

# Judging 101

First, THANK YOU. Without you, we could not do this. If you find that you have a friend or relative competing and feel that you cannot be objective because of your relationship, please come back to the judges' table and we will be happy to reassign you.

Your job is to score and rank the competitors in the round giving a one (1) to the best, a two (2) to the second best, and so on. Judge the presentation, not whether you agree or disagree with the speaker.

Please start the round promptly at the scheduled round time, even if some of the students are not present. If all present students have spoken and a scheduled student has not arrived, check your watch. If you have been in the room for at least one hour, write "no-show" next to their code on the ballot. Many students are double entered and may be coming to your room second.

**Taking Roll:** Start the round by taking roll. Call off each contestant's name to determine who is present. Some students may be entered in more than one event and may arrive late or leave early. This is not their fault, and they should not be penalized for this. When ready, call the first speaker to the front.

Please time with a stopwatch or the stopwatch function on your phone, not a clock or watch.

Please do not make comments on students' appearance. Be careful to examine your own internal biases and judge each student fairly. You may not agree with everything they say, but if say it well and have support, do not penalize them. Students do not always have choice in their topic or what side they are arguing.

## FAQ

**Should I give the students feedback after the round or tell them their scores?** Students will receive your ballot after the tournament. Please save all comments for the ballot and do not tell them any scores or critiques/comments during the tournament unless explicitly told by the tournament official. .

**Who do I ask if I have a question about the rules?** At all times during the tournament there will be staff in the tab room to answer any of your questions. Please feel free to ask them anything.

**What do I write on the ballot?** Please write DETAILED constructive comments for each speaker: A comment like "good speech" does little to help the speaker improve. The students want your feedback. Tell them specifically what you liked and didn't like about their performance. Please remember that the competitors are students who want to learn to improve. They read every word. You should think of these in a way as letting the students know the REASON for ranking them the way you did. But please be kind and constructive- they are still learning.

Feel free to take notes on the ballot or on a separate sheet of paper during the speeches. Please fill out comments and the rubric promptly and use those to help you rank all the students in the round. Ratings scores can be tied, but only 7th place can be a tie (if there are 8 or more in the room). Do not skip a rank ie. If there are 5 students in the room, then only use ranks 1-5. Rank 1 is best, 2 is next etc. In ratings, however, higher numbers indicate higher quality.

Please return your ballot to the "Judges' Check-in Table" or submit for online ballots as soon as you can. If you are writing lengthy comments, please move to the judges lounge to finish so that the next round may begin and check in with tab so they know you are working on it.

## Time Signals for Impromptu & Tall Tales

In these events students have 6 minutes to prepare and speak, followed by a 30 second grace period. Start your timer when students look at their prompts. As they choose a topic and prepare, you will give oral time signals every thirty seconds. "30 seconds elapsed", "1 minute elapsed" etc. Once the student begins speaking, you will switch to hand signals counting down the remaining time.

01:00



02:00



03:00



04:00



05:00



05:30



05:45



From 05:55 to 06:00 count down with your hand signals 5-4-3-2-1 and hold up a closed fist for 0. The student will then have entered their grace period. If they are still speaking at 06:15 give the time signal from 05:45 again. From 06:25 to 06:30, repeat the 5-4-3-2-1-0 hand signals again. Typically, students have stopped before this time. If a student continues much longer (this is rare) you are allowed to politely interrupt and tell them their time is up.

## Time Signals for Extemporaneous Speaking

Students have been preparing in a separate room for the past 30 minutes. They will arrive one by one for their speaking time. It is up to you to allow students to read you their chosen prompt before you begin the timer or not. Either way, it should be clear in their speech which topic they chose. When they begin speaking, start your timer. As time continues, you will give hand signals to let the students know how long they have remaining.

02:00



03:00



04:00



05:00



06:00



06:30



06:45



From 06:55 to 07:00 count down with your hand signals 5-4-3-2-1 and hold up a closed fist for 0. The student will then have entered their grace period. If they are still speaking at 06:15 give the time signal from 06:45 again. From 07:25 to 07:30, repeat the 5-4-3-2-1-0 hand signals again. Typically students have stopped before this time. If a student continues much longer (this is rare) you are allowed to politely interrupt and tell them their time is up.

