

2026 WSDT Judge Packet

This packet contains critical information for the success of the WSDT. Please keep it and reference it during the tournament.

New things this year are highlighted in yellow.

Contacting the Tabroom

Email Tabroom@wdca.org for tournament related issues. You can also text 414-207-6346.

When to contact tab (Tabroom@wdca.org):

- There's an issue with your ballot
- There are concerns the coin flip in PF did not occur properly
- You need to confirm what entry should be affirmative/pro or negative/con.
- You are missing students, and it is at or past the round's start time
- An evidence violation has occurred
- An entry has forfeited *Note – do not submit a ballot*
- You realize you are conflicted against a team (you know them personally, have coached them, etc.). A conflict is something that prevents a judge from impartially judging the round (see below for additional details). Conflicts not already disclosed that lead to your removal from an assigned round may lead to a fine to your school.

BIS

Per the WDCA standing rules, all forms of harassment and discrimination, whether written or oral, based on race, color, religion, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, marital status, citizenship, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, or any other characteristic protected by any applicable federal, state, or local law are prohibited, whether committed by participants, judges, coaches, or observers.

For equity-related issues, please email BIS@wdca.org, text 414-207-4247 or fill out the equity intake form located at:

<https://forms.gle/LeUWbAk8zFbygws57>

If you require accommodations of any kind, please fill out the tournament accommodation request form at:

<https://forms.gle/u5C4M5KYnQmsZbZCA>

All accommodation requests must be received by **Thursday, Jan. 15**.

Postings

Check <http://wsdt.tabroom.com/> for postings, especially to check if you have been assigned a round. The tournament will attempt to publish a list of standby judges for each round in the live doc found here [2026 WSDT LiveDoc](#). If a judge is unsure if they have a round, judges should check these two places and look carefully for their name on the pairing for the division they are judging or for their name on the list of stand by judges in the live doc. Judges will not be moved between events. Please note, the texts and email blasts via tabroom.com no longer work. Judges are responsible for checking these two places each round.

Start Time

As soon as you know you have a round, head to your room so the round can start on time.

Pre-Round Verification

Sides will be determined by the computer for Policy and Lincoln-Douglas preliminary rounds. For Public Forum (all rounds) and Policy/Lincoln-Douglas elimination rounds, the coin flip determining sides will be completed by the computer. If a judge starts their ballot prior to the coin flip, the ballot may appear incorrect. Prior to the first speech for all rounds, the judge should ensure they know who is pro/con (or aff/neg), that the teams/sides match the ballot, and that they feel confident in following the round and who is on which side. The judge should refresh

their ballot if the sides appear incorrect. It is the duty of the judge to know sides and speaking order prior to the beginning of the round. If needed, reach out to Tabroom@wdca.org.

Ballots & Post Round Comments

After a round ends and you know who you are voting for, there are two things you must do - submit your ballot (speaker points, winner chosen, and an RFD) and verbally disclose who wins to the students. **Submit your ballot first with an RFD (reason for decision) sentence.** This RFD sentence should clearly outline who won and why. It can literally say "I vote for the _____ side from _____ school because _____". Writing that verbal comments were provided in round is not acceptable.

A completed ballot should have an RFD and comments for each speaker. You can add additional comments to your ballot after submitting it to the tabroom. **Saturday morning ballots should be fully completed by Saturday 1pm. Saturday afternoon ballots should be completed by Saturday 8pm.** All Sunday morning ballots should be fully completed within 20 minutes of the round's conclusion. Comments should be educational, specific to the content of the round, and be objective. Comment examples can be found here: [Ballot comments.pdf](#). Judges CANNOT change speaker points, ranks, sides, or the decision after it is submitted. If a mistake is made, only the tabroom can change it. If you submitted something in error, you must contact the tabroom immediately to correct the error. You will be required to finish an incomplete ballot. WDCA Standing rules also provide a \$15 fine for incomplete ballots.

