

Supplement to the AADG for NSDC

General Explanation

The aim of this document is to provide regularity and predictability for students, coaches and adjudicators about the approach that will be taken to some of the recurring adjudication issues at the National Schools Debating Championships ('Nationals'). The hope is that it will do no more than detail the conclusions usually reached during discussions at the Coaches and Adjudicator Briefings each year.

As the name suggests, it should always remain a supplement to the AADG.

Usage

It is not intended that adjudicators memorise these rules or carry around a copy for reference. In large part they codify existing practice and common sense to form an agreed set of standards. Adjudicators should familiarise themselves with the rules and the Chief Adjudicator, President and/or markers should direct adjudicators to review them in whole or in part if a concern arises at a tournament or during testing respectively.

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Section One: Speaking Aides

The use of paper and palm cards

1. A speaker may choose any size or form of hand-written notes to use for guidance during their speech without automatic penalty from the adjudicator.
2. Speakers are not entitled to have a lectern or table to rest on. They must be allowed to use one if it is available with minimal practical inconvenience to the other participants in the debate and the host.
3. A judge should not apply any penalty to students complying with rules 1 and 2, however in circumstances where the size or form of notes affects the objective persuasiveness of a speaker, they may consider this in their decision and marking.
 - 3.1. The objective test to be applied is that of a reasonable person who is aware of rules 1 and 2 and is agnostic as to the inherent impact of notes, lecterns and tables on persuasiveness.

The use of timing devices

1. Speakers may use a device to time the length of their preparation time.
 - 1.1. The device must not be a mobile phone or otherwise capable of storing, transmitting or receiving information.

NOTE: Basic electronic stopwatches comply with rule 1.
2. Speakers may use a device to time the length of speeches in the debate, including their own.
 - 2.1. The device may be a mobile phone that has been set to 'flight mode' so as to disable its transmitting and receiving capabilities. The speaker's coach should show the chair of the adjudication panel that the phone has been set to 'flight mode' before handing the phone to the speaker upon their return from preparation time.
 - 2.2. Speakers should refrain from contact with the device other than to start and stop the timer.
3. There is no longer a need to seek the permission of opposing coaches or judges provided that rules 1 and 2 are complied with.
4. Where an adjudicator is concerned that rules 1 or 2 have been breached, they should report the incident to the Chief-Adjudicator and/or the President of the ADF as soon as possible after the debate is concluded. Only in the case of unequivocal or extreme breaches should the adjudicator say 'order' during the debate.

Section Two: Points of Information

Offering

1. Points of information may only be offered by saying any of the following at a volume no louder than that needed to be heard by the speaker and the adjudicators:
 - 1.1. 'Point of Information?'
 - 1.2. 'Sir?'
 - 1.3. 'Madam?'
 - 1.4. 'On that point?'
 - 1.5. 'Point?'
 - 1.6. '[Opposing Speaker's first name]?'
 - 1.7. A speaker may also validly offer a point of information by rising in their place and saying nothing.
2. Judges should say 'order' if a speaker breaches rule 1 more than once in a debate. If a team or speaker does so consistently (at least more than twice) a judge should consider this when determining the mark that should be given in the POI column.
3. Frequency of offering points of information - upper limits:
 - 3.1. No speaker may offer a point of information if they have been rejected in the preceding ten seconds.
 - 3.2. No speaker may offer a point of information if a point offered by another speaker on their team has been rejected in the preceding five seconds.
 - 3.3. No speaker may offer a point of information if a point offered by them or their teammate has been accepted in the previous 20 seconds.
4. Judges should say 'order' if a speaker breaches rule 3 more than once in a debate. If a team or speaker does so consistently (at least more than twice) a judge should consider this when determining the mark that should be given in the POI column.
5. Frequency of offering points of information - lower limits:
 - 5.1. Each speaker should aim to offer approximately five to ten points of information per opposing speech.
 - 5.2. A penalty in the POI column for a speaker should be considered if
 - (a) the total number of points of information across the three speeches is less than nine, or
 - (b) the total is fewer than ten, but in one or more opposition speeches the number offered was two or fewer, or
6. Whether or not to apply a penalty in the POI column for any breach of the rules above should be determined in light of all the circumstances, but the following general presumptions apply:
 - 6.1. If a speaker has asked solid points when called on or offered at least one exceptional POI a penalty should normally not be given.
 - 6.2. Where a speaker has breached one of the rules above and has not been taken or has asked poor or average questions when selected, only in exceptional circumstances should a point not be removed from the POI column.
7. Only in truly exceptional circumstances should a -2/+2 be awarded in the POI column. The correct question to ask is: *in the course of asking one or more fifteen second questions was the speaker able to do as much damage or service to their team that would warrant their speaker points being adjusted by 20% of the available marks.* It will be rare that in such a short time period a speaker will be able to move their speech across twenty percentiles when the overwhelming volume of their contribution has come through their substantive speeches.

