

Judging Public Forum

The Best Form of Debate

What to expect?

Public Forum is a team debate event that supports or rejects a position posed by the monthly resolution topic. Two-person teams are expected to convincingly argue both sides of the assigned topic, randomly selected by coin toss.

Debaters should:

- Display solid logic, lucid reasoning, and depth of analysis
- Utilize evidence
- Present a clash of ideas by countering/refuting arguments of the opposing team (rebuttal)
- Communicate ideas with clarity, organization, eloquence, and professional decorum.

How to Start

The round starts with the judge facilitating a coin toss. The winning team selects *either*:

1. The **side** – Pro (for the resolution) or Con (against the resolution)
2. The speaker **order** (begin the debate or give the last speech)

The team that loses the toss will then decide their preference from the option not selected by the winner.

Sequence of Debate

Side A - 1 st Speaker	4 min constructive (written)
Side B – 1 st Speaker	4 min constructive (written)
Both 1 st Speakers –	3 min Crossfire
Side A – 2 nd Speaker	4 minute rebuttal/extension
Side B – 2 nd Speaker	4 minute rebuttal/extension
Both 2 nd Speakers –	3 min Crossfire
Side A – 1 st Speaker	2 min summary speech
Side B – 1 st Speaker	2 min summary speech
All speakers –	3 min Grand Crossfire
Side A – 2 nd Speaker	2 min final focus
Side B – 2 nd Speaker	2 min final focus

*Debaters should keep their own time,
however judges should also run a timer to enforce the limits.*

What Does Crossfire Entail?

- The two previous speakers stand, asking and answering questions in a polite, but argumentative exchange.
- First speaker asks the first question.
- The judge may halt any crossfire lacking civility.
- Crossfire is not a time for making statements or long speeches.
- The speaker must reply in a reasonable amount of time to the question.

Summaries and Final Focus

Summary speeches are rebuttals that extend earlier arguments made or answer opposing refutations, and may incorporate new evidence, but **not new arguments**.

The **final focus** is a compelling restatement of why the judge should vote pro or con. Given the short period, the team must articulate which arguments weigh most importantly on the decision. **No new arguments** are accepted in final focus speeches.

How to Pick the Winner

1. Judges evaluate teams on the **quality** of arguments made, not on their own personal beliefs.
2. Judges should write notes throughout the debate, assessing the bearing of each argument on the truth or falsehood of the assigned resolution.
3. Logical reasoning, maturity of thought, and effectiveness of communication are of primary consideration.
4. The team that has made better arguments, used effective evidence and logic, and refuted the opponents arguments should be selected as winner.

Speaker Points

- Speaker points rank the quality of the speakers in the round. The highest rank being a 30. The judge ranks the debaters based on their speaking skills and assigns speaker points accordingly.
- Speakers may receive the same number of speaker points if the judge assesses them at parity.
- Constructive criticism for the debaters to improve their speaking skills should be included on the ballot.

Disclosure and Critique

- At the end of the round, judges may choose to disclose the winner. It is entirely at the judge's discretion and not open for debate.
- The judge also has the option of providing the debaters with constructive criticism to aid them in future rounds.
- Judges are free to critique and disclose, critique only, disclose only, or none of the above; although critiques are encouraged as this is primarily a learning experience.

January 2013 PF Topic

Resolved: On balance, the Supreme Court decision in Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission harms the election process.

Notes:

- Judges should set aside all previous opinions on the topic, considering only the evidence presented by the debaters.
- “On balance” topics require the debaters to first establish the harms/benefits caused by the ruling in question. And then, **more importantly**, convince the judge that their harm/benefit is more significant or important than the opponents’.

Good Luck & Enjoy
Public Forum AKA
Pretty Fun Debate!