

The Maumee Guide to Judging Public Forum Debate

Public Forum debate is a team effort, with 2 students (Pro) against another 2 students (Con) arguing over a pre-determined resolution. The Pro team must uphold the resolution, and the Con team must negate the resolution. The resolution is based on a current event that changes monthly. Judges will be given the resolution prior to the beginning of the first round.

A central focus of the debate is that the students must communicate their ideas in a manner persuasive to a non-specialist or citizen judge. Unlike Lincoln-Douglas Debate which concentrates heavily on theoretical issues of value, Public Forum Debate focuses on observed statistics and other criteria, often drawing on emotional appeal to convince the judge.

Besides using *hard facts*, such as internet sources, news programs, newspaper articles, documents, and reports to support their arguments, it is also highly encouraged for the debaters to include true stories, anecdotes, examples, and vivid imagery into the speeches in order to hit on the emotions of the judges and opponents.

Speakers 1&3 and Speakers 2&4 will be from the same team

<u>Speaking Order</u>	<u>Time Limit</u>
Speaker 1	4 min
Speaker 2	4 min
(Prep time if needed)	*
Crossfire (between 1&2)	2 min
Speaker 3	4 min
Speaker 4	4 min
(Prep time if needed)	*
Crossfire (between 3&4)	2 min
Summary (Speaker 1)	2 min
Summary (Speaker 2)	2 min
Grand Crossfire (all speakers)	3 min
Final Focus (Speaker 3)	2 min
Final Focus (Speaker 4)	2 min

* 2 min Prep Time per team

Instructions: **Before the Round**

1. Supplies:

- **Judging Ballot**
These must be picked up at the judges' table prior to every round. If you don't have one ready for you, please check the table regularly, unless otherwise told by tournament staff, to make sure you aren't needed for the very next round. Even if you aren't needed for one round, you may still be needed for the next round.

- **Stopwatch or time-keeping phone app**
While many debaters will use their own timers, as the official time keeper you must keep track of time yourself. It is important that you keep your cell phone on airplane mode or silent even if you are using it to keep track of time.

- **Flow sheet**
These help to keep track of arguments in an organized way, simplifying the decision process at the end. Flow sheets are available to be printed from our website or by request from a Maumee coach.

- **A Quarter or similarly large coin**
This coin will be flipped prior to the round to determine the choices that the debaters make.

2. Ask one of the teams to call heads or tails, and then flip a coin

The winner of the toss will choose sides (either Pro or Con) OR speaking order (to be speaker 1&3 or speaker 2&4). The loser of the toss gets to choose the remaining option.

3. Once the teams have chosen their sides, ask them to fill out their speaker information at the top of the judge ballot. Then ask them to sit on the side corresponding to their spot on the ballot.

For example, if the ballot has the Pro comments on the left, have the team that chose to be Pro sit on the left side of the room facing you. This makes it easier for you to keep track of which side each team is on, which can be tricky at times throughout the debate.

4. Remind the students that phones must be turned off or on airplane mode during the round, and laptops must be on airplane mode. Also, check your own phone to make sure it is also turned off or on airplane mode.

Researching using the internet is prohibited during the round and could be grounds for disqualification. Debaters must have the research downloaded and ready, either in physical copy or a PDF document on their laptop. You are welcome to request that the students show you their phone and/or laptop prior to the round, although this is often unnecessary. If you suspect that they are drawing their sources from the internet during the round, you may also ask to see the PDF regarding the suspected information after the round is fully completed. Do not interrupt the round for this request.

Additionally, if a student's phone rings, it may be grounds for disqualification. Exceptions are made if the ringing is meant to signify the end of their speech, produced by a timing app. Ringing that interrupts a speech, regardless of whether it is from a phone that belongs to a competitor, judge, or observer, will typically incur a fine imposed on the team that the student or adult came with.

During the Round

**Both teams can use up to a total of 2 minutes of preparation time.*

They can request to use this time at any point during the entire round so long as it does not interrupt a speech.