# Original Oratory Rules

In Original Oratory, students deliver a self-written, ten-minute speech on a topic of their choosing. Competitors craft an argument using evidence, logic, and emotional appeals. Topics range widely, and can be informative or persuasive in nature. The speech is delivered from memory. (NSDA).

Give the orator **free choice of subject and judge him/her solely on the effectiveness of its development and presentation.**

The presentation **must be memorized.** Anyone who refers to a script or notes during their speech must rank below those who do NOT.

The time limit for this event is TEN (10) MINUTES. If the speaker goes over a 30 second grace period (timer reaches 10:31) the contestant may not be awarded first place in the round. Any other ranking is acceptable. There is no minimum time limit.

Oratory is about the art of speaking and rhetoric. Speakers like Winston Churchill, Aristotle, and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. are prime examples of well-known orators.

## Judging Original Oratory

Things to look for include development of the topic, rhetoric/diction, persuasiveness, organization, use of voice and body, and sincerity or directness.

The use of appropriate figures of speech, similes and metaphors, balanced sentences, allusions, and other rhetorical devices should be noted. Delivery should be judged for mastery of the mechanics of speech: poise, quality and use of voice and bodily expressiveness, and for qualities of directness and sincerity.

Don't judge on how you feel about the topic personally, but how the student presents and shares their ideas and information. Do they bring up good points? Did something make you think differently? Are they presenting well? Is the speech well organized? Do examples and evidence support what they are saying?

The structure is not just problem-cause-solution. Other formats are acceptable. Refer to the ballot for more info.

### Sample comments:

"Be purposeful in movement."

"I appreciated your analogy about [...]"

"Work on organization to help you listener follow through the argument."

"Good vocal dynamics, i.e., variety in pacing and volume."

"Work on incorporating support from outside sources."

"Your point about [...] really made me think."

# Informative Rules

In Informative Speaking, students author and deliver a ten-minute speech on a topic of their choosing. Competitors create the speech to educate the audience on a particular topic. All topics must be informative in nature; the goal is to educate, not to advocate. Visual aids are permitted, but not required. (NSDA)

Responsibility for choosing a worthwhile topic rests with the contestant. Worthwhile means many things--not just socially or politically relevant. Things that are interesting, entertaining, bring new insight or share a speaker's passion/interest can all be considered worthwhile.

There is no penalty for the use of notecards/manuscripts in WSFA competition.

The time limit for this event is TEN (10) MINUTES. If the speaker goes over a 30 second grace period (timer reaches 10:31) the contestant may not be awarded first place in the round. Any other ranking is acceptable. There is no minimum time limit.

## Judging Informative

Things to look for include a worthwhile topic, an original approach, language, organization, and use of voice and body.

Even if you don't personally find the topic interesting, it can still be worthwhile from the speaker's perspective.

While visual aids are a nice addition, they are not required and should not overshadow the other judging criteria. Visual aids can be things other than posters.

Speeches do not have to be memorized, but the use of scripts or notecards should not detract from the presentation elements like eye contact, and use of voice and body.

### Sample comments:

"I didn't know [...] about this before."

"Work on organization rather than a list of facts."

"I can really feel your excitement about your topic."

"Your phrasing during this point makes it unclear."

"I appreciated your use of the space (not standing in the same spot the whole time)."

"Don't let changing your posters detract from the speech."

# Impromptu Rules

Impromptu is a public speaking event where students have six minutes to select a topic, brainstorm their ideas, outline the speech, and finally, deliver the speech. The speech is given without notes and uses an introduction, body, and conclusion. The speech can be light-hearted or serious. The speech can be based upon prompts that range from nursery rhymes, current events, celebrities, organizations, and more. (NSDA)

A good impromptu speaker will discuss intelligently and with adequate speaking skills his/her chosen topic. Topics are provided by the tournament. The student listed first in the round should receive the speaker number one topics. The speaker must identify the chosen topic as part of the introduction.

JUDGES MUST GIVE TIME SIGNALS: oral signals at 30-second intervals for preparation time and hand signals for the remaining minutes. Time limit: preparation and speaking time shall be a total of six (6) minutes. Contestants may use the time as they wish. If the speaker goes over a 30 second grace period (timer reaches 6:31) the contestant may not be awarded first place in the round. Any other ranking is acceptable. There is no minimum time limit.

