New York Catholic Forensic League
Guide to Judging Debate Events

V 1.0, October 2022

Welcome

On behalf of the NYCFL, I would like to thank you for your willingness to give up a Saturday for our students. Our contests could not run without your support.

I believe you will find judging a rewarding experience. That is not to say that it will be completely without a little anxiety. Our students will do their best to make it difficult to decide who wins and who loses a round. Rest assured, however, that no one is more qualified to make that decision than you are. We trust you to watch and listen to the various presentations and to make a thoughtful and intelligent decision about which debaters you honestly believe were the best in their rounds.

This manual is intended to be a guide to help you understand the rules and criteria for each category. I hope you find the information in here helpful.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask me or any of the coaches in our league.

Thanks.

Charles J. Sloat

Disclaimer: This document is intended as a general guideline. Rules for specific competitions may vary. Please check with your team's coach/moderator or the NYCFL executive council for specific rule changes.

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Introduction

This guide is designed to help you become an effective judge at both New York Catholic Forensic League debate tournaments and more elaborate invitationals. We hope that it will answer most of your questions about:

1. The operation of debate contests
2. The effective evaluation of debaters in contest rounds
3. The rules and practices in each event

Our students are serious about their work. They put a great deal of time, energy, and care into the preparation of their arguments. We want, of course, for them to have positive and successful experiences in forensics. To this end, we hope that you will take the time to read this guide thoroughly before arriving at your first tournament as a judge or observer. It does not take special talent or expertise to become an effective judge. It does, however, take time, energy and care. It takes a positive and supportive outlook. It takes a willingness to fine tune your critical listening skills and apply them to the contest setting.

We hope that this information will help to make your judging experience a positive one—for you and for the debaters you hear as well. These talented and motivated students truly are the future leaders of our society, and we can help prepare them assume these leadership roles by helping them improve their communication skills. We are grateful to you for your time and look forward to seeing you at the contests to come.

The Debate Events

There are many types of debate out in the wild, but the two we will concentrate on here are Public Forum and Lincoln-Douglas, which are the chief events conducted at NYCFL tournaments, and the events you are most likely to be judging at invitationals.

> **Public Forum Debate** is a two-person-team event where the debaters argue some particular current world situation. It was specifically created for students to present arguments to general-public, non-debate adjudicators, i.e., people like you. The point was to keep it simple. The other forms of debate at the time were getting progressively more complicated, becoming closed systems of speed and often arcane argumentation. The intention with Public Forum was to create an activity that would be more open and accessible to a wider group of students. The resounding popularity of PF since its inception has proven this to be the case. The use of lay judges, i.e., parents, combined with the short life span of the topics, virtually guarantees that the event remains roughly what it was intended to be. It is a great educational opportunity for students of all abilities and levels of dedication. It has even spread into Middle Schools. This is most likely the event you will be signed up for.

> **Lincoln-Douglas Debate** is a one-on-one contest between two people affirming or negating a resolution. The resolutions change roughly every two months, and the topics usually boil down to is a conflict between the rights of one individual or group measured against the rights of some other individual or group, or, is a certain action right or wrong (i.e., moral). What the debaters offer in their cases is the greatest inherent value of either the affirmative or negative; the underlying reason to do something. They defend that value on their side, while attacking their opponent's value. In any tournament, the debaters are required to argue both sides of the resolution; the point is to be persuasive on either side, by acquiring and demonstrating the skills of reasoned argument.

The other forms of debate, which we do not offer at NYCFL tournaments, include Policy, Parliamentary, World Schools and Big Questions. If, by chance, your coach asks you to judge one of these events, it means that no doubt you have already proven your ability to adjudicate rounds, and your coach will be the one to walk you through the particular intricacies you might be facing. Nevertheless, the general business of tournaments remains the same (e.g., the need to have a tabroom.com account), so what is in this manual should be of use.

NYCFL vs. Invitationals

The NYCFL is a the speech and debate organization defined by geographic boundary of the Archdiocese of New York. It operates non-denominationally, and is open to all schools, public and private, within that geographic boundary, and to all students of any religion. The league holds events virtually every weekend during the season, which stretches over most of the school year. Roughly one of these each month is a debate event. The host school could be anywhere in the region, but is usually somewhere in Manhattan, where our numbers are the greatest. And, occasionally, we may hold virtual events, something we learned to do during the pandemic. Both in-person and virtual events are covered in this manual. The culmination of the NYCFL season is a national tournament traditionally held over the Memorial Day weekend.

For debate tournaments, the NYCFL provides three or four preliminary rounds of competition over the course of one day, with a lunch break between rounds 2 and 3. We usually kick off with a short introductory assembly, and end with a brief awards ceremony. Most judges will be scheduled for most rounds—we seldom have the luxury of too many judges—and should expect to travel directly from one round to the next. If you should happen to find yourself without a judging assignment for any one round, you should remain in the judges' lounge or in the general meeting area during that round so that it will be easy to locate you should it become necessary. Adult chaperones must remain on the premises at all times, including those who might not be judging.

While our CFL events are one-dayers, invitational tournaments are more elaborate affairs spanning two or three days either at high schools or colleges throughout the Northeast. While the literal debating is no different, the stakes are usually higher at invitationals, and, of course, there

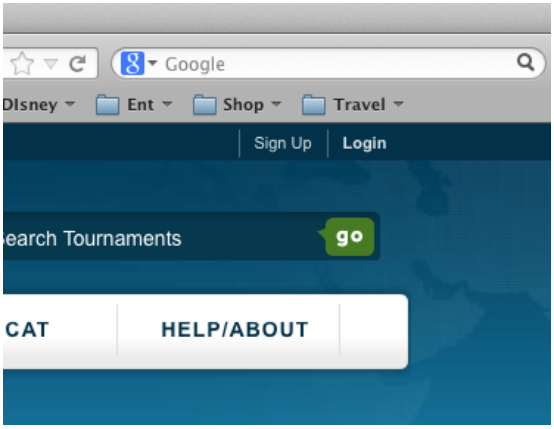
is travel involved. This manual intended to cover both the local league events and the more elaborate away events.

Tabroom.com

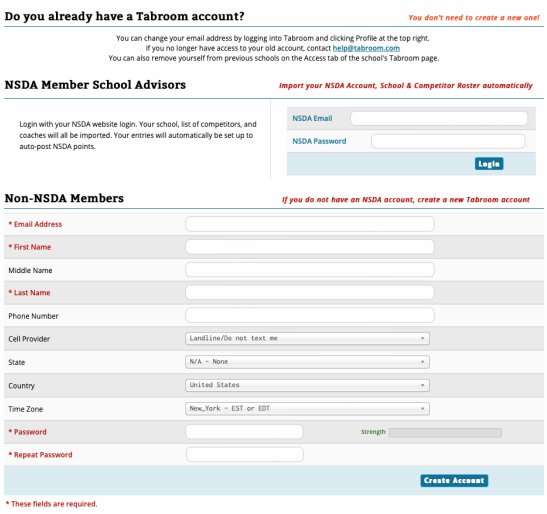
Nowadays tournaments are almost entirely managed online, from registration sometimes months in advance to the posting of results when it's all over. For the NYCFL and most if not all invitationals in our region, this requires that all participants, including judges, have an account on tabroom.com, the National Speech and Debate Association software. Here is how to set up your account.

