

Debate - Congress

This event is modeled after the U.S. Congress. Students speak on various bills and resolutions. They can speak on the side of the pro or con. Also, if they wrote the bill or resolution they can give an authorship speech. Students who go to the same school as an author of a bill are encouraged to give a sponsorship speech if the author isn't in the room, and this speech must be pro. The speaker may also answer questions posed to them from the other members of their House or Senate.

In the room will also be a Parliamentarian who is simply there to make sure the Presiding Officer (or PO – this student is elected by the House/Senate for this position) runs the session correctly. As scorekeeper, you will score the speakers and write comments regarding their performances. You may also be asked to select the speaker you considered to be the best in the room (this person may or may not have given a speech).

The good news—as the scorekeeper, your job is pretty easy.

Ask yourself these questions

- Was the speaker prepared?
- Did the speaker stay focused?
- Did the speaker's argument advance the debate?
- Were the points logical and relevant to the bill or resolution?
- Were you persuaded by the speech?
- Did the speaker use sources?
- Did the speaker just repeat comments made by other representatives?

You can use the same comments in congress that are listed for extemp with one exception. Students do not have to have three sources (one or two are recommended).

You may need to help the Parliamentarian do clerical work at the end.

Lincoln-Douglas Debate

This category is one-on-one debating about values and morals. Keep track of what the students are saying (in debate terms, “flow the round” on a separate piece of paper – not on the ballot) so that you can more easily determine what was said and who had the better arguments.

The times are -

Affirmative constructive	6 mins
Negative cross examination of the affirmation	3 mins
Neg constructive and first rebuttal -	7 mins
Aff cross ex of neg	3 mins
Aff rebuttal	4 mins
Neg rebuttal	6 mins
Aff rebuttal	3 mins

Both sides are allowed 3 minutes of preparation time that they may use when they wish.

Clearly state on the ballot why you chose the winner. Don't simply say that one side had a more persuasive case. Name specific arguments that you feel the winning side presented better.

The most difficult part of LD is keeping time and giving time signals while listening to the kids debate and taking notes on what they are saying (on a separate piece of paper that no one but you will ever see) and writing notes on the ballot. (Make sure to write notes on the ballot!!! – Tell the kids what you did and didn't like!) If you don't know how to give time signals – ask someone!!!

Your job is NOT to think of things that the kids *could* have said or *should* have said. Just on what they *did* say. Did they have a good argument? Did they shoot down what the other debater said? Did they shoot down the arguments against their cases? For example – if debater A says, “The pen is mightier than the sword because Bics come in purple and you can never find a good sword in that color,” and debater B never says anything about debater A saying something so stupid, then debater A won that point. You shouldn't base the round on one argument, but if one side clearly has won more arguments, you have to go with that side.

Do not judge the kids based on your beliefs. You may never be convinced that the pen is mightier than the sword, but instead judge the kids on who debated better!

Remember to get your ballots to the tab room within five minutes of the debate ending. Do NOT hold up the tournament!!! Don't forget to sign your ballot and give the students points based on the scale that is on the ballot. The person with the better speaking skills / higher speaker points should have the win.

Prose/Poetry

In this event, the speakers must have both a prose piece and a poetry piece. The object is for the speaker to bring the piece to life. This piece is NOT memorized, and the speaker doesn't have to have focal points.

There are two types of tournaments for prose and poetry speakers. Sometimes a speaker may only be able to speak in prose OR poetry. At other tournaments, students may do prose in one round and poetry in the next.

Ask Yourself these Questions

- Do they have gestures?
- Do the gestures fit the selection?
- Can you tell the difference between characters?
- How is the body stance? Is the student poised?

