

The Tournament Day

We ask judges to hang out in the Judge's Lounge between rounds. You should not fraternize with students as you might judge them at some point in the day. Parents are not allowed to judge their own kids or their category.

A judge briefing takes place around 8:45 to cover the rules and guidelines for the day. Hopefully you have been trained by your coach and are ready to judge! If you are brand new to judging and your coach has made us aware of this, we try to have you shadow two rounds before we have you judge.

During the Judge Briefing, the Tabulation (Tab) staff (the brains of the tournament—all on computer!) is making last-minute changes before round one.

As soon as possible (9:00 is usually our goal) we post Round One by calling for judges and delivering ballots to your hands. The ballot tells you the room where you are judging and the two team numbers competing in that room. Please report to that room immediately. You might grab a flow sheet on your way out to help guide your note taking.

Most tournaments hold four rounds of debate, but might hold more. If the tournament runs smoothly, there could be three rounds before lunch.

To Start the Round

Before reporting to assigned room, write the codes for both debaters on the ballot and which side of the argument each competitor is assigned to debate.

Some judges prefer the first speaking team to sit on their left (i.e. the same side as noted on the ballot). You can ask students to move if you'd like.

Please do not ask students their name or school.

During the Round

Follow the time schedule on the flow sheet, giving students time signals at two minutes remaining, one minute remaining, and 30 seconds remaining. Students may finish their thought once time expires, but should wrap it up quickly.

Both sides have four minutes of prep time, which they can use at any time between speeches and in whatever distribution throughout the round. As the judge, you track the prep time. Students typically ask for prep in 30 second increments, but try to track as accurately as possible (e.g. if they use 40 seconds, count 40).

Please "flow" the round, meaning, with a flow sheet or your own notebook, track which arguments are advanced and which ones sway you. These notes are for your eyes only, so you don't have to worry about sharing them.

Cross examination is not directly judged. Competitors must bring into evidence anything the opponent admitted to in cross-ex in order for you to consider it in round.

After the Round

After the round thank all debaters. Some will shake your hand as well as their opponents', then leave the room. **Do NOT disclose the round's results verbally to the kids.** They will read your ballot later.

IMPORTANT! Using a pen and pressing firmly, adjudicate the round as quickly as possible, confirming the winning team, their side, and speaker points on a 30-point scale. Speaker points are for the team, not individuals. If you wish to say that one team won despite having lower speaker points (rare occurrence), please indicate the low-point win with "LPW."

Deliver the white sheet to Tabulation immediately.

You can then return to the Judges' Lounge, pour some coffee, and continue to write comments on the ballot; just be sure to submit the pink and yellow sheets before you leave for the day. Students (and coaches) will pore over your comments for affirmation or tips to improve in the future. Of your comments, clearly state your reason for decision.

Making Your Decision

Each judge uses different criteria to determine the winner of a round. There is no way to fully eliminate the human element in your decision. The good news, then, is that you are never wrong! Choose a winner based on who convinced you of their argument better. Leave any preconceived notions or opinions at the door; don't be a third party debater. Try to answer the following questions:

- Did one side convince you more than the other to their point of view within the round?
- Did one side more effectively refute their opponents' argument(s)?
- Did one side drop key arguments that you feel should have been addressed? (Students may erroneously claim their opponent dropped an argument. That is where your notes are handy.)

Additional Resources

NSDA's Lincoln Douglas Resources (membership sign-in might be required for some resources)