

Public Forum Debate

Time Limits

All debate rounds must be timed by the judge, a spectator, or another competitor.

Speaker 1 (Team A, 1st speaker)	4 minutes
Speaker 2 (Team B, 1st speaker)	4 minutes
Crossfire (between speakers 1 & 2)	3 minutes
Speaker 3 (Team A, 2nd speaker)	4 minutes
Speaker 4 (Team B, 2nd speaker)	4 minutes
Crossfire (between speakers 3 & 4)	3 minutes
Speaker 1 Summary	2 minutes
Speaker 2 Summary	2 minutes
Grand Crossfire (all speakers)	3 minutes
Speaker 3 Final Focus	2 minutes
Speaker 4 Final Focus	2 minutes

The Coin Flip

The Ted Turner round begins with a flip of a coin between the competing teams. 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.

Crossfire

During crossfire 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.

During Grand Crossfire 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.

Final Focus

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 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.

Summary Speeches

Each team should summarize key arguments it is winning and refute the important arguments it is losing. Facts, opinions, statistics and 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

This is a debate event. Arguments must be supported by evidence. However, Public Forum Debate is an audience debate. Competitors should present enough evidence to prove their arguments but not so much as to destroy good communication with their judge.

Judges

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.

The final focus plays an important part in the judge’s decision. The debaters should choose their most important issue or issues and offer those as voting issues. The judge should probably vote on those issues, unless the judge feels the debater has missed the critical issue. Although superior communication must be rewarded, Public Forum Debate is debate, not just public speaking.

Public Forum Debate Topic: