

The Judges Workshop

This is the talk I hope I give when I give the Judges Workshop at a CDA tournament. In person, I am likely to forget some things, add others, and spend time on questions, so each time is a little different. This version should give new judges a good idea of the process and ready them for their first tournament.

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Good morning. My name is Everett Rutan. I am the Executive Director of the CDA. I have worked with debate teams at several Connecticut high schools—Xavier, Daniel Hand, Amity. I participate at tournaments sponsored by several leagues and colleges. I teach at a summer debate workshop. In high school I was a successful national circuit debater. Like you I'm a volunteer. I'm not a teacher. I am currently retired, but I came up in business, primarily the finance industry in New York.

On behalf of the Connecticut Debate Association, I'd like to thank you for coming today. To run a tournament, we need one judge for every four debaters, a much higher ratio of adults to students than most high school activities. If you weren't here, we wouldn't be able to do this. We hope you will enjoy the day and return to judge again at future CDA tournaments.

How the Tournament Works

While we are here, the students are preparing to debate. They saw the motion—the topic they will debate at this tournament—for the first time just a few minutes ago, when we left for this workshop. By the time we finish in about one hour, they will debate both for and against the motion. Keep that in mind as you judge. I think that you will be impressed by how well they do.

After one hour of preparation, there will be two rounds of debate before lunch, and two after. Each team will debate twice in favor and twice against the motion. They do not get to choose which side they prefer. The first round is randomly matched; later rounds may be power matched. After the fourth round, the two varsity teams with the best records meet in a final round that is public from about 4PM to 5PM. We then present the awards and leave for home around 5:30PM.

You should have picked up copies of three things when you came in: a handout with schedule on the front and a judging rubric on the back; a copy of a sample ballot; and a large sheet of paper for taking notes which we call a flow chart. (If we are using electronic ballots, you will need a laptop or tablet to access them.) You will need a pen or pencil to take notes; you can pick up extra flow charts between rounds. You will also need a phone with a timer app or stopwatch.

If you need anything during the tournament, we run things from the Tab Room, named because it's where we tabulate the ballots. There will be extra ballots and flow charts, copies of the schedules, and advice if you have questions. It's also where you should bring your ballots after each round (unnecessary if we are using electronic ballots). If we can be of help to you during the day, please ask.

In the next hour, I'm going to take you through what you need to know to judge your first round. We've broken it down into 10 steps that are easy to follow. Please note that a lot of what I will say is based on how I judge debates. You should know that not all judges—even experienced judges—would judge the same way. If someone else teaches the workshop next month, they may do things a bit differently. As you become more experienced, or speak to other judges, coaches, and debaters, you will probably develop an approach that works for you. But these 10 steps are a good place to start.

Note my focus is on the process with the goal of having you finish the round and return the ballot in a timely manner. I won't spend much time on actually judging a debate. First, I'm still learning how to judge well, so I could not do justice to that topic in the hour that we have. Second, you already know how to judge a debate. All your life you have been asked to make decisions based on what others tell you. Listen attentively, evaluate fairly, make a decision. That is all we ask.

Step One: Make sure you're in the right room at the right time.

To finish on time, it's important that we keep to schedule. Towards the end of this session, someone will come by with the schedule for the first round, one for Novice and one for Varsity, and a ballot for each assigned judge. The schedule and your ballot will list a room number, the school and debaters for each team, and your name as judge. Once you receive your ballot, you should go directly to the room assigned.

We usually have extra judges—if we didn't the scheduling computer would have fits—so you may not be assigned every round. If you aren't assigned for the first round, please don't leave. The scheduling algorithm will assign you in later rounds. Please stay near the Tab Room until we are sure we don't need to assign you to this round. Sometimes we make a mistake, or a judge doesn't show up, and we need to

assign another. Once we are sure each debate has a judge, you are free to spend the round observing a debate or reading a book or whatever.

As I said, the Tab Room is the nerve center from which we run the tournaments. If you have any questions or need a clean ballot or flow chart, you can get these at the Tab Room. If you aren't sure about the schedule or where you need to be, you can get that information at the Tab Room. It's also where you should bring your completed ballot at the end of each round. There will be signs posted so you can find it easily.

