



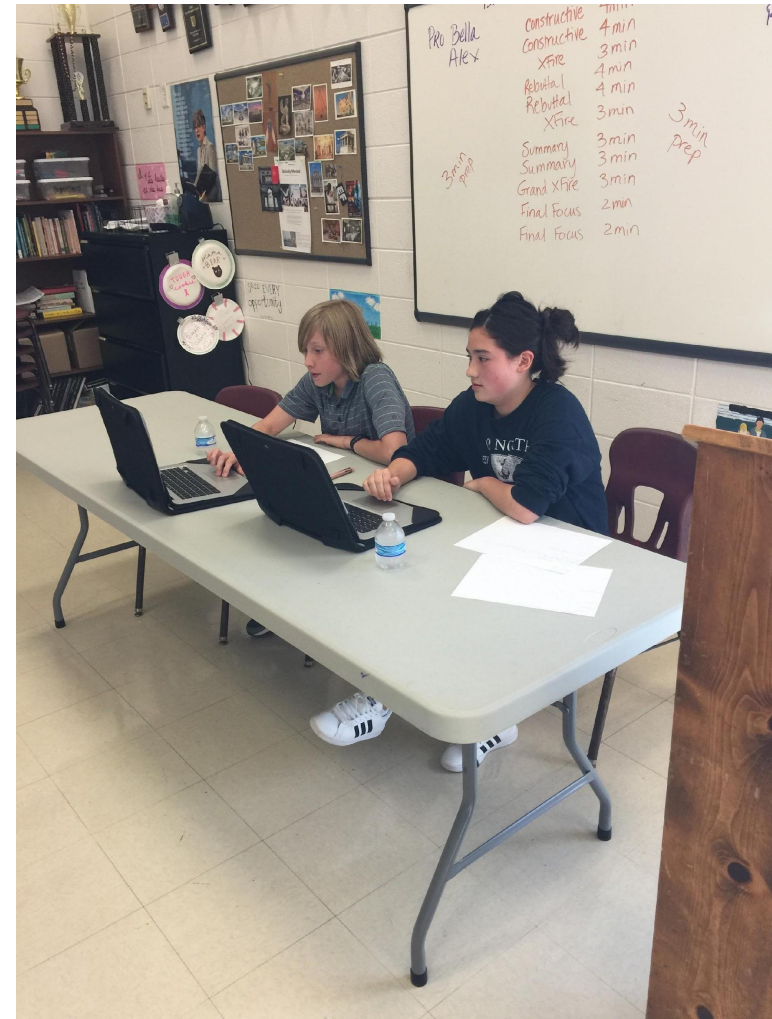
PUBLIC FORUM DEBATE—WHAT IS IT?

A QUICK PRIMER FOR STUDENTS, PARENTS, AND JUDGES



THE BASICS

- **Public Forum Debate** is a partner style debate where 2 students on one team debate against 2 students on another. One team is **Pro** and one is **Con** on the resolution.
- **Nationally** the resolutions (or topics), for the debates are decided by a vote of **NSDA** coaches and students. In **September** and **October** there is one topic, in **November** and **December** there is a different topic, and then starting in **January**, the topic changes monthly.



THE TEAMS



- The two students on a team should decide who will be the first speaker for their team and who should be the second speaker.
- First speaker students are usually students who are clear and confident speakers who prefer prepared speeches and arguments.
- Second speaker students are usually students who are good at thinking on their feet and who are confident and persuasive speakers.

