

ASF Debate Tournament Rules and Guidelines

In-Person Specifications

- All debates will be held in-person in the Upper School or Middle School buildings.
- Registration, tabulation, and judge's ballots will be processed through Tabbycat.
 - Judges will receive a private URL to submit their ballots.
 - If a judge's ballot is not submitted within the allocated time frame or at all, the results for the lowest ballot will be replicated.
- We will assume that all teams registered will be present all days. However, we will take into account a registration time frame at the beginning of each session for any attendance matters: a sick teammate, a change in judges, etc. Please report to the Fine Arts Lobby for registration on Friday.

Online Specifications

- All debates will be held in Zoom breakout rooms. Links will be provided on the tournament schedule closer to the tournament dates.
- Registration, tabulation, and judge's ballots will be processed through Tabbycat.
 - Judges will receive a private URL to submit their ballots.
 - If a judge's ballot is not submitted within the allocated time frame or at all, the results for the lowest ballot will be replicated.
- We will assume that all teams registered will be present all days. However, we will take into account a registration time-frame at the beginning of each session for any attendance matters: a sick teammate, a change in judges, etc.

Code of Conduct

The American School Foundation strives to fulfill its mission of encouraging students to "live purposefully and to become responsible, contributing citizens of the world." Supporting students to develop behaviors exemplary of and congruent with this mission is an indispensable feature of The American School experience. We are engaged not only in the cognitive development of our students but also in their moral, emotional and psychological development.

It is the responsibility of each participant of the tournament to behave in a manner consistent with the ASF Student Rights and Responsibilities. Any behavior that may negatively affect a positive learning community is unacceptable.

Examples of unacceptable behavior include but are not limited to:

- any conduct that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, degrading or hostile environment including inappropriate touching, fighting, play fighting or contact with sexual overtones
- inappropriate communication (verbal, non-verbal or written), including swearing
- racial/cultural slurs, disparaging comments or sexually related comments

- damaging or disrespecting school property or the property of others
- littering or stealing
- defying or disrespecting others
- putting others or oneself in danger, including possessing dangerous or illegal materials or substances including weapons, look-alike weapons, tobacco, alcohol or other drugs
- cheating or any variant of academic dishonesty
- inappropriate use of technology including cellular telephones, computers or other electronic devices, specially during impromptu preparation time.

If any of this behavior occurs you might be dismissed from the tournament.

Behavior during debates

- Direct contact (addressing a single speaker) during a speech is strongly discouraged.
 - You are rebutting arguments, not individuals.
 - Participants in the tournament, especially coaches and debaters, must not confront adjudicators or any other person in an aggressive manner after a debate.
 - Feedback between teams and adjudicators must be given and received in a constructive and non-confrontational manner.
 - Be language inclusive during feedback.
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Eligibility of Participants

1. Teams
 - a. A team shall have 5 members at most. 3 members minimum.
2. Age & Division
 - a. There are no age restrictions for our tournament. All students are welcome.
 - b. High School and Middle School categories fall under their respective American definitions. Middle School is from 6th to 8th grade, while High School is from 9th to 12th grade.
3. Education Status
 - a. Each team member must be attending classes as a full-time student at an accredited institution.
4. Team Coach
 - a. Every team must be accompanied by a team coach.
 - b. A team coach must have reached their 19th birthday by the first day of debates at the tournament.
 - c. A team coach is responsible for taking all reasonable steps to -
 - i. look after the welfare of the members of the team,
 - ii. ensure the members of the team comply with the Code of Conduct, and

- iii. ensure all members of the team are eligible to take part in the tournament subject to the requirements in Eligibility of Participants.

Requirement to Send Judges

5. Each team must provide at least one judge who meets the qualifications outlined in rule 21 to adjudicate during the entire tournament regardless of team disqualification.
6. The institution must provide an extra judge for the duration of the tournament. This means that if your institution signs up two teams, you must provide three judges.

