



Public Forum
Debate

DEFINING PUBLIC FORUM DEBATE

Public Forum Debate is a team event that advocates or rejects a position posed by the resolution. A central tenet of the debate is that the clash of ideas must be communicated in a manner persuasive to the non-specialist or “citizen judge”, i.e. a member of the American jury.

The debate should:

- display solid logic, reasoning, and analysis
- utilize evidence but not be driven by it
- present a clash of ideas
- counter the arguments of the opponents (rebuttal)
- communicate ideas with clarity, organization, eloquence, and professional decorum

Public Forum is a unique debate form. While Policy Debate focuses on a plan to solve the problem(s) posed by the resolution, and Lincoln Douglas Debate focuses on the core value of the resolution, Public Forum Debate focuses on advocacy of a position derived from issues presented in the resolution, not a prescribed set of burdens.

PUBLIC FORUM DEBATE

Q and A about NFL's new event

The Coin Flip

Q How does a Public Debate Forum round begin?

A With a flip of a coin between the competing teams.

Q Why a coin flip?

A The coin toss adds an element of uncertainty and teaches students strategy, since depending on the toss a team may choose to be pro or con or may choose to speak first or last.

Q How is the flip conducted?

A A coin is tossed by one team and called by the other team. The team which wins the flip may choose EITHER the *side* of the topic they wish to defend (pro or con) OR the *speaking position* they wish to have (begin the debate or end the debate). Once the coin toss winners select their favorite option (i.e. they choose to have the last speech) then the other team makes a choice within the other option (i.e. pro or con). The analogy here is to football: Toss the coin and the winner chooses to kick or receive OR the side of the field they wish to defend.

Q Could the con side go first?

A Indeed. There is no presumption or burden of proof in Public Forum Debate. The pro side wishes to convince the audience that the topic should be adopted; the con side wishes to convince the audience that the proposition should be rejected. So the con side, knowing the topic, can argue against it as first speaker.

Q Why not just alternate sides?

A Invitational tournament directors may choose alternation but NFL suggests flipping. Alternating sides locks the pro as first speaker and the con as last speaker. It is much fairer for students to have the choice of side or speaker position. All NFL contests will use the flip.

Crossfire

Q What is crossfire?

A Both debaters "hold the floor." But the first question must be asked by an opponent *to* the speaker who just finished speaking. After that question and answer, either debater may question and/or answer at will. Debaters should stand during regular Crossfire.

Q Won't this create confusion?

A As students practice the format, they will learn valuable lessons: that an advocate may be more effective with good answers than asking questions; that good questions must be brief; that filibuster answers will be exposed; that rudeness will be penalized by judges.

Q Public Forum Debate sounds like TV debate shows?

A Right! Capital Gang, Crossfire, McLaughlin Group *et al* do this each week. Crossfire adds excitement to the debate process which attracts audiences and the media. Your principal will love to see a Public Forum Debate!

Q Won't debaters abuse this format?

A Not if they want to be successful! Adult judges from the community will be using a ballot which calls for questions to be "brief" and answers to be "on point". Contestants will be penalized for rudeness and poor communication.

Q What is the Grand Crossfire?

A All four debaters have the floor to interact with questions and answers. This is a real test of team work. The first question is asked by the team that had the first summary to the team which had the last summary. After that, any debater may question or answer. Debaters should be seated for Grand Crossfire.

Q Does the judge ever ask questions?

A This is not a common practice.

Q I'm still worried that the crossfire periods will be "Towers of Babel"

A The judge is chairperson of the round and may halt any crossfire out of control. Most debaters will learn that interrupting, shouting, filibustering (all of which may also occur in Policy and L/D cross examination periods) are counter productive.

Q How can students be taught cross examination skills?

A Read James Copeland's book *Cross Examination in Debate*, National Textbook Co.; read pages TA7 and TA8 of the NFL Manual; read John Munkman, *The Technique of Advocacy*, Butterworth (U.K.); read the *Lost Art of Cross Examination* by J. W. Ehrlich, Dorset Press; read the *Art of Cross Examination* by Francis L. Wellman, Dorset Press [check for used copies at abebooks.com. The Munkman is British so Amazon.com (U.K.) might be best]. Also, check your library.