Go to **Tabroom.com**

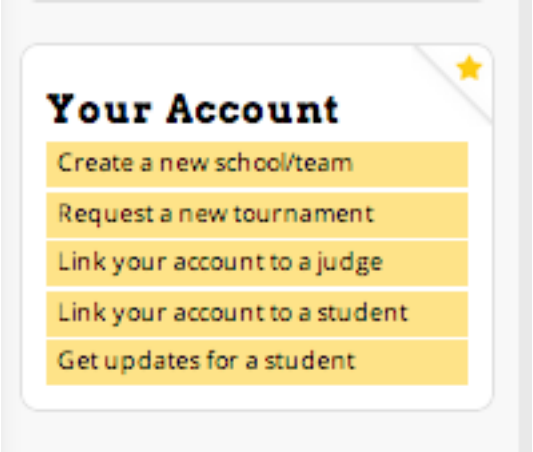
Click **Sign Up** in the top right corner to create an account.

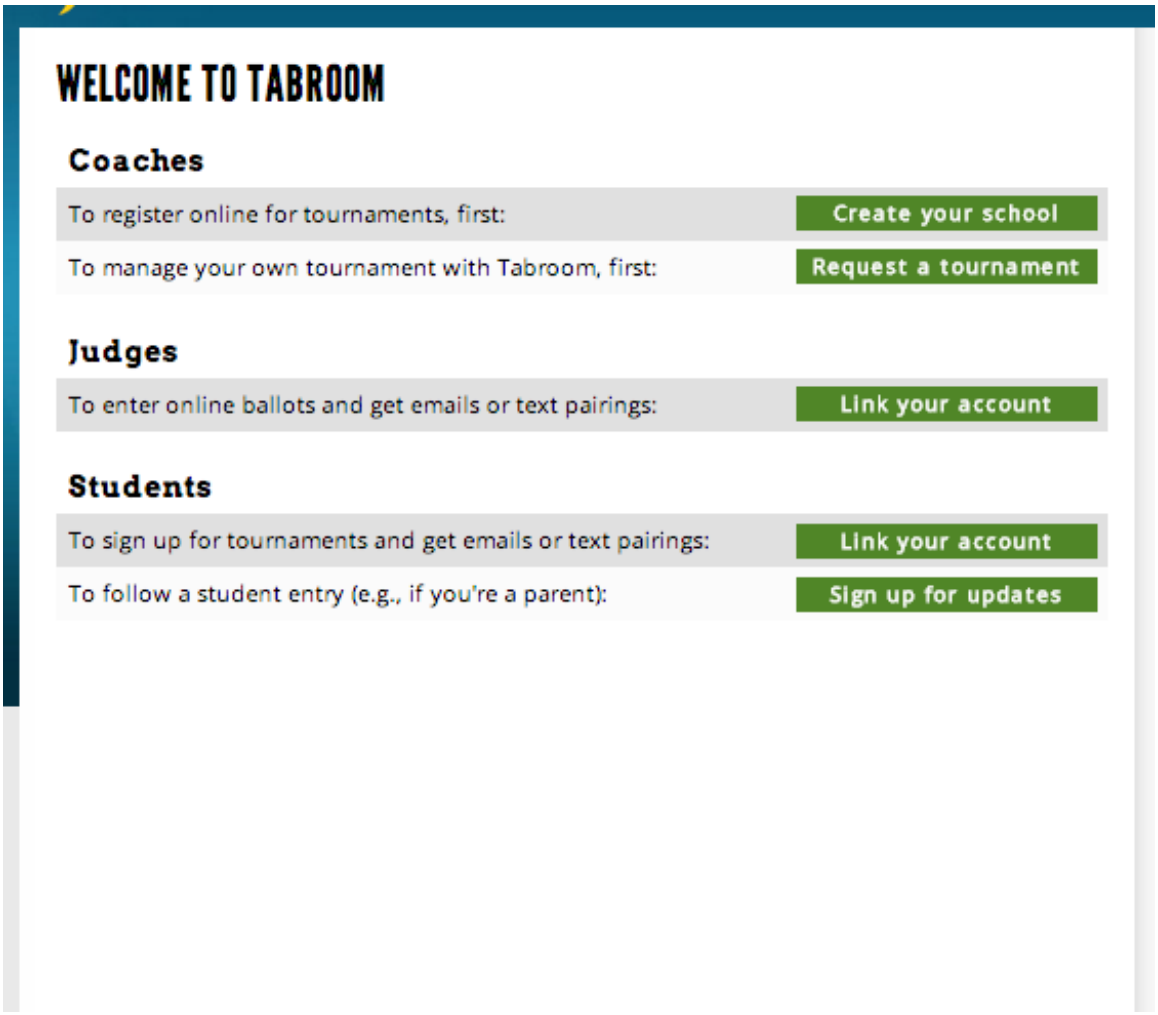


Fill out the form.



Once an account is created, click **Link your account to a judge** under the **Your Account** header.





What Goes on at a Tournament?

As noted above, tournaments range from small one-day affairs at a local high school—the average NYCFL event—to ginormous three-day affairs sprawling over an entire university campus. Some things are fairly constant, though. Your team arrives and registers, which means alerting the hosts that you're there while paying any fees. After that, more often than not, you wait around.

And wait.

And wait.

We strongly recommend that you bring a book to read. *War and Peace* should get you through at least the first couple of rounds. After that, *Infinite Jest* ought to take you through to the elims.

As a general rule there will be a judges' lounge off somewhere to the side where you're segregated from the students—good for them, better for you—and where you can get coffee and snacks and maybe even meals, peace and quiet, and a comfy chair. But, then again, don't go counting on that comfy chair. There's usually a college student sleeping in it for three days straight. Still, any judges' lounge is better than no judges' lounge, and you should avail yourself of it. It can become problematic if you locate yourself somewhere other than the lounge, if people need to find you.

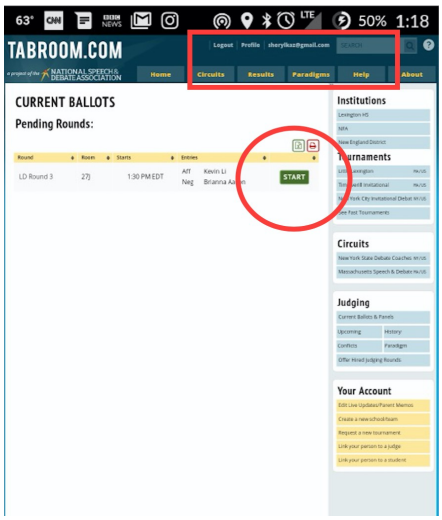
Curiously, this judge has been at every tournament, and in every judges' lounge, since 1983.

How Does It Work?

On arrival at a tournament, please check in with your school's coach, if you weren't already traveling with the team. The coach (or their designee) is responsible for registering the whole team with the tournament officials, and can direct you to the judges' lounge.

Rounds will be announced electronically via tabroom.com. In other words, you'll get a text. It is, after all, the 21st Century. Therefore, it behooves you at the very least to have a smartphone; better still, have a smartphone and either a tablet or a laptop. We repeat: it is, after all, the 21st Century.