Format of Debates

7. Teams in a Debate
 - a. In a debate there are two teams. One team proposes the motion for debate, the other team opposes it.
8. Speakers in a Team
 - a. In a team in a debate, there are three speakers.
 - b. Before a debate begins, each team must inform the chairperson of the names of their three speakers and the order they will be speaking in.
 - c. The only persons who may speak in a debate are the three speakers for each team announced by the chairperson at the start of that debate.
 - d. Each speaker speaks only once.
 - e. After each speaker has spoken, the first or second speaker for each team gives a reply speech, with the opposition reply going first and the proposition reply second.
9. Substitute Speeches
 - a. During a debate, if a speaker declares that they are unable to make their speech, another speaker from that team who was announced by the chairperson as speaking in that debate may give a speech in substitution.
 - b. If a substitute speech is given in accordance with this rule, judges shall award that speech the lowest possible score within the Marking Standard in the Judging Schedule, regardless of the quality of the speech.
10. Timing of Speeches
 - a. The speaking time for substantive speeches is 8 minutes, and for reply speeches 4 minutes.
 - b. A member of the judge dais or an appointed time keeper shall provide time signals for each speech.
 - c. In addition to the time signals provided by the aforementioned individual, team members or the team coach may give time signals to a speaker provided that the signals are discreet and unobtrusive.
11. Communication
 - a. During a debate speakers may not communicate with their coach, other team members who are not speaking in that debate, or any person in the audience, except to receive time signals in accordance with rule 9c.

The Draw

12. Only an even number of teams can be entered into a draw.
13. The draw is automatically calculated through the Tabbycat Software using a slide method.
 - a. The program is configured to avoid institutional conflict and team history.
14. Where a team has either won or lost a debate by forfeit, the team will be taken to have received the following number of judges in its favour for that debate:
 - a. if the average number of judges in its favour in its other debates is higher than 2.5, it receives 3 judges for that debate;
 - b. if the average number of judges in its favour in its other debates is higher than 1.5 but less than or equal to 2.5, it receives 2 judges for that debate.
 - c. if the average number of judges in its favour in its other debates is higher than 0.5 but less than or equal to 1.5, it receives 1 judge for that debate;
 - d. if the average number of judges in its favour in its other debates is less than or equal to 0.5, it receives no judges for that debate.
 - e. Note that this will be resolved by manually inputting average marks onto the Tabbycat ballots for the judges assigned on that round.
15. At the end of the preliminary rounds, teams shall be ranked according to the number of wins. If teams are tied on the same number of wins, they shall be separated where practicable by elimination debates and otherwise on the following priority:
 - a. Total wins
 - b. Votes/ballots carried
 - c. The average total speaker score
16. The draw for Semi-Finals and Finals is calculated using a Power-Pairing Method.

Judges

17. In accordance with the Rules, the Organizer acting as Chief Adjudicator is responsible for:
 - a. determining the eligibility of judges,
 - b. training judges prior to the start of the championship,
 - c. assessing whether eligible judges are competent to judge debates,
 - d. assigning judges to debates,
 - e. recording results of debates,
 - f. determining the team rankings at the end of the preliminary rounds,
 - g. determining the draw for the Semi -Finals and Grand Final, and
 - h. any other matter connected with the adjudication of debates at a championship.
18. Prior to the start of the tournament the Chief Adjudicator may nominate a panel to assist in the aforementioned responsibilities.
19. All debates shall be judged by an odd-numbered panel of at least three judges;
 - a. A judge may judge the same team more than once, provided that the judge does not judge that team a disproportionate number of times.
20. A debate is won by the team which has a majority of the votes of the judges.

- a. The cumulative judges marks or winning margins of teams are not used to determine which team wins a debate.
21. Subject to this rule, to be eligible to judge at the tournament ("an eligible judge") a person must :
 - a. be nominated by an organisation or team
 - b. be experienced at judging the highest level of High School debates and have judged such debates regularly or have attended judging training prior to the tournament,
 - c. have carefully read the [Judging Guidelines](#) on our [Tournament Website](#) as well as the [Debate Rubric](#),
22. Judges for all tournament debates, including the Grand Final, are to be selected for their ability to judge, not because they hold any particular office or occupation.
23. The Organizer may assess an eligible judge at any time before or during the tournament to determine that judge's:
 - a. competence to judge, and
 - b. understanding of the Rules, the Judging Schedule, and any guidelines and instructional material linked above.
24. The Organizer may at any time, as a result of an assessment in accordance with Rule 20, decide that that judge should not judge any debates, or should not judge any further debates without a further assessment if the Organizer is satisfied that there is sufficient doubt about that judge's ability to judge competently or impartially.
25. In undertaking an assessment in accordance with Rule 20 the Organizer may take into consideration:
 - a. Whether the judge has been able or unable to give sufficient reasons for awarding the debate to one team as against another;
 - b. Whether the judge has misdirected himself or herself as to some or more of the rules of debate to a significant extent;
 - c. Whether the judge has made remarks to a team or other participant at the tournament in a way that casts significant doubt as to the judge's competence or impartiality;
 - d. Whether as a result of excessive consumption of alcohol or other substances or tiredness or sickness or other such factors, the ability or perceived ability of the judge to judge competently is seriously in question;
 - e. Whether a complaint has been upheld against the judge:
26. Any complaint about a judge in a particular debate shall be made to the Chief Adjudicator:
 - a. Within 24 hours of the alleged incident giving rise to the complaint,
 - b. By:
 - i. A judge or judges accredited by the Chief Adjudicator for the tournament and who were on a panel of judges with the judge who is the subject of the complaint; or
 - ii. The official and registered coach or team manager of a team participating in the tournament who shall make the complaint in writing;