Final Focus

Q What is "Final Focus"?

A The "Final Focus" is a persuasive final restatement of why your team has won the debate. This speech might begin "Judge this is why you should vote (pro or con). "Final Focus" trains students to choose what is vital to decision-making. "Final Focus" must be based on arguments and issues previously addressed in the debate. New arguments in the Final Focus are to be ignored by the judge.

Summary Speeches

Q Are the summary speeches the same as rebuttals?

A Yes. Each team should summarize key arguments it is winning and refute the important arguments it is losing.

Q Can new information be presented in the summary and Final Focus speeches?

A Yes. Facts, opinions, statistics -- evidence of all kinds are legal and welcome to advance the debate. New *arguments* in summary and Final Focus speeches are forbidden. An answer in response to an argument originally presented by the opposition is not a new argument.

Topics and Research

Q When are topics announced?

A A new topic will be announced the first day of each preceding month at www.nflonline.org. The National Tournament topic is released on May 15th.

Q Who chooses the topics?

A A topic committee has been set up to make topic selections.

Q How should topics be researched?

A Newspapers, news magazines, online news sites, books.

Q Is evidence necessary?

A Yes. This is a debate event. Arguments must be supported by evidence.

Q How much evidence should be presented?

A Public Forum Debate is audience debate. Present enough evidence to prove your arguments but not so much as to destroy good communication with a community judge.

Argumentation

Q Are Plans and Counterplans allowed?

A No. In Public Forum Debate, a plan or counterplan is defined by the NFL as a formalized, comprehensive proposal for implementation. Neither the pro or con side is permitted to offer a plan or counterplan; rather, they should offer reasoning to support a position of advocacy. Debaters may offer generalized, practical solutions.

Q Are kritiks banned?

A Yes. Kritiks, which are off topic arguments, are not allowed. Public Forum Debate should stick to issues within the proposition -- not outside issues.

Judges

Q Who judges?

A Almost any adult in the community: salesmen, librarians, retired teachers, business people -- a typical American jury. The use of **community** judges is strongly encouraged. However, any adult can judge.

Q How should a judge evaluate the Final Focus?

A Each debater will select what s/he believes is the voting issue(s); the judge should vote on one of these unless the judge feels the debaters have ignored the critical issue.

Q Why are judges required to identify their voting issue?

A In order to make sure arguments play a part in the decision. Although superior communication must be rewarded, Public Forum Debate is *debate*, not just public speaking.

Ballot

Q Why are there team speaker points?

A Points are awarded to facilitate tie breaking in regular invitationals and to create a reasonable and consistent standard. Team speaker points recognize team excellence rather than individual speaker excellence.

Q How can speaker awards be determined?

A Speaker awards are not required. If awards are given, perhaps they can be based on team excellence.

NFL Rules

Q How many NFL points does Public Forum Debate earn?

A 6 for a Win and 3 for a loss; Maximum of 750 points (exclusive of district and nationals) in the debate category.

Q May students double enter in Public Forum Debate and another event at the NFL district tournament?

A Maybe. Individual district committees have the authority to determine district double entry rules. However, no district can allow doubling in Public Forum Debate and another team event (Policy, Duo).

Q How many Public Forum Debate teams may a school enter in the district tournament?

A Entry is based on the quota system on page TD-2 of the District Tournament Manual.

Preparation

Q What can a student do to be successful in Public Forum Debate?

A Mainly learn to speak well. This is public debate to community audiences.

Q What can a student study to be successful?

A Students and coaches may wish to read *Public Argument* by Robert O. Weiss, University Press of America, or the long essay by Bill Davis in the November *Rostrum*, *The A-Ha Experience*.

Q Are there sample tapes/DVDs of Past Public Forum Debates?

A Yes. Past National final round debates are available on Video and DVD by going to www.dalepublishing.us.

