







## **Public Forum Debate Judging Instructions**

example, thoroughly obnoxious, offensive or unethical conduct by a debater

8. **Include the reason for decision on your ballot.** Explain in, at least, a paragraph, which issues convinced you to vote the way that you did. If you need more room, ask the ballot table for an additional ballot
9. **Check your ballot carefully before you turn it in.** Did you:
  - declare a winner
  - assign team speaker points
  - provide useful suggestions for improvement
  - justify your decision thoroughly
  - sign the ballot
10. **Return your ballot to the judges room IMMEDIATELY.** Then, please wait in the Judge's Room for your next judging assignment. If you leave the Judges' Room and are not present when called, your school may face consequences.

### **JUDGING TIPS**

- Model professional, respectful behavior at all times. Treat all students, coaches, and other tournament participants with civility and kindness. Do not tolerate rude or disrespectful behavior from contestants, and report any such behavior to the student's coach and the tab room. Follow all announced tournament policies and instructions.
- Recuse yourself from any possible conflicts of interest. The following are examples of relationships to students that constitute conflicts of interest: past teammate, present or past coach, paid assistant, parent or other relative, personal friend. Notify the tab room immediately if you have a possible conflict of interest.
- Judge the debaters on the quality of the arguments they make, not on your own personal beliefs or on the arguments you wish they had made. Set aside personal biases as much as possible. Remember that the debaters must prepare to debate both sides and that they cannot read your mind. They can respond only to the arguments their opponents actually make.
- Prefer balanced, straightforward interpretations of the resolution to unfair or obscure interpretations. If the debaters offer different interpretations of the resolution, make your decision on the basis of whichever interpretation better fits ordinary English usage and provides more equal grounds for reasonable public debate.
- Assess the bearing of each argument on the truth or falsehood of the assigned resolution. The pro should prove that the resolution is true, and the con should prove that the resolution is not true. Arguments unrelated to the truth or falsehood of the resolution should not influence your decision. A good question to ask as you decide each round is, "If I had no prior beliefs about this resolution, would the round as a whole have made me more likely to believe the resolution was true or not true?"
- Prefer quality and depth to mere quantity of arguments. Reward students who present well-explained arguments. Judge the quality of arguments presented in the round as a whole. To promote quality debate, do not penalize students for failing to address frivolous or minor points due to time constraints.
- Consider quoted evidence only as support for arguments explained by the debaters. Well-chosen



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- Q. I'm still worried that the crossfire periods will be "Towers of Babel"
- A. The judge is chairperson of the round and may halt any crossfire out of control. Most debaters will learn that interrupting, shouting, filibustering (all of which may also occur in Policy and L/D cross examination periods) are counter productive.

### **FINAL FOCUS**

- Q. What is "Final Focus"?
- A. The "Final Focus" is a persuasive final restatement of why your team has won the debate. This speech might begin "Judge this is why you should vote (pro or con). "Final Focus" trains students to choose what is vital to decision-making. "Final Focus" must be based on arguments and issues previously addressed in the debate. New arguments in the Final Focus are to be ignored by the judge.

### **SUMMARY SPEECHES**

- Q. Are the summary speeches the same as rebuttals?
- A. Yes. Each team should summarize key arguments it is winning and refute the important arguments it is losing.
- Q. Can new information be presented in the summary and Final Focus speeches?
- A. Yes. Facts, opinions, statistics -- evidence of all kinds are legal and welcome to advance the debate. New arguments in summary and Final Focus speeches are forbidden. An answer in response to an argument originally presented by the opposition is not a new argument.

### **TOPICS AND RESEARCH**

- Q. When are topics announced?
- A. A new topic will be announced the first day of each preceding month at [www.nflonline.org](http://www.nflonline.org). The National Tournament topic is released on May 15th.
- Q. Who chooses the topics?
- A. A topic committee has been set up to make topic selections.
- Q. How should topics be researched?
- A. Newspapers, news magazines, online news sites, books.
- Q. Is evidence necessary?
- A. Yes. This is a debate event. Arguments must be supported by evidence.
- Q. How much evidence should be presented?
- A. Public Forum Debate is audience debate. Present enough evidence to prove your arguments but not so much as to destroy good communication with a community judge.

### **ARGUMENTATION**

- Q. Are Plans and Counterplans allowed?
- A. No. In Public Forum Debate, a plan or counterplan is defined by the NFL as a formalized, comprehensive proposal for implementation. Neither the pro or con side is permitted to offer a plan or counterplan; rather, they should offer reasoning to support a position of advocacy. Debaters may offer generalized, practical solutions.
- Q. Are kritiks banned?



## **Public Forum Debate Judging Instructions**

### **How about lunch?**

Judges are usually, at a minimum, provided with meals – generally breakfast, lunch and dinner, with snacks in between. Please note this food is provided for the judges only; please do not share the food with the students.

### **This is fun! When can I do it again?**

If you enjoy your judging experience, we'll be happy to have you return to judge! We have tournaments throughout the year and we're always in need of judges! Know a friend or a neighbor who you think would like to do this? Please let the coach at your school know. And, again, thank you! We could not have a tournament if it weren't for people like you!