

Association for Practical and Professional Ethics
Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl®

Ethics Bowl Etiquette: Frequently Asked Questions

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Ethics Bowl Etiquette – Frequently Asked Questions

General Etiquette – For Everyone

Q: What is the overall purpose of the Ethics Bowl?

A: Ethics Bowl is designed as an educational experience that promotes deep ethical reasoning and the cultivation of civic virtues such as respectful dialogue, listening, and democratic deliberation.

Q: How should all participants conduct themselves?

A: All behavior should reflect mutual respect and a shared commitment to intellectual growth. Disagreement is encouraged when constructive—but personal attacks, dismissiveness, or hostility undermine the spirit of the event.

General Etiquette – For Students

Q: Is it okay to express frustration during or after a match?

A: It's natural to feel strongly, especially during close or contentious matches. However, students are expected to remain respectful—toward other teams, judges, and moderators—regardless of the outcome.

Q: What behaviors should I avoid during another team's presentation?

A: Avoid whispering loudly, making faces, laughing inappropriately, or using rhetorical tactics meant to belittle the opposing team. Respectful listening is part of your role as a competitor.

Q: What if I think a judge scored us unfairly?

A: Judges are doing their best to evaluate complex arguments in real-time. Rather than focusing on the outcome, use this as a chance to reflect on how to better communicate your ethical reasoning to diverse audiences.

General Etiquette – For Coaches

Q: How can I help my students deal with disappointment or perceived unfairness?

A: Model emotional balance and help your students focus on what they've learned rather than just the results. Guide them in turning frustration into growth and resilience.

Q: What should I do if I have a concern about judging?

A: Bring it up with Ethics Bowl organizers privately—not in front of students, teams, or judges. Professional, behind-the-scenes feedback helps improve the event while preserving its tone of mutual respect.

General Etiquette – For Judges

Q: How should I prepare for my role as a judge?

A: Read the cases carefully in advance and familiarize yourself with the ethical issues involved. Judges are expected to approach the cases with care and intellectual humility.

Q: What is the role of the question period?

A: Use it as a learning opportunity—for both yourself and the students. Ask questions that help you understand their position, challenge weak points, or explore ideas they didn't address.

Q: Should I explain my scores to the teams?

A: While you aren't required to explain scores, if the opportunity arises, do so constructively. Frame your feedback in a way that helps teams better understand how their reasoning was received.

General Etiquette – For Moderators

Q: What is the moderator's role beyond enforcing rules?

A: You help shape the environment of the room. Your tone, fairness, and demeanor set the stage for civil and focused dialogue.

Q: What should I do if there's inappropriate behavior?

A: Address it discreetly. Speak privately with coaches, judges, or teams as needed. Your role includes fostering a respectful space while ensuring the rules are applied consistently.