THE COIN TOSS

- Every round begins with one team flipping a coin and the other team calling “heads” or “tails” while the coin is in the air.
- The winner of the coin toss can choose either to be Pro or Con on the resolution OR First or Second presenters (Team A or Team B)



THE SPEAKING ORDER

- Speaker 1 Team A constructive speech....4 minutes
- Speaker 1 Team B constructive speech....4 minutes
- Crossfire between Speaker 1A and 1B....3 minutes
- Speaker 2 Team A rebuttal speech.....4 minutes
- Speaker 2 Team B rebuttal speech.....4 minutes
- Crossfire between Speaker 2A and 2B....3 minutes

SPEAKING ORDER CONTINUED

- Speaker 1 Team A Summary speech....3 minutes
 - Speaker 1 Team B Summary speech....3 minutes
 - Grand Crossfire (all 4 students).....3 minutes
 - Speaker 2 Team A Final Focus speech...2 minutes
 - Speaker 2 Team B Final Focus speech...2 minutes
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- Each team can use up to 3 minutes of prep time during the round

CONSTRUCTIVE SPEECHES

- Constructive speeches build the Pro or the Con argumentation. They are structured so that the opposing team and the judges can take notes, called “flowing” during the round to keep track of the arguments for the entire debate. Arguments should be clearly evidenced. Citing the source and the date of the evidence is absolutely necessary during a speech.
- Constructive speeches have a short introduction which usually mentions the resolution and the side (Pro or Con), that the student is debating. Often introductions will include a framework or a voting criteria for the judge to use as a lens while evaluating the round.
- Students will usually use an outline signpost to help the opponent and judge keep track of their argumentation. They may use terms like “Observation” or “Contention” in front of their specific arguments for that reason. Some debaters will also use sub-structure saying, “Contention I...blah... Subpoint A...blah” and so on.
- A clear format to use in creating your argumentation is to include an Argument Claim, then the Source of the Evidence, then the evidence (either word for word or paraphrased), and then original analysis.

