

## GUIDELINES FOR ADJUDICATORS

A set of notes by three experienced New Zealand debaters and adjudicators.

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### OPENING NOTES – HAYDEN RYAN

#### PUT SIMPLY, ADJUDICATORS HAVE THREE ROLES TO FULFIL

- \* Ensure the debate runs smoothly
- \* Call the debate correctly
- \* Provide a useful and considered adjudication speech

#### A COMMON MISTAKE IS TO FOCUS SOLELY ON MAKING THE RIGHT DECISION

- \* The other two roles will be at least as important if we are to achieve a credible and happy schools' competition.

#### THE ADJUDICATOR MUST MANAGE THE DEBATE

- \* At this level, there is often no chairperson or only an inexperienced/"biased" chairperson
- \* You will be expected to know more than anyone else in the room about debating and the rules of the competition
- \* From the moment you enter the room, the teams and coaches will be looking at you, assessing your competence (e.g. from your manner, body language, confidence)

Taking simple steps to manage the debate effectively will help to establish your credibility as an adjudicator – regardless of age or experience.

#### WHEN YOU ENTER THE ROOM ...

- \* Be approachable, confident, and courteous in your manner – your aim should be to establish a good rapport with both teams, and to set everyone at ease. This cheerful behaviour is important because the students need to:
  1. Have confidence in you as their adjudicator
  2. Feel they are in a non-hostile environment.
- \* Be well organised – have your mark-sheet and notepaper with you; know which teams you're judging, the motion, the sides and the speaking times. To have to ask for any of these things is unprofessional.
- \* Take control – get the names of the speakers, organise a chairperson/timekeeper, and get the debate started as quickly and efficiently as possible. The teams will be looking to you to organise proceedings.

#### DURING THE DEBATE ...

- \* Be alert to any major problems eg
  1. Loud team discussions during speeches
  2. Heckling, or any other unhelpful behaviour
  3. Points of order
  4. Extensive coaching from the audience
- \* Use your judgement in dealing with these problems. Usually, a firm but polite reminder between speeches is sufficient; marks would only be deducted if the behaviour is extreme or if it continues despite your warning.

After the debate, always ask yourself whether you could have managed things better. Discuss any problems with other adjudicators.



## THE ROLE OF THE ADJUDICATION SPEECH

- \* The adjudication speech has two purposes:
  1. Encourage and develop the speakers
  2. Explain the result
- \* Your speech must cover these two areas. Tips include (1) Try not to give individual criticism/praise (e.g. “So it all came down to the 3<sup>rd</sup> negative and if only Jeremy had done more rebuttal ...”). Rather, go for statements that are equally specific, but more tactful (e.g. “By the end of the substantive speeches, the Negative needed to have rebutted the Affirmative’s crucial points on global warming and US nuclear disarmament ...”) (2) Be aware of formats that will cover the two areas of the adjudication speech (e.g. summary of strengths and weaknesses in the debate, followed by overview/analysis of the result)

## FIVE GOLDEN RULES OF THE ADJUDICATION SPEECH

Rule 1: Think through what you are going to say. Use the time given at the end of the debate not just to finalise your decision and tally up the mark-sheet, but also to prepare brief notes for your adjudication speech

Remember – It’s better to take a couple of extra minutes at the end to plan your speech, than to rush into it unprepared

Rule 2: Be aware of time constraints. The ever-present temptation is to act as a “seventh speaker”. Instead, you should recognise that:

1. The debaters’ attentions spans will naturally have limits
2. There will be tight time constraints on the competition (students and organisers have to get home!)

Remember – A super detailed adjudication seldom equates to a good adjudication

Rule 3: Be intelligible. It’s important to pitch at a level appropriate to the school students you’re judging. In particular, you should avoid jargon and elevated technical discussions that will make little sense to relatively inexperienced debaters.

Remember – Students will be alienated by an excessively sophisticated analysis. Instead your role is to make both the debate and the reasons for your decisions clear to them.

Rule 4: Be enthusiastic and constructive. The students need to feel that you enjoyed the debate and appreciated their efforts. Extended criticism or ridicule is never a helpful tool with young debaters.

Remember – nine times out of ten, students will know when they have been terrible or completely outclassed. You can make these points without humiliating them in front of their peers.

Rule 5: Always be prepared to give helpful, individual feedback to speakers after the debate. Time constraints will make this difficult, but debaters will appreciate your interest and (provided it is done well) it adds to your credibility when it is seen that you are prepared to discuss matters with students.

Remember – While you should be prepared to discuss the debate, you do not have to actively defend your decision in a “second debate”.

## CALLING THE DEBATE: – JESSE WILSON

### These are guidelines not rules:

A holistic, contextual approach, weighing all the factors is preferable to a prescriptive, mechanical approach to debates.

