

Direct Questioning was conceived in June 2009 by the National Speech & Debate Association's Congress Rules & Recommendations Committee. Since, it has been implemented at interregional tournaments, as well as by state and local leagues, including the Illinois Congressional Debate Association.

The same speaking and questioning times used in earlier rounds are in place for designated semifinal and final rounds, except that all periods are broken into 30-second segments, with one questioner per segment, who may ask multiple questions of the speaker. Additionally:

1. The PO must keep a separate questioning precedence/recency (to ensure equal opportunity for legislators to ask questions), and should promptly adjudicate the end of each 30-second period.
2. If a questioner does not use her/his full 30 seconds, the presiding officer has the discretion to call on another speaker, or absorb the time.
3. No suspensions of the rules to extend questioning are permitted.
4. Questioners may not prefer questions with information external to the speaker's remarks.
5. Questioners may interrupt a speaker during his/her response, *but the manner in which they do so is subject to critique by judges – remember, this is Congress – there is a standard of decorum and courtesy that members should be held to!*

Questioners should strive to expose flaws in the speaker's arguments by asking a series of questions about the speaker's remarks. These questions should subject the speaker's arguments to intensive and focused scrutiny. There should be no "softball questions." The segment is for asking questions; not for making new arguments or rehash old arguments. Questions and answers should be concise and to the point. To that end, questioners may politely interrupt speakers during their responses when, for instance, they ramble or do not directly answer the question.

Direct Questioning Judging Considerations

Speakers always should be evaluated on how well they answer questions, and this should factor into the score for each speech. There also is a space on the evaluation sheet for judges to comment on the quality of questions asked, which should factor into the holistic ranking of legislators at the end of the session.

Evaluation of Speakers:

- Brevity of responses (short and clear, to the point)
- Non-evasiveness (is the speaker answering the question being asked?)
- Quality of argument defense (does the speaker successfully defend his/her argument?)

Evaluation of Questioners:

- Coherence and relevance of questioning line (are questions connected? Do they expose flaws in arguments?)
- Brevity of questions (short and clear, to the point)
- Quality of follow-up questions (is the questioner responsive to the speaker's initial responses in the CX segment?)
- Quality of argument scrutiny (does the questioner successfully probe or poke holes in the speaker's arguments?)
- Degree of courtesy and decorum in necessary interruptions

Evaluation of the PO:

- Adherence to time guidelines (does the PO enforce the 30 second limit?)
- Fairness in calling on questioners (fairly distribute opportunities among those who want to ask questions?)