

Student Congress Judging Instructions

Thank you from the San Diego/Imperial Valley Speech League!

Students and coaches alike deeply appreciate your judging Student Congress. Without your help, students would not have the opportunity to practice the skills they have learned. Please enjoy the refreshments provided for volunteers before the first session and during the break. So that the event today is fair to all competitors, we appreciate your being on time for the start of each session, and please read the following instructions carefully.

Overview

Student Congress includes argumentation, analysis, questioning, clash of ideas, and delivery. A thorough knowledge of parliamentary procedure should be reflected in each speaker's courtesy and decorum. Judges should evaluate or rank speakers based on the speaker's overall contribution to the debate in their house.

Description of Student Congress

- Student Congress is modeled after the procedure of floor debate in a legislature.
 - It is designed to test a student's ability to speak to an issue in both an extemporaneous and impromptu matter and to reveal the individual's knowledge of parliamentary procedure.
- Bills and resolutions to be debated today have been determined in advance, and students, who are called **representatives**, have had time to prepare to speak on these issues.
 - Speeches should respond to the views of previous speakers and except for the very first speech of the Congress, they should not be a rehearsed or "canned" speech. In other words, speeches should "clash" with the arguments presented in a previous speech or provide additional reasons to support the arguments in a previous speech.
- Each session of Congress is approximately an hour and fifteen minutes long.
- A student **presiding officer** or "PO" will chair each session.
 - In order to speak, a representative must be recognized by the presiding officer.
 - The presiding officer will recognize representatives who wish to give speeches or ask cross-examination questions according to a priority system based on a "frequency and recency standard".
 - The presiding officer is also responsible for making sure representatives are equitably called up to make motions.
- A **parliamentarian (a tournament official)** will open and close each round.
- All speeches must be delivered from the front of the room. You will be provided with a seating chart to identify students.
 - Each speech is limited to three minutes. In addition, each speaker is open for a maximum of one minute of cross-examination.
 - Notes and prepared material are allowed in delivering speeches.
 - Debate speeches should alternate from affirmative to negative positions on the bill or resolution under consideration.
- You will be provided with a *Student Congress Ballot* for ranking the students in your house. In addition, each time a student speaks you will be asked to fill out a *Comment Sheet*. **Please read the directions on them.**
 - You are strongly encouraged to fill out the *Comment Sheets* during the session as a number of students will speak, and your notes will help differentiate speakers.
 - The *Student Congress Ballot* contains a space to record the rank you gave them considering their speeches as well as their overall decorum and their skill in asking appropriate questions of other speakers during cross-examination.

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Judging Criteria

Students will take positions on the bills and resolutions for reasons of competition. Please be objective about the views expressed in the debate. Your personal views should not intrude on your evaluation of the speakers.

Please keep all of the following criteria in mind as you judge the Student Congress speakers.

1. **Delivery**—communicative and persuasive manner.
2. **Original arguments**—new and innovative views on the issue backed up by evidence.
3. **Clash**—directly responds to the issues presented by previous speakers.
4. **Answers to Questions**—incisive, knowledgeable, and direct answers during cross-examination.
5. **Analysis**—logical examination of the issues.

Using the Comment Sheets

- Complete the *Comment Sheet* after the student has delivered a speech and answered any questions that may be posed by other representatives during the cross-examination time.
 - The *Comment Sheet* will ask you to rate each speech by considering the Judging Criteria listed above including the student's response to questioning during cross-examination.

Determining the Final Ranking on the Student Congress Ballot

- In Preliminary Sessions:
 - Review the ratings you gave each of these students for their speeches.
 - Then take into account their:
 - Decorum or courtesy and knowledge of parliamentary procedure.
 - Skill in asking appropriate and direct questions during cross-examination.
 - Rank the nine best students from 1st through 9th place as follow: "1st" is the best; "2nd" is second best, and so on. Give all of the other students a tie for 10th place.
- In Semifinal and Finals Sessions:
 - Review the ratings you gave each of these students for their speeches.
 - Then take into account their:
 - Decorum or courtesy and knowledge of parliamentary procedure.
 - Skill in asking appropriate and direct questions during cross-examination.
 - Rank all the students from 1st through last place as follow: "1st" is the best; "2nd" is second best, and so on.
There are no ties allowed in these sessions.
- **Remember:** Active participation should be taken into consideration, but several mediocre speeches and questions are not better than a few high quality ones.
- If there is a different presiding officer each session, the parliamentarian of the house will instruct the students on the procedures for voting for PO.

The Last Step

- Return your completed and signed *Student Congress Ballot* to the judge's room as soon as possible to avoid holding up the tournament. If you wish to add more comments on the individuals' *Comment Sheets*, please feel free to be as thorough as you would like.

A few words about Questioning during Cross-Examination

- Questions should add value to the debate. The presiding officer or parliamentarian may call leading questions "out of order" because students who ask them may be trying to provide new evidence in the guise of a question. Such questions often begin with the words: "Isn't it true that...?" "Are you aware that...?" "Do you know that...?"
- A speaker's response to questions during cross-examination should be to the point.