



Introduction to Judging in the MDL

What is Policy Debate?



Policy debate is an intellectual competition between two sides: the **Affirmative** and the **Negative**. Each side is represented by a two- person team. One **Judge** will adjudicate each debate round.

The Role of the Affirmative



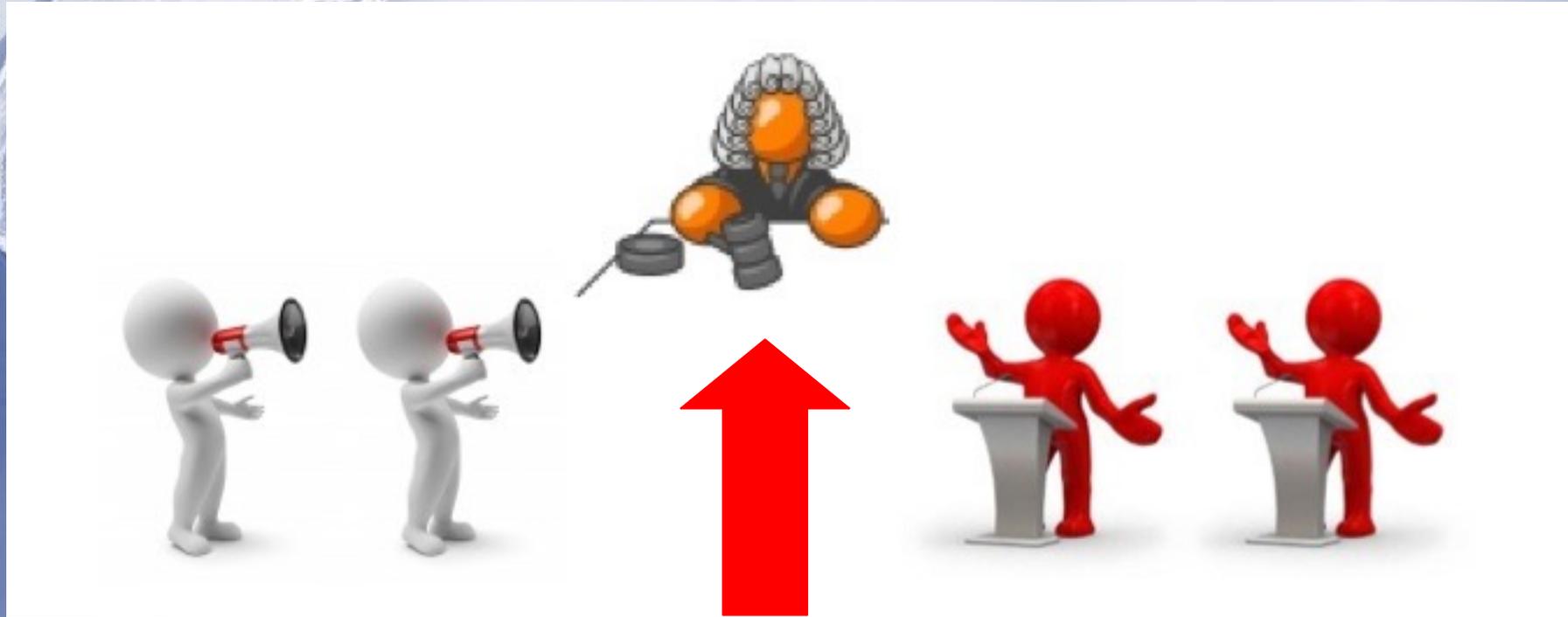
In every round, the affirmative team will propose a federal policy that fits under the guidelines of a national resolution. At the middle school level, these policies will be chosen by the MDL and by middle school coaches.

The Role of the Negative



The negative team argues in favor of the status quo, making arguments attacking specific parts of the affirmative's case while arguing that the disadvantages of voting affirmative outweigh the advantages.

The Role of the Judge



The role of the judge in a round involves the following:

1. Facilitate the debate during the round (prompting the next speaker to begin, keeping time during student speeches and keeping track of students' prep time, taking notes on arguments that were made)
2. Offer students constructive feedback after the round
3. Evaluate all of the arguments made during the round and come to a conclusion about which side presented the more compelling worldview.

Here's an example...

The affirmative starts the debate by standing up and making the case that the federal government should lift the current trade embargo off of Cuba, saying that status quo policy hurts public health systems in Cuba, resulting in the deaths of innocent Cubans as a result of a failed U.S. policy.

Judge, you should lift the embargo off of Cuba. The policy is antiquated, has failed to force changes in Cuba, and has the effect of dramatically hurting public health systems in Cuba. Because of this, you have a moral obligation to lift the embargo.



Here's an example...

