

## Handling PF Judges

At most debate tournaments nowadays, Public Forum is the biggest draw. Hence, it's probably your biggest moneymaker. There are still plenty of people in forensics who remember when PF was the debate upstart, an only marginally legitimate activity that looked like imitation policy, with complex rules designed to keep it from becoming real policy. Over time, it has become the activity with the greatest accessibility for both coaches and students; it's become no more or less legit than any other activity, with a great range of skills and styles, and its popularity growth remains undiminished. The original disdain has almost—but not quite—completely disappeared. PF is not only here to stay, it rules. Accept it for what it is, and make the most of it. It has unique issues that need to be addressed. A good PF tournament this year is a tournament PFers will want to go to again next year.

By definition, a broad swath of the PF pool is lay judges. The fact that the activity can be judged by parents helps define what happens in the rounds, and vice versa. Maybe someday there will be a specialized body of judges, as with policy and LD, a select pool who alone can understand what's going on, but for the time being, it's all about convincing folks in the back of the room who may be doing this for the first time that you are the team they should pick up. Which means that a successful tournament needs to understand the nature of lay judging, and to address those judges in a fitting fashion.

If everyone who attends your tournament is your guest/customer, then it is likely that the biggest source of your revenue, the biggest number of your guests/customers, are in PF. The parents who are there, or the newish coaches, are what make PF possible. That is, when you connect the dots: they are the ones who enable your tournament to make the biggest amount of its money. They're the ones who pay their kids registration, who chaperone, who are the adults in place who assist the coaches, and sometimes even are the coaches, or become brevet coaches thanks to valor under fire.

So here's some facts about lay judges in PF:

1. They want to do a good job, but the newer they are, the more they are afraid of screwing over kids because of their own inexperience.
2. They don't necessarily understand obligations. They might want to leave when their own kid or team is eliminated. For that matter, they may not understand a lot of tournament procedures that we take for granted (e.g., e-ballots). This does not make them unintelligent. Given #1 above, it means that they are probably eager to learn. After all, if they have their own kids in the activity, they can probably see a long commitment on their part of helping out at tournaments. Trust that, as a rule, they have good intentions.
3. Sometimes they're the only adults with a team. This means, especially if they are unaware of a lot of the norms of a tournament, they are both worried about the

responsibility of chaperoning a bunch of kids and slightly afraid that everyone knows what they're doing except them.

The key thing, as has been key to almost everything in the Toolkit, is to treat them with respect and understanding. Treat them as customers. Treat them as guests. Treat them so well that they will make sure that their school comes back next year. Alternately, you can treat them like inexperienced idiots and build up a lot of bad feeling and malice or ignore them completely so that they never grow in the activity. Given that, as a Tournament Director, you are in the education business, doing a good job here means, as it would in virtually any debate context, being a good educator. These customers/guests probably need and want education about what's going on more than anything else. As TD, you should be the one to provide it.

### Training PF Judges

There is little question that, at any tournament, there will be relatively (or even completely) inexperienced PF judges. As already noted, they want to do a good job. Here's how to help them do that:

1. **Provide how-to handouts in advance of the tournament.** There are plenty out there, including the link on the Toolkit page. Connect judges to the handouts four or five days before the tournament to give them a chance to absorb the material
2. **If you can, provide on-site training.** The important thing to remember, if you do so, is that your training is NOT the history of discourse in the Western World starting with Socrates and Balzac and Shakespeare and all those other hifalutin' Greeks. On-site training is not an opportunity for you to bloviate. On-site training is a five-minute briefing to touch on the most important issues. Hit these marks below, and then let them go:
  - a. Decisions are based not on your personal preferences about a topic, but on what happens in the round. You are a tabula rasa. The debaters' job is not to change your mind, but you inform you of a situation on which you have no opinion, and guide you to an opinion based on their persuasion.
  - b. Debaters will quote evidence. You can ask to see it if you are so inclined, but only what they literally say out loud—and what you hear—matters in the round.
  - c. Avoid conversation. Do not announce a winner until after you have entered your ballot. Tell the teams why you made your decision, and that is the end of it. Sometimes debaters want to keep debating, trying to persuade you to change your decision. DON'T!
  - d. Follow the guidelines on the ballot for assigning speaker points. (Tournament Director: You did put guidelines on the ballot for assigning speaker points, right?)
  - e. *(This is the one you may or may not want to talk about. But they need to know. I prefer explaining this in an email before the tournament.)* Occasionally one side will challenge the other side's evidence. This is usually just saying that a source is not as good as their source, but occasionally a team will accuse the other team of falsifying evidence or misreading it or otherwise, in a word, cheating. A team that makes this accusation must go all in on it to matter. That is, nothing else

matters in the round anymore except that one side cheated. The judge in the round, after looking at the evidence that's being challenged, makes the decision in the round solely on the basis of the reading of that evidence. At that point, the round is over. The judge should report what happened on the ballot, so there will be no confusion.