

INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC DEBATE ASSOCIATION

BEST PRACTICES MANUAL

The guide that follows is intended to provide an overview of the process followed for a typical IPDA debate tournament. Additional organizational information can be found on the organization's website: <http://www.ipdadebate.info>

Tournament Preparation

The only way any debate organization can flourish is for participating schools to host tournaments. The following are considerations not covered in the IPDA Constitution or By-Laws.

Invitation:

The invitation should be prepared and sent to the IPDA Executive Secretary for posting to the web-site in the summer before the season begins.

The invitation should include:

The tournament schedule- For flighted tournaments, we recommend 1:45 per round with an extra hour in between the final preliminary round and the first outround. For nonflighted tournaments, we recommend 1:15 per round.

A list of potential hotels- We recommend an official tournament hotel, even if no official activities are to be held there. This will help some schools with their administration. The list should include affordable as well as more luxury options. Try to reserve a block of rooms as early as possible.

Tournament guidelines and procedures- This is generally a simple reaffirmation that the tournament will be held in accordance with the IPDA Constitution and By-Laws.

Driving directions.

Sweepstakes formula.

Judges statement- Some tournaments require a judge for every four competitors. Others allow teams to pay for judge coverage. That should be made clear.

Entry deadlines.

Entry form.

Contact information.

Rooms:

You will need one room for every four competitors in some combination of 2 divisions. Generally, IPDA runs Novice and Junior Varsity together in the first flight to allow Varsity and Professional competitors to mentor the newer debaters. Some tournaments do not keep a division within the same flight for the tournament, but every effort is made to do so.

You will need a room(s) for prep. These rooms need plenty of seating, lots of access power, and INTERNET ACCESS! Tournaments will often rise or fall based on connectivity!

You need a room for your tabulation staff. This room needs power, lots of table space, room for electronics, etc. Make sure you have both a printer and a copier available.

You will need a room for the awards ceremony. This is often the same space as the prep room.

Make sure you have the ability to get the rooms open when you need them. Nothing slows down the start of a tournament day like locked doors!

Awards:

You can do whatever you want here, but it would be a bit embarrassing to forget to order something for the winners!

Resolutions:

The topic areas and specific resolutions for Public Debate are left to the discretion of Tournament Directors. Topics should be fair to both the Affirmative and the Negative. Tournament Directors should avoid local issues which are inaccessible to visiting competitors. Tournament directors are encouraged to include a variety of fact, value and policy resolutions.

Do these early. There is simply no way to keep your tournament running efficiently and on time if you are trying to write resolutions!

You need five resolutions per flight per round. In other words, you need 60 resolutions for the preliminaries in a typical 6-round tournament. You only need 5 resolutions for each out-round as these typically occur simultaneously.

Ballots:

The official IPDA ballot is on the organization's web-site. However, you are free to adjust this ballot as you will. We do require that speaker points be from 1-40 as that is a consistency issue for season-long speaker awards.

We also strongly recommend using the back-of-the-ballot advice to the judge. As lay judges are our norm, this information is invaluable.

You need enough ballots for all preliminary rounds. Out-round ballots are often printed by the tab room staff.

Judges:

Try to recruit as many “local” judges as possible. This will be a service to the competing teams. The more judges you recruit, the less judges teams have to supply. Thus, more of them get to compete.

See the By-Laws Article 1, Section B for judge qualifications.

IPDA debate encourages a diverse judging pool. To that extent, traditional debate judges (degreed individuals with some degree of experience in academic debate) are a part of the field. However, IPDA expands this field to encourage community and student involvement. Unique to IPDA is the option to have your students judge the event before competing in it. This opportunity provides the benefit of “thinking like a judge” for the student as well as an additional adaptation requirement for competitors. This diverse judging pool allows competitors to appeal to a broad array of judges while discussing a variety of topics (analogous to the burdens placed upon lawyers speaking to judges and juries, politicians appealing to diverse constituencies and businesspersons seeking to persuade the general public).

