



Ronald Reagan

DEBATE SERIES

THINK CRITICALLY. SPEAK FREELY.

OFFICIAL JUDGE HANDBOOK



Ronald Reagan
EDUCATION





Ronald Reagan

EDUCATION

Dear Judge,

Thank you for dedicating your time, insight, and expertise to the Ronald Reagan Debate Series. Your participation directly contributes to an enriching, supportive environment where students grow as communicators, leaders, and critical thinkers.

This program is built on the values President Reagan championed: respectful discourse, optimism, and civil debate. As a judge, you help uphold these values and ensure that each competitor is evaluated in a way that encourages skill development and personal growth.

Your time, professionalism, and thoughtful written evaluations shape students into leaders capable of engaging with civility, clarity, and optimism.

Sincerely,

Reagan Education Team

The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute

ROLE OF A JUDGE

Judges in the Ronald Reagan Debate Series serve as evaluators of communication, civility, and persuasive leadership, not as technical policy experts.

Judges are responsible for:

- scoring debaters using the provided rubric
- observing communication style, tone, clarity, and story integration
- ensuring adherence to Reagan-style values
- submitting written evaluations only (no oral feedback)
- providing constructive comments that encourage reflection and growth

Judges should look for:

- clear communication and relatable explanation
- use of stories or real-world examples
- constructive tone and respectful engagement
- solution-oriented thinking
- evidence of preparation and understanding

Important Key Values

Judges score competitors based on how well they demonstrate:

- clarity
- civility
- ideas, not attacks
- constructive engagement

Important Differences from Traditional Debate

Judges do not give verbal feedback or oral critiques. All feedback is written only, because written evaluations:

- encourage students to self-reflect
- promote careful preparation
- build resilience and professionalism
- reduce pressure during the event
- allow for a fairer, more consistent judging experience

Judges' comments and ballots are shared with students only after the competition concludes.

COMPETITION EXPECTATIONS

Conduct & Professionalism

- Debaters are expected to conduct themselves with civility, professionalism, and decorum throughout all programming.
- Aggressive, disrespectful, or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated.
- Participants are expected to engage respectfully with opponents, judges, staff, and fellow attendees at all times.
- Participants should arrive on time and prepared for all scheduled rounds and activities.

Competition Materials

- All speech documents and research materials must be printed and brought in physical form (paper documents, note cards, or handwritten notes).
- Electronic devices, including laptops and tablets, may not be used during competition rounds.
- Cell phones may only be used for timing purposes.

Debate Timing & Procedures

- Each debater is allotted two minutes of optional preparation time to use at their discretion throughout the round.
- Debaters are responsible for keeping their own time.
- After each use of preparation time, debaters should clearly state how much time has been used and how much remains.

Judging Standards

- Judges evaluate each round using the official Ronald Reagan Debate Series rubric.
- Judges are instructed to evaluate rounds from the perspective of the average American voter.
- Use of excessive debate jargon or highly technical competitive debate terminology may negatively impact scoring.
- Judges assign speaker points to each competitor and determine a winner.
- Debaters may not receive identical scores.

Tournament Administration

- All rulings made by tournament administration are final.
- Tournament schedules and procedures may be adjusted at the discretion of event staff.
- Questions regarding rules, logistics, or disputes should be directed immediately to tournament administration.

Participation Requirements

- Each student must remain under the supervision of their approved adult chaperone throughout the duration of the regional tournament.



Debate Topic



2027 Regional Topic

Resolved: The primary responsibility for disaster preparedness and response in the United States should rest with state and local governments rather than the federal government.

About the Topic

This year's resolution asks students to examine the appropriate roles of federal, state, and local governments in preparing for and responding to natural disasters. Competitors may consider how different levels of government can work together to address disasters such as hurricanes, wildfires, tornadoes, floods, earthquakes, and other emergencies. Students are expected to evaluate evidence, construct logical arguments, and respond effectively to opposing viewpoints.

