



SPEECH & DEBATE Judge Handbook

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[Acknowledgements](#)

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Introduction

This handbook is for new or returning judges to help you through the challenging but also rewarding task of judging a Speech and Debate tournament!

Different tournaments may have slightly different rules for certain categories, but you will be informed about any changes at the judges' meeting at the start of the tournament. It is very important that you find out where the judges' lounge is located since, at some tournaments, this is where you will have your meeting. You should stay in the judges' lounge if you do not have an assignment in case you are needed or if new information is announced.

Each tournament may also have a different number of rounds offered in a given day. **Typically, most tournaments have at least 4 rounds** (with a break for lunch at some point). You may be asked to judge all the rounds or just one. The length of each round will depend on the type of event and the number of students participating. (*See the sections below for more information about what to bring or where to go when you arrive.*)

The more you judge, the more comfortable you will feel (and the more you will begin to develop expectations of what makes for a good or a great performance in a given event). It's natural to feel some self-doubt about ranking speakers or determining a winner during your first tournament, but just remember: the students don't know whether it's your first or your hundredth tournament. (If it is your first-time judging, do NOT share that with the students!) As an adult, you know more about good speaking skills and persuasion than they do. Even if you have a round with multiple strong competitors, your evaluation is the final say, and although the students certainly want to do well, they are also supportive of one another and admire the strengths of one another's performances. We trust your judgement, and we will always support your justified ranking because at the end of the round, it's about which student/team did a better job of convincing *you*, their audience.

If you have questions at any point during the tournament, please ask any coach or send a **text** (no phone calls, please) to the **Tabroom Google Voice number at 412-376-3490**. Thank you for taking the time to work with our students and our coaches. Your experience will be well worth it ... for everyone!

BEFORE THE TOURNAMENT/////

- Create an account on www.tabroom.com and include your email address and cell phone number (you will receive emails during the tournament with judging information, but the phone number allows the local tab staff to text you if there are any problems). Please note: Tabroom.com is used by all our local tournaments, whether they are live or virtual. Locally, the ONLY way to judge is online on your Tabroom account!
- Some of the tournaments that you might be attending will require that you complete the Certification Level 1: Intro to Multicultural Competence offered at the NSDA website under the Resource tab. It is probably simplest to take this free course early and have it listed on your Tabroom.com profile. The course is available at speechanddebate.org under the Resources tab, then under judge certification. If you are judging debate, you will also be asked to complete a judging paradigm that will be linked to your Tabroom.com profile.

WHAT TO BRING

- **Laptop** (or tablet with a keyboard) **and charging cord**
 - All ballots are now electronic, so you will need to type your comments during the round and then submit and confirm your ballots after each round.
- **Cell phone** (or stopwatch) **and charger**
 - You will need to keep time during the round, which can quickly drain a cell battery, so it's good to bring the charger. Also, the Tabroom will send you a text (or email) to notify you when (and where) you will be needed as a judge. Please remember to switch your phone into airplane mode during a round.
 - Tabroom.com has built-in timers that you can use as well. Some judges have an online timer from another source that they prefer. What is critical here is that you have some device to use as a timer.
- **Notepad and pens** (optional)
 - A few judges like to record their observations on paper (or outline a tentative ranking) while an event is happening. Also, most debate judges like to have at least 2 different colored pens to record each side of a debate.
- You might want to **minimize the number of bags you bring** (1 backpack vs. purse + bag), since you will be moving to different rooms for each round and will have to carry your belongings with you.
- **Snacks or cash** (optional)
 - The judges' lounge is usually stocked with light snacks (water, fruit, veggies, sometimes donuts), and lunch is available for purchase (typically, lunch is a slice of pizza, a drink, and chips). But if you would prefer a more substantial lunch, it could be helpful to pack something else.
 - Please remember that when you purchase items at the hosting school's concession stand, you are supporting forensics for that school and for our district.
- **Something to read or work on** (optional)
 - Depending on the number of students and schools present for the competition, you may be asked to judge every round – or you may only be asked to judge 1 or

2 rounds. You might want to have something to do should you have any down time.

WHEN YOU ARRIVE

When you arrive at the tournament, check in with the coach from your team and then locate the judges' lounge. You should NOT check in at the registration desk; the head coach for your school will register you once they know that you are present.



For virtual check in, open your Tabroom account and click on your username (email) in the upper right corner. Then, select "Current Ballots" on the right side of the screen (the button is pastel yellow). You will then see a video camera icon with your school's "Squad Room" where you can join the virtual team room **if** your team is meeting there. Your head coach may give you other directions for checking in virtually; follow their directions!

- For virtual tournaments, it isn't as easy to hold a whole group meeting with all of the judges, so please see the videos in this folder for guidance from USC Coach Ben Edwards: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1YdZeTktwVMoeCj0zH7dlwE2ip40RJnN2> Even if you watch these videos, please know that you are still expected to report to the judges' meeting since each school does things a bit differently at their tournament.
- You can also find additional information about judging as recommended by the NSDA at the NFHS site: <https://nfhslearn.com/courses/adjudicating-speech-and-debate>

When in person, once you are in the judges' lounge:

- ☐ Ensure that you can connect to the **internet** – the password may be posted in the room or may be given to the coaches.
- ☐ A member of the tab room personnel will come in to announce the rules for this specific tournament. It is likely that speech judges and debate judges will be separated to give additional information about the events.
- ☐ Log into www.tabroom.com. Click on your username (email) in the upper right corner and once the rounds are scheduled, your round information will appear in the middle of the screen. Here, you will see details about which event you will be judging during an upcoming round (and which room it will take place in).
- ☐ Sometimes, schools will provide maps of the building or will have student helpers in the hallway to guide you to the room. When you receive a judging assignment, please go directly to the room, as some of the buildings can be easy to get lost in. Don't hesitate to ask for directions if you can't find the room.

Judging: What to Do

BEFORE YOU BEGIN THE ROUND

- Double-check that you are judging in the correct room and that all of the students have arrived. For speech events, the students will be listed in Tabroom with an alpha-numeric code (ex: M165, TK177, etc.) or by student name. If students are not present, contact the Tabroom by texting Google Voice and wait for instructions. Chances are good that you will be told to start the round. The order in which students are listed on Tabroom is the order in which they should speak unless you are advised otherwise.
- Be certain the door is closed before the competitors begin their performances.
- Make certain you are seated towards the back and in the center of the room and that other students can't see your computer screen or notes.
- Some tournaments will include the judging criteria on the ballots; review these before the round begins.
- Remind everyone in the round to silence their electronic devices.
- For virtual rounds, you will be sent a notification to your cell phone informing you of the event and the competitors' names. On Tabroom, you will then see a new link on the "Current Ballots" page where you previously only saw the "Squad Room." (If it doesn't show up immediately, try refreshing the page). Click on the video icon for your round and wait for the competitors to arrive. Then, return to the Tabroom page and click the green "Start" button. This will alert the tab room that the judge and competitors are all present and that the round is underway.