## Judging Impromptu

Things to look for include adherence to the topic, general knowledge of the area, originality/insight, organization, use of voice and body, and convincing speaker. Three main areas to look for are organization, analysis, and delivery.

Some areas tend to have very humorous speeches while others tend to be serious; do not penalize students for doing a different format that you are used to so long as they do it well.

Just speaking for longer does not make it a better speech. There is no minimum amount of time required for brainstorming and no minimum amount of time for speaking. Therefore, the student should work to develop the best possible structure and reasoning in as short amount of time as possible. Sometimes speakers think it's more impressive to speak longer, but if the ideas aren't clear or well developed, it can detract from the overall performance. Conversely, a well-thought out but short speech restricts a student's ability to spend adequate time analyzing the prompt. Therefore, examine which students struck the best balance between preparation and speaking. (NSDA)

### Sample Comments:

"Work on organizing your speech around a few clear ideas."

"Great use of voice. Good variety in tone and volume."

"I didn't see how your speech really applied to your chosen prompt."

"You brought up some interesting ideas I hadn't thought of before."

"Great story to support your point on [...]."

# Extemporaneous Rules

In Extemporaneous Speaking, students are presented with a choice of three questions related to current events and, in 30 minutes, prepare a seven-minute speech answering the selected question. Students may consult articles and evidence they gather prior to the contest, but may not use the Internet during preparation. The speech is delivered from memory. (NSDA)

The speaker has one half hour to prepare one topic. The speaker should announce the topic choice as part of the introduction. In giving his/her speech, the speaker may not use any notes at the state tournament. It is common for tournaments to allow novices to use one 4x6 note card when speaking.

JUDGES MUST GIVE TIME SIGNALS. The time limit for this event is SEVEN (7) MINUTES. If the speaker goes over a 30 second grace period (timer reached 7:31) the contestant may not be awarded first place in the round. There is no minimum time limit.

## Judging Extemporaneous

Things to look for include use of supporting material, depth of analysis, convincing speaker, organization, use of voice and body, answering the question.

You may not agree with everything the student states. If they make a logical case or provide good support for their conclusions, then do not mark them down because you personally disagree.

### Sample Comments:

"You only cited one source, multiple times. Be sure to have a variety of sources."

"Great organization. I could see your preparation in the speech."

"Make sure your speech addresses the question. Don't get off topic."

"While your first and third points were excellent, your second point needed more explanation and support. Be sure to spend enough time on all your topics."



# Humorous Interp. Rules

Using a play, short story, or other published work, students perform a selection of one or more portions of a piece up to ten minutes in length. Humorous Interpretation is designed to test a student's comedic skills through script analysis, delivery, timing, and character development. Competitors may portray one or multiple characters. No props or costumes may be used. Performances can also include an introduction written by the student to contextualize the performance and state the title and the author. (NSDA)

The time limit is ten minutes with a 30-second "grace period." Should a student go beyond the grace period, (timer reaches 10:31) the student may not be ranked 1st. Judges are to use accurate (stopwatch function) timing devices. No minimum time is mandated.

The presentation may not use physical objects or costuming. The contestant must name the author and the source from which the cutting was made. Full movement is allowed.

## Judging Humorous Interp.

Things to look for include introduction and transitions, suitable material, ability to keep character, creation of mood/characters, voice volume and rate, comic timing, poise and physicality, and total program.

Students are performing *their* interpretation of a piece. If there is a version (like a movie or play) that you have seen, this does not have to duplicate that. Students put their own spin on it. Likewise, there may be differences between the script the student was able to obtain and the movie.

Not everyone has the same sense of humor; even if the humor of the piece is not your style, please judge them on how well they perform that style of humor.

Sample Comment:

"Great use of pauses to increase comedic effect."

"Work to create stronger, distinct characters. I couldn't always tell who was talking."

"Your physicality added a lot of humor and character to the piece."

"Work on smoothing the transitions between characters."

"I struggled following the story with how you cut the piece."