When you get to the room, make sure that the two teams are the teams listed on the schedule and ballot. You should never be judging a team from your own school—the school you are judging for—and you shouldn't be judging a team you judged in a previous round (though you can judge teams you've seen in other tournaments). If anything is incorrect, please don't try to fix it yourself. If changes are made that we don't put into the computer, it will cause problems when we try to schedule later rounds. Send one person to Tab and ask everyone else should stay in the room. That way, when we get the problem fixed, you can start your debate promptly.

Step 2: Fill out the ballot correctly before the debate begins

We use an internet service called, surprisingly, tabroom.com, to manage the tournament. It prints a ballot for each round with the room number, the judge's name, the team names, and the names of the debaters. Next to the names of the debaters are boxes to enter the rank and point score. Below the debaters is a space to indicate which team won and the side they were on. The remainder of the ballot is space to provide feedback to the debaters based on their performance. If we are using electronic ballots, you will find all this on a browser page when you log in to tabroom.com with your userid.

When you and both teams are in the room, you should verify that the teams and debaters match the names on the ballot. Tabroom knows the names of the teams and the debaters, but not the speaking order. There are two debaters on each team, and they decide who will speak first. You should confirm which debater is the first speaker on each team, and which the second speaker. In our format, on the Government team—the team defending the motion—the first speaker is called the Prime Minister, and the second is called the Member of Government. On the Opposition team—the team arguing against the motion—the first speaker is called the Leader of the Opposition, and the second is called the Member of the Opposition. Make sure you note who is who, so you assign results correctly.

The same applies to an electronic ballot. You will need to note the speaking order on your flow so you enter the speaker ranks and points correctly.

When I judge, once I've filled in the round information, I put the ballot aside and I don't touch it again until after the debate is over. Not all judges do this. Some judges make notes on the ballot during the debate, or adjust the score based on what they observe. I find it works better for me to take notes on a separate piece of paper, and then put the results on the ballot at the end. You'll have to work out your own style as you judge more debates.

Step 3: Keep time and keep order during the debate

At this point you are ready to start the debate. The first page of the handout has the timing for the speeches. The debaters have been through this before, and they will largely go through it almost automatically. You do need to keep track of the time for each speech so that they don't speak for longer

than they are allowed. Speaking time is a valuable resource in a debate, so it's important to try to be reasonably accurate.

The Prime Minister gets a 7-minute constructive speech. The Leader and the two Members each get an 8-minute constructive. The four constructive speeches alternate Gov-Opp-Gov-Opp. The constructives are followed by a 4-minute rebuttal from the Leader of Opposition and the debate ends with a 5-minute constructive by the Prime Minister. Each team has an equal amount of speaking time, but the Prime Minister and the Leader both speak twice, while the Members only speak once.

Round Format

Prime Minister Constructive (PMC)	7 minutes	Provides an interpretation of the resolution and lays out the Government's case
Leader of Opposition Constructive (LOC)	8 minutes	Lays out the Opposition case and replies to the Government case.
Member of Government Constructive (MGC)	8 minutes	Responds to previous arguments, and may introduce new points while doing so
Member of Opposition Constructive (MOC)	8 minutes	
Leader of Opposition Rebuttal (LOR)	4 minutes	Summarizes the debate from the Opposition perspective, while responding to arguments.
Prime Minister Rebuttal (PMR)	5 minutes	Summarizes the debate from the Government perspective, while responding to arguments.

Note that the Government starts and ends the debate, very similar to the role of a prosecutor at a trial. This advantage is balanced by the fact that the Government team has the burden of proof. The motion usually calls for a change to the status quo, and Government needs to convince you to agree that change is warranted. The Opposition need only show that the Government hasn't done this. Again, this is like a prosecutor at trial, who must prove the defendant guilty: the law presumes that the defendant is innocent. However, in a criminal trial the prosecution has to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. The standard in a debate is closer to what holds in a civil trial, one side only needs to carry the preponderance of arguments.

Most debaters time themselves using their cell phones. They also time each other to make sure the other team doesn't go over. You should also time each speech just to be sure. Note each speaker gets 30 seconds grace after time is up to finish their sentence or their thought. This is not intended to be 30 more seconds of speaking time, and you should ignore any new material presented after the allotted time. I put my pen down—if I'm not taking notes I'm not listening—and let the speaker finish. If they go too long, I will say aloud, "time is up" or "that's time." Most debaters will stop promptly at that point.

Teams do not get any preparation time between speeches. When one speaker finishes, the next speaker should rise, with reasonable time to collect their notes and arrange the podium. We aren't looking for strict precision, but there should not be any excessive delays. If a debater doesn't seem to be getting up to speak, nudge them along by asking if they are ready to speak. Keeping order mostly means keeping the debate moving along. The students are usually good about this. They know what they have to do and generally do it promptly.

