

speech). After the first question, anyone can ask questions of any other participant. In the competitive public forum format, no questions are to be asked by the judge or spectators.

The Final Focus: Speakers three and four present a one-minute restatement of the reason(s) their position is superior and the opponent's position should be rejected. The original public forum rule structure stipulated that final focus speakers could make only one argument (choosing either a strong point in their own case or a weakness of the opponent's case). This rule proved difficult to enforce because it was often impossible to determine when one argument had crossed the border into multiple ones. Recent rule revisions allow debaters to make more than one argument in the final focus, but speakers are encouraged to highlight key strengths and weaknesses. The number of arguments is less important than the persuasive strength of the selected positions. Public forum judges are instructed to ignore any new arguments in the final focus, although it is acceptable for debaters to present new evidence in support of existing positions.

Preparation Time: Each team is given two minutes of total preparation time to use as it chooses. The team could elect to use a portion of this preparation time before its summary speech, saving the balance to prepare for the final focus speech. Experienced debaters, recognizing the importance of the final focus, save all the preparation time for the time just before the final speech. If a team has used all its preparation time, the timekeeper (which is usually the judge) begins the time for the next speech.

The Judge's Decision: Immediately after the end of the round, the judge is asked to be objective and judge the debate on the quality of the arguments made, not on personal beliefs or on the arguments the judge wishes they would have made. The judge is asked to mark her ballot showing who won (no ties allowed) and how each team is rated (on a scale of 20 to 30, with 30 being the best). The instructions for public forum ask the judge to fill out the ballot, explaining a reason for the decision. The decision is delivered to the ballot collection table, but judges in public forum are asked *not* to reveal the outcome of the round to the participants.

TOURNAMENT FORMATS FOR PUBLIC FORUM DEBATE

Most invitational tournament formats involve competition in preliminary rounds and elimination rounds. A typical two-day tournament might involve six preliminary rounds, after which top competitors are seeded into an elimination round bracket. Smaller one-day tournaments might offer three or four preliminary rounds of competition, followed by one or two elimination rounds. A round of debate refers to the half-hour-long argumentative exchange between two teams assigned to debate one another.