



# Ace Peak Judge Manual

The Basics .....	2
Getting Started .....	3
Timing .....	4
Theory .....	5
Filling out the Ballot .....	7
Additional Resources.....	8

# The Basics

## What is Debate?

Debate is a formal competition of ideas. Debaters take turns giving speeches, trying to convince the judge (you) to support or oppose a statement. All you need to do is listen carefully and take notes, then fill out a ballot at the end.

Debates take 45 - 90 minutes, depending on format. Filling out the ballot afterward takes about 15 minutes.

## Who's in the Round?

Debaters compete by themselves or in teams of two. If all participants consent, spectators are welcome to observe - but they aren't allowed to make any sound or cause any delays.

## You Represent a Debater

At Ace Peak tournaments, debaters are responsible for providing judges for a certain number of rounds. The debater who recruited you is counting on you to show up to the round and submit your ballot on time. If a scheduling conflict comes up, let your debater know immediately so they have time to find a replacement. If you're having difficulty during the tournament, [reach out](#) to a tournament official for help.

Ask the debater who recruited you about which times you'll be needed to judge.

## BUT I'M NOT QUALIFIED!

Most judges feel intimidated when they get started with this activity. Don't worry! If you are 18+ years old and fluent in English, you are ready. You don't need to know anything about the topic.

Debaters are responsible for adapting their message to you in a clear, organized way. If you're confused, that means the speaker is failing, not you.

We want debaters to learn how to communicate complex ideas to a "person on the street." So while we do have experienced judges, our favorite is one with no experience at all. They force the debaters to learn skills that will be most valuable after graduation.

# Getting Started

## What do I need?

To judge effectively, all you need is pen and paper for taking notes, a stopwatch (or stopwatch app) for timing the speeches, and a device (phone, laptop, tablet, etc) that can run Skype. If you haven't yet, go to [www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com) or download the app and set up a username. Do a quick test call to make sure everything is working.

When the round is over, you'll need to submit your ballot on the Ace Peak website. Pull up a ballot before the round by [clicking here](#). A computer is strongly recommended for this.

## Signing up for a Round

A list of matchups - or "Postings" - will be emailed to participants 20 minutes before the round is set to start.

## Starting the Call

On the postings, you'll see the Skype usernames of the debaters you're expected to judge. 5 minutes before the round is scheduled to begin, start a group call with both names. If you're judging Team debate, the debaters may need to add their partners to the call.

Debaters may also ask if they can add spectators to the call. That's fine if everyone in the room - including you - is okay with it and they don't cause any disruptions or delays.

## Starting the Round

Make sure that all participants are in the call and ready to start. Then invite the first affirmative to begin the first speech. You don't need to speak once the round starts.

## Filling out Your Ballot

Fill out the Ace Peak Ballot and then click "Submit Ballot." A computer is strongly recommended for this (although you can use your phone, it is not recommended).

## WHAT'S YOUR PHILOSOPHY?

Debaters might ask for your background or judging philosophy before the round. You're welcome to say as much or as little as you like.

When in doubt, a good answer is:

*"I'm new to debate, so please be extra organized and explain everything."*

# Timing

One of your duties as a judge is to make sure that the timing rules are followed. Start your stopwatch whenever a speech or cross-examination begins. Debaters will have their own timers going, so you don't need to tell them how much time they have left.

Speakers may not begin a new sentence after their speech time has ended. Going slightly overtime to finish a sentence is acceptable. Penalize speakers who go more than a few seconds overtime.

## Cross-Examination

Constructive speeches are followed by a 3-minute cross-examination, in which a member of the opposite side asks questions and the person who just spoke answers.

## Prep Time

Debaters also get a certain amount of preparation (prep) time between speeches. Unused prep time carries over from one speech to the next. Debaters should tell you if they're going to use prep time so you can time it.

## Cutoff Time

All debates have a cutoff time. The round should be over well before the cutoff time. If the round is still going, end it and vote against the speaker/team most responsible for the delay. This is to keep things fair and make sure the tournament stays on time.

Lincoln-Douglas		Team Policy	
<u>Speech</u>	<u>Mins</u>	<u>Speech</u>	<u>Mins</u>
Affirmative Constructive	6	1 <sup>st</sup> Affirmative Constructive	8
Negative Constructive	7	1 <sup>st</sup> Negative Constructive	8
1 <sup>st</sup> Affirmative Rebuttal	4	2 <sup>nd</sup> Affirmative Constructive	8
Negative Rebuttal.	6	2 <sup>nd</sup> Negative Constructive.	8
2 <sup>nd</sup> Affirmative Rebuttal	3	1 <sup>st</sup> Negative Rebuttal	5
		1 <sup>st</sup> Affirmative Rebuttal	5
		2 <sup>nd</sup> Negative Rebuttal	5
		2 <sup>nd</sup> Affirmative Rebuttal	5
Preparation time	3	Preparation time	5
Cutoff time	60	Cutoff time	120

# Theory

## The Judge is Always Right

There is no “technically correct” way to vote. It’s the responsibility of the debaters to persuade you to vote for them. That means they need to adapt their presentation to what you will understand and care about.

