



JUDGING KEEPS THE TOURNAMENT MOVING



RVSDL JUDGE QUICK GUIDE • SMALL SCHOOLS • BIG ENTRIES • EVERY JUDGE MATTERS

Why your help matters: The River Valley Speech & Debate League is built around small schools. Large entries can only run on time when we have enough dependable judges. A missing judge does not just leave one room empty - it can delay dozens of students, coaches, and the next round.

BEFORE THE ROUND



1. Be ready before rounds begin

Wait in the **Judges Lounge** or report to the **Tabroom** before rounds begin to pick up your paper ballot. Grab a snack or drink first if you need one. Arrive ready to focus - not hungry, distracted, or trying to finish another task.



2. Know the ballot

Read the event-specific directions and scoring scale. If anything is unclear, ask tab staff **before** the round. We will have links to short online judge trainings in the Judges Room; most are about 15 minutes and are strongly encouraged.

THE BASIC EXPECTATION

BE PRESENT

Phone away. Eyes up. Give the students your attention.

BE FAIR

Judge what happens in the round - not your personal view of the topic.

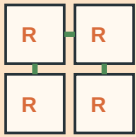
TAKE USEFUL NOTES

A few clear notes are better than a novel that delays the tournament.

Good judging is active listening. Keep brief notes during the performance/debate so your ballot can be completed quickly. Constructive feedback should identify what influenced your decision or ranking and give the student something usable for next time. Avoid comments about appearance and be alert to implicit bias.

THE RVSDL DIFFERENCE: STUDENTS ROTATE

THIS IS THE RULE MOST LIKELY TO BE DIFFERENT FROM OTHER TOURNAMENTS



Multiple rounds are happening concurrently.

Students may need to perform in several different rooms during the same block. A competitor who finishes with you may need to move immediately to another room.

DO

- Keep your room moving.
- Judge the competitor(s) who are ready for your room.
- Release competitors as soon as their performance/round with you is finished.
- Expect competitors to be waiting **outside other rooms** so they can rotate to the next available judge.
- If a scheduling problem or missing competitor seems unusual, contact tab staff rather than creating your own fix.

DO NOT

- Do **not** require competitors to stay and watch other performances.
- Do **not** keep a competitor in your room after their portion is complete.
- Do **not** assume a student waiting outside another room is skipping your round.
- Do **not** hold a room while several competitors wait elsewhere if another ready competitor can go.
- Do **not** personally declare a forfeit/drop for a confusing no-show - bring the issue to tab.

WHY THIS MATTERS: Forcing a competitor to sit and watch the rest of your room can make that student late to another room, leave another judge idle, and create a chain reaction that throws the entire tournament behind.

DURING THE ROUND

Listen first. Take basic notes as students speak. Keep the event moving without rushing students. Apply the ballot criteria consistently to everyone in the room. Your personal agreement or disagreement with a student's argument should not determine the result; evaluate the performance and argumentation presented.

When something goes wrong: do not improvise a tournament policy. If there is a missing student, unclear pairing, ballot problem, rule question, or unusual situation, contact tab staff. Tournament staff can see the larger schedule and make a fix without creating a second problem.

FINISH THE BALLOT. RETURN IT FAST.

A COMPLETE BALLOT IS PART OF RUNNING THE NEXT ROUND

DEBATE BALLOTS: CHECK ALL THREE

1	CIRCLE / MARK THE WINNER The ballot must clearly show who won.
2	WRITE THE WINNING SIDE Affirmative or Negative, as required on the ballot.
3	GIVE SPEAKER POINTS Use the printed scale honestly and consistently.

SPEAKER POINTS ARE NOT FLUFF.

They help determine each debate event's speaker champion, and they can be used as a tiebreaking/seeding mechanism for tournament breaks. Inflating points just to be nice can accidentally reward the wrong speaker or change who meets whom in outbounds. Use the scale on the ballot and score the performance you actually heard.

THE 5-10 MINUTE RULE



Return the ballot within 5-10 minutes after the round ends - sooner is better.

Before leaving tab, make sure the ballot is signed and complete. Whenever possible, wait a moment while a tab staff member checks it. Catching a missing winner, signature, rank, or speaker point now is much faster than hunting you down later.

QUICK JUDGE CHECKLIST

- ✓ Before: report to the Judges Lounge/Tabroom, pick up your ballot, and ask questions early.
- ✓ During: phone away, listen actively, take concise notes, and use the same criteria for every competitor.
- ✓ RVSDL rotation: release competitors when they finish; never require them to stay and watch.
- ✓ Problems: contact tab staff instead of inventing a ruling or declaring a forfeit yourself.
- ✓ After: complete every required field, sign the ballot, and return it within 5-10 minutes.
- ✓ Debate: winner + winning side + speaker points. Use the printed point scale honestly.

Added from common tournament judge-training guidance: keep decisions independent of personal beliefs; use the ballot's published scoring scale; submit decisions promptly; contact tab for no-shows or unusual situations; and keep feedback constructive, concise, and focused on the student's performance.

IE BALLOTS: RANK IT THREE WAYS

TRIPLE REDUNDANCY HELPS TAB GIVE EVERY STUDENT THE CORRECT PLACEMENT

The diagram shows three vertically stacked rectangular boxes. Each box contains a small circle with a number inside, followed by a horizontal line. The numbers are 1, 2, and 3 from top to bottom.

For Individual Events, we intentionally record placement three different ways.

This is not busywork. It gives tab staff three places to cross-check the result and helps prevent a student from receiving the wrong placement because of one missed mark, a shuffled packet, or a transcription mistake.

THE THREE CHECKS

1. CIRCLE THE PLACEMENT ON EACH STUDENT BALLOT

After you have ranked the room, clearly circle the placement earned by that student on the individual ballot: 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and so on. Make the mark unmistakable.

2. PUT THE BALLOTS IN PLACEMENT ORDER

Stack the completed individual ballots in order, with 1st place on top, then 2nd, then 3rd, continuing through the room. This creates a second visual check of your ranking.

3. COMPLETE THE COVER PAGE

On the round cover sheet, list each competitor and the placement you awarded them. Before returning the packet, compare the cover page to the circled ranks and the physical ballot order.

BEFORE YOU TURN IT IN: The circled placement on each ballot, the order of the ballot stack, and the cover page should all tell the same story. If they do not match, stop and fix the packet before returning it to tab.

EVERY STUDENT NEEDS A GLOW AND A GROW

GLOW

Something the student did well.

Be specific enough that the student knows what to keep doing.

Useful: "Your character voices were distinct and easy to follow."

Useful: "Your opening immediately established the stakes of the speech."

GROW

Something the student can improve.

Give one concrete next step they can actually work on.

Useful: "Slow down during transitions so each new idea has time to land."

Useful: "Commit more fully to the physical choices when the second character enters."

"GREAT JOB!" IS NOT ENOUGH.

Encouragement is welcome, but it does not tell a student what made the performance successful or what to practice next. A ballot should help a competitor get better. Even brief feedback can do that when it is specific.

IE packet final check: every student has a clearly circled rank, ballots are stacked in rank order, the cover sheet matches, every ballot includes at least one Glow and one Grow, and the judge has signed/completed all required fields.