When you are notified that you have an assignment:



1. Acknowledge the ballot.. You'll be able to find the START button on the tabroom home page on your device. (Remember to log into tabroom first.) The example is the page you see when you click on your email address on the top right. The red rectangle in the illustration shows your email address. The circle indicates the position of the START button. (NOTEL It may also be called ACKNOWLEDGE BALLOT or ON MY WAY or anything of that nature, depending on the tournament. We'll continue referring to it as the START button for the sake of simplicity.) Hit that button at the right time, so that the tournament officials know that you are on the case.
2. Go to your assigned room.
3. After the competitors arrive, and everyone is ready, the round can begin.
4. As soon as the round is over and you have made your decision, click on the **ENTER** button to submit your results. *YOU MUST CONFIRM THE RESULTS AS DIRECTED.*
5. RFDs and comments to the debaters should be entered after you've submitted the results. If you're rushing to your next assignment, your ballots will be available for your comments any time before the tournament ends.

Flights, Chats and Obligations

Most PF and LD in-person rounds comprise two flights; that is, most rounds are actually two rounds back-to-back, and you will usually judge both of them. Normally you judge the first flight, watch those kids leave and get replaced by the second flight, and then you judge that second flight. **This is important: Enter your decision on the ballot for the first flight before starting the second flight.** Otherwise, you will confuse who's who and what's what so badly that you won't know if the sun rises in the east and if spaghetti really doesn't grow on trees. The kids in the second flight can wait until you're finished. (With e-ballots, all you have to do is enter the decision. You have until the end of the day to enter any comments. There is much more on this later in the manual.)

Who Gets to Talk

It is important to keep in mind that **the less you say to the debaters before and after the round, the better. And, of course, you say nothing during the round.** It's up to the debaters to do the talking. You can disclose your decision in the round after you have submitted your ballot, but that is up to you. Some tournaments actually disallow disclosure, so make sure you know the rule where you're judging. NYCFL discourages disclosure, although it is permissible to address issues that have arisen in the round, if you are so inclined. In any case, you are strongly urged to discourage any further discussion about the round from the debaters themselves. Sometimes students will want to change your mind about something you've already decided. Don't let that get started. Also, in general, it is a good idea not to express too many opinions aside from your evaluation of the round that you just saw. If you comment, say, that you think "it's hard for the pro to win on this topic," the pro team will go straight to their coach and claim you have a con bias. Things like that happen, and you don't want to get caught in the middle of them.

A zen-like approach to judging is the best policy.

Obligations

Judging obligations vary from tournament to tournament. At NYCFLs, you're in for the whole day. At invitationals, judges are usually obligated one round past their school's participation in the tournament; that is, tournaments need judges to stay one round past the point their own students are eliminated, otherwise there won't be any judges left in the elimination rounds. This may not be the case at the tournament you're attending, so make sure you know what your obligation is and that you fulfill it. Schools whose judges don't show up for rounds can suffer penalties including fines and, in the worst-case scenario, inability to sign up for future tournaments. (A full explanation for why obligations work the way they do is in Appendix B.)

Paradigms

Not only are you being dragged to this tournament kicking and screaming every inch of the way, but they are asking for—nay, *demanding*—you post your paradigm! This is not a requirement for the NYCFL, but it is most everywhere else.

What fresh hell is this?

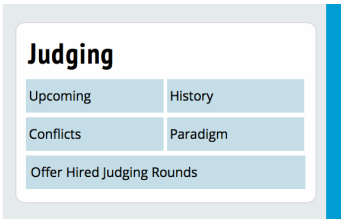
One of the most important things a debater (or any public speaker) can learn is to adjust to the audience. In debate, we call that judge adaptation. Knowing something about their judge theoretically allows teams to adjust accordingly. Increasingly at tournaments, there will be an expectation that judges will have posted a paradigm on tabroom.com. But if you're just starting out, or only judge occasionally, you probably don't have any hard and fast rules or ideas that you want to communicate to the teams. Nevertheless, you *are* a certain kind of judge, and this indeed can be communicated.

No two audiences are alike. Sometimes even one audience isn't alike.

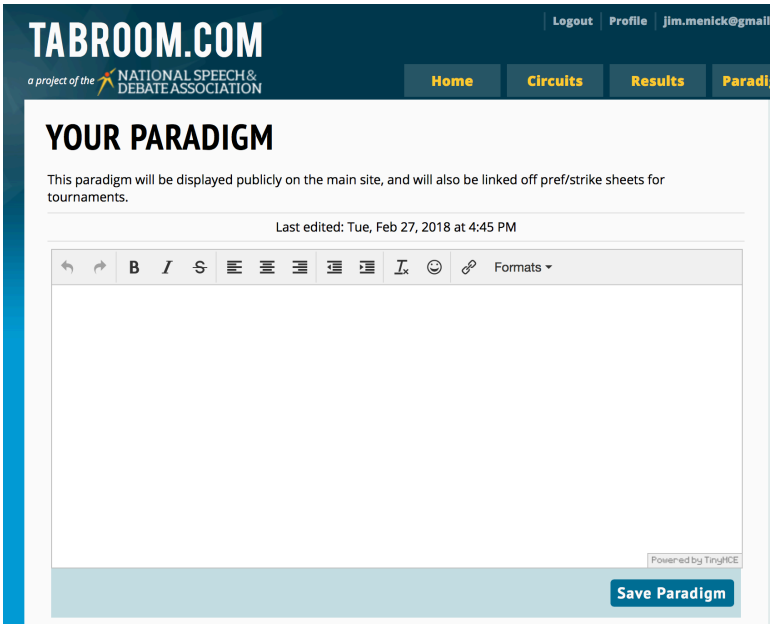
If you're a new and relatively inexperienced judge, the best thing to say in your paradigm is: "I am a new and relatively inexperienced judge." This says 99.9% of what a team needs to know. You can add anything else you want. If you don't like fast talking and can't follow it, say so. If you expect that the teams will crystallize voting points in their final speeches, say so. Whatever. You don't have to get carried away. Just the basic premise, that you're a new judge, and anything else you might have gleaned along the way if you've already done a few rounds. And, of course, you can update your paradigm at any time.

How to Create a Paradigm

Once you've created a tabroom.com account, clicking on your email address at the top will bring up a screen with this on the lower right:



Clicking on **Paradigm** will bring up this page:



Fill it out and save it, and there you are.

Public Forum

The topics in PF usually concern current events, and what we should do to solve a specific problem. **One of the most important things to remember when listening to a debate is that you must not bring your own opinions on a topic into the round.** Often you won't have an opinion, but there are times when you might feel strongly that one side or another of a resolution is correct before the students even open their mouths. You need to put that aside. The debaters' job is not to change your mind, which would be an unfair burden for the team on the "wrong" side. The debaters' job is simply to convince you for the next half hour or so that they are right and that their opponents are wrong. Your job is to judge the debate in front of you as if it were the first time you have ever heard of the subject. Tabula rasa is the name of the game.

The Round Itself

At NYCFL events, sides are set in advance, that is, everyone knows who is Pro and who is Con when the rounds are announced, and Pro always goes first. Many tournaments, especially invitationals, decree that PF teams flip a coin at the beginning of the round. If there is a flip, the winners of the flip get to decide either which side they wish to be on, or whether they wish to go first or second. The losers of the flip get to decide whichever the winners of the flip didn't decide. This takes a couple of minutes to sort out before anything gets started, and nowadays is usually handled automatically by the tabroom software.

It is strongly recommended that once the flip is done and sides are chosen—or if there is no flip, pretty much as soon as everyone is in the room—that you take careful note of who is who and on which side. Find out this information from the students and write down all their names in your notes in such a way that you'll remember which speaker is which, from which school. You might write down: *Bill = red tie, Fred = eyeglasses, from Benjamin Harrison High School, Becky = good hair*—anything so that you'll know, as they are speaking, who's who, since you will need to evaluate them separately, assigning individual points to each speaker. It is easy to get the who's who in PF wrong; even seasoned coaches can screw this up. You can't be too careful.