1. No knockout blows technical imperfections by themselves ought not to be the basis for deciding debate.
  - \* Failure to perorate, problems with case splits etc may detract from the effectiveness of a case but shouldn't be fatal to it. Adjudicators should be cautious about single arguments winning debates.
  - \* SIGNIFICANCE: (no requirement to "hit" every point, teams can legitimately decide to prioritise their rebuttal time to focus on key arguments)
  - \* INITIATIVE: (arguments shouldn't win debates against the run of play, especially if the argument came out late and the other team decisively dominated other aspects of the debate)
2. Analysis by the adjudicator must reflect the flow of the round.
  - \* The weighting of the issues by the adjudicator should reflect the focus that the teams themselves took. The adjudicator should not decide in an intellectual vacuum what **are the key points** that need to be made by each side and then decide the debate according to which team came closest to meeting this expectation. –
  - \* There is a risk of adjudicators overanalysing the debates as they would run them leads on to a problem of giving teams too much credit when they allude to something that the adjudicator wants to hear (the adjudicator then completes the halfargument in his or her mind).
  - \* Adjudicators should not apply principles unique to university debating at schools level. (E.g. status quo cases, placesets, models, counter-cases openminded approach to the moot required as well. The adjudicator should not give extra credit to teams faced with a supposedly difficult case nor should they hold them to any higher standard of proof due to the emotional reaction that an adjudicator might feel. Similarly teams shouldn't need to be apologetic or diffident about running potentially controversial cases if the moot reasonably requires them to do so.
3. Evidence adjudicators should strongly promote the viewpoint that relevant and preferably recent examples are the only acceptable means for illustrating arguments and correspondingly discourage in the strongest possible way reliance on less reasonable means of substantiating their cases. (E.g. role plays, references to films and songs, quotes from Shakespeare, metaphors, personal anecdotes.) It is important in terms of bringing SSDA into line with expectations at Russell McVeagh tournament and Nationals. In prepared debates teams reasonably ought to be expected to be able to back up their arguments with appropriate evidence
4. Style: 2 main points:
  - (a) Adjudicators should look at overall effectiveness of the presentation rather than against a narrow list of expectations. Clarity, persuasiveness and professionalism are the key but there are many ways of delivering a speech and adjudicators shouldn't nit pick about technical features, e.g. use of cuecards, unless they genuinely detract from the overall effectiveness of the speech.
  - (b) More controversially, I'd like to talk about the weighting that adjudicators ought to give to style. Do we pay enough attention to style? A frequent criticism that university adjudicators get from schools includes an adjudication where the adjudicator never looked up from his/her refill pad during the debate. Manner is worth half the marks but is usually ignored altogether by adjudicators can a team win on style? In many cases at schools level the answer is yes. Most obviously, this is true where teams are relatively close on argument but miles apart on style. Moreover, teams can get away with gaffes in analysis and interpretation of examples, where these gaffes are not picked up by opponents. Their style carries them through. Style involves more than effective delivery but also seizing the initiative by manipulating the dynamics of the debate, dragging the debate onto a team's ground. Bear in mind as well that at junior levels in particular,

almost all debates will be won and lost on style. Fluency, confidence and the ability to speak to time tend to be decisive issues for younger debaters.

5. Definitional Issues 2 bases for challenge:

- (a) selfproving
- (b) outside the spirit of the motion.

I'll look specifically at defining the topic in a way which conflicts with the spirit of the motion. Some of you may know as this as squirreling.

The bottom line is that it has no place in the SSDA. It should be treated according by adjudicators. This is because the moots are: (a) prepared and (b) have clear and obvious issues behind them. For Example: That Beijing deserves the 2008 Olympics.

However please do not go overboard looking for unreasonable definitions for several reasons.

- \* To the best of my knowledge Isaac, Warren, Colin and myself are the only speakers in Auckland Secondary Schools Debating who ran squirrels.
- \* Many debates have moots which are legitimately open to a variety of quite different meanings. The affirmative has a right to construct a case in good faith without being unreasonably secondguessed at every turn. ("squirreling" denotes a deliberate intention to distort the moot.)
- \* Often debates reasonably require some narrowing of the scope.

### **COMMON PROBLEMS IN DEBATES – ISAAC HIKAKA**

Common problems in debates. How these conflict with/don't fulfil the roles of the teams. Adjudicator's duty to inform students as to problems in these cases. General guidelines for adjudicators when faced with these situations.

REMEMBER guidelines are only guides. They are not fixed rules.

#### **The Role of Teams**

##### Affirmative Team

The affirmative team must set up the debate in a way which enables both teams to make logical and compelling arguments. They must outline and prove a case, eg to adopt proposal X.

##### The Negative Team

The negative team must attack and disprove the case of the affirmative team. There is no requirement to propose an 'alternative model', though this may be helpful in some debates.

