

### **What is Debate?**

Debate is a competitive speaking activity that involves two sides arguing the merits of a resolution in an attempt to convince the judge that their argument is best. This process of convincing the judge is done through both real world examples and persuasive arguments made by the debater. **Public Forum debates are argued by teams of two (two debaters on each side for a total of four in each round of debate). Each member of the two-person team gives speeches and helps his or her partner the best they can.**

### **The Role of the Judge**

Each debate round will have a judge who will decide which team does the better job of debating. The judge is instructed to base his/her decision on the arguments made in the debate round, not on his/her personal beliefs about the issues. Usually, a judge will take notes and do his or her best to follow all of the arguments you make. At the conclusion of the debate, the judge will write a ballot which explains his/her decision.

### **Before the Round**

- Check in at registration for the tournament
- Attend the Judge Meeting
- Wait for the first round “pairings” to come out - this will tell you your judge assignment
- If you do not have an assignment, wait on “standby” until you are released for that round
- If you are judging, pick up your ballot at the tab table and proceed to your room

### **During the Round**

- The judge enters the room first
- Help the students configure the room to fit the needs of the debate, please return everything to the way it was at the end of the round
- Perform the COIN FLIP: Prior to EVERY round and in the presence of the judge(s), a coin is tossed by one team and called by the other team. The team that wins the flip may choose one of two options: EITHER the SIDE of the topic they wish to defend (pro or con) OR the SPEAKING POSITION they wish to have (begin the debate or end the debate). The remaining option (SIDE OR SPEAKING POSITION) is the choice of the team that loses the flip. Once speaking positions and sides has been determined, the debate begins (the con team may lead, depending on the coin flip results).
- Fill out the ballot with names and who is con/pro
- Start the round - Ultimately the judge is responsible for the timing of the debate, though the students usually time themselves. Even though students may choose to time their own speeches, the judge still need to keep a timer on their speeches as you are the final authority on that.

***Tip for during the round:*** the judge may want to “flow” the round. Flow is what we call taking notes in debate. A judge may find it helpful to use a legal pad, unlined paper, a device, or notebook paper to jot notes on which team argued what and keep track of their responses and refutation of the other team’s arguments.

### **After the Round**

- Fill out the ballot: The judge may write as little or as much as you feel comfortable on the ballot. The students and their coaches will get to see the ballots at the conclusion of the tournament. Filling out a clear and helpful ballot would be the most educational approach that a judge can

take—so if you can, try to come up with constructive criticism and helpful ideas or comments for the individual speakers. A “reason for decision” statement is especially helpful.

- The judge may give the students comments at the end of the debate, and even tell them who won (disclosing)—but writing information on the ballot is the only way the coach will know how to help the students improve for their next tournament.
- When the round is over, thank the debaters and bring your ballot to the tab room for tabulation. At the tab table you will find out about your next round.

### **Format of the Round**

1 <sup>st</sup> Speaker Constructive	4 minutes
2 <sup>nd</sup> Speaker Constructive	4 minutes
Cross Fire	3 minutes
3 <sup>rd</sup> Speaker Constructive	4 minutes
4 <sup>th</sup> Speaker Constructive	4 minutes
Cross Fire	3 minutes
1 <sup>st</sup> Speaker Summary	2 minutes
2 <sup>nd</sup> Speaker Summary	2 minutes
Grand Cross Fire	3 minutes
3 <sup>rd</sup> Speaker Final Focus	2 minutes
4 <sup>th</sup> Speaker Final Focus	2 minutes

### **Other Information to Consider:**

#### ***Speech #1 & #2: The Constructive Speech***

*Purpose: The first speaker presents their team's arguments, Speaker: Pro #1 or Con #1*  
*This is a pre-prepared speech that is written prior to the tournament. The speech should be written to persuade your audience in favor of your position.*

#### ***Crossfire #1: Crossfire***

*Purpose: Question/Answer Time, Speakers: Pro#1/Con#1*  
*Crossfire is a period of time of time that can be used to clarify arguments presented in the round. Both debaters are allowed to ask questions during this time. Questions should be probing questions and not open ended questions.*

#### ***Speech #3: The Rebuttal***

*Purpose: Refute first Constructive, Speaker: Pro orCon #2*  
*The job of the second speaker is to refute the arguments provided by the first speaker on the opposing team. The speeches should reflect analysis and argumentation and should directly answer the claims made by the opposing team.*

#### ***Speech #4: The Rebuttal***

*Purpose: Refute first Constructive & Rebuild second Constructive, Speaker: Pro orCon #2*  
*The second speaker must attack (refute) the arguments made in speech #1 (constructive) and also refute*

the claims made against made in speech #3 (rebuttal).

#### ***Crossfire #2: Crossfire***

*Purpose: Question/Answer Time, Speakers: Pro#2/Con#2*

#### ***Speech #5: Summary***

*Purpose: Summarize Position, Speaker: #1*  
*In the summary speech, the first speaker should consolidate their position (arguments) by defending the most important speeches and attacking the most important points in the opponent's case.*

#### ***Speech #6: Summary***

*Purpose: Summarize Position, Speaker: (other) #1*  
*In the summary speech, this second speaker should consolidate their position in a few key arguments. Primarily,*

the speaker should answer the four main arguments provided by the other second speaker in the previous speech (speech #5) while offering a few key arguments of their own.

