

Congressional Debate Judge Instructions

1. Assignments will be sent through Tabroom.com at least 30 minutes prior to the start of the round. For Session 1 and all other rounds, be there 15 minutes before.
2. If you do not have a specific assignment, wait for at least 15 minutes after the designated start time. All available judges are eligible to be called up for pushed ballots.
3. Log onto tabroom.com. Click on your email address in the upper right corner. Your ballot and camera icon to access the competition room should be waiting for you.
4. When you are in the competition room and your technology is working, click "Accept Ballot." Tab staff will be coming around to make sure everything is working well.
5. There are two tabs, for Speeches and Ranks. Best Practice recommends opening each one in a separate Chrome tab.
6. **Enter speech comments and points as the students speak. Do not wait until the end of the session to begin entering speech comments.**
7. Under the Speeches tab, choose the student from the dropdown menu. Write comments as they speak. When they finish, award points as described below.
8. The student elected as presiding officer must receive scores for the equivalent of 2 speeches, one at the end of each full hour of service. Mark them as PO and score them according to the rubric. The PO is eligible to be ranked at the end of the session, and should be considered.
9. Please recognize students come from all parts of the country. Qualities such as accents, clothing, appearance, audio and video quality may all create an implicit bias. Particularly when it is something over which the student has minimal control, do not let outside factors prejudice your appraisal of the students' arguments in the chamber.
10. Scorers award between 1 (weak) and 8 (strong) merit points for each speech *pertaining to legislation* (nomination/candidacy speeches are not scored), taking the following into account; scores are entered into Tabroom.com
 - 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); and
 - Demeanor (fosters a respectful, professional, and collegial atmosphere); and
 - Answers to Questions (demonstrating grasp of issues and ability to defend positions); but
 - NOT *Whether you agree or disagree.*
11. If a student speaks on the wrong side called by the presiding officer (PO), and the error is not caught by the speaker, s/he shall be scored and the speech shall count in precedence/recency, but the *speaker must be penalized at least three points* for not paying close attention to the flow of debate. Reserve scores of "4" for students who show little effort, and "3" for students who make serious errors (speaking on the wrong side, a speech that's a mockery/not serious, or engaging in personal attacks of other students). If a student speaks on an item of legislation *not currently* being debated, said speech shall count in the PO's precedence/recency, but zero points shall be awarded.
12. For the student PO, award 1-8 points per hour of presiding (1=*weak*; 8 = *strong*). Consider:
 - Parliamentary Procedure (clearly explains protocols and rulings);
 - Recognition (fairly and efficiently recognizes speakers and questioners, maintains appropriate speaker precedence and recency, and avoids "activity," "longest standing/standing time");
 - Control (maintains decorum of delegates, and willing to rule motions out of order);
 - Demeanor (fosters a respectful, professional, and collegial atmosphere); and
 - Communication (overall use of language, avoiding unnecessary verbiage).

Congressional Debate Judge Instructions

13. Please confer with the parliamentarian to confirm *number of speeches given and number of speeches per student*, but do not confer regarding evaluation and scoring of those speeches. While you are encouraged to work with the other judges, you do not confer with them on evaluating or ranking. If you have questions, please check with tournament staff.
14. At the end of the session, move to the ranking tab. (If you haven't given points to the PO, you will not be able to rank). Rank your top eight (8) most preferred students, weighing the overall impact each individual student had during the session.
 - a. In addition to speaking or presiding effectively, did s/he encourage the legislative problem-solving process in a collaborative manner by asking meaningful questions, useful motions, and showing attentive interest throughout the debate? Could you tell which students listened by making specific and accurate references to others' arguments?
 - b. Ranking the PO amidst speakers is like comparing apples and oranges. Therefore, consider overall performance of the PO. Did s/he effectively facilitate debate in an assertive but not aggressive manner? Were motions and votes handled efficiently? Did s/he rely on a number of unnecessary "crutch phrases," or was her/his word economy exquisite? Considering the PO's aggregate performance, how would it compare to a speaker's performance based on your expectations? Let that be your determining factor in how you might rank the PO. -
 - c. Quality is more important than quantity. Your rank does not have to be based solely on total speech scores.
 - d. A student must have spoken or presided to be ranked.