#### **Bad Things That Can Happen**

1. 'Examples' Case
2. 'Ships Passing' Case
3. Shrinking Onus
4. Hung/Bridged Case
5. Definitional Problems

##### 1. The 'Examples' Case

A case that consists basically of a list of examples that may be related to the moot. The relevancy of the examples is never properly explained and the case therefore has little argument.

Example: "This House believes that US foreign policy was responsible for September the 11<sup>th</sup>"

The Affirmative team provides a list of examples of a poor USArab policy (for example – support of corrupt monarchies, support of Israel, failure to overthrow Saddam Hussein.) The Negative team can also do the same (for example by citing Kosovo, Haiti, Somalia.)

This fails to fulfil role required of the teams to advance and present an argument. The necessary analysis that links these examples to responsibility and September 11 is missing.

In this situation, whichever team provides the most analysis should win.

## 2. The 'Ships Passing' Case

In this situation there is little, if any, substantive clash between the cases of the teams.

Example: "That the UN has failed"

The Affirmative sets up a debate about whether or not the UN needs a standing army to ensure that it can effectively maintain peace.

The Negative team does not engage, but talks only about the work done by the WHO and UNICEF.

The negative team fails to fulfil its fundamental role of negating the argument of the affirmative.

Generally, in this situation the negative team will lose.

## 3. Shrinking Onus

Throughout the debate, a team back-pedals on what it has to prove in order to win the debate.

Example: "That international boundaries are out of date"

The Affirmative team starts by arguing they will prove that boundaries are no longer relevant because globalisation has made national sovereignty obsolete. By second speaker this has become that borders are out of date because governments need to work with other governments to operate in the international environment. By third speaker borders are out of date because people can transfer their money overseas easily, or can talk to people on the internet.

The affirmative fails to fulfil its role of advancing a clear and consistent argument.

Both teams can fall victim to shrinking onuses. Usually, however, it is the affirmative that is the guilty party, and it is usually a sign that the negative team has successfully disproved large sections of the affirmative case.

## 4. Hung/Bridged Case

This is a rare occurrence, when a team spreads its arguments across speakers in a series of logical syllogisms, such that each speech does not of itself directly support the central argument.

Example "That the Treaty settlements are a fraud"

1st Affirmative sets out the historical situation leading up to the current settlement process.

2nd Affirmative describes the Treaty settlements.

3rd Affirmative argues why the settlements are a fraud.

The argument is not actually arrived at until the final speech. Thus the affirmative has not (for the first two speeches) provided a case the negative can constructively engage with. Also, third speaker should not be used to bring out substantive arguments.

Both teams can advance bridged arguments, though usually it will be an affirmative team who does so. Usually bridged arguments don't win debates.

## 5. Definitional Problems

There are four usual definitional problems encountered in debates (excluding the definitional challenge).

- \* The Dictionary definition.
- \* The Truism
- \* The "Issueless" definition
- \* The Squirrel

### The Dictionary Definition

Usually seen at school level, teams will not actually define the topic in terms that allow for a clear debate, but will replace the words of the topic with synonyms.

Example: "That NZ should have stronger armed forces" Stronger = more strong than  
Such debates don't facilitate for a clear presentation of arguments.  
However, they rarely are going to dramatically affect the outcome of a debate.

### The Truism

The topic is defined in such a way that it becomes selfproving.

Example: "That America is a global bully" A bully is someone who uses his/her power to influence others. America does this and is therefore a bully.  
Truisms do not allow either side to present proper argument.  
Truisms will usually founder about 6 minutes into the 1st affirmative speech, as it is usually impossible to develop an argument from a truistic definition.

### The Issueless Definition

The topic is defined in such a way that there is no real issue behind it. Often very close to a truism.

Example: "That all the meek inherit is the dirt". Meaning that meek people will get nothing much from life.  
Again, it is almost impossible to advance compelling argument (for either team).

Like a truism, argument will run out very quickly.

### The Squirrel (Refer also Jesse's comments)

The topic is defined in an unreasonable way.

Example: "That tourism is a global menace" International money speculators should be outlawed.  
Squirrels (at school level) are unfair on an opposing team, especially in a prepared competition.  
A team shouldn't automatically lose for squirreling, but an adjudicator should look favourably on a negative that responds to the argument set up by the affirmative.  
On squirreling: Narrowing a topic by setting a scope for the debate is perfectly legitimate, and indeed should be encouraged eg "That NZ should follow US lead" saying should follow economic lead by joining NAFTA is valid.

Note: Given the types of moots being used in the competition, it is unlikely squirrels or issueless definitions will occur.

**Also note:** None of these situations is a 'death blow' to a team. Most are intrinsically problematic, and don't warrant any extra 'mark taking off'. All debates should be judged holistically. Refer also Jesse's comments.