DURING THE ROUND

- Click "**Start Round**" on Tabroom as soon as you arrive in your competition room.
- For speech events, be sure to have competitors speak in the order listed on the ballot.
- If asked, please **give time signals** to students during their performance. Most students will tell you which time signals they prefer (for example in a 10-minute event: a 2 at 8 minutes, 1 at 9 minutes, a "c" at 9:30, a fist at 10 minutes). It can be helpful to write down the time signal requests as each student may have a different preference.
- Please keep time during the round, but please also place your cell phone in airplane mode first.
- Type critiques on the ballot during each performance and click "**Save.**" Do not wait until the end of the round to record your comments.
- Remember that you are a competitor's advocate during this round. Provide positive feedback as well as suggestions for improvement. It is important that your personal philosophies do not influence how you evaluate the round; remain unbiased toward the competitors who may have opinions other than your own.
- Many judges find it helpful to jot down notes or tentative rankings on a separate notepad that will not be seen by the students as part of the ballot. For example, in a round with 6 participants, you may want to write of the 2nd speaker ("better than 1st") and of the 3rd speaker ("better than 1st but not as good as 2nd"). It could also be helpful to write down the title or topic of the piece next to the student's name. That way,

when you go to submit the ranking, you will have an easier time recalling the performances and deciding on the order.

Some judges use a separate document to write comments for the students and then they copy and paste those comments into the Tabroom ballot. Whatever you do, save your documents and your ballots frequently!

- Avoid eating and drinking during a student's performance.
- Thank each student after their performance and encourage others to applaud them, but please do NOT give students verbal critiques.
- Also, please feel empowered to politely correct students if they are behaving rudely or inattentively (please also note this on their ballot). Sometimes students may be chatting loudly in the hallway when a round is going on inside a classroom or sometimes they may be tapping a pencil or crinkling a water bottle inside a room when another student is presenting. In most cases, students do not intend to be disrespectful – they may just be nervous or unaware. Still, if they are distracting the speaker, they should be made aware of how their behavior affects others.

AFTER THE ROUND

- Thank the competitors and dismiss them for their next round.
- **DO NOT** give students any verbal critiques or reveal your rankings.
- Rank the speech competitors on the ballot. **Remember "1" is best.** There are NO ties.
- For debate competitors, note the winner and give points. More information about the points system will be given at the judges' meeting, but the students are often scored out of a maximum of 30 points (the typical range being from 25-30). It's rare for a student to score a 30 (perfect), and it's also uncommon to give less than a 25. Please note that some tournaments use a different point range; you will be told about this at the judges' meeting and it should be evident on your ballot.
- You must click "**Submit**" and then "**Confirm**" on the Tabroom ballot before leaving the room. If you need more time to type the comments, please submit the numerical ranking first (in debate the win/loss) and then you can go back to edit the comments. You usually have 24 hours to complete your comments before they will be released to the students, **but the rankings must be completed and submitted within a few minutes.** The tournament needs to wait until all rankings or wins/losses are entered in order to proceed.
- Do not discuss performances with others until after the awards ceremony.
- If you have any concerns about a student's conduct or a rule violation, please report it to the tabulation room after the round (and before submitting your ballot) to see if there should be a penalty that would influence your ranking. Avoid personally confronting the student; the proper etiquette is to communicate your concern to the student's supervisor.
- After a round, **check your cell phone or Tabroom.com** on your computer to see if you have been assigned to the next round. If a new round is listed, you should move directly to the new room. Depending on the tournament and on the round that was just completed, there may be a slight delay before the next round is published.
- Otherwise, always **return to the judges' lounge** between judging assignments. Please **do not leave the tournament between rounds** or after the last round unless you have checked with your school's coach.

DO'S AND DON'TS OF JUDGING

- ✓ **DO** dress appropriately. We ask the competitors to “dress up.” Judges should not wear torn clothes, sweatpants, or the like. Jeans or neat-looking clothing is fine.
- ✓ **DO** write constructive comments on the ballots, noting both the strengths of the piece and the improvements that need to be made. Keep in mind, however, that many students will be new to this activity, so supportive or gentle critiques can go a long way. Coaches and competitors will use these as guides to improve performances.
- ✓ **DO** convey to the students that you enjoy the event. There’s no need to be stern or intimidating – try to put the students at ease yet still be in charge. Aim to be compassionate and empathetic in your comments and your presence in the room.
- ✓ **DO** let it be known on the ballot if you believe that the selection is inappropriate for an educational setting, i.e., it is too sexually explicit or uses too much profanity.
- ✓ **DO** aim to be as specific as possible when leaving feedback on a piece so the student and the coaches know which parts to improve upon.
- ✓ **DO** let it be known on the ballot if the competitors’ dress, jewelry, hair, etc. is interfering with the performance. However, do not inject your personal fashion preferences into these remarks. Please do not comment on a student’s physical appearance beyond whether their attire looks professional.
- ✓ **DO** maintain as much eye contact as possible with the student speaking. This can be difficult while also taking notes, but it’s important to show engagement and to note their facial expressions and movements.
- ✓ **DO** write a “flow” if judging debate — this means that you need to take notes to keep track of the progression of the debate.
- ✓ **DO** ask the tab room or another coach if you have any questions about the rules. Please respect the tab room personnel and student helpers. Sometimes mistakes or confusion can arise, and there is an appropriate way to deal with these (that does not involve yelling at someone).
- ✗ **DO NOT** write inappropriate or unkind comments on the ballots – i.e., “you should be doing extemp,” or “I hate overly emotional pieces,” or “maybe forensics isn’t for you.” Basically, don’t type something on a ballot that you would never say in person to a student.
- ✗ **DO NOT** give a last place ranking without any explanation. As mentioned, aim to be kind and compassionate in your critique, but also be honest with the students so they know how to improve.
- ✗ **DO NOT** assume that a student is new just because they may seem inexperienced. Along the same lines, **DO NOT** tell the students that this is your first time judging a

tournament or event. This may make a student feel anxious about whether you will be able to assess their work accurately.

