

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) on Muslim Youth Debate Tournament Debate Format – For the Judges

- 1) In the second and third preliminary round, teams will be paired according to their scores to ensure a balanced debate. Does this mean pairings will be a mix of high-scoring and low-scoring teams? Can you please clarify?

We usually rank them according to their level so that the teams get a balanced debate and have an opportunity to learn better by being against a team their own level. This way the teams do not get discouraged when you read the answer to question 2 it will clarify more insha Allah. However this year since we have only two preliminary rounds, we may not be doing that. I believe both rounds will be randomly selected.

- 2) Say the 3rd speakers rebuttal is an excellent summation of the proposition's arguments and justified refutations. However, though he/she may provide an excellent summary, say the points they summarized were not quite as excellent. So, while the speaker's arguments were not very strong (because the whole team's arguments were not), he/she did an excellent job of working with what they had. How should judges weigh on something like that? Can we give the speaker high individual points and still have the opposition win?

Absolutely. It happens more often than you would think that the team with higher cumulative points loses the debate and the team that scores lower points wins the debate. Also the best speaker could be from the losing team. When scoring, you as a judge should score the individual speakers right after their speech. This is a score for only their speech. However, when deciding who won or lost the debate, the scores should have nothing to do with it. The last couple of pages explain this quite clearly. You would basically have to determine which side made the stronger case. I am pasting an old document that I had come up with to explain how to decide who wins. How do you choose who won the debate? **It is NOT the team that scores higher points.** Even the best team may deliver very good and sound speeches but may not respond adequately in a particular topic to the rebuttals and therefore may not make a sound case and lose the debate. Or sometimes what you said above could occur. How do you decide?

Remember you should decide the debate based on the criteria offered by the debaters in the round. Also in a good debate the rebuttal speaker should point out WHY their side should win a debate not just recap what happened as if the judge did not take good notes. They need to give you the criteria why their side is superior in argument. So here is what you do.

First, look at the arguments. Check which ones were successfully refuted and which lay standing on both sides. Your flow sheet will help you there. Make sure to not let your opinion or bias enter here. **However it is NOT the number of arguments won on each side either that decides who wins.** Now you have your raw material.

Next you answer the following questions:

- Did the proposition make a case? In this you will have to look at their line of reasoning, the AREs, and the arguments brought forth.
- Did the opposition show that the case was either flawed, inadequate or a dangerous opinion in any way? Were there refutations complete? Look for the 4-step refutation or other complete ways of refutation.
- Were the rejoinders that the proposition brought up adequate in reinstating their stance and did they address all rebuttals brought up?

Typically this should tell you who won the **debate**. If the proposition had a sound case and they addressed all rebuttals adequately, they win. If the opposition had brought arguments that the proposition could not satisfy, then the opposition wins. **Remember the burden of proof lies with the proposition.** Opposition does not have to prove the opposite of the topic rather just negate the proposition. However, it is not always that easy.

Sometimes, as all debates do have two sides, it may not be that clear, especially if both sides are equally good (or bad) debaters. Then we look at some of the following:

- Lets say each side proved one argument conclusively. Then you can look at the significance of the argument overall in the outcome of the **debate**.
- You may also look at what has a greater impact. (One side is talking about saving millions of dollars, the other side is talking about saving lives by avoiding war)
- You also look at the probability of the arguments (In the above example, the probability of avoiding war is minimal but saving money is more likely so although avoiding war is better, it may never happen whereas saving money is very probable)
- You could also look at any arguments that were dropped. Normally you wouldn't do that if the other side did not pick it up, but in case of a tie, you would.

It is imp to note here that although we let the debaters know who won the **debate** in the preliminary rounds, ***the winning teams are not the ones that advance to the semi finals.*** Rather the teams that score the highest. This way we ensure that the best teams move up. In a scenario that you described above it would seem that this team was a good team but just happened to not have come up with good or sound arguments in this particular **debate**. So they lose the **debate** but they can still advance as they are a good team. This shows why it is so important for judges to go through the rubric guide thoroughly and refer to it while scoring. This way we can make sure to minimize the human element and differences in scoring.

However, in ***the semifinals and finals it is the wins or losses that determine who advances or who wins the trophy.*** The reason being we have already weeded out the weaker teams and now the best are up. This time it is about how they perform in the particular competition. Hope this clarifies stuff.

- 3) Matter, Manner, and Method: are they equally weighed? I saw the mark bands on the rubric, so I'm assuming they are. As judges, do we indicate the individual scores we assigned to each category, or is a more general judgment?

Yes they are equally weighed. In some parliamentary debates matter gets 40 points but we have decided to make it simpler with the rubric guide to stick to equal weight. Yes the rubric scoring sheet allows space to fill in the score for the three indvdl categories. We actually give this score to the debaters so that they may get some feedback from the judges. The boxes are large enough for you to put a comment or two as well so they may see how they performed or take notes on the speakers so that you may put it on the ballot sheet when you are done which is also fwded to the debaters for feedback.

- 4) Is it common for 3rd speakers to justify bringing up certain points (if they believe there may be some uncertainty regarding whether or not that point is a new argument)? Or, are judges encouraged to decide for themselves? I'm asking this because I'm uncertain as to how much leeway we have in filling in "empty spaces" when it comes to deciding if an argument is "new" or "old."