Food:

College kids like to eat; debaters need to eat! Try to provide options for the incoming teams. If you can't secure on-campus options, you will need to provide time in the schedule for teams to travel off campus.

It is common practice to include a list of restaurants in the invitation.

Tab room staff:

Several coaches in the organization are capable of “running tab” for tournaments. It is common practice to pay these coaches a small fee or waive their team's registration fee.

They will often bring their own supplies, but, depending on distance traveled among other factors, they may need you to help secure needed supplies.

Tournament Administration

Flighted Rounds:

The majority of IPDA tournaments run individual rounds in a “flighted” format. When rounds are “flighted” it means that the round is divided into two patterns (typically referenced as an “A” and “B” pattern), with roughly half of the debaters divided into each pattern. At the initial draw-time for a round, the debaters for flight A will receive their topics and begin their 30 minutes of preparation; 30 minutes later, the debaters for flight B will receive their topics and begin their 30 minutes of preparation (so that in a given room, a judge will evaluate one debate and immediately afterward, a second panel of debaters will enter the room for that same judge to evaluate). This process is adopted both to cut down on the number of judges necessary for a competition (one judge can evaluate 4 debaters per round, as opposed to only 2) as well as to allow some

break time for debaters during the tournament (debaters will typically have a half hour worth of break time per round). It is important to note that at most tournaments a debater is not guaranteed to remain in a certain flight (e.g., you could be “flight B” in round 1 + “flight A” in round 2), so it is important that debaters check the postings each round before taking any break time in between rounds (when rounds are scheduled back-to-back, a debater going from “flight A” in one round to “flight B” in the next, will often proceed immediately from the conclusion of one debate to the topic draw for the next).

Postings:

Postings are where your debaters and judges can find out where they will be for the following round. Often postings are put up one round at a time; however, multiple rounds may be posted at once. Because the tournament environment is fluid (rooms sometimes become unavailable, competitors and judges sometimes have to be dropped from the tournament, etc.), competitors and judges should always check postings before a round starts (and a judge who is not listed on the postings may sometimes be asked to substitute for another judge that has been listed but that is unable to judge the round). Topic draw is usually in a central location, the room listed is the room where the actual debate will take place after preparation time is complete.

Topic Draw & Strike Procedure:

During the “draw” time that has been assigned, competitors will meet in the area assigned for their division (novice, junior varsity, varsity or professional). Pairs of competitors are typically called to the front and given a slip of paper with the five topics to choose from for that round (see the website for resolutions from previous tournaments).

Once competitors receive the topics, the negative will strike one topic. The process of striking continues by alternating strikes (affirmative, negative and finally affirmative again) until one topic remains. That will be the topic for the round.

It is important to note that the 30 minutes of preparation time begins at the start of the topic draw period (meaning that any time that is used deliberating on “strikes” comes at the expense of preparation time). Occasionally the scheduled “draw” time will be delayed because of a significant event (rooms that were locked during the previous round, a previous draw getting started late, etc.) that causes a tournament to run late. However, competitors should always make every effort to arrive at the posted draw time (and not assume that a topic draw may be delayed, as this is rare event).

Typically, tournaments offer a 5 minute grace period for competitors to arrive to the topic draw. If one competitor has not yet arrived at the conclusion of that 5 minute grace period, the competitor who is present will choose which topic they wish to debate without having to complete the alternating strike process. A tournament official will then make an effort to inform the late competitor of the topic that has been selected

for that round. It is important to note that preparation time is running during this process, including the 5 minute grace period which is included in the total of 30 minutes preparation time.

