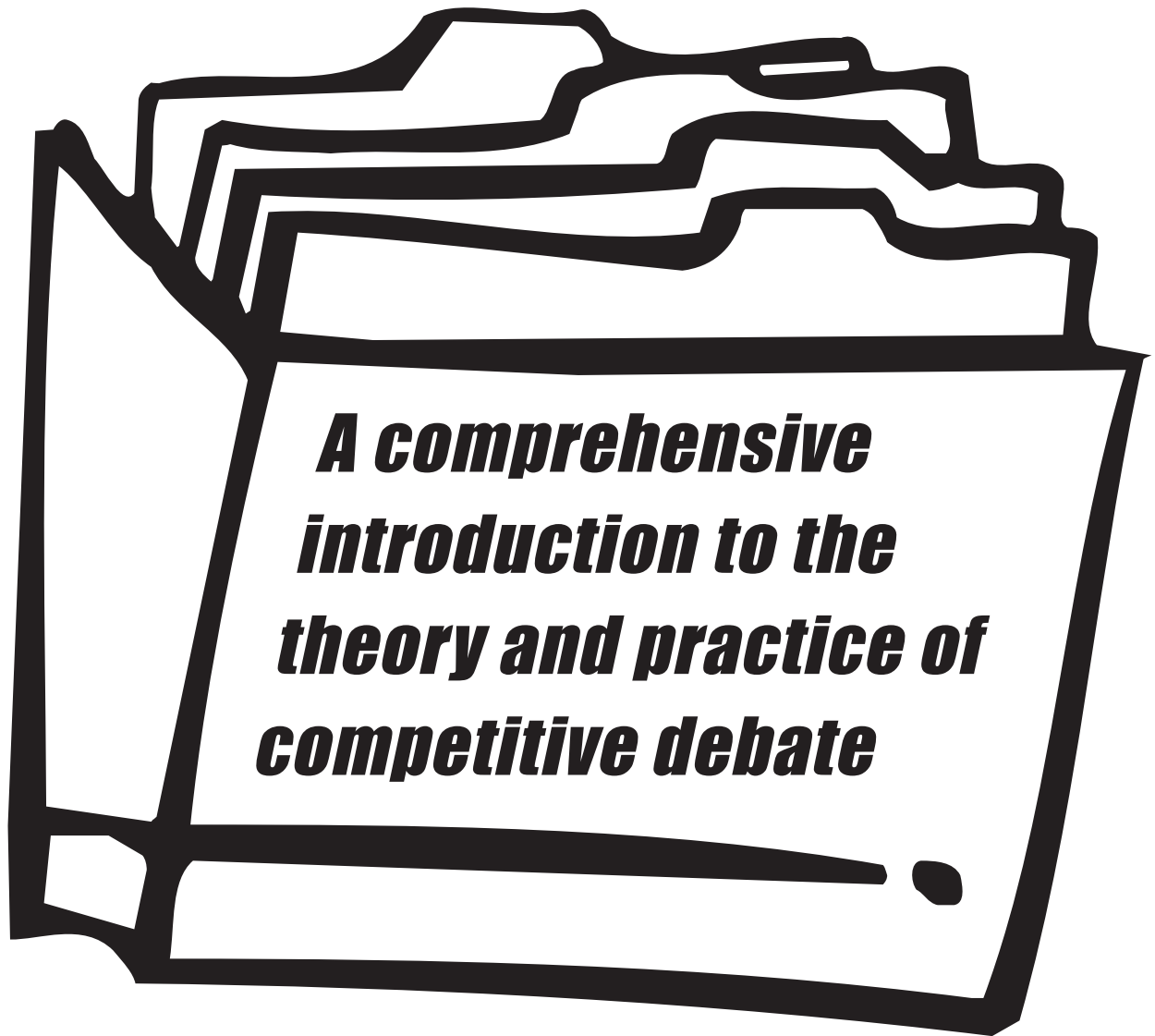


# The Policy Debate Manual



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with

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# Foreword

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My journey into the world of competitive debate began in 1981 when my high school speech teacher kicked me out of class. I had been arguing with her again, and she had finally had enough. “Get out of my classroom,” she said, “go to the library, find a book on debate, and start a debate team. I’m sick of listening to you.” Being an obedient child (well, sort of obedient), I did what she told me to. Our library contained a single book on debate, written in the late 1890s. I read it, I found out what I could about competing against other schools, and I convinced some of the other, um, *obedient* students in my high school to join me.