Students may draw on examples and experiences from their own states and communities while addressing the broader national question presented by the resolution. Judges should evaluate the quality of argumentation and communication rather than their personal agreement with a particular viewpoint.

When evaluating rounds, ask yourself:

- Was the argument clear and understandable?
- Did the competitor support claims with reasoning and evidence?
- Did the competitor effectively respond to opposing arguments?
- Was the competitor persuasive?
- Did the competitor demonstrate civility and professionalism?
- Did the competitor effectively use personality and humor to strengthen their message?



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Ronald Reagan Debate Structure

STRUCTURE	TIME
AFFIRMATIVE OPENING STATEMENT	5 MINUTES
NEGATIVE OPENING STATEMENT	5 MINUTES
CROSSFIRE	3 MINUTES
AFFIRMATIVE REBUTTAL	4 MINUTES
NEGATIVE REBUTTAL	4 MINUTES
MODERATOR QUESTIONING	3 MINUTES
AFFIRMATIVE CLOSING STATEMENT	3 MINUTES
NEGATIVE CLOSING STATEMENT	3 MINUTES
PREP TIME PER DEBATER	2 MINUTES
TOTAL DEBATE TIME	30 - 40 MINUTES

Moderator Questioning Guide

- Unique to the Ronald Reagan Debate format, judges, also known as moderators, ask the debaters questions just like a real presidential debate!
- The purpose of this period is an opportunity for debaters to show their breadth/ depth of knowledge or clarify their points.
- There are no “gotcha questions,” questions that argue against, or criticize the debater.
- There should not be any yes or no questions.
- Judges should ask each debater an equal number of questions.
- Engaging questions encourage the debater to think critically about what they are arguing and apply their knowledge.
- Judges can ask the same question to each debater.

Example Questions



Could you further elaborate your point about _____?



How would this impact you and me personally?



How would this impact our community?



What do you believe is your opponent's strongest point?



Why should I care about this issue?

Ronald Reagan Debate Series Rubric

CATEGORY	1- POOR	2- FAIR	3- GOOD	4- VERY GOOD	5- EXCELLENT
LIKENESS TO RONALD REAGAN Much like President Reagan, competitors should present their ideas with a variety of ways including storytelling, humor, charisma. Debaters should aim to connect with their audience.	Debater showed no personality and uniqueness and/or was disrespectful.	Debater showed little personality and minimally incorporated Reagan.	Debater incorporated some but not all elements of Reagan's speaking style.	Debater incorporated all aspects of Reagan's speaking style, but can have a more polished style.	Debater excelled at incorporating the attributes of Reagan's speaking
ORGANIZATION AND CLARITY A successful debater communicates ideas with clarity, organization and eloquence. Competitors should appeal to the Average American voter and enunciating clearly.	It was impossible to follow the debater's speech and logic.	Only people with technical knowledge can understand the debater/ unreasonable speaking pace was used.	Debater was somewhat organized, but can greatly improve clarity	Debater was decently organized, and most people can understand.	Anyone could have understood this debater/well-organized.
KNOWLEDGE OF THE TOPIC Skilled debaters should demonstrate their knowledge of both the topic in both moderator and competitor questioning periods. They should be able to competently answer a question.	Debater demonstrated little to no topical knowledge/ was completely dependent on notes and speech documents.	Debater did not have a firm grasp on the topic and relied heavily on notes and speech documents.	Debater somewhat understood the topic but could have been less dependent on notes and speech documents.	Debater demonstrated subject competence and did not rely heavily on notes and speech documents.	Debater demonstrated a strong grasp of the subject at hand and was not dependent on notes.
PERSUASIVENESS Competitors should use a balance of storytelling, logic, and evidence to make their points. While quality evidence should be used, win/loss should not be determined by evidence alone.	Debater made no arguments/ had no balance of storytelling, logic, and evidence/ used flawed logic/evidence.	Debater used some but not all of the elements of persuasion/ ideas were limited in scope.	Debater used storytelling, logic, and evidence, but wasn't persuasive enough in doing so.	Debater was persuasive and effectively used all elements.	Debater was very persuasive and used all elements to present a better case.
REBUTTALS (RESPONSE TO OPPONENTS' ARGUMENTS) Rebuttals include all responses to opponents' logic. Debaters should respond to all major arguments given by opponent.	Debater did not address/ counter any of their opponent's main arguments.	Debater only minimally addressed/countered some of their opponent's main arguments.	Debater only addressed/countered some of their opponent's main arguments.	Debater addressed/countered most of their opponent's main arguments.	Debater successfully addressed/ countered all of their opponent's main arguments.
CONDUCT AND CIVILITY Debaters are expected to model the civility, respect, and courtesy exemplified by President Reagan throughout his life. This includes respectful engagement with opponents and judges and active listening, appropriate body language.	Debater was disrespectful, dismissive, or hostile toward their opponent or the judge: demonstrated poor sportsmanship or inappropriate behavior.	Debater had noticeable lapses in civility or professionalism; may have interrupted, rolled eyes, or demonstrated frustration.	Debater was generally respectful and professional, though some minor lapses in tone or demeanor may have been present.	Debater was consistently respectful, professional, and courteous, showing clear understanding of the competition.	Debater was a model of civility and sportsmanship, demonstrating respect, humility, and encouragement toward others.



