

Judge Instructions

What is debate?

Debate is a competitive speaking activity that involves two sides arguing the merits of a resolution in an attempt to convince the judge that their argument is best. This process of convincing the judge is done through both real world examples and persuasive arguments made by the debater.

Competitive debate has occurred in high schools around the United States for over a century. Debate encourages students to formulate research and deliver arguments on a range of topics. Students who participate in debate often find the skills learned through the debate experience to be some of the most valuable skills used throughout their lives.

There are many different debate formats that are used in competition; Public Forum Debate, Lincoln-Douglas, Policy Debate, student congress and many others.

Public Forum debates are argued by teams of two (two debaters on each side for a total of four in each round of debate). Each member of the two-person team gives speeches and helps his or her partner the best they can.

Being On the Debate Team

Because debate is a competitive activity, participants are members of a team. The debate team is much like a typical sports team with practices, meets/tournaments, and coaches. A debate round (one full debate) takes about an hour. A judge picks a winner in each debate based on which side does the better job of upholding their position.

The Role of the Judge

Each debate round will have a judge who will decide which team does the better job of debating. The judge is instructed to base his/her decision on the arguments made in the debate round, not on his/her personal beliefs about the issues. Usually, a judge will take notes and do his or her best to follow all of the arguments you make. At the conclusion of the debate, the judge will write a ballot which explains his/her decision. You will get your ballot back at the end of the tournament.

Remember, debate is subjective and will be seen differently by different people. In Public Forum Debate, "lay" or inexperienced judges are preferred!

November Resolution (The students will be debating the following topic)

Topic Area: Constitution

Resolved: In United States public K-12 schools, the probable cause standard ought to apply to searches of students.

Step by Step Debate

The MIFA uses the National Speech and Debate Honor Society's format for Public Forum debate.

Preparation Time per school unit or team: 2 minutes

Speech #1: The Pro Constructive Speech

Time Limit: 4 Minutes

Purpose: The pro team presents their arguments in support of the resolution

Speaker: Pro #1

This is a pre-prepared speech that is written prior to the tournament. The first pro constructive speech should present the primary position of the pro in regards to the resolution for debate. The speech should be written to persuade your audience in favor of your position.

Speech #2: The Con Constructive Speech

Time Limit: 4 Minutes

Purpose: The con team presents their arguments in opposition of the resolution

Speaker: Con #1

This is a pre-prepared speech that is written prior to the tournament. The first con constructive speech should present the primary position of the con in regards to the resolution for debate. The speech should be written to persuade your audience in favor of your position.

Crossfire #1: Crossfire

Time Limit: 3 Minutes

Purpose: Question/Answer Time

Speakers: Pro#1/Con#1

Crossfire is a period of time of time that can be used to clarify arguments presented in the round. Both debaters are allowed to ask questions during this time. Questions should be probing questions and not open ended questions. Both debaters should stand during this speech.

Speech #3: The Pro Rebuttal

Time Limit: 4 Minutes

Purpose: Refute Con Constructive

Speaker: Pro #2

The job of the pro speaker is to refute the arguments provided by the Con in their previous speech. The speeches should reflect analysis and argumentation in support of the resolution but should directly answer the claims made by the opposition speech. Since the Pro speech (speech #1) has yet to be refuted the Pro #2 does not have the duty to argue (extend) their first speech.

Speech #4: The Con Rebuttal

Time Limit: 4 Minutes

Purpose: Refute Pro Constructive & Rebuild Con Constructive

Speaker: Con #2

The most difficult speech, the second speaker must attack (refute) the arguments made in speech #1 (pro constructive) and also refute the claims made against made in speech #3 (pro rebuttal). The speaker must carefully take notes of the arguments made against their speech and be able to answer the claims made by the pro.

Crossfire #2: Crossfire

Time Limit: 3 Minutes

Purpose: Question/Answer Time

Speakers: Pro#2/Con#2

Crossfire is a period of time of time that can be used to clarify arguments presented in the round.

