

# Principles for Decorum in Debate

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Based on *Robert's Rules of Order*, Article VII, section 43

- **Listen to the other side.** Give your fellow members their rightful turn to speak and genuinely consider the value of their words.
- **Focus on issues, not personalities.** You may disagree with the point being made, but address the point itself, not the person making it.
- **Avoid assuming motives.** Express your opinion based on the merits of the proposal without speculating as to what could be behind it.
- **Address remarks through the chair.** Address the chair, not a member directly, during debate.
- **Use titles, not names.** Keep the focus on issues, not individuals.
- **Be polite.** Avoid lengthy speeches, and don't do anything that otherwise disturbs the assembly.
- **The chair has the authority to enforce decorum.** Don't argue with the presiding officer except by legitimate appeal. If someone is disturbing the assembly with inappropriate chatter or activity, you can raise a "Question of Privilege" that the buzz and chatter are affecting your ability to hear the speaker and let the chair address it. Remember that the chair can rule members out of order and can refuse to recognize a disruptive member who wishes to speak.