- ✕ **DO NOT** be put off by a selection or oration if it is a piece that you feel that you have heard too many times or is an argument contrary to your beliefs. Remember to put aside your personal opinions to judge based on the criteria provided, rather than the side of the argument that you would take.
- ✕ **DO NOT** discuss decisions with other judges.
- ✕ **DO NOT** give oral critiques during or after the round.
- ✕ **DO NOT** eat, text/call, or be inattentive during a round (unless, of course, in the case of an emergency).

The Speech Events

GENERAL NOTES

Review the **"Judging: What to Do"** section to note where to sit, how to start the round, etc. Remember to type comments on the ballots while the students are speaking and to begin the timer when the student begins to speak. When ranking speech events, the student who is the best in the room is ranked in 1st place. Keep in mind that there are no minimum times in any speech events, but when ranking 2 equally good speeches, you certainly can consider the length and development of a speech as a factor. (*see pg. 11 for some sample ballot comments*)

Now that we have switched to Tabroom.com, some tournaments do not use ballots for specific categories, but previous paper ballots used to list the following categories and questions (please feel free to use this as a guide if it's helpful):

Selection: Does the selection provoke thought, a theme, or sufficiently entertain? Is the selection suitable for the interpreter including challenging to the person's abilities, or fitting to their vocal range, physical presence, maturity? If multiple selections are used, are they somehow linked?

Understanding of the Selection: Does the interpreter demonstrate an understanding of the selection's tone and purpose, the characters' depth and development, and the text's elements and progression? Does the introduction sufficiently prepare the audience for the selection?

Voice: Has the interpreter employed appropriate vocal variety (such as pitch, rate, volume, phrasing, pausing, and stress)? Do these components reflect the shifts in the selection on an intellectual and emotional level? Is the interpreter articular and understandable?

Action: Does the interpreter utilize facial expression appropriate to the narrator and/or characters being portrayed and to the emotional moments being rendered? Are focal points, if utilized, effective? Do gestures and body stance contribute to the effectiveness of the reading?

Overall Effect: Did the interpreter effectively transport you to the setting of the selection? Did the interpreter fully communicate to you the feeling and understanding of the selection?

For student-created pieces (OO, INF, COMM, POI, BLENDED POETRY, EX, IMP):

Content / Organization: Is the speech a reasonable development of the topic selected? Is there a variety of sources? Is there a clear and central idea supported well by the main points? Is there a logical progression utilizing effective transitions? Are the introduction and conclusion effective? Did the speaker effectively inform or persuade you about the topic? Did the speaker adequately develop the speech to keep it interesting for the audience?

EXTEMPORANEOUS

Description of Event: In International/United States Extemporaneous Speaking, students are presented with a choice of three questions related to international/domestic current events and, in 30 minutes, they must prepare a seven-minute speech answering the selected question. Each student brings their own materials (in print or on a laptop) that will help them research the topic during the 30 minutes. Topics range from country-specific issues to regional concerns to foreign policy. The speech is delivered from memory.

Timekeeping: Maximum of 7 minutes (+30 second grace period). If a student goes over the grace period (7:31+), they cannot score first place in the rankings of that round. **No Minimum Time** requirement.

Format of a Round: Extempers get their topics in a prep room 30 minutes before you judge them. When you receive your judging assignment, go to the room, and click “Start Round.” You may need to wait for the first student to arrive because students will not get the topic until the tab room is sure that a judge will be ready for them. Students will arrive **one at a time** for this event – only one student will be present in the room at a time. The student should hand to you the slip of paper on which their assigned topic is written (to prevent the possibility of an off-topic or pre-written speech).



Virtually, the student will tell you the topic either in the speech, type it into the chat box, or as you start the round.

Before the student begins speaking, type their topic into the ballot so that the student will remember which topic it was when they view their comments later.

Additional Notes: At the start of the speech, students will typically list the points that they intend to make. Write down these points to keep track of the structure and content of their speech. Also, in this event, students are judged on the content of the speech as well as the performance / delivery of the speech. A superb spoken performance with weak content is not a strong speech overall (just as an excellently written speech with poor spoken performance is not a strong speech overall). Both of these factors are equally important, so aim to rank (and provide feedback) in a way that considers both.

*Some tournaments allow the student to use one note card with 50 words. Be sure that you know the rules that are in effect for this tournament.

*In Extemp, students should reference sources in their speeches. Note on the ballot if they do not provide enough facts or sources to sufficiently establish their points.

IMPROMPTU

Description of Event: Each speaker is given a choice of three topics and must prepare a short speech. The student is given only 7 minutes in which to prepare and speak about the chosen topic.

Timekeeping: Maximum of 7 minutes to prepare and speak.
No Minimum Time requirement.

Format of a Round: Some tournaments will tell you to allow only one student, the speaker, in the room at a time. Follow the directions given at the judges' meeting! When the first speaker enters the room, you will use the topics that are part of your ballot. The speaker will give you three numbers from those listed; tell the student these topics. From these topics, the speaker will choose one and drop the other two. (Do not reuse these numbers for later speakers!) At that point, the speaker's seven-minute prep and speaking time begins. The judge in the room is expected to keep time for the student as s/he prepares the speech, and then to continue that time while the speaker is presenting. The speaker may split this time in any manner, but the judge is expected to keep time for the student. The process is then repeated for the second speaker and continues until all speakers have presented.

Some Example Impromptu Ballot Comments:

- I thought you did a wonderful job with the verbal element of your structure. I had an easy time following your analysis and a very clear idea of the arguments you were making. That said, work on balancing the time spent on verbal cues of structure with actual argumentation. Don't let one win over the other!
- Your first point was very well argued. I appreciated how clearly your example linked up to the argument you were making. Some work could have been done in your second point. There wasn't an explicit enough link between your argument and the example you used to prove it.
- Overall, this was very strong throughout the performance. Thank you for displaying such confidence in what can be a nerve-wracking event! Your ability to have a cohesive and fluent speaking style with such little preparation is remarkable.
- You have a good understanding of what it takes to be a successful Impromptu speaker. I would advise that you pay more attention to how you make the examples you use more relevant to the arguments you are making. The mark of a great Impromptu competitor is succinct argumentation that doesn't sacrifice depth. You're almost there, just keep working on it!
- You gave a great speech, but in the end, one other person in the round had stronger argumentation with comparably skilled delivery.

INTERPRETATIVE EVENTS: DRAMATIC, HUMOROUS, OR DUO

Description of Event: This category gives students a chance to perform as actors. The speakers must choose a published piece, dramatic (DI) or humorous (HI). They can also pick a piece for two people to present (DUO), either serious or humorous. If the piece has more than one character, the student must convey this by having different focal points / gestures/ stances for each character. In a monologue, the student doesn't need a focal point (remember not to mark a student down for doing a monologue instead of a piece with multiple characters).

