

Guide to Judging

Times and Duties of Speakers

First Proposition Speaker

Makes a case for the motion for debate. Provides assertions, reasoning, and evidence (ARE) in support of the motion. May offer a specific interpretation of the motion.

5 minutes

First Opposition Speaker

Presents arguments against the case presented by the other team. Uses direct and indirect refutation to undermine the case and show why the other side's position is wrong and dangerous.

5 minutes

Second Proposition Speaker

Supports the case presented by the first proposition speaker. Should answer all arguments made by the previous speaker.

Should bring in new ideas to bolster their side's position.

5 minutes

Second Opposition Speaker

Extends upon partner's arguments against the case. Continues to refute proposition's arguments. Should bring in new ideas to bolster their side's position.

5 minutes

Opposition Rebuttal

Continues to refute proposition's major points. Should explain how, given the arguments advanced in the debate, the opposition wins the debate.

3 minutes

Proposition Rebuttal

Refutes the arguments advanced and extended by the opposition side. Extends partners' arguments. Shows how, given the arguments advanced in the debate, the proposition wins the debate.

3 minutes

Responsibilities of the Judge

How to Judge a Debate

Judging is hard work. This sheet is meant to refresh your memory and serve as a brief guide for judging. For more information, there are longer judging guides available on our website: www.middleschooldebate.com.

Things to remember when judging

- 1. You're responsible for timing the debate.** The debaters rely on you for time signals. Remember that in the 5-minute speeches, you must signal the beginning and end of **protected time**, or time in which the speaker is protected from points of information offered by the other side. Signal by slapping a table or desk **after 1 minute has passed and when 1 minute remains**.
- 2. Take notes on a flowsheet.** Because debates are about the interaction between arguments, students must respond to the arguments made by the other side. To track this, you must use a flowsheet.
- 3. Leave your opinions at the door.** The only facts known in the debate are what the teams bring forth. It is not the job of a 13-year old to change a judge's lifelong belief.
- 4. Don't fill in for speakers.** Judges should not "fill in" what they believe a speaker was going to say, should have said, or probably meant. **ALL THEY SAID IS ALL THERE IS.**



About Points of Information

A point of information is a request to the speaker that holds the floor to yield some of her time (up to 15 seconds, give or take) to a question or comment from the other side. The speaker decides to accept or reject points, as they come from her time.

Points of information are only allowed in the middle three minutes of the 5-minute speeches. There is no rule about how many should be offered, or how many must be taken. Proficient debaters display control of the floor. It is bad practice for a speaker to reject all points. It is also bad practice for the speaker to accept all points, if that means she loses control of her speech.

Because points of information are considered to be part of the debate, the judge should take notes about them.

5. **Proposition teams may reasonably interpret, or "shrink" the topic.** Remember that a debate is like a trial: the prosecution does not offer every possible way that the defendant might be guilty ("He did it with a gun, and a knife, and a bazooka, in the car, and the yacht, and the ballroom..."); similarly, the proposition team does not offer every possible proof of the motion, just a **proof** of the motion. This means that (for example) "child" may be defined as being between the ages of 8 and 16, but probably not as a juvenile cactus in the the Arabian Peninsula.

6. **Reveal your decision.** You are required to reveal your decision and give constructive feedback to the students. You should also share "speaker points" with the students.

7. **About speaker points.** In addition to assigning a win and a loss in a given debate, you must give each student an individual score. **Use the rubric on the back of this sheet to assign points.** Remember that speaker points are **not** the same as points of information, and that the team that gets the highest speaker points does not have to be the team that wins the debate.

8. **No new arguments in the rebuttals.** Students should not make new arguments in the rebuttals. A new argument is defined as an argument with no foundation in the previous debate. New examples to support existing assertions are fine. Judges should simply ignore new rebuttal arguments.

ARE- The components of an argument: Assertion, Reasoning, Evidence.

4-Step Refutation- A method for refuting arguments: "They say..." "But..." "Because..." "Therefore..."

MIDDLE SCHOOL PUBLIC DEBATE PROGRAM

Speaker Point Assessment Rubric -- USE HALF POINTS (23.5, 26.5, etc.)

