

Public forum is a team debate event involving two students from one school competing against two students from a second school. Competitors are given the topic for debate only a few days or weeks before the debate tournament. The topic can be something such as “Colleges and universities should be permitted to pay stipends to their Division I athletes.” Prior to the tournament, students are expected to prepare brief pro and con statements because they must be ready to debate either side of the topic. For each round of competition, the tournament host provides a schematic listing the teams competing, along with room assignments. The schematic might look something like this:

UNIVERSITY OF IOWA INVITATIONAL

Round 1		Start Time: 6:30 P.M.	
TEAM A	TEAM B	ROOM	JUDGE
Newton AH	Oskaloosa CC	CC 130	Johnson, Dennis
Grinnell FT	Regis GK	CC 132	Griffin, Amy
Tiffin ER	Dubuque GR	CC 141	Masters, Ron
Ankeny DC	Cedar Falls GH	CC 153	Rollins, Steve

GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY SEASON OPENER

Round 1		Start Time: 4:00 P.M.	
TEAM A	TEAM B	ROOM	JUDGE
A231	G119	Dahlonge	Alford, Phil
T113	P421	Louden	Nakayama, Tom
V201	A252	Falcons	Myers, Rhonda
N310	M003	Bruster	Bien, Songsook

Following the University of Iowa schematic example, the teams from Newton and Oskaloosa would go to the assigned room to prepare for the upcoming round of competition. This schematic illustrates the practice of using the school name along with the first letter from each debater’s last name. Newton AH, for example, might be the team of Jennifer Ables and Jason Herrera. The Georgia State University schematic example illustrates the use of contestant codes, which is also a common practice in public forum tournaments. When codes are in use, the tournament host assigns letters and/or numbers to identify each of the contestants.

The first task in preparing for an upcoming round is the coin toss. The two teams agree on which team will flip the coin and which will call heads or tails. The winners of the coin toss have a choice—they can either choose a side (pro or con) or choose a speaking order (whether they will speak first or last). If the winner of the coin toss opts to select a side, the loser of the coin toss then chooses a speaking order (first or last). If the winner of the coin toss opts to select a speaking order, the loser of the coin toss then chooses a side. As soon as the judge arrives at the room, the debaters should list their