

OSDA Congressional Debate Judge Overview

In Congressional Debate, students act as legislators at the federal or state level. Students offer legislation, debate it, make motions, ask questions, and vote. Throughout, they follow parliamentary procedure. The Congressional Debate chamber should resemble a real congress or state legislative chamber.

Presiding Officer:

A presiding officer is a student elected to run the chamber for a portion of the time. They manage the docket, determine the next speaker/questioner, moderate questioning, and handle motions/votes.

Parliamentarian:

An experienced adult will be selected to serve as parliamentarian. This person ensures that the students are running the chamber correctly and steps in when guidance is needed.

Ranking Top Competitors: 1 = Best Competitor in Chamber ***** MOST IMPORTANT *****

Your primary responsibility is ranking the top competitors in the chamber at the conclusion of the session, with “1” being the best student in the chamber. The tournament will inform you of how many students need to be ranked in that particular session. Typically, you will need to rank the top 8 or top 10 students in the chamber. Ties are not permitted. Rankings should reflect the entirety of the session you judged in that chamber. Considering all aspects of Congressional Debate, which student was most impressive? That student should earn the “1” for the round. The second most impressive student should earn the “2” for the round, etc.

All chamber activity is both applicable and impactful in ranking the chamber. This includes presiding, presenting speeches, asking questions, responding to questions, making motions, and professionalism. As you rank the chamber, please be mindful of the following considerations for speakers and presiding officers (in no particular order):

Considerations for Speakers	Considerations for Presiding Officers
Direct Clash in Speech	Correct Application of Precedence / Recency
Extemporaneous Presentation	Correct Application of Rules / Motions
Introducing New Content	Enforce Prohibition of Back / Forth Questioning
Quality of Evidence / Sources	Enforce Prohibition of Prefacing
Quantity of Speeches	Leadership / Command of the Room
Responses to Questioning	Running an Efficient Chamber
Understanding of Topic	

The OSDA affirms that a Presiding Officer is worthy of being ranked as the best competitor in the chamber. However, serving as a Presiding Officer does not necessarily guarantee that a competitor is ranked at or near the top of the chamber. If few students are willing to preside, that could indicate the Presiding Officer role is particularly impactful in that session and could be considered as such when ranking competitors.

Tracking and Scoring Speeches (including Presiding):

For reasons including tracking activity in the chamber, judges are asked to score each time a student speaks or presides. These scores do not impact tournament results; they only reflect the “points” that students “earn” during the chamber, so in this case, more is better! When entering a score for a speech or for presiding, the typical range is 3-6, with 6 being best, and 3 being the fewest points typically awarded for a speech or for presiding. Scores of 1 or 2 are reserved for extreme situations, such as speaking for less than a minute, speaking on the wrong side of a piece of legislation or the incorrect piece of legislation, or unprofessionalism.

OSDA Precedence and Recency Guidelines

BQS, District, and State Tournaments

Precedence - rule that requires the presiding officer to choose speakers who have spoken least (or not at all).

Recency - rule where the presiding officer not only employs precedence, but also selects speakers based on who has spoken least recently (or earliest).

Each time the Presiding Officers call on speakers, they will consider:

1. Which debater has spoken the fewest number of times (precedence)
2. Which debater has spoken least recently (recency)

Speechwire randomly assigns a number to each competitor in a chamber. The number can be seen on the seating chart:

15 Name <input type="text"/>	14 Name <input type="text"/>	13 Name <input type="text"/>	12 Name <input type="text"/>	11 Name <input type="text"/>
10 Name <input type="text"/>	9 Name <input type="text"/>	8 Name <input type="text"/>	7 Name <input type="text"/>	6 Name <input type="text"/>
5 Name <input type="text"/>	4 Name <input type="text"/>	3 Name <input type="text"/>	2 Name <input type="text"/>	1 Name <input type="text"/>

The seating chart number will be the random number for the purposes of preset randomized recency. The Presiding Officer will use this number to determine the order that debaters will give their first speeches and first questions in a session.

Using preset randomized recency, speakers are prioritized in increasing order (1, 2, 3, 4, ...).

This applies if a competitor has yet to give a speech.

Using preset randomized recency, questioners are prioritized in decreasing order (15, 14, 13, 12 ...).

This applies if a competitor has yet to be selected to ask questions.

Use of the random number will only determine speaking precedence for debaters who have not spoken or asked questions during the session. Typical precedence and recency will determine the order that subsequent speeches are granted. The debater who has spoken the fewest number of times will be granted a speech. In the event of several students having the same number of speeches, the student who spoke least recently would be granted the speech.

This same process will be used for direct questions following each speech.

If any participant believes the incorrect student has been identified as the next speaker (or next questioner), they should rise to a point of order before the speech in question takes place and state their concern. If a mistake has been made, it must be corrected at that time.