Note: If the debaters have flipped and tell you they are on a particular side but your tabroom page says otherwise, refresh the page. That should get everyone pointing in the same direction.

For the most part, the teams will time one another, and you don't want to worry about that. There is a timer built into tabroom.com, however, if you want to keep an eye on things.

How the Round is Organized

This is how the speeches break down:

First Pro Constructive: 4 minutes
First Con Constructive: 4 minutes
Crossfire: 3 minutes (the Con asks the first question; thereafter, either debater can ask questions).
Second Pro: 4 minutes
Second Con: 4 minutes
Crossfire: 3 minutes (the Pro asks the first question; thereafter, either debater can ask questions).
First Pro Summary: 3 minutes
First Con Summary: 3 minutes
Grand Crossfire: 3 minutes (one member of the Pro team asks the first question; thereafter, any debater may ask questions).
Second Pro Final Focus: 2 minutes
Second Con Final Focus: 2 minute
Preparation Time: 3 minutes per team to be allocated at each team's discretion.

You should take notes throughout the round, as thoroughly as you can. This is called flowing, and if you can do it on your computer or tablet, go for it. Using paper to take notes is perfectly acceptable if you prefer it. In either case, it is recommended that you use two different colors, black for pro and red for con (or whatever), so that when you're evaluating your notes, you'll know which side said what.

How to Pick a Winner

Most PF debates concentrate on a couple of main lines of argumentation. Teams might start with a whole slew of contentions in their cases, but what matters is how they argue things throughout the round. By the end, they may have whittled things down to just one or two big areas. You are going to vote on their debating, and what they said when they clashed, and how the arguments they made developed throughout the round. If something was simply said at the beginning in a case and never mentioned again, it really doesn't matter anymore. What matters is what stayed alive for the whole debate.

Originally the paradigm for making a decision in a round was the idea of the evaluation of newscasters. The activity was called "Controversy," and you were expected to evaluate it on the level of which arguing newscaster made the most believable, persuasive arguments. (At one point it was even called Ted Turner Debate, as a result of Turner's sponsorship, hence the Crossfire/newscaster connection.) There is use of evidence to support arguments, but there is only so much evidence one can present in the short speech times, not to mention that the topic changing regularly prevents teams from amassing overwhelming amounts of evidence (as they might with the year-long topic in the Policy debate event). When it comes to making your decision, the real question is, Who convinced you that they were right? That is the side you vote for.

After the round ends, you write up a ballot. You can offer advice to either side, or various notes that you think might be helpful to them, but the most important thing you will put into your ballot is your Reason For Decision, or RFD. Why did you vote for this side and not that side? Answer that question. That is what the teams and their coaches are really looking for.

You also need to assign points, usually to each individual debater (which is why it was important at the beginning to sort out who was who). There is usually a scale and a range on the ballot. Follow that. (If there isn't a scale/range—30 is likely to win the tournament, 29 should get a trophy definitely, 28 probably will get a trophy, 27 you doubt it they'll get a trophy, 26 needs work, 25 or less is rude or unacceptable behavior, which you'll clearly explain on your ballot. More often than not, you can modify your number assignments with half points or even tenths of points.) The assigning of points is terribly arbitrary, but thinking of it in terms of your prediction of where the teams will be at the end of the tournament does help. In any case, there is a section below on points in detail.

LINCOLN-DOUGLAS

LD can be a complex activity. The number one thing to keep in mind is that the debaters must adapt to you, and not vice versa. You, as the judge, are the one with the power, i.e., the ballot. Good debaters will adjust accordingly. As a general rule, while newcomer parents may easily judge novices, varsity debates are more often adjudicated by coaches and ex-debaters.

What to Do as a Judge

In the non-virtual world, most LD rounds consist of two flights, an A flight and a B flight, which simply means that each round is actually two rounds cleverly disguised as one, but at least they're both usually in the same room. In the virtual world, a round usually consists of just one debate/flight. If you are assigned a ballot, go to the correct room—a virtual room in the covid world, an actual room otherwise—where, as judge, you should find the most comfortable seat available, excluding the teacher's desk; teachers are more territorial than grizzly bears, and any hint of disturbance at a teacher's desk can set the National Speech and Debate League back a hundred years. The debaters will logically take places where you can get a good look at them. Then everyone does a little bookkeeping. The debaters pre-flow, i.e., get organized (which will always make you wonder why they waited until the last minute, especially if it's B flight and they've been camped outside your door for the last forty-five minutes). What the judge should do is prepare a pad to flow the coming argument, or if you're adept enough, an Excel or Word sheet. Flow? The thing is, you've got to take notes if you really want to track what's going on, and what's going on in debate parlance is "the flow" -- the flow of the arguments, the flow of the debate. If possible, get someone to show you an example of a flow in advance: there are different ways of doing it, and you'll find one right for you. Mostly it's just taking notes in such a way that you can align the contentions with the refutations and compare what was said by whom.

When the debate begins, the students will usually time one another, although in tabroom, a timing clock can do the countdown, so there's not much to worry about there. Aside from casually watching the timing, the judge is under no obligation to utter a word during the round. In fact, conversation with the debaters is discouraged until after your ballot is entered. Depending on the tournament, there is usually no requirement to disclose your decision to the debaters, and in fact, in the NYCFL, disclosure is theoretically against the rules. Whatever you do, do not get involved in yet another debate after the round is theoretically over! The judge's word is law. Make sure you don't end up starting up the argument again. (Some debaters never give up; this is a failing on their part which should be reported to their coaches -- they should know better.)

As soon as the debate is over, you should enter your decision as quickly as possible so that the tab room can keep the tournament moving. You have until the end of the tournament to enter any comments; the recommendation is to enter your decision and points immediately, and as soon as you can after that, while the debate is still fresh in your mind, enter your comments. Do stay in the room, real or virtual, until you have entered your decision. You could hold up an entire

tournament if you keep to yourself and run off somewhere private where no one can find you while you struggle with ballot-writing. We need your decision, and we need it right away. What we don't need is your reasons for the decision; they can wait.

The Mechanics of LD

The debate itself is a series of speeches on both sides. In order they are:

1) **The affirmative constructive (AC -- 6 minutes).** First up is the affirmative side, for a six minute speech. Often the aff will begin with a quotation or summary statement, then perhaps some definitions of key terms in the resolution, and perhaps an observation or two setting some boundaries to the discussion. The aff will then usually declare a value that he or she is going to defend, and perhaps a criterion through which to measure that value (we'll explain that later). Then the aff will then go into its contentions, which are the meat of the argument: these are usually two or three areas of analysis explaining the affirmative position detail.

2) **Cross-examination by negative (CX -- 3 minutes)**. At the conclusion of the AC, the negative debater will directly question the affirmative for three minutes. There are no boundaries on CX, short of abusing your opponent; any question can and will be asked. In CX, the best debaters both chisel away at the flaws in their opponent's case and set the framework for their own case.

