



Congress Glossary and a 10-Week Practice Plan.

For beginners and parents. Learn over 40 terms in plain English, then follow a 10-week plan that takes a new student from first speech to first tournament.

Glossary, part 1: the room and the people

Chamber

The room and group of students debating together

Presiding officer (PO)

The elected student who runs the chamber

Scorer

A judge who scores speeches and ranks students

Legislation

Bills and resolutions debated in Congress

Resolution

A statement that urges action, often outside Congress's lawmaking power

Sponsor

A student who gives the first speech when the author is absent

Session

One block of debate with its own PO and docket

Parliamentarian

A neutral person who advises on procedure

Docket

The ordered list of legislation to debate

Bill

A proposal to create or change a law

Author

The student or school who wrote the legislation

Senator or Representative

A common way to address a speaker, varies by chamber

Glossary, part 2: speaking and fairness

Authorship speech

The first speech on a bill

Negation

A speech against the legislation

Refutation

Answering another speaker's argument

Clash

Direct disagreement on an issue

Precedence

Priority to those who have spoken least

Questioning

Short period when members ask the speaker questions

Yield

Give up time, rules on this vary

Affirmation

A speech in favor of the legislation

Contention

A main argument in a speech

Crystallization

Summing up the key issues near the end

Weighing

Explaining why your impacts matter more

Recency

Tiebreaker by who spoke least recently

Preface

Extra talk before a question, usually not allowed

Grace period

Short allowed time past the limit, varies by league

Glossary, part 3: procedure

Motion

A formal request for the chamber to act

Point of order

Call out a rule violation

Point of inquiry

A question about procedure

Germane

Relevant to the legislation

Previous question

Motion to end debate and vote

Recess

Short break

Suspend the rules

Set aside a rule for a purpose

Quorum

Minimum members needed to conduct business

Second

Support for a motion so it can be considered

Point of personal privilege

Request for comfort or ability to take part

Amendment

A change to legislation

Dilatory

Meant only to delay

Table

Set legislation aside temporarily

Adjourn

End the session

Roll call vote

A vote recorded by name

Appeal the chair

Challenge a PO ruling

10-week practice plan

WEEK	FOCUS	HOME TASK
1	Learn the format and read the glossary	Watch or read a session description; quiz each other on terms
2	Reading legislation	Summarize three bills in one sentence each
3	Research basics	Make 5 evidence cards for one bill
4	Authorship speech	Write and time a 3-minute speech
5	Questioning	Do 4 drills from the questioning guide
6	Refutation	Answer a family member's speech using quote, respond, prove, impact
7	Parliamentary procedure	Practice 5 motions with exact wording
8	Mock session	Run a short chamber with family or teammates
9	Presiding practice	Take turns acting as PO for 20 minutes
10	Tournament prep	Pack the checklist and review scorer comments

Pace yourself

Twenty to thirty minutes a few times a week is enough. Consistency beats cramming.

WHAT I LEARNED THIS WEEK

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

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