Sample Comments

- I did/did not get the main idea.
- You had a very good introduction.
- This cutting is good / needs work.
- This selection suits you well.
- This selection is a challenge, and you handle it well.
- As the reader, you seem to understand the selection.
- The audience responded well.
- You transmit ideas and feelings well.
- You set the mood well.
- Your eye contact is good.
- Slow down. It is difficult to understand you.
- Watch your volume.
- Too (many or few) pauses.
- Work on articulation.
- Facial expression is good.
- Characters are good.

PHSSL Parliamentary Debate

You may be asked to judge a Prepared Debate or an Impromptu Debate.

In a Prepared round, students knew the resolution well before this day of competition. You will need to conduct a coin flip to see which team will be the proponents (in favor of the motion) and which team will be opponents (against the motion.) Teams are allowed to bring any materials and computers, if they wish, into these Prepared Rounds.

If you are judging an Impromptu round, students found out what motion they will be debating for you only 30 minutes ago. They have already flipped a coin to determine their sides. Teams may bring only their notes into an Impromptu round. Computers are prohibited.

Hand the ballot to each team and ask them to fill in their team code and the speaker names.

First speaker for the motion	6 minutes
First speaker against the motion	6 minutes
Second speaker for the motion	6 minutes
Second speaker against the motion	6 minutes
Third speaker for the motion	6 minutes
Third speaker against the motion	6 minutes
Reply speech against the motion (must be first or second speaker)	3 minutes
Reply speech for the motion (must be first or second speaker)	3 minutes

Any member of the opposing team (the interrupter) to question the speaker. In fact, that's where most clash in the round is. The speaker who has the floor is in total control of the time and may either accept the Point from the interrupter or decline it. If the Point is accepted, the interrupter may make a short point or ask a short question (15 seconds or less) that deals with some issue in the debate. A Point of Information is offered by standing and saying "Point of Information" or similar. The speaker on the floor is not obliged to accept every point. He may ask the interrupter to sit down, may finish the sentence and then accept the point, or may accept the point immediately. Debaters must sometimes tread a fine line between the offering legitimate Points and overwhelming the speaker. Points should advance the debate, not merely interrupt it.

The first and last minute of each main speech and the entire reply speech is "protected time" – Points of Information are not allowed during these times.

Timing the Debate

Agree with the speakers before the round begins what signals you will use. Many judges find it useful to "knock" on the table at the one-minute point and the five-minute point of the main speeches to signal that protected time has ended and has begun.

Impromptu

Each speaker is given a topic and he must prepare a short speech. He is given only 5 minutes in which to prepare and 5 minutes in which to speak. As a judge it will be your responsibility to time each speech. Often the speaker will ask you to count down the remaining time by giving hand signals.

Sometimes you will be asked to run the prep for your round. Have the first speaker choose one of three topics (given to you before the round). Send him out of the room to prepare. When he returns 5 minutes later (Get him if he doesn't come in on his own), send the next person out to prepare while the previous student gives his speech. Make sure to keep track of time.

Sometimes there is an impromptu prep room. The students will come to you one at a time to speak and you do not need to worry about their prep times. Make sure that you are writing on the ballot as the students speak or you may give too much prep time to the students waiting to speak next.

Ask yourself these questions

- Did you understand the speech?
- Did you enjoy the speech?
- Was the speech logical?
- Did the main idea of the speech relate to the topic the speaker was given?

Sample Comments

- You should be more organized.
- Make the topic more understandable.
- Your intro was good, but it needs something more to grab attention.
- Your voice needs to be clearer.
- Your voice should vary by the topic.
- You seem very interested in the topic.
- Eye contact was good/bad.

A questionnaire was given to experienced coaches and judges to help new judges and coaches. These were the responses - Sharon

Comments from coaches to help judges —

The Don'ts —

What you should never write on a ballot... (The specific question read, "What do you think that a judge should NEVER write on a ballot but seems to be a common occurrence? Or what would you advise a judge to Not write on a ballot.")