Both debaters are allowed to ask questions during this time. Questions should be probing questions and not open ended questions. Both debaters should stand during this

Speech #5: Pro Summary

Time Limit: 2 Minutes

Purpose: Summarize Pro Position

Speaker: Pro #1

In the pro summary speech, the pro should consolidate their position (arguments) by defending the most important speeches and attacking the most important points in the opponent's case. Select only the most important arguments; this is typically about four (4) arguments in favor of the resolution.

This speech should not be rushed.

Speech #6: Con Summary

Time Limit: 2 Minutes

Purpose: Summarize Con Position

Speaker: Con #1

In the con summary speech, the con should consolidate their position in a few key arguments.

Primarily, the con should answer the four main arguments provided by the pro in the previous speech (speech #5) while offering a few key arguments of their own. An effective con speech will limit the debate to 4 or 5 key points at the end of this speech.

Crossfire #3: Grand Crossfire

Time Limit: 3 Minutes

Purpose: Question/Answer Time

Speakers: All students

The grand crossfire should work on finding areas of agreement and highlighting arguments that clash with your opponents. This times gives you the opportunity to highlight the differences between your position and your opponents. Use the time wisely to help build speeches for the final speeches. All debaters should be seated and facing the judge(s) during the grand crossfire.

Speech #7: Pro Final Focus

Time Limit: 2 Minutes

Purpose: Give final voting issues in favor of Pro

Speaker: Pro #2

In this speech the debater is expected to restate the reasons why their team has won the debate. This is typically done by finishing up with two primary arguments in favor of the pro team. This speech should be very conversational in tone. Students should try not to rely on notes and instead give a clear and persuasive reason to vote for the pro team.

Speech #8: Con Final Focus

Time Limit: 2 Minutes

Purpose: Give final voting issues in favor of Con

Speaker: Con #2

In this speech the debater is expected to restate the reasons why their team has won the debate. The best strategy for the con speaker is to answer to provide its own two primary arguments in opposition of the resolution while answering the final claims made by pro speaker in their previous speech. This speech should be very conversational in tone. Students should try not to rely on notes and instead give a clear and persuasive reason to vote for the pro team.

COIN FLIP

Prior to EVERY round and in the presence of the judge(s), a coin is tossed by one team and called by the other team. The team that wins the flip may choose one of two options: EITHER the SIDE of the topic they wish to defend (pro or con) OR the SPEAKING POSITION they wish to have (begin the debate or end the debate). The remaining option (SIDE OR SPEAKING POSITION) is the choice of the team that loses the flip. Once speaking positions and sides has been determined, the debate begins (the con team may lead, depending on the coin flip results).

PROMPTING

Oral prompting, except time signals, either by the speaker's colleague or by any other person while the debater has the floor, is discouraged though not prohibited and may be penalized by some judges. Debaters may, however, refer to their notes and materials and may consult with their teammate while they do not have the floor and during the Grand Crossfire.

BALLOTS

The MIFA uses a ballot, which requires the judge to provide each team with points ranging from 20-30. In addition, each judge must provide participants with constructive comments, and explanations of arguments that are important to the decision in the "Reasons for Decision" section.

Your Step-By-Step Guide to Judging a Debate Tournament:

1. Check-in at registration
2. Make sure you attend the Judge Meeting (if there is one, ask when you check in)
3. You will get a judge folder with a schedule (schematic/pairings is what it is called) and your ballots
4. Go to your round
5. Make sure all 4 students are present (2 person teams)
6. Do the coin flip and discuss how everyone wants time signals
7. Fill out the ballot with names and who is con/pro
8. Start the round
9. Time each speech and give time signals the whole time (for example, if the speech is a 4 minute speech, after 1 minute has passed, show 3 fingers, after 2 minutes show 2 fingers,

after 3 minutes show 1 finger, at 3:30 show a half minute signal, then count the last 10 seconds down on your fingers. Verbally say time at the end of the interval.

10. When the round is over, dismiss everyone (say good job!)
11. Fill out your ballot with speaker points, speaker ranks, team points, and which team won
12. Return your ballot to tab (most likely cafeteria, but as when you register)