Adapted from the 2014 NSDA Scorer Instructions, with additional information provided by Dr. Alexandra Sencer, Nathaniel Hylton and Adam Jacobi

Congressional Debate Judge Instructions

Overview of Congress Speeches

Debate on each legislation starts with a speech introducing it to the chamber, called an “authorship” or “sponsorship”. This speech is always followed by a two-minute questioning period. The first negative speaker also fields two minutes of questions.

Time Limits – applies to each new legislation	
Sponsor Speech	3 Minutes
Questioning of Sponsor	2 Minutes
First Negative Speech	3 Minutes
Questioning of First Negative	2 Minutes
All subsequent speeches	3 Minutes/each
Questioning of all subsequent speakers	1 Minute/each

These speeches act as the **constructive** for the legislation, providing reasons for advocacy or negation and providing ground for the remaining debate.

After these first two speeches, students deliver alternating affirmative and negative speeches. Each of these speeches allows a maximum of three minutes, with a one-minute questioning period. These rules may not be suspended, since they involve the structure of competition.

Remaining speeches may fall into the **rebuttal** category, which directly refute *arguments* by explaining why they are incorrect (not merely saying an opposing legislator is wrong without explanation or evidence). They may also serve as **extension** speeches, which explore a previous argument and provide a more in-depth exploration of why the debater’s position is correct.

When the debate begins to wind down, students may deliver **crystallization** speeches, which act as the “Final Focus” of Congress, identifying the top voting issues and weigh the impacts to identify why one side wins over the other.

Speeches should be delivered extemporaneously, which means spoken spontaneously based on an outline of notes, rather than recited word-for-word from a manuscript). To do this, a speaker must be well-researched and prepared with ideas before arriving at the contest.

Speakers should use effective word choice, correct sentence structure, and clear transitions to signpost ideas (outline that the audience can follow). Given the unique nature of an online competition, do not take video and audio quality into account when judging.

Asking questions helps clarify confusing points in debate and shows a genuine interest in what other speakers are saying. Questions usually are not scored by judges (although can be accounted for in holistic ranking), but how well speakers answer is scored. Answering questions well shows a judge the speaker can defend his/her arguments and has sound knowledge of the topic. When answering, it’s best to succinctly answer just the question – no more, no less. Do not avoid answering questions; give your best effort, but if you don’t understand the question paraphrase by saying “what I think you’re asking is...” and then answer. If you don’t know the answer to a question, redirect your answer to what you do know about the topic. It’s courteous for speakers to thank the presiding officer when s/he recognizes them to ask a question.

Dispelling Myths of Congressional Debate

- Debate exists to advance arguments. Students should be prepared on both sides of legislation. One of the skills of Congressional Debate is being able to flip one’s points if one really wants to give a speech on a particular piece of legislation, and more students seek the opposite position. Hence, one-sided debate is highly frowned upon. If everyone is in agreement, then there is no debate!
- Students should feel comfortable moving the previous question when debate has become one-sided or debate has become stale – even if other students wish to speak. This is not rude,
- Not every student needs to speak on each legislation.
- There is no “minimum cycle”, nor a “maximum cycle” rule at Nationals.
- There are not motions to “open the floor for debate,” “open the floor for presiding officer nominations,” nor “open the floor for agenda nominations.” These are part of the normal, established order of business for Congressional Debate, so the PO simply announces they will do these things.

Congressional Debate Judge Instructions

Congressional Debate Rubric: Speaking

Each scorer independently (without collaborating) awards 1 to 8 points for each speech. Each speaker has up to three minutes to present arguments followed by a questioning period. Remember, you do not base your score on agreement or disagreement with the positions they debaters offer; rather, evaluate based upon how well the debaters argue their positions.