Dramatic Interpretation: 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, Dramatic Interpretation focuses on a 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 should also include an introduction written by the student to contextualize the performance and state the title and author.

Humorous Interpretation: 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 should also include an introduction written by the student to contextualize the performance and state the title and author.

Duo Interpretation: Two competitors team up to deliver a ten-minute performance of a published play or story. Using stage focus, Duo Interpretation competitors convey emotion and environment through a variety of performance techniques focusing on the relationships and interactions between the characters; however, competitors are not allowed to make eye contact or touch one another. No props or costumes are used. Performances should also include an introduction written by the students to contextualize the performance and state the title and author.

Timekeeping: Maximum of 10 minutes (+30 second grace period). If a student goes over the grace period (10:31+), they cannot score first place in the rankings of that round. **No Minimum Time** requirement.

Format of a Round: A group of 5-7 students will be present together for the duration of this round (the students all watch one another perform). Except at the very beginning of the season, **these pieces are to be memorized.**

PROGRAMMED ORAL INTERPRETATION

Description of Event: Using a combination of Prose, Poetry, and Drama, students construct a program up to ten minutes in length using at least two out of the three genres. With a spotlight on argumentation and performative range, Programmed Oral Interpretation focuses on a student's ability to combine multiple genres of literature centered on a single theme. Competitors are expected to portray multiple characters. No props or costumes may be used except for the manuscript. Performances also include an introduction written by the student to contextualize the performance and state the titles and authors used in the program.

A primary focus of this event should be on the development of a theme or argument through the use of narrative, story, language, and/or characterization. Competitors are encouraged to devote approximately equal time to each of the genres used in the selection. At least two pieces of literature that represent two separate genres must be used.

Timekeeping: Maximum of 10 minutes (+30 second grace period). If a student goes over the grace period (10:31+), they cannot score first place in the rankings of that round. **No Minimum Time** requirement.

Format of a Round: A group of 5-7 students will be present together for the duration of this round (the students all watch one another perform). 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.

Additional Notes: An introduction should set the stage, enhancing the interpretation of the literature to the audience, providing information and analysis of the chosen theme. All selections must be verbally identified by title and author in the introduction. However, where, when, and how these are ordered in the performance are the speaker's decision.

This is a contest in oral interpretation. The contestant should be evaluated on poise, quality and use of voice, inflection, pronunciation, and the ability to interpret characters consistently.

The contestant should also be evaluated on how effective their argument/theme is projected in the total program.

PROSE/POETRY

Description of Event: In this event, the speakers interpret either a prose piece or a poetry piece. The object is for the speaker to bring the piece to life. There are two types of tournaments for prose & poetry speakers. Sometimes a speaker may only be able to speak in prose OR poetry. At other tournaments, students may do prose in one round and poetry in the next. Most tournaments in our area now allow “blended poetry” where poems are woven together to form a single piece.

Timekeeping: Maximum of 10 minutes (+30 second grace period). If a student goes over the grace period (10:31+), they cannot score first place in the rankings of that round.
No Minimum Time requirement.

Format of a Round: A group of 5-7 students will be present together for the duration of this round (the students all watch one another perform). Students **MUST** read from a binder / manuscript for this performance (they cannot perform a piece from memory – even if they clearly do have the piece memorized by the end of the season, they must look at the binder and present as if reading). Since the piece is not memorized, the speaker doesn’t have to have focal points (as they would for HI or DI).

Additional Notes: The interpreter should demonstrate a clear understanding of the literature and project its meaning, message, and tone. The speaker should capture and convey the plot and/or development. In a presentation of a collection, there should be a unity to the program as a whole, made clear by the introduction and transitional material. Consideration should be given to the literary merit of the selection(s).

Narrator/Character Creation: The narrator should be believable and conversational. The narrator should be able to lead the audience through the details of the literature, keeping a consistent and clear attitude toward people, objects, and events within the literature. In collections, the interpreter should develop and maintain unique and distinct narrative voices for each selection within the program. If they are utilized, character voices should be distinctive, consistent, and appropriate to the character. The interpreter should be able to demonstrate the characters’ feelings and thoughts through the use of vocal inflections, facial expressions including visualization, and appropriate intensity.

Vocal Variety: The interpreter should appropriately vary pitch, volume, rate, and intensity to convey the various moods and messages in the literature. Appropriate words should be stressed for clarity and understanding. The interpreter should appropriately play with sound devices such as alliteration and attend to the sound and meaning of every word. For poetry, the interpreter should capture and effectively vary existing poetic rhythm, making use of rhyme when necessary and avoiding it when not.

ORIGINAL ORATORY

Description of Event: Students deliver a self-written speech on a topic of their choosing. Limited in their ability to quote words directly, Original Oratory competitors craft an argument using evidence, logic, and emotional appeals. Topics range widely, and may be informative or persuasive in nature, and at some tournaments, OO will be divided into these two separate categories. The speech is delivered from memory if the tournament is using NSDA rules.

Timekeeping: Maximum of 10 minutes (+30 second grace period). If a student goes over the grace period (10:31+), they cannot score first place in the rankings of that round.
No Minimum Time requirement.

Format of a Round: A group of 5-7 students will be present together for the duration of this round (the students all watch one another perform). Except at the very beginning of the season, **these pieces are to be memorized.** Some tournaments may allow note cards.

Additional Notes: The topic should be interesting, stimulating, and of some importance. The purpose of the oration may be to inspire, to persuade, to eulogize, or to inform. These purposes may overlap in the same oration.

The introduction should gain attention, specify a clear thesis, and give some direction as to how the speech will unfold or develop. The body should be organized for easy understanding. Transitional words/devices should help to move the speech from point to point. The conclusion should recap, make you want to think more about the topic, and end interestingly.

The word choice should be clear and potent. Figures of speech and rhetorical devices should be used effectively.

The speaker should be articulate and fluent. The speaker should make use of contrast and make use of the elements of vocal variety: pitch, volume, rate, pausing, phrasing, stress, and tone. The speaker should stress words to enhance meaning. The speaker should be conversational and concerned, passionate and pleasing. The speaker should be in control of the words and the emotions.

The speaker should vary facial expression to accentuate the natural flow of thoughts and feelings. The speaker should make eye contact with the audience. The speaker's stance should be erect and controlled, without distracting movements. Movement, if used, should be motivated by transitions in thought or mood. Gestures should be visible, effectively used for emphasis, and varied.