The team that is not speaking may attempt to interrupt the speaker by offering a Points of Information. They do this by rising, or by simply saying "Point" or "Point of Information". The speaker may take the

question, defer it, or wave it off. Offering and accepting POIs is an important aspect of parliamentary debate, and it may get testy at times. This is fine, so long as no one is insulting or offensive. I generally try not to interfere in the debate unless things get out of hand. I have occasionally had to say something to debaters who were talking or making noise when the other team was speaking, but very rarely.

Of course, if you think their behavior is getting out of hand, you should say something. If one team is particularly offensive you may stop the debate and direct a victory to the other team. Note that I've never had to do this in over 25 years as a judge, and I am not aware of anyone who has. If this happens, you must go and speak to the Tab Director and inform them of what occurred. Should this ever happen, please do not speak to the debaters or their coach about it outside of the debate. Let the Tab Director deal with it.

Step Four: Take notes

In addition to keeping time and moving the debate along, it is important for you to take notes. The debate will take a bit less than one hour. Without notes, by the end of the debate you won't remember what was said at the beginning.

The debaters are taught to present their arguments in the form of contentions, each with supporting arguments. Please note that the debaters are only required to support or attack the motion in whatever matter they see fit—there is no required format or terminology. But you will hear most teams present two to four contentions for or against the motion. Some Government teams may present a plan; less often, some Opposition teams may present a counterplan. As you take notes, you will want to write down these contentions and proposals as well as the major supporting arguments. These will or should become the major points of contention in the debate. As the debate progresses you will also want to note the other team's responses and counter arguments as they are presented.

Everyone takes notes in their own way. The recommended way for debate is to use a flow chart, a large piece of paper divided into six columns, one for each speech. During each speech you take notes down the appropriate column, keeping the Government contentions towards the top of each column, and the Opposition contentions lower down. As the debate progresses, the responses to a particular argument are written down in the column opposite the earlier argument. You can read the "flow" of the arguments across the page. In a good debate, where the teams clash back and forth, each argument will be followed by a counter argument, then a further reply and so forth.

It is the debaters' job to persuade you, not your job to be persuaded. If a debater is speaking too fast or too slow, too loudly or too quietly, you may—but you are not required to—ask them to adjust. If you find the speaker confusing or hard to understand, or if the speaker is using jargon that is unfamiliar to you, that is the speaker's fault, not yours. Make an honest effort to understand what the speaker is trying to tell you, but don't be afraid to tell a debater after the round that they need to do a better job presenting their arguments.

Step Five: When the debates ends, give a useful, balanced comment to the debaters

The debate has been progressing, the speakers taking their turns, offering and answering POIs. You've been keeping time, taking notes and generally keeping things moving along. Finally you come to the last rebuttals, and the debate ends. The two teams will usually rise and shake hands and offer to shake yours.

If we are using electronic ballots, you should immediately enter the results and submit the ballot. You should not enter any written feedback. You can go back to enter or edit comments until 8PM the evening of the tournament.

If we are using paper ballots, (or if you have entered the results on the electronic ballot) and if you are comfortable, you can take a quick minute or two to comment verbally on the debate. Remember that they are students, so try to be positive about what you say. I try to compliment something they have done well and to suggest how they can improve. These can be comments on their presentation style, their organization or the arguments they use. As you become more experienced, you may want to comment on debate tactics and strategy.

Please be careful not to say anything that gives away your decision. We have a strict rule not to release any results until after the tournament is over, when we distribute copies of the ballots to all the teams. You should not disclose your decision to the debaters or to anyone else until after the tournament ends. Disagreements over the results could be a serious distraction during the day.

Step Six: Decide Who Won!

After you've spoken to the debaters, ask them to leave the room and close the door. (With electronic ballots, you can ask them to leave while you enter the result and call them back for comments after.) There may be other debaters, even another Judge, waiting to enter the room for the next round. Ask them to stay outside and while you take a few minutes to fill out the ballot. And I mean only a few minutes! We want to keep the tournament on schedule, so you have to get the ballot filled out and returned to the Tab Room so that you can go on to your next assignment as a judge.