The negative responds by making the case that actually, public health systems in Cuba are pretty strong. By several indicators, including infant mortality and life expectancy, the Cuban health system is good compared to other Latin American (and even the U.S.) health systems. Additionally, lifting the embargo would strengthen the Castro regime, leading to increased human rights abuses.

Judge, you should lift the embargo off of Cuba. The policy is antiquated, has failed to force changes in Cuba, and has the effect of dramatically hurting public health systems in Cuba. Because of this, you have a moral obligation to lift the embargo.

Cuban health systems are strong, according to several important indicators. The harm caused by the embargo is not nearly as great as the affirmative states. Additionally, there are some consequences of lifting the embargo that you should consider, judge.



Here's an example...

This goes on for a total of eight speeches.

1AC (First Affirmative Constructive)

- The affirmative team begins the debate by proposing a federal policy that increases investment in transportation infrastructure
- Given by the first affirmative speaker
- 4 minutes long, followed by a 1.5 minute cross examination

1A



Here's an example...

1NC (First Negative Constructive)

- The negative team begins the debate offering reasons why the status quo is better than the world of the affirmative plan
- Given by the first negative speaker
- 4 minutes long, followed by a 1.5 minute cross-examination

1A



1N



Here's an example...

2AC (Second Affirmative Constructive)

- The affirmative team responds to all of the points brought up in the 1NC and repositions the affirmative case as being preferable to the status quo
- Given by the second affirmative speaker
- 4 minutes long, followed by a 1.5 minute cross-examination

1A



2A



1N



Here's an example...

2NC (Second Negative Constructive)

- The negative team extends the arguments made in the 1NC and responds to the points raised by the 2AC.
- Given by the second negative speaker
- 4 minutes long, followed by a 1.5 minute cross-examination

1A



2A



1N



2N



Here's an example...

1NR (First Negative Rebuttal)

- The same as the 2NC: The negative team extends the arguments made in the 1NC and responds to the points raised by the 2AC.
- Given by the first negative speaker
- 2.5 minutes long. No cross-examination

1A



2A



1N



2N



Here's an example...

A note on the 2NC and the 1NR

- These two negative speeches, given back-to-back, are referred to as the 'negative block' in debate. It's an opportunity for the negative to go more in depth into specific arguments.

1A



2A



1N



2N



Here's an example...

A note on the 2NC and the 1NR

- The 1NR is the first of four rebuttal speeches, which are each five minutes long. In rebuttal speeches, neither team is allowed to bring in brand new arguments. They can elaborate on arguments that are currently in the round, but the negative, for example, cannot come up and say, here's another completely separate reason why the affirmative's plan is a bad idea.

1A



2A



1N



2N



Here's an example...

1AR (First Affirmative Rebuttal)

- The 1AR extends the best arguments from the 2AC and begins to collapse the debate down into a few key issues. The 1AR has only 2.5 minutes to respond to a combined 6.5 minutes of negative argumentation, so word efficiency is critical.
- Given by the first affirmative speaker, 2.5 minutes long, no cross-examination

1A



2A



1N



2N



Here's an example...

2NR (Second Negative Rebuttal)

- The negative's last speech. The 2NR should pick their best arguments for why the affirmative plan is a bad idea, extend them, and make their final case to the judge.
- Should pre-empt some of the arguments that will be made by the affirmative in their final speech.
- Given by the second negative speaker, 2.5 minutes long, no cross-examination

1A



2A



1N



2N



Here's an example...

2AR (Second Affirmative Rebuttal)

- The affirmative's last speech. The 2AR should pick their best arguments for why the affirmative plan is a good idea, extend them, and make their final case to the judge.
- Should close the door on any remaining issues in the round.
- Given by the second affirmative speaker, 2.5 minutes long, no cross-examination

1A



2A



1N



2N



A quick recap:



Each student gives two speeches: a constructive and a rebuttal. A constructive speech is 4 minutes and a rebuttal speech is 2.5 minutes. Each student also is cross examined once and cross-examines someone once.

A quick recap:



Constructive speeches are 8 minutes, rebuttal speeches are 5 minutes and cross-examinations are 3 minutes

On the Affirmative- there are two affirmative speakers:

- One student is The First Affirmative Speaker gives the First Affirmative Constructive and the First Affirmative Rebuttal
- One student is The Second Affirmative Speaker gives the Second Affirmative Constructive and the Second Affirmative Rebuttal

On the Negative team- there are two negative speakers:

- One student is The First Negative Speaker gives the First Negative Constructive and the First Negative Rebuttal
- One student is The Second Negative Speaker give the Second Negative Constructive and the Second Negative Rebuttal

A quick recap:



Constructive speeches are 8 minutes, rebuttal speeches are 5 minutes and cross-examinations are 3 minutes

1st Affirmative Constructive (4 minutes): The affirmative team presents its plan.

