

Public Forum Judging Primer

A public forum round is based upon logic, analysis, reasoning, and speaking skills. As each competitor speaks, judge his ability in each area. Paper and pen will help you keep notes on the speakers and arguments, so bring plenty.

Before the round

The judge will flip a coin, asking one of the teams to call it in the air. The winner of the toss will choose **one** of the following:

- ~debate the pro or con side of the resolution
- ~hold the first or second speaker position

The losing side of the toss will choose from the remaining option (i.e. If the winner chooses to go con, the losing side will choose between first and second speaker.) Once this has been decided, the competitors should write their names in the appropriate places on the ballot.

In the round

Times for Speeches

Judges keep the official time in each round.

Speaker 1 from Team A	4 minutes	Summary from 1A	2 minutes
Speaker 1 from Team B	4 minutes	Summary from 1B	2 minutes
Crossfire between 1A and 1B	3 minutes	Grand Crossfire (all participate)	3 minutes
Speaker 2 from Team A	4 minutes	Final Focus from 2A	1 minute
Speaker 2 from Team B	4 minutes	Final Focus from 2B	1 minute
Crossfire between 2A and 2B	3 minutes		

The flow of the round

- Each team has two minutes of **prep time** that they may use between speeches. They must request to use this time. The judge keeps note of how much prep time remains for each team.
- Use **hand signals** to indicate remaining time in a speech or crossfire. Three fingers indicates three minutes remaining, two fingers indicates two minutes, one finger indicates two minutes, and a half finger indicates a half minute. At the end of time, show a closed fist.
- 1A and 1B should both have already written **speeches** to present their arguments. 2A and 2B will generally not have a pre-written speech. They will use their time to refute arguments from their opponents' speeches, to refute and clarify crossfire questions and answers, and/or to strengthen their own arguments.

- **Crossfire** has two main purposes. First, speakers use the time to clarify information and positions of the opponent. Second, they use it to highlight weaknesses in the opponent's arguments. Speakers should conduct crossfire in a civil manner, allowing both sides the opportunity for question and answer. If crossfire becomes chaotic, the judge may halt proceedings to regain order.
- Speakers use **summaries** to summarize the main arguments in the round.
- **Final Focus** lasts only a minute, so speakers use it to state the reason one side has won the round clearly and concisely.
- During and after the round, assign speaker points to the speakers based on the criteria provided on the ballot. Add any general comments about strengths and weaknesses of the speakers and the arguments. **Clearly state the reason for decision (RFD)**---what persuaded you to vote a particular way? After making the final decision at the bottom of the ballot, sign and return to the tab room.