

# Dialectic Spar

**A new event for the Southern California Junior Forensic League focused on the skills of persuasion, negotiation, concession, agreement and compromise. This debate allows each competitor to be evaluated on their skills to come to a solution or agreement rather than standard debates that focus on the polarized opposites of an issue. Topics for Dialectic SPAR are policy-like topics that are strongly worded in one direction to allow for the other side room to present the opposite approach or position. This extreme approach allows the debaters to come to a point somewhere in the middle through compromise and persuasion. The round is evaluated on 5 different categories and follows the following timeline:**

<b>Presentation Skills</b>	2 min Initial Prep
<b>Reasoning Skills</b>	2 min Position Speeches (Aff and Neg)
<b>Recall and Evaluation Skills</b>	3 min Cross / Discussion
<b>Problem Solving Skills</b>	2 min Proposal Prep
<b>Respect</b>	2 min Proposal / Solution Speeches (Aff and Neg)

This timely debate format was created because our business leaders are interested in employees with more than just debate skills and our politicians are stuck in polarized, partisan debates without end. Tomorrow's workforce and political leaders will need to be comprised of problem solvers, able to compromise and negotiate to get to an agreement or solution. Traditional debate typically does not allow us to budge from our position - defending it to the bitter end. SPAR format is not as concerned with who wins the debate as it focuses on presentation, argument creation and clash. Taking SPAR a step further with the Dialectic, keeps the emphasis away from winning or losing but still focuses on presentation, argument creation and even clash - then goes further to include the ability to agree, compromise, even concede to get to the most important conclusion - a solution. Finding common ground in what we want to achieve and hopefully how we choose to get there!

As with traditional SPAR (aka Stanford-style SPAR) debate, the debate begins with a coin toss to determine which side each competitor will represent, followed by a presentation of the topic to be debated. Topics are traditionally policy focused and not the typical comparative style of pens versus pencils. Instead topics will propose to take some kind of action, such as Banning all Guns. This extreme position may be hard to defend, but will bring out the common goals of such an issue. Making the other side establish their position's goals and advantages helps clarify the starting point. For instance, with banning guns, both sides do not wish to injure or kill innocent people but there are legitimate concerns for taking away a common form of self defense. Finding solutions that provide for common defense without guns would be an example of problem solving and reasoning skills. This helps identify arguments that are not well supported versus arguments that satisfy common goals.

When the initial 2 minute prep time is over, competitors will deliver their 2 minute position speeches - one right after the other. When these speeches are done, this is when the debate becomes something different. A 3 minute cross-fire / discussion with both competitors, begins with questions focused on clarifying each other's position on the topic, clarifying common goals and establishing potential compromise areas. The "discussion" should be respectful and productive versus non-bending and polarized. The goal of this questioning is to set-up a shared and agreed upon solution to the topics main and implied goals.

After this discussion, competitors will be allowed to prep for 2 minutes with both competitors being allowed to discuss issues and points with each other if needed. This prep time is focused on the last two proposal speeches, where each competitor will take their points, conceded points, agreed upon points and try to formulate a solution. These proposal speeches should show the competitors ability to recall and evaluate effectively as well as demonstrating their respect for the other sides position. The overall presentation skills throughout the debate should also be considered in evaluating the rank of each competitor in the round.