1st Negative Constructive (4 minutes): The negative team presents all the reasons they believe the affirmative's plan should not be done.

2nd Affirmative Constructive (4 minutes): The affirmative team responds to the 1st Negative constructive

2nd Negative Constructive (4 minutes): The negative team responds to the 2nd affirmative constructive and extends negative arguments

A quick recap:



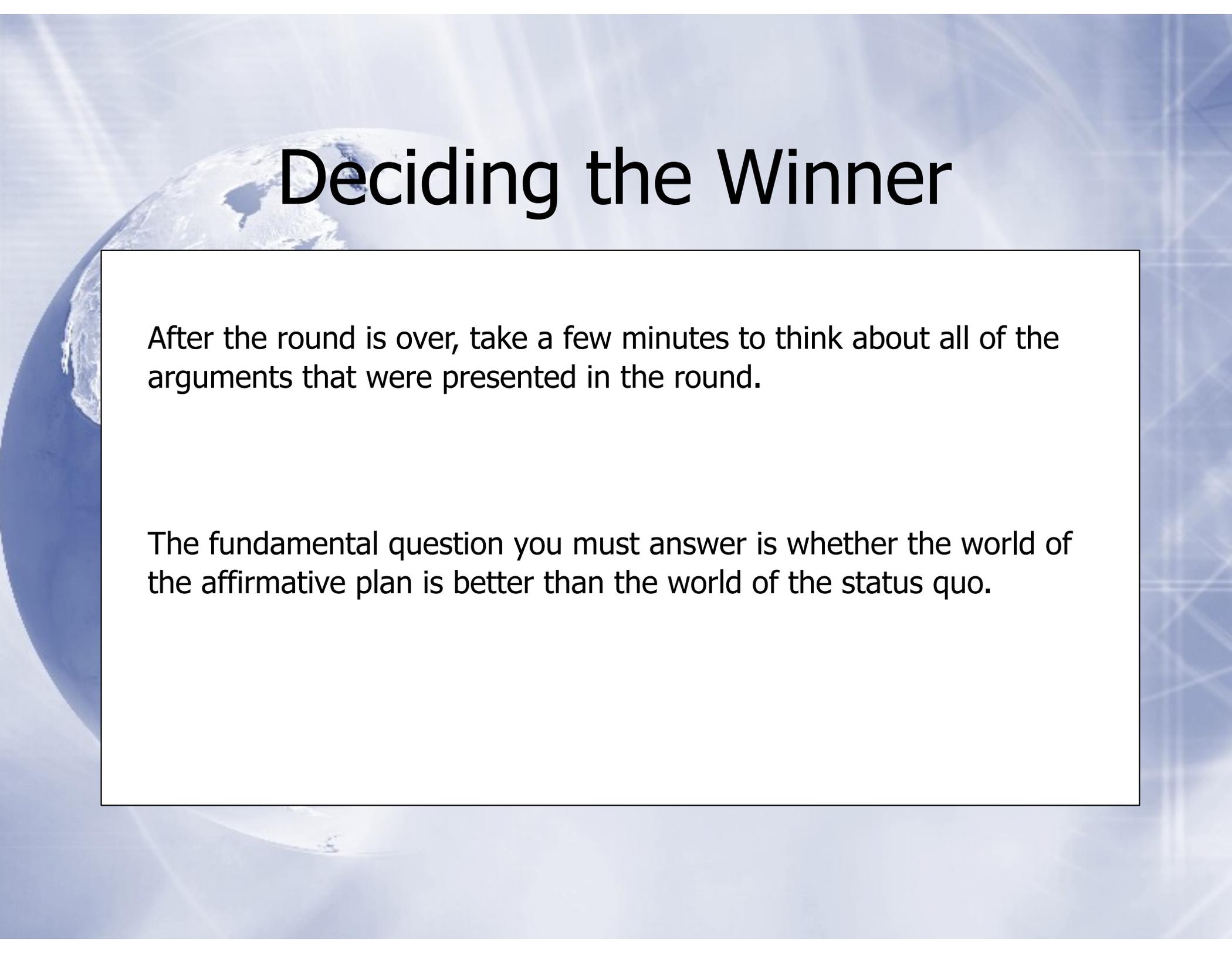
Constructive speeches are 8 minutes, rebuttal speeches are 5 minutes and cross-examinations are 3 minutes

1st Negative Rebuttal (2.5 minutes): The negative team responds to the 2nd affirmative constructive and extends negative arguments

1st Affirmative Rebuttal (2.5 minutes): The affirmative team responds to both the 2nd negative constructive and the 1st negative rebuttal

2nd Negative Rebuttal (2.5 minutes): The negative team tells you why they think they should win

2nd Affirmative Rebuttal (2.5 minutes): The affirmative team tells you why they think they should win



Deciding the Winner

After the round is over, take a few minutes to think about all of the arguments that were presented in the round.