This is when I pick up the ballot that I put aside after Step Two. As I said, I don't touch the ballot during the debate (though I know some Judges who will write notes or update point totals on the ballot during the round). I prefer to have heard the whole debate and then consider my decision, assign scores and mark the ballot. Other Judges want to develop their decision and scoring concurrently with the debate. There is no right or wrong here, it is simply a matter of preference. As you develop as a Judge—and we certainly hope that you will come to other CDA tournaments to help us as Judges—you will develop your own approach and style.

Your decision is composed of three parts: who won the debate, the speaker ranks and the speaker points. At the end of the tournament, we award trophies for the best teams and the best speakers. The best team is decided on the basis of best win/loss record, highest total speaker points and lowest total speaker ranks, in that order. We have additional tiebreakers if needed that look at the record of the opponents each team faced. The best speaker awards are decided on the basis of highest total points, lowest total ranks and best win/loss record, in that order. Again, we have additional tiebreakers based on the record of the speaker's opponents if needed.

All three components of your decision matter. The importance of the win/loss decision is obvious. The speaker ranks essentially compare the debaters among themselves within the debate. The speaker points compare debaters across debates, and ideally should be consistent across the debates that you yourself judge and the debates judged by others. Every debate will have one winner and one loser, and every debate will have a speaker ranked one—the best rank—two, three and four. But deciding whether the speaker you saw in the second round deserves the same score, say a 27, as a debater your

saw in the first round, and whether another judge would have assigned the same number of points, can be tricky. I'll spend some time later discussing assigning point totals.

I find that the easiest way to score the debate is in three steps:

1. decide who won,
2. rank the speakers, and
3. finally assign points.

This process starts with the most important, yet in some ways the simplest decision, and moves on to those that are more difficult. As I said before, other judges may score the debate differently, but this is the method I will describe to you.

So, the first thing is to decide who won. Most of the time, by the end of the debate, you will know who you believe won. That feeling that you have at the end of the debate as to which team did the better job of convincing you to accept their side of the motion is probably the right decision. I always review my notes and go over the major points of clash between the two teams, to make sure my feeling is justified. But most of the time the review will confirm my first impression. This isn't to say that some debates will be closer than others and take more time to decide. This also isn't to say another Judge might disagree with me. But Judges often spend too much time worrying over the result without getting anywhere. At least make sure you note down your first thought as to which team won and which lost and start from there.

The ballot has a place on the front page to note who won, and you should list both the school name and the side—Government or Opposition—as a check for the Tab Room. Below that is an area that begins “Reason(s) for decision” followed by a blank space for you to write a brief explanation of why you made the decision you did. It is very important that you give the debaters a reason for your decision. I'll talk more about your written comments a bit later.

Step Seven: Rank order the speakers from 1 to 4

Once you've decided who won the debate, the next step is to decide how to rank order the four speakers from first to last. The ballot requires that you rank them 1, 2, 3 and 4, with no ties, where 1 indicates the best speaker.

These ranks must correspond to the decision you made in Step Six as to who won. So if you rank the speakers on one team 1 and 2, that team must be the team that won the debate, because you believe both speakers were better than those on the other team that you ranked 3 and 4. Similarly, if you rank the speakers on one team 1 and 3, as 1 is better than 2 and 3 is better than 4, that team must be the one you believe won the debate. The only ambiguous case is if you rank the speakers on one team 1 and 4, and the speakers on the other team 2 and 3. While 1 is better than 2, 3 is better than 4, so either team may have won the debate. The sum of the ranks of the winning team will always be 5 or less.

It is easy to get confused with ranks and points because sometimes the team that has the best speakers—in the sense of the best orators—does not have the best arguments. You should award the victory to the team that wins on the arguments. This means that when you assign speaker ranks you must consider not just oratory, but all the duties of the speaker, including the quality of their arguments. A speaker who has presented superior arguments and done a better job of clashing with and answering the arguments of his opponents is the better debater, even if he is less articulate than his opponents.

Step Eight: Assign points to each speaker

The final step in scoring the debate is to assign speaker points. You've decided which team won the debate, and you've ranked the debaters from first to last, 1 to 4. The points you assign should correspond to the ranks you assigned: the speaker ranked 2 should not receive more points than the speaker that you ranked 1. Unlike ranks, however, speakers may receive the same number of points. While the speaker ranked 2 should not receive more points than the speaker ranked 1, the two could receive the same number of points if you felt their performances were very closely matched.