Delivery and content should be evaluated equally.

INFORMATIVE OR PERSUASIVE SPEAKING

Description of Event: Students deliver a self-written, ten-minute speech on a topic of their choosing.

Limited in their ability to quote words directly, Informative Speaking competitors craft a speech using evidence, logic, and *optional* visual aids in order to explain, define, describe, or illustrate a particular subject. All topics must be informative in nature; the goal is to educate, not to advocate. Depending on the tournament, this speech is usually delivered from memory, but in PHSSL competitions notes may be used.

Persuasive Speaking is a similar event, but in this case, the goal is to advocate / take a stance on an issue in order to persuade the audience.

Timekeeping: Maximum of 10 minutes (+30 second grace period). If a student goes over the grace period (10:31+), they cannot score first place in the rankings of that round. **No Minimum Time** requirement.

Format of a Round: A group of 5-7 students will be present together for the duration of this round (the students all watch one another perform). Except at the very beginning of the season, and except at PHSSL competitions, **these pieces are to be memorized**. Some tournaments may allow note cards.

Additional Notes: Visual aids are an optional addition in informative speaking to help reinforce the speaker's message. During the presentation, no electronic equipment is permitted. The use of live animals or any additional people as visual aids is also not permitted. Items of dress put on and removed during the course of the presentation are considered costumes and may not be part of the contestant's presentation. Visual aids must be appropriate (no weapons, drug references, etc.). The host school is not responsible for providing any facilities, equipment, or assistance in a contestant's use of visual aids. Expedient set up and take down of aids is expected. If a visual aid displays published pictorial material, the source must be included in the Works Cited page but does not need to be cited orally.

In PHSSL competitions notes may be used, but excessive reference to notes should be part of a judge's consideration when ranking students.

The Debate Events

GENERAL NOTES

- To view this month's debate topics, visit: <https://www.speechanddebate.org/topics/>
- When filling out a debate ballot, **note the winner and assign points to each student.** More information about the points system will be given at the judges' meeting, but the students are typically scored out of a maximum of 30 points (the typical range being from 25-30). It's rare for a student to score a 30 (perfect), and it's also uncommon to give less than a 25.
- Remember that your job is NOT to think of things that *could* have been said or *should* have been said. You can only evaluate them based on what they *did* say. Did they have a good argument? Did they shoot down what the other debater said? Did they shoot down the arguments against their cases? For example – if debater A says, "The pen is mightier than the sword because Bics come in purple and you can never find a good sword in that color," and debater B never says anything about debater A saying something so ridiculous, then A won that point.
- Remember, also not to judge the students based on your own beliefs on the topic. It is difficult to leave your own opinions at the door, but you must do so in order to evaluate them fairly and in order to critique the merits and demerits of their research and statements.
- You shouldn't base the round on one argument, but if one side clearly has won more arguments, you have to go with that side.
- During a debate, a judge should keep track of the arguments being made, this is called "**flow**." Organized notes of the important points you thought were raised during the round will help you complete the ballot and may help you make a decision about who was better at debating.
- When talking about debate sessions, judges and students often use the term "**clash**" to describe the points of contact or disagreement between teams. An effective "clash" can be just as important to consider as an effective prepared statement.

Some Example Ballot Comments:

- | | |
|--|--|
| - The summary did an effective job of highlighting the key issues in the round. | - The first speaker's confidence is strong in the first speech but lacks in the summary. |
| - The final focus discussed a couple arguments that the summary did not focus on. | - The rebuttal was impressive with the turns placed on the con case. |
| - The argument about the developmental harms was persuasive but not developed in the later parts of the round. | - The summary speech dropped a couple arguments. |
| | . |

REASON FOR DECISION (RFD)

- This was an interesting debate. While the con team was more balanced, the pro did end up winning the round. The most important argument at the end of the round was the pro's second contention. Within that contention, the con did not effectively refute the various

parts of the argument. While they rejected the overall, claim, they failed to address the specific justifications that established the validity of the claim.

- The key elements of the argument that led me to voting pro was the Harvard University study on GMOs and the economic impacts that are created. The defense that was put on the side effects helped mitigate the offense of the con. So I voted pro.

WHAT TO KNOW WHEN JUDGING A DEBATE

Be sure to listen for the “**clash**” in any debate you judge.

- A good debate must have what’s called a “clash” where participants actively address and respond to one another’s claims. Debaters cannot simply read their prepared arguments without addressing the opponent’s claims.
- Pay attention to “dropped arguments.” If Participant A says a lot of arguments and Participant B cannot or does not address them – any claims Participant B does not address are won by Participant A.

Learn to take notes on the arguments being made.

- “**Flowing**” is a notetaking strategy where the judge writes down the main contentions and sub-points of each argument. It’s often helpful to have 2 different colored pens while taking notes in order to keep track of each side’s claims.
- Generally, an argument should follow the structure of an essay: claim, warrant, evidence, so you can use this as a guideline when taking notes (or noting omissions)
- Write down their contentions and values. Then, draw arrows to note whether the debater actually clashed with their opponent or if they let them “flow through.”
- The term “cards” refers to evidence used to support the contention.

In the **final speeches**...

- The students will give “voting issues” which are the students’ reasons why they think they won.
- In your ballot, you should respond to the voting issues so they know whether or not you agree with them in terms of what they won (or didn’t).

Additional Notes:

- You cannot disqualify a debater for going overtime.
- Style is a distant third criteria after the clash and the prepared argument. In debate, we would rather a participant be judged on what they said rather than how they’ve said it. However, when all things are equal between two competitors, style can be a tie breaker.

LINCOLN-DOUGLAS DEBATE

Description of Event: In this one-on-one format, students debate a bi-monthly topic provided by the NSDA. Lincoln-Douglas Debate topics range from individual freedom vs. the collective good to economic development vs. environmental protection. It is a philosophical debate. An entire debate is roughly 45 minutes and consists of constructive speeches, rebuttals, and cross-examination.

Timekeeping and Format of a Round:

This category is a one-on-one debate about values and morals. Keep track of what the students are saying (in debate terms, “flow the round”) on a separate piece of paper – not on the ballot — so that you can more easily determine what was said and who had the better arguments.

The times are:

Affirmative constructive	6 mins
Negative cross examination of the affirmation	3 mins
Negative constructive and first rebuttal	7 mins
Affirmative cross examination of negative	3 mins
Affirmative rebuttal	4 mins
Negative rebuttal	6 mins
Affirmative rebuttal	3 mins

*Both sides are allowed 4 minutes of preparation time that they may use **when they wish**.

