



Researching Bills and Tournament Day Checklist.

For Congress students and their parents. Learn how to research legislation quickly, balance prepared speeches with flexibility, and arrive at the tournament ready.

Research in three passes

Many tournaments share the legislation ahead of time, though how far ahead varies, so check your invitation. Use a fast, repeatable process for every item.

- 1 Pass 1: Understand.** Read the bill twice. Write what it does, who it affects and what it costs.
- 2 Pass 2: Evidence.** Find two or three strong sources for each side: government agencies, nonpartisan research groups, major news outlets, university and think-tank reports.
- 3 Pass 3: Build.** Draft a one-page brief for each side: thesis, three contentions, one answer to the other side's best point.

Source tips

Prefer recent and credible. Note the author, organization and year so you can answer questions. If a source is partisan, pair it with a neutral one.

Prepared speeches versus flexibility

Congress rewards students who can react. You will not know who speaks before you, so a speech that is fully written in advance will often fail. NSDA national scorer instructions also say speeches should be extemporaneous, not read from a manuscript. The best approach is a **modular speech**.

PART	PREPARED IN ADVANCE?	WHY
Hook and thesis	Yes	Strong and stable
Main contentions and evidence	Yes, per bill and side	Fast and accurate
Refutation of earlier speakers	No, built in the room	Depends on the debate
Conclusion	Partly	Adjust to the vote

Keep a folder with an evidence card for each major argument. Mark each with a topic tag so you can find it in seconds.

Evidence card format

- ♦ **Tag:** one sentence that states the claim
- ♦ **Source:** author or organization, year
- ♦ **Quote or summary:** two or three sentences, accurate and short
- ♦ **Use:** which bill and side it supports

PRACTICE: WRITE ONE EVIDENCE CARD

Tournament day checklist for parents and students

- ☐ Check-in time, location and the tournament schedule (confirm on the tournament page)
- ☐ Printed or digital copies of all legislation on the docket
- ☐ Speech outlines and evidence folder, labeled by bill
- ☐ Pen, notepad, timer or watch, name placard if requested
- ☐ Business or school-appropriate attire, layers for chilly rooms
- ☐ Water, snacks and a lunch plan (breaks can be short)
- ☐ Charged phone or laptop for the tournament app and ballots, following device rules
- ☐ Contact info for the coach and a parent meeting spot
- ☐ Parent role: be supportive and quiet, do not coach during rounds, and ask about learning rather than rank

After the round

Ask three questions: What went well? What was hardest? What is one thing to try next time? Save scorer comments in a folder and review them before the next tournament.

Want a plan built around your debater? Book a free consultation with Scholar Coach at the link below.

Built from public guidance: NSDA Nationals Congressional Debate scorer instructions · Wikipedia: Congressional Debate. Rules change by league and tournament, so always confirm against your tournament invitation and current league rules.

NOTES

Want a plan built around **your** debater?

Book a free consultation. The short intake takes about a minute and opens right away.

BOOK NOW →