- Don't assume that a student is new just because they sound "new" or inexperienced. Don't write things like "keep trying." You have no way of knowing how long they've been at this.
- Don't give last place without an explanation.
- Don't say anything any where at the tournament that you would not say directly to the student. Over-hearing snide comments can hurt a student as much as seeing it on the ballot. This kind of behavior will not impress anyone.
- Do not use derogatory or killing remarks. Don't say things like "What are you doing in forensics" or "Have you thought about sports?"
- Don't be rude. Temper your remarks. Be compassionate and always find something good to say about the participant.
- Do not write inappropriate comments (or sexual!!!) comments on ballots!!! It is okay to compliment someone's dress, (or tell them that it is inappropriate), but again, nothing inappropriate.
- Do not walk in the room and say "I've never done this before" or "How do you do this?" Nothing will scare a kid more! (Do not even write these things on the ballot!!!)
- Do not give someone last place without an explanation.
- Do not begin your observation with negative comments. Be kind with your criticism.
- Don't question the quality of a piece unless it is obviously inappropriate or offensive
- Do not (NOT) write that the piece is over-done. To the kid, and the coach, the piece may be completely new and different. It is not up to you to judge how many times you've heard a piece.
- If a ballots asks you yes or no questions, don't just write yes or no — explain. Remember that a coach may be using your ballot later to help coach a student.
- Do not judge a student because you don't agree with the content of a speech. Identify that you don't agree with the student or that you find material offensive, but do not be offensive in your remarks in return.
- Don't be afraid to tell them their weaknesses.

Speech -

In General

First and foremost – act like you know what you’re doing *even if you don’t feel like you do*.

Sit in the center of the room in a position that will allow you to see the students speaking in the front of the room.

Sometimes you are given the ballots before you even go to the room. In this case, pass them out to the kids. Ask them to fill in these ballots. Ask one of the students to put the speaking order on the board so that you know in what order the students are scheduled to speak. Collect the ballots when the kids have filled them in, and then put the ballots in order.

Sometimes the kids will have the ballots in advance. When you go into the room, ask one of the students to put the speaking order on the board so that you know in what order they are supposed to go. Collect a ballot from each student, and then put all of the ballots in order.

Make sure that you write comments on the ballots while the kids are speaking. Do not wait until the end of the round. If you do wait till the end of round, you will cause the people in the tab room great consternation.

Start the timer when the kids begin to speak.

The person who is the best in the room gets first place (1).

Read the ballot and ask yourself these questions:

- Did the speaker do a good job?
- Does the speaker read/speak clearly and distinctly?
- Does the speaker make good use of the audience?
- Does the interpretation of the characters fit the play (PRO, POE, DI, HI, DUO)?
- Do the characters have distinct voices (PRO, POE, DI, HI, DUO)?
- Does the speaker have facts and quotes (OO, EXT)?
- Did the speaker use his/her time wisely?
- Was there one particular thing you did like?
- Was there one particular thing you didn’t like?
- Was the selection/topic a challenge?
- Did he/she use gestures to his/her advantage?

And still more advice...

The specific question read, “If you’ve given a tournament in the past, what advice would you give to a school having its first tournament?”