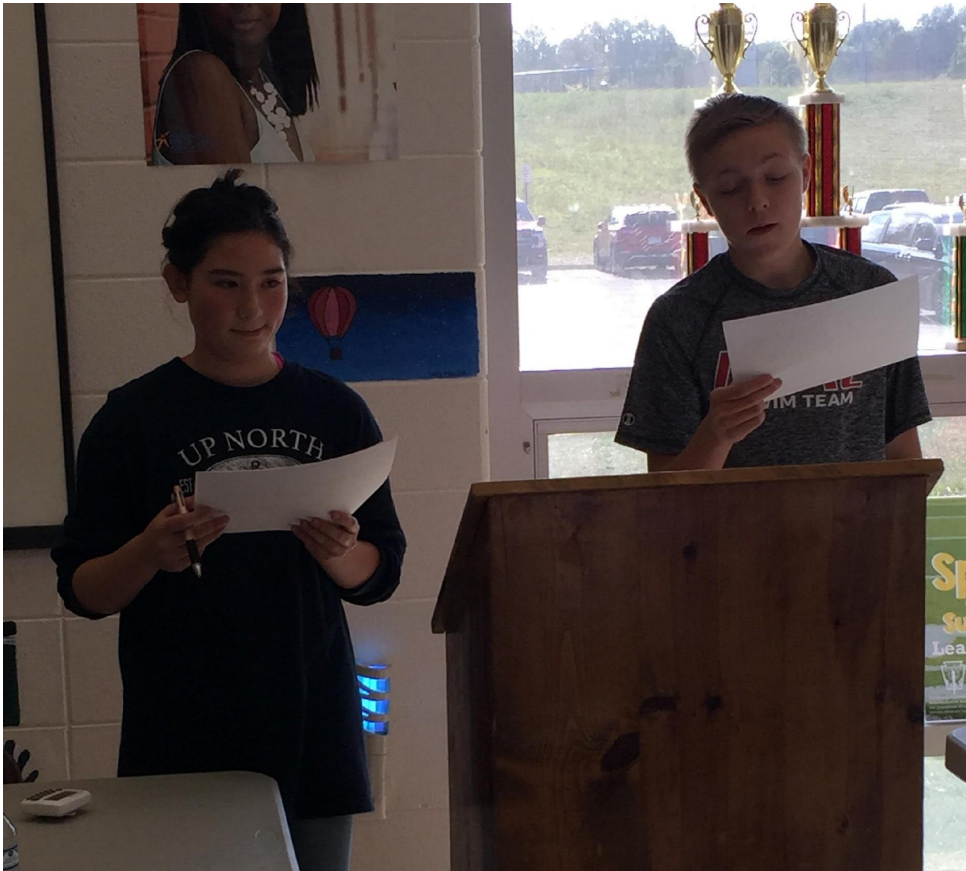
SNAPSHOT OF A CONSTRUCTIVE SPEECH

- **My partner and I support the resolution that..... We believe that the team which can prove that they save the most lives (or some other criteria) should be used to evaluate this round. We begin our analysis with**
- **Contention I: Overarching Harm or Value (that the team will use as the first part of their argumentation).**
 - **A claim that supports what you're saying in Cont. I**
 - **The source and date of the evidence you will be using to prove your claim**
 - **The actual evidence either word for word or paraphrased**
 - **Your own analysis or commentary before your next piece of evidence**
 - **Second claim that supports what you're saying in Cont. I**
 - **The source and date of the evidence you will be using to prove your claim**
 - **The actual evidence either word for word or paraphrased**

CONSTRUCTIVE SPEECH CONTINUED

- **Contention 2 a Second Overarching Harm or Value (that the team will use as the first part of their argumentation).**
 - **A claim that supports what you're saying in Cont. 2**
 - **The source and date of the evidence you will be using to prove your claim**
 - **The actual evidence either word for word or paraphrased**
 - **Your own analysis or commentary before your next piece of evidence**
 - **Second claim that supports what you're saying in Cont. 2**
 - **The source and date of the evidence you will be using to prove your claim**
 - **The actual evidence either word for word or paraphrased**
- A Brief Conclusion like: Because our case saves the most lives, you must vote (PRO or CON)**

CROSSFIRE



- The speaker from Team A always asks the first question
- Students trade questions back and forth
- Questions should:
 - Ask for clarification
 - Ask a question that helps to set up your refutation
 - Students can ask for a “Follow Up” linked to a previous question—follow up questions are usually granted
 - Ask to explain terms or define terms
 - Ask about qualifications/dates of sources on evidence
 - Ask for explanations of links to arguments

REBUTTAL SPEECHES

- Rebuttal speeches allow students to answer and respond to claims made in the two constructive speeches.
- Students should indicate which of their opponent's arguments they are trying to mitigate or clash with so that the opponents and judge knows where to "flow" the arguments.
- Students will say, "On their second argument where they say, blah, I have one response, Blah."
- Students should explain why their argument or position is better than their opponent's
- Students should expose inconsistencies and contradictions in their opponent's arguments
- Students should show the judge why the argument matters in the round (what is the significant impact)

SNAPSHOT OF A REBUTTAL SPEECH

- (Signpost where you will begin) “I will begin with my opponent’s arguments and then go back to support our arguments”.
- Go down the flow point by point responding to, answering, attacking and analyzing their opponent’s arguments.
- Structure the argumentation using the structure of the constructive speech that came before it. For example, “On their contention I note their (say author’s name) where they say, I have X arguments—
 - Make a claim that supports your position
 - Say the source and date of the evidence you will be using to prove your claim
 - Read the actual evidence either word for word or paraphrased
 - And/or give your own examples and/or analysis explaining why your opponent’s point is not valid and why your response is valid
 - Before moving on to the next argument, explain to the judge how your argument against your opponent has strong weight in the round