RONALD REAGAN Debate Series

JUDGE BALLOT



DEBATE INFORMATION

Judge Name: _____

Round: _____

Room: _____

Affirmative Speaker: _____

Negative Speaker: _____

CRITERIA	AFFIRMATIVE SPEAKER					SCORE	NEGATIVE SPEAKER					SCORE
 Likeness to Ronald Reagan	1	2	3	4	5	_____	1	2	3	4	5	_____
 Organization & Clarity	1	2	3	4	5	_____	1	2	3	4	5	_____
 Knowledge of Topic	1	2	3	4	5	_____	1	2	3	4	5	_____
 Persuasiveness	1	2	3	4	5	_____	1	2	3	4	5	_____
 Rebuttals	1	2	3	4	5	_____	1	2	3	4	5	_____
 Conduct & Civility	1	2	3	4	5	_____	1	2	3	4	5	_____
TOTAL						/30						/30

JUDGE NOTES (OPTIONAL)





RONALD REAGAN Debate Series

WRITTEN FEEDBACK



DEBATE INFORMATION

Judge Name: _____

Round: _____

Room: _____

Affirmative Speaker: _____

Negative Speaker: _____



AFFIRMATIVE SPEAKER FEEDBACK

What did this speaker do well? What could they improve?



NEGATIVE SPEAKER FEEDBACK

What did this speaker do well? What could they improve?



THANK YOU FOR YOUR THOUGHTFUL FEEDBACK!

Your evaluations help students grow and support civility, clarity, and strong ideas.

Schedule

ROUND	TIME
WELCOME & CHECK-IN	8:00 AM
ROUND 1	9:00 AM
ROUND 2	10:00 AM
ROUND 3	11:00 AM
LUNCH	12:00 PM
ROUND 4	1:00 PM
QUARTERFINALS	2:00 PM
SEMI-FINALS	3:30 PM
FINALS	5:00 PM

This schedule is tentative. Timing may fluctuate based on regional location.

RESOURCES

- Website: www.reaganfoundation.org/debate
- Judges Video: <https://vimeo.com/1146680404/a68f59d680?share=copy&fl=sv&fe=ci>
- Ronald Reagan Debate Series Championship:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kk6Q1qcxWzg>
- Tabroom: <https://www.tabroom.com/index/index.mhtml>
- How to Set Up a Tabroom Account Training Video:
<https://reaganeducation.box.com/s/4xzxu6lcp7oc9e9gkpypc88dezs7mx29>
- Other leadership development opportunities & scholarships:
<http://www.reaganfoundation.org/education>