- Don’t feel pressured into having a tournament until you, yourself, have worked in many tab rooms and are comfortable with all the rules established by the school and the forensic organization.
- Get experienced coaches to work tab.
- Solicit advice of experienced coaches in tournament preparation.
- Begin preparing a month in advance.
- Make a complete list of everything that needs to be done.
- On the day of the tournament, don’t assign yourself a specific job in the tab room. Be the general overseer.
- Ask people to work in your tab room at least 3 weeks before your tournament. Make them feel needed and important — because they are!
- Remember that the schools are doing you a favor by coming — they are increasing your revenue by buying your food and paying your fees. Thank them heartily.
- Never allow double entering.
- Accommodate judges and coaches in the morning with breakfast and a room where that is kids-free.
- Set your registration fees on the last day of registration. If a school drops 6 kids, they should be responsible for paying for them.
- Sell lunch tickets before round 1 and only purchase a few extra.
- Have enough maps, schemas, instructions, etc., for all students, all judges, and all coaches.
- Insist that if schools don’t bring enough judges and don’t hire one, they have to drop students to match their judging quota.
- Have an odd number of rounds and a final so ties are less likely to occur.
- Do not allow tab room personnel to count for the judging quota. You need all the judges that you can get!
- Get a good, organized parent to arrange hospitality for the coaches and lunches for everyone so that you can concentrate on the organization of the tournament.
- Make sure to have breakfast type snacks for kids when they arrive.
- Arrive hours and hours before the first school is likely to arrive. Get all doors unlocked, and make sure that you know where you can easily locate a custodian if a door accidentally locks.
- Take the time to make signs especially for rooms that are difficult to find.
- Start small.
- Take a deep breath and pray.
- Don’t rely solely on yourself.

Pittsburgh District Recommended Guidelines for Judging

DO dress appropriately. We ask the competitors to “dress up.” Judges should not wear torn clothes, sweat suits, or the like.

DO write constructive comments on the ballots. Coaches and competitors use these as guides to improve performances.

DO NOT write inappropriate comments on the ballots – i.e. you should be doing extemp, or I hate holocaust pieces.

DO NOT be “turned off” by a selection or oration if it is a piece that you feel that you have heard too many times or is contrary to your beliefs.

DO let it be known, though, through the ballot, if you believe that the selection is inappropriate for an educational setting, i.e. it is too sexually explicit.

DO let it be known on the ballot if the competitors’ dress, jewelry, hair, etc is interfering with the performance. However, do not inject your personal fashion preferences into these remarks.

DO give time signals if requested. Competitors in extemp, extemp commentary, debate, etc. will be the ones most concerned with time. However, do be aware of time limits in all events. Keep time and mark it on ballots. Do not request that the speaker keep his / her own time.

DO write a “flow” if judging policy or LD debate.

DO NOT discuss decisions with other judges.

DO NOT give oral critiques. It slows a tournament down. You may speak to competitors constructively after the tournament if you want to find them.

Public Forum

These issues come from current events. The topics may be controversial. At no time is anyone asking you to change your beliefs. For example – the topic may be on the “day-after pill.” You have an opinion on this – don’t give a team the loss just because you don’t like what they are saying – remember that since they are arguing on both sides of the issue, *they* may not even believe what they are saying. Instead, judge the *quality* of what they are saying – how much they researched. How well they spoke. Follow the ballot.

This debate starts with a coin toss. The winners decide if they want to go first / last OR they may decide if they want to go pro / con. The other team gets to decide what the winner did not.

Be very careful – do not fill in the ballot till after the kids have chosen their sides. (On numerous occasions in the tab room, we will find that an inexperienced judge has marked the kids on the ballot based on which side of the room that they sat and then the judge makes a mistake when filling in the winners name at the bottom of the ballot.)

As with other debates, the most difficult part is keeping time while taking notes for yourself and writing notes on the ballots all while you’re listening to what is happening.

The times for the round are

First Speaker - Team A	4 Minutes
First Speaker - Team B	4 Minutes
Crossfire	3 Minutes
Second Speaker - Team A	4 Minutes
Second Speaker - Team B	4 Minutes
Crossfire	3 Minutes
Summary - First Speaker - Team A	2 Minutes
Summary - Second Speaker - Team B	2 Minutes
Grand Crossfire	3 Minutes
Final Focus - Second Speaker - Team A	2 Minute
Final Focus - Second Speaker - Team B	2 Minute

Prep Time (per team) is 2 Minutes – this means that a team can take time to think / write / whatever at any time during the debate. They do not have to use all this time at once – they may break these two minutes into parts.

Remember to get your ballots to the tab room within *five minutes* of the debate ending. Do NOT hold up the tournament!!!