The fundamental question you must answer is whether the world of the affirmative plan is better than the world of the status quo.

Using your flow to help resolve arguments

In policy debate, there is a specific way of taking notes, called 'flowing'.

Flowing helps debaters and judges keep track of what arguments have been made in a round and which arguments have and have not been responded to.

Using your flow to help resolve arguments

During each speech, you should take notes of what the speaker said using a flow sheet. Here's what it looks like:

⌋ Negative Block ⌋						
1AC (8 minutes)	1NC (8 minutes)	2AC (8 minutes)	2NC/1NR (8 min + 5 min)	1AR (5 minutes)	2NR (5 minutes)	2AR (5 minutes)

Name of Argument _____

Using your flow to help resolve arguments

At the end of the round, use your flow to help you decide who has made the more compelling case. A few questions you can ask yourself:

1. Are there dropped arguments that I should consider?
2. Were those dropped arguments exploited by the opposing team?
3. Who is doing more on the substance level?

The Ballot

At the end of the round, after you decide who won, you will need to fill out a ballot.

1. Write some comments to each student
2. Assign speaker points (based on how well the student spoke and the quality of their argumentation) and ranks (rank the students 1-4, with 1 being the best speaker in the round and 4 being the worst)
3. Mark which team one and which side they represented
4. Indicate if it was a 'low-point win', in which a team's combined speaker points were lower than the opposing team's speaker points, but they still win the round.

The Ballot

Division _____

Judge _____

Round _____

Room _____



AFF. TEAM _____ POINTS RANK NEG. TEAM _____ POINTS RANK

1ST AFF _____ 1ST NEG _____

2ND AFF _____ 2ND NEG _____

Reason for Decision:

THE TEAM WINNING THIS DEBATE WAS _____ REPRESENTING THE AFF NEG

JUDGE SIGNATURE _____ SCHOOL/AFFILIATION _____

LOW POINT WIN YES NO

The Ballot

Division JV

Judge Hoffman

Round 1

Room 245



AFF. TEAM Rufus King POINTS 27.5 RANK 3 NEG. TEAM Bradley Tech POINTS 28.5 RANK 1

1ST AFF John Smith POINTS 27.5 RANK 3 1ST NEG Peter Kim POINTS 28.5 RANK 1

2ND AFF Jane Johnson POINTS 28 RANK 2 2ND NEG Lucy Jacobs POINTS 27 RANK 4

Reason for Decision:

The affirmative team proved that the plan was a good idea in the following ways:

- They identified a concrete problem in the status quo
- They explained and extended their arguments about how poverty hurts the economy and causes racism and discrimination
- They demonstrated that providing block grants would solve this problem through the provision of important social services that raise individuals out of poverty

The negative team:

- Provided several reasons why the plan would be a bad idea, but did not explain the impacts to those arguments
- Needed to more fully develop why the plan would not be a solution to this problem, and why it might be worse to attempt to do the plan

THE TEAM WINNING THIS DEBATE WAS T.J.H.S REPRESENTING THE **AFF** **NEG**

JUDGE SIGNATURE _____ SCHOOL/AFFILIATION _____

LOW POINT WIN **YES** **NO**

Awarding Speaker Points

Give each student speaker points. Below is a commonly used scale for assigning speaker points. Please note: You can give the same number of speaker points to multiple debaters in the round and you can award half points (28.5, for example).

- ❑ **30 Points** Absolutely brilliant! An *outstanding* speaker. A flawless performance.
- ❑ **29 Points** An extremely good speaker. Well above average. Unusually effective; highly persuasive.
- ❑ **28 Points** A good speaker. Slightly above average. Clear room for improvement.
- ❑ **27 Points** In the lower-middle of the pack. With strengths, but also with unmistakable flaws.
- ❑ **26 Points** An ineffective speaker, overall, though with some glimmers of skill.
- ❑ **25 Points** A significantly flawed speaker.

Please do not give less than 25 points

Giving Oral Feedback

Once you finish filling out the ballot, take a couple of minutes and discuss the round with the students. Which arguments were persuasive? Which weren't? How could the students have been more effective speakers? A couple of guidelines to consider:

1. Affirm the students
2. Offer honest, constructive criticism. But limit the number of criticisms. As a rule of thumb, provide three affirmations per criticism
3. Note that you are not required to disclose a decision to the students
4. Keep it short and sweet (about 5 minutes, 10 at the absolute most)