Online Debate Rules of Engagement

As we are moving into new waters for the NLSDU and it's high school debate circuit, this document is meant to prepare debaters, coaches, and judges for the inevitable questions that come up pertaining to online debating. Logistically, debating online poses a few challenges that are not experienced in the classroom.

FAQ:

1. **How do I give a point of information?**
   While normally debaters can raise their hand or interject by standing up, this is usually unnoticeable in our online debate platform. Students will be expected to say "on that point" or "point of information" to interject for a POI. Debaters who have the podium can "wave them down" by saying "not at this time" or some variation of this. POI's are allowed to be asked after the protected time is over (the first 30 seconds), students are expected to self time, and judges will be timing as well. Debaters should not be disruptive with their POIs.
2. **What do I do if my room code won't work in time for the debate to start?**
   We recommend that as soon as you get your room code for your debate you sign into the room to ensure it works. If it does not work, please reach out to info@NLSDU.org who are responsible for tech help and they will help you sort it out as well as notifying your judge. Students who knowingly are late to a room by more than five minutes will receive a warning the first time, and will be given an automatic loss the second time.
3. **How do I report an equity violation?**
   Equity violations can be reported (insert email here) and they will be reviewed and dealt with as soon as possible during the tournament. Here is our equity code (insert link here).
4. **What if a debater goes over time and the judge didn't notice or cut them off?**
   Judges are expected to maintain good time keeping practices during online debates, but in the case that a judge misses cutting off a student, they are expected to discount anything said after the grace period (15 seconds past the time has ended). If you do go over time, a judge will cut you off by either interrupting or muting your microphone and verbally telling you that your time is cut off. They will then unmute you.
5. **What about "busy backgrounds" or "noisy backgrounds"?**
   Students are encouraged to mute their mics when they are not speaking, and to unmute them when they want to ask a POI as to reduce the feedback in rounds online. Students who are easily distracted by busy backgrounds (people walking behind another debater, etc) are encouraged to flag this in the round to the participants so those who are not speaking can turn off their camera. In your own turn to speak, you are expected to have your camera and mic on.

6. **How am I judged if there are technical issues?**

    Online debate has a number of specific concerns that differ from traditional debate and, as such, requires adjustments to the way it is scored. ‘Presentation and style’ still have to be a part of the scoring criteria as they are skills that are instrumental in the delivery of persuasive argumentation, but these scores cannot discriminate against participants with poor or sub optimal internet connection. As a result, this scoring must not include detractions from scores for regular issues such as screen freezing, inability to and/or decision not to display picture, and/or poor audio quality. Where there are technical issues, content will be the highest graded criteria.

    When technical issues, such as stopping or freezing occur, judges should stop the timer. Before the speech begins again, judges should provide speakers a reminder of where they were in their speech and give them up to 10 seconds to adjust themselves before they continue, at which time the timer can be started again.

7. **Someone muted me in the round. What do I do?**

    Students must not mute each other in a round, even if someone is going over time - the judge is responsible for this. If you do mute someone, this is an equity violation and can result in your automatic dismissal from this tournament.