The Final Focus is a persuasive final restatement of why your team has won the debate. New arguments in the final speech are to be ignored.

The coin toss must take place in front of the judge(s) of the round.

Extemporaneous

In this event the students speak on current events. Extempers get their topics 30 minutes before you judge them. Each team brings its own materials that will help the speaker to research the topic during those 30 minutes. Then they each have a maximum of 7 minutes to give a speech.

Most tournaments allow the student to use one note card with 50 words. In CFL tournaments, students cannot use any notes, and if a student does use notes, he is to get last place.

As the judge, it will be your responsibility to time the speech. Students will ask that you give them signals counting down their remaining time. If you do not know how to give time signals, ask someone in charge before you go into the round!

Ask yourself these questions

- Did you understand the speech?
- Did you enjoy the speech?
- Was the speech logical?
- Did the speech have a clear central idea?

Sample Comments

- You should be more organized.
- Make the topic more understandable.
- You need more sources. (They should have 3 or more sources!)
- You need to back up your logic with more facts.
- Your intro was good, but it needs something more to grab attention.
- Your voice needs to be more distinct.
- Your voice should vary by the topic.
- You seem very interested in the topic.
- Eye contact was good/bad.

Ballot Information

The speakers are finished, now what? Now, you must decide, to the best of your ability, who was the best in each round. This person is given first place.

Once you've finished all of your comments, tallied the points (some ballots ask you to give points that are (unfortunately) assigned in a very subjective manner) and given rates and/or ranks you should turn your completed ballots into the established tab room (You will be told where this is at the judges' meeting at the start of the day). Make sure that each ballot is COMPLETELY filled in with the necessary information, including your name and code, the student's name, code and rank.

Once again, we thank you for supporting our team and taking time to give these students a chance to learn valuable skills in public speaking.

Original Oratory

As the title denotes, this event is strictly original pieces written by the student. The speeches can be either persuasive or informative, and at some tournaments will be divided into these two areas. The maximum time limit for each oration is 10 minutes. For Pennsylvania High School Speech League, informative speakers may use props and only speak for seven minutes. Some tournaments allow note cards and others don't. Make sure that you're at the judges' meeting to get this information!

Ask yourself these questions

- Did you enjoy the speech?
- Did you like the topic of the speech?
- Did you get the main idea?
- Is the speech timely?
- Was the speaker talking "to" you or "at" you?

Sample Comments

- I did/did not get the main idea.
- You had a very good introduction.
- Your organization needs work.
- You need to "work" the audience more.
- Your articulation was very good.
- Your speech was very persuasive/informative (depending on the type of speech).
- You seemed very sincere.
- Watch your breathing patterns.
- Work on your gestures, they should be more natural.
- Your gestures are quite natural.
- You need more facts and information.
- You need more examples.

The Advice:

The specific question read, "What advice would you give to a judge at a tournament for the first time? Beyond the 'standard' instructions that should be given...".)

- You know what you like — judge on whether it makes you think, laugh, cry. Go with what your heart tells you and be kind with critiques until you know what you are doing.
- If a child asks for time signals, Give Them in Any Event.
- Always tell students if they have gone overtime. If you do make the mistake of not timing one student, you must do the same for all students.
- Remember that there are no minimum times, but in equally good presentations, time can count.
- Write as you listen. When one student is finished speaking, you should be finishing your ballot at the same time. Immediately put the ballots in order from first to last. If you do this after each speaker, you can get your ballots to the tab room quickly!
- Maintain as much eye contact with the student speaking as possible.
- Always write at least one positive, encouraging comment.
- In OI and OO, write specific lines that the students say that you think could be improved.
- In extemp, write down their points as they preview them in their intro. It will help you keep track of structure and content.
- Enjoy the event; there is no need to be stern and scary — try to put the kids at ease yet still be in charge.
- Realize that the importance of the tournament is to encourage students to be a part of this activity, enjoy it, and strive for personal growth. Respect the time that the students put into the activity.
- READ any rules that are on the ballot
- It is rare that a first place would get below 20 points on the PHSSL ballot.
- If you are unsure about the rules, go to the tab room and ASK
- It's okay to look at the students. It's okay to laugh. Just keep things in moderation.
- In OO and extemp, students are judged on their written work as well as their performance. A superb performance with a weak speech is not a strong speech — look for some balance.
- Temper your remarks. Be compassionate and always find something good to say about the participant so as not to drum him out of the corps. Allow empathy to be your guide.
- Respect the tab room personnel and the student helpers. Mistakes can be made but there is an appropriate way to deal with them, and a judge screaming at someone in the tab room does not make matters better.
- Be constructive and tell participant how to improve with suggestions, not sarcasm.
- Attempt to relate observation to specific part of piece to allow for a coach's feedback.