Again great question. The whole idea of a 3rd speaker not bringing up new points is that the other side has no chance to refute. A smart debater may bring in a new point and make it look like a part of an original point if they want to pull that off. HOwever if you feel it is a strong point but hte other side has no chance to refute it then it must be considered new. Again, even if a rebuttal for an old point or a comeback ie refutation to an extended argument is new; ie they come up with a new line of reasoning to refute or refute an argument previously dropped, then it woudl be new. To answer your question: you have all the leeway to determine which argument is new based on if the opposition has had a chance to refute it or not. YOu will not see this in our debates but in partliamentary at college level they allow for the oppostiion to stand and call out a *point of order*- that is they will point out a rule breaking to hte judge. In such a case the judge may either accept in which case the speaker must stop talking about that point or he/she may reject it in which case the speaker may continue. (New arguments in the last speech also are an indication of bad teamwork. If the third speaker had a good rebuttal or a good point he/she should have shared it so that it would have come up at the appropriate time. This is not always the case though. SOMETimes they are trying to fix messes that the previous speakers have made.)

- 5) Are debaters penalized for arguing too fiercely? (i.e. having an attitude, etc)

The simplest answer would be NO. In this Parliamentary **debate** differs from LD as wit, humor and even sarcasm is rewarded rather than looked down upon. Arguing too fiercely is great. To say stuff like, " if the opposition had only paid attention tehy would have seen that..." or "I think this **debate** is over. the opposition just gave us the case. Thanks for helping." or in answer to a POI to have a smart alec attitude etc is actually looked favorably upon. HOWEVER, meanspirited, derogatory statements or insults and rudeness would not be the same. In that case yes they would be penalized. Who decides? YOu do. Wit and funny sarcasm in good spirit is differnet than abnoxious behavior. Once I saw a **debate** where as soon as the protected time was over and POIs were allowed, all three debaters stood up at the same time for POI. The guy

instead of getting nervous paused, looked at them and said, "Sit down children." He got positive points for that.

Thanks for reading up on the material. Wasn't sure you wanted a long email like this but please feel free to ask any more questions that may arise. Hope you have watched the videos. Wanted to point out one more difference from LD debates in case you are more familiar with that. Evidence in this **debate** is more about evidence to support the logic of the argument and not just research and statistics. You could potentially have someone throwing out names and numbers and the other side just giving you examples from everyday life. Please do not get swayed by the numbers. The examples that support the logical argument are valued equally to any statistics that support it. In fact we consider appeal to authority as a fallacy. ie just because newsweek said something does not make it a proof. Of course it helps in strengthening the argument but it is all about the logic and soundness of rational argumentation.

6) How do you choose who won the **debate**?

It is NOT the team that scores higher points. Even the best team may deliver very good and sound speeches but may not respond adequately in a particular topic to the rebuttals and therefore may not make a sound case and lose the **debate**. Or sometimes what you said above could occur. How do you decide?

Remember you should decide the **debate** based on the criteria offered by the debaters in the round. Also in a good **debate** the rebuttal speaker should point out WHY their side should win a **debate** not just recap what happened as if the judge did not take good notes. They need to give you the criteria why their side is superior in argument. So here is what you do.

First, look at the arguments. Check which ones were successfully refuted and which lay standing on both sides. Your flow sheet will help you there. Make sure to not let your opinion or bias enter here. **However it is NOT the number of arguments won on each side either that decides who wins.** Now you have your raw material.

Next you answer the following questions:

- Did the proposition make a case? In this you will have to look at their line of reasoning, the AREs, and the arguments brought forth.
- Did the opposition show that the case was either flawed, inadequate or a dangerous opinion in any way? Were there refutations complete? Look for the 4-step refutation or other complete ways of refutation.
- Were the rejoinders that the proposition brought up adequate in reinstating their stance and did they address all rebuttals brought up?

Typically this should tell you who won the **debate**. If the proposition had a sound case and they addressed all rebuttals adequately, they win. If the opposition had brought arguments that the proposition could not satisfy, then the opposition wins. **Remember the burden of proof lies**

with the proposition. Opposition does not have to prove the opposite of the topic rather just negate the proposition. However, it is not always that easy.

Sometimes, as all debates do have two sides, it may not be that clear, especially if both sides are equally good (or bad) debaters. Then we look at some of the following:

- Lets say each side proved one argument conclusively. Then you can look at the significance of the argument overall in the outcome of the **debate**.
- You may also look at what has a greater impact. (One side is talking about saving millions of dollars, the other side is talking about saving lives by avoiding war)
- You also look at the probability of the arguments (In the above example, the probability of avoiding war is minimal but saving money is more likely so although avoiding war is better, it may never happen whereas saving money is very probable)
- You could also look at any arguments that were dropped. Normally you wouldn't do that if the other side did not pick it up, but in case of a tie, you would.

It is imp to note here that although we let the debaters know who won the **debate** in the preliminary rounds, ***the winning teams are not the ones that advance to the semi finals***. Rather the teams that score the highest. This way we ensure that the best teams move up. In a scenario that you described above it would seem that this team was a good team but just happened to not have come up with good or sound arguments in this particular **debate**. So they lose the **debate** but they can still advance as they are a good team. This shows why it is so important for judges to go through the rubric guide thoroughly and refer to it while scoring. This way we can make sure to minimize the human element and differences in scoring.

However, in ***the semifinals and finals it is the wins or losses that determine who advances or who wins the trophy***. The reason being we have already weeded out the weaker teams and now the best are up. This time it is about how they perform in the particular competition.

For question, please contact Debate@mafaiq.org