After your ballot is submitted, you **MUST** verbally disclose the team and side you are voting for to the debaters. For example, "I vote affirmative for Hogwarts GP" or "I vote con for West Beverly WZ". No additional verbal justification for your decision is needed.

If you do offer additional feedback following the round, please keep those comments brief (2-3 minutes). Use your ballot as the strong tool for feedback and education that it is.

Judging Standards and Ethics

The Adjudicator Guidelines are included in this packet. Read and follow them. A copy of the procedures for Evidence Violations is also included. Please study that document. In the event of a formal allegation, follow the steps outlined. These procedures are not optional.

Teams can be online. This includes performing electronic research during the course of a debate. They are not allowed to receive assistance during the round from someone outside of the round, such as a coach. If the judge is able to determine that a violation has occurred, the judge should notify the tournament director.

Two sections of the standing rules to highlight:

Time to provide speeches is a part of the prep time allotted to each entry. The WDCA does not recognize "off time prep" as a valid, appropriate, acceptable, or actual practice. Prep time ends when the evidence is given to the other team or when the next speaker is ready to begin their speech. If all planned pieces of evidence are not provided before the speech, then the time to facilitate this transfer after the speech will be deducted from the speaking team's prep time.

Only pieces of evidence that the debater reasonably plans to read in the speech should be provided (not entire aff or neg files). This evidence should be provided in the order the debater intends to read it before the round or speech begins. Egregious violations of this rule may be grounds for the judge to decrease the weight given to that team's arguments. It is also grounds for the opposing team to make a formal allegation of nonexistent evidence. Failure to share read evidence is also grounds for a formal allegation of nonexistent evidence. At a minimum, evidence should be shared before the speech in which it is read. Evidence may be shared before the round begins. If evidence is not shared before the speech, the time required to compile and share evidence shall be deducted from the speaking team's allotment of preparation time.

Implicit Bias

We are all influenced by implicit bias, or the stereotypes that unconsciously affect our decisions. When judging, our implicit biases negatively impact students who are traditionally marginalized and disenfranchised. Before writing comments or making a decision, please take a moment to reflect on any biases that may impact your decision-making process.

Judge intervention

Judges should render a decision based upon the content of the round. At times, topics may be things that you are familiar with due to your employment, education, and/or personal background. That can be part of your feedback to the debaters but should not affect your decision.

Evidence Violation Procedures

Evidence read in a round must be available to the opposing team and judge to verify its content, accuracy, etc. At a minimum, debaters must read the author and date when introducing evidence but must have a complete citation available upon request. At times, debaters might make an allegation of a violation of the WDCA evidence guidelines. This guide's purpose is to help judges navigate those allegations in accordance with the WDCA Standing Rules.

The team making the allegation needs to identify which type of violation they are alleging (distortion, non-existent evidence, etc.). Judges are permitted to list the types of allegations. Please note, the below is an abbreviated version of the full rules which can be found on Pg 3 (Section 210.10) of the [Standing Rules 2025](#). All participants are encouraged to read the entire rule.

Definitions:

- A. Evidence is any statistic, idea, example, etc. that is attributable to another person(s).
- B. Source Citation. Debaters must, at a minimum, orally provide the author's last name and date when introducing evidence in a round. Full written citations must be available and presented if requested by the opponent and/or judge. Providing the actual article satisfies this requirement.
- C. Written source citation. A written source citation must contain all information provided in the original source material, including but not limited to: Full name of the primary author(s) and qualifications, Publication Date, Source, Title, Date accessed (if digital evidence), Full URL if applicable, Page number(s)
- D. Paraphrasing. If a debater chooses a parenthetical reference for evidence, the same evidence standards apply as to quoted evidence.
- E. Original source(s) for evidence may include, but is not limited to, one of the following:
 - i. Accessing the live/a copy of a web page (students may access the Internet).
 - ii. A copy of the pages preceding, including, and after or the actual printed source.
 - iii. Copies or electronic versions of published handbooks
 - iv. Electronic or printed versions or the webpage for a debate institute or the NDCA sponsored Open Evidence Project or similar sites.
 - v. Regardless of the form of material used to satisfy the original source requirement, debaters are responsible for the content & accuracy of all evidence they present.
 - vi. Generative artificial intelligence cannot be cited as a source. While it may be used to guide students to articles, ideas, and sources, the original source of any quoted or paraphrased writing must be available if requested.
- F. Evidence Accessibility. Text in evidence should be provided in an accessible format.
 - i. All font sizes, including non-highlighted text, should be size 8 or larger.
 - ii. Text color should be high contrast and readable.
 - iii. Highlighting should be readable and high contrast with text.
 - iv. A digital copy may be considered accessible if the text is able to be altered to meet the aforementioned guidelines.