3) **The negative constructive (NC -- 7 minutes).** Next up (after a couple of minutes preparation time) is the neg to make the opposing argument. Again, we'll probably start with a quote or summary statement, then perhaps new definitions if for some reason neg feels that the aff's definitions are inadequate or misleading, followed perhaps by more observations. Then there's neg's value, which may be the same or different from aff's. Next neg argues, as did aff, with two or three contentions, this time against the resolution (contentions, by the way, are also sometimes referred to as lines of analysis). When the neg is finished its own contentions, neg then goes on to refute the aff case, point by point. In other words, now, in the same speech, the debating begins as neg attacks aff's contentions.

4) **Cross-examination by the affirmative (CX -- 3 minutes).** At the conclusion of the NC, the aff debater will grill the negative, just like aff was grilled by negative before. Same no-rules apply.

5) **First affirmative rebuttal (1AR -- 4 minutes).** From now on, it's all argument. Both sides have made their cases. Now they defend their side and attack their opponent's. The first affirmative rebuttal is a four-minute speech by aff, and it's not much time to cover everything, but covering everything is the order of the day. Usually aff begins by going point by point refuting the neg case, then aff defends against the neg's previous refutations of the aff case. It can get hectic, but it's one of the high points of the debate.

6) **Negative rebuttal (NR -- 6 minutes).** Neg is up again, to defend the neg case and once again refute the aff. But neg has six minutes, plenty of time to go into deep analysis of the issues. Usually neg will attempt to sum up or "crystallize" the round at the conclusion of the NR, urging you to deliver a negative ballot.

7) **The second affirmative rebuttal (2AR --3 minutes).** To make up for the apparent time imbalance, aff gets the last word in the 2AR. Aff usually uses the time to summarize the round, crystallizing the key voting points and, of course, urging an affirmative ballot.

8) Note that both sides do have an allotment of **preparation time**, usually a total of four minutes, which they will usually use prior to making their rebuttal speeches (although once in a blue moon a kid uses prep before a cx).

How to Pick a Winner

Choosing in favor of a debater is called picking them up. Choosing against them is called dropping them. Regardless of your abilities as a judge, debaters you pick up will consider you an expert (provided your allotment of speaker points is commensurate with their normal expectations -- we'll discuss speaker points later), while the debaters you drop will suspect that their pet ferret could have done a better job than you have. But that's to be expected. They'd feel exactly the same way if you'd been doing this for 50 years and were the president of the NSDA.

Obviously, the person who makes the best arguments wins. If the subject is one on which you have a personal opinion (for example, the death penalty), it is still the person who makes the best arguments in that round, and not what you happen to believe yourself. Of course, usually the resolutions are so broad that either side could win, so you won't have to worry about your own prejudices.

Crystallization points. Often debaters wind up by offering crystallization points, or voting issues, at the end of their last speeches. These are the aspects of their side of the case that the debaters claim to have won. It is a good idea to use these voting issues as your own issues when making a decision. Of course, you may not agree that the debater won a point that he or she claims he won, and you may rank the importance of the issues differently than the debaters, but that's precisely why you earn the big bucks. Newer debaters don't often use crystallization points, but more seasoned varsity debaters usually are adept at this part of the presentation, which is very helpful to any judge, no matter how experienced.

Values. Each debater should uphold his value, if he or she has one. (NOTE: There is no rule that a debater must have a value per se—it's an old-time approach). If the value is justice for both sides, for instance, which case ultimately came across as the most just? If the values are different for the two sides, say justice for aff and individual rights for neg, you have to measure which value applies better to the resolution after you've heard their arguments. Which debater convinced you that he or she best supports his or her value? If it's equal, which proved to have the "higher" -- more important -- value?

Criteria. If a debater establishes a criterion for a case, you should use this criterion to measure the value. A good analogy in understanding values and criteria is that, let's say you want to buy a car because you need transportation. Transportation is your value. What are the criteria you use to buy the car? If you want speed and flash and fun, you might opt for a sports car, while if you want spaciousness and safety for a family you might opt for a minivan. The end result is still a

car, and transportation, but it's a different kind of car, and your reasons -- or criteria -- for buying it are entirely different. Criteria in LD usually come into strongest play when the values are the same for both sides. However, as with values, there is no "rule" that a debater must have a criterion (despite what some debaters might say to you during the round).

Style. LD debate is not an event where the style of speech comes into play, so it is not the best orator that wins but the best debater. You do not vote for the debater who sounds the best; it is what they say that is important. That's why you have to listen carefully and take notes. There has to be a clash, and someone has to win it. Essentially, each side defends two or three contentions of his or her own, and replies to the opponent's two or three contentions. The best arguments are the ones that you found the most logically compelling. It's as simple as that. Some arguments might sound entirely ridiculous to you. That means that, as far as the judge in this round is concerned, an argument is indeed ridiculous. YOU ARE THE JUDGE. Be open to what they're saying, but don't turn off your brain, only your prejudices. You want to be an impartial evaluator of their debating. Who outdebated whom?

Interventionist vs. noninterventionist judges. An interventionist judge applies some of his or her own thinking on a topic, while a noninterventionist judge only evaluates what is said by the debaters. This is not as simple as it sounds. If a debater argues something that you know is wrong, but the opponent doesn't know it, and concedes it, you would not want to intervene and give the point to the opponent who misguidedly conceded it. Similarly, if you hear a contention and can think of a great argument against it, but the opponent instead comes up with a pretty lousy argument, you have to follow what was actually said rather than what should have been said. That is simple nonintervention, and this is what you should be trying to do.

Drops. Intervention gets more complex, and more controversial, with the issue of drops. We're now talking about the "game" of debate, with rules, albeit tacit, to conduct that game. As you go down the flow of a case, sometimes a debater will drop an issue; that is, the first debater contends that cows have wings, and the opposing debater never responds to it. That means that the second debater has dropped flying cows. If the original debater stands up in the next speech and points out the drop to the judge, I would suggest that this is a contention that must stand for the original debater; in other words, the debater who first made the statement wins that statement, no matter how cockamamie, if the opponent drops it. Having a point stand in this way is just as good as proving through argumentation that cows have wings. Anything the opponent subsequently says to this point after dropping it is unacceptable. However, if the point is dropped and the original debater does not cite the drop, then it just disappears as an issue from the round. This happens all the time. Neither debater can bring up that subject again. If either of them do, all that discussion is wasted, because once a point has been dropped, it cannot be revived. That's the game of drops. We're not saying a round should be won or lost on flying cows, but simply that this is how dropping points does work. Sometimes, especially with novice debaters, whole cases will be dropped left and right, and a debater will get a straightforward technical win as a result. You won't see this much at the varsity level. The interventionist issue can be very sticky here. Usually dropped points are good points, but what if the dropped point is indeed that cows have wings? Use your judgment here. If the dropper made all good arguments and dropped some small stuff, go that way. If the round is close, and you need to evaluate on drops and extension, you just have to do it. I hate to think that a debater can win by responding to everything that is

said, without having good arguments. Good arguments should win. That should be what debating is all about.

One last thing about drops. The 1AR is that four-minute rebuttal by affirmative, where everything has to be covered in a short amount of time. This is the place where it may appear that an aff is dropping issues, but keep in mind the reality of the time pressure. No matter how fast the aff speaks, he can't have that much depth of analysis, and there's going to be tradeoffs in both directions. The aff should cover the main points of the contentions, or perhaps group similar ideas together, but when the neg has 112 bitsy little subpoints all the aff has to do is address the meat, not every little detail.

Ad hoc voting issues. One interesting thing that might occur during a cross examination is that both debaters make an agreement that whoever wins this or that specific point wins the round. This is perfectly acceptable in LD and completely clarifies your job as a judge. You will now give the round to whomever does best what the two debaters agreed had to be done.

