

## Competition Events – At A Glance

# An Introduction to Public Forum Debate (PF)



### Event Description

Public Forum Debate involves opposing teams of two, debating a topic concerning a current event. Proceeding a coin toss, the winners choose which side to debate (PRO or CON) or which speaker position they prefer (1st or 2nd), and the other team receives the remaining option. Students present cases, engage in rebuttal and refutation, and also participate in a “crossfire” (similar to a cross-examination) with the opportunity to question the opposing team. Often, community members are recruited to judge this event.

### Considerations for Public Forum Debate

As a team event, students who compete in Public Forum need to be able to work well with a partner. Balanced teams, both in terms of preparation before debates and contributions within a debate, helps provide a competitive advantage during tournaments. PF is the newest form of debate in the Association and looks at current event topics. Students who do Public Forum must be prepared to debate in front of judges without any formal debate training. Being able to persuade a range of judges is a central component to this event. Additionally, PF is focused upon debating varying resolutions that change frequently, which exposes students to a variety of topics during a singular competitive season.

### Traits of Successful PF Debaters

When considering what event you should choose, or in which direction to point a student when selecting an event, below are some general traits of successful PF debaters to keep in mind:

- Thinks logically
- Organized-in both presentation and thought
- Simplifies concepts
- Engaging personality that is persuasive to a variety of people
- Big-picture thinker
- Professional

### List of Past PF Topics

- Resolved: NATO should strengthen its relationship with Ukraine in order to deter further Russian aggression.
- Resolved: Single-gender classrooms would improve the quality of education in American public schools.
- Resolved: Immigration reform should include a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants currently living in the United States.
- Resolved: The benefits of domestic surveillance by the NSA outweigh the harms.
- Resolved: The continuation of current U.S. anti-drug policies in Latin America will do more harm than good.
- Resolved: On balance, the rise of China is beneficial to the interests of the United States.
- Resolved: Congress should renew the Federal Assault Weapons Ban.
- Resolved: The benefits of post-9/11 security measures outweigh the harms to personal freedom.

**Learn More!** The National Speech & Debate Association is the leading provider of competitive and educational resources to aid students and coaches as they explore our competitive events. For Public Forum Debate, we provide a number of helpful resources—including live and recorded webinars designed to introduce foundational and advanced concepts in PF; access to PF final round videos through 2013; a PF textbook; a starter file for beginning debaters; research assistance; and much more! Take advantage of the amazing benefits of being a member by using our resources to help you advance yourself in competitive speech & debate activities. For more information, visit [www.speechanddebate.org](http://www.speechanddebate.org).

## Find Your Voice

*Public Forum played a large role in who I am today. It taught me to be persuasive. At its core, the event's structure and audience forced me to shape and mold my thoughts into concise, simple, yet elegant arguments."*

— Danny Rego, Association Alum