



District Tournament

Congressional Debate Judging Instructions

This is individual debate in a large group setting. Debaters write and research legislation they feel will better our society. At tournaments, debaters speak extemporaneously in favor or against each bill or resolution using proper parliamentary procedure. Judges evaluate contestants for quality of research and analysis of issues, argumentation, skill in asking and answering questions, use of parliamentary procedure, and clarity of delivery.

Evaluation

1. When scoring a speaker, offer constructive comments about the speech. If there is questioning involved, the quality of answers by the speaker should factor into the overall speech score. Award each speech between one and six points. You evaluate the quality of arguments, not whether you agree or disagree. Reserve scores of “2” for students who show little effort, and “1” for students who make serious errors (speaking on the wrong side, a speech that’s a mockery/not serious, or engaging in personal attacks of other students). See rubric for more guidance, as well as the sample form.
2. Each judge also should complete an evaluation of the presiding officer (PO), awarding 3-8 points per hour, based on how effectively the presiding officer ran the chamber. See rubric for more guidance, as well as the sample form.
3. **NOTE:** At the National Forensic League **district qualifying tournament**, speakers and POs earn 2-8 points.
4. When the session ends, judges independently (without consulting one another) rank best legislators on a master ballot:
 - a. Ranking should take into account students’ overall impact during the session. In addition to speaking or presiding effectively, did s/he encourage the legislative problem-solving process in a collaborative manner by asking meaningful questions, useful motions, and showing attentive interest throughout the debate? Could you tell which students actually listened by making specific and accurate references to others’ arguments?
 - b. Ranking the presiding officer (PO) amidst speakers is like comparing apples and oranges. Therefore, consider the overall performance of the PO. Did s/he effectively facilitate debate in an assertive but not aggressive manner? Were motions and votes handled efficiently? Did s/he rely on a number of unnecessary “crutch phrases,” or did s/he speak briefly, but effectively? Considering the PO’s overall performance, how would it compare to a speaker’s performance based on your expectations? Let that be your determining factor in how you might rank the PO among speakers.
 - c. Quality is more important than quantity. Rank best legislators even if they didn’t give the most speeches.
 - d. A student must have spoken or presided to be ranked.
5. Stay in the background as much as possible. Although congress participants may appeal the decision of the student presiding officer to judges, these cases are rare. Allow students to retain control except for serious violations.

Time Limits – applies to each new legislation	
Sponsor Speech	3 Minutes
Questioning of Sponsor	2 Minutes
First Negative Speech	3 Minutes
Questioning of First Negative	2 Minutes
All subsequent speeches	3 Minutes/each
Questioning of all subsequent speakers	1 Minute/each

Ethics and Evidence Rules *Judges should take adherence to these rules into account when ranking.*

Conduct

- A congressperson shall act with integrity and he/she should never be guilty of intentional harassment. Impeaching/censuring other participants is not allowed.
- Participation in this event demands the seriousness of purpose and maturity possessed by real world policymakers. All adult officials, including scorers, will hold each participant to this standard.
- Congresspersons should have a cooperative nature and if there is a problem, then the student should take any concerns to an adult official.

- Participation in debate is essential. Extended absence from the chamber during a session will affect a contestant’s overall impression and performance. The practice of “open chambers” interferes with the parliamentarian’s ability to monitor student participation.

Evidence and Use of Electronic Devices

- Computers may be used to retrieve evidence per the League’s rules for laptops in debate events.
- Visual aids are permitted in Congressional Debate, provided they do not require electronic retrieval devices in the chamber.

Congressional Debate

Speech Evaluation	Chamber #:	Student Name:	School Code:
	Session:		

Rate each speech, (2 = weak; 8 = strong), and justify your rating with constructive suggestions for improvement. Consider: **Originality of Thought** (advances debate rather than repeats previously stated ideas; refutes opposing arguments); **Organization and Unity** (cohesively links ideas); **Evidence and Logic** (cites credible sources, connecting to claims); **Delivery** (extemporaneous speaking vs. reciting a manuscript, seriousness of purpose, style and poise). How well the speaker answers questions also should be considered. *If the student speaks more than three times, write comments on the reverse side and award 2-8 points for each additional speech.* You will rank students, holistically, at the end of the session, on a separate form.

