

Public Forum Debate Judging

Thank you to Norm Rumsey at ACP for doing so much work on this document!

This is 2 vs 2 debate focused on current events. It is a debate about policy. The resolution changes every 1-2 months, and you can find the current resolution at <https://www.speechanddebate.org/topics/> and scrolling down to "Public Forum".

The arguments you will hear in round are often arguments that the students themselves do NOT necessarily personally believe in. In reality, the purpose of debate is to educate students on perspectives and arguments which they might not have considered previously. Thus, you should not evaluate the round based of the argument that best aligns with your personal views, but rather, you should evaluate the round off of the arguments that are best presented and debated within the round, whether or not they align with your personal views.

Before the Round

1. Let the students into the room. (they are not allowed into a classroom without an adult)
2. Take attendance immediately by reading off the names of the competitors on your list. Do this as an introduction as you are entering the room. You don't want to judge the wrong competitors. **Make sure to hit start on your Tabroom ballot so the tournament directors know you have accepted it**
3. Before they sit down, have the coin flip. Have the debaters do a coin flip. The winner can choose either Pro/Con or Speak first/Speak last. The losers of the coin flip will make the other choice.
4. Arrange the room for a fair debate. The students will sit in the front of the room with their back to the front wall.
5. Ask one of the competitors to write the resolution on the board behind them. This is so you can reference the resolution during the debate.
6. Get ready. There is no huge rush. You may want to write down (pen/paper) notes as you go. This is called "flowing" the debate. If you prefer to make notes on your laptop or directly into Tabroom you can.
7. Address the room – You should tell them your experience level. It is acceptable to admit to them that you are a first time judge or have limited experience. They will probably ask for your paradigms. In other words, what are you looking for in the debate round? Until you begin to know what YOU are looking for in a debate round, this is a good paradigm: *"Do not spread (talk too fast). I am a very inexperienced judge and if I can't follow your arguments because you are speaking too fast I won't be able to vote for you."*
8. Before starting the debate, ask the debaters to keep their own time.

Format

- 4 min - Pro Construction Speech (speaker 1)
- 4 min - Con Construction Speech (speaker 1)
- 3 min - Crossfire
- 4 min - Pro Rebuttal Speech (speaker 2)
- 4 min - Con Rebuttal Speech (speaker 2)
- 3 min - Crossfire
- 3 min - Pro Summary Speech (speaker 1)
- 3 min - Con Summary Speech (speaker 1)
- 3 min - Grand Crossfire
- 2 min - Pro Final Focus (speaker 2)
- 2 min - Con Final Focus (speaker 2)

Note that Pro does not HAVE to go first- Con may be going first (depending on the choices each team makes during the coin flip). Each team also gets 3 min of preparation time to use between speeches at their discretion.

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During the Debate

1. Don't talk, ask questions, or make comments. Exception: If someone is being exceptionally aggressive or abusive you can ask them to tone it down. Additionally, at any point you can ask the debaters to slow down if they are talking too fast for you.
2. Be a non-interventional judge. Assess the debaters on the quality of the arguments they make, not on your own personal beliefs or on the arguments you wish they had made. Don't consider information that you have heard in another round or outside of the debate you are judging.
3. Consider only the arguments that debaters carried through the entire round. Do not vote off an argument that was once brought up but later disregarded by both teams.
4. Do not make faces of approval or disapproval. Be stoic as possible.
5. Take as many notes as possible.
6. If a debater does anything to make another debater uncomfortable during the round, or alienate them due to their identity, it is your responsibility as a judge to evaluate what occurred. If a debater brings up the fact that the other debater is making them uncomfortable, try to help solve the problem within the round, and if nothing can be done, contact the info table and inform them as to what happened.

Immediately after the Debate

They will ask: a) do you have any feedback? b) are you going to disclose? (tell them who won)

- If you feel comfortable with disclosing feel free to tell the debaters who won, but you are not obligated to.
- Try to give feedback on what the debaters could have to make the round easier to evaluate for you and what they could have done better.

Alone with Your Ballot

1. Decide who won the debate. Helps:

- Look for major arguments made by one team that were completely ignored by the other team. You must address your opponent's major arguments. That is an automatic win.
- Look for that "one card" (evidence with a very strong impact) or key argument that the other team has no good answer for.
- Look for Impacts that outweigh the other teams impacts. "In the pro world, we will save x-number lives. That should be weighed against increasing the economy by 2%.
- Look for weak support or weak logic by one team. This is common. One side may make a claim that is strongly supported.

2. Write an RFD (Reason for Decision). Templates:

- The Pro's impact of _____ outweighs the Con's impact of _____.
- Very little support that _____ is true for the Pro. The Con's argument that _____ is true was well supported and logical.
- The Con side completely dropped (failed to address) the Pro's 2nd contention.
- I was totally confused & didn't understand the Con's argument that _____.
- The Con's case was illogical, specifically _____.

3. Write some comments to debaters: a) Give them hope! Don't crush their spirit. We want them to come back. b) Thank them for teaching you something, inspiring you, for having the courage, etc. c) try to give them one or two things to work on.

4. Lastly, enter Speaker Points.

- Rank the four debaters 1-4 using a 25-30 scale. One speaker might be 29, one is 26, one is 27, one is 25. NO TIES! Base this score on proper volume, diction, eloquence, confidence, etc.
- The ballot asks, "Is this a low point win?" Check YES only if the team that had weaker speakers beat the team with stronger speakers. This can happen because it's not a speech contest.

If you have a lot of comments to make, go to the Ballot Table, tell them who won your debate, and then finish entering your comments. You can always go back and enter more comments after Submitting your ballot. **Please Submit your ballots as soon as possible in order to keep the tournament moving smoothly!**