

Sample Verbal Briefing of Debate Judges

Good morning and welcome to the *1984 National Student Debating Seminar*. Thank you very much for taking this time from your busy schedules to assist us; without such support, we could not conduct this event. We hope that you find the debates you hear both enlightening and enjoyable.

My name is *Joe Blo-hard* and I am the Judging Co-ordinator for this event. Each of you will be on a panel of *three* judges, at least one of whom will be quite experienced. The moderator, timekeeper and debaters themselves are responsible for the actual operation of the debate: they are supposed to know and comply with the proper procedures. However, if some problem arises that neither they nor the senior judge in your room knows how to handle, don't hesitate to seek assistance from me. I'll be *near the coffee machine* ... If you observe any fabrication or falsification of evidence during the debate, please report details of this to me immediately.

This morning you are judging a debate in *Cross-Examination* style on the question "*Was Orwell right?*" Two *two*-person teams will take part in each match and each debater will have up to *14* minutes of speaking time, composed of a *5* minute speech, *3* minutes to question and *3* minutes to be questioned by an opponent, and a *3* minute rebuttal-defence-summary speech. The debaters are all *senior high school* students and this is a *prepared* topic for which they have had *at least two months* to prepare.

You all should have received a Judging Kit containing a Summary of the Rules of Debating, a list of Specific Criteria on which to judge debaters, a Team Evaluation form, a sample Flow Sheet and a sample Score Sheet. Have you any questions about the rules or any of those other judging materials? [Pause and answer any questions raised.]

The Score Sheets are of critical importance, of course, so let's examine one in detail. Do you all have a copy of one in front of you? [Pause for judges to get out their copies. If the Score Sheets are printed on NCR paper, say: Please be careful to press down firmly when scoring since you are making several copies; however, please don't write on one Score Sheet when it is on top of another or you will probably spoil the second's copies.]

Some of the Score Sheet can be completed right now, such as the date, round and signature. Please print everything except for your signature. Would you please jot down the number of the room to which you are assigned as soon as it is announced, in the "Location" blank provided on the Score Sheet, so that you judge the right debate. If we end up with *4* judges in one room and *2* in another, our statistical system will be sabotaged! When you reach your room, the names of all debaters in the order in which they will be speaking should be written on the blackboard: please copy them carefully on to your Score Sheet.

You should not finalize any debater's marks until you have heard the whole debate, since scoring is relative. If you are judging two rounds, we encourage you not to complete your scoring until after the second round; rather keep tentative scores for the debaters as they speak and finalize the scores once you are able to compare debaters from both contests. Before you turn your Score Sheets in to the Timekeeper, you should check to ensure that you have filled in all the necessary scores and other information: one missing score could destroy the validity of our entire scoring system.

If time permits, you may be invited to deliver a critique following the debate. If this occurs and you choose to make some remarks, please remember to be constructive and encouraging but **NOT** to reveal any scores or the outcome of the contest.

Remember to sit apart from the other judges and not to confer with them prior to scoring the debate. Please request pauses between speeches so you can make notes only if absolutely necessary; if you do require extra time, however, be sure to request it before the debate begins. Don't let the debate proceed until all members of your judging panel are present. Don't hesitate to interrupt a debate if you are unable to hear what is being said.

Try to be objective in your role, disregarding your own personal knowledge and opinions on the subject: the debate should be judged solely on the basis of what the students say. Don't become chummy with any of the competitors and ignore any information about the personal background of a debater.

Between rounds, we invite you to wend your way back here for refreshments and assignment to another debate. Please try to return no later than *10:45 a.m.* so that we can keep the tournament running more or less on schedule.

When I announce the teams that you will be judging, please advise me at once if you should not adjudicate one of the teams for any reason, such as conflict of interest or having judged it previously. Before we announce the draw and despatch you to the rooms, do you have any questions or problems? [Pause and respond to any raised.]