Additional Notes: Clearly state on the ballot why you chose the winner (include this in the RFD box: “reason for decision”). Don’t simply say that one side had a more persuasive case. Name specific arguments that you feel the winning side presented better.

The most difficult part of LD is keeping time and giving time signals while listening to the students debate, taking notes on what they are saying, and writing notes on the ballot.

Some Questions to Consider (for any debate event):

- Was the speaker prepared?
- Did the speaker stay focused?
- Did the speaker’s argument advance the debate?
- Were the points logical and relevant?
- Were you persuaded by the speech?
- Did the speaker use reliable sources?
- Did the speaker just repeat comments made by others?

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE

Description of Event: Parliamentary debate is a two-person team event. There are two teams, the Government and the Opposition, who debate a topic. All rounds are extemporaneous rounds where the teams see the motion at the beginning of the round and have a 20 minute prep time. There is a computer generated coin toss that will assign students their sides to see which team will be The Government (in favor of the motion) and which team will be The Opposition (against the motion.) Teams are allowed to bring any materials and computers, if they wish, into the round. Not all leagues allow computers in the rounds. Rules will be listed from the tournament host.

Timekeeping and Format of a Round:

Teams may bring only their notes into an Impromptu round. Computers are sometimes prohibited, but the host will determine this. If following State rules, computers can be used, but communication with others outside the partnership is not allowed.

First speaker (PM) for the motion	7 minutes
First speaker (OL) against the motion	7 minutes
Second speaker for the motion	7 minutes
Second speaker against the motion	7 minutes
Reply speech against the motion (must be the Opposition Leader)	5 minutes
Reply speech for the motion (must be the Prime Minister)	5 minutes

Additional Notes: Any member of the opposing team (the interrupter) can question the speaker during minutes 2-6 of the speech (the first minute and last minute of the speech are considered “protected time” when the speaker cannot be interrupted). Judges often knock on the desk to let the other competitors know when the speaker is leaving or returning to the protected time minutes.

The challenges / interruptions (called “Points of Information”) are where most clash in the round happens. The speaker who has the floor is in total control of the time and may either accept the Point from the interrupter or decline it. If the Point is accepted, the interrupter may make a short point or ask a question (15 seconds or less) that deals with some issue in the debate. A Point of Information is offered by standing and saying “Point of Information” or something similar. The speaker on the floor is not obliged to accept every point. He may ask the interrupter to sit down, may finish the sentence and then accept the point, or may accept the point immediately. Debaters must sometimes tread a fine line between offering legitimate Points and overwhelming the speaker. Points should advance the debate, not merely interrupt it.

PUBLIC FORUM DEBATE

Description of Event: Public Forum Debate involves opposing teams of two, debating a monthly topic concerning a current event. At a few tournaments there will be a coin flip, and 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. At most local tournaments sides are assigned by the computer software. Students present cases, engage in rebuttal and refutation, and also participate in a “cross fire” (similar to a cross-examination) with the opportunity to question the opposing team.

Timekeeping and Format of a Round:

- In some situations, the debate starts with a coin flip – this **MUST** be done in front of you, the judge. The winners decide if they want to go first / last, OR they may decide if they want to go pro / con. The other team gets to decide what the winner did not.
- **Note:** Sometimes the sides are pre-set (especially for virtual tournaments). Make sure that you are at the opening meeting for the rules. If PRO/CON is often already indicated for each team on the ballot, no coin flip is needed.
- Be very careful – do not fill in the ballot until after the kids have chosen their sides. Also— it is so wise to confirm their names more than once! On numerous occasions in the tab room, we will find that a judge has marked the ballot based on which side of the room the students sat instead of their PRO / CON position.
- As with other debates, the most difficult part is keeping time while taking notes for yourself and writing notes on the ballots all while you’re listening to what is happening.



The times for the round are:

First Speaker - Team A	4 Minutes
First Speaker - Team B	4 Minutes
Crossfire	3 Minutes
Second Speaker - Team A	4 Minutes
Second Speaker - Team B	4 Minutes
Crossfire	3 Minutes
Summary - First Speaker - Team A	3 Minutes
Summary - First Speaker - Team B	3 Minutes
Grand Crossfire	3 Minutes
Final Focus - Second Speaker - Team A	2 Minute
Final Focus - Second Speaker - Team B	2 Minute

**more details about
PF debate sequence
on next page*

*Prep Time (per team) is 3 Minutes – this means that a team can take time to think / write / discuss at any time during the debate. They do not have to use all this time at once – they may break these three minutes into parts.

*The Final Focus is a persuasive final restatement of why your team has won the debate. New arguments brought up in the final speech are to be ignored and should result in a loss for that team.

Additional Notes: The topics for PF come from current events and may sometimes be controversial. Remember to suspend your own beliefs about the topic in order to consider which team argued the case more effectively. Since the teams must be prepared to argue both sides of the topic, the team may not even be arguing in favor of what they personally believe. Instead, you want to evaluate their merits as a researcher, presenter, and arguer based on the quality of their statements, responses, research, and speaking skills.

