



What is a “judging philosophy” and what are my choices?

A “judging philosophy” is a short-hand explanation that describes your predispositions and discloses how you will decide a round. These are extremely important to the debaters because different philosophies emphasize some arguments over others. If you’re a new judge, it is normal not to have a philosophy yet. Judging philosophies are developed from watching debate rounds and figuring out what you find persuasive. Below is a brief explanation of some of the more popular judge philosophies. These are not clean, distinct categories and often times they may overlap (for example, being a policy maker and games player are not mutually exclusive). If you do not fit into any of these categories, be sure to articulate your views to the debaters.

Stock issues: This judge believes that the affirmative must meet all of their “HIPS” burdens (for fuller discussion please see affirmative arguments page). If the negative is able to prove that the affirmative cannot fulfill all their burdens, the negative wins. Similarly, if the affirmative is able to win all the stock issues, they win the round.

Tabula Rasa: Latin for “clean slate,” these judges walk into a debate with no preconceived notions of how debate should operate. This kind of judge allows the debaters to dictate her/his judging calculus.

Policymaker: This judge wants to craft the best policy. These judges adopt a “cost benefit analysis” perspective that seeks to maximize advantages while minimizing harms.

Games player: Games judges are unconcerned with the “probability” of an argument. Instead, they are interested in its strategic value. Games judges have no problem voting for a plan that nukes the earth to reduce the population, as long as that choice is net beneficial.

Speaking Skills: Speaking skills judges favor eloquence over strategy. They make their decision based on the most persuasive speaker.