	3-4 points Mediocre	5 points Proficient	6 points Excellent	7-8 points Superior
Content: Organization, Evidence & Language	The speech lacked a clear thesis and organizational structure. Claims are only asserted with generalizations and no real evidence. Language use is unclear or ineffective.	While the speaker's purpose is present, the speech lacks logical organization and/or developed ideas. Analysis of evidence, if present, fails to connect its relevance to the speaker's claims. Use of language is weak.	While a clear purpose is apparent, organization may be somewhat loose (weak introduction/conclusion; no transitions between points). Diction represents a grasp of language. Much evidence is presented, but not in a persuasive or effective manner; or the speaker relies on one piece of evidence, but does so effectively.	Content is clearly and logically organized, and characterized by depth of thought and development of ideas, supported by a variety of credible quantitative (statistical) and qualitative (testimony) evidence analyzed effectively to draw conclusions. Compelling language, a poignant introduction and conclusion and lucid transitions clearly establish the speaker's purpose.
Argument & Refutation	The speaker offers mostly unwarranted assertions, which often simply repeat/rehash previous arguments.	The speaker fails to either introduce new arguments (simply repeating previous arguments) or the speaker fails to refute previous opposing arguments; in other words, no real clash is present.	New ideas and response to previous arguments are offered, but in an unbalanced manner (too much refutation or too many new arguments). Questions are answered adequately.	The speaker contributes to the spontaneity of debate, effectively synthesizing response and refutation of previous ideas with new arguments. If the speaker fields questions, he/she responds with confidence and clarity.
Delivery	Little eye contact, gestures and/or movement are present. Vocal presentation is inarticulate due to soft volume or lack of enunciation.	Presentation is satisfactory, yet unimpressively read (perhaps monotonously) from prepared notes, with errors in pronunciation and/or minimal eye contact. Awkward gestures/movement may be distracting.	The presentation is strong, but contains a few mistakes, including problems with pronunciation and enunciation. The speech may be partially read with satisfactory fluency. Physical presence may be awkward at times.	The speaker's vocal control and physical poise are polished, deliberate, crisp and confident. Delivery should be extemporaneous, with few errors in pronunciation

Scores of less than five (5) are discouraged, and should be reserved for such circumstances as abusive language, a degrading personal attack on another legislator, or for a speech that is extremely brief (less than 45 seconds) or delivered without purpose or dignity for the cause exhorted by the legislation. Substantial written comments and description of specific incidents should accompany such scores.

Congressional Debate Judge Instructions

Congressional Debate Rubric: Presiding

Each scorer independently (without collaborating) awards 1 to 8 points for each hour of presiding.

	3-4 points Weak – Mediocre	5-6 points Proficient	7-8 points Excellent – Superior
Speaker Recognition	The PO needs to improve his/her communication with fellow delegates to gain their trust and respect relating to the rationale for rulings made. Frequent errors are made in speaker recognition, which lacks consistent method or impartiality.	While the PO does not adequately explain his/her preferences for running the chamber in advance, he/she does clearly explain rulings, when necessary. Speaker recognition may be somewhat inconsistent or biased.	Presiding preferences are clearly explained at the beginning of the session and executed consistently. The PO is universally respected and trusted by his/her peers, and is consistent in recognition (very few errors) and rulings, distributing speeches throughout the room, equally between schools of the same size, and among individuals.
Parliamentary Procedure	The PO's knowledge of parliamentary procedure is lacking, and he/she shows negligible effort to correct errors and/or consult written rules.	The PO demonstrates competency in procedure, but makes mistakes in determining the results of motions and votes, etc. S/he does not hesitate to consult rules when necessary to ensure fairness.	The PO has command of parliamentary procedure (motions) and uses this almost transparently to run a fair and efficient chamber, seldom consulting written rules and ruling immediately on whether motions pass or fail.
Delivery/ Presence	The PO needs to improve his/her vocal and physical presence and professional demeanor.	The PO displays a satisfactory command of the chamber in his/her vocal and physical presence. Word choice is usually concise. The PO generally has command over the chamber.	The PO dynamically displays a command and relates well to the chamber through his/her vocal and physical presence. Word choice is economical and eloquent. The PO does not hesitate to rule abusive or inappropriate motions out of order.

Speaker Recognition Rules:

- When more than one speaker seeks the floor, the presiding officer must follow the *precedence/recency* method:
 - First recognize students who have not spoken during the session
 - Next recognize students who have spoken fewer times
 - Then recognize students who spoke earlier (least recently)
- During any session, precedence/recency should not reset, to ensure that all students in a chamber have an equal opportunity to speak and receive evaluation from scorers. When a new session begins, precedence/recency will be reset along with a new seating chart, and election of a presiding officer.
- Before precedence is established, the presiding officer should explain his/her recognition process and it must be fair, consistent and justifiable. They may not use the following methods:
 - Number of motions and/or questions (*activity*)
 - Number of times a speaker has risen to seek recognition (*longest standing or standing time*)

Presiding Officers and Motions

The presiding officer should pause briefly between speeches to recognize any motions from the floor; however, he/she should not call for motions (at the beginning of a session, the presiding officer should remind members to seek his/her attention between speeches).

