

## SPONTANEOUS ARGUMENTATION (SPAR) JUDGING INSTRUCTIONS

In SPAR, topics may range from lighthearted to academic in nature, but all topics can be done with no research. Therefore, SPAR is an excellent introduction to creating and rebutting arguments with an emphasis on speech delivery skills. The goal of SPAR debating is that students may become more comfortable with the basics of both speech and debate.

Given the nature of the debate and the limited preparation time, judges may provide definitions of words in the topics if students are not familiar with them.

- You must judge the round you are assigned, **do not switch ballots with another judge.**
- Do not communicate with anyone about your judging decisions until AFTER ballots are turned in. Judging is an individual activity. This includes finals, when there are 3 judges in the round—do not speak to the other judges about your decisions.
- **Judge Demeanor:** It is important to be a supportive audience member. Judges are encouraged to present a positive and attentive attitude to each speaker. Do not interrupt the speaker once they have started.
- **Turn off Phones:** Please remember to turn off all cell phones before you start the round (do not set them to vibrate) and please remind all others in the room to do likewise.
- **What to Bring:** Timer (to time the speeches). Do not phone/text/go online during the speech; this is a serious violation of judge etiquette. Your complete focus must be on the speaker and comments you are writing on their ballot while they are speaking.

### Getting Started

- **Start on Time:** Start the round as close to the designated starting time as possible. Do not wait for every student to show up before beginning the round (\*if semis or finals, there are 3 judges--DO wait for all judges to be there before starting).
- **Attendance:** Each round you will receive a ballot that will give you the speaking order. Please verify that the students competing in the room are the same students on your sheet. Students are to perform in the designated order (unless there is a double entry in your round in semis/finals; if so, that speaker is given order priority). The students should wait for you to call them up by name before they stand up and perform.

<h3>Topic Selection and Debate Format</h3>
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In a typical SPAR round, there are anywhere from 4-6 students within a round. Students will be selected in pairs to debate one another. In the case where there are an odd number of students, one student may be chosen to speak twice. For students who speak twice, you may still include feedback for their second debate; however, only the scores for the first debate will be counted for the tournament regardless of if their second speech was better or worse than the first.

Approximately 15 minutes **before the round**, judges will be emailed debate topics for the round (3 sets of topics per debate).

Students will be chosen to debate against each other in pairs of two. Once both competitors are chosen and ready, initiate a coin toss and have the students choose heads or tails, whoever wins the coin toss may choose whether they are affirmative (AFF / PRO) or negation (NEG / CON). Each pair will then be given 3 debate topics by the judge. The AFF will strike one resolution and then the NEG will strike one of the two remaining topics, leaving the pair with one final topic and this is the topic for the debate.

After the final topic is chosen, competitors will have **2 minutes of prep time**, to begin writing down their arguments before the debate begins. The debate times are as follows:

- 2 min – AFF constructive speech
- 2 min – NEG constructive speech
- 4 min – Grand Cross Examination (All speakers)
- 2 min – AFF Rebuttal
- 2 min – NEG Rebuttal

During the debate: You should take careful notes of all the speeches on the SPAR Debate flow sheets so students' refutation and argument evaluation can draw on this record. Argument tracking – in competitive debate, this is called "flowing."

\* The flow sheet is an essential mechanism for enforcing refutation. The flow sheet records all of the arguments in the debate and reveals whether each argument has been refuted (or at least whether an attempt has been made to refute it) or conceded.

\*\* Students may not use laptops or phones during prep time

\*\* There is no preparation time during the debate other than the 2 minutes at the start

\*\* During cross, the debaters should be prepared to take at least a few questions from their opponent or other SPAR competitors in the audience (i.e. judge and audience members not participating in SPAR are not permitted to ask questions). Current competitors will be the ones to call for questions.

\*\* In the closing statement, speakers should extend one or two of the strongest arguments from their case, with a final rebuttal and mitigation of their opponent's arguments, concise and synthesized. No new arguments should be made here.

## Evaluation & Judging

Ranking: Rank each competitor 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, etc. (the best speaker in the round should receive a rank of "1," the second best speaker a "2," on down to the total number of speakers in the round). For example, if 4 speakers show up to the round, rank them 1st-4th. If 7 speakers are in the round, rank them 1st-7th. Do not tie.

Judges will rank the speakers on the basis of overall wit, persuasion, quality argument construction, and delivery style.

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.

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.

Consider the following:

- \* At or near its beginning, each side's case (affirmative and negative) students should include the topic and whether the speaker is affirming or negating it.
- \* Did each argument in the case should include at least one piece of evidence –some objective fact, example, piece of data, or reference
- \* Did students display solid logic, lucid reasoning, and depth of analysis
- \* Did students utilize evidence without being driven by it
- \* Did students present a clash of ideas by countering/refuting arguments of the opposing team (rebuttal)

**Computer Policy:** Participants are forbidden to use the internet to look up evidence during the debate. If a student violates this policy, the tabulation room should be immediately notified.

**Ballots:**

Please fill out the ballot completely; assign ranks and speaker points along with the reasons for your decision and SIGN your ballot. If you are electronic balloting, please submit your ballots prior to leaving the round. Each debater should be awarded speaker points, which range from 15-25. Please assign speaker points based on the scale on your ballot. Ties are not allowed. Speaker points below 15 should be reserved for debaters demonstrating especially obnoxious and rude behavior and 25 should be reserved for the best speaker you will see at the tournament.

**Comments:** What did the speaker do well? What do they still need to work on? Ballots are not only used to help determine the rankings for this particular tournament, but they are used as a tool to educate students. Your comments tell the student the reason or justification for their ranking in the round. For example: If a student is ranked 3rd out of 6 competitors, what specifically about their performance placed them third? The students look to your comments to help them to improve, so make sure you write as many positive comments and as much constructive criticism as you can on the ballot (without holding up the tournament, of course). Keep in mind, time is short--you should be writing during each speech as well as briefly after the speech. Do not wait for speeches to be over to begin writing comments on the ballot.

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