

CCofSE Public Forum Debate

Rules and Standards

PHILOSOPHY

Academic debate is a persuasive speech event centered on the clash of issues. In Public Forum debate, students must be prepared to both advocate for and refute a specific proposition (a statement expressing a judgment or opinion).

Unlike Team Policy debate, a Public Forum proposition does not pose a problem requiring a policy solution. Furthermore, unlike Lincoln-Douglas debate, Public Forum does not focus on arguing core values.

(Note: Public Forum is designed for debaters ages 10 to 13, assessed as of October 1st. Students who are 9 or 14 on this date may participate with coach approval.)

In Public Forum Debate, there is no prescribed set of burdens that must be met by either team. The goal is to engage in a clash of ideas. Debaters will present their cases (supported by evidence), cross-examine each other, refute each other's claims, and reiterate their own claims to convince judges to cast a ballot in their favor.

BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

- Always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope
- that is in you.... 1Peter 3:15.
- Come now, and let us reason together, says the LORD... Isaiah 1:18a
- Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how
- you ought to answer each one. Colossians 4:6

GENERAL STANDARDS

Ethics

Conduct and attire should reflect respect for other participants, the debate activity itself, and the mission of CCofSE. Participants are encouraged to err on the side of caution, to do everything decently and in order (1 Corinthians 14:40, 1 Corinthians 16:14), and to avoid even the appearance of wrongdoing (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

Violations

Concerns about violations of the Policy Debate Rules and Standards should be handled according to the guidelines specified in the CCofSE Code of Conduct. The tournament director will have the final say in determining any action that may be required.

RULES AND JUDGING PARADIGM

Debaters will be evaluated on their analysis, use of evidence, and ability to effectively and persuasively organize, deliver, and refute arguments. A win shall be given to either the Pro or the Con team, except in the event a winning team is given a loss for committing an ethical violation. In such cases, a double loss shall be given. Only in this instance is the round given a double loss. The Pro side wishes to convince the judge that the proposition should be adopted; the Con side wishes to convince the judge that the proposition should be rejected.

Both sides should support their arguments. Newspapers, news magazines, online news sites, and books are all acceptable support for a debater's points. Credibility is important for all sources cited. However, evidence in Public Forum Debate does not have to be limited to facts and statistics. "Soft" evidence (examples, stories, etc.) is also acceptable, as is logic. Evidence should be accurately and directly quoted with proper respect to the context of the original source. References may be made to the Bible, but citing the Bible as evidence is prohibited. Participants take full responsibility for the accuracy of the evidence they cite.

Plans offering a solution are not allowed by either team. New arguments are not permitted in the Summary and Final Focus speeches. There is no penalty for dropped arguments, but once dropped an argument should not be picked up later in the debate unless the opposing team continues the discussion. Visual aids are not allowed at the lectern or to be placed on the teams' tables. Tag teaming is not allowed. Tag teaming is any kind of interaction by a speaker with his partner or anyone in the audience during his speech.

THE ROUND

One team (the PRO side) is affirming the proposition; the other team (the CON side) is negating it.

The coin toss procedure is as follows:

Before beginning each round the students, judge, or a tournament official (if applicable) will flip a coin. The team winning the coin toss may then choose which speaking position they would prefer - to speak first or last.

Teams have up to 60 seconds to make their decisions. During that time they may not leave the room or consult with anyone other than their partners.

FORMAT OF THE ROUND

Speeches occur in the following order:

First Speaker - Team A = 4 Minutes

First Speaker - Team B = 4 Minutes

Crossfire (between speakers 1 & 2) = 3 Minutes

Second Speaker - Team A = 4 Minutes

Second Speaker - Team B = 4 Minutes

Crossfire (between speakers 3 & 4) = 3 Minutes

Summary - First Speaker - Team A = 2 Minutes

Summary - First Speaker - Team B = 2 Minutes

Grand Crossfire (all speakers) = 3 Minutes

Final Focus - Second Speaker - Team A = 2 Minutes

Final Focus - Second Speaker - Team B = 2 Minutes

Each team may use up to two (2) minutes of preparation (prep) time.

Prep time is to be taken by the team that will be speaking next.

Prep time may not be used prior to Crossfire or Grand Crossfire.

TIMING

All timing shall be done by the debaters. Each team will provide two countdown timepieces, one of which is to be used to keep track of prep time.

Debaters shall tell the judge/s when they are beginning and ending prep time, and how much time remains.

ELECTRONICS

Debaters may not use electronic devices other than countdown timepieces in a round.

Recording or videotaping of any or all of a round may only be done with the permission of all debaters involved.