PUBLIC FORUM DEBATE TIMING SCHEDULE

(In the Following Order)

First Speaker - Team A = 4 Minutes

First Speaker - Team B = 4 Minutes

Crossfire = 3 Minutes

Second Speaker - Team A = 4 Minutes

Second Speaker - Team B = 4 Minutes

Crossfire = 3 Minutes

Summary - First Speaker - Team A = 2 Minutes

Summary - First Speaker - Team B = 2 Minutes

Grand Crossfire = 3 Minutes

Final Focus - Second Speaker - Team A = 1 Minute

Final Focus - Second Speaker - Team B = 1 Minute

Prep Time (per team) = 2 Minutes

Public Forum Debate Ballot

Round # _____ Room # _____ Judge Name _____ Date _____

Resolution _____

Before **EVERY** round, flip a coin to determine the side and speaking order of the debate. The winner of the flip has the option of choosing either the side (Pro or Con) or the speaking order (1st or 2nd) in the round. The team that loses the flip makes the remaining choice, either side or speaking order. After this is determined, record the names of the competitors. **Please note that new arguments in the Final Focus are to be ignored. The Final Focus must be based on arguments and issues previously addressed in the debate.**

PLEASE DO NOT FILL OUT THIS BALLOT UNTIL AFTER THE COIN TOSS HAS BEEN COMPLETED
AND THE DEBATERS HAVE DETERMINED SIDE/SPEAKING ORDER

Code _____	Side _____
Speaker 1 _____	
Speaker 3 _____	

Code _____	Side _____
Speaker 2 _____	
Speaker 4 _____	

Team Points _____

29-30 Outstanding
27-28 Above Average
24-26 Average
20-23 Below Average

Team Points _____

The team that won this debate is _____ representing the PRO/CON (please circle the winning side)
(Code)

Comments to debaters:

Comments to debaters:

These are the reasons for my decision:

Order/Time Limits of Speeches	
Speaker 1	4 min
Speaker 2	4 min
Crossfire (1&2)	3 min
Speaker 3	4 min
Speaker 4	4 min
Crossfire (3&4)	3 min
Speaker 1 Summary	2 min
Speaker 2 Summary	2 min
Grand Crossfire (all)	3 min
Speaker 3 Final Focus	1 min
Speaker 4 Final Focus	1 min
2 minutes of Prep Time per Side	

Judge Signature _____ Affiliation/Occupation _____

TIPS FOR JUDGING A ROUND OF PUBLIC FORUM DEBATE

Thank you for agreeing to judge a Public Forum Debate round. Your service is especially important as this event is designed to bring citizen judges and high school debaters together in an educational and productive encounter. The pro team tries to convince you that the resolution is true while the con team tries to convince you that the resolution is not true. This activity was designed to teach excellent critical thinking and public presentation skills, so debaters typically communicate an air of professionalism in their dress, demeanor, and delivery.

BEFORE THE DEBATE:

- Find out the exact wording of the debate resolution and write it down.
- Read and follow the instructions on the judging ballot you will receive.
- Read the PFD Judge Instructions that are provided for you (perhaps on the back of this sheet).
- You may introduce yourself to the debaters (esp. to put new debaters at ease) before the debate starts (if you are comfortable doing so), but without showing favoritism toward either side.
- Debaters should *always* be respectful of one another and of you, and you should set a tone of decorum.

TO BEGIN THE DEBATE:

- There will be a coin toss to determine the side (PRO OR CON) and the speaking order (1st or 2nd) that each team will take in the debate. The team that wins the toss may choose either the side or the speaking position it prefers. The team that loses the toss makes the remaining choice.
- The team that speaks first in the debate should be listed on the left side of the ballot and sit on the left side of the room as you, the judge, look at the debaters.
- Please pay close attention when recording the team code and side. You can ask teams for this information again if you are uncertain.

