

General Debate Judge Guide

Filling out the Ballot

Winning team: Select the team which made arguments that are more logical. This may or may not be the team that was better at speaking. Remember that students choose neither their topic nor their side; even if students are making arguments that you believe to be incorrect, it is the opposing team's burden to point this out. If an argument was dropped or responded to poorly, please treat it as valid even if you personally disagree with it. Consider both arguments based on evidence and arguments based on logic.

Reason for Decision: Write down which argument(s) won the round and why the winning team persuaded you that this argument was the biggest issue in the round. If possible, you should defer to debaters' analysis about which arguments to prioritize over others. Explain why you were not persuaded by the losing team's arguments.

Example: If a topic is "The death penalty should be repealed," and you voted for the Affirmative, your reason for decision might be, "I vote Aff. Aff won that death penalty results in the killing of wrongfully accused. Neg won that death penalty consoles the victims' families, but Aff proved that the loss of innocent lives outweighs the feelings of family members."

Comments: Write down tips for individual debaters' improvement and what they did well. After the tournament ends, the ballots are given to the debaters. They appreciate your feedback immensely, so please write as legibly as possible.

Argument procedure (*note: Public Forum is slightly different. See the front of a PF ballot for details*)

Dropped arguments: If an argument goes unanswered ("dropped"), it is automatically considered true, even if you personally disagree with it. Debaters should answer their opponents' arguments at the first opportunity; they cannot drop an argument and then reply to it later in the round. Dropping an argument does not mean the debater loses the round; it simply means they lose that particular argument.

Extending arguments: After an argument is introduced in the first speech of either side, it needs to be extended in every subsequent speech. Extending an argument means briefly restating it and addressing any responses made to it. Arguments not mentioned in the final speeches should be disregarded. This does not mean debaters must extend all arguments; a debater can make an argument in an earlier speech and then not go for that argument in a later speech if they think that argument is not key to winning.

Weighing arguments: A team does not automatically win simply by having more arguments. Instead, a team should prove that the arguments it is winning outweigh (are more important than) the arguments the opposing team may be winning.

Debate about which arguments are allowed: Tournament rules ban no type of arguments. But if a team feels that some definition or strategy used by their opponents is unfair, they can make arguments about why you should disallow it. The opponents can then make arguments defending their definition/strategy choices, and you would evaluate the debate on this issue the same way you would evaluate any other issue.

Evidence (*except in parli*): This tournament uses the National Speech and Debate Association's 2015 piloted version of debate evidence rules. During the round, a debater can formally allege that their opponent's use of evidence violates the rules and ask you to look at the evidence after the round. If this happens, on your ballot under "Comments & Reason for Decision" write down what the evidence protest was about and how you ruled on it.

When you decide the round, disregard evidence which violates any of the following three rules:

- 1) When introducing evidence, debaters should read aloud the primary author(s)' last name(s) and year of publication.
- 2) Upon opponents' request, debaters must provide to their opponents (before the start of prep time) and to the judge (after the round) a full citation, including full name of primary author and/or editor, publication date, source, title of article, date accessed for digital evidence, full URL for digital evidence, author qualifications, and page number(s), as well as the full text of their quotation without ellipses and including the surrounding sentences.
- 3) The written evidence must indicate which words are to be read aloud and which ones are to be omitted.

If debaters allege a violation other than the three above, then, as soon as the round is over, instruct the students to wait for you right outside the room and then ask a tournament official for help.

Preparation Time (*except in parli*): Debaters are given time between speeches to prepare their next speech (2 minutes in PF, 3 minutes in LD, 8 minutes in policy, none in parli). Debaters can split up this time however they choose, and should keep track of their remaining time by announcing it prior to the next speech. Evidence exchange is not prep time; if one team asks the other for a piece of evidence read in the round, prep time should start once the opposing team is given the evidence.