

*Preliminary Rounds:* In a typical invitational tournament, the first two rounds of competition are randomly paired, so each team's opponent is randomly selected. Additional preliminary rounds are power-matched, meaning teams are assigned to meet opponents with similar win-loss records. Teams going into round three with two wins meet other teams with two wins.

*Elimination Rounds:* At the end of the preliminary rounds, the tournament host determines the ranking of each team from top to bottom, based on the number of wins and team ratings in preliminary rounds (judges give each team a numerical rating as well as determining a winner and a loser in each round). Because judges are not allowed to give ties, each team compiles a win-loss and speaker point record that can be used to establish a ranking for it. The number of teams qualifying for participation in elimination rounds depends on the tournament size; this number is almost always less than half the teams competing in preliminary rounds. Suppose, for example, that 40 teams have participated in preliminary rounds. The tournament host would establish an octa-final bracket, pairing the top 16 competitors against one another. The team ranked 1st would meet the team ranked 16th, the team ranked 2nd would meet the team ranked 15th, and so on until all of the top 16 teams are paired. Two key differences distinguish elimination rounds from preliminary rounds: (1) Multiple judges are assigned to each round (usually at least three judges); and (2) Only the winner of the elimination round participates in the next elimination round (usually the nonadvancing team receives an award showing that it did advance beyond preliminary rounds). The elimination bracket proceeds round by round, culminating in a final round between the top two remaining teams. The winner of the final round wins the tournament.

*Who Are the Judges?* In most invitational tournaments, the competing teams are expected to provide a judge who is assigned to adjudicate rounds other than the ones in which their own teams participate. In public forum debate, no special training or certification for judges is required. The judge can be any adult who will make a commitment to listen and follow simple instructions for rendering decisions.

*Switching Sides:* In most forms of competitive debate, contestants are expected to alternate sides from round to round. Only in elimination rounds do contestants in policy or Lincoln-Douglas debate flip a coin to determine sides. Even then, if the contestants have met before in preliminary rounds, they switch sides when they meet in elimination rounds. In public forum debate, however, there is a coin toss in every round to determine side and speaking order. This is true even in elimination rounds when the teams have met before in preliminary rounds. It is, therefore, theoretically possible (though unlikely) for a team to proceed all the way through a tournament debating on the same side of the topic.