Summary. In the final analysis, you are the judge and what you say goes. Sometimes a round will be easy, when two opponents are mismatched and one clearly takes it from the other. In closer rounds, one little dropped point may make the difference. And in the best rounds, with equal opponents, you will simply listen to what they both have to say and award the win to the side that convinced you better that he or she was right. We offer this possibility for helping make a decision: think of the resolution (banning capital punishment, spending money on X versus Y, doing this or doing that). After you've heard the debate, if you had to immediately take the action described by the resolution, which way would you go? If you can clearly see a path of action as a result of what you've just heard, the person who offered that path must needs have won the round. It won't always happen, but if it does, go with it.

Results

Probably at some point—when the debaters finally run out of gas and sit down and stare at you accusingly—you will want to enter your results. You will go to tabroom.com and it will ask you to enter your decision, and you will. Sounds simple, doesn't it? Oh, would that it were!

RFDs

There are three parts to the ballot. There's picking the winner and loser, there's writing up the reason for your decision (the RFD), and there's assigning speaker points. We talked about how to pick a winner in the PF and LD sections above. Here we'll discuss RFDs and speaker points.

Your reason for decision should be based on the arguments. Tell the debaters what argument(s) played into your decision, and why. This is crucial. Saying that one debater or team was "more persuasive" or "made better arguments" tells the debaters nothing. They need some nuts and bolts (and so do you). The biggest thing to keep in mind is that these ballots are torn into after a debate like they're the Dead Sea scrolls. Be fair, clear and constructive.

In addition to the RFD there are also sections on the ballot to communicate directly to the debaters about the round. Here you might point out ways that they might improve their speaking style or the like, although it is perfectly acceptable to comment here also on the arguments, for instance how this or that piece of evidence might help them in the future.

Writing up a ballot is not an easy business. There are as many different styles of ballots as there are judges. Whatever you want to say is fine, but certainly more is better than less: in the case of newer debaters, anything constructive you say to both of them will help them improve in the future. But do be constructive: these are kids, after all: you want to give them tips for improvement, not traumas that will eventually turn them into serial killers.

Speaker Points

And then there's speaker points. Speaker points in debate have the beauty (?) of being entirely arbitrary, but we are stuck with them.

Nowadays, most tournaments, including the NYCFLs, use tenths of a point. The textual descriptions below should be helpful. If you want something a little broader, think of points as grades, where 30 is an A+ and 26 is a D-. Then you can focus in on the scale below for a little more granularity.

Use 10ths of points

29.5-30: I wish I could frame your speeches; your strategic decision-making belongs in a textbook
29.1-29.4: you left no doubt about who won and are better than most debaters at this tournament
28.8-29.0: you were effective and strategic, and made only minor mistakes
28.3-28.7: you hit all the right notes, but could improve (e.g. depth or efficiency)
27.8-28.2: you mainly did the right thing, but left something to be desired
27.3-27.7: you missed major things and were hard to follow
27.0-27.2: you advanced little in the debate or cost your team the round
26.0-26.9: you are not ready for this division/tournament
Below 26: you were offensive, ignorant, rude, or tried to cheat (Judge MUST come to tab)

The Right Way to Enter Results

As soon as your debaters are finished the final speech, you should make your decision. You will decide who won and who lost (there has to be both a loser and a winner; there are no draws in debate), and if it's a preliminary round, you have to decide how many points to award them (there are no points in elim rounds).

This may sound familiar from what has already been said, but it bears repeating**. Enter your results before disclosing your decision.** The chief reason for this is so that the tab room can get going as soon as possible on pairing the next round. A secondary reason is to prevent debaters from changing your mind. It is not unheard of for a debater or two to beat a dead horse until it comes back to life and the judges decide to reverse their decisions. But there is no mind changing after a decision is made, no matter how persuasive a team might be in the 5AR, because there shouldn't be any 5AR. Once it's over, it's over. The results are in. Then you can talk, if you wish (although we recommend keeping comments to a minimum).

Random Issues

Here we'll talk about this and that, the things that could happen but probably won't. But now, at least you'll be aware of them.

Missing Debaters

The judge arrives in room, and finds that one of the teams is missing. Oh, the horror. Oh, the humanity. There is usually a specific time noted in the tournament instructions for when a time must be present. If that time is now, the judge should call tab and reports a missing team. The tabbers will handle it from there.

Break Rounds and Round Robins

Break rounds and RRs have multiple judges. Each judge needs to press the START button independently. This will alert the tab room that all is well with each individual judge, and help them track down the judges who aren't there yet.

Despite the independent starting, if one of your judges is missing from the room, please contact the tab staff. They have judges up the wazoo, and can provide a satisfactory replacement in the twinkling of an eye. (Or more likely, they usually have to throw in some shmegeggie who was struck by both sides and who would prefer to stay in the judges' lounge working on their immigration status, but beggars can't be choosers. Don't blame them when a judge goes AWOL.) Whatever you do, don't start a round until all the judges are present and accounted for.

If debaters are missing, most likely they're off prepping somewhere. At a well-run tournament, there is plenty of time between rounds for critiques and prepping, so start times are real, and teams are expected to be in place. If a team has not shown up by the start time, let the tab room know.

OMG! The Wifi Just Went Down!

Well, there's two possibilities here. You can: A) access tabroom.com on your phone and enter the results that way; or B) you can join the multitude of knuckleheads panicking in the streets. We recommend option A. In fact, we recommend a complete life philosophy that includes both the slogan "Don't Panic" and always carrying a towel, the latter of which is a massively useful aid in traveling the galaxy.

Speed

As a rule, judges wishing to do so can call for slower speaking without initial penalty to the competitors in the round. Before the round starts, judges should tell debaters if they want a moderate speaking speed. It is no crime to advise the students that you are new, and that they should adapt accordingly. During the round, a judge may call out "Speed!" or "Clear!" if a debater is talking too fast. The debater should slow down, without penalty. A second "Speed!" can be called if the debater is still speaking too quickly, still without penalty. After a third call of "Speed!" however, it is acceptable for the judge to adjust speaker points, or even award a loss. If you can't understand what they're saying, how can you judge it? Of course, if the judge doesn't mind speed, there is no specific policy doesn't prevent it.

Evidence Violations

In the normal flow of a good round, teams will throw evidence at one another, and some evidence will be better than the opposing evidence (as in more convincing, more detailed, more…anything), and that evidence will win the point.

But what if the evidence is somehow tainted? According to the NSDA rules, teams have an obligation to be ethical. But that doesn't always happen. And sometimes even ethical students inadvertently do something questionable. Actual evidence violations do not happen often, but they happen often enough that you should be prepared for them.

First of all, if there is a question about evidence, this NDSA rule applies:

> *In all debate events, … any material … that is presented during the round must be made available to the opponent and/or judge during the round if requested. When requested, the original source or copy of the relevant ... pages of evidence … must be available …*

In other words, if there's a question, you get to see the evidence. And not just the printout of the team's case where they've typed it themselves, but the evidence in its original source, with full citation.

So what exactly are the evidence violations?

- Distortion: Altering the evidence in some way, like adding or deleting the word "not" to change the point of it
- Non-existence: Making it up, perhaps, or not being able to supply it as noted above
- Clipping: Essentially, saying you read evidence that you didn't read
- Straw arguments: Sometimes an author posits a hypothetical position in order to refute it. A violation would occur if a team claims that the hypothetical position is, in fact, supported by the original author.

