

Judging Instructions for Public Forum Debate

IF YOU ARE ASSIGNED A LINCOLN-DOUGLAS DEBATE BALLOT BE PREPARED TO COMPLETE THE DEBATE, SUBMIT YOUR BALLOT DIGITALLY, GO BACK TO THE JUDGING ZOOM ROOM, AND RECEIVE A NEW BALLOT FOR ANOTHER DEBATE. ELECTRONIC BALLOTS SHOULD BE SUBMITTED AT THE END OF EACH DEBATE.

Public Forum is a team debate event that advocates or rejects a position posed by the monthly resolution topic.

The clash of ideas must be communicated in a manner persuasive to the non-specialist or “citizen judge”, i.e. a member of the American jury. The debate should:

- Display solid logic, lucid reasoning, and depth of analysis
- Utilize evidence without being driven by it
- Present a clash of ideas by countering/refuting arguments of the opposing team (rebuttal)
- Communicate ideas with clarity, organization, eloquence, and professional decorum

Format & Time Limits

The round starts with a **coin toss**; the winning team selects **either**:

- The **side** (pro or con) they will argue
- The speaker **order** (begin the debate or give the last speech).

The team that loses the toss will then decide their preference from the option not selected by the winner (*i.e., if the winning team decides to speak last, then the losing team may decide which side they will argue*). The debate, therefore may begin with the con side, arguing against the topic.

Speaker 1 (Team A, 1st speaker).....4 min.
Speaker 2 (Team B, 1st speaker).....4 min.

Crossfire (between speakers 1 & 2)3 min.

Speaker 3 (Team A, 2nd speaker).....4 min.
Speaker 4 (Team B, 2nd speaker).....4 min.

Crossfire (between speakers 3 & 4)3 min.

Speaker 1 Summary3 min.
Speaker 2 Summary3 min.

Grand Crossfire (all speakers).....3 min.

Speaker 3 Final Focus.....2 min.
Speaker 4 Final Focus.....2 min.

During "**crossfire**," the two previous speakers stand, asking and answering questions in a polite, but argumentative exchange. Unlike traditional cross-examination, both speakers may question each other, however, the first question of the crossfire period is asked to the speaker who just finished.

Summary speeches are rebuttals that extend earlier arguments made or answer opposing refutations, and may incorporate new evidence, but not new *arguments*.

In the **grand crossfire**, all four debaters may remain seated, asking and answering questions. The first question is asked by the team that had the first summary to the team which had the last summary. After that, any debater may question or answer.

The **final focus** is a compelling restatement of why the judge should vote pro or con. Given the short period, the team must decide what arguments weigh most importantly on the decision. No *new* arguments are accepted in the final focus speeches.

Each team may use up to three minutes of prep time.

Evaluation & Judging

The judge is the chairperson of the round (facilitating the coin flip and giving time signals if requested). S/he may not *interact* in the crossfire or debate.

Judges evaluate teams on the quality of the arguments actually made, not on their own personal beliefs, and not on issues they think a particular side *should have covered*. Judges should assess the bearing of each argument on the truth or falsehood of the assigned resolution. The pro should prove that the resolution is true, and the con should prove that the resolution is not true. When deciding the round, judges should ask, "If I had no prior beliefs about this resolution, would the round as a whole have made me more likely to believe the resolution was true or not true?" Teams should strive to provide a straightforward perspective on the resolution; judges should discount unfair, obscure interpretations that only serve to confuse the opposing team. Plans (formalized, comprehensive proposals for implementation), counterplans and "kritiks" (off-topic arguments) are not allowed.

Generalized, practical solutions should support a position of advocacy.

Quality, well-explained arguments should trump a mere quantity thereof. Debaters should use quoted evidence to support their claims, and well-chosen, relevant evidence may strengthen – *but not replace* – arguments.

Clear communication is a major consideration. Judges weigh arguments only to the extent that they are clearly explained, and they will discount arguments that are too fast, too garbled, or too jargon-laden to be understood by an intelligent high school student or a well-informed citizen. A team should not be penalized for failing to understand his or her opponent's unclear arguments.

In short, Public Forum Debate stresses that speakers must appeal to the widest possible audience through sound reasoning, succinct organization, credible evidence, and clear delivery. Team points provide a mechanism for evaluating the relative "quality of debating" by each side.

Computer Policy: Live internet is acceptable for accessing files on Dropbox, Cloud, or a similar system for electronic storage. Students should not find, cut, or site new evidence and sources found from the Internet during the round. Students will sign an honor code that they will not violate this policy.

Ballots:

Please fill out the ballot completely; choose a winning team, assign speaker points. Please submit your ballots prior to leaving the digital round. Each debater should be awarded speaker points, which range from 24.0-30.0. Please assign speaker points based on the scale on your ballot. Ties are not allowed but you can specify in 10ths of point increments (i.e. 27.2 or 28.4). Speaker point below 25.0 should be reserved for debaters demonstrating especially obnoxious and rude behavior and 30.0s should be reserved for the best speaker you will see in your lifetime.

*****The tabroom will NOT allow ties in points!!!!*****

*Rules and information above adapted from the National Speech and Debate Association.
www.speechanddebate.org*