

Judging Instructions

Why Judge?

Academic debate is a unique activity in that we need so many judges to make a tournament happen. But why should parents and members of the community judge instead of those experienced with debate?

Debate is a communication event. We want our students to learn how to communicate in the “real world”; to learn how to explain their positions with eloquence and understanding. We will never be speaking to an audience (be it a friend, employer, students, or co-workers) that will have *all* of the necessary information to evaluate our arguments in an unbiased manner. We must communicate everyday with people from all walks of life, all different beliefs, and completely different feelings. Former students who participated in the debate activity and who have had numerous experiences conversing with people from all walks of life consistently express how valuable it was and how helpful the various skills they learned and developed has been.

Furthermore, judging debate also enables you to be a part of your child’s (niece’s, nephew’s, grandkid’s, church member’s, neighbor’s...) education. Debaters become interested in government and economics when they compete. They start taking the initiative to learn about different viewpoints and worldviews. Having wise parents and members of the community who care about their wellbeing to guide them, and to give them critique as they gain more understanding, is invaluable to their education.

About “Team Policy” Debate:

- Team policy debate is a type of debate that centers on a public policy question. Topics range from government energy policies, to foreign policy, to tax policy. One topic is debated per year (this is called the Resolution).
- This year’s topic is;
Resolved: That the United States Federal Government should substantially reform its transportation policy.
- The topic is debated by two opposing sides. These sides are known as the Affirmative and Negative teams.
- Each team shall consist of two students. The Affirmative team’s members are commonly referred to as the “1A” and the “2A”. The Negative team’s members are referred to as the “1N” and the “2N”.

Format and Structure:

- The debate (called a “round”) is divided into 8 speeches, and 4 cross-examinations.
- Constructive speeches (the first four speeches) can be up to, but may not exceed, 8 minutes. New arguments **may** be presented in each of these speeches.
- Rebuttals are no more than 5 minutes long. **No** new arguments may be presented, but further analysis and evidence **can be** used.
- Cross-examination is 3 minutes long, and occurs after every constructive speech

Terms and Theory:

- Debaters will often use new and/or uncommon terms in their speeches that they have learned in the activity.

- Any uncommon word (whether it be jargon from debate or the topic) should be explained by the debaters in the round. As a communication event, we want to encourage students to explain the issues to their audience thoroughly.
- Any theory used by the debaters should be explained. Debaters should never assume what their audience does or does not know.
- If a debater does not explain an argument well enough for you as the judge to understand it, that argument does not merit your vote.

What to Judge on:

- There are two areas on which you are judging students: overall argumentation of their position as a team, and effectiveness as an individual debater.

Individual Points

- Each individual debater is scored on six different categories, on a 1 to 5 scale. A 1 in any category indicates a poor demonstration of that skill. A 5 indicates a well mastered skill. A 3 is average.
- There is room in each speaker's box to give them individualized comments. A suggestion on what they did well and what to improve on is typical.
- Speaker points do not determine who should win or lose the round.

Who Wins the Round?

- Only one team may win the round: Affirmative or Negative. The judge evaluates the arguments, and only the arguments, presented by the debaters in the round. The judge should not make his or her decision based on personal opinions/arguments. The team who best supports their position wins the ballot.
- At the bottom of the ballot there is room for you to explain why you chose the team you voted for. This helps the debaters to understand what they need to work on in the future.

How to Make Your Decision:

- Debate is a communication event. It is the student's job to clearly state the reasons why you should vote on his/her arguments. In debate, students learn how to explain real world issues to real people.
- The Affirmative team's responsibility is to present a workable Plan (that supports the given Resolution), and reasons why we should pass their new policy proposal.
- The Negative team's responsibility is to present reasons why we do not need to change, or, reasons why the Affirmative team's proposal won't work or is disadvantageous.
- Evaluate the arguments presented on both sides and decide whether or not the Affirmative has presented a necessary / workable / beneficial plan. Evaluate whether or not the Negative has given you sufficient cause to reject the Affirmative plan.
- There are different judging paradigms which exist – the most popular is the Stock Issues paradigm. This is where the judge votes on the Stock Issues (Topicality, Significance, Inherency, and Solvency) presented in the round. These are simply types of arguments that should be explained in your judge's orientation, and by the debaters in your round.