PUBLIC FORUM: THE DEBATE SEQUENCE EXPLAINED

1. Coin Flip (**may be pre-determined on the ballot for some tournaments*)
 - a. First, you will need to know the resolution.
 - b. The judge flips a coin and whichever team wins can decide whether they want to choose side (Pro or Con) or Order (deliver speeches first or second).
 - c. For the purposes of this debate, we are going to assume Pro will speak first. However, know this may not always be the case.
2. Constructive Speeches - 4 Minutes Each
 - a. These are speeches that each team prepares ahead of time.
 - b. This is where each team builds their framework, delivers their contentions and evidence (think body paragraphs for an essay), and overall just constructs their arguments.
3. Crossfire - 3 Minutes
 - a. This is a crossfire between the first two speakers, one from either side. The crossfires are where the majority of the clash in the round comes from. Each side questions the other for a total of three minutes. This can seem a bit intimidating, but once you get the hang of it, it can actually be fun.
 - b. The crossfire begins with the first speaker asking the question to the second speaker (the speaker who just finished his/her speech). After this, each team has equal access to the floor.
4. Rebuttal Speeches - 4 minutes Each
 - a. This is the part where the other two speakers get to shine. This speech is impromptu, and the speaker should be preparing for it the second that the opposition begins their constructive speech. The second speakers should write down notes and try to poke holes in the other side's arguments. For the students: Before you begin your round, you will have wanted to do some extensive research. This should not only be for your own side, but be in anticipation of what someone else might try to argue.
 - b. The rebuttal speeches' aim is to point out flaws in your opponent's logic. Show why their contentions fall (aka fail) and, if time permits, try to go back to your own case and strengthen it.
5. Crossfire - 3 Minutes.
 - a. Same drill as the first crossfire, but with the Rebuttal Speakers instead
 - b. This crossfire begins with the speaker who went first questioning the speaker who just immediately went. After that, it is again open to either of the two speakers to question each other. Be aggressive but don't be rude!
6. Summary Speeches - 2 Minutes Each
 - a. These speeches are made by the first two speakers (the ones who made the constructive speeches).
 - b. The goal of these speeches is NOT to present any more arguments. The time for that has passed. Now it is time to condense the round into a 2-minute speech and point out the major hot-bed issues that the round revolved around. Stress any major points you made and reflect on major issues of conflict.
7. Grand Crossfire - 3 Minutes.
 - a. Alright. This is it. If the other crossfires were not heated enough, imagine everyone in a huge free for all. This is the part where all the speakers can question and interrogate each other. If you haven't shown that your team is the clear winner yet, this is your opportunity to do so. Do not be afraid to be aggressive, but refrain from being rude.
8. Final Focus- 2 Minutes
 - a. This is where Speakers 3 and 4 make their team's final speeches. Convince the judge that you have clearly won. Talk about your contentions and your opponents, and why you have won on all fronts. Make this easy for the judge and try and be as clear as possible.

LD, PF, and Policy Debate Evidence Rules — Guide for Judges



This document provides potential scenarios and basic expectations for Policy, Lincoln-Douglas, and Public Forum Debate judges. This is a guide and is not a replacement for the actual rules.

Scenario	Expectation
A debater or judge asks to see something read and/or the original source of something read.	The opposing debater should provide this information promptly.
A debater questions the oral source citation of the opponent	When debaters read evidence, they are required to provide the author's last name and the year of publication. If duplicating the same source, only the author's name is needed subsequent times. It is up to the judge to determine what to do with evidence lacking proper oral citations.
A debater questions the written source citation of the opponent.	When debaters read evidence, they are required to provide a full written citation, <i>to the extent provided by the original source</i> . Requirements include: full name of primary author and/or editor, publication date, source, title of article, date accessed for digital evidence, full URL, author qualifications, and page numbers. It is up to the judge to determine what to do with evidence lacking proper written citations.
A debater questions paraphrased evidence.	If a debater summarizes what an authoritative source says about a topic, s/he is required to have the original source of the information available, if questioned by the opponent and/or judge. If no specific source is referenced, but a general theory is summarized, no original source is required.
A debater questions the use of ellipses in evidence read.	The use of internal ellipses (...) is prohibited <i>unless it is a replication of the original document</i> . Vote against the debater and award zero points. Note this on the ballot.
A debater reads part of the quotation but not the entirety of the quotation.	A debater can select which parts of a quote are read and not read; however, the entire text must be present so a debater and/or judge can examine the quotation in full context.
A debater claims the opponent doesn't make it clear when s/he is delivering a piece of evidence orally.	Debaters can use phrases such as "quote/unquote" or "mark the card" to make it clear when they are quoting an author. It is up to the judge to determine whether or not the distinction between a debater's own analysis and a direct quotation is clear. It is up to the judge to determine what to do with this violation.
A debater claims that the opponent did not indicate in the written text what was read or not read.	Debaters must clearly indicate what was read in the debate. It is up to the judge to determine whether or not the marking is clear. It is up to the judge to determine what to do with this violation.
A debater questions the use of private communication.	Private, personal communication between an author and a debater is inadmissible as evidence. It is up to the judge to determine what to do with this violation.

A debater claims a straw argument violation.	A “straw argument” is a position of argumentative claim introduced by an author for the purpose of refuting, discrediting, or characterizing it. If an author is setting out to disprove a point, s/he may outline or establish that point before going into their refutation and conclusion. If a debater presents the idea as the conclusion of the author, they are violating the rules. A straw argument violation occurs when a debater does not verbally indicate s/he is citing a straw argument or citing that the evidence they are presenting is not the conclusion of the author. Therefore, debaters can use straw arguments, but when they do not verbally acknowledge it when first reading the evidence in the round, then it’s a problem. The judge should vote against the debater who uses a straw argument and award zero speaker points. Note this on the ballot.
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Scenario	Expectation
<p>A debater formally alleges during the round:</p> <p>A) The opponent distorted evidence. B) The opponent read non-existent evidence. C) The opponent clipped evidence.</p>	<p>If a debater makes a formal allegation DURING the round, the following general procedures should be followed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The team/individual alleging the violation must clearly indicate a formal protest of distortion, non-existent evidence, or clipping. • The judge should <u>STOP THE ROUND at the time of a FORMAL PROTEST IN--ROUND to examine the evidence from both teams/individuals and render a decision as to whether or not a violation occurred.</u> • If the alleged violation is legitimate (see below for specific definitions and explanations), the judge should vote against the debater who violated the rules. If the alleged violation is not legitimate, the judge should vote against the team/individual who alleged the violation. TAB MUST BE NOTIFIED.
A) Distortion	<p>A judge should look at the evidence in question. When reviewing the evidence, the judge would determine it was distorted if it contains added and/or deleted word(s), which significantly alter the conclusion of the author. A failure to bracket added words also would be considered distortion. If a debater distorts evidence, s/he should lose the round. The judge should notify the tab room.</p>
B) Non-Existent Evidence	<p>If a debater is unable to provide the original source or copy of the relevant pages when requested by the opponent or judge, the evidence is considered non-existent. If the original source does not provide the evidence cited, it is considered non-existent. If the evidence is paraphrased but lacks an original source to verify, it is considered non-existent. If the debater has the original source but declines to provide it to their opponent, upon request, it’s considered non-existent. If a debater is found to have non-existent evidence s/he should lose the round. The judge should notify the tab room.</p>
C) Clipping	<p>Clipping occurs when the debater claims to have read the complete text of highlighted and/or underlined evidence, when in fact s/he skips or omits parts of the evidence. The judge should vote against the debater who clips and award zero speaker points. Note this on the ballot.</p>

Congressional Debate

Description of Event: A simulation of the U.S. legislative process in the Senate and the House, students generate a series of bills and resolutions for debate in Congressional Debate. Debaters (also referred to as Senators and Representatives) alternate delivering 3 minute speeches for and against the topic in a group setting. An elected student serves as a Presiding Officer (PO) 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.

