

Public Forum Debate

In Public Forum debate two-person teams debate a current and controversial issue that changes several times during the year. Teams will have prepared both sides of the debate and will be assigned a position to debate in the round. The affirmative/pro team will always go first followed by the negative/con team. Each debate team has the duty to debate the resolution in a way that is reasonable within the language of the resolution. The affirmative side argues in favor of the resolution and the negative side argues against the affirmative position. The best Public Forum debaters will demonstrate solid argumentation backed up by logic and evidence, and presented with excellent speaking skills.

Timing-Speaker Order

1st Pro	Constructive	4min
1st Con	Constructive	4min
	Crossfire	3min
2nd Pro	Constructive/response	4min
2nd Con	Constructive/response	4min
	Crossfire	3min
1st Pro	Rebuttal /summary	3min
1st Con	Rebuttal/summary	3min
	Grand Crossfire	3min
2nd Pro	Rebuttal/final focus	2min
2nd Con	Rebuttal/final focus	2min

Updated with **NEW TIMES**
for 2020-2021

Prep Time

Each team has a total of 3 minutes of preparation time which may be used as need prior to their speaking time, but not prior to crossfire.

Before the Round

Check to make sure you have the correct debaters in the room. Confirm the speaking positions so that you will know which team is which and the names of the debaters speaking first and second. Confirm the timing. Most debaters have their own timers, but you should confirm that they will not need time signals from you. Sometimes the debaters will ask about your “judging philosophy” or “judging criteria”. They probably want to know how much experience you have or how you feel about debaters who talk very fast. If they ask it is ok to tell them.

During the Round

Please take notes on what the debaters are saying to help you judge the round. You will need to keep track of the main arguments being made and the responses to those arguments. During the debate all participants should treat each other with respect and professional courtesy. Keep track of time. Judges are not expected to comment on anything occurring during the round, please write down your comments on the ballot.

Particulars of Public Forum

Teams are going to advocate a position based on the resolution. It will not be based on any particular set of burdens or a value. The teams may give you a standard or a weighing mechanism that they believe you should use to evaluate the round. The teams may agree on this standard or disagree. Some of the arguments may be about how the round should be evaluated. Ultimately you decide.

Plans and counter-plans are not permitted in Public Forum Debate. A plan or counterplan is a “formalized, comprehensive proposal for implementation”. Neither the pro or con side is obligated or permitted to offer a plan or counterplan; rather, they should offer reasoning to support a position of advocacy. Debaters may offer generalized, practical solutions.

Public Forum debate should utilize evidence, but not be driven by it. Teams need to both present arguments and respond to the arguments made by their opponents using logical analysis, reasoning, and evidence. They are responsible for the validity of their evidence.

After each set of speeches students who spoke will rise for 3 minutes to ask each other questions. Time in crossfire does not belong to any one person; instead it is a joint questioning time. Debaters should be polite and questions and answers should be brief. The Grand Crossfire period is exactly like crossfire except all four of the debaters are permitted to ask questions. They typically stand for crossfire; sit for grand crossfire.

As with all other forms of debate, the constructive speeches are the place to “construct new arguments.” Each debater gets a constructive speech and each gets a rebuttal. The first rebuttal speeches are a place where the debaters summarize the main arguments in the round, and the second rebuttal is generally where they give “voting issues” and explain why they are winning the round. No new arguments are allowed in the summary rebuttals or final focus, though new examples are allowed to support old arguments.

Completing the Ballot

There are two things you need to rank on the ballot and they are not necessarily intertwined.

First, you must decide who won the round based on the arguments made by the debaters. What were the main points brought up? How did each team deal with those points? Who had the best evidence and logic? Who was more persuasive? This should *not* be a measurement of who you most agreed with. Debaters can't be expected to “convince” the judge they are correct because that might imply a need to change the judge's mind. Judges must leave their personal beliefs out of the equation. The debaters did not get to choose which side of the resolution they will argue. You should not vote for or against them just because they happened to be upholding a particular side. Vote for whoever did the better job of debating their side of the resolution based on the arguments made by the debaters in the round.

Second, you must assign points to each speaker. It looks like a 30 point scale, but it is really more like a 5 point scale. We do this to minimize the impact of a score outside of the prescribed range when averaging speaker points. Speaker points are an indicator of the overall skill and style of the speaker. They are a way to reward debaters for exceptionally good communication skills, or punish them for a rude or unprofessional presentation. We use them as the tie breakers between teams with the same win-loss record. Points should be awarded from 25-30. 25 is a very low score and 30 is a perfect speech both should be used rarely. Most debaters will score between 26-29. You may use a decimal. 27.5 is an acceptable score.

After the Round

Please do not tell the students who won the round or give oral critiques. Decide which team won the round and note it on the ballot. At the end of the round please return to the judge's lounge and turn in your ballot as quickly as possible. We generally can't start the next round until we get all the ballots back.

Parliamentary Debate

In Parliamentary debate the students will have been given the topic for debate and the side they are to defend 20 minutes prior to the round. They have access to reference materials during this time, but may not bring any printed materials into the round to help during the debate. Topics vary from round to round and the proposition (or Government) side will have some flexibility in how they define the debate. They do, however, have a responsibility to frame the debate in a way that is fair and debatable. Because it is a more extemporaneous form of debate it relies less on evidence and more on reasoning and common knowledge.

Types of Resolutions

Traditionally in parliamentary debate, there are four different types of resolutions:

A resolution of policy is one in which the government team presents a plan to enact a particular government policy. For example, *The United States Federal government should reform the immigration system* or *This house would protect voting rights*.