DURING THE DEBATE:

- Judges need to monitor speaking times during the round. Maximum speech times are listed on the ballot. Each team has two minutes of preparation time total) in each round to use before their speeches.
- Judges should not ask questions or otherwise interrupt the round.
- Debaters directly question each other *only* during the Crossfire segments, with the team that spoke first asking the first question.
- Debaters should not expect any response from the judge.
- Judges are advised that plans and counterplans by either team are not allowed and that the Final Focus must deal only with issues previously raised in the debate.
- Judges should be objective and judge the debate on the quality of the arguments made, not on personal beliefs or on the arguments you wish they had made.

AFTER THE DEBATE:

- Please pay close attention to the side that each team chose in the debate and which spoke first and last. Check your codes carefully. This is especially important when marking the winner of the debate.
- Judges should not reveal their decision at the end of the round.
- In your written comments, please be as encouraging and educational as possible.
- Assign points between 20 and 30, indicating the quality of each team as indicated on the ballot.
- Check your ballot carefully before you turn it in. Did you:
 1. declare a winner
 2. assign team speaker points
 3. provide useful suggestions for improvement
 4. justify your decision thoroughly
 5. sign the ballot

(MORE JUDGING TIPS ON BACK)

ADDITIONAL PUBLIC FORUM JUDGING TIPS

- 1. Model professional, respectful behavior at all times.** Treat all students, coaches, and other tournament participants with civility and kindness. Do not tolerate rude or disrespectful behavior from contestants, and report any such behavior to the student's coach and the tab room. Follow all announced tournament policies and instructions.
- 2. Recuse yourself from any possible conflicts of interest.** The following are examples of relationships to students that constitute conflicts of interest: past teammate, present or past coach, paid assistant, parent or other relative, personal friend. Notify the tab room immediately if you have a possible conflict of interest.
- 3. Judge the debaters on the quality of the arguments they make, not on your own personal beliefs or on the arguments you wish they had made.** Set aside personal biases as much as possible. Remember that the debaters must prepare to debate both sides and that they cannot read your mind. They can respond only to the arguments their opponents actually make.
- 4. Prefer balanced, straightforward interpretations of the resolution to unfair or obscure interpretations.** If the debaters offer different interpretations of the resolution, make your decision on the basis of whichever interpretation better fits ordinary English usage and provides more equal grounds for reasonable public debate.
- 5. Assess the bearing of each argument on the truth or falsehood of the assigned resolution.** The pro should prove that the resolution is true, and the con should prove that the resolution is not true. Arguments unrelated to the truth or falsehood of the resolution should not influence your decision. A good question to ask as you decide each round is, "If I had no prior beliefs about this resolution, would the round as a whole have made me more likely to believe the resolution was true or not true?"
- 6. Prefer quality and depth to mere quantity of arguments.** Reward students who present well-explained arguments. Judge the quality of arguments presented in the round as a whole. To promote quality debate, do not penalize students for failing to address frivolous or minor points due to time constraints.
- 7. Consider quoted evidence only as support for arguments explained by the debaters.** Well-chosen evidence may strengthen arguments. However, quoted evidence should not replace arguments by the debaters, and all evidence should be relevant.
- 8. Treat clear communication as a major consideration.** Remember that PFD is a speech communication event. Weigh arguments only to the extent that they are clearly explained. It is acceptable to discount arguments that are too fast, too garbled, or too jargon-laden to be understood by an intelligent high school student or a well-informed citizen. Do not penalize a debater for failing to understand his or her opponent's unclear arguments.
- 9. Write constructive suggestions for each team and a thorough reason for decision.** Students and coaches appreciate your comments. The ballot is a valuable educational tool for students and their coaches long after the tournament is over.
- 10. Pursue suspected dishonesty with tournament officials after the round.** If you believe a student is plagiarizing, fabricating, or otherwise misusing research sources, notify the tournament director after the debate and let him/her take the appropriate steps.

RESEARCH

In order to understand a topic one must read current material about it.

Such current material may be found by both electronic or print means.

Electronic:

Access good search engine like GOOGLE (www.google.com), Yahoo (www.yahoo.com), Alta Vista (www.altavista.com) or MSN Search (www.msn.com)

Type in key words of the topic (ie... "Tax Cuts" or "Armed Pilots").
The search engine will list websites which discuss that issue.
Click on those sites to read and download material.