Accepting

1. A speaker must take two points of information and ideally should not take more than two.
2. A speaker taking only one point should result in a one (1) mark penalty in method unless their method was exceptional in every other regard.

3. A speaker taking no points of information should receive at least a one (1) mark penalty in method unless the speaker had the most brilliant method in every other regard. A two point penalty should be applied where the speaker's method was otherwise average or poor.
4. A speaker should not lose marks under rules 2 and 3 where the total number of points of information offered to that speaker was:
 - (a) 3 or fewer or
 - (b) 5 or fewer, with no points offered in the final minute of available time, or
 - (c) Where no points were offered in the final two minutes of available time, but at least one point has been taken.
5. Taking three points of information should not be penalised in and of itself, however it is likely that a decision to take three points of information will adversely affect scores in the matter and method columns.
6. Taking four or more points of information will almost always result in lost method or matter marks unless the speaker uses the points of information to significant persuasive effect.
7. Speakers should decline points of information in at least the first instance by saying 'no, thankyou' or words to that effect. Subsequent points may be declined by politely waiving the offeror down or by saying 'no' or 'no thankyou'.
8. Speakers should not begin answering points of information or otherwise interrupt the offeror until the offeror concludes their question or the chair calls the offeror to order for being overtime.

Appendix

Rough guide to POI column marks in different circumstances:

<u>Quality of points offered when accepted</u>	<u>Complied with offering rules</u>	<u>Breached offering rules more than twice</u>
Two or more exceptional points	+2	0
Average	0	-1
Generally average with one exceptional point	0 or +1	0
Generally average one poor point	0 or -1	-1
Poor	-1	-2
Generally Poor with one exceptional point	-1 or 0	-1
Not accepted	0	-1

Rough guide to suggested method column marks in different circumstances:

<u>Quality of POI Answers</u>		<u>Quality of non-POI method overall</u>		
<u>1st POI</u>	<u>2nd POI</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Poor</u>
Exceptional	Not accepted	15	15	14
Average	Not accepted	15	14	13
Poor	Not accepted	14	14	13
Not accepted	Not accepted	14	13	12

Section Three: Column marks, speaker marks and overall margins

1. As a general rule judges should
 - 1.1. Consider generally and on the whole where each speaker sits relative to the NSDC average for that year and the other speakers in the debate. In doing so the judge will naturally be mindful of manner, matter, method and the offering of points of information. Then,
 - 1.2. Consider the range of a margin they believe is appropriate in the debate they have watched (a close debate “0 to 3” point margin, a clear win “4 to 7” point margin, and a convincing win “8 to 10”), then
 - 1.3. Check that awarding speaker marks as determined in 1.1 would generate a margin in accordance with the range they considered appropriate in 1.2. If it does not fall within the range, the judge should consider which of their two impressions is the more accurate and make the adjustment to the one they feel, on reflection, does not fit as well as the other. Then,
 - 1.4. Determine which marks should be awarded in each of the three columns, keeping in mind their overall assessment of the speaker as they stood within the debate and vis a vis the other speakers at the tournament.
 - 1.5. If the marks in the columns cannot be matched to the speaker scores awarded, the judge should consider their margin, speaker scores and columns and determine which assessment(s) they are least confident in and make the necessary adjustments.

Section Four: Speaker's internal timing

1. There is no defined minimum or maximum amount of time that must be spent on the 'rebuttal section' of a speech. The appropriate amount of rebuttal will vary depending on the nature of the debate.
 - 1.1. A first negative speaker who neglects to advance their team's substantive case in favour of a lengthy rebuttal of the first affirmative speaker may risk a poor method score, but only if it precluded them from explaining what transpires to be their team's important material.
 - 1.2. Second speakers who neglect to advance their own substantive material in extension of their team's case will risk a poor method score. However this is not to be assessed according to a perceived requirement to have a certain number of arguments or spend a certain amount of time on 'substantive material'. Instead, the timing or division of substantive material at second should be assessed according to the impact it has had on the persuasiveness of the team's case compared to the other team.
 - 1.3. There is no requirement that a speaker have a separate rebuttal and substantive section of their speech.
 - 1.3.1. The average reasonable person expects persuasive opposing arguments to receive a response, but they are agnostic as to when and how that is to occur. The average reasonable person is reluctant to go looking for a response, so a speaker will get better method scores where they make it clear when and what they are responding to.
 - 1.3.2. It is important to note that a speaker can substantively advance a case while in their 'rebuttal section' and this should be assessed before penalising a speaker in method.
 - 1.3.3. The average reasonable person expects issues (whether substantive or responsive) to be dealt with generally in order of importance and so a failure to prioritise the most important material can result in a method penalty, but only where the order of explanation makes the material less persuasive.
2. Ultimately, the appropriate question to ask with regards to timing is, did the speaker strategically allocate their time between refuting the opposition's case and substantively advancing their own team's case in light of the circumstances of the debate.