

Judging Public Forum

Preface

The arguments that students debate may not reflect their actual beliefs; thus, you should judge the round absent any biases to ensure a fair debate. While you should aim to be an accommodating judge, the ultimate goal of debate is for debaters to be able to adapt to any judge. Try to understand the core arguments in the debate, but if there are any words/concepts you don't understand, it is the debaters' job to convey it to you.

Helpful Terms

- Resolution: The topic. You can ask debaters to write it out so you remember what it is.
- AFF: The Pro side, "affirming" the resolution.
- NEG: The Con side, "negating" the resolution.
- Card: A card is a singular piece of evidence - you'll be seeing debaters asking if they can "call for a card," which is just a way of asking to see their opponent's evidence.
- Contention: This is what debaters call their arguments.
- Prep time: Each team will have three total minutes of preparation time throughout the round, and should notify you whenever they take a part of it. It's not your obligation to time them, and you should encourage debaters to time themselves.
- Weighing: When debaters compare the real-world impacts of their arguments.

Procedurals for Before the Round

- (If in-person) make sure you are the first person in the room - debaters shouldn't be in a room without a judge
- Hit start on your Tabroom ballot - this will notify the tournament directors that you are present for your round and ready to judge
- Figure out which debater matches which name on your ballot - this will help for distributing speaker points
- The debaters should coin flip to determine sides and speaker order; input the sides and speaking order of the debaters into your ballot
- If debaters ask you for preferences, tell them your experience level. While every judge is different, **it is the debaters' job to adapt to you, not the other way around.**

Format of a Public Forum Debate

1st Speakers - AFF/NEG Constructive - 4 minutes

1st speakers - 1st Crossfire - 3 minutes

2nd speakers - AFF/NEG Rebuttal - 4 minutes

2nd speakers - 2nd Crossfire - 3 minutes

1st speakers - AFF/NEG Summary - 3 minutes

All speakers - Grand Crossfire - 3 minutes

2nd speakers - AFF/NEG Final Focus - 2 minutes

*Note: Each team gets 3 minutes of prep time they can use throughout the round.

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During the Round

- Don't interfere with the debate itself, but if a debater is speaking too fast or is acting extremely unprofessionally, you can ask them to tone it down in between speeches.
- Take notes however you'd like - whether this is with a pen and paper, or whether it's on a computer.
- Do not vote off of biases - judge only based on the arguments made in that specific round, not off of your personal beliefs or what you heard in other rounds.
- Have the debaters keep time themselves, unless you would like to keep track of time too.

After the Round

- You don't have to disclose your decision if you don't feel comfortable doing so right after round.
 - If you give feedback, be specific and say what the debaters could have done better.
- When making your decision, look for these things to vote for:
 - Impacts that outweigh each other - which team has the most impactful argument?
 - Which team's argument is the strongest? Which one makes the most sense? Which one has the least responses on it?

Writing your Ballot

- You will be typing an RFD (Reason for Decision) in Tabroom. This will be a comprehensive summary of how you viewed the round and why you voted the way you did.
- State who you voted for, then write down your reasoning, which could include:
 - "The [AFF/NEG] team had the bigger impact, so I believed their argument had more weight"
 - "The [AFF/NEG] team's argument that [XYZ] was made more clear throughout the round, and was very logically sound."
 - "The [A] team's main argument had a lot of doubt on it due to responses placed by the [B] team throughout the round, thus I believe that the [A] team's argument is weaker."
- You will have a section to write comments specific to each team - use these to give comments about their speaking style and more specific things you want only them to know.
 - Be constructive! Don't tear them down, but also don't sugarcoat. If they had a serious problem with speaking, inform them on what you thought of it, and try to give them ways to improve so they can become better in the future.
- Enter speaker points (speaks) for each debater. These will usually be on a scale of 25-30.
 - 30 speaks don't have to mean a debater debated/spoke perfectly, but that they comparatively performed well.
 - Unless their conduct and behavior throughout the course of the round is extremely disrespectful and unproductive, try to give speaker points at a minimum of 27.

If you have any questions or concerns, don't hesitate to contact Public Forum leadership:

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