Print:

You may access the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature in your school library. The Guide lists articles in current periodicals by topic .

Look up "Hijacking", "Airline Safety", "Tax Cuts" or other issues and make a list of magazines which carry stories by date and page number. Then read the articles. Copy parts which are good evidence.

The New York Times index (available in most public libraries) will allow to you search articles in the New York Times (usually on microfilm).

You also should look up the key definitions of words in the topic in a good unabridged dictionary or a topic specific dictionary (i.e..Blacks Law Dictionary)

Polls:

Since you will be debating before a citizen judge from your community, it would be helpful to research polling data on how citizens feel about the issues posed by the topic and why they feel that way.

This polling information can be used to select arguments which will address citizen judge concerns.

Evidence:

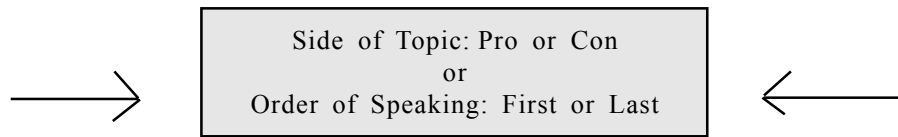
Hall of Fame Coach Esther Kalmbach once defined evidence as "a reason for a judge to believe an argument."

Evidence may of course be "hard evidence": facts, statistics, quotations from experts; but "soft" evidence is also persuasive: examples, anecdotes, analogies, stories.

Debaters will want to find a wide variety of types of evidence that will be persuasive.

THE COIN TOSS

Prior to each round the teams will flip a coin. The team winning the coin toss may choose either:
:

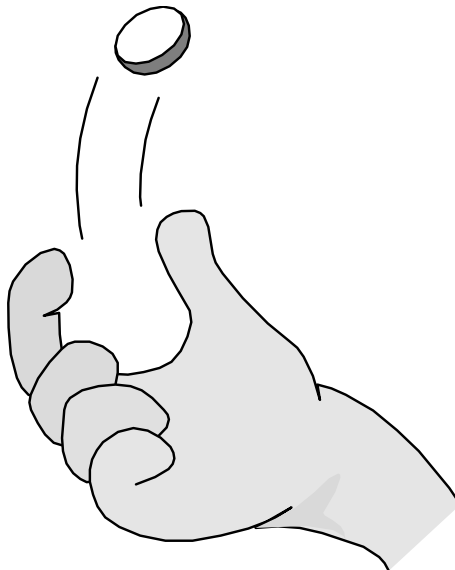


This choice is very strategic. Considerations may include:

- Is one side of the topic more intuitively acceptable to citizen judges.
 - Is our team significantly stronger on one side.
 - Are opponents significantly stronger on one side.
- Should our team pre-empt them by "choosing" our opponent's best side.
- Is first speaker position critical to "sell" our case by making a good first impression.
- Is the final "last shot" speech critical for us to have the last word to the judge(s).
- Are our opponents so effective in first (or last) speaker position we wish to pre-empt them by selecting that position for ourselves.

Once the coin toss winner selects either a side or a speaker position, the coin toss loser then has a choice. If the winner selects a side, the loser selects a speaker position. If the winner selects a speaker position then the losing team selects the side of the topic. The above list of options should be carefully studied by both teams.

Please realize the con side of the topic may begin the debate and argue directly against the adoption of the topic before the pro side says a word.



SPEAKER DUTIES

The first and second speakers should prepare in advance the reasons for adoption (or rejection) of the topic. Arguments should be carefully worded to be accurate and persuasive.

The first crossfire should be used to clarify arguments and define where clash exists. Probing questions to expose weakness are useful. Both debaters should stand during two person Crossfire.

The third and fourth speakers have two duties:

To attack (refute) the case (arguments) of their opponents; and to answer attacks made upon their own arguments by their opponents. The speeches should reflect analysis and refutation with an emphasis on clash and adaptation to the issues raised in the previous speeches and crossfire.

