

13.2. Public Forum Debate (from “NSDA District Tournament Manual”)

13.2.1. Team Size. In this debate form, there are two speakers to a team.

13.2.2. Topic. The NSDA April Public Forum Topic will be used at the Speech State Championships. The topic is released on March 1, and is posted on the NSDA website: <https://www.speechanddebate.org/>

13.2.3. Sides/Burdens. A team represents either the “pro” or the “con” side of the resolution. Public Forum Debate focuses on advocacy of a position derived from the issues presented in the resolution, not a prescribed set of burdens.

13.2.4. Side Draw Procedure. Prior to every round and in the presence of the judge(s), a coin is tossed by one team and called by the other team. The team that wins the flip may choose one of two options: EITHER the SIDE of the topic they wish to defend (pro or con) OR the SPEAKING POSITION they wish to have (begin the debate or end the debate). The remaining option (SIDE OR SPEAKING POSITION) is the choice of the team that loses the flip. Once speaking positions and sides have been determined, the debate may begin.

13.2.5. Speaking Procedure. Each speaker shall have four minutes for constructive argument, alternating between pro and con. (Please keep in mind that the debate may begin with a con speech.) Following the first two constructive speeches, the two debaters who have just given speeches will stand and participate in a three-minute “crossfire.” In “crossfire,” both debaters “hold the floor,” however, the first question must be asked by the speaker who spoke first. After that question, either debater may question and/or answer at will. At the end of the first “crossfire,” the four-minute constructive arguments are continued by the students yet to speak. At the conclusion of the last two constructive arguments, another three-minute “crossfire” takes place between the two debaters who just spoke using the crossfire procedure discussed above. Following the four constructive speeches and two “crossfire” segments, the 1st speakers for each team will each give a two-minute summary continuing established alternation. The summary speeches should include the arguments his or her team is winning and refutation of arguments the team is losing. At the conclusion of the summary speeches, all four debaters will remain seated and participate in a three-minute “Grand Crossfire” in which all four debaters are allowed to cross-examine one another. The first question must be asked by the speaker who gave the first summary speech. At the conclusion of the “Grand Crossfire,” the second speakers will each give a two-minute “Final Focus” speech. The “Final Focus” is a persuasive final restatement of why a team has won the debate.

13.2.6. Time Limits.

4 minutes	First Speaker - Team A
4 minutes	First Speaker - Team B
3 minutes	Crossfire
4 minutes	Second Speaker - Team A
4 minutes	Second Speaker - Team B
3 minutes	Crossfire
3 minutes	Summary - First Speaker - Team A
3 minutes	Summary - First Speaker - Team B
3 minutes	Grand Crossfire
2 minutes	Final Focus - Second Speaker - Team A
2 minutes	Final Focus - Second Speaker - Team B
Prep Time (per team) = 3 minutes	

13.2.7. Plans/Counterplans. In Public Forum Debate, a formalized, comprehensive proposal for implementation is considered a plan or counterplan. Neither the pro nor the con side is permitted to offer a plan or counterplan; rather, they should offer reasoning to support a position of advocacy. Debaters may offer generalized, practical solutions.

13.2.8. Prompting. Oral prompting, except time signals, either by the speaker’s colleague or by any other person while the debater has the floor, is discouraged though not prohibited and may be penalized by some judges. Debaters may, however, refer to their notes and materials and may consult with their teammates while they do not have the floor and during the Grand Crossfire.

13.2.9. Reading Case. A team may decide, when asked by the opponent team for a copy of their case, whether or not to provide it; if the team refuses, they shall not be penalized in any way.

13.2.10. Other Rules. See [General Debate Rules](#).