

Debate Judges' Manual

The National High School English Debate Tournament

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1. What Judges Should Always Keep in Mind

Debate judges should always keep in mind that you are not only judging but you are also *teaching* the students through that process. To accomplish this, always keep the following three basic principles in mind.

FAIRNESS: Always try to be fair. Decide winners only by the debaters' performances *within the round* you're judging.

OBJECTIVITY: Don't make decisions by hunches. Never cast a ballot unless you clearly know the objective *reason* for decision.

ACCOUNTABILITY: Make the students understand your reason for decision. (At the same time always try to cheer them up!)

2. Judging Standards

In this tournament, winner of the round should be decided by comparing the outcome of the *arguments* of both teams. No ties; always pick a winner! Specifically, since the debate is on governmental policy proposition, if the proposition has more merits than the demerits, you vote AFF and vice versa. (If you have judged in other debate tournaments, see Section 6. below for the difference). Three warnings for novice judges:

1. Don't add your own issues. Make decisions only by the debaters' arguments that are *properly* presented within the debate format: Debate judges should judge the *debaters'* arguments (and their counter-arguments). Don't add any advantages/disadvantages yourself! Presenting "*new arguments*" (new merits/demerits) in the attacks, defense, summary speech are forbidden by the rules. Ignore them if they are presented.
2. Only the issues that are extended (not forgotten in the summary speech) counts: Even if a team sounded better than the other in the early stage of debate, that shouldn't be taken into your decision if they screwed up in the latter stages. As you will soon see, in most of the debates, earlier stages are just recitation of some prepared scripts. If the students can't properly defend and summarize their own issues, those issues should be taken lightly in your decision.
3. *Distinguish "reason for decision" and "advices"*: As mentioned above, don't add your own issues in your decision. However, in your *advices* after the round, teaching the students about such hidden "issues" would be very helpful.

3. Process of Judging

In sum, judging a policy debate is like policy making itself. Just imagine yourself as a rational voter for a national policy referendum, and you are going to vote according to, and only according to the issues that are raised by each opposing party. The following 5 steps might help you to make fairer and more objective decisions.

1. List the issues that were extended: How many merits (advantages) and demerits (disadvantages) were presented, and how many of them were defended and mentioned in the final stage. Write down the titles (tag-lines)
2. Judge the *probability* of each issue: How convincing were the alleged "merits" in terms of factual probability? Weigh them lightly if the opponents attack was successful, or the defense was poor, or there wasn't much explanation even in the Constructive speech on why the plan can really gain such "merits". Do the same thing to each alleged "demerit" too.
3. Judge the *value (significance)* of each issue: How important is the alleged "merit"? What is the value at stake? How much impact will the "demerit" bring in terms of quantity and quality? If the value mentioned in an issue is not well explained by the debaters, don't weigh such issue as significant. Values can be sometimes "flipped" by good opponents. (In debate jargons, "turnarounds": For example, AFF might argue that the plan brings in a lot of tourists from abroad and it's good. However NEG might "flip" the issue by arguing that the increased tourists may increase the risk or terrorism.
4. Judge the *strength* (=multiply probability and value) of each issue: Multiply the above probability (2.) and value (3.) for each remaining merits and demerits.
5. Weigh the strength (4.) of AFF and NEG issues on a scale: Sum up the strength of the AFF plan's merits and consider if it outweighs the strength of the summed-up demerits. If merit outweighs the demerits then AFF wins, else the NEG wins. Being fair in weighing the issues might not be easy. Try to avoid being subjective in the first place. Recollect the latter stage speeches (summary) of the debaters. If a team has explained the "criteria" for deciding whether the merit outweighs the demerits, such "criteria" should be used to determine the winner. (Of course, if the mentioned "criteria" are irrelevant or not supported by any reason, you don't have to follow them. Honestly speaking, in most high school debates, neither side will present such criterion effectively. In those cases you should decide using your own "usual" value judgments).

For example, AFF insists that their plan has some merit on "international trade", but NEG pointed out that it might increase "domestic jobless rate". Which issue is more important? There is no absolute scale that can measure such value comparison. So, such comparison should be done by debaters themselves. A good AFF summary speech may present a "value criterion" insisting that a good policy should ignore short term "jobless increase" and long term merits outweighs such demerits. If the NEG summary cannot present a counter-criterion, a judge should decide by the AFF in favor of the AFF.

