

Frequently Asked Questions:

WHAT IS FORENSICS?

Latin: *forensic* public, from *forum* forum.

Many people are confused by this title. With so much focus on forensic medicine in our contemporary culture, it may come as a surprise that forensics (*belonging to, used in, or suitable to courts of judicature or to public discussion and debate*) refers primarily to public speaking. The National Forensics League notes that Forensics includes: **interscholastic debate, oratory, public speaking, and interpretation of literature.**

WHAT ARE THE TOURNAMENTS LIKE?

Most tournaments take place on Friday afternoons or Saturday mornings. Forensic tournaments consist of three rounds of judging, each usually 45 minutes in length. The competition is usually held in a classroom in front of a judge and 4-6 other competitors. Each competitor competes in all three rounds. They are judged by three different judges. After the third round, scores are 'tabbed' and ranks are determined in preparation for a culminating awards ceremony. A tournament generally lasts 3 ½ hours.

DO I HAVE TO STICK WITH THE SAME EVENT FOR THE WHOLE SEASON?

No. You are welcome to try as many events as you like. You may **NOT** switch events during a tournament. Some tournaments allow 'doubling'. This means that you can compete in two events in the same tournament. You have to complete three rounds of BOTH events.

DO I HAVE TO GO TO ALL OF THE TOURNAMENTS?

No. You are required to attend **THREE** tournaments to qualify for the State Tournament.

HOW IS DEBATE DIFFERENT FROM FORENSICS?

In Public Forum Debate the proposition is posted on the web (nflonline.org) a month in advance of the debate on that question. That gives the debater time to research both sides of the issue and develop the arguments and the evidence to be used. The key to winning a debate is persuading the citizen judge that your position is the right one. That means analyzing the issue, refuting the opponents' arguments and developing a persuasive delivery. A debate involves four debaters and has very strict time limits.

WHO CAN DEBATE?

Any student in good standing in Vermont is eligible to participate. Each debater needs a partner. That person can be from the same school or another school. If not from the same school or locale, the debaters will need to be able to communicate to develop the ideas for each month's topic.

WHAT IS A TOURNAMENT LIKE?

Between fifteen to thirty teams compete at a tournament. The tournament can be held in conjunction with forensics' tournaments or independently. All regular tournaments occur on a Friday afternoon and evening or a Saturday morning. The debaters register upon arrival at the host school and the tournament director will match up teams. Each team will debate three times but won't know the results until awards are announced at the end of the tournament. At the beginning of each debate, a coin is flipped to determine who will be the **pro** team and who will be the **con** team. This also determines the order of

speaking. A debate lasts about forty minutes with each side having an equal amount of time to present its case and refute the opponents' arguments. The judge then makes a decision on a secret ballot and provides an explanation for that decision. Awards are given to the top debating teams and to the best individual debaters.

HOW DO I QUALIFY FOR THE STATE TOURNAMENT?

You must compete in three scheduled tournaments (nine rounds of debate). Your participation, not your "win-loss" record is the important criteria. At the State Tournament, there are preliminary rounds, a semi-final round, and a final/championship round.