Timekeeping and Format of a Round:

In terms of timekeeping, your job as a judge for this event is fairly easy because the Presiding Officer (a student who will be elected by the group) will be in charge of keeping time and calling on students to speak.

As a judge, you will be given the role of either scorekeeper or parliamentarian:

- The **parliamentarian** will be with the group for the entire day and will make sure that the Presiding Office (PO) runs the session correctly. The parliamentarian will also be in charge of keeping detailed clerical records of the session in order to rank students for their performance across both sessions. On the ballot, parliamentarians only provide a numerical ranking; it is the judges' role to provide feedback on speeches and performance. However, you will still want to keep detailed records of who spoke (and whether their comments were noteworthy) in order to give an accurate assessment.
 1. Parlis (and scorekeepers) may find it helpful to develop a shorthand ranking system (such as ✓+, ✓, ✓-) in order to note whether the speech or question was particularly good. Remember that just because someone speaks often doesn't necessarily mean that their comments have advanced the discussion – speaking up just to re-hash the same points should not be seen as equal to someone who speaks purposefully with new insight.
- More likely (if it is your first time judging Congress), you will be given the role of **scorekeeper**, so you will be present for the duration of one session (not both). Depending on the tournament, there may be 1 or 2 scorekeepers in addition to the parliamentarian.
- When you enter the round, you will be given a seating chart that displays all of the students' names. It's helpful to sit in the back of the room so that the seating chart mirrors the layout room from this angle. You will also be given a packet with all of the potential bills that might be debated during the session. The students will have written these bills, and they will be in charge of deciding which ones to discuss in which order and whether they want to speak in the affirmative or in negation. If a present student has written a bill (or is from the same school as the author), they will be given the first opportunity to give an authorship or sponsorship speech, which must be affirmative. The PO will alternate calling for speakers in the affirmative or the negation, and after any student speaks for or against a bill for up to 3 minutes, they will also be called on to answer questions posed to them from the other members for 1-2 minutes.



- For virtual tournaments, you can see the students' names if you move the mouse over their video. Due to WiFi connections, sometimes students will leave and re-enter the room, so make sure that you are keeping track of their names rather than their order on the screen. To view the docket of bills, either see the posting on Tabroom, or ask the students to paste a link to the bills in the chat.
- As scorekeeper, you will score the students in two ways:
 1. Each individual speech given for or against a bill is assessed on a scale of 1-6. On the ballot, you will need to click to add the individual student's name in order to create a space to leave feedback and to score their speech. It is highly recommended that you type feedback (or take notes on paper) while the student is speaking, as the speeches can be brief and it's tough to remember the fine points later. **For the individual speeches, 6 is the highest score**, and typically, you will not give less than a 3. Also, speeches should be assessed as "scores" rather than "ranks" (for example, in HI & DI, there is only one student ranked as best – but for Congress speeches, multiple students can earn the same numerical score. The number is similar to a letter grade in this sense).
 2. After the speech, you will want to also make note of which students are asking questions (and how good these questions are). Although you do not score the students for asking questions (like you would for the individual speeches), you will take the quality of their questioning into account when ranking the whole room at the end of the round. At the end of the round, you will be asked to rank the top 6 speakers overall, and in these rankings, **1 is the highest score**. Depending on the tournament, you may also numerically rank all of the other participants in the room, or you may give them all the same number (for example, you might rank students 1-15, or you might rank the top 8 and list all the rest as 9 – the instructions will be listed on the ballot).

Additional Notes for Congress:

- **The final student ranking isn't necessarily based upon speech scores alone.** Student ranking is dependent on **overall impact in a chamber**, including:
 - the quality and contextual amount of speaking,
 - the quality and number of questions,
 - how well a student advanced the debate and contributed to the chamber's discussion (i.e. repeating points should be highly frowned upon),
 - how well the student responds to questions,
 - the student's decorum and knowledge of Congressional conduct.
- Congress, at its core, is a debate event, and how well the student defends their side on bills, how other speakers' points are addressed, refuted, or built upon by the student, and how well the student addresses standing opposition points should be heavily considered since **strong refutation is a big part of Congress**. The final ranking,

however, is subjective, based on the judge's evaluation of the student's overall performance. Please try not to make rankings arbitrary.

- Additionally, in Congress, **one criteria of evaluation is not inherently more important than another** -- speaking style is not more important than content and presence in chamber. Make decisions holistically based on a number of the above criteria. The most charismatic speaker is not always (and oftentimes is not) the best Representative / Senator, and quality of content can be diminished by poor speaking skills. The best student congress debaters are versatile on both fronts. After all, these "elected officials" treat the event like a real Congress; how would you want your elected officials to interact?
- Congress is a highly political event, and a variety of differing opinions will (sometimes emotionally) be brought up. **Please try not to let your own personal political views affect your evaluation of competitors.** Evaluate them only on their effectiveness as a Representative/Senator. A skilled Senator who stands opposite to your political views deserves more credit than an ineffective one that supports your perspective.

Additional Notes and Resources

JUDGING A FINAL ROUND

Some tournaments may have a Final Round after the preliminary rounds have been completed and tallied up. The Final Round is a “best of the best” competition with the top 6 speakers and top-rated debaters competing against one another in their respective categories. Judging a Final Round can be challenging because all of the speakers will be very good, but it’s also very enjoyable to watch one great performance after another!

If you are asked to judge a Final Round, here’s what to expect:

1. You will be one of a panel of judges asked to score the round. Each judge will fill out their own ballot, and you should not discuss or confirm your ranking with one another. Other than communicating over the timekeeping, you will each operate independently.
2. Students are permitted to watch a Final Round even if they are not one of the participants. This is a great way for students to observe skilled speakers and debaters and to be supportive of their classmates. However, sometimes the rooms can get crowded and the students may not arrive on time. As with any round, students should know not to enter the room while another student is presenting. Still, it can be helpful to delay the start of the round just by 2-3 minutes to allow time for students to arrive and get settled. If students end up standing in the back of the room during a round, make sure that they cannot see your ballots.
3. Depending on the tournament, you may or may not be asked to leave written critiques in a Final Round.

HELPFUL LINKS

Some websites with additional information about Speech and Debate are:

www.tabroom.com

www.phssl.org

www.speechanddebate.org (especially: www.speechanddebate.org/judge-training/)

www.ncfl.org

Resources for Virtual Tournaments:

<https://campus.speechanddebate.org/>

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLbRmCbS7bdKIdJb1IUZpZPchxqEt1LM_D

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1YdZeTktwVMoeCj0zH7dlwE2ip40RjnN2>