27. Complaints shall include but are not necessarily restricted to one or more of the following:
 - a. The judge has misdirected him/herself as to one or more of the rules of debate to a significant extent;
 - b. The judge has made remarks prior to, during or after a debate in a way that raises significant doubt as to his or her impartiality for that debate.
28. Before deciding whether a judge should not judge a further debate or debates, the Organizer shall determine whether the matter could be more appropriately resolved by counselling or other appropriate procedure.

Motions

29. Prepared motions are released on the [Tournament Website](#) at least a month before the first round of debate.
30. All impromptu motions must be developed by a Motions Committee and shall be kept confidential until the beginning of a round.

Language

31. All debates shall be in English.
32. Debaters shall not be judged by their expertise in English language, but by the clarity and structure of their arguments.

Prepared Debates

33. Prepared motions will be provided to teams at least a month advance, allowing preparation for both affirmative and negative sides of the issue.
34. Teams are encouraged to conduct thorough research on the debate motions to gather relevant evidence and supporting facts.
35. Teams are allowed to use handwritten or printed notes, cut cards, and any other materials they have prepared in advance during the debate.
36. Teams should compile their research into cut cards, which are excerpts or quotations from sources supporting their arguments.
 - a. In debate, "cutting cards" refers to the practice of extracting and preparing specific excerpts or quotations from research materials, such as books, articles, or online sources, to support arguments and points made during a debate. These extracted excerpts, known as "cut cards" or simply "cards," are carefully selected passages that encapsulate relevant information, evidence, statistics, or expert opinions that back a particular claim or assertion in a debate.
 - b. The process of cutting cards involves:
 - i. Research: Thoroughly researching the debate topic to find credible and pertinent sources that provide evidence or support for arguments.
 - ii. Selection: Identifying key sections, sentences, or phrases within these sources that directly support the debater's argument or position.

- iii. Extraction: Extracting these chosen sections verbatim or slightly paraphrased to ensure accuracy and clarity.
 - iv. Attribution: Properly citing the source of the extracted text, including the author, publication, date, and page number, to maintain academic integrity and provide a clear reference.
37. Judges are encouraged to check cut cards or any other material used at the end of the debate to justify the team's argument. If a cut card is created or cited incorrectly, this might result in losing points for content, or worse, losing the debate.

Impromptu Debates

38. At the discretion of the host, up to one-half of the debates for any team in the preliminary round may be impromptu debates, provided that every team has as close as possible to the same number of impromptu debates as every other team in the preliminary rounds.
39. The preparation time and procedure for impromptu debates are in the discretion of the host, provided that:
- a. both teams in an impromptu debate receive the topic (or choice of topics) at the same time,
 - b. insofar as possible, each team shall have the same number of affirmative and negative sides in impromptu debates, and
 - c. both teams in an impromptu debate are given similar preparation rooms and conditions.
40. Only the members of the team may take part in the preparation.
41. Teams may not bring any handwritten, printed or published materials with them into their preparation room for impromptu debates, with the exception of an English Language dictionary, a bilingual dictionary, and a single-volume encyclopedia or almanac per team.
42. A person taking part in the preparation of an impromptu debate may not use a telephone, computer or any other device capable of communicating or accessing information.
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Judging Schedule

- Judges mark independently of each other, and should sit apart from each other during the debate so that they cannot see each other's mark-sheets.
- At the end of the debate, the judges fill in their mark-sheets independently, and hand them to the person chairing the debate before leaving the debate room briefly to confer.
- The purpose of the conference is to brief one of the judges to give a short adjudication on behalf of the judges.

