

Public Forum Debate Judging

This is 2 vs 2 debate focused on current events. It is a debate about policy. Examples from last year: *The United States should no longer pressure Israel to work toward a two-state solution. The United States should end Plan Columbia. In order to better respond to international conflicts, the United States should significantly increase its military spending. In United States Public K-12 schools, the probable cause standard ought to apply to searches of students.*

You will need to flip a coin before the debate. If Team A wins the toss, they can choose between pro/con or first speaker/last speaker.

From the Public Forum Ballot

1. **Be a non-interventional judge.** Assess 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 they can't read your mind and can only respond to the arguments their opponents actually make.
2. **Debaters should advocate or reject the resolution in a manner clear to the non-specialist citizen judge (i.e. jury) (this is why it's called "Public" Forum)**
3. ***Judge the round on 1) solid logic and reasoning, 2) strong advocacy of their position, 3) utilization of evidence, and 4) clear communication.**
4. **Neither the pro nor con is permitted to offer a plan or counterplan (defined as a formalized comprehensive proposal for implementation). Debater may offer generalized practical solutions.**
5. **Crossfire time should be dedicated to questions and answers rather than reading evidence. Evidence may be referred to extemporaneously.**
6. **No new arguments may be introduced in the Final Focus, however, debaters may include new evidence to support prior arguments.**

Notes: 1) Don't reward unfair or obscure interpretation of the resolution. 2) Disregard arguments that are unrelated to the resolution. Students sometimes drift off topic. 3) Do not penalize students for failing to address minor or frivolous points due to time restraints.

Filling Out Your Ballot

Write an RFD (Reason for Decision). Try to be specific as possible. Better to say, "The con side did a better job of convincing me that the cost of loss of privacy outweighed the benefits of convenience" than "The con side was more convincing." Don't award a decision to best speaker. We have speech events for those kids. That said, if speaking impedes clear communication, this could weigh into your decision.

Speaker Points. Base this score on the strength of the arguments, not the strengths of the orator. It is better to be a little generous on Speaker Points that too hard. This is how they advance to future rounds in the event of a tie.

Comments to debaters: As above, be kind and gentle in your comments. Always make some positive comments on the ballot. Even if you have to make them up. Remember you have the power to crush a spirit. It is amazing that these kids have the courage to do this. Let's try to reward them. However, it is important to give them some specific constructive criticism. They will pour over every word you write.

You're not really supposed provide oral feedback, but if you do, be very brief.

Do NOT disclose who won.