### **Crossfire #3: Grand Crossfire**

*Purpose: Question/Answer Time, Speakers: All students*  
The grand crossfire should work on finding areas of

agreement and highlighting arguments that clash with your opponents.

### **Speech #7: Final Focus**

*Purpose: Give final voting issues, Speaker: #2*  
In this speech the debater is expected to restate the reasons why their team has won the debate.

### **Speech #8: Final Focus**

*Purpose: Give final voting issues, Speaker: #2*  
In this speech the debater is expected to restate the reasons why their team has won the debate while answering the final claims made by the speaker in the previous speech.

1. Paradigm or frameworks that the teams present in their speeches that help the judge understand how the team wants the judge to make decisions in the round are allowed and encouraged. An example of a paradigm, judging criteria or framework would be to ask the judge to do a cost benefit analysis with the arguments in the round to determine which side better upholds the resolution.
2. Prompting during a person's speech by his/her teammate is NOT allowed in a round. There is no specific penalty for prompting, but the reason for the rule is so that one student does not use his/her partner as a tool. We aim for all four students in the round to have valid information and to think and speak for themselves.
3. Quiet talking to one's partner during an opponent's speech is not against the rules, but should be kept to a minimum, because it can be distracting and rude if it's too loud.
4. A new argument, which is not to be considered by the judge, is an argument (either evidenced or analytical) that no one has talked about at all before one of the final 4 speeches in the round.
5. Students may finish the sentence they are saying when time expires without penalty.
6. Judges should award points based on a variety of criteria to each individual debater—not simply based on how eloquent that debater was. The 30 speaker points should be allocated using a scale based on 1-6 points per quality. Excellent debaters should receive between 27-29 points. Good debaters 25-27, and Fair debaters 23-25. 30s are reserved for the best of the best. Points may be equally distributed (27, 27, 27, 27) between the 4 speakers, but each student must be ranked 1,2, 3 or 4.
7. Treat all students, coaches and audience members professionally and follow all announced tournament procedures.
8. Do not accept a judging assignment in which there is a possible conflict of interest (eg. Past teammate, present or past coach, paid assistant, parent or relative or friend of one of the debaters).
9. Judge the debaters on the quality of the arguments they make and not your own personal beliefs, or the arguments that you wish they would've made. Judges can only vote on issues that are in the debate. In the Summary and Final Focus—each team should be explaining what they believe the voting issues in the round are, and the judge should pay close attention to what the debaters say in these rebuttal speeches. However, in rare circumstances, a judge may vote on something that is not brought up in the round if the judge feels that the debaters have ignored the critical issue of the topic.
10. Give preference to the interpretations that best fit ordinary English usage and provides more equal grounds for a reasonable debate (eg. If the team is debating a sports topic and the word ball comes up—using the interpretation that a ball is where people wear fancy gowns is not the best fit for ordinary usage).

11. Assess the arguments based on which side of the resolution Pro or Con is more true. The Pro should be proving that the resolution is true and the Con should prove that it is false. A good way to determine the winner of a round might be to ask yourself the question, "If I had no prior beliefs about the resolution, would the round as a whole have made me more likely to believe the resolution is true or not true?"
12. Look for quality and depth of argumentation over quantity of arguments. We don't want to have students trying to speed up so as to "get in a lot of frivolous arguments" to trick the judge into voting for them. The debate should actually reflect an in depth discussion of the topic.
13. Well chosen evidence can help to support the arguments made by a debate team, however, the concept of making a claim and explaining the warrant for that claim is more important than having a bunch of evidence that a debater reads which has no explanation or analysis.
14. Clear delivery and persuasive skills should go a long way in helping a team win a debate. Weigh arguments only to the extent that they are clearly explained. It is acceptable to discount arguments that are too fast, too garbled, or too jargon-laden to be understood by a well-informed citizen. Do not penalize a debater for failing to understand his opponent's unclear arguments.
15. Write constructive suggestions for each speaker on the ballot and a complete reason for decision.
16. Judges should consider evaluating the round on the following criteria: evidence and explanation of such, analysis and argumentation, cross fire questions and answers, presentation and delivery. Although delivery is important the arguments in the round must take preference over speaking well because it is a debate and there must be an exchange of ideas and clash.
17. If you believe that a team has plagiarized, fabricated or otherwise misused sources, notify the tournament director and let him take the appropriate steps.

#### **PROMPTING**

Oral prompting, except time signals, either by the speaker's colleague or by any other person while the debater has the floor, is discouraged though not prohibited and may be penalized by some judges. Debaters may, however, refer to their notes and materials and may consult with their teammate while they do not have the floor and during the Grand Crossfire.

#### **PREP TIME**

2 minutes of preparation time, which they can use at any point of the debate, except during a speech. Please keep track of that as well; most students don't keep track of their own prep time b/c that would be distracting. I usually call out prep time used in 30 second intervals.