1st & 2nd

Speeches: These speeches should outline reasons to affirm or negate the resolution. They should include facts, expert opinions, and sources of information. They should not include plans, counterplans, off-topic arguments, etc.

Crossfire 1: Speaker 1 and Speaker 2 crossfire each other for 3 minutes. Speaker 1 gets to ask the first question. Following that question, either person can ask and answer questions. Questions should be brief and relevant. Filibustering and rudeness are frowned upon.

3rd & 4th

Speeches: These speeches should outline reason to affirm or negate the resolution. They should include facts, expert opinions, and sources of information. These speeches may include rebuttals of opponents' arguments.

Crossfire 2: Speaker 3 and Speaker 4 crossfire each other for 3 minutes. Speaker 3 gets to ask the first question. Following that question, either person can ask and answer questions. Questions should be brief and relevant. Filibustering and rudeness are frowned upon.

Summaries: These speeches should summarize the points that the team feels it is winning and should refute opponents' arguments. Summary speeches may include new information, but they may not include new arguments. (New information used to counter an old argument is NOT a new argument.)

Grand

Crossfire: All four speakers crossfire each other for 3 minutes. The team that spoke first in the round gets to ask the first question. Following that question, either team can ask and answer questions. Questions should be brief and relevant. Filibustering and rudeness are frowned upon.

Note: The judge serves as the moderator of the round and may halt any crossfire that is out of control.

Final Focus: In this speech, debaters should emphasize the arguments or single argument that should win the debate for that side. No new arguments are permitted.

After the Round

1. Do not provide verbal feedback unless otherwise directed by tournament staff

It is important that the students do not know who won or lost until after the tournament. This is intended to ensure that all students are on equal terms up until the awards ceremony. Additionally, do not give them feedback on their speeches or arguments until you have turned in the judge ballot. As the judge, you must rely on the information provided during the round only; the final decision is not up to a group discussion.

2. Write both positive and negative feedback on the ballot, once the students have left the room

Again, the students should not know who won or lost, so please avoid making such marks until they have left the room to avoid them accidentally seeing the decision. The students will receive copies of the ballots after the awards ceremony, so please add a combination of positive and negative feedback to aid in their future improvement. It's helpful for these students to know what they did correctly AND what they did wrong in order for them to practice the appropriate changes for the next tournament, and it is helpful for coaches to know what they need to focus on and what they can leave be.

3. Be brief, using bullet points or short sentences to explain your decision

The tournament staff needs to know the results of the round in order to organize the next round. While it is encouraged to have comprehensive feedback for the student, it is equally important that the ballot is turned in before the next round is scheduled to begin. The easiest way to ensure that both of these can be achieved is by using bullet points or short sentences that focus on what the root of your comment is. Writing paragraphs to explain a single cause of concern is both time consuming and unnecessary for the student to understand the issue. Don't worry about sounding too blunt: a good balance of straightforward positive and negative feedback is more important than a paragraph explaining the nuances of a specific issue.

4. Deciding the Winner

You should decide which team was most persuasive in the debate. It is best to be objective about the issues, setting aside your original opinions and attitudes. You should determine which team did the better job of debating, not which side is right and which side is wrong. Some criteria that could be considered are logical reasoning, maturity of thought, and quality of communication.

Sample considerations for ballot comments and reasons for decision:

- An unfair interpretation.
If the interpretation is disputed by the Con, it rests with the judge whether or not the Pro is supporting the position well.
- Discourtesy toward opponents.
Discourtesy and rudeness should be penalized according to the seriousness of the offense.
- Falsification of evidence.
If a team falsifies evidence in support of a point, they should lose that point.
- Misconstruing an opponent's arguments.
A speaker who misconstrues an argument unintentionally should not be penalized more than the time wasted. If it is obviously intentional, the team should lose that point or argument.
- Speaking overtime.
When a speaker's time is up, the judge shall disregard anything beyond a closing statement.
- Delivery
Rate of speech should be at a conversational pace. Debaters should be fluent, articulate, free of slang and jargon, have good vocal variety and good eye contact with the judge.