## **Dramatic Interp. Rules.**

Using a play, short story, or other published work, students perform a selection of one or more portions of a piece up to ten minutes in length. With a spotlight on character development and depth, this event focuses on the student's ability to convey emotion through the use of a dramatic text. Competitors may portray one or multiple characters. No props or costumes may be used. Performances can also include an introduction written by the student to contextualize the performance, and state the title and the author. (NSDA)

The time limit is ten minutes with a 30-second "grace period." Should a student go beyond the grace period, the student may not be ranked 1st. Judges are to use accurate (stop-watch function) timing devices. No minimum time is mandated.

Selections must be presented from memory. Full movement is allowed.

## **Judging Dramatic Interp.**

Things to look for include introduction and transitions, suitable material, ability to keep character, creation of mood/characters, voice volume and rate, poise and physicality, and total program.

These pieces should be dramatic but use of humor to support that drama is acceptable. Some of the topics may be sensitive. The characters portrayed can be sympathetic or antagonistic. You may not like the piece. The performance may evoke emotions or reactions that are not comfortable. If done for a purpose, those reactions can be a positive for the performance.

Students are performing *their* interpretation of a piece. If there is a version (like a movie or play) that you have seen, this does not have to duplicate that. Students put their own spin on it. Likewise, there may be differences between the script the student was able to obtain and the movie.

### **Sample Comments:**

"Each character was unique and well-rounded."

"Make sure your accents are consistent."

"I loved all the content that you included through physicality--beyond just the words."

"The climactic moment was really [surprising, disturbing, emotional, horrifying,...]. Well done."

"Make use of your body more to add to the characters."

"The moment where you say '[...]' could have made more impact if you whispered it instead."



# Duo Interp. Rules

Two competitors team up to deliver a ten-minute performance of a published play or story. Using off-stage focus, competitors convey emotion and environment through a variety of performance techniques focusing on the relationships and interactions between the characters. No props or costumes are used. Performances can also include an introduction written by the students to contextualize the performance and state the title and the author. (NSDA)

The time limit is ten minutes with a 30-second “grace period.” Should a student go beyond the grace period (timer reached 10:31), the student may not be ranked 1st. Judges are to use accurate (stopwatch function) timing devices. No minimum time is mandated.

Each of the two performers may play one or more characters so long as performance responsibility in the cutting remains as balanced as possible. If the selection is prose or poetry and contains narration, either or both of the performers may present the narration. Focus may be direct during the introduction [the performers may look at each other] but must be indirect [off-stage/no eye contact with each other] during the performance itself. Full movement is allowed. However, students should not touch each other during the performance.

## Judging Duo Interp.

Things to look for include introduction and transitions, suitable material, ability to keep character, creation of mood/characters, voice volume and rate, poise and physicality, and total program.

Students are performing *their* interpretation of a piece. If there is a version (like a movie or play) that you have seen, this does not have to duplicate that. Students put their own spin on it. Likewise, there may be differences between the script the student was able to obtain and the movie.

These pieces may be dramatic or comedic in nature. Some areas focus more on one than the other but no penalty should be given if they perform in a different style. Some partnerships choose to dress similarly, while others do not. There is no rule, so students should not be penalized either way.

### Sample comments:

“Be sure to balance the performance between the two of you. Even if one is speaking, the other should still be performing.”

“Great dynamics between the two of you. I can see you practiced the choreography of the piece.”

“Work on the character development; I’m not sure who is who.”

“Add more physicality to the piece to develop it further.”

“While the cutting is funny, I don’t always follow the plot when you cut to a new scene.”

## **Program Oral Interp. Rules**

POI is a program of oral interpretation of thematically-linked selections chosen from two or three genres: prose, poetry, drama (plays). At least two pieces of literature that represent at least two separate genres must be used. Unlike the other interpretation events, Program Oral Interpretation may use multiple sources for the program.

The title or author of all selections must be verbally identified in either the introduction and/or transitional phrases. Competitors are encouraged to devote approximately equal times to each of the genres used in the program. This distinction pertains to these two or three genres as a whole, not types of literature within a genre (such as fiction/nonfiction).

The use of a manuscript during the performance is required. Common practices include the use of a binder or folder. Reading from a book or magazine is not permitted. The intact manuscript may be used by the contestant as a prop, so long as it is in the contestant's control by remaining in contact with the body at all times. No costumes or props other than the manuscript are permitted. Pictures, graphics, and/or illustrations are considered a visual aid, even if included in the original manuscript, and may not be displayed. The contestant must address the script; however, introduction and transitional material may be memorized.