The thing is, it's up to the teams, not you, to point out an evidence violation in the round. And when they do, they must go all in on that call. The round stops, and nothing else matters except whether or not a violation (distortion, non-existence, clipping, straw argument) has occurred. It is the judge's job to make that determination, after careful study of the situation. You need to look at the evidence and decide if a violation has occurred. It is entirely up to you. If you think it is a violation, the team who made the violation loses the round. If not, the team who made the indictment loses the round. Either way, you should note this on your ballot, and more importantly, report it in person to the tab room. It's a big deal. Nothing else in the round matters.

The tab room cannot on its own overturn or in any way dispute the judge's decision except in certain extremely rare and unlikely circumstances. The tab room can hear appeals if the judge misinterprets, misapplies, or ignores the rule, or in any situation involving distortion or non-existent evidence. Again, this whole business doesn't happen often, especially not at one-day NYCFL events with a preponderance of novice teams, but it does happen. Keep it in the back of your mind, just in case.

Fines

When a judge does not show up for an assignment and has to be replaced, this can result in a financial penalty. Coaches are usually notified of the penalty immediately.

No tournament is in the business of milking their guests for extra money via replacement fines. But a tournament must run within a certain time frame. Judges and students both must show up promptly for their assignments. There is really no acceptable excuse for not being where you're supposed to be. Judging at tournaments is a job like any other. How many jobs are there that don't expect you to show up?

If you are fined, don't fight it. Pay the two dollars. On the other hand, if you know that you will have other obligations during a tournament preventing you from judging a particular round, work it out with your coach well in advance of the tournament so that they can cover your absence and keep the tournament running smoothly. It is better to commit yourself completely, but sometimes that is impossible. Be a team player: do the right thing in a timely manner.

Virtual Tournaments

So, says you, there's this little thing called covid-19, and a lot of what was said above refers to tournaments with real physical people in real physical places. What about tournaments with unreal people in unreal places?

Welcome to the new normal.

Much of what we said above remains true regardless of whether a tournament is live or online. The big difference is that instead of physically getting to your room, you will now be sent to a virtual room. Different tournaments might be running various platforms for their virtual rooms, so we won't pretend to show you the One Way It Is Done. But rest assured that, whatever the platform, they are all more or less the same.

Prepping for Virtual Tournaments

The first thing you need to know is on which platform the tournament is running, be it Zoom or Google Meet or NSDA Campus or something else. We cannot urge you strongly enough to test your devices running that software before the tournament. The time *not* to find out that you can't run an app is when an entire tournament is waiting for you to run that app. Responsible tournaments will tell you well in advance what you need to know; make sure you get that information from your coach if it isn't sent to you by the tournament itself. As a general rule, a laptop is the best device for judging, but tablets and even phones can do the job, and phones especially can provide backup if there's a problem with a laptop. Anything that runs the Chrome browser, the standard interface, can do the job.

Both speakers and judges need a quiet, secure place to participate in online events, so find that spot that's right for you. Make sure everyone in your household understands what you are doing, and when you are going to be doing it. Make sure no one in the house is sucking up all your bandwidth: If possible, plug directly into Ethernet.

During the Round

All participants should leave their video on. Everyone should be on mute except for the actual speaker.

The judge should actively troubleshoot audio issues caused by technology or the Internet. Don't interrupt for a few seconds of voice pixelation ("robot voice"). Do interrupt if you consistently cannot hear someone because of a tech issue.

The judge should keep track of "tech time," or interruptions where the debate stops because a competitor has been disconnected. After 10 minutes per round—that's the usual tech time allotment—the debate must move on so the tournament isn't delayed. In other words, the disconnected competitor gets a loss. You should report this directly to the tab room. If a call drops during a speech, and a speaker is less than 15 seconds into the speech, then they should just re-give the entire speech. Otherwise, simply figure out the last part that everyone heard and resume from that point.

Special considerations for virtual judging

This is a speech and debate competition, not a video contest. Please remember that having the best possible technology is a privilege not equally shared by everyone. Base your decisions and points on the factors that competitors can control, such as what they say and how they say it. Do not penalize competitors for things they can't control, such as Internet connection speed and video quality.

Please disregard the background that you may see behind the contestant. Every student's home situation is different, and we want everyone to have an equal chance to be seen and heard. We are striving for access over perfection.

When in doubt, err in favor of the contestant. If a speaker needs to mute for a period of time to address a sudden disturbance in their home, then it is perfectly acceptable to allow that speaker to pause and restart, or even to re-deliver the speech in its entirety when the issue has been resolved. We are all doing what we can with what we have where we are!

And finally, turn off messages and alerts on your device while you are judging.

Stirring Conclusion

Our goal with forensics is to augment our students' education with a meaningful activity that will instill in them the skills of a lifetime. These are skills not usually taught in the classroom, despite their value in real life. You, as a judge, become part of this exciting process. Without you, this process simply might not happen.

We hope this manual has proved helpful. Feel free to pass it along to others, if you know someone who might be able to use it.

Enjoy your judging!

Appendix A

Glossary

We've covered some of these terms already. Others are rare or special, but worth knowing about if they pop up.

cross-apply Cross-applying an argument means taking an argument made against one argument, and applying it to another argument. "What I said before about X? Apply it to Y." This allows debaters not to have to repeat the argument and give up valuable time on it. It can also be confusing to a judge. If you get confused by it, it's the debater's fault, not yours. (And rest assured that, if you've gotten confused by it, then the cross-application was probably erroneous.)

drop A dropped argument is an argument that one debater makes, and the other debater does not cover

cross-apply Cross-applying an argument means taking an argument made against one argument, and applying it to another argument. "What I said before about X? Apply it to Y." This allows debaters not to have to repeat the argument and give up valuable time on it. It can also be confusing to a judge. If you get confused by it, it's the debater's fault, not yours. (And rest assured that, if you've gotten confused by it, then the cross-application was probably erroneous.)**drop** A dropped argument is an argument that one debater makes, and the other debater does not cover

extend Extending an argument means, essentially, "What I said before about this? Apply it again."

flow Take notes during a round. Past tense: **flowed**

impact This is often used as a verb, to impact a statement. Impacting meets showing the point of one's contention, usually relating back to the value/criterion

intervention Judge intervention means doing work that the debaters have not done themselves. It is not a good way to judge. All you have is what the debaters said. Just go with that.

kritik A critique, known in debater circles as a kritik or K, is a case that claims that there is an inherent flaw in the resolution, and argues not a side of the resolution (usually the negative) but against the resolution per se, and therefore against the opponent who implicitly accepted the flawed resolution. A performative kritik is the literal acting out of the reasons why the resolution is flawed. You will most likely only come up against these at the highest levels of competition, or at least those contenders who fancy themselves high level, i.e., national circuit debaters.

national circuit A small number of tournaments around the country award entry qualifications to the annual Tournament of Champions in Kentucky. Debaters with the funds and talent to do so travel to these tournaments, often halfway or completely across the country, and often on a weekly basis. The tournaments with these TOC bids are considered the national circuit. Debaters who attend these tournaments week after week are called national-circuit, or just circuit, debaters. And boy, do they have a high opinion of themselves!

non-unique An argument is non-unique when it could be made for either side. It's not that it's an irrelevant argument, merely that it's not specific to one side of the argument.