If and only if you are reasonably sure that you think there is no way to decide whether the merits outweigh the demerits, then vote for the NEG side (according to the tournament-debate convention: "presumption".)

Filling in the following “Decision making chart” will help you decide the vote:

1. List of issues	2. Probability	× 3. Value	= 4. Strength
Merit 1 International exchange	Quite High (Good proof: more foreigners will come to Japan)	Big (More international trade)	STRONG (persuasive)
Merit 2 English will bring together a new global culture	None (Nearly no explanation, no proof)	Big (Global culture)	NONE (Big impact, but no reality)
Demerit 1 Japanese language ability will be harmed	High (NEG proved that the school Japanese language classes will be harmed)	Little (Poor explanation: on the impact of the decline in Japanese language ability)	WEAK (probable, but unclear impact)
Demerit 2 Tax will be wasted	Not defended	Not explained	NONE (Not extended)
5. Comparison criteria)	AFF pointed out that international issues are more important than pure domestic matters. (Value criteria) NEG did not show any criterion effectively.		
Conclusion: AFF team wins. The AFF successfully extended Merit 1 and so did the NEG Demerit 1. However, Merit 1 outweighs the Demerit, as the latter's impact is not clear and moreover, AFF criterion for decision was agreeable and I am convinced that more will be gained than lost.			

4. Communication Points

Judges should also rate the “communication points” of each team. Scale how well were the debate *team* (not each debater) successfully communicating with the judges, opponents, and the audience in the round you are judging. 10 is the maximum and 1 is the minimum (No fractions, only integers). 6 should be the average. 10 and 2 should be rare (1 should be marked only when the point is subtracted for penalty). Use the following scale:

10 Excellent	<i>Every</i> speech was easy to follow (adequate speed, elocutions etc.). And every team member was successfully communicating with the audience (good eye-contacts, gestures, good manners, etc.)
9	
8 Good	Most of the speeches had no problem in following. And most of the team members were effectively communicating with the audience.
7	
6 Average	Though with some exceptions, the speeches were basically easy to follow. Majority of the members had no problem in communication.
5	
4 Below Average	Speeches were quite often hard to follow. Lack of audience communication can be found often.
3	
2 Poor	Most of the Speeches were hard to follow. None of the team members were communicative.

PENALTIES: You should subtract some points for PENALTY in the following conditions: If a team or its member A) does not obey the judge's/chairperson's instructions, being rude or making noise; B) was offensive or rude during the Q/As; C) not answering at all in the Q/As; D) not cooperating to reveal the source of their evidence to the opponents. Subtract as many points as you think it deserves. (The minimum point cannot be below 1 though.) NOTE: In extreme cases, the winning team may have lower communication points but that's OK. (These points are mainly for tie-breaking purpose to select the finalist after four preliminary rounds.)

5. Instructions / Interruptions during the round

Basically, judges should leave the debate to the debaters and not intervene in it. However, for educational purposes, do interrupt the speeches in the following exceptional cases: A) *SPEECHES are unintelligible* (too fast, not loud enough, etc.) B) *QUESTIONS and ANSWERS are anomalous* (Too few questions, too long silence, questioners making speeches and not asking any Qs., etc.) C) *Speeches are interrupted by NOISE* (Chatting, pen-clicking, etc.)

6. Some Notes for the Experienced Judges:

- This is not a Parliamentary Debate (British impromptu style) tournament:
 - Interruption of speeches by the opponents, so called “POINT(s) OF INFORMATION” is not allowed
 - Decide the winners by the outcome of the argument contents (see Section 2), not by cumulative speech points.
 - The usage of evidence is to be *encouraged*, not to be discouraged as in some Parliamentary debate contests.
- This is not a Recitation contest (Even if some of the rounds may appear to be so!)

Don't decide the winners just by eye-contacts, accents, intonation, etc. Of course those are important for English communication, but as long as the speeches are intelligible, please don't overweigh such speech delivery aspects when deciding the winners. However, you should *comment* on them. Please tell the students how to improve their English delivery.
- This is not exactly an American Policy Debate (NDT/CEDA style) tournament
 - NEVER encourage fast delivery. Interrupt the speeches, if you think the speeches are too fast.
 - Ignore cheap debate tactics (such as phony “Topicality”, “Counterplans” etc. just to make the opponents upset).

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