The time limit is 10 minutes with a 30-second "grace period." Should a student go beyond the grace period, (timer reached 10:31) the student may not be ranked 1st. Judges are to use accurate (stopwatch function) timing devices. No minimum time is mandated.

## **Judging Program Oral Interp.**

Things to look for include non-scripted elements, difficulty of material, development of theme, balanced program, vocal expression, poise and preparation, and creation of mood/characters.

Each different piece should have a distinct style or characterization. It should be clear which piece is being used even if there is not a stated transition between the pieces.

Sample comments:

"Good integration of the pieces; you created a great climax for the whole speech."

"Work on characterization for each piece. I couldn't always tell which piece we were in."

"The piece by [author] didn't support your theme as well as the others. It seemed out of place."

"Great movement in the piece; you added a lot through the unscripted material."

# Tall Tales Rules

This event should be fun. The competitors and audience should enjoy themselves. The student who can tell the tallest tale, utilizing all three given words, should win the round.

The speaker will be given three words to incorporate into his/her speech. The student will then have six (6) minutes to prepare and speak. If the speaker goes over a 30 second grace period, that contestant may not be awarded the first place in the round. No minimum time limit.

If a speaker does not incorporate all three words in his/her speech, the speaker will be ranked below those who use all three words.

**JUDGES MUST GIVE TIME SIGNALS:** oral signals at 30-second intervals for preparation time and hand signals for the remaining minutes. Time limit: preparation and speaking time shall be a total of six (6) minutes. Contestants may use the time as they wish. If the speaker goes over a 30 second grace period (timer reaches 6:31) the contestant may not be awarded first place in the round. Any other ranking is acceptable. There is no minimum time limit.

## Judging Tall Tales

The story should be complete, with a beginning, middle and end. Look for creativity and outrageous exaggeration. Think of the classic American tall tales, like Paul Bunyan, Pecos Bill, etc.

Use of the prompt words should be organic. The best tall tales use the words more than a single time each.

Physical performance can enhance a good tall tale, as will vocal variety.

### **Sample Comments:**

“Your story didn’t really reach a conclusion.”

“Great use of exaggeration.”

“Your use of the words was forced.”

“You used your body well to enhance the story.”

“Work on adding exaggeration and making your story larger than life.”

# Editorial Commentary Rules

Editorial Commentary is a scripted speech that is intended to be an analysis of a news event rather than a running synopsis of the news.

Speakers will read the manuscript from a seated position.

The script should be timed to end between 1:45 and 2:00 minutes. Any speaker ending before 1:45 or after 2:00 minutes shall be ranked one score lower. Some speakers may elect to time themselves, but the judge is the ultimate authority.

## Judging Editorial Commentary

Things to look for include a balance between reporting and commentary, organization, analysis, and delivery.

Some areas tend to have very humorous speeches while others tend to be serious; do not penalize students for doing a different format that you are used to so long as they do it well.

### Sample Comments:

“I enjoyed all your topical puns.”

“Great use of voice. Good variety in tone and volume.”

“You reported the news event well, but didn’t have much commentary on it.”

“You did a good job of combining reporting with your own thoughts on the event.”

# Public Forum Debate

Public Forum involves opposing teams of two, debating a topic concerning a current event. Proceeding a coin toss, the winners choose which side to debate (PRO or CON) or which speaker position they prefer (1st or 2nd), and the other team receives the remaining option. Students present cases, engage in rebuttal and refutation, and also participate in a “crossfire” (similar to a cross examination) with the opportunity to question the opposing team.

The goal for each team in Public Forum is to convince the judge that their side of the debate is preferable. The judge is responsible for evaluating each team’s arguments and determining which side presented their position more effectively. (NSDA)

Structure:

- Development (Construction)
- Exchange (Clarification)
- Clash (Deconstruction)
- Extension (development or Rebuttal)
- Perspective (framing) (Shawn Briscoe)

Please remember that students may not have a choice in which side of the topic they are debating. Please do not judge only on whether or not you agree with a debater. Do not judge them on what you think they should have said or if they left something out if their opponent does not bring it up (though you can include it as a comment to help them in future tournaments).