That day changed my life forever. I spent four years debating in regional tournaments in east Tennessee, and I applied to Emory University specifically because it had such a strong reputation in competitive debate. When I arrived at Emory, I was horrified to discover that I was not, in fact, a good debater. I wasn’t bad, either. I was *horrible*. In spite of four years of experience and the benefit of my late-1800s education in debate theory, I knew virtually nothing about the way debate was practiced in the modern world. I was the worst debater on Emory’s large team.

I spent four years catching up to my classmates, assembling a decent record of victories along the way. I fell in love with debate, I made lifelong friends, and I qualified for the elimination rounds of the National Debate Tournament twice. Still, I always wondered what things would have been like if the book I checked out of the library in 1981 had actually contained useful information about competitive debate.

In 1998, I became the Director of Operations for the Emory National Debate Institute. The ENDI is a two-week debate camp for high school and middle school students. As part of Emory’s efforts to maintain the quality of the ENDI, I was put in charge of updating the educational materials for novice debaters. Since there was still no widely available practical textbook

for beginning debaters, I started trying to write one. The first draft of the project that would eventually become this book was around 30 pages long.

Over the years, the project grew. As time allowed, I expanded and revised different sections. I got my Ph.D., left my formal work with the ENDI behind, and became Director of Debate at Georgia State University. I worked hard to build a competitively successful program by recruiting experienced debaters, but I had trouble finding enough time to work with the inexperienced debaters who wanted to start their careers in college. Once again, I realized the need for a single text I could hand to novice debaters that would help them learn how to debate.

Increasingly, it became obvious that the work I had done for Emory was just the tip of the iceberg. More was needed, not only for new college debaters, but also for the growing number of new high school and middle school students being introduced to debate by outreach programs sponsored by GSU, Emory, and many other schools and organizations across the country.

In the Summer of 2005, Abi Smith Williams became an M.A. student at GSU. Over the next two years, she helped me execute a total rewrite and a major expansion of *The Policy Debate Manual*. It had taken over 25 years, but I finally owned a copy of the book I had needed so desperately back in 1981.

## How to Use This Book

This book is designed to accomplish two tasks. First, it is intended as a comprehensive introduction to competitive debate for those who are new to the activity. Second, it is designed to serve as an ongoing source of information for debaters — even those who have a fair amount of experience.

The five sections of the book reflect its multiple goals. Although it is certainly possible to

read the entire book in a single sitting, I do not expect anyone to do that. The first section *can* be read in that fashion, as a general introduction to competitive debate. If you don't know anything at all about debate, reading the first section will give you enough information to understand the basic ideas and structures of the activity.

The second section introduces the skills and arguments that will allow a beginner to become competitive against other beginners. This section is the longest in the book, and it will take some time to digest all the information it contains.

The third section is designed to transform argumentative competence into competitive success. It contains important information to help debaters understand how to think strategically and how to win debates. The fourth section provides a thorough explanation of how to prepare for success in debate rounds by researching and assembling arguments before competition starts.

The final section of this book is a glossary of words that you may hear in debate circles. It is, by definition, incomplete. Every year, debaters come up with new arguments and new jargon. If you hear a word or an argument you don't understand, however, the glossary in this book may be able to help you.

It is my hope that this book will give you a good start in the world of debate, and that it will provide you with a place to go for ideas and answers as you become more experienced and more successful. I know I would have appreciated having it when I was in high school.

## **Acknowledgments**

I have been working on this project for around ten years now. In that time, so many people have pitched in with ideas and feedback that I have neither space nor memory enough to thank all of them. So, if you are one of the people who helped but did not get thanked, just know that I appreciate you.

I don't know what happened to Dean Long, who taught speech and drama at Bearden High School in Knoxville, Tennessee for so many years. Whatever the case, I owe her my

deepest gratitude for kicking me out of class all those years ago, and for following that up by attending countless debate tournaments with me and my various partners. She did this in spite of a hostile school administration that kept threatening to fire her for being a good teacher. Thanks, Ms. Long.

Melissa Wade, Director of Forensics at Emory University, taught me everything important I know about debate. She taught me to treat my teammates like family, to use debate to make friends and serve others, to take joy in the activity, and to see all the opportunities a fundamentally competitive activity gives us for true cooperation. If she had only cut a single card, perhaps I would have won the NDT. Alas, even saints have their failings.

Abi Smith Williams, the second author of this text, was a true joy to work with. Her enthusiasm for the project, especially in the summer of 2006, is the reason that you have this book in your hands.

Dr. Elner C. Bellon conducted the final edit of this volume, and for that she has my thanks. Oh, and thank you for giving birth to me back in 1967. I've always appreciated that.

The Georgia State University Communication Department has been very supportive of this project. Thanks are due, in particular, to Carol Winkler and David Cheshier, the former and current chairs of the department.