	Speech 1	← Poor (circle rating) Excellent →	Speech 2	← Poor (circle rating) Excellent →	Speech 3	← Poor (circle rating) Excellent →
	<input type="checkbox"/> Aff <input type="checkbox"/> Neg	2 3 4 5 6 7 8	<input type="checkbox"/> Aff <input type="checkbox"/> Neg	2 3 4 5 6 7 8	<input type="checkbox"/> Aff <input type="checkbox"/> Neg	2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Topic:						
Comments ↓						

Questioning of Other Speakers (relevance to debate, clarification, etc.)	Print Judge Name:
	School/Affiliation:

Congressional Debate

Presiding Evaluation	Chamber #:	Student Name:	School Code:
	Session:		

Award a rating of 3-8 points per hour of presiding (3=weak; 8 = strong), and justify your rating with constructive suggestions for improvement. You will rank students, holistically, at the end of the session, on a separate form, and **may or may not include** the presiding officer in your ranking. Consider: **Parliamentary Procedure** (clearly explains protocols and rulings); **Recognition** (fairly and efficiently recognizes speakers and questioners, maintains appropriate speaker precedence and recency, and avoids “activity,” “longest standing/standing time”); **Control** (maintains decorum of delegates, and willing to rule motions out of order); **Demeanor** (fosters a respectful, professional, and collegial atmosphere); **Communication** (overall use of language, avoiding unnecessary verbiage).

Circle point rating:							
← High/Best		Low →	X # of Hours	= Total Points			
8	7	6	5	4	3		

Print Judge Name:
School/Affiliation:

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 (the time length for which will vary, depending on specific league rules). Remember, you **do not base your score on agreement or disagreement with the positions they debaters offer; rather, evaluate based upon how well the debaters argue their positions.**

Points	3	4 or 5	6 or 7	8
	Mediocre	Proficient	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/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/rehash 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 discouraged, 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.

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	3-4	5-6	7-8
	Weak – Mediocre	Proficient	Excellent – Superior
Speaker Recognition	The PO 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 PO 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 PO is universally respected and trusted by his/her peers, and is consistent in recognition (very few errors) and rulings, distributing speeches throughout the room, equally between schools of the same size, and among individuals.
Parliamentary Procedure	The PO's knowledge of parliamentary procedure is lacking, and he/she shows negligible effort to correct errors and/or consult written rules.	The PO demonstrates competency in procedure, but makes mistakes in determining the results of motions and votes, etc. S/he does not hesitate to consult rules when necessary to ensure fairness.	The PO 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.
Delivery/ Presence	The PO needs to improve his/her vocal and physical presence and professional demeanor.	The PO displays a satisfactory command of the chamber in his/her vocal and physical presence. Word choice is usually concise. The PO generally has command over the chamber.	The PO dynamically displays a command and relates well to the chamber through his/her vocal and physical presence. Word choice is economical and eloquent. The PO does not hesitate to rule abusive or inappropriate motions out of order.

Speaker Recognition Rules:

- When more than one speaker seeks the floor, the presiding officer must follow the *precedence/recency* method:
 - First recognize students who have not spoken during the session
 - Next recognize students who have spoken fewer times
 - Then recognize students who spoke earlier (least recently)
- During any session, precedence/recency should not reset, to ensure that all students in a chamber have an equal opportunity to speak and receive evaluation from scorers. When a new session begins, precedence/recency will be reset along with a new seating chart, and election of a presiding officer.
- Before precedence is established, the presiding officer should explain his/her recognition process and it must be fair, consistent and justifiable. **They may not use the following methods:**
 - Number of motions and/or questions (*activity*)
 - Number of times a speaker has risen to seek recognition (*longest standing or standing time*)

Presiding Officers and Motions

The presiding officer should pause briefly between speeches to recognize any motions from the floor, however, he/she should not call for motions (at the beginning of a session, the presiding officer should remind members to seek his/her attention between speeches).