REBUTTALS CONTINUED

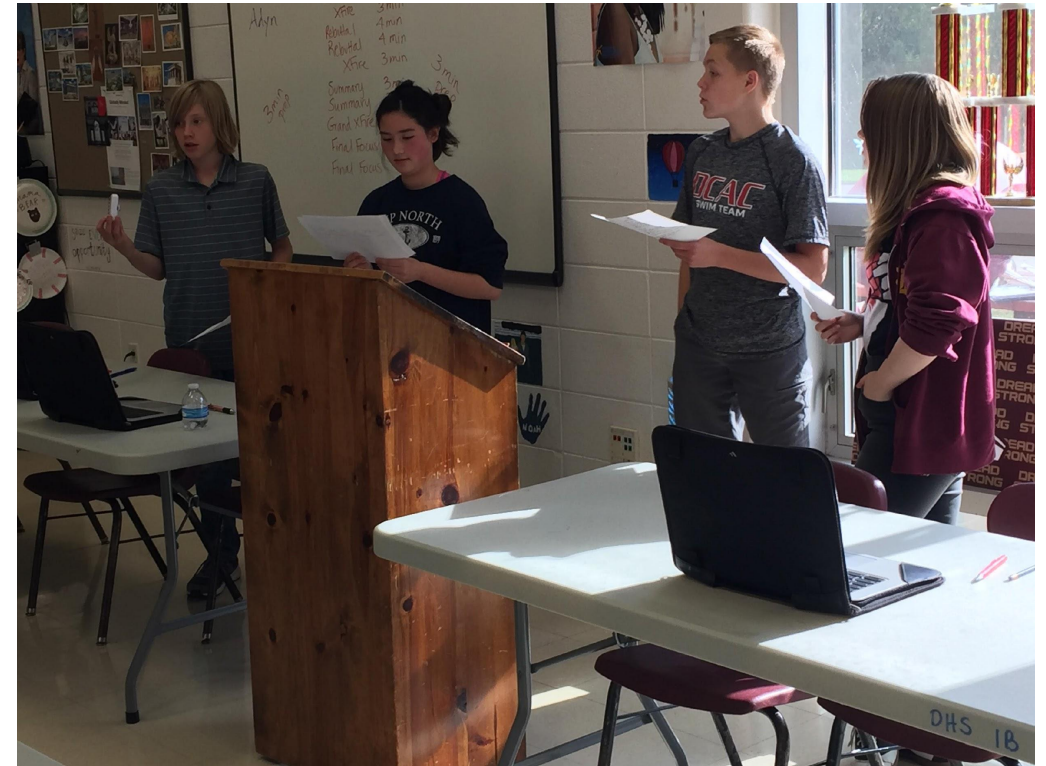
- **After answering and attacking each of your opponent's arguments, go back to your own "Case".**
- **Turn your opponent's arguments by explaining why the opposite outcome is true**
- **If there are arguments your opponent made on your case, make sure to answer those arguments using the same format as above.**
- **Extend your original arguments by "blowing up" the impacts so that the judge understands how important they are and why the judge should vote in your favor.**
- **Spend time rebuilding and strengthening your position that you presented in your first speech.**
- **Make a short conclusion like, "Therefore you should prefer a _____ ballot."**

SUMMARY SPEECHES

- These speeches must explain their team's position in light of the previous speeches
- The summary must boil down the issues and develop them in such a way that shows the judge why their side is winning the issue
- New evidence may be presented in these speeches, but new arguments may not be presented
- Most summaries begin with a short overview of why their side has the most compelling argumentation on the resolution
- These speeches will often end with a reference to the framework or voting criteria

GRAND CROSSFIRE

- All 4 of the students participate in this crossfire
- Students may stand or sit, but all should do the same
- The first question is asked by a speaker from Team A
- The flow of questions and answers must alternate back and forth between Team A and Team B
- The focus of the questioning should be to clarify what the two sides can agree on and what the big differences are between the two sides



FINAL FOCUS

- This is the final speech for each side of the resolution
- The speech can do the following:
 - Choose the most important arguments you are winning and summarize the analysis and evidence for the judge
 - Turn an argument from the opponent into a winning argument for your side using analysis and evidence
 - Answer the arguments you may be losing by summarizing the analysis with examples and evidence that you believe “takes out” your opponent’s arguments
 - Remind the judge of inconsistencies or contradictions in your opponent’s argumentation
 - Link your voting criteria or framework to the arguments in the round in your favor
 - Weigh the argumentation on scope, impact and probability of your impacts vs. your opponent’s impacts

A BIT ABOUT DELIVERY

- Debate isn't only about the arguments, it's also about how you deliver them. **Good speakers:**
 - Speak clearly, at a conversational speed, and loud enough for everyone in the room to hear
 - Pronounce words correctly
 - Do not repeat themselves
 - Avoid verbal pauses like “um,” “er,” and “ah”
 - Avoid non-verbal pauses
 - Start sentences with a subject and avoid complex and convoluted structures
 - Look at the judge and the audience while speaking
 - Behave politely in all aspects of the round