The number of points to assign each speaker can be a difficult decision. We have a number of guidelines. First, the maximum number of points you can assign is 30, but we ask that you not assign points above 28 ½ unless a debater is truly exceptional. We also ask that you not assign fewer than 23. You can assign a 22, but it means the debater has done something offensive that needs to be reported to the debater's coach. The Tab Director may question you if you assign a score outside of the 28 ½ to 23, so you are really working on a 6 point scale, with half points.

Second, you can consider three categories: superior, average and below average. A superior debate will receive a 27 or 28, average a 25 or 26, and below average a 23 or 24, with half points allowed for finer distinctions.

Third, remember that we have two divisions, Varsity and Novice. Varsity debaters are generally more experienced than Novice, and we make allowance for that in the scoring, expecting better performance from the Varsity. An excellent Novice debater who might earn a 27 or 28 might only be an average Varsity debater, scoring only 25 or 26.

The handout describes scoring with two separate rubrics as well as a discussion of the various skills you should consider. Your coach should have provided you with this material before the tournament, but if not, try to read it when you have time. (Please don't read it during the debate!) It will help you understand judging, but the only way to become a good judge is the same as the only way to become a good debater: judge or debate.

When you have observed a lot of debates you will develop your own sense of scale for assigning points. You will be able to place the speakers on that scale more easily. We understand that judging is subjective. There is no one correct way to judge, and assigning scores is no different. If you are a new judge, you may find the rubric useful in helping to build up the speaker points from individual skills. If you are an experienced judge, you can use the rubric to provide feedback to the debaters on their strengths and weaknesses. In either case you may have to make some compromises to assign reasonable scores.

One final word on speaker points. You are unlikely to see the best debater or the worst debater of the day in the first round that you judge. So be careful about scoring too high or too low. In all the years that I've been a judge, I've assigned very few 29's and even fewer 30's, and I have never assigned a score below 23. So even if you are very impressed by the first team you see, remember the next team might be even better, and you may want to save a point or two in the range to recognize that difference.

Step Nine: Provide a brief written critique on the ballot

The bottom two-thirds of the ballot has space for you to write your comments to the debaters. We make a copy of the paper ballots for both teams, so all four debaters and their coach will see whatever

you write. The electronic ballot has one box for your Reason for Decision (RFD) which goes to all debaters and their coach, and one box for comments to each team that go only to that team.

What you write is the most important information you will place on the ballot. While the debaters will focus on the ranks and the scores, it's your written comments that provide the feedback that can help them learn to become better debaters. For most debates the only people in the room will be the four debaters and the judge. You are the only one who can give them an unbiased opinion as to what they did well and what they did poorly.

The first thing you should write is an explanation of why you chose one side or another to win the debate, the RFD. Try to be specific. If you were impressed by a particular argument that outweighed the others, then say so. If you felt one team did a better job responding to the other team's arguments, then tell them and provide an example. Explaining why they won or lost is the most important feedback that you can give them.

You can also direct comments to one team or even one debater. Just remember on a paper ballot these comments go to both teams. Here you can tell each debater those things they did well or poorly. You can write about their speaking style, their performance offering and answering POIs, their arguments or anything else that you think is important.

With all your comments, please remember that you are dealing with students. Try to phrase things in a positive fashion. Often a debater may be unaware that they are doing something that is ineffective or even annoying. Rather than saying that directly, you may want to write something like, "Your presentation would be more effective if you used fewer hand gestures, and looked at your audience when you spoke," or "When you argued that the proposal would be too expensive, it would be more convincing if you gave examples or reasons why it would cost so much."

The electronic ballots comments can be edited until 8PM the evening of the tournament. The comment windows allow you to write quite a bit. The paper ballot space is limited, but you can continue on the back if you need more room. We check and copy the back if needed.

Don't be too self-conscious. Every judge approaches a debate a bit differently. Debaters need to understand this and to appreciate that arguments or speaking styles that persuade one person may not work as well with another. There is no one correct way to judge a debate. Your feedback is important because you were the one who saw them debate.

Finally, while we do give copies of the ballots to each team, we don't distribute them until the end of the tournament. The debaters will review them on the ride home and at their team meeting after the tournament. They may complain about your decision, but they will do so after we have all gone home for the day. If a debater comes up to you during the tournament and asks you about the debate, you should not discuss anything that would give away your decision. As I said, we want the decisions kept confidential until after the tournament has ended.