Types of Violations

- A. Distortion occurs when the evidence contains added and/or deleted words that substantially alters the original conclusions of the author(s).
- B. Nonexistent evidence is one or more of the following:
 - i. The debater citing the evidence is unable to produce it when requested by the opposing team, judge or tournament official. In PF, teams have a reasonable time to produce the evidence. The time required to find the evidence is not counted as prep time and should not be excessive.
 - ii. The source provided does not contain the evidence cited.
 - iii. The evidence is referenced parenthetically but lacks an original source to verify it

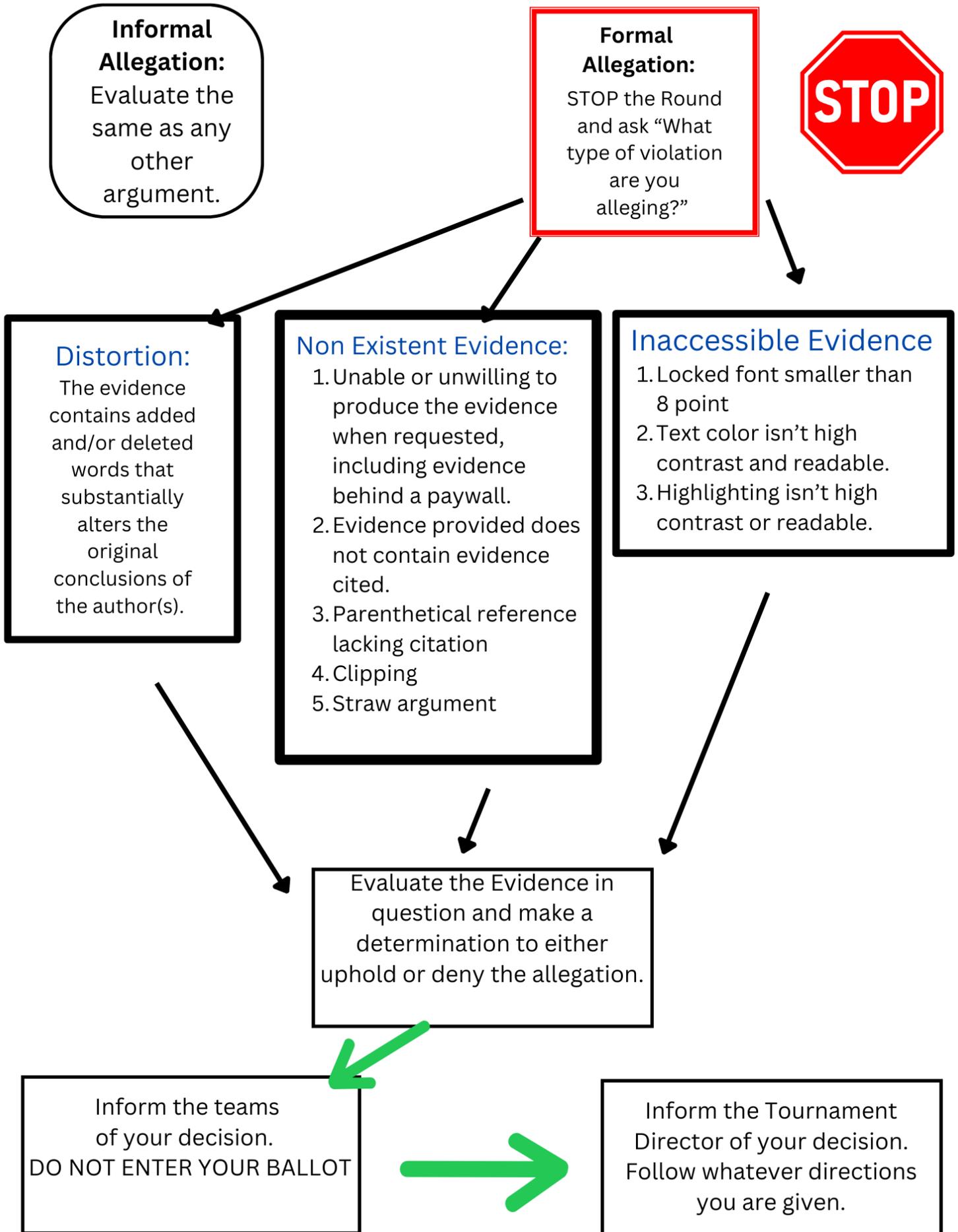
- iv. The debater has the original source but refuses to provide it to their opponent, the judge or a tournament official, in a timely fashion as outlined in these rules.
 - v. The debater fails to present a full citation when requested.
 - vi. When debating paperless, the team must provide only the pieces of evidence that the debater reasonably plans to read in the speech (not entire files). This evidence should be provided in the order the debater intends to read it.
 - vii. Clipping. When a debater claims to have read more of a piece of evidence than was actually read in the round.
 - viii. Straw Argument. Intentionally reading evidence that argues a position that the primary author(s) presents for the purpose of refuting it, while advocating for a different position.
- C. Inaccessible Evidence is when the debater refuses to or cannot produce an accessible version of evidence as defined in (1)F Evidence Accessibility.