HOW A ROUND IS DECIDED

- Judges evaluate the argumentation delivered by both teams in the round. They should not vote on their own bias, so it's your job to tell them how you want them to evaluate the round. Use your Final Focus to “write the ballot” for the judge.
- Judges will determine who wins the round and will also give you speaker points.
- Speaker points are determined by your delivery, your argumentation, your analysis, and your decorum.
- Speaker points range from 6-30, but realistically they range from 24 (You gave it a good solid try, get some more practice.) to 28 (Wow! That was good!)

SPEAKER POINT EVALUATION

ADD THE SCORES TO 20 FOR A STUDENT'S TOTAL POINTS

Qualities/Points	0	1	2	3
Speaking: Delivery, Eye Contact, Clarity, Rate/Speed, Persuasive Tone	Student didn't give any speeches	Student gave speeches but lacked presentation skills. Speed was likely too fast or slow, student offered little eye contact and did not speak in a compelling manner.	Student gave solid speeches with good eye contact and conversational speed. The student was convincing in tone.	Student delivered excellent speeches with good eye contact, clarity, conversational rate and persuasive tone and conviction.
Speech Content: Sources, Evidence Reasoning	Student didn't give any speeches	Some sources are partially indicated, information seems relevant, some reasoning presented is unclear.	Sources are presented clearly and evidence is relevant to the debate. Student explains importance of evidence and shows solid reasoning.	All evidence is well supported with credible sources, clearly revealed in the speech, and well explained. Has excellent and well articulated reasoning.
Argumentation: Explanation, Analysis, Extension of Evidence, Impact	Student didn't give any speeches	Student offers arguments in initial speeches but doesn't build on them. There is no extension of the argument and there is no weighing of impacts.	Student offers arguments in initial speeches and extends those arguments. The analysis is clear and compelling and weighs the impact so that the judge understands why the arguments are valid.	Student offers arguments in all speeches that are compelling and well supported. Analysis is clear and compelling. Impact analysis is clear and compelling. Excellent argumentation.
Behavior: Respectful, Kind	Student was rude and/or disrespectful during the round.	Student was kind, respectful and polite during round.		

AWARDING POINTS

INSTRUCTIONS

Please do not let your own opinion about the topic affect your ballot. Use the information that the debaters use in the rounds to evaluate the round. Most debaters will give you a criteria (sometimes called framework) for you to use as you weigh the Pro and the Con, you should use it as you look at both sides of the issue.