Finally, and as always, I would be nothing without my family, especially my wife Brenda and my daughter Zoe. Thank you both for letting me go on so many debate trips. Don't worry, Zoe: daddy won't make you debate if you don't want to.

Dr. Joe Bellon  
Director of Debate  
Georgia State University  
2008







# **Section 1:** **Why, What, and,** **Briefly, How**

# Why Debate?

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“A person who forgoes the use of his symbolic skills is never really free.”

-Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

The purpose of this book is to provide the reader with the tools he or she will need to begin the process of learning about competitive debate. I say “begin the process” because debate is a complex activity that takes study and experience to understand. If you were looking for the kind of skill you can master easily after a few minutes of reading, you have picked the wrong activity. Debate is hard.

Perhaps some of you are asking yourselves why you would want to continue reading a book whose opening paragraph is so uninviting. After all, don’t we live in the era of convenience? Can’t you learn anything in a few hours from a book with the words “for dummies” in the title? As it turns out, you can’t. Some things are hard, and I would be a liar if I tried to convince you otherwise. There is no competitive debate for dummies.

That brings us back to the question that forms the title of this section: why debate? Why try to learn something that is, admittedly, so hard? Like any good debater, I have more than one answer to that question. In fact, I have three.

## Debate Is Not Really That Hard

Don’t get too upset. I know I just got through saying that debate is hard, and it is. The point is that the word “hard” can mean a lot of things. One person might say taking out the trash is *hard* because they have to get up off the couch and wheel the can down to the curb. Another person might say that learning how to be a good brain surgeon is *hard* because it takes more than a decade of intense study, and if you make a mistake then someone probably dies. Debate is not as hard as brain surgery. No matter how bad you feel about your performance in a debate round, no one’s going to die because you made

a weak argument. That’s debate: harder than taking out the trash, but not as hard as brain surgery. In other words, don’t panic.

There is a common misconception that the only successful debaters are super-geniuses who go to Harvard and invent alternative forms of energy in their spare time. This is simply false. Oh, sure, Harvard has a good debate team. So do a lot of less prestigious public and private colleges, including places you’ve never heard of. To be a good debater, you don’t have to go to a fancy school, and you don’t have to be a super-genius. You just have to be willing to work.

The nice thing about debate is that you usually start by debating against people who have the same level of experience as you do. First year students in high school do not compete against college seniors. People who have many years of experience do not, generally, compete against novices. As you learn more about debate and as you become more skilled, you will start debating against people who are more experienced. Inexperienced debaters usually have time to get used to the activity before things get really tough.

The thing to remember about debate is this: there have been a lot of people before you who started out knowing nothing about the activity, and they all managed to figure things out. Most of those people were not valedictorians or Nobel Prize winners. They were relatively normal, and they did it. You can, too.

## Debate Is Fun

This is the dirty little secret about debate that we don’t like to tell parents and people in charge of schools. You see, a lot of people have this strange idea that something can’t be educational and fun at the same time. It’s kind of like what happens when you taste a new kind of food you like for the first time. The first thing you think is “wow, that’s tasty.” The second thing you think is “wow, that’s probably really, really bad for me.” See what I mean? People are pessimists.

Most people who debate do it because it's fun, not because you learn a lot or it increases your chance of getting into a good school. Arguing with people is fun, especially if the argument is not personal or violent. Very few things feel better than being clever in front of other people, and debate teaches you how to do that.

Competitive debates take place in front of judges, so winning a debate means that someone has listened to your arguments and voted for you. In many cases, debate judges are experienced former debaters, so getting their vote means that you have the respect of someone who is something of an expert in the field. If you are a good debater, your record earns you respect even from those who don't like you or don't even know your name.

One of the things that attracts many people to debate is that it give you room to think creatively. Most of us have, at one time or another, been frustrated in school because there are always so many restrictions on how we can learn. Write your paper *this* long with *this* many footnotes. Make sure your conclusion contains *this* idea, and that you write using *this* tone and *these* kinds of words. Debate gives you a tremendous amount of freedom to try new things and make up your own rules, even if they are different from what most people think.

### **Debate Is Good For You\***

Please, please don't put the book down. I swear it's not that bad! Most of the time, when someone says something is "good for you," they mean you're going to hate it. This is not one of those times. When I say "debate is good for you" I mean that you will have plenty of reasons to give older people when they ask why you decided to start debating.

Competitive debate improves your speaking skills. Because we are not usually required to give formal speeches in public, most people have a high level of "speech anxiety." This means they get worried and anxious when they have to give a speech. One of the best cures for speech anxiety is speaking experience. Competitive debate gives you extensive speaking experience. