

Clash Debate Club Bylaws
September 2001, as amended September 2002
The Clash Board

Nature of Organization

Clash is a voluntary, Christian, home-schooling, family-based organization which provides practice in team policy debate in the National Christian Forensics and Communication Association (the "NCFCA"). Clash also sponsors NCFCA policy debate tournaments. It is financially supported by the dues of its members. No member or parent of Clash receives wages for their role in Clash. Members join in order to help each other advance in the art of policy debate. Leaders in Clash are not required to provide "coaching" per se, but instead volunteer to facilitate the cooperative work of all members and their families.

Clash is a "debate club" or "debate team," because it provides to its members a community in which they can refine their own skills and the skills of their teammates. The immediate purpose of the club is to produce debaters of both technical excellence and Christian integrity.

When Clash teams attend tournaments, they are required to register their affiliation with Clash. Clash debaters are generally protected from each other at tournaments, and they are expected to help each other to do their best at tournaments.

Clash is organized into a number of small groups called "cell groups," each led by one or two "cell group leaders," often adult volunteers. The cell groups provide comfortable setting for students to discuss what they are learning and practicing. The cell groups encourage a firm sense of community and teamwork.

Group Character

We are a Christian organization, in a Christian league. Our work in Clash is and must be a facet of our Christian discipleship, helping us to become like our lord and teacher Jesus Christ, in love, truth, courage, and generosity.

In our relations within the club, and when representing the club to others, we strive to imitate our master. We accept the scriptural teachings on love, unity, humility, and peace, such as this admonition from Paul (Colossians 3:12-17):

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

We expect to treat each other with honor and kindness (Romans 12:9-11), to speak truly and courteously (Ephesians 4:29-32), to aspire to righteousness and peace in our relationships (Matthew 5:4-11), to serve each other with humility (Matthew 20:25-28), to act helpfully and generously to each other (Galatians 6:9-10), and to be mindful of each others' needs before our own (Philippians 2:3-7ff). We aspire to show the kind of generosity to each other that God has shown to us (Luke 6:38).

The nature of our exercise is competitive, but our competition is not aimed at pride or domination, but rather at the sharpening of our own and of each others' skills (Proverbs 27:17). We learn to argue effectively to support and refute ideas, not persons. We strongly pursue excellence in debate, thereby becoming better speakers, researchers, and thinkers. In the end, our diligence in this is an offering to God (Colossians 3:23).

When we lose a round we are thankful for the exercise, and when we win one we encourage the team that lost. We refuse to be bitter, even after seemingly unjust losses. We refuse to be proud, even after a great performance.

In proper order, we share with each other our research, insights, and plans, expecting to prosper not from hoarded evidence or concealed cases, but from the sharpening we receive in our practice debates and team discussions.

We welcome strangers and seek to do them good. We are thankful to those who serve us.

We love, serve, and pray for our opponents. We realize that our wins and losses are momentary events, but the brothers and sisters whom we debate will be with us through eternity.

Authorities and Responsibilities

The Club recognizes that parents are the key authority in the lives of the debaters, and expects that parents will exercise that authority in their student's Clash membership, by ensuring compliance with club rules and culture, and by working diligently with the students.

Parents are also expected to help keep the club running by assisting in various chores and duties, such as helping running tournaments, serving refreshments, helping in leadership, etc. So that we may work together effectively, the club insists that at least one parent of each debater attend the occasional mandatory parent meetings, or if that is impossible, to make up for the absence appropriately.

Clash is governed by a Board of a small number of parents and other interested parties. Usually, the spouse of a Board member is also a Board member. The Board is self-appointing. Board meetings are run by a chairman, who has been designated by the previous chairman. Any Board member can call a meeting, with the concurrence of the chairman. Historically, the Board has met several times per year. Board meetings are by invitation only.

Day-to-day executive responsibility is delegated by the Board to the club president. The president sits on the Board. The president's main task is to plan and run regular club meetings, with the help of other club members. The role of president may be filled by an adult advisor who is gifted in administration, or it may be given to one or two students, in conjunction with an adult advisor.

The Board appoints a treasurer to oversee club finances, which consist of a club bank account (cosigned by the treasurer and Board chairman), deposits from member dues and visitor fees, and expenditures for honoraria to teachers and speakers, tournaments, social events, etc. The use of this account is at the sole discretion of the Board.

The Board appoints a secretary to take minutes. The secretary may be an adult or student, and need not be a Board member.

The Board determines dues for members, payable per semester. (Each season has two semesters.) The Board determines a fee for visitors to club meetings, which is charged per visit. Parents of debaters are responsible for paying membership dues in a timely manner. The treasurer is responsible for arranging dues collection. The president is responsible for ensuring that visitors are properly charged. (This task should be delegated to an adult.)

The Board is responsible for overseeing club membership, setting club rules, determining the number and timing of club meetings and tournaments, authorizing fees and expenditures, supporting and mentoring club leaders, guiding club culture, and praying for the welfare of the club.

The Board is not directly responsible for day-to-day operations, for coaching, or for the running of club meetings or tournaments—it delegates such responsibilities.