- The adjudication should be short, and should explain the result to the audience. In particular, it should set out the key reasons why the winning team won, and comment on significant matters of debate style or technique that were displayed in the debate.
- The adjudication should be constructive, not negative.

Marking Standard

- Each speaker's substantive speech is marked out of 100, with 40 for content, 40 for style and 20 for strategy.
 - Since our students are learning, **we award the highest substantive speeches 32/40 and 16/20 marks.**
- The reply speech is marked out of 50, with 20 for content, 20 for style and 10 for strategy.
 - Since our students are learning, **we award the highest reply speeches 16/20 and 8/10 marks.**
- Judges may not use any other marking standard or categorise of marks.

Content	Style	Strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content is the argument used by the speaker, divorced from style. • An argument must be built with reliable evidence and analysis. • Evidence must be based on common knowledge, case studies, events from the news, data, or theories. • A weak argument is one that does not provide evidence, or simply lists the evidence and does not analyze it. • If an argument is weak it should be marked accordingly, even if the other team does not expose its weakness. • In deciding the strength or weakness of an argument, judges should not be influenced by their own personal beliefs or specialized knowledge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Style is the way speakers speak. • Judges should make allowance for different accents, speaking styles and debating terminology. • In general, the use of palm-cards, lecterns, folders, notepads or other forms of speaker notes should not affect the mark a speaker is given. However, speakers should not read their speeches, but should use notes that they refer to only from time to time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy covers two concepts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Whether the speaker understands what are the issues of the debate, and ◦ The structure and timing of the speaker's speech. • A speaker must provide a roadmap/agenda for their speech • If a speaker does not allocate enough time to an argument you would take marks off for strategy. • If the speech does not have a conclusion you would take marks off for strategy.

Minute-by-minute of a Debate

Definitions and Cases

- The Proposition must present a reasonable definition of the motion. This means:
 - On receiving a motion, both teams should ask: 'What is the issue that the two teams are expected to debate? What would an ordinary intelligent person reading the motion think that it is about?'

- If the motion poses a clear issue for debate (i.e. it has an obvious meaning), the Proposition must define the motion accordingly. When the motion has an obvious meaning (one which the ordinary intelligent person would realize), any other definition would not be reasonable.
- When defining the words in the motion so as
 - to allow the obvious meaning to be debated, or
 - (when there is no obvious meaning) to give effect to a possible meaning which would allow for a reasonable debate, the Proposition must ensure that the definition is one the ordinary intelligent person would accept.
- The definition must match the level of abstraction (or specificity) of the motion, so that the debate is as specific or general as the motion itself. Specific motions should be defined specifically and general motions generally.
- When suggesting parameters to the debate, or proposing particular models or criteria to judge it by, the Proposition must ensure such parameters, models or criteria are themselves reasonable. They must be ones that the ordinary intelligent person would accept as applicable to the debate.
- The Proposition's ability to set reasonable parameters to a debate does not provide a license to restrict the motion arbitrarily.
- When the motion requires the Proposition to propose a solution to a problem and the Proposition has to set out the details of its proposed solution to prove its effectiveness, the Proposition must ensure that the detailed solution given (the Proposition's 'model' or 'plan') is a reasonable one, such that the ordinary intelligent person would accept it is applicable to the debate.
- If the Proposition's definition is unreasonable, the Opposition may:
 - Accept it anyway (and debate the Proposition's case regardless);
 - Challenge it (argue that the definition is unreasonable, put up an alternative, reasonable definition and a case based on this);
 - Broaden the debate back to the words in the motion (if the Proposition has unreasonably restricted the motion and is arguing a narrower version of it);
 - Challenge the definition, but argue that 'even if' it is reasonable, the Proposition's case is flawed.
- The definition settled, each team has to present a case, supported by arguments and examples.
- A case sums up the team's arguments and states why its side of the motion is correct.
- Arguments are reasons or rationales why the team's case is correct.
- Examples are facts, events, occurrences and the like that show the team's arguments are correct.

The Roles of the Speakers

1st Prop

- The role of the first speaker of the proposition is to define the topic, establish the issues for the debate, outline the proposition case, announce the case division between the speakers, and present their part of the proposition case.
- The proposition may define the topic in any way provided that the definition - is reasonably close to the plain meaning of the topic, allows the opposition team reasonable room to debate, is not tautological or truistic, and is otherwise a reasonable definition.
- Squirreling, place-setting and time-setting are not permitted
 - Squirreling is the distortion of the definition to enable a team to argue a pre-prepared argument that it wishes to debate regardless of the motion actually set;
 - Place-setting is the setting of a debate of general application in a particular place
 - Time-setting is the setting of a debate of general application in a particular time, past or future.

