

Policy Guide

Speeches

2024-25

Introduction

Speaking at Conference

- As a member, you are entitled to speak at conferences, on a number of sessions including policy debates, consultation sessions and scrutiny sessions.

How to Speak at a Conference

- In most Liberal Democrat Conferences (Regional Conferences, Young Liberals Conferences, Federal Conferences), you can request the opportunity to speak through online systems.
 - For instance, Young Liberals Conferences use the Confera App.
 - For instance, Federal Conferences use the Party's ['typeform'](#) system.
- Ask your Conference Organiser or Committee for details if you are unsure.

The Role of Chairs and Aides

- As the people in charge of running specific sessions, Chairs and Aides will decide who is speaking and in which order.

Find out more!

- All details on your rights can be found in the [Liberal Democrat Constitution](#) and the [Young Liberals Constitution](#).



What is a Speech?

For or Against, the Motion or the Amendment

- A speech is expected to be for (supporting) or against (not supporting) a motion or amendment.

Convince Conference Attendees of a Specific Point

- The best speeches will use the time they have to try and convince conference attendees (and therefore, the voters) of their point of view.

Proposing and Summating

- 'Proposing' and 'Summating' speeches are specific speech types, often with special status in Conference standing orders.
 - 'Proposing' a motion or amendment is the action of introducing a motion to the Conference.
 - 'Summating' a motion or amendment is the action of delivering the final speech on a motion or amendment.



Preparing to Submit a Speaker's Card

Young Liberals Conference Speaker's Card

- To submit a speaker's card at a Young Liberals Conference, use the Confera App.

Federal Conference Speaker's Card

- To submit a speaker's card at a Federal Conference, you will need the following information:
 - Which session you are speaking on
 - Which way you are speaking (for/against)
 - Your name, pronouns, email and phone number
 - Your local party
 - Party offices you hold
 - Personal details (diversity and accessibility)
 - Have you spoken at Conferences before
 - A justification for being selected to speak

Different Ways to Speak on a Policy Session

- On policy sessions, you can speak:
 - For/against the motion as a whole
 - For/against specific lines
 - For/against amendments as a whole
 - For/against specific lines of an amendment



Submit a speakers card online in advance of or during conference

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Submit a speakers card



How to Write your Speech

Limited Time

- Different types of speeches will be limited by different timescales. Make sure you know how much time you are expected to have, aim to undershoot (it is better to speak a bit less than risk missing key points), and rehearse ahead of time!

Work with Others

- Some people find it useful to work with others to cover different points

Speaking as a Proposer

- Proposing speeches are the first speeches made in a policy debate. Proposers often get more time, and their aim is often to focus on the big picture of the motion, as opposed to details that may be heard later.

Speaking as a Summator

- As a summator, you will want to cover the points made by the proposer, in summary form.
- It is common for the summator to try and recall the speeches made throughout the session, and make short comments on those speeches.

Introduction. Point. Evidence. Explain

- One common way to partition speeches is the introduction, point, evidence, explain format.
 - Introduction: Say hello to 'conference', thank the Chair and Aide of the session and introduce yourself briefly.
 - Point: Make your point clearly, and ideally in a sentence. For instance 'I am speaking in favour of the motion, as I believe this motion would improve the quality of life for young people'
 - Evidence: Back your point with academic, professional, lived experience or other evidence that will beef-up your speech. For instance '2024 statistics from the House of Lords show 22% of children living in poverty'
 - Explain: Your chance to expand on your Point, using your Evidence, and link ideas like on liberalism or campaigning opportunities, into your speech.



Submitting a Speaker's Card

What Makes a Good Speaker's Card

- The most important part of a speaker's card is the justification or reason for which you want to speak. Chairs and Aides will often look to make sure there is diversity from speakers, including on the topics being discussed. To make your justification stronger:
 - Highlight any expertise you have (including academic, professional and lived experiences)
 - Summarise the argument you will be making
 - Write the justification so it should take about 30 seconds to read and understand.

Submitting your Speaker's Card Early

- Submitting a speaker's card early increases your chance of getting a speaking slot. This is because Chairs and Aides, especially for over-subscribed debates, may look to organise a number of speakers ahead of the debate. Whilst you are often allowed to submit speaker's cards during the debate, submitting early increases your chances (and is easier for Chairs!)



**Submit a speakers card online
in advance of or during
conference**

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[Submit a speakers card](#)



The Role of Chairs and Aides

Chairs and Aides

- Chairs and Aides will manage the proceedings at Conference. This includes:
 - Opening and closing the conference session
 - Calling speakers up to conference floor
 - Opening, closing and recording votes
 - Managing procedural motions.
 - Acting as a liaison with the Policy Officer, Events Officer, Policy Committee and Events Committee as needed.

Hall Aides and Stewards

- For larger conferences, in particular Federal Conferences, there may be enough resources to provide hall aides and stewards. The roles and responsibilities of hall aides and stewards can be found in relevant documents.



Listening and Debating Well

Listening well

- Whilst conference is often about speaking on the floor with meaningful points that support debate, conference attendees must also make sure that they respect whoever is speaking, and trust the chair to intervene if speeches are unconstitutional.
- Conference attendees are expected not to heckle negatively, and are instead encouraged to support speakers positively with applause when appropriate.

Debating well

- In a conference session, topics being discussed and arguments made can at best fuel disagreement and at worst, division and polarisation. Conference attendees should use the systems available (see right) to challenge debate points, and can submit speakers cards to disagree with points made by other speakers.
- It is recommended to keep speeches on the topic at hand, rather than on personal points, and to use non-emotive language where discussing others' speeches.

Challenging debate points

- The Chair, the Aide, the Hall Aide and Stewards
 - Chairs, Aides, Hall Aides and Stewards have all been chosen democratically or hired intentionally, to support conference. Especially for larger conferences with lots of moving parts, it can be extremely disruptive for people to attempt to intervene in a session by themselves.
 - As a rule of thumb, approach stewards and hall aides first, followed by the aide, and only in the most urgent or extreme circumstances, should you speak directly to the chair.
- Points of Order and Points of Information
 - Points of Order and Points of Information are tools that allow attendees to share points on the order of a debate (for instance, on whether the constitution is being followed), or on information relevant to the session (for instance, on forgotten or unknown data shared by a speaker).



Building Confidence

Speaking at Conference can be daunting and it can take time to build confidence. Start small (speaking on a debate at Young Liberals Conference or your Regional Conference) and build up to Proposing motions at Federal Conference!



REMEMBER

This is only a guide

- People will have different views on speaking at Conferences including on how to frame your speech.

Speeches are *yours*

- Speeches exist to give members their right to expression, within the parameters set out by Conference, Chairs and Aides; You have a right to speak on the issues that you are important to you.

Get in touch! The leadership and executive officers are here to help!

Policy Officer 24-25, ulyse.abbate@youngliberals.uk

Policy Committee, policy@youngliberals.uk



Other Tips

Look at previous speeches

- The [Liberal Democrat Youtube Channel](#) contains a number of speeches, often longer keynote speeches, for you to draw inspiration from.

Attend other sessions during Conference

- Hearing other speeches ahead of yours can help you get in the mood for speech-giving. You can also hear what others do, and make small edits to your speech ahead of time.



Useful Links

Mark Pack's Tips for Speaking at Conference

- <https://www.markpack.org.uk/137895/tips-speaking-liberal-democrat-conference/>

Caron's guide to the craziness of Conference, updated for Brighton 2024, Point 6

- <https://www.libdemvoice.org/carons-guide-to-the-craziness-of-conference-updated-for-brighton-2024-76008.html>