## Judging Debate:

Debate should not be won just on who convinces you on more of the issues (Horizontal) but on who convinces you they win on the most important issue identified during the debate (Vertical)

### Horizontal

PRO →	Issue #1 ← CON
PRO →	Issue #2 ← CON
PRO →	Issue #3 ← CON

### Vertical

PRO	Public Health?	CON
PRO	Economic Consequences?	CON
PRO	Smokers' Rights?	CON

(Shawn Briscoe)

In the vertical debate example, while Con won on two of the three issues, Pro won on the issue that was determined to be most important during the debate and so the win would go to Pro, not Con.

### Sample comments:

“Your rebuttal was unorganized, which made it hard to follow which of your opponenet’s points you were addressing.”

“Your final focus did a good job of comparing arguments.”

“Develop your 3rd argument further. You bring it up but don’t support it enough.”

# Lincoln-Douglas Debate

In this one-on-one format, students debate a topic provided by the National Speech & Debate Association. Topics range from individual freedom versus the collective good to economic development versus environmental protection. Students may consult evidence gathered prior to the debate but may not use the internet in round. An entire debate is roughly 45 minutes and consists of constructive speeches, rebuttals, and cross-examination. NSDA

Value frameworks (questions students may focus on during the debate):

- **What do** (or should we) **care about?**
- **How do we achieve that** good thing? Demonstrate that your perspective achieves that good thing.

Structure (essential elements of debate):

- Development (Construction)
- Exchange (Clarification)
- Clash (Deconstruction)
- Extension (development or Rebuttal)
- Perspective (framing) (Shawn Briscoe)

Please remember that students may not have a choice in which side of the topic they are debating. Please do not judge only on whether or not you agree with a debater. Do not judge them on what you think they should have said or if they left something out if their opponent does not bring it up (though you can include it as a comment to help them in future tournaments).

## Judging Debate:

Debate should not be won just on who convinces you on more of the issues (Horizontal) but on who convinces you they win on the most important issue identified during the debate (Vertical)

### Horizontal

PRO →	Issue #1 ←	CON
PRO	Issue #2 →	← CON
PRO	Issue #3 →	← CON

### Vertical

PRO	Public Health?	CON
PRO	Economic Consequences?	CON
PRO	Smokers' Rights?	CON

(Shawn Briscoe)

In the vertical debate example, while Con won on two of the three issues, Pro won on the issue that was determined to be most important during the debate and so the win would go to Pro, not Con.

### Sample comments:

"Your rebuttal was unorganized, which made it hard to follow which of your opponenet's points you were addressing."

"Your first speech was well-structured and easy to follow."

"Good use of questions to clarify and highlight flaws in your opponent's argument."



# Policy/CX

A two-on-two debate that focuses on a policy question for the duration of the academic year, this format tests a student's research, analytical, and delivery skills. Policy debate involves the proposal of a plan by the affirmative team to enact a policy, while the negative team offers reasons to reject that proposal. Throughout the debate, students have the opportunity to cross-examine one another. (NSDA)

**Policy Frameworks** (questions students may focus on during the debate):

- Is change necessary?
  - o Is there a problem?
  - o Why does the problem exist?
  - o Identify a solution.
- Is change desirable?
  - o Does the solution reduce the problem?
  - o Are there additional consequences?
  - o Are there opportunity costs?

**Structure** (essential elements of a debate):

- Development (Construction)
- Exchange (Clarification)
- Clash (Deconstruction)
- Extension (development or Rebuttal)
- Perspective (framing) (Shawn Briscoe)

Please remember that students may not have a choice in which side of the topic they are debating. Please do not judge only on whether or not you agree with a debater. Do not judge them on what you think they should have said or if they left something out if their opponent does not bring it up (though you can include it as a comment to help them in future tournaments).

## Judging Debate:

Debate should not be won just on who convinces you on more of the issues (Horizontal) but on who convinces you they win on the most important issue identified during the debate (Vertical)

**Horizontal**

PRO →	Issue #1	← CON
PRO	Issue #2	→ ← CON
PRO	Issue #3	→ ← CON

**Vertical**

PRO	Public Health?	CON
PRO	Economic Consequences?	CON
PRO	Smokers' Rights?	CON

(Shawn Briscoe)

In the vertical debate example, while Con won on two of the three issues, Pro won on the issue that was determined to be most important during the debate and so the win would go to Pro, not Con.

**Sample comments:**

"Work on clarity when speaking."

