

# THE WHY AND THE HOW OF THE "BASE SYSTEM"

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Many students and coaches have observed the fallacy of the frequently used "priority system" in recognizing students in congress. All too often we hear Presiding Officers' comment, "I'll recognize speakers from front to back and left to right." There are fairer ways of recognizing students, either with "Speaker cards" or the blind draw or a computerized program. But where the tradition of left-right, front-rear has been established, students and coaches alike see any deviation as a probable attempt to manipulate the Congress.

To alleviate the unfairness of more speeches (under any system) causing inequity in the National Student Congress, the Base System was devised.

The goal of the Base System is to place every Congress person on a common denominator (regardless of the number of speeches given) for figuring speaker points, for advancement to the next level of competition or for award recognition.

All recognition systems (hopefully) work under the principle of recognizing *first* those Congress people who have *spoken least or not at all*. All students start the Congress on a **Base One**. Once every participant has spoken once, or has had the opportunity to speak once, the system is moved to a **Base Two**. Logically, once every participant has spoken twice, or has had the opportunity to speak twice, the chamber moves to a **Base Three**.

By the close of the session some Congress people will have spoken more often than others thus giving them an unfair advantage for nominations or advancement to the next level of Congress competition. In order to guarantee equity the Congress Director determines what "**Base**" everyone reached or had the opportunity to reach. If a Congress person elected not to give a speech but had the opportunity to speak, he/she remains on a previous Base as it was their choice not to advance to the next Base level, and their total speaker points would be those awarded by the scorers in that session.

Assuming, for example, that every Congress person had the opportunity to give four speeches the Congress Director determines that the Congress chamber is on the **Base Four** level. If some, but not all, Congress people had the opportunity to give five speeches, their total points are added and then divided by five and multiplied by four (***total speaker points divided by the total number of speeches given multiplied by the base that everyone had the opportunity to achieve***). If every Congress person only had the opportunity to give three speeches in the session, the chamber is on the **Base Three** level. Therefore the students that did get in four or more speeches will use the formula of total speaker points divided by their number of speeches and multiplied by the

common base number of their Chamber, in this case three.

When division creates a fraction of a speaker point, the points are rounded up to the next whole number for the recording of NFL speaker points, but *fractions may be used for the advancement process*. In other words, a student with 18.876 points might advance while a student with 18.875 might not advance and still both students would receive 19 NFL Speaker points.

In this process some students will not advance strictly based on their total *number* of Congress speeches. A student with three superior speeches may receive more speaker points than those with five or six poor or average speeches (logical under any system). The Base System does encourage quality compared to strictly quantity that often causes recognition of the less than superior Congress contestant. Over the years that the "Base System" has been used no one has objected, because they recognize its fairness to all Congress students.

A fairly simple computer program uses the following formula:

1. Speaker points earned from all speeches are totaled.
2. These points are divided by the number of speeches given (carried out to the fourth decimal place).
3. Average points for each speech multiplied by the base number equals the speaker credit points. The Base System insures equity!