

## Norms in World Schools Debate

*The goal of this document is to share commonly accepted international norms in World Schools Debate and utilize these norms as the foundation for the event in the United States.*

**1. The WS judging rubric:** allocates 40% for content (“the matter”), 40% for style (“how the matter is presented”) and 20% for strategy (“how the matter is utilized”). The team with the higher total points wins the rounds. There are no tied team points, nor low point wins based on team points. Judges should use a holistic, comparative focus in determining the winning team.

**2. Allocation of speaker points:** the norm is for constructive speeches to receive between 60 and 80 points with 70 points being the average you expect at the tournament. Generally, points will fall in the 66-74 range. Reply speeches should receive between 30 and 40 points with the general range falling between 32-38 points.

**3. Roles and burdens of teams:** the Proposition must prove that the motion is true as a general principle and/or in the majority of circumstances. The Opposition must cast more than just a reasonable doubt in the Proposition case. Even when the motion is expressed as an absolute, the Opposition must show it is false in a (at least) significant minority of cases. In other words: both teams have an equal burden of proof in WS style debating.

**4. Communication style:** as noted above, WS Debate emphasizes "style" as 40% of the scoring rubric. In practice that means that speeches are persuasive in nature and delivered at conversational speed. There should be no "spreading" at all in this format. Students are encouraged to use notecards or bullet points for delivery rather than reading directly from text. Eye contact, facial expressions, and gestures are all part of persuasive delivery. If you think of Oratory or Extemp speed and style, you will have a sense of what you are looking for in a WS speech. That does NOT mean that signposting arguments or noting where you are on attacking opponent arguments is precluded; it DOES mean that the average person in the back of the room should be able to keep up with what is being advocated and argued. World Schools is very flexible in allowing competitors to be who they are in round (whether that means being sassy, having strong rhetoric, or using humor) as long as the discourse is courteous.

**5. Communication on the bench:** students are allowed and even expected to communicate with each other during other speeches as there is no allotted prep time. This is not seen as disrespectful unless the whispers become too loud and distract the speaker. Speakers on the bench may move to sit together while the other member of their team goes to center of the room to speak.

**6. Use of devices:** computers and/or other electronic devices should NOT be used at any point in the delivery of speeches for either prepared or impromptu debates. Cell phones may be used for timing, but should be placed in airplane mode to avoid any perception of outside communication. The only exception to the use of devices rule would be if a student has a documented ILAP with their home school allowing for use of devices in oral presentation, which the coach would need to communicate in advance to the Tournament Director and WS Tab Room. Devices may be used to research prepared motions in advance of a round, but should not be used during the round itself. Impromptu motion preparation may only utilize a dictionary/thesaurus and a one-volume almanac (ex. the World Almanac OR the CIA Fact Book). Computer stands are NOT used. Students speak from paper/notecards.

**7. Argument construction and use of evidence:** there should be a focus on proving the motion and clashing “big ideas.” Arguments in the WS format are derived from logic, rather than through a focus on carded evidence (as in other American formats). Students are not expected to cite their evidence (name, publication, date, etc.), and should not be penalized in any way for not doing so. In general, arguments are supported by warrants (analysis and logic) and examples (used from across the globe). Students are expected to be able to provide examples from outside the United States to support their arguments unless the motion is country-specific. There are no “cards” that are read. Evidence cannot be “called for” or looked at during or after the round. Supporting material is integrated into the speeches, similar to Extemp or Oratory, but without the need for specific source notes. As in all forms of debate, the example should not BE the point, rather, it is an illustration OF the point. In other words, in judging the quality of an argument, the question of whether the logic makes sense comes before the evaluation of supporting material. New content is designed for constructive speeches (delivered by the 1st and 2nd speakers). The 3rd speaker is allowed to have new warrants and to make extensions, but is generally not offering new substantive arguments (claims). Replies should not have any new content (unless the Prop Reply is replying to new material in the Opp 3) as they should be crystallizing the debate. Debates aren’t won solely based on what’s on the “flow”—often in American debates people think if an argument is conceded it is automatically true, but a lot of judges in the WS format won’t

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vote on arguments they think are poorly explained/justified or wildly implausible even if the other team doesn't explicitly respond to them.

**8. Refutation:** WS Debate is not intended to be delivered line-by-line. This means that refuting every single example/link is not necessary: it is more about the bigger picture. Arguments and lines of analysis may be discarded in the round without impacting the decision as long as the principles behind the arguments and the core points are extended.

**9. Models:** while there are not plans in WS debate, Side Proposition can offer a model (an illustration) of what the Prop world would look like. It does not have to be specific advocacy and is not needed for every motion. Side Opposition could offer a counter-model if a model was presented but these are not common and are unnecessary in most cases.

### 10. Definitions & Definitional challenges:

WHAT IS A GOOD DEFINITION:

- 1) Definitions should be 1) reasonable, 2) obvious (understandable, expected and accepted by an average voter / intelligent person), 3) fair (allow "normal" / quality debate)
- 2) Time and Place setting are not allowed - definitions and Interpretations should be as general or as specific as the motion.
- 3) Squirreling" is not allowed and is considered strategically bad.

WHAT CAN OPPOSITION DO IF THEY DISAGREE WITH THE DEFINITION

- 1) accept it
- 2) broaden it
- 3) challenge it
- 4) run "even if" case

DEFINITIONAL CHALLENGES must be

- 1) Explicit (done by the 1st Speaker of Opposition)
- 2) Explained (arguments for the re-interpretation are offered)
- 3) Relevant (debater should explain how the judge just see the debate under the new terms)

JUDGING DEFINITIONAL CHALLENGES:

- 1) Judge needs to holistically compare both definitions and decide how the debate should be understood
- 2) There are no automatic losses regardless of who wins the definitional challenge

**11. POIs:** the norm for Points of Information is that a speaker will take two. Taking less is seen as not engaging with the other team. Taking more can be viewed as strategically weak as it cedes too much time to the other team. POIs may be questions OR statements and should be limited to 15 seconds in length. They should NOT be offered in two parts nor are follow up questions (as might appear in direct questioning in Congress) generally accepted. Other team members should avoid interrupting the speaker with more POIs while that individual is attempting to answer. POIs may be offered at approximately 20 second intervals. Interrupting more frequently is viewed as "bar-racking" (harassing) the speaker. POIs only occur in the first three speeches on each side; there are no POIs in the reply speeches. Additionally, the first and last minute of each eight minute speech is considered protected time where POIs cannot be asked.

**12. The judge as chair:** the judge serves as the Chair of the round and therefore should call the various speakers to the center of the room to deliver the speech. The Proposition team can also be called the Government/Side Proposition while the Opposition team is opposed to the Government and is also called Side Opposition. Conventionally, the speakers/audience members use tapping the table to indicate support. The judge taps the table once at the 1 minute mark, once at the seven-minute mark to indicate protected time has concluded, and twice at the 8 minute mark. The judge should tap the table repeatedly at the 8:15 minute mark to indicate that the speaker should stop. There is no prep time and there is no "off-time road map." After the round is over, the convention is for the Judge/Chair to ask the debaters to "cross the House" and shake hands, then step outside for a few minutes. The judge then completes the ballot, double-checking the math (NO tied team points, NO low-point wins), and calls the team in to give

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a brief oral decision. Remembering that there is a different motion every round, comments should indicate why one side was preferred over the other while still offering suggestions that will help the debaters improve in later rounds.