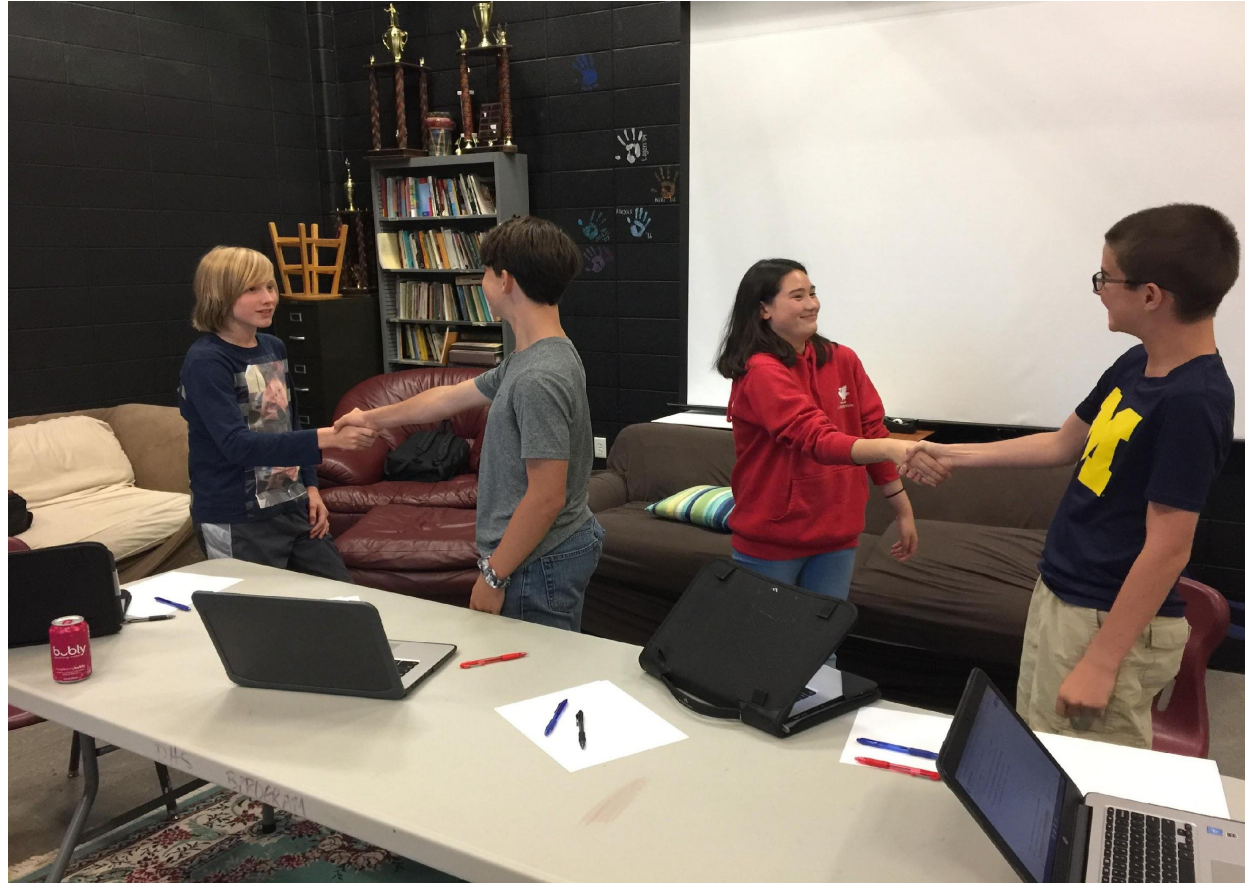
Decisions should be made on how well the teams present their position, give argumentation for their position, and refute their opponent's position. Crossfire comments are important, and many debates may come down to what is said in crossfire, so listen to those speeches carefully.

You may give tied points. Rank each student in the debate 1-4, with 1 being the best. Award points between 24-30, with 30 being the most amazing debate you've ever seen. Points are awarded on all aspects of the debate—(argumentation, refutation, analysis, delivery and use of evidence in all of their speeches). If you have questions, ask for clarifications at the Tab Table.

AFF	NEG	(Circle Side)	Speakers	1st	2nd	AFF	NEG	(Circle Side)	Speakers	1st	2nd
Spkr	Utica Chieftains CY			POINTS (1 - 30)		Spkr	Saline LS			POINTS (1 - 30)	
	Wen Chen						Nikolai Sergeev				
	Eddie Yago						Abby Lupo				

Winner: _____ debating on the _____ Low point win? _____
School/Team Side (Aff or Neg)

- The judge will use the rubric, and add 20 points to the number they determine about your debating in the round. Scores get added to a paper ballot **HERE**
- Students can receive the same points as others in the round.
- The winning team must receive as many or more points (between the two students) than the losing team.



END THE DEBATE WITH A HANDSHAKE

IT'S NOT OVER, 'TILL IT'S OVER

- After the handshake, the judge may want to give some comments about the round, *but they may not feel comfortable giving verbal feedback. There is no requirement for oral comments after a round.*
- Judges may or may not disclose their decision (who won)—some tournaments tell judges **NOT** to disclose their decision.
- If the judge is willing, students may ask questions of the judge, but often they have to hurry to their next rounds.
- Always leave the room in better shape than when you arrived. Push in chairs, rearrange desks, clean up any mess.