

Rules and mechanics of Spar (please share this with participating students):

Each spar panel consists of 5-8 competitors. The debaters will be assigned affirmative or negative until all debaters are assigned to a side by the judge prior to the start of the round. Each pair will consider a single issue/resolution which is presented to the debaters by the judge right before each pair debates. The affirmative will have one minute before speaking must commence. The first affirmative speaker will give a two-minute speech in favor of the resolution; immediately after that speech, the first negative speaker will refute the position in a two-minute constructive. Strict adherence to the exact wording of the resolution is not required, but the debaters should at least regard the topic as a common frame-of-reference.

Following the opening statements, there will be a five-minute open cross-examination. The pair should question each other, and should be prepared to take at least a few questions from the audience of other competitors. Since speakers do not have to offer questions or accept them while they are speaking, this aspect of the process may vary from round to round. Judges should look for debaters who aggressively offer questions and confidently accept at least one or two questions from competitors in the audience during their CX. Questions and comments should be a forum through which the rebuttalists can develop their arguments. Debaters who do not take full advantage of the questioning process will not do as well as those who do.

Two rebuttal speeches of the affirmative and negative respectively complete the round. Judges should make sure that no speech exceeds the allotted time so that the round may end on time. No preparation time during the debate is allowed.

Times: Aff-2; Neg-2; CX-5; Aff-2; Neg-2.

Judge Responsibilities: Unlike judges of prepared debate, spar judges do not have to render decisions. Judges merely rank the debaters in terms of how well they defend their side, the quality of their arguments, the quality of their presentation, their use of questions, and the like. The judge is also responsible to assign speakers to their various positions. Judges may use tab-room suggestions, but are empowered to vary those suggestions in any way necessary to facilitate the process. For example, if a debater does not show up at the start of the round, that debater should not be placed in

the first constructive spot. If an odd number of students show up for the round, one student may give a repeat (unscored) additional performance. Answers by debaters to questions from the audience during the open CX period should be used in the scoring of the competitors who are actually debating, but should not be considered as relevant in the scoring of those who are merely asking the questions, particularly since many students are double-entered and will not have the opportunity to participate in the questioning process.

Spar Theory: The affirmative should advocate a specific idea, but the aff position need only be loosely related to the topic. For example, the affirmative should argue that something is good or bad, true or false, morally correct or immoral, or that something should be done differently or the same. In other words, the affirmative should advocate one side of an issue and defend a clear position. For example, a debater could argue that voters should vote for women on the basis of their gender; American History should be taught from the Native American perspective; or that the electoral college is good. The affirmative position should not be truistic (it should not be an argument with which virtually everyone would agree). For example, the affirmative should not argue that racism is immoral, rape is bad or Stanford is better than Cal. The debate should not require specific knowledge. The position should be debatable by any reasonably well-informed high school student. Specific knowledge can be used to support a larger position, but should not be the focus of the debate. One option for advanced debaters is to allow the negative the choice of positions on a specific issue. For example if the issue is greed, the affirmative could offer the negative the choice of defending or attacking greed. This option allows the affirmative to defend a potentially truistic position. The affirmative would offer the issue and the choice at the outset. The negative must make an instantaneous choice, and the affirmative must proceed to speak immediately. Another option for advanced debaters is to set the debate in a specific time/space. For example, the debate could be set in 1945, and the affirmative might suggest that the judge should consider themselves to be Harry Truman deciding whether or not to consent to dropping atomic bombs on Japan. No future knowledge should be assumed or imparted.

The important thing to remember is that spar competitors should be judged on the basis of overall wit, persuasion and quality argument construction.