Here are the procedures to follow: (A flow chart to help is on the next page)

When a team makes an allegation, stop, and ask them if they are making a formal allegation (Yes, you get to talk to the team). If they say they are, stop the round. There won't be any more speeches. Listen to the allegation and be certain you know which piece of evidence is in question and what kind of allegation is being alleged. If they aren't, evaluate their assessment of the evidence the same way you evaluate any other argument in the round.

Evaluate the allegation. It's your job to either uphold the allegation or not. If you uphold the allegation, the accusing team wins the round. If you do not uphold the allegation the accused team wins the round. Tell the debaters your decision and come to the tabroom and tell them about the allegation and your decision. Don't complete your online ballot. The tab staff will do that. You and/or the debaters can go online to check an online source, e.g., a web page.

An Evidence allegation is made.



Off Rounds

If we have to replace a judge, there are very specific procedures followed to determine the replacement. Please stay near your phone and/or in the judge's lounge if you have an off round. Do not risk a fine for your school by not being responsive when put into a round.

Obligations

All judges are obligated two full elimination rounds (not partial) beyond their school's elimination. For example, if your school's final debater is eliminated in the quarterfinals, you are obligated through the final round. A partial elimination round begins the elims when the advancing teams don't fill a bracket (**So some people have a bye on the schedule**). That round will not count toward your obligation. Functionally, this means judges are obligated for three elimination rounds in most instances. Most elim rounds will utilize panels of 3 judges with a panel of 5 judges in the final round. Don't start a round until all the judges are present (as well as all the debaters). Panels of judges render their decisions independently - so submit your ballot without conversing with other judges about who you are voting for.

Judge Recusals

There are times within a debate season that a judge may realize there is a competitor or school they should not judge. This is referred to as recusing yourself. It is very important that if any of these criteria apply, you inform the tournament director as soon as possible. Before the tournament begins or before the first round's schedule is released would be ideal. However, if the worst happens and you go to a round to judge before realizing one of these things apply, please notify the tournament before the round begins (so before the first speech begins). If any of the below apply, you must recuse yourself. If you are unsure, please ask!