NSDA The National Speech and Debate Association. The topics, and most of the rules, come from this organization. Formerly known as the National Forensic League, or NFL.
paradigm Debaters will often ask a judge, before a round, what their paradigm is. This means, what exactly does the judge believe about LD that the debater ought to know. If you do have a paradigm, that probably means you've been doing LD for years, so feel free to offer it. If you don't have a paradigm, well, that's a paradigm too: it says that you're a relatively new judge with a lot of intelligence and a dedication to supporting your debate team who wants debaters to debate in such a way that you can follow what they're talking about. Debaters, if they're any good, will accept that and act accordingly. At many invitationals, all the judges are required to post a paradigm on tabroom.com. If it comes to that, your coach can help you put something together.
pick up/drop To pick up a debater is to award them a win; to drop them is to award them a loss
pre-flow Pre-flowing is what debaters do before a round. They write down their arguments on their flow devices, so that when the debate begins, they can flow their opponent's arguments on those lines. This sort of went out with the advent of computers in rounds, but you never know.
pull across Pulling across an argument is what you do when an argument was dropped. That is, one debater makes an argument, and the second debater doesn't respond. The first debater then asks you to pull across his original argument. The first debater should also impact the argument at this point; that is, show you why it's important and why it shouldn't have been dropped. Just saying it was dropped isn't enough.
schematics The sheets issued by the tabroom showing who is debating whom, who is judging, and where. Nowadays these are usually simply posted online.
standard(s) This is usually referred to as "the standard for the round," and is really just another way of talking about values/criteria. The standard is the way we can determine which side wins; if the standard for the round is, say, individual rights protection, the side that protects the most individual rights, wins. Often there is an argument which side's standard to use, as there may be an argument which side's criterion/value to use. It is up to the judge to make this determination. Go the way that makes the most sense to you, if the sides cannot agree on a standard.
turn To turn an argument means to take an argument made against you, and turn it against the other debater. This is a rather complicated and rare occurrence, but you will often find debaters claiming they are turning everything that isn't nailed. Not so. A turn is rare, and should be rather startling. If it is successful, it not only renders the argument moot against the turner, but allows the turner to claim the argument as his or her own. Powerful stuff. That's why it's rare, and why people are always claiming that they're doing it.
value/criterion The value is the reason you're making an argument: "I'm going affirmative because I believe it is more just/moral/whatever." The just/moral/ whatever is the value. "I'll show that it is more just/moral/ whatever through this process or weighing mechanism." The process of weighing mechanism is the criterion. For example: "My value is justice; my criterion is access to information." The case will show how this side gets more access to information, and the debater will also show how this access leads to justice.

Appendix B

Judge Obligations Explained

Newcomers to judging often find themselves at a loss to understand what exactly is required of them, and more important, *why* it's required. Sometimes you feel as if they've forgotten all about you, abandoning you to the bitter coffee in the judges' lounge and never calling you to do what you signed up to do. Other times, it seems as if you're running all over creation, judging every round without a moment's break. And worst of all, there are times when they're making you to stay an extra day when your own team is no longer debating. What's going on here, anyhow? Are these people that bad at running a tournament?

The short answer to that last question is, probably not. It's just the way things are.

Sometimes Every Round, Sometimes Not

At the average tournaments, there are just about enough judges to make the thing run. If, say, 20 judges are needed, there's roughly 20 judges in the place to do the job. This is especially true of smaller, local high school events like NYCFLs. In these situations, yes, you will judge a lot. While the tournament-running software does its best to spread things around, things can only be spread as far as the numbers allow.

At bigger tournaments, there are usually more judges than the absolute minimum. This means that you'll get more time off; occasionally, if the tournament is *really* big and has enough surplus judging, you'll only judge one or two rounds. You are not being forgotten or ignored; you're being given a fair share of the judging rounds.

By the way, some tournaments obligate judges for a certain number of rounds, rather than to cover a certain number of teams. That is, you might be in to judge 3 rounds or 4 rounds or 6 rounds or whatever, as compared to being available for all rounds. If you are at one of these tournaments, keep in mind that this burden is for prelims only; the number does not include elimination rounds. All judges are usually obligated for the elims regardless of how many rounds they judged, or were obligated to judge, in the prelims.

Lincoln-Douglas

This next applies to parents who get drawn into judging varsity LD. Many tournaments have what is called Mutual Judge Preferences, where the teams that are debating rank the judges in advance. Most (but not all) teams want to be judged by college students or certain coaches, so parent judges are usually not highly prioritized. In these situations, the cold truth is that you might indeed spend much of your time in the judges' lounge. Later in the tournament, however, when the top priority judges are adjudicating the more difficult rounds determining who will make it into the elims, you might finally pick up a ballot or two among those teams

mathematically incapable of breaking (or, in certain situations, incapable of *not* breaking). This does not mean your work is unimportant. All teams are due a serious judge who does their best to make a good decision, and those teams you see are going to be fighting just as hard as the undefeateds. And honestly, although you may not have been their first choice as a judge, you're probably in their second or third tier, which means that they determined in advance that you are the right person for the job. So, overall, as an inexperienced LD judge you might spend what seems to be an inordinate amount of time hanging around, but this means that the tournament is doing its job for the students, as are you. Your presence is appreciated both when you're standing by and when you're actively judging.

I Wanna Go Home!!!

The biggest question tournaments face from newcomer judges is why they have to hang around to judge elimination rounds once their school is eliminated. The answer is simple: It's the arithmetic.

Let's say that a tournament breaks to an octafinals round. That means 16 teams advance. Now if only their own judges were available, that would mean there would be 16 judges. The thing is, elimination rounds require 3 judges in each round. In this case, that would mean 24 judges. Where are those judges going to come from if everyone who isn't still in the tournament has gone home?

This arithmetic applies to every elimination round. Tournaments always need more judges than just the judges of the teams debating. Not only that, but given the possibility of no-shows for illness or the like, and the various strikes and preferences that usually apply in a tournament, they need more than just the bare coverage. For the elims, tournaments need a lot of judges on hand, some of whom might not actually get an assignment.

The good news is that, at a big tournament, it is not unusual for the tab room to post a list of standby judges obligated for the elim rounds. In these cases, there actually are so many judges at the tournament that tab can safely allow some folks to call it a day. A responsible tab room will create this list with an eye on travel distance, and will factor in preference/strike prioritization. The tab room will do the best they can. But their first duty is to the students, not the judges.

So here's the rule of thumb. **If you are signed up to judge a tournament, prepare to judge the whole tournament.** The standard obligation is one round past one's own school's participation, although some tournaments vary. Make sure you know exactly what's expected at every tournament. Needless to say, if your students were in it to the end, you wouldn't be leaving early. And if your students were still in it, you would want the other judges at the tournament to fulfill their obligations to stay and judge them. If you are on the opposite side of the equation, your standing by to judge insures that the other students at the tournament get the same treatment you would expect for your students.

And by the way, what about your students? After all, the tournament is for them, not for you. If your students didn't make it into elimination rounds, they most likely need to improve. And one of the best ways for them to learn to get better is to watch the students who did get into the

elimination rounds. What are they doing that your students didn't do? What arguments are winning or losing on a given topic? Who do your students have to scout out to beat next time? Virtually every experienced coach in the country insists that their teams not debating in the elim rounds must *watch* the elim rounds. It's a given. Simply put, the students who go home early and skip elimination rounds can pretty much guarantee that their entire careers will comprise going home early and not being a part of the elimination rounds. You're doing your students a disservice by taking them home early.