

Guide to Asking Judge's Questions

New judges often find that the most challenging part of their first experience as a judge is the section of each round in which judges may ask the presenting team questions about their presentation. Given this, judges might wish to keep the following considerations in mind when thinking about possible questions.

- **First, and most importantly, please familiarize yourself with the cases in advance of the competition.** It is tempting to think that all that is needed to prepare for judging is to look over the cases briefly so that one is aware of the basic issues presented. However, bear in mind that teams have had several weeks with the cases and so have thought about them in depth. You are encouraged to take notes on the cases regarding what you take to be interesting issues that a thorough treatment of the case would cover. Then, if a team fails to address one of these, or does not do so as thoroughly as you would wish, you can follow up with them about the issue.
- **Listen carefully to the commentary team's response to the initial presenting team.** Often a commentary team brings up issues that the initial presenting team had not covered, or challenges the team on a point. A judge may only address questions to the original presenting team, but might wish to pick up on a point raised by the commentary team in doing so.
- **You can challenge a team's view even if you ultimately agree with them.** Many teams struggle to really engage with arguments against their own position, so this is an area where judges can press teams a bit. It is important that your score not be based on whether or not you agree with a team's view, but you may probe the team to see if they can handle objections to their view.
- **Feel free to "change the case" slightly with a question.** With very good presentations, you might not sense anything is missing, and that a team handled all issues well. In such cases, you might consider offering a team a hypothetical question that changes a particular fact of the case, in order to see how such a change impacts the team's view.
- **You don't need to ask a question (but always should if you think a team did not do well.)** If you think a team did very well and cannot think of a question, you may yield your question to another judge, so please don't feel pressure to ask a question just to ask one. However, this can be a learning experience for you as well as the teams, so we encourage you to not defer to more seasoned judges too readily. There is one instance in which a judge "owes" a team a question: when the judge feels the team did a poor job with an aspect of the case. The goal of the competition is to foster a collegial and thoughtful discussion of ethical issues, and judges can play a role in this by offering teams a chance to improve their analysis with a question. When teams did not offer a presentation of high quality, sometimes a simple question asking them to clarify their view and main reasons supporting it can be helpful.
- **Please see the Guide to Scoring for additional points to consider.**