

JOB OF A STUDENT CONGRESS JUDGE

- Evaluate the “Best Legislator”
- Students should be evaluated based on the demonstration of various skills – not just speaking. This means students should be recognized for participating in setting the agenda, making motions, decorum, asking questions, etc.

SPEECH SCORES (many tournaments ask judges to award a score of 1-6 for each speech)

- 6 – This competitor should contend for a top spot at the tournament with speeches of this caliber.
- 5 – This competitor should expect to advance out of prelims based on this speech.
- 4 – This competitor was good, but not likely to advance out of prelims.
- 3 – This competitor was prepared but has a lot of growth opportunities.
- 2 – This competitor was unprepared.
- 1 – This competitor was offensive. Requires a detailed explanation.
- 0 - This competitor accidentally spoke on the wrong side of the debate.

CRITERIA FOR JUDGING SPEECHES

Delivery -- Was the speaker fluid, lively, and engaging to listen to? Did they make consistent eye contact instead of looking down at their notes most of the time? Were body language & hand gestures controlled and appropriate?

Organization -- Was the speech structured in such a way that the speaker's main ideas were clearly identifiable and easy to follow? Conversely, did the speaker's argumentation tend to wander to & fro seemingly without a plan, with points sometimes repeating or bleeding into each other?

Evidence -- Were the speaker's claims & logic supported by relevant evidence? Did that evidence, in fact, tend to support the claims that the speaker thought it did? Was the source of their evidence appropriately cited, such that a listener would be able to track it down if so inclined? Did the evidence come from reliable and *relatively* unbiased sources?

Originality -- Did the speaker introduce new ideas, evidence, and arguments into the debate? Or, was the speech largely a rehash the same points made by previous speakers, without shedding new light in a substantial way?

Clash -- Related to the above, did the speech engage with the arguments raised by previous speakers? Where the logic or evidence of the speech disagrees with that already put forth by the opposite side, did the speaker highlight this difference and clearly explain why the previous claims are faulty? Conversely, did the speech seem to exist in a vacuum, indistinguishable from one given by someone who was absent from the chamber for the previous speeches on the bill? How well did the speaker handle any questions from the chamber?

TYPES OF CONGRESS SPEECHES

- Students demonstrate skill by performing different types of speeches, none of which are inherently more or less valuable than the others. (These are unofficial categories, and you'll see speeches that combine elements from more than one kind of speech.)

Constructive:

- Seen at the beginning of debate on a given bill; these explain the most fundamental issues and arguments on their side.
- An authorship or sponsorship speech should establish the purpose of introducing the bill. You should be able to listen to the sponsorship speech and understand what the proposed piece of legislation advocates without reading it.
- A bill's **author** (i.e., his or her name is on it) is responsible for the content of the bill itself. If the bill is flatly unconstitutional, self-contradictory, or riddled with typos, etc., that may be factored into their final ranking.

Rebuttal Speeches:

- Rebuttal speeches directly refute opponents' argumentation.
- Rebuttals should not simply list the names of opposing legislators, but rather engage with their arguments & evidence and explain why they are flawed.

Extension Speeches:

- Extension speeches take a previous argument and extend the line of argumentation.
- Extension speeches are not rehash if, and only if, some new nuance of the debate is brought forth.
- Speeches can be a combination of rebuttal and extension.

Crystallization Speeches:

- Happen at the end of the debate.
- Often this is a retrospective or summing-up of the debate so far. It weighs both sides and tries to convince you why one side is better than the other, or shows the process by their side has "won" the debate.

ROLE OF THE PRESIDING OFFICER

- To ensure that students can do this in a fast, fair, and efficient manner, a presiding officer is absolutely necessary.
- Rounds cannot happen without presiding officers. Students are sacrificing their opportunity to speak to serve the chamber. This is a leadership position.
- Bad presiding officers will result in chaos in the chamber and thus, the lack of opportunity for students to participate in debate. Therefore, in order to encourage individuals to preside, we highly encourage you to place the presiding officer in your final ranks.
- Failure to rank the presiding officer should be accompanied by an explanation as to why the presiding officer failed to keep order in the chamber or demonstrated a lack of leadership.

ONE-SIDED DEBATE

- The purpose of debate is advance arguments.
- Students should be prepared on both sides of the legislation. Thus, one-sided debate is highly frowned upon. If everyone agrees, then there is no debate.
- Students, in this event, are not required to advocate on every bill.

CALLING THE QUESTION (Ending Debate on a Bill)

- Students should feel comfortable calling the previous question when debate has become one-sided or debate has become stale.
- It is not rude to call the previous question *if these conditions exist*, even if some people still want to speak on the bill.
- One of the skills of a limited prep event like Student Congress is being able to flip one's points if one really wants to give a speech on a particular piece of legislation.

MENTAL REMINDERS

- Clothing is appropriate if it speaks to seriousness of purpose and provides confidence.
- Accents do not reflect intelligence.
- Pitch is not a personal choice.
- Speech impediments (lisps, etc.) are not, of themselves, valid grounds for demerits.
- Positions taken in debates don't necessarily equate to personal beliefs.
- Avoid giving hints or indications to speakers about how you think they did during and immediately after the session.
- On your ballots, offer suggestions, but remember to be nice.
- Be supportive, but remember to offer criticism -- the ballot should give an idea of why the student got the rank they did (especially if the rank isn't very good).