The second crossfire should advance the debate by finding areas of agreement and attacking arguments with which the debater does not agree. Previously prepared dilemmas may be posed. Contradictions should be exposed. Both debaters should stand during two person Crossfire.

The summary speakers should consolidate their positions by defending the most important point in their own case and attack the most important point in the opponents case. Select only the most important issue or issues and cover them thoroughly, but *do not rush*.

Grand Crossfire:

The purposes of grand crossfire are to find areas of agreement, highlight clash, and expose areas of opponent weakness to bring the debate to its final focus.

All debaters should be seated during Grand Crossfire, but should be able to see the judge(s), audience, and camera. The Crossfire TV Show on CNN is a good model.

The first question is asked to the team who just ended their summary by the team which had the first summary.

After the first Q and A any debater may question and answer at will.

Final Focus:

The purpose of the Final Focus is to restate the reason(s) why your team has won the debate. Judges will be instructed that new arguments in the final focus are to be ignored.

Tip: Delivery should be conversational and extempore in style but absent flaws like vocal pauses, fast delivery, poor articulation, and lack of vocal variety.



SPEECH DEVELOPMENT

Speaker 1 – This speaker position for both sides must be concerned with constructing and presenting a logical argument with evidentiary support. This is the one time in the debate where specific preparation can be used as a tool of the debate. Due to the uncertainty of whether this will become the first or second speech in the debate, a 4-minute speech for and against the resolution is warranted. Reserving time for response in the Speaker 1 position is not practical.

I. Introduction to the issue –

An overview of the issue presented in a compelling introductory remark or quotation to alert the judge to the importance of the topic.

II. Definition of terms –

When ever a debate focuses upon an issue without support of a clarifying plan or value, the topic must have its own agreed upon parameters. Often this is accomplished with a field definition from an expert; occasionally the topic is self-evident. In the latter case, it may be left to the judge to interpret the topic.

III. Analysis of the issues – Traditionally, three issues are considered sufficient to establish a warrant. These issues can be abstract or concrete, or a mix of both. However, to be successful, each should be an independent reason to vote for the topic. Given the nature of the audience, a most logical progression would be:

- Personal story or narrative story to provide context for the judge to understand what is at issue.
- Example from the news to show timeliness and to support the analysis and to show the debater as knowledgeable about the subject.
- General or theoretical issue to establish the argument beyond the particular and to provide grounds for revisiting this speech later in the debate.
- Supporting analysis may draw from areas including, but not limited to, pragmatic, philosophical, historical, and economic areas of analysis.

IV. Closing – Why does this issue matter to us? Answering this question in closing provides reasons for the judge to care; while focusing the entire speech into a short, memorable summary.

Speaker 2 – This speaker position for both sides will have the burden of analyzing the opponents' position and explaining

flaws in the ideas presented by the other team. While this speaker might present prepared arguments from briefs to establish new points, the judge using media analysis is now looking for the fight. Argumentatively, at least, the judge places an expectation that the two sides will clash.

This speech may take the form of a line-by-line refutation of the opponent's position, but this form is rarely followed in media debate. Instead, the speaker should identify the most attackable issues advanced by the other side. In this manner, the most memorable opposition points are refuted with memorable counter-points.

Time vested in responding will permit only one or two key responses. A suggested form for this debate would be:

I. Introduction which links the 2nd speech to the 1st speech, probably with a story or quotation.

II. An overview of the issue to be discussed.

- Statement of what opponent said.
- Reasons and/or proof of why opponent is wrong.
- Explanation of what this means for the topic.

III. (a second issues as in II above)

IV. Closing which solidifies both of your side's speeches.

Summary – Summary is an odd speech. The purpose is implied in the title. Because the summary speaker will have listened to partner respond in the 2nd speech and in the give and take of the Crossfire, the summary should manage all of what the judge has heard to this point. Something like this:

- Brief overview of the debate so far.
- Focus on the key idea, maybe with a fresh antidotal story or other framing quotation.
- What does this all mean? The implications for the judge and the world provide a clear summary focus.

