first. You may use material from the assigned readings, but a strong case may depend on collecting other examples and ideas. Please have references or copies of your sources available at the debate. Some structured, prepared speech is absolutely necessary, but so is the flexibility and willingness to answer points raised by the opposing team. Try to anticipate their arguments as best you can. Practice your speeches, preferably in front of people who aren't in the class, and who can give you objective, detailed feedback.

A good mark does not depend on brilliant speaking abilities or on winning the debate. I am looking for evidence of engagement with the ideas and arguments of your opponents, a willingness to go beyond the parameters of general classroom discussions, well-developed and supported arguments and teamwork.

# 19<sup>th</sup> Century U.S. History

## Debate Rules

### **Responsibilities of the Jurors**

For each debate, seven students will be selected as jurors for the debate. They are responsible for having an understanding of the topic at hand, and then deciding on which team won the debate. It is important that jurors realize that they are deciding on which team presented a better argument, not necessarily which side they agree with or which side they liked better.

### **Responsibilities of Commentators**

All students not involved in the debate will become commentators. Commentators should be ready to give impartial analyses of the opposing sides' arguments, and to raise questions and issues which they think remain unresolved, or would benefit from further discussion. Each commentator participates in analyzing the arguments of each side in the debate and giving reasons for their own opinion (whether affirmative, negative, or neither). Some questions commentators might think about include:

1. Does the negative attack the affirmative argument on every point, or does the debate narrow to just one or two issues?
2. Do the speakers base their arguments on any generally accepted principles or values, such as justice, individual freedom, and constitutional guarantees?
3. How important is evidence in the debate? Do the speakers question the credibility of each other's sources? To what extent, if any, does the argument center around evidence?
4. What comments would you make on the speakers' oral presentation (delivery)?
5. Which side do you think won, and why?

### **Point Value**

<b>Debate</b>	50 points
<b>Commentator Participation</b>	20 points

# 19<sup>th</sup> Century U.S. History Debate Rules

## Debate Rubric

Scale Criteria	20	15	10	5
<b>Opening Statement</b>	Clear, concise statement that outlines argument	Clear statement outlining argument presented	Opening statement unclear; argument not present	No opening statement presented
<b>Information</b>	Thesis richly supported with facts and analysis	Thesis supported with facts and some analysis	Thesis supported with some facts and/or some analysis	Thesis supported with few facts and little or no analysis

Scale Criteria	5	4	3	2
<b>Time Management</b>	Utilized allotted time effectively, and met time requirement	Utilized allotted time well, and met time requirement	Did not utilize allotted time effectively, and/ or did not meet time requirement	Did not meet time requirement.
<b>Presentation Skills</b>	Maintained eye contact, clear strong voice.	Good eye contact, clear voice,	Little eye contact, hesitant voice, poor body language	No eye contact, read from notes, poor body language

**Score:** \_\_\_\_\_/50

**Comments:**

**Commentator Score:** \_\_\_\_\_20

\*Commentator score will be taken based on weighing commentator's positive contribution and cooperation with the proceedings with disruptive behaviors. Positive participation, including respectful observation of debate, as well as providing your opinion and insight after the debates, will earn you points towards a 20/20. Sitting passively and not participating, while also not disrupting will earn you 50% of the points (10/20). Actual disruptive or disrespectful behavior towards the proceedings, including (but not limited to) talking out, playing on electronic devices, trying to listen to ear buds, or attempting to distract/interfere with speeches made by participants will factor seriously into your grade, and may result in a zero score for participation.

# 19<sup>th</sup> Century U.S. History

## Debate Rules

### Civil War Debate Resolutions:

1. Confederate secession was a legal action, and therefore should have been respected by the Union.
2. States' rights issues were the biggest cause of the Civil War.
3. The Emancipation Proclamation was issued for political, not moral reasons.
4. Congress was justified in creating a draft to fill the ranks of the Union Army.
5. President Lincoln was justified in suspending habeas corpus during the war.
6. Abraham Lincoln, Ulysses S. Grant, and William Sherman should have been tried as war criminals for targeting civilians during Sherman's March to the Sea.
7. The terms of surrender given to the south were not severe enough.
8. The Civil War set the women's rights movement back.