"Good balance and teamwork between both speakers."

"Clear development of the offense."

# Congressional Debate

A simulation of the U.S. legislative process; students generate a series of bills and resolutions for debate in Congressional Debate. Debaters alternate delivering speeches for and against the topic in a group setting. An elected student serves as a presiding officer to ensure debate flows smoothly. Students are assessed on their research, argumentation, and delivery skills, as well as their knowledge and use of parliamentary procedure. (NSDA)

Typically the round will be run by an experienced parliamentarian (the judge who sees all the rounds) and succession of elected student Presiding Officers (P.O.).

Presiding officers will acknowledge speakers by precedence (whoever has given fewer speeches so far) and recency (if both speakers have given the same number of speeches, the person who spoke earlier). They also acknowledge questioners and should do so in a balanced manner (people from different schools and different parts of the room). Additionally, they make sure parliamentary procedure is being followed and should keep the debate moving and time speakers.

Make sure to consider the presiding officer when ranking students in the room. Outstanding performance as a P.O. should be ranked on the same level as outstanding speakers in the room. Students should not be penalized for serving as a P.O. because they are unable to give speeches while presiding.

## Judging Congressional Debate:

**Ratings:** You will rate each speech as they are given. Larger numbers are better. When rating, consider the following elements: ORIGINALITY OF THOUGHT (extent to which speech advances debate or merely repeats previously stated ideas; whether speaker refutes opposing arguments); ORGANIZATION AND UNITY (while speeches that respond to other arguments advanced in the session are often spontaneous and extemporaneous, the speaker should attempt cohesiveness); EVIDENCE AND LOGIC (cites credible sources and warrants claims accordingly); DELIVERY (extemporaneous vs. reading a manuscript, seriousness of purpose, style and poise). How well the speaker ANSWERS QUESTIONS for each speech should be considered. (NSDA)

**Rankings:** At the end of the round, you will also rank all students in the room (chamber). In this, #1 is the best and so on. Take into account quality of speeches over quantity. You can use your speech rating to help you in this, but also include quality of questions they ask, and parliamentary motions they make to keep the debate moving. Include the P.O. in your rankings where you believe they fall among the speakers, even if you never saw them give a speech in the round.

Please do not judge the students on which side they are debating (for or against) but what they bring up in the speech. Speeches that bring up new information or respond to previous speeches should be ranked better than speeches that restate something from a previous speech. Delivery quality should also be taken into account.

# Big Questions Debate

Big Questions is designed to enhance students' current debate experiences, opening their minds and encouraging them to engage in life discussion that may not align with their previously held beliefs. Whether or not students change their opinion, the rich experience of this debate event will advance their knowledge, comfort, and interest in learning more about the subject matter.

Big Questions Debate is a debate format that allows students to debate with a partner or as an individual. Debates may be one-on-one, two-on-two, or two-on-one. Topics last all year and concern the intersection of science, philosophy, and religion. Students are assigned a side of the topic before each round and present cases, engage in rebuttal and refutation, and participate in a question period. (NSDA)

**Structure** (essential elements of a debate):

- Development (Construction)
- Exchange (Clarification)
- Clash (Deconstruction)
- Extension (development or Rebuttal)
- Perspective (framing) (Shawn Briscoe)

Please remember that students may not have a choice in which side of the topic they are debating. Please do not judge only on whether or not you agree with a debater. Do not judge them on what you think they should have said or if they left something out if their opponent does not bring it up (though you can include it as a comment to help them in future tournaments).

## Judging Debate:

Debate should not be won just on who convinces you on more of the issues (Horizontal) but on who convinces you they win on the most important issue identified during the debate (Vertical)

### Horizontal

PRO →	Issue #1 ←	CON
PRO	Issue #2 →	← CON
PRO	Issue #3 →	← CON

### Vertical

PRO	Public Health?	CON
PRO	Economic Consequences?	CON
PRO	Smokers' Rights?	CON

(Shawn Briscoe)

In the vertical debate example, while Con won on two of the three issues, Pro won on the issue that was determined to be most important during the debate and so the win would go to Pro, not Con.

### Sample comments:

"Good use of science, philosophy and logic to support your case."

"Good balance and teamwork between both speakers."

"Your definitions support your opponent's case better than your own."