You can vote any way you choose for any reason you choose. We only ask that you base your decisions on the content of the round as much as possible, and to set aside personal biases and special knowledge.

## Rules vs Theory

You are responsible for making sure that the rules are followed. If you think someone broke the rules, let a tournament official know. Rules are mostly concerned with making sure the tournament is fair and on time.

This manual gives you an overview of the most important rules. Review the complete rules on the [Ace Peak website](#).

Theory is mostly concerned with what people say in their speeches. Everyone’s theory is a little different. Debaters are welcome to use theory that breaks with what you see here. As you learn more about debate, expect to develop your own unique theory.

## Resolutionism

The resolution is a statement that both sides contest. A vote for the affirmative means that the resolution has been proven true; a vote for the negative means that it has been proven or presumed false.

Typically, every argument in the round should relate to whether the resolution is true.

Many resolutions begin with the words “Resolved” or “This house believes ...” This is debate convention signaling that what comes next is a resolution.

## Policy

Policy resolutions propose a change. *Example: The United States should forgive all student loan debt.* Team debate uses policy resolutions.

The affirmative tries to find one example of the resolution that is true - a Plan. They’ll offer details on their plan and reasons why you should support it; the negative will give you reasons you shouldn’t.

At the end of the debate, ask yourself two questions:

- 1) Is the plan an example of the resolution?

2) If the plan is passed, will the world become a better place?

If the answer to both questions is yes, vote affirmative. If not, vote negative.

## Value

Value resolutions assign worth to something. *Example: Freedom is more important than security.* Lincoln-Douglas debate uses value resolutions.

Typically, both debaters will propose a value - an external measure for the resolution. Then they'll use the value to assign worth to the things in the resolution. For example, they might argue that freedom creates more happiness than security.

Good value debaters won't just give you a strong position, they'll explain why their position is better than their opponent's.

At the end of the debate, ask yourself:

- 1) Is the affirmative case a coherent support of the resolution?
- 2) Is the negative case a coherent refutation of the resolution?

If the answer to only one of these questions is yes, pick the coherent case. If both cases are coherent, or if neither of them are, pick the debater whose arguments you liked best.

## New Arguments

Debate is all about testing ideas against each other. Debaters are expected to present all new lines of argumentation in the constructive speeches. That ensures that there's enough time for a back-and-forth discussion of the issues.

If a debater presents a new line of argumentation in a rebuttal, ask yourself: "Could this argument have been presented in a constructive?" If the answer is yes, you're not going to get a chance to hear a proper debate on that argument. Consider reducing the weight you place on that argument, or throwing it out completely.

## Dropped Arguments

Both sides should respond to each other's arguments. If a speaker has a chance to respond to an argument and doesn't, we call that a "Dropped argument." Most judges treat drops as if the dropping side conceded the argument.

A common exception: in team debate, the negative often divides their arguments between their first two speeches. It's fine if the negative doesn't respond to the 1AC right away, as long as they do so before the constructives are over.

The other exception: if one side speaks very quickly and runs a lot of bad arguments to try to overwhelm their opponents, it's okay if some of them are dropped. We encourage debate with a conversational style and high-quality arguments over "speed-and-spread."

# Filling out the Ballot

## No Verbal Feedback

Please don't give the debaters any verbal feedback during or after the round. Just listen carefully and take notes, then end the call.

## Online Ballot

Go to the Ace Peak website and load a new ballot page. Then fill out all the information. Double-check everything before you hit send - you can't change a ballot once it's submitted.

You have one hour after the round cutoff time to submit your ballot.

## Speaker Points

Rank the speakers in each category with 1-5 points, then add them up for a total.

## Reason for Decision

Explain why you voted the way you did. Debaters find it helpful when you identify specific arguments that persuaded you.

## Additional Feedback

You're encouraged to give individual speakers additional notes about what you did and didn't like.

## Non-Constructive Feedback is Best

You don't have to be a debate expert to give great feedback. Instead of telling the debaters what to change, tell them what your experience of the round was and let them figure out what to do about it. Examples of good feedback:

- *"Your last speech was well organized."*
- *"Your Roman Wars argument confused me."*
- *"Good evidence that specifically supported your case."*
- *"Your attitude in cross-examination struck me as disrespectful."*

## HOW MANY SPEAKER POINTS?

Speaker points help us break ties if two debaters have similar win records.

You can assign as many or as little speaker points as you like. Here's a rough idea of what the debaters expect:

Beginner: 18  
Intermediate: 22  
Advanced: 26+

# Additional Resources

## Read the Rules

The complete rules are available online at the Ace Peak website. [Click here](#) to read them.

## Contact a Tournament Official

If you have questions about making a decision, submitting your ballot, or any other judging matter, contact an Ace Peak tournament official by [clicking here](#). We're happy to help.