Preparation Time:

IPDA discourages the usage of “canned” cases (cases that have been researched and written before a tournament begins) and instead provides 30 minutes for individual competitors to prepare and receive advice for the development of their advocacy. To that extent, tournaments often provide wireless internet access and competitors are encouraged to bring laptop computers. A few tournaments also attempt to provide desktop computers for competitors or programs that may not have access to laptop computers. Teams often will bring dictionaries, reference books and/or major publications with them both to provide backup in the event of an internet outage as well as to provide a supplement to materials available online. During preparation time, competitors may also consult with their teammates, coaches, or anyone else who is willing to aid in their preparation.

Disclosure:

For the purpose of making the debate both fair and educational, it is common practice for the affirmative side to disclose to the negative side if they will be interpreting the resolution in any way not obvious from its wording. This is particularly significant for abstract resolutions, resolutions which do not specify a topic area (for example, “We should close the door.”)

Signing In:

Upon the conclusion of preparation time, competitors should have arrived in their competition room (if a competitor is in “flight B” a round may be concluding in the room that s/he is scheduled to compete in and they should wait outside of the room until the round concludes). Competitors should position themselves in the front of the room with the affirmative seated on the left side of the room (from the judge’s perspective) and the negative on the right side (this is done so that the positioning of the competitors mirrors the listing on the ballots). When resources are available (chalkboard, whiteboard, etc.), competitors are urged to “sign in” for the round. When signing in, each competitor should list their position (Affirmative or Negative, typically abbreviated “Aff” or “Neg”), their school, and their name. The affirmative should write the resolution. When resources for signing in are not available, competitors should inform the judge of their position/school/name and the topic before the round begins.

How Debates are Evaluated:

During each preliminary round, a judge assigns both a “win” to one of the sides in the debate, as well as “speaker points” for each of the debaters in the round. The “win” may be assigned for a variety of reasons including the side that did the best job of debating in the round, the side that spoke the best, the side that won the key issue, etc. “Speaker points” are assigned to each debater, rating them from a total score of 8 (worst) to 40

(best) on their individual presentations during the round (typically, these scores are compiled by assigning a value from 1 to 5 on 8 different categories on the ballot (delivery, courtesy, appropriate tone, etc.) and then summing those scores. Typically, there is only one judge during each preliminary round of competition.

During elimination rounds, judges are simply required to assign a “win” as speaker points have no bearing on elimination rounds (see explanation on “preliminary and elimination rounds”). However, many will complete the “speaker points” section to provide additional feedback to competitors. Typically, there is a panel of three judges during each elimination round of competition.

Preliminary and Rounds:

Most tournaments offer 4 to 8 preliminary rounds of competition (with the norm being 6). During preliminary rounds, debaters will be assigned to either affirmative or negative, and over the course of the tournament they should have an even balance of affirmative and negative preliminary rounds (though it is not uncommon to have back-to-back rounds assigned as the same position, but this should be equalized by the end of the preliminary rounds). Occasionally, because of an odd number of debaters in the field, a debater may receive a “bye” in a preliminary round. In the event of a “bye,” the debater receives a win for that round and their speaker points will be averaged for their other rounds to determine the speaker points for this “bye” round. During preliminary rounds, debaters from the same school will not be scheduled to debate each other, and debaters will not debate the same person twice.

Power Matched Rounds:

When a field is large enough, tournaments attempt to “power match” a number of preliminary rounds in a tournament (Typically the final two preliminary rounds are “power matched.” However, this can begin as early as after the 2nd round of competition). For rounds that are not “power matched,” the “pairing” (which competitors are assigned to debate each other) is simply determined at random. When “power matching,” competitors are paired together based on their current ranking in the tournament (number of wins and speaker point total) so that the top ranked competitor debates the highest ranked competitor that they are eligible to debate (constraints include whether a person needs to be affirmative or negative in order to achieve balance for the tournament, whether two competitors are from the same school, whether two competitors have already debated each other, etc.) and this process of pairing continues until all competitors in that round have been scheduled. If there is a “bye” available when “power matching” a given round, that “bye” is typically assigned to the competitor ranked lowest in the competition at that point. Whenever rounds are not “power matched,” that bye is simply assigned at random as well (whether the rounds are “power matched” or not, bye’s are assigned with the constraint that no competitor should receive more than one “bye” in a given tournament).