Examples of Comments/Critiques for Use on Your Ballots

Often the hardest part about judging is figuring out what to write on your ballots – that is, you pretty much know where a speaker ranked in the round, but you're not sure what you should comment on or how to put into words what they did well or poorly. Below is a selection of comments my own students have received over the past couple of years that I felt were reasonably helpful. The intent here is to give you a sense of the kinds of things you can critique, though obviously it's not an exhaustive list. Enjoy.

Biggie Smalls intro — Fun intro. Strong clear voice. Passionate presentation.

Try not to overly depend on your notes — refer to them for statistics, quotes, names and titles, or bullet-point your speech for organization. But don't read chunks of your speech.

Good job refuting the counterarguments of your opponents in the chamber.

SOURCES

REUTERS published yesterday. REUTERS 2019 — careful not to overly depend on one source of evidence. If that source turns out to be tainted or incorrect, you risk having your whole argument collapse.

Guardian 2018

The value of Turkey as an ally. It's good to have large Turkish army as they assist NATO and the fight in the ME.

This fear of Russian influence is largely rehash by this point. Not much new has been added. Also, saying Turkey moves towards Europe is generally considered to mean moving towards America as well, not Russia.

Economies of the ME is relatively new argument, but your evidence isn't really there that slackening Turkish tariffs will strengthen our trade ties with ME.

Speech had better, more consistent flow this time.

- I think the intro was... a good try. I appreciate the effort, not sure if the joke really landed, but I do appreciate the attempt.

- I like your decision to look back at the previous effort to remove the embargo in 2016, it was a good way to add context to the round.

- I think the biggest thing you need to work on is organization. The speech was hard for me to follow. I got a lot of evidence, a lot of different arguments, but there wasn't really any structure to your speech so it was difficult for me to flow through what you were saying. Make sure to clearly identify each independent point you're presenting so the room can follow what you're saying.

- I like your speaking style, you annunciated well, changed your style up, and sounded impactful. Good work there.

- Nice handling of CX [cross-examination]

eye contact good; intro really didn't land; really good passion; need more confidence when conveying points; too much rhetoric actually on first point...want more empirical evidence explaining your points; work on transitioning between speaking extemporaneously and pad; i would rather a stronger source than investopedia; DATES WHEN STATING SOURCES; ending felt awkward tie conclusion into intro...good job discussing impacts...points logical and make sense...overall really good work

Funny self-introduction OTTO & THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE (code 1000)

Strong, clear voice, though you sometimes lose your thought and stumble over some of your words as you race forward. Slow down a little to smooth out your presentation.

Watch that you don't fall into a sing-song vocal pattern where you repeat the same emphasis throughout. If some parts of your info is more important than others, emphasize these. Look at how pitch, volume, pausing, and alternating your pace (fast/slow) you make your argument a bit more engaging.

BLOOMBERG 8/18, BUSINESS INSIDER 2018, INVESTIPEDIA (this sounds, horrifyingly, like Wikipedia! Is this more credible as a source, I hope?)

Direct intro. Slow down, though so you don't race through your points and to maintain clear diction.

Good vocal variety — volume & pitch

Some of your analysis is a little general — you jump right to a conclusion without actually explaining WHAT in the article or evidence "clearly proves" your thesis.

Very fluid presentation. You KNOW your subject and do not overly rely on your notes.

You handle yourself with poise in questioning.

Sources

DEFENSE NEWS, FORBES 2018, HOW THINGS ARE MADE 2018

SPEECH 1

Your speech could be a little bit better organized. It's hard to follow the points you're trying to make. Enunciation might also be something to work on, as well as slowing down so sentences don't run together. Sometimes, in answering questions, you didn't address the question at hand directly.

SPEECH 2

You are practically shouting/yelling at the chamber. Some emotion is fine, great, even, but it's hard to take it all in when all of it is so loud. There is a way to be firm, but also differentiate your speaking style, tone, and volume-- this will make your most important emotions and points stand out.

COMMENTS

Another piece of advice: Wait until the van ride before complaining about your judge or parli. My students and I overheard you complaining about me as you walked down the hallway.

I'm sorry you disagreed with my comments and oral critique. I did my very best to be fair and understanding. At the end of the day, I felt that you were disrespectful today-- others, you included, may agree or disagree, and that's fine. Rest assured, it was not the only factor affecting your rank, as this was a fairly competitive chamber. I thought fairly highly of you today until our last few minutes of interacting. Please, have some respect for your peers and the adults that make these tournaments happen. I almost changed your rank, but Tab said it was too late.

This extra critique may be unnecessary, but I add it merely because I want you to be aware that your behavior would have affected your rank even more if Tabroom wasn't faster than me. That, and if any of my students acted this way, I would want to know about it so that I could discourage that behavior. I hope today was just a bad day, and I look forward to seeing you compete in the future!