



Guide to Judging Public Forum Debate

Times and Duties of Speakers

Public Forum is a team debate that supports or rejects a position posed by the monthly resolution topic. The clash of ideas must be communicated in a manner persuasive to the non-specialist or “citizen judge”, i.e., a member of the American jury.

1st Pro Speech 4 minutes

*These speeches **construct** arguments presenting the resolution’s worthiness (Pro) and disadvantages (Con). An underlying concept will always be the risk of change versus the risk of not changing. If the Pro speech has the advantage of a changing future, the Con speech has a track record of experience (status quo) and why change is ill-advised.*

*These speeches are given by **Speakers 1 and 2**.*

1st Con Speech 4 minutes

Crossfire 3 minutes

***Between Speakers 1 and 2** Questioning periods give debate interactivity and a chance to build clash. The first question is asked by the Pro team member to the Con team debater who just finished speaking.*

2nd Pro Speech 4 minutes

***Speakers 3 and 4** have the primary burden of **refuting** the other team’s arguments by analyzing and explaining flaws in the opponent’s position. They should identify the opposition’s key arguments and attack their legitimacy by: turning the analysis to the other side; presenting evidence that destroys or reduces the opposing position; presenting alternate causes that are not accounted for by the opposition argument; exposing argument inconsistencies between the speakers or between the opponents and their statements during crossfire.*

2nd Con Speech 4 minutes

Crossfire 3 minutes

***Between Speakers 3 and 4** Speaker 3 (Pro) opens with the first question.*

Pro Summary 3 minutes

*Summary speeches are **rebuttals** from **Speakers 1 and 2** that extend earlier arguments or answer opposing refutations, and may incorporate new evidence, but not new arguments.*

Con Summary 3 minutes

Grand Crossfire 3 minutes

All four debaters participate. The first question is asked by the Pro team. After that, any debater may question or answer.

Pro Final Focus 2 minutes

*The final focus is a compelling **restatement** from **Speakers 3 and 4** of why the judge should vote Pro or Con. Given the short period, each team must decide what arguments weigh most importantly on the decision. No new arguments are accepted in the final focus speeches.*

Con Final Focus 2 minutes

Responsibilities of the Judge

Arrival: Notify your coach of your arrival at the tournament and go to the Judges Lounge; you do not need to report to Registration (that is your coach’s responsibility). You are committed to judging all rounds, and we appreciate your availability for the whole day.

Start Ballot: Tournaments usually have four rounds, with pairings, judges, and location announced via text and your Tabroom account. Pick up your ballot(s) (usually two) at the Tab Room. Do not leave the Judges Lounge if your name is not on the Schematic, as you may be required to fill in for a missing judge. Click Start Ballot as soon as all competitors are present.

Conflicts: Rounds may not be judged by high school students. Also, do not judge a round if there is a Conflict, such as, if you are judging a former debater you’ve coached, your child, or a team you’ve already judged in the tournament. Do not watch other rounds.

Rounds / Flights: Most Public Forum rounds are double-flighted, meaning that each of the four rounds actually consists of two rounds, an “A Flight” and a “B Flight.” A Flight teams should go first; however, the B Flight teams may debate first if an A Flight team is missing (thus avoiding delay or a Forfeit). DO NOT mix teams from different flights. For Forfeits, wait 10 minutes and ask Tab Room to render a decision.

Side/Speaker Order: In WACFL, Pro begins the rounds with its First Debater (first speaker), followed by Con’s First Debater (third speaker). *There is no coin flip for sides or for speaker order in Preliminary tournaments* — there is a coin flip *only* in the MetroFinal tournament Elimination rounds when teams have not met before. Ensure the ballot accurately reflects sides and order.

Timing: The Judge is responsible for timing and must have a timing device (iOS and Android apps are available). Ask the debaters if they require hand signals for their speeches; most debaters will time themselves, but you are responsible for enforcing time limits and providing signals if requested.

Prep Time: In WACFL, Prep Time is limited to 3 minutes per team. Debaters will track this, but you must do so as well.

Ballots: Complete your ballot as the round progresses (to prevent tournament delays) and submit the ballots for both Flights immediately after the second flight (keep in mind that a single judge delaying for 15 minutes, sets the *whole* tournament back 15 minutes).

BE OBJECTIVE DO NOT INTERRUPT THE ROUND NO LOW-POINT WINS DO NOT DISCLOSE YOUR DECISION TO THE DEBATERS