Tips for Debate Judges

Good morning! We at Randolph thank you for donating your time today to help judge speech contestants at our tournament – truly, our tournament and our activity would not be possible without generous, involved supporters like you. We’d like to point out a few tips & bits of information for debate judges today.

**General Rules for Debate**

* Speaker Points 25-30, with 30 being the best speaker in the entire tournament, 27.5 being about average, and 25 being patently offensive. You must justify any low point wins. Ties are allowed for speaker points.
* It will help your process to take notes as the debate progresses. These notes can be detailed (a “flow”) or basic, but they should be taken to help you remember the flow of the debate and the arguments raised throughout. Either way, please remain attentive during the round, especially as it relates to phones, devices, etc.
* As the judge, you are the official timekeeper for the round. Many students will time themselves and their opponents, but you should keep time yourself, especially marking prep time used, in order to resolve any disputes.
* Verify that the correct debaters are in the room based on your ballot. Do not allow A flight to cross with B flight.
* There are no oral critiques or disclosures at this tournament. Do not talk to the students during or immediately after the round. If students approach you after you have turned in your ballot, feel free to speak to them about the round if you like and time permits. You should not reveal the winner, however.
* Ensure that your ballot is fully completed. Make sure the side you assign the win to is actually the correct one – i.e., do not confuse PRO with CON.
* If giving a low point win, it must be clearly indicated on the ballot and justified in the written critique.
* Please be as descriptive and efficient as possible on your written critiques. Competitors and coaches use ballot comments to target strengths and weaknesses to improve upon in their performances.
* Once a round has ended, please finish any comments on ballots, assign a winner, and submit your ballot.
* If you have any issues (competitors not showing up, problems with the room, issues in-round) speak to the students in the hallway first. They will either provide assistance or escalate the issue to someone who can.

**Electronic Balloting**

* You will get an email blast with your judge assignments. You can also sign up for text alerts if you prefer at [speechwire.com/subscribe](http://speechwire.com/subscribe), and there will be a paper list of assignments posted in the judges room just in case.
* Sign in to your SpeechWire account at [www.speechwire.com/login](http://www.speechwire.com/login)
* You should see a large yellow banner indicating that you have ballots. Click on it to see your ballots.
* When you start the round, click the “Start Round” button. This is really important because it lets us know that everyone has gotten underway; if the round hasn’t started after ten minutes or so we will send a student to see if there is anything wrong, a missing competitor, etc.
* The ballot is very simple, so it should be easy to display on any device. There are two sections to the ballot.
* First, judges for LD will have to type in speaker points and indicate the winning team. For PF, you will also have to indicate who is Pro/Con. This is basic information that we need to keep the tournament running, as soon as the debate is over. Once this is put in and saved, it is LOCKED.
* Second, there are text boxes for you to write your comments and reason for decision. This section is NOT LOCKED - you can go back and complete this at any time before the end of Round 4. It’s recommended that you save this often, if you are typing as you go.  The system will let you save comments without putting in a decision and points, so you can save during the debate if you are working on it as the debate is going on.
* If you want to give a low point win, you can, but the system will warn you before you do it, just to confirm.

**Lincoln Douglas**

Timing

6 minute **Affirmative** constructive
3 minute Cross-Examination of Affirmative by the **Negative**
7 minute **Negative** constructive
3 minute Cross-Examination of Negative by the **Affirmative**
4 minute 1st **Affirmative** rebuttal
6 minute **Negative** rebuttal
3 minute 2nd **Affirmative** rebuttal

*4 minutes of prep time per side.*

November/December 2019 Topic

**Resolved: The United States ought to eliminated subsidies for fossil fuels.**

**Public Forum**

Timing

4 minutes **Speaker 1**

4 minutes **Speaker 2**

3 minutes Crossfire (**Speakers 1&2**)

4 minutes **Speaker 3**

4 minutes **Speaker 4**

3 minutes Crossfire (**Speakers 3&4**)

3 minutes **Speaker 1** Summary

3 minutes **Speaker 2** Summary

3 minutes Grand Crossfire (**all**)

2 minutes **Speaker 3** Final Focus

2 minutes **Speaker 4** Final Focus

*3 minutes of prep time per side*

November/December 2019 Topic

**Resolved: The benefits of the United States federal government’s use of offensive cyber operations outweigh the harms.**



Judge Expectations

**We expect judges to:**

* **Act as educators**. Most judges are not literally educators by profession, but we do expect all judges to take on this role. This requires you to provide thoughtful, meaningful written critiques and rationales for your decisions. We like to say that judges should “make sure the kids get back on the bus next week” – be truthful and honest in your criticism, but in a constructive way. Students who receive totally positive ballots find them not useful to improve themselves, and those who receive totally negative ballots are disheartened and hurt. Remember that the competitive aspect of the activity is important but is ultimately secondary to the educational aspect.
* **Act as the adult in the room.** While speech & debate is certainly an activity based in free speech, it is your obligation as a judge to restrain certain activities that go beyond the bounds of taste (i.e., physical assault, use of clearly pornographic materials, etc.) that are unacceptable in a high school environment.
* **Be a calming and neutral presence in the room**. Competitors will look to you as the person who knows what he/she is doing, even if you do not feel that way. Act as though you do (chances are you do more than you know), and the competitors will be none the wiser. Avoid speaking too much to competitors, but feel free to be non-specifically and non-preferentially supportive. In general, conduct yourself in a professional manner.
* **Keep the tournament flowing.** The biggest issue in keeping the tournament running on time is always the speed and efficiency of judges. If judges get to their rounds on time, start on time, complete and turn in ballots in a timely fashion, etc., then the tournament runs much smoother and quicker than if those things do not happen. Sometimes all it takes is one slow ballot or lost judge to pull the entire tournament off-schedule.
* **Come prepared.** This means that judges should either be trained by their coaches/schools/teams, or self-trained such that they feel adequately prepared to judge the category they are responsible for. We cannot spend large chunks of tournament time giving judge training other than general reminders and expectations. Any questions about which category you are responsible for or why should be directed toward your school’s coach.
* **Fulfill their obligations.** You are obligated all day for our tournament. Unless you have not been scheduled for a round AND the judges’ lounge has been released for ballot pushes, you should not leave campus. Judges who leave in the middle of the tournament or who leave early will earn fines for their school.
* **Follow the rules of the tournament.** At our tournament, we do not allow oral critiques in-round. We ask this to ensure the swift movement of rounds and flights. If a competitor seeks you out for oral critiques at a later time when there are no time constraints, you are welcome to provide a critique only if you feel it is appropriate.

Finally, in agreeing to judge for your school or group, you also have an implicit agreement with the tournament to act according to the spirit and aims of our activity. Judges whose behavior is unacceptable to the tournament director will be fined and/or removed from the tournament. This may include missed rounds, unaccountable lateness to rounds, going “missing” with ballots, and other inappropriate behavior.