Dramatic Interpretation

This category gives kids a chance to perform as actors. The speakers must choose a published piece, dramatic (DI) or humorous (HI). They can also pick a piece for two people (DUO), either serious or humorous. If the piece has more than one character the student must display this by having different focal points for each character. In a monologue the student doesn't need a focal point. These pieces are to be memorized. Each piece has a maximum time limit of 10 minutes.

Never mark a student down for doing a monologue instead of a piece with more characters.

Ask yourself these questions

- Did you enjoy the selection?
- Did you understand the differences in the characters?
- Was the "cutting" understandable and creative?
- Did the student use the audience to his/her advantage?
- If more than one character, did the student use the same focal point for each character throughout the piece?

Sample Comments

- Good Introduction.
- This is a challenge, and you handled it well.
- This selection suits you well.
- You need to work on a better cutting of the play because this was hard to follow.
- You need to work on the building of the drama.
- Good reaction of the audience.
- Characters have very distinct voices.
- Watch volume.
- Slow down.
- Keep your focal points.
- Work on gestures.
- Body language is a big part of speech. Use it to your advantage.
- Work on transitions between characters.

A few extras...

Well, these are comments that I just didn't solicit but are worth mentioning...

- When listening or helping your students choose a selection or write a speech, remember three things. This is a school sponsored activity. Participants are captive audiences being required to listen to the materials presented. If this piece or speech could not be done in a regular classroom, it should not be in competition.
- Make sure to attend the judges' meeting. There will never come a time that you are such an incredible judge that you don't need to hear what the host coach has to say.
- Remember that you are not deciding on an Academy Award. Nobody has all the right answers.
- If the other coaches are doing their jobs, they are telling their kids that they are to try to please every type of personality in every round. You are just another personality that they have to contend with...

INTRODUCTION

This companion is for new judges to help you through your first tournaments.

In general, you should write your opinions of the speech, making sure to include constructive criticism, both positive and negative, to help the speaker improve his or her performance.

Different tournaments have different rules in certain categories. You will be informed about rules at the judges' meeting before the tournament. It is very important that you find out where the judges' lounge is located since, at most tournaments, this is your where you will have your meeting. You should stay in the judges' lounge if you do not have an assignment in case you are needed or if new information is announced.

In some events you will have to time the speakers, so it's a good idea to have a watch with a second-hand with you. One of the other coaches can brief you on hand signals to give the speakers as you count down the remaining time.

The more you judge the more comfortable you will feel. If you have any questions you can always ask any coach. Just have fun with it! Thank you for taking the time to work with our kids and us. It will be well worth it.... for everyone!

The various events in which students compete (in our district) are as follows:

Congress
Extemporaneous Speaking (EXT, FX, IX, DX)
Dramatic Interpretation (DI)
Humorous (HI)
Oral Interpretation of Literature or Prose/Poetry (PRO/POE)
Impromptu (IMP)
Original Oratory (OO, INF, PER)
Lincoln Douglas Debate (LD)
Public Forum (PF)

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Judging
Handbook
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