Cell group leaders are volunteers appointed by the Board. These leaders are responsible for ensuring that students in their cell groups are well exercised, and that the students receive any help they need to grow as debaters. If the cell group leader cannot directly provide exercises, coaching, or other help for a specific problem, he helps the student find the needed help. A student's sense of belonging within the club community depends in large part on the attention and care of the cell group leader.

Conversely, students are required to respect the authority of the cell group leaders who serve them (Matthew 20:27). Students must cooperate with them in cell group meetings, attend to their instruction and counsel, and help them to mentor other students. Cell group leaders may call their groups to practice sessions and other exercises outside of club meetings, and members are expected to participate.

Problems in the club are to be handled first with the families immediately concerned, second with leaders immediately connected with them, and finally (only if necessary) with the Board (Matthew 18:15-17).

Parents, debaters, cell group leaders, and the Board all mutually agree to recognize themselves as under the final authority of Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures.

Membership

Membership in Clash is restricted in any given year to no more than 16 teams, and subject to the availability of volunteer leaders. To maintain continuity, we generally accept members from past seasons, siblings of members, and new partners of members. We are always eager to meet and form new associations with friendly and hardworking debaters, although we cannot always offer

membership if the club is already full.

Membership must be requested from the Clash Board in writing. There is an application form which specifies the information that must be supplied. Membership decisions are at the sole discretion of the Board.

Members pay dues at the beginning of each semester of membership. (There are no dues during the off-season when the club is not meeting.) For people who join part way through the season, membership for part of a semester incurs a full semester's dues.

Visitors pay a fee per visit. Visitors are observers, and are not guaranteed full participation in Club activities. If a visitor decides to join and is accepted, he may deduct from his dues payment any visitor fees paid for meetings during the four weeks immediately preceding receipt by the Board of his membership application, or paid subsequently.

Two-Club Rule

In order to maintain the best possible community spirit, Clash does not permit simultaneous membership in Clash and in other team policy debate clubs. In our experience, dual membership in clubs can be disruptive to the sense of teamwork in our club.

No Clash member may be a member of another team policy debate club. Members of Clash may not partner with members of other clubs. Partners of Clash members are expected to join Clash also.

If a Clash member partners with a debater outside of Clash, that debater must resign from any prior club and join Clash before that team competes in any NCFCA qualifying tournament. (A "qualifying tournament" is any tournament which qualifies some of its winners for participation in another tournament, such as nationals. Partnering rules do not apply to non-qualifying tournaments.)

For the purposes of these bylaws, a "club" is any organization or group which provides regular

practice or coaching for NCFCA policy debate tournaments, or which registers debaters in such tournaments.

Evidence of “membership” in another club includes paying of dues or fees to that club, registering in any tournament as affiliated with that club, regularly practicing with or receiving coaching from that club, or any other club-related activity which appears to the Clash leadership to compromise the trust and teamwork enjoyed among the members of Clash.

Debaters from other clubs are welcome to come as visitors and listen to Clash meetings from time to time. They must obtain prior approval from the president. There is a per-visit charge, set by the Board.

There are many excellent coaching opportunities available. If Clash members find them in other clubs and determine to use them, they are requested to resign their Clash membership.

This rule does not prevent Clash members from obtaining extra coaching or exercise on an individual basis, unless that coaching is provided in the setting of a club other than Clash. As a matter of courtesy, cell group leaders should be informed of such activities, and such activities should be made available (when appropriate) to other club members.

Partnering Process

The choice of one’s debate partner is a delicate one, determined by many subtle factors, including the personality, schedule, skills, goals, and family situation of the individuals involved. Because partnering is a highly personal decision, Clash policy leaves both the control and responsibility of partnering almost completely to debaters and their parents.

The choice of a partner is also a serious matter. Each partner relies on the other partner to invest much time and effort in the partnership. Partnering should be viewed as a commitment lasting a full season.

Clash does not guarantee that a debater will be given a partner. Debaters must find and choose partners for themselves.

Out of respect to the Clash leaders (and especially the debater’s own cell group leaders), partnering decisions are carried out with the advice and consent of the Clash leadership. We do not expect the Clash leadership to withhold this consent, except in extreme cases.

Before a new team debates in its first NCFCA qualifying tournament, that team must obtain approval from the Clash leadership. There is a partnering form which declares and records the intentions of the debaters and their parents, and the approval of the club leadership.

If a team wishes to break up, they must notify the Clash leadership. It is expected that unpartnering decisions will be mutual, not unilateral.

Debaters are requested to choose their partners in a timely manner. It is especially important for senior debaters to choose partners early in the season. Note that non-qualifying tournaments (or “round robins”) early in the season provide an opportunity for debaters to try each other out as partners. Partnering in non-qualifying tournaments is not governed by these partnering rules.

For purposes of overseeing partnering decisions, the set of “Clash leaders” consists of Board members and cell group leaders.

Appeals

In cases of hardship, these bylaws can be adjusted to individual cases, at the sole discretion of the Clash Board. Requests for a variation must show good cause, and must be submitted to the Clash Board in writing. They, and the answer given by the Board, become part of the minutes of the Board.