A resolution of value is one in which two competing values are measured against one another, or teams argue over who best upholds the same value. For example, *Economic freedom ought to be valued over protecting the environment* or *Justice demands the recognition of a right to die*.

A resolution of fact is one in which the validity of the resolution is questioned. For example, *Student aptitude is best-assessed through standardized testing* or *The teaching of sex education in high schools is counterproductive in preventing teen pregnancy*.

A metaphorical resolutions which is a sort of “wild card” and can be any of the aforementioned three resolutions. The opposing team need not accept the other team’s interpretation of the resolution if they can demonstrate it is an unfair case to debate.

Speakers & Timing

During each debate there are two teams: the government team, which defends the resolution and the opposition team, which opposes the resolution. The government team is made up of the prime minister and the member of government. The opposition team is made up of the leader of the opposition and the member of the opposition. The structure of the debate is as follows:

Proposition	(Prime Minister)	Constructive	7 minutes
Opposition	(Leader of Opposition)	Constructive	8 minutes
Proposition	(Member of Government)	Constructive	8 minutes
Opposition	(Member of Opposition)	Constructive	8 minutes
Opposition	(Leader of Opposition)	Rebuttal	4 minutes
Proposition	(Prime Minister)	Rebuttal	5 minutes

Note that the Proposition team begins and ends the debate, and the Opposition team members will speak back-to-back at one point in the debate.

Minimal Preparation

The debaters receive the resolution 20 minutes before they must debate it. They must come up with all their arguments during the preparation period before the round. Often the Opposition team may have no idea how the Proposition team will define the resolution until the round begins. Although they may use some research material during the 20 minute preparation period, no printed evidence is allowed in the room during the debate. As such, it is a debate that relies on general knowledge, logic, and reasoning rather than evidence to support arguments. There is no “preparation time” once the round begins. As soon as one speaker finishes speaking, the next speaker should begin within 30 seconds.

During the Debate

As with all other forms of debate, the constructive speeches are the place to “construct new arguments.” All four debaters have a constructive. The rebuttal speeches are a place where the debaters summarize the main arguments, give “voting issues”, and explain why they are winning the round. No new arguments are allowed in the rebuttals.

Points of Information

One unique aspect of parliamentary debate is that it has no formalized cross-examination period. Instead, any speaker may rise during his or her opponent’s constructive speech. The current speaker has discretion over whether he or she will choose to yield the floor to the person who wishes to ask a question. Time does not stop, so answer a question takes away from the speaker’s time. Generally speaking, it is good form for each speaker to take a few questions from the opposing team. The first and last minute of each speech is “protected time” and no points of information are allowed. No points of information are allowed in the rebuttals.

Points of Order

California rules allow for Points of Order only during the rebuttals, and only to point out new argument or a rule violation to the judge. The person rising does not have to be recognized to speak and may interrupt for no more than 15 seconds. Time should stop for a Point of Order. The team holding the floor may choose to respond, but does so while time is running.

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Student Congress

Event Overview

A Student Congress is modeled after the procedure for floor debate in a legislature. It is designed to test a student's ability to speak to an issue in an extemporaneous manner and to reveal the individual's knowledge of parliamentary procedure. Bills and resolutions to be debated are determined in advance and students are given about two weeks to prepare.

Student Congress is an event that includes argumentation, analysis, questioning, clash of ideas, and delivery. Although students may have prepared notes, a good speech responds to the arguments made by others and advances the debate. Judges should evaluate or rank speakers based on the speaker's overall contribution to the debate rather than as an oratory contest

A student presiding officer will run each session. In order to speak or ask a question, a congressperson must be recognized by the presiding officer. All speeches should be delivered from the front of the room. Each speech is limited to three minutes. In addition, each speaker is open for a maximum of one minute of cross-examination. Notes and prepared material are allowed in delivering speeches. Visual aids and props are NOT allowed.

Mechanics of the Round

At the beginning of the round the Presiding Officer will instruct the students to sit in a pre-arranged seating chart. The Presiding officer will sit in the front of the room, the judges will sit in the back, with the student competitors in the middle. The PO will call for motions and the debate will begin. At the end of the session the PO should call an end to the round.

During the round

Take notes. You will have a seating chart to keep track of students asking and answering questions. Students should write their name on the board so that judges can confirm their identity. Keep track of what you liked about each of the speakers as they spoke. It is a good idea to keep a ranking going as they speak, compare each speaker to those that have gone before, and determine where they would be ranked. After the round look over your notes to confirm your rankings and make adjustments.

How do I determine the winners?

There is no single answer as to who is the winner of the round, rather the judge should take a holistic look at the round. Was the student's speech articulate? Did the student use sound reasoning with evidence to support their arguments? Did the student respond intelligently and eloquently to questions asked? Did the student actively ask questions during the round? Were the questions asked relevant? Was the student courteous to his/her competitors? The best speaker in the round will be the person who has done all of these things the best. Please remember that students may only get a chance to speak once during their round, so if a student does speak more than once, they do not get double the points of a person who speaks only once; you should evaluate both speeches in determining a person's ranking.

Each student will be ranked from 1-10 with 1 being the highest and 10 the lowest. All remaining students tie at 10th place. On the ballot please write comments for the students. Comments should be constructive; ideally they will point out a few strengths and areas of growth for the speaker. If you have any questions please talk to a member of the tab room staff after the round is over