[Step Ten: Get your ballot back to the Tab Room on time](#)

Okay. You've listened to the round, taken notes, made a decision, scored the round and filled out the ballot. You should try to spend no more than five to ten minutes filling out the ballot. I realize this isn't a lot of time—especially since I've just said you can write comments on the back of the ballot—but it's important that we keep the tournament moving so that we stay on schedule. We all want to get out at

a reasonable time. Try not to agonize over your decision. I find that the quality of my decision and comments don't improve much after more than 15 minutes, and I try to be finished in 10.

If we are using electronic ballots, Tab will have your result as soon as you submit it and verify it. The computer checks that decision, ranks and scores are consistent.

If we are using paper ballots, there is one more thing to do before you get to move on to the next round and do it all over again: get the ballot back to the Tab Room. Please bring the ballot back in person. Don't give it to a student or anyone else. There will be volunteers, usually sitting at a table outside the room, who will check to see that your ballot is filled out correctly. If you bring the ballot to tab personally, we can clear up any questions immediately while the debate and your score are still fresh in your mind. Once you've been told the ballot is correct, you can go on to the next round. And remember, we want to keep your decision confidential until the end of the day.

Additional Thoughts on Judging a Debate

There will be four rounds, two before and two after lunch, with a final round between the two best varsity teams to decide the winner of the tournament. It's a long day, but I hope you will find it interesting and enjoyable.

I also hope that these ten steps will help guide you through your first round and subsequent rounds. I've concentrated more on procedure than how to evaluate the debate to be sure you were prepared for your first round.

In the time that remains I'd like to talk about more about the criteria we would like you to use to judge the debate. While each judge will approach a round differently, there are a number of things that we emphasize to the debaters that you should be aware of and understand. Some of these are listed on the handouts we've given you, and some are indicated by the scoring categories on the back of the ballot.

Judge Primarily on What the Debaters Say

The fundamental task of each team is to persuade the judge of the correctness of its position, the Government in favor of the motion, and the Opposition against the motion. The decision should be based on the arguments presented by each team during the debate, and not on the knowledge, preferences, or reasoning of the judge. The topics that we debate are usually of current interest and are sometimes highly controversial. You may have strong personal opinions in favor of one side of the argument or the other. We ask you to leave those opinions outside the room and listen to the debaters with an open mind. You should judge based on what you hear, not on what you believe. If you find that you feel so strongly about the issue we are discussing today that you can't judge with an open mind, please let us know and we will excuse you.

You should also be careful not to inject too much of what you know about the subject into judging the debate. While it is reasonable to ask you to put aside your beliefs, it's harder and less useful to ask you to put aside what you know, because if you didn't know anything you wouldn't be very useful as a judge. However, you shouldn't let your knowledge overwhelm what is presented by the debaters.

The debaters only received the motion just before we began this workshop. The only materials they have are four to ten pages of articles in a packet put together to give them some background on the motion and to be used to help develop and support their arguments. They are permitted to bring a

dictionary, an almanac, and a copy of the US Constitution with them for use during the preparation period and the debates. Beyond that, all they have are their wits and what they have learned, both formally and informally. But in one hour they have to be ready to argue both for and against the motion with equal skill.

You may know quite a bit more about the topic than they do, but you cannot hold them to that standard. I've often found debaters to be surprisingly knowledgeable. On the other hand, I've also heard debaters cite rather amazing facts that I've known to be absolutely incorrect. This is done quite innocently—I've never seen debaters knowingly present false evidence. We've all said things on occasion that we've later found out were false. It's also rare that the debate will turn on the truth or falsity of one fact. You should generally credit what the debaters tell you, but if you believe some fact they have presented is incorrect, then you may want to credit it a bit less.

You've probably already noticed a wide variety of fashion choices among the debaters. The CDA does not have dress code, and you should try not to let a student's appearance affect your judgment.

Judge Primarily on How Well the Teams Support Their Side

There are very few rules of debate, but there are a few things that are generally accepted.

First, the Government team has the "burden of proof" which means simply that they must start the debate by presenting a reasonable argument that supports the motion. The Opposition team need only show that the Government has not met this burden and has not given sufficient reason to adopt the motion. Note that in compensation for having to carry the motion, the Government gets three advantages: the Government speaks first and last, and the Government has the right to a reasonable definition of terms.

