



## **OHSSL**

### **Congress Judging Instructions**

*Congressional Debate asks students to act as if they are legislators at the federal or state level. Students offer legislation, debate it, make motions, ask questions, and vote. Throughout, they follow parliamentary procedure. The Congressional Debate chamber should resemble a real congress or state legislative chamber.*

#### **Judging Speeches:**

As a judge, your primary responsibility is judging speeches. Speakers deliver speeches alternating in support or opposition to a piece of legislation. This speech lasts for three minutes and includes an additional questioning period. You will judge the speaker based on the following criteria:

- speaker's strength of vocal delivery
- speaker's strength of logic
- speaker's understanding of the issue at hand and its impact
- speaker's use of research to support points
- speaker's ability to answer questions
- speaker's ability to advance the discussion without repeating previous speakers' arguments

You will judge from the time the speaker begins to the time he or she finishes answering questions. Do not score based on any activity outside of this speech time.

#### **Entering Scores:**

Tournaments will ask you to judge speeches based on a scale of one to six. Higher scores are better. Reserve scores of two or below for speeches demonstrating serious weaknesses, such as speaking for less than one minute or acting offensively. Most tournaments request that you complete a speech critique sheet as well. Be sure to provide positive and negative constructive comments. Speakers want to know what works and what does not. Be specific and clear.

#### **Judge's Preference:**

At the end of a session, tournament organizers will probably ask you to rank your favorite speakers from the room in order. The organizers may ask you to rank all the members of the chamber or just the top six, based on previously tabulated speech scores. Regardless, the procedure is the same. You decide how strong you felt each speaker was in speaking, answering questions, asking questions, following parliamentary procedure, and helping to create a respectful chamber. Ranks run in opposite approach from speech scores. Give a rank of number one (1) for the strongest congressperson, a rank of number two (2) for the next strongest, and so on.

#### **Parliamentarian and Presiding Officer:**

Unlike regular debate, you need not organize and run the room. The tournament has enlisted the efforts of an experienced adult to serve as parliamentarian. This person ensures that all members are observing rules. He or she settles disputes with reference to official Congress documentation.

The presiding officer is a member of the chamber elected to run the chamber. This member manages the legislation docket, hears motions, and handles votes. This person runs the room. The parliamentarian settles disputes, but good rooms rarely see them.

#### **Judging the Presiding Officer:**

Tournaments ask that you judge a presiding officer's performance based on the same point scale, judging his/her tenure as if it were one speech. Usually, service for one session equals one speech score. Judge the presiding officer based on his or her ability to run the chamber smoothly according to parliamentary procedure, treat all members fairly, and reduce conflict as much as possible.



## OHSSL Congressional Debate Rubric: Speaking

This table of evaluation standards may be used by any judge who would like assistance in determining scores for speeches. Each scorer independently (without collaborating) awards 1 to 6 points for each speech. Each speaker has up to three minutes to present arguments followed by a questioning period **of one minute**.

Points	3	4	5	6
	Mediocre	Good	Excellent	Superior
Content; Organization, Evidence & Language	The speech lacked a clear thesis and organizational structure. Claims are only asserted with generalizations and no real evidence. Language use is unclear or ineffective.	While the speaker's purpose is present, the speech lacks logical organization and/or developed ideas. Analysis of evidence, if present, fails to connect its relevance to the speaker's claims. Use of language is weak.	While a clear purpose is apparent, organization may be somewhat loose (weak introduction or conclusion; no transitions between points). Diction represents a grasp of language. Much evidence is presented, but not in a persuasive or effective manner; or the speaker relies on one piece of evidence, but does so effectively.	Content is clearly and logically organized, and characterized by depth of thought and development of ideas, supported by a variety of credible quantitative (statistical) and qualitative (testimony) evidence analyzed effectively to draw conclusions. Compelling language, a poignant introduction and conclusion and lucid transitions clearly establish the speaker's purpose and frame the perspective of the issue's significance.
Argument & Refutation	The speaker offers mostly unwarranted assertions, which often simply repeat/refresh previous arguments.	The speaker fails to either introduce new arguments (simply repeating previous arguments) or the speaker fails to refute previous opposing arguments; in other words, no real clash is present.	New ideas and response to previous arguments are offered, but in an unbalanced manner (too much refutation or too many new arguments). Questions are answered adequately.	The speaker contributes to the spontaneity of debate, effectively synthesizing response and refutation of previous ideas with new arguments. If the speaker fields questions, he/she responds with confidence and clarity..
Delivery	Little eye contact, gestures and/or movement are present. Vocal presentation is inarticulate due to soft volume or lack of enunciation.	Presentation is satisfactory, yet unimpressively read (perhaps monotonously) from prepared notes, with errors in pronunciation and/or minimal eye contact. Awkward gestures/movement may be distracting.	The presentation is strong, but contains a few mistakes, including problems with pronunciation and enunciation. The speech may be partially read with satisfactory fluency. Physical presence may be awkward at times.	The speaker's vocal control and physical poise are polished, deliberate, crisp and confident. Delivery should be extemporaneous, with few errors in pronunciation. Eye contact is effective and consistent.

Scores of less than three (3) are rarely encouraged, and should be reserved for such circumstances as abusive language, a degrading personal attack on another legislator, or for a speech that is extremely brief (less than 45 seconds) or delivered without purpose or dignity for the cause exhorted by the legislation. Substantial written comments and description of specific incidents should accompany such scores.



## OHSSL Congressional Debate Rubric: Presiding

This table of evaluation standards may be used by any judge who would like assistance in determining scores for a Presiding Officer (PO). Each scorer independently (without collaborating) awards 1 to 6 points for each hour of presiding.

Points	1 – 2	3 – 4	5 - 6
	<b>Weak – Mediocre</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Excellent - Superior</b>
<b>Speaker Recognition</b>	The P.O. needs to improve his/her communication with fellow delegates to gain their trust and respect relating to the rationale for rulings made. Frequent errors are made in speaker recognition, which lacks consistent method or impartiality.	While the P.O. does not adequately explain his/her preferences for running the chamber in advance, he/she does clearly explain rulings, when necessary. Speaker recognition may be somewhat inconsistent or biased.	Presiding preferences are clearly explained at the beginning of the session and executed consistently. The P.O. is universally respected and trusted by his/her peers, and is consistent in recognition (very few errors) and rulings, distributing speeches throughout the room geographically, equally between schools of the same size, and among individuals.
<b>Parliamentary Procedure</b>	The P.O.'s knowledge of parliamentary procedure is lacking, and he/she shows negligible effort to correct errors and/or consult written rules.	The P.O. demonstrates competency in procedure, but makes mistakes in determining the results of motions and votes, etc. .	The P.O. has command of parliamentary procedure (motions) and uses this almost transparently to run a fair and efficient chamber, seldom consulting written rules and ruling immediately on whether motions pass or fail.
<b>Delivery/Presence</b>	The P.O. needs to improve his/her vocal and physical presence and professional demeanor.	The P.O. displays a satisfactory command of the chamber in his/her vocal and physical presence. Word choice is usually concise.	The P.O. dynamically displays a command and relates well to the chamber through his/her vocal and physical presence. Word choice is economical and eloquent.