Coaches Review:

The “coaches review” period is a concept unique to IPDA debate. Before the first elimination round, coaches have the opportunity to review the ballots for their teams and how those ballots have been recorded for the tournament. This provides a chance to catch any errors (though rare, occasionally a ballot may have been entered incorrectly into the computer and a competitor's win/loss record or speaker points may not reflect the total that they have actually earned). Because an error in ballot entry could affect who advances to elimination rounds and/or the seeding of elimination round brackets, IPDA has adopted this protocol to ensure that tournaments have the opportunity to correct any mistakes before the elimination rounds begin.

It is important to note that this time is simply for checking for errors. It is highly recommended that coaches should not release any information to competitors while the competition continues. All ballots, tab sheets, etc. are released to programs at the conclusion of the competition.

Elimination Rounds:

At the conclusion of preliminary rounds, the debaters who will advance into the single elimination tournament are announced (commonly referred to as “breaks”). The number of competitors eligible for elimination rounds is determined by the size of the entry in a given division (See By-Laws, Article 2, Section A, Subsection 3). The method for determining who advances to elimination rounds is to sequentially list the competitors based first upon the number of wins that they earned during preliminary rounds, and then speaker points earned are used as a tiebreaker among those with the same number of wins (Note – Tournaments vary in how speaker points are summed. Some tournaments use the total of speaker points for all preliminary rounds as the first method for summing the points, while others choose to use a “high/low” formula where the highest and lowest points earned by a competitor during a single round will be eliminated from their total and the remaining points will be summed. The specific formula for this as well as additional tiebreakers should be listed in the tournament’s invitation).

Once the sequential listing of competitors qualifying for elimination rounds is determined, competitors are then placed into a seeded bracket (for example, in a tournament starting with “octofinals” #1 vs. #16, #2 vs. #15, etc.) for the remainder of the competition. The typical tournament practice is to say that these brackets will not be “broken,” which means that no adjustment will be made for competitors who may be from the same school who are scheduled to debate each other. In the event that two competitors from the same school “hitting” each other, the coach for that program has the ability to decide what action to take (most coaches have a policy of not having their team members debate each other and instead advance whoever was the “highest seed” in that tournament. However, coaches also have the option to have the competitors debate each other with a panel of independent judges or debate the round with judges from their own school.

In IPDA debate, all elimination rounds are “flip” rounds, regardless of whether the competitors have debated already during the competition. A “flip” round simply means that before the topics are released, the competitors should flip a coin to determine who will get the chance to choose to be affirmative or negative in the round. That decision should be made before the competitors receive their topics. For the elimination round, competitors are typically evaluated by a panel of 3 judges. The competitor who receives a plurality of “wins” from this panel advances to the next round of the tournament. Depending on an individual tournament’s policy, judges sometimes “disclose” results in elimination rounds (announcing the decision of the panel at the conclusion of that round), and at other times, complete results of an elimination round are announced at a central gathering.

Awards:

Most tournaments offer speaker awards, sweepstakes awards, and awards for elimination round contestants.

Speaker awards are awards given to the top X number of students in a division listed sequentially based solely on the number of speaker points earned during preliminary rounds (see the discussion of high/low versus total speaker points in the preliminary and elimination rounds section for how different tournaments choose to sum these points).

Sweepstakes awards are awards for the top X number of teams, based on the overall team performance during a tournament (the formula for determining these awards varies greatly with differences in whether only preliminary rounds are counted or all rounds are counted, the number of competitors that will be counted, whether speaker awards will be counted, as well as the point values for each category – the invitation for each tournament should detail how this award will be determined).

Awards for elimination round contestants are awards given for a competitor's final placing in the single elimination tournament (e.g. “octofinalist”).

Additional IPDA organizational information is available on the IPDA website:

<http://www.ipdadebate.info>