- You are alumni of the school and graduated in the last 4 years (so, you were a senior when current seniors were freshmen).
- You are currently or have had a romantic relationship with a competitor.
- A competitor has asked you out romantically at any point in the past.
- You personally know the competitor from any aspect of your life (family, friends, neighbors, debate camp, they are a student in your class, etc.)
 - This includes being a coach for a different activity the student is a part of. For example, if you also coach swim and the student is on the swim team, you should not judge them.
- You have helped coach the student in any way this year in a practice/outside of a tournament setting. For example, the student shares their case with you for you to review and provide feedback beyond what would typically occur in a post-round oral critique.
- You regularly interact with the competitor when at tournaments, traveling to tournaments, etc. This includes driving competitors to tournaments.
- You feel you cannot evaluate the round objectively or avoid any appearance of impropriety.

ADJUDICATOR GUIDELINES

- A. Any judge who finds themselves in a conflict of interest including, but not limited to, judging a student from a school with which the judge is affiliated, shall notify the tournament director immediately. A judge would be conflicted if they personally know or coach a student or for the school in the round. An alumnus of a school is considered affiliated unless they have been out of high school for four or more years without coaching or knowing any students on the team. Whenever possible, these conflicts should be expressed prior to the registration period ending.
- B. A judge shall neither shorten rounds nor render a decision on the ballot until the completion of the round. The judge shall listen to the entire round in a fair and impartial manner before making a decision.
- C. The judge should decide the round based upon the arguments presented in the round and not upon their personal beliefs or biases.
- D. The judge shall not provide assistance to competitors of the round except for time signals.
- E. The review of evidence by a judge is not allowed unless there is a dispute by the opposition regarding the meaning, context, or validity of the evidence, or suspicion by the judge of falsification. If a judge chooses to be on the email chain, the document should not be examined until the evidence has been disputed, there is a falsification concern or there is a concern clipping is occurring.
- F. A judge is expected to adapt expectations and award speaker points appropriate to the level of debate being judged. A judge should not give speaker points lower than 20.
- G. A judge shall fill out the ballot completely. Comments for individual speakers and a written justification for the decision shall be provided. Comments on ballots are to be instructive and constructive. The school of any judge that does not provide a written justification for decisions, as prescribed by the Tournament Director, will be required to pay \$15 to the WDCA Scholarship Fund for each round where no written justification was provided. The first notice would be sent by the tournament host to the coach of said school. Failure to respond and remit payment within one month will result in a letter being sent to the school's principal by the WDCA President. Repeated violations could result in disqualification from WDCA sponsored tournaments by Executive Committee decision.
- H. While oral critiques may be of educational value, lengthy oral critiques are unacceptable. A judge should, therefore, fully communicate their decision on the ballot and allow the tournament to proceed as close to the scheduled time as possible. To limit tabulation errors, judges must communicate their decision as to the team receiving the win to the debaters at the conclusion of the round.
- I. Judges who are still obligated to potentially judge in any division are not permitted to observe any rounds. This includes coaches observing their own students if that coach is actively in the judge pool at the WSDT.
- J. No high school student may be used to judge any round at the Wisconsin State Debate Tournament nor at any WDCA sanctioned tournament.
- K. If while judging a round, the judge leaves to go and confer with their team, the team conferred with takes a loss. Any judge who leaves a round for any other, non-emergency reason shall be fined \$20 per round.
- L. Judges who are in violation of the Adjudicator Guidelines may be fined, blocked against certain teams or schools, and/or removed from the judge pool by the tournament director. The hiring school is responsible for compensating the tournament for judging fees, providing a replacement judge, or removal of an appropriate number of their teams.
- M. Debaters shall not leave a debate round for any non-emergency reason or else they shall forfeit the round.
- N. Novice policy debate has specific plan texts, counterplan texts, and kritik alternatives that cannot be altered at any WDCA sanctioned tournaments.

