



**District 5280 Ethics Forum  
Saturday, January 19, 2019**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**What happens at the Rotaract Ethics Forum?**

Rotaract teams of four or five members compete in timed presentations consisting of three rounds: 10 minutes, 5 minutes and 3 minutes. This year, the final 3-minute round will be on a topic assigned at the end of the first two elimination rounds. The three final teams will be given about an hour to prepare their final presentation on the new topic. The judges will rank the final three teams based on their performance in the final round.

The forum is not a debate, and does not necessarily involve advocacy as much as persuasive and analytical presentations advancing the proposition that the chosen topic may be examined from the ethical touchstone of the Rotary Four-Way Test. Topics may include societal issues, current events, or situational ethics encountered in every-day life.

**How will teams be judged?**

You will be judged by a diverse variety of professional members of the community. You may wish to avoid sensitive arguments and personal characterizations. The judges will each give a very brief critique following each round. Each round should be a complete, but more succinct, version of the previous round.

**How should our presentation be organized?**

Participants may choose to appear as a panel taking turns, or by using a skit format to illustrate the proposition they are advancing. Creativity and critical thinking will be given greater credit than simply reciting the views of authors, leaders or experts. All of these things translate into numerical scores that are the bases for determining the winners.

**What is the suggested attire for participants?**

Most successful teams will be well-groomed and dress professionally (men in jackets and ties.)

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#### **May I bring props or wear a costume?**

No. However, you could hang a sign around your neck (e.g. “Homeless man.”)

#### **Will there be food and free parking?**

Depending on sponsorship support, a continental breakfast and lunch will be served. Parking will be \$8/vehicle, but we hope to have that sponsored, as well. Carpools strongly encouraged.

#### **How long should I plan to stay?**

The forum generally ends about 2:00 p.m., followed by the presentation of awards.

#### **What if our team needs to cancel?**

In planning whether to participate, please carefully consider potential conflicts, particularly concerning competing campus activities. If an unavoidable circumstance has arisen that causes you to cancel, please notify the *Ethics Forum Chair (Leon Nixon-- leon.o.nixon@gmail.com) as soon as possible.*

The District publicizes the event well in advance, including the names of the participating colleges and universities. It is very disappointing to amend those names to say that two or three schools have backed out. This is especially true for the other Rotaract teams anticipating the excitement of competing against more teams and the correlated prestige of winning. Fees cannot be refunded.

#### **Can I invite family or friends to the Ethics Forum?**

For the sake of other participants, as well as the audience and judges, the more people we have in attendance during the competition, the better the teams will perform. Encourage members of your sponsoring Rotary Club to attend.

#### **How do teams prepare for the competition?**

There is no requirement, but Rotaract teams should first meet with their faculty or staff adviser, if any. Teammates should select a team captain, choose a topic and assign roles. Each team member should be expected to contribute to research and help draft an outline. Teams will then meet to review and finalize their outline.

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The captain's job is to coordinate meetings and rehearsals. At rehearsals, all members constructively critique the presentations of each other. Teams should rehearse as often as necessary to feel confident. Use of note cards and scripts will result in a loss of points from the judges. Avoid complete memorization, as a self-conscious commitment to precision can create its own kind of stress, particularly before a live audience. If you make a mistake, keep going. Be aware of the clock.

**TIP:** As a form of dress rehearsal, schedule a mock presentation as a program at your sponsoring Rotary club. Ask the club to assign several appropriate "judges" to offer suggestions after each round. Invite the sponsoring club members to attend the forum.

### **What do winning teams have in common?**

Winning teams are all well prepared, confident, and sensitive to keeping terminology clear and inoffensive. They look directly at the audience except when addressing each other, and they do not use notes or scripts. Winning teams know that having a support group of other Rotaractors, Rotarians, friends and family members will add to their confidence. Winning teams smile at the audience when they take their positions, and when they leave the stage. They begin by clearly stating the topic to the audience and set the stage by allowing the audience to understand their chosen format.

They demonstrate creativity in format and originality in their analyses and verbal illustrations. They avoid over-used arguments and clichés and they remember that the Rotary Test applies not just to actions, but to the things "we think, do and say."

### **Why does the Test apply to *thinking*?**

Isn't thinking purely private? How could thinking be unethical? Think about that. Modern science and technology have provided plenty of challenges to ethical speech behavior, whether at home, at school or at work. Social media have often created the unintended consequences of poisoned personal relationships, anonymous slander, false announcements, bullying and extremely hurt feelings.

### **Can we apply the 4-Way Test to our use of the Internet?**

**TIP:** Do not be too quick to offer a solution by mechanically applying the Test. Expand your mind and think below the surface to really understand the benefits of the 4-Way Test.