Final Focus – The duties of the Final Focus speaker are stipulated in the rules. Final Focus chooses the key issue(s) which matters the most and frames in a final parting focus of why this issue(s) is enough to warrant a ballot for the speaker's team.

- Statement of the issue(s) and its importance.
- Explanation of the issue(s).
- Appeal to let this issue(s) override all other concerns.

(Originally by **John Durkee**. *Rostrum*, January, 2003)



CROSSFIRE TIPS

Correct Positioning. Debaters should stand during regular Crossfire. All four debaters should remain seated for the Grand Crossfire, but should be able to see the judge(s), audience and camera.

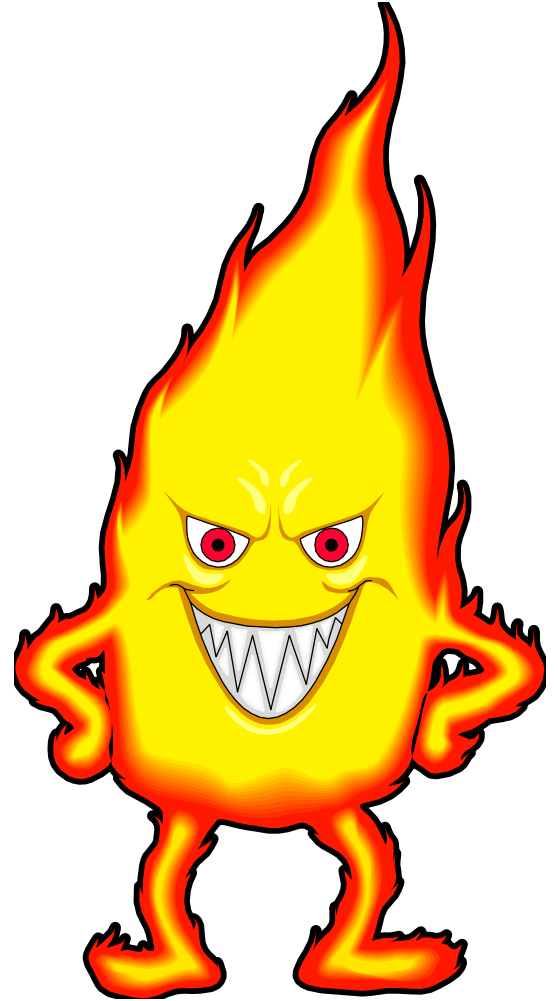
Be polite, but firm. Keep questions and answers brief and speaking style conversational. Don't interrupt or talk over another debater unless s/he is filibustering. Don't ever interrupt your partner.

Have a plan in mind. What admissions do you wish to gain from your opponents. Which dilemmas do you wish to pose to your opponents.

Answering can be as important as questioning. Have brief retorts prepared for questions that you think might be asked.

Silence is golden. If you trap your opponent in an unanswerable dilemma, let their silence or frantic babbling expose their weakness. Don't rush in with the next question.

Relax. Don't rush! If you can establish one or two points that is enough.



THE FINAL FOCUS TIPS

Ask yourself this question (before your Final Focus): If I were judging this round, what would I be voting on now . Once you decide the key issue, make that your focus.

What should be argued? Several choices are available.

- Answer the argument(s) that you are losing (if losing more than one, pick the most important)
- Stress an argument(s) you are winning (if winning several, pick the most important)
- Stress an argument(s) that is most appealing to a citizen judge and clearly win it.
- Try to "turn" a major argument(s). Show how an opponent's argument proves your point.
- Expose a major inconsistency made by your opponents - - two arguments they made which contradict each other.
- Remember, judges are reminded on the ballot that new arguments should be ignored.



PAST PUBLIC FORUM TOPICS

(a/k/a Ted Turner Public Forum)

October/November, 2002

Resolved: Commercial airline pilots should be armed in the cockpit.

December, 2002

Resolved: That the "Bush" tax cuts should be made permanent.