At the Wisconsin State Debate Tournament, judges in all divisions must disclose their decision before exiting the room to the competitors. Judges should complete their ballot before disclosing. When disclosing, judges must indicate the side and entry code of the winning team. If there is a mistake or possibility of mistake, the judge should notify the tabroom immediately. Judges do not have to defend their decision or provide an oral critique but may do so at their own discretion. If a judge does not disclose the school who hired the judge will be immediately assessed a \$15 fine.

Speaker Points

Over the years, there have been concerns about the arbitrary nature of speaker points and the different scales that are used. Speaker points are a useful tool for making observations about debater quality across the pool, but it can be difficult for some judges to evaluate what scale they should utilize. Speaker points matter if you think of them as a language that is mutually understandable across the judging pool. A community understanding of what a certain score means is important.

After a variety of conversations amongst coaches and judges a few years ago, it was suggested that publishing some data regarding the prior year's state tournament speaker points at certain tournament benchmarks would be helpful to guide judges in their assignment of speaker points throughout the state tournament. Our intent in creating this is solely informational. Every judge should feel free to give whatever speaker points they desire. However, if you find this information interesting or relevant, we present an analysis of speaker points from the 2024-2025 Wisconsin Debate Tournament.

| Varsity Policy Debate | Highest Points | Lowest Points | Average | Median |
|--|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Top Speaker | 29.7 | 29 | 29.25 | 29.2 |
| Students in Finals | 29.7 | 30 | 27.76 | 29 |
| Students who were in the first elimination round but did not win | 29.2 | 28 | 28.76 | 28.75 |
| Students who had a losing record | 28.9 | 27 | 28.2 | 28.3 |

| Novice Policy Debate | Highest Points | Lowest Points | Average | Median |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Top Speaker | 30 | 28.5 | 29.2 | 29.2 |
| Top Team | 29 | 27 | 28.12 | 28.25 |
| Students who had a winning record | 30 | 27 | 28.45 | 28.38 |
| Students who had a losing record | 29.1 | 26 | 28.09 | 28.28 |

| JV Lincoln Douglas Debate | Highest Points | Lowest Points | Average | Median |
|--|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Top Speaker | 29.5 | 28 | 28.75 | 29 |
| Students in Finals | 30 | 27.5 | 28.67 | 28.75 |
| Students who were in the first elimination round but did not win | 30.00 | 27 | 28.3 | 28 |
| Students who went 3-3 | 28.5 | 27 | 27.68 | 27.6 |
| Students who had a losing record | 30 | 26 | 27.88 | 28 |

| Varsity Lincoln Douglas Debate | Highest Points | Lowest Points | Average | Median |
|--|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Top Speaker | 30 | 29 | 29.33 | 29 |
| Students in Finals | 30 | 28 | 29.13 | 29.25 |
| Students who were in the first elimination round but did not win | 30 | 28 | 29.2 | 29 |
| Students who went 3-3 | 30 | 27 | 28.53 | 28.5 |
| Students who had a losing record | 30 | 27 | 28.29 | 28 |

| JV Public Forum Debate | Highest Points | Lowest Points | Average | Median |
|--|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Top Speaker | 30.00 | 28.00 | 28.92 | 29 |
| Students in Finals | 30 | 27 | 28.67 | 28.5 |
| Students who were in the first elimination round but did not win | 30.00 | 24 | 28.2 | 28 |
| Students who went 3-3 | 29.5 | 26 | 28.17 | 28.2 |
| Students who had a losing record | 30.00 | 26 | 27.76 | 28 |

| Varsity Public Forum Debate | Highest Points | Lowest Points | Average | Median |
|--|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Top Speaker | 30.00 | 29 | 29.42 | 29.25 |
| Students in Finals | 30.00 | 27 | 29.02 | 29 |
| Students who were in the first elimination round but did not win | 30.00 | 26 | 28.45 | 28.5 |
| Students who went 3-3 | 30.00 | 23 | 28.32 | 28.5 |
| Students who had a losing record | 30.00 | 25 | 27.88 | 28 |