Almost any reasonable argument the Government makes in favor of the motion meets the burden of proof if it stands unopposed, no matter how weak it may seem. If all you have is what the Government tells you, then they will win the debate by default. This is reflected in the convention that both teams have what is called the "burden of rejoinder." What that means, simply, is that if one side advances a reasonable argument, it should be accepted as such unless it is challenged by the other team. If the Government presents a case that is ignored by the Opposition, then the Government has met its burden of proof and should win the debate. If the Opposition presents reasonable arguments against the Government case, and the Government ignores them, then the Opposition has met the burden of rejoinder. The Opposition has responded to the Government's arguments, and the Opposition should win the debate, and so on.

The debates that you judge will be much messier than this simple description. The Government will present arguments in favor of the motion. The Opposition will respond to those arguments: to some with strong counterarguments, to some with weaker replies, and to some with no argument at all. The Opposition may also give you separate arguments against the motion, an Opposition case, independent of what the Government has said. The Government will then not only have to respond to any Opposition counterarguments against the Government case but also propose Government counterarguments to the Opposition case. Like the Opposition, some of those Government counterarguments will be strong, some weak, and the Government may fail to respond at all to some arguments.

In the rebuttal speeches, each team should try to summarize the debate by comparing the arguments presented by both sides and weighing their importance. A good rebuttal speech provides the Judge with a reason for deciding in favor of your side. As with the tasks of presenting and responding to arguments, some debaters will do this very well; others may not.

This is where the real work and art of judging comes to play. If the debaters have not done so, you will have to compare the arguments presented by both sides—strong and weak, present and missing—and weigh them to decide which side has done the best job of convincing you to adopt or reject the motion. In some debates one argument may be critical, but in most of them it each side will carry one or more arguments, and you must determine their relative weight. We ask you to judge the debate based on the information presented by the debaters, but in the end you may have to exercise your own judgment as to the relative value of that information.

Remember that the standard in debate does not require one side or the other to win every single argument. The team that wins should carry the preponderance of the arguments, which means you should consider the relative importance of arguments as well as their number. In short, you must judge.

Judge Primarily on Clash

The idea of clash is explicit in the way I've just described a debate: each side is responsible for presenting arguments and responding to the arguments made by their opponents. That is the essence of good debate: two teams each listening closely to what the other is saying and responding appropriately.

Not every debate will work that way. Especially with the Novice and less experienced debaters, a team may come in with their own arguments and repeat them throughout the debate. Some debates will seem as if the two teams could be in separate rooms for all the attention they pay to each other's arguments. This lack of clash is the exact opposite of good debate. It's less interesting to listen to, and it's hard to judge because you have to make all the decisions as to which arguments are important. If you judge a debate like this, you should be certain you note the lack of clash in your comments on the ballot. This way the debaters will realize what's missing and do better the next time.

The best debaters in the best debates clash early and often, starting when the Leader of Opposition constructive. Clash is continuous thereafter. Each team makes arguments that refer directly to arguments, comments or answers given by their opponents. They compare and contrast their own position with that of their opponents, telling you precisely why their own arguments are superior. These debates are interesting and entertaining. They may be just as difficult to judge if they are hard fought, but you won't have to construct the arguments yourself, only select the line of reasoning that you found most convincing.

How do you know when the debaters are clashing effectively? It should be obvious that the debaters have listened carefully to what their opponents have said, citing their opponents' arguments fairly and correctly. They should reply to those arguments in detail, not with vague assertions. They should exploit weaknesses in what their opponents have said, not simply mistakes, but also weak reasoning, inconsistencies, and omissions. They should explain why the impacts of their own arguments outweigh those of their opponents. Finally, and especially at the end of the debate, they should summarize what has been said, reducing the debate to the critical differences between the two sides, and why the arguments should lead you, the judge, to decide in their favor.

Ironically, the essence of clash is utmost respect for your opponents: “I’ve listened to you, I’ve understood what you’ve said, and I’ve replied to it in a serious fashion.” That’s what makes a good debate!

This is about all the time we have for now. Please check the schedule and go to your first debate promptly. If you are not scheduled for the first round, feel free to observe a debate. Simply ask the two teams and the judge if they mind your presence. It can be useful to observe a team from your own school in order to give them additional feedback on their performance. In any event please do not leave, because we will almost certainly need you for the second and later rounds.

I and other member of the CDA will be around all day. Please feel free to stop us and ask questions as you have them. We will be happy to help. And once again, thank you for volunteering your time to make this tournament possible. We hope that you will enjoy it enough to come back to other CDA tournaments in the future.

ejr

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