Start at 22 and go up from there

Score	Description	Argumentation	Refutation	Structure	Presentation
21 and below	21-20 should be reserved for people who are unsuccessful as debaters as well as obnoxious, disruptive, or mean-spirited. Lower points often exclude debaters from awards, so if you give points below 20, you are saying that a debater has no chance of rehabilitation in any other debates.				
22:	Below average for an experienced debater but an average performance for a new or nervous speaker.	Offers assertions with negligible reasoning or evidence. Has clearly borrowed phrases of arguments from other sources.	Likely to repeat own arguments rather than enhance or develop them. Does not engage opponents' arguments. Does not accept or make PoIs.	Not organized. Arguments are not clearly distinguished from one another. Does not use full time.	Mumbles and does not look up from notes; never raises points of information. Appears anxious; disengages from the debate after their speech.
23:	Below average. This speech is modestly successful in a few major elements and unsuccessful in other areas.	Inconsistent argument design – missing reasoning and/or evidence in support of most important issues. Likely to have one or more fallacies in main arguments.	Likely to repeat previous ideas as the debate advances. Little argument anticipation; identifies only a few opposing arguments. Likely to use fallacies.	Little macro-organization, although individual arguments may occasionally be effective. Speech is difficult to follow at times. May fill up time, but not allocate it effectively.	Speech loses clarity for sustained periods. Poor eye contact and body language; rarely makes a PoI, and points are likely to be ineffective or distracting. Does not engage teammates or heckle. If accepts PoIs, does not respond well.
24:	Near average. An inconsistent performance.	Understands A-R-E but missing reasoning and/or evidence in support of some important issues.	More likely to discuss their own arguments than answer opponents' arguments directly.	Little support of partners' arguments. Inconsistent organization of general and specific argumentation.	Speaks clearly, but errors begin to distract audience and undermine content. Makes PoIs and replies to PoI, but is ineffective.
25:	Average. A competent speaker and debater.	Follows the A-R-E model consistently, although some assertions do not have sufficient reasoning and many do not have supporting evidence. Identifies obvious opposing issues; misses nuanced or complex issues.	Understands own positions but likely to repeat ideas rather than amplify them. Uses four-step model of refutation, although inconsistently. Uses direct refutation for most arguments but offers ineffective or no reply to important issues.	Organized and generally effective. Attempts a narrative structure but is not able to consistently adhere to it. Loses some clarity integrating opposing arguments. Good use of time.	Speaks in a clear, comprehensible way, with no poor body language but no or few special elements to persuade an audience. Speech errors noted by audience, though not in a way that undermines content. Visibly making and responding PoIs, but rarely engages teammates or heckles. May be ineffective or exclude two or more obvious presentation elements (eye contact, volume, gestures, etc.).
26:	Above average. This is a good debate speech, with more style and content than one might expect for the circumstance.	Able to make an effective argument and identify key opposing arguments. Uses effective reasoning but infrequently presents evidence verifying claims. The debater is familiar with most issues in the debate.	Can maintain own position and reply to some of the more powerful arguments of opponents. Likely to use only direct refutation (simple disagreement) but does so effectively.	Simple narrative structure for own arguments but has some difficulty integrating effective counter-positions into speech.	Speaks in an engaging manner. Demonstrates some confidence and credibility. PoIs offered concisely with clear relevance to the round. Occasional verbal pauses ("ummm..."). May be ineffective with one or two obvious presentation elements (eye contact, volume, etc.)
27:	Quite exceptional. A strong debater delivering an above-average speech. Consistent in delivery and argumentation.	Able to establish a clear position requiring a sophisticated reply. Compares the relative merits of arguments, and has highly effective reasoning and use of evidence.	Able to refute arguments directly as well as by minimizing their importance or explaining why they are actually a benefit for the speaker's side.	Logical but inconsistent organization. Missing effective introduction or conclusion. Advances and adds to teammates' arguments in the round, rather than simply repeating previous arguments.	An animated speaker able to present a clear and coherent position or about the debate, rather than just offering individual arguments. Effective use of and reply to PoIs. Solid presentation skills.
28:	Near brilliant. A well above average debater giving an exceptional speech.	Constructs correct arguments on-the-spot to respond to new issues in the debate. Constructs detailed arguments with substantial evidence to support sound reasoning.	Understands how arguments interrelate, investigating inconsistencies between opponents' claims. Identifies opportunity costs and underlying assumptions.	Organized in a way that is logical and easy to understand. Integrates major supporting and opposing arguments into the speech.	A persuasive presentation that effectively uses rhetorical devices like humor, effective pausing and vocal inflection to add depth to the speech. Occasionally uses an effective heckle.
29-30:	A 29 is a near flawless performance, and a highly unlikely event. A 30 is flawless and perfect.	Sophisticated understanding of issues and opponent strategies. Critiques underlying assumptions and/or offers alternative plans of action.	Integrates refutation into argumentation, using responses to the other side to advance their own side.	Uses a stable narrative speech structure, organizing by categories relevant to the debate, restoring order to a confused debate round.	Has exceptional knowledge about the subject. Is very involved in the debate, including PoIs and appropriate heckling. Outstanding verbal and nonverbal skills, including pace, clarity, and humor.