1st Opp

- The role of the first speaker of the opposition side is to challenge the definition if necessary, present an alternative definition if the definition is challenged, respond to the proposition case, outline the opposition case, announce the case division, and present his or her part of the opposition case.
- The first opposition may challenge the definition only if it does not conform to 5.2 or 5.3. If it challenges the definition, the first opposition must propose a new definition that conforms to their case.
- If the first opposition does not challenge the definition, the opposition is taken to have accepted the definition and the opposition may not challenge the definition in any other speech unless the proposition significantly alters the definition in their subsequent speeches.
- In responding to the proposition case, the opposition team may produce a positive choice of its own, or merely attack the case presented by the proposition. If it chooses to produce a positive case of its own, it must in fact produce that case through its speeches, and not concentrate solely on attacking the case presented by the proposition.

2nd Prop

- The role of the second speaker of the proposition is to deal with the definition if it has been challenged, respond to the opposition case, and continue with the proposition case as outlined by the first speaker.
- If the second proposition does not challenge a re-definition of the debate made by the first opposition, the proposition is taken to have accepted the opposition's re-definition and no further challenges to the definition may be made.

2nd Opp

- The role of the second speaker of the opposition is to deal with the definition if it is still in issue, respond to the proposition case, and continue with the opposition case as outlined by the first speaker.

3rd Speeches

- The role of both third speakers is to deal with the definition if it is still in issue, and respond to the other team's case.
- The third speaker of either team may have a small part of the team's case to present, but this is not obligatory as the third speaker's primary role is to respond to what has gone before in the debate.
- **If the third speaker is to present a part of the team's case, this must be announced in the case division by the first speaker.**
- The more the debate progresses, the more each speaker must spend time dealing with what has been said by previous speakers.
- Hence the more the debate progresses, the less time will be spent by each speaker in presenting a new part of the team case and the more time will be spent responding to the other team's arguments.
- The role of the reply speeches is to sum up the debate from the team's viewpoint, including a response to the other team's overall case and a summary of the speaker's own team's case.

Reply Speeches

- The reply speaker may be either the first or second speaker of the team, but not the third.
- The reply speakers are in reverse order, with the opposition reply first and the proposition reply last.
- Neither reply speaker may introduce a new part of the team case.
- A reply speaker may respond to an existing argument by raising a new example that illustrates that argument, but may not otherwise introduce a new argument.

In short...

- The proposition team does not have to prove its case beyond reasonable doubt, but merely that its case is true in the majority of cases or as a general proposition.
- The opposition team must prove more than a reasonable doubt about the proposition case.
- Where the topic is expressed as an absolute, the proposition must prove the topic true in the significant majority of cases, but not in every single conceivable instance.
- Where the topic is expressed as an absolute, the opposition must do more than present a single instance where the topic is not true and prove that it is not true for at least a significant minority of cases.

Points of Information

- Between the first and seventh minutes of a speaker's substantive speech, members of the other team may offer points of information.

- The purpose of a point of information is to make a short point or ask a short question of the speaker.
- Points of information need not be addressed through the person chairing the debate, and may be in the form of a question.
- A point of information should be brief, and no longer than 15 seconds.
- Points of information are an important part of the clash between the teams, and enable speakers to remain a part of the debate even when they are not making a speech. Hence a speaker should offer points of information both before and after that speaker has given their substantive speech.
- The speaker has the absolute right to refuse to accept a point of information, or to accept it only at the end of the next sentence.
- However, a speaker is obliged to accept some points of information, provided that they have been offered at reasonable times in the speaker's speech.
- As a general rule a speaker should accept at least 2 points of information in their speech. But a speaker who accepts a significantly greater number of points of information risks losing control of their speech.
- Members of the opposing team should not offer an excessive number of points of information to the point that they are **barracking**. As a general rule **each team member should offer between 2 and 4 points of information per speech**, and should not offer them within a short time of a previous point of information having been offered.
- The response by the speaker to a point of information should be included in the mark for that speaker's speech.
- The offering of points of information should be included in the mark for the speaker offering points.