January, 2003

Resolved: The Federal Government should authorize oil exploration in the Arctic National Wildlife Reserve.

February, 2003

Resolved: The death penalty should be abolished in America.

March, 2003

Resolved: Affirmative action should not be practiced in college and university admission.

April, 2003

Resolved: Awards for pain and suffering in medical malpractice cases should be limited to \$250,000.

May, 2003

Resolved: That the United States should assume primary responsibility for the rebuilding of Iraq.

June, 2003 (National Topic)

Resolved: That the United States should assume primary responsibility for the rebuilding of Iraq.

September, 2003

Resolved: Use of a cell phone should be prohibited while operating a motor vehicle.

October, 2003

Resolved: That the United States should comply with United Nations' decisions concerning international peacekeeping operations.

November, 2003

(Name Changed to Public Forum Debate Topic)

Resolved: That Federal judges should be elected in their district for a limited term rather than appointed by the President for a life term.

December, 2003

Resolved: That Congress should repeal the No Child Left Behind Act.

January, 2004

Resolved: The United States is losing the War on Terror.

February, 2004

Resolved: Americans should be allowed to share copyrighted media over the internet.

March, 2004

Resolved: The United States should provide universal health insurance to all U. S. citizens.

April, 2004

Resolved: English should be the official national language of the United States.

May, 2004

Resolved: All young adults in every nation should be required to perform at least one full year of national service.

September, 2004

Resolved: That the United States should establish a cabinet-level position to oversee its entire intelligence community.

October, 2004

Resolved: In the United States, public opinion polls positively affect the election process.

November, 2004

Resolved: The United States government should allow Americans to purchase prescription drugs from other countries.

December, 2004

Resolved: Corporate offshoring aids in the economic development of the United States.

January, 2005

Resolved: The United States Constitution should be amended to establish a mandatory retirement age for Supreme Court Justices.

PAST PUBLIC FORUM TOPICS

(a/k/a Ted Turner Public Forum)

February, 2005

Resolved: In the United States, the current system of federal income taxation should be replaced by a flat rate income tax.

March, 2005

Resolved: Student aptitude should be assessed through standardized testing.

April, 2005

Resolved: The United States should issue guest worker visas to illegal aliens.

May, 2005 (National Topic)

Resolved: That, when a choice is required for public high schools in the United States, government funding should prioritize vocational education over college preparatory education.

September, 2005

Resolved: In the United States, colleges and universities should be permitted to pay stipends to their Division I athletes.

October, 2005

Resolved: That the United Nations should be the primary agent to lead and direct the fight against terrorism around the world.

November, 2005

Resolved: That the United States federal government should fund Hurricane Katrina relief and rebuilding by ending President Bush's tax cuts.

December, 2005

Resolved: That the National Basketball Association (NBA) should rescind its dress code.

January, 2006

Resolved: In the United States, public high school science curriculum should include the study of the Theory of Intelligent Design.

February, 2006

Resolved: That the policy decisions of the current Israeli government toward the Palestinian state have improved prospects for peace in the Middle East.

March, 2006

Resolved: That big box retailers benefit the communities in which they are located.

April, 2006

Resolved: That the American media work against the best interest of the American public.

May, 2006 (National Topic)

Resolved: That the United States government should ratify the Kyoto Protocol.

September, 2006

Resolved: That the benefits of NASA's space exploration programs justify the costs.

October, 2006

Resolved: Current immigration laws in the United States should be enforced.

November, 2006

Resolved: That participating in multinational diplomatic efforts is beneficial to U.S. interests.

December, 2006

Resolved: Colleges and Universities in the United States should end their early admission programs.

January, 2007

Resolved: That lobbyists negatively influence the legislative process in the United States.

February, 2007

Resolved: The costs of legalized casino gambling in the United States outweigh the benefits.

March, 2007

Resolved: That the quantity of credit available to American consumers should be significantly reduced.

April, 2007

Resolved: United States corporations should honor all prior commitments to employee pensions.

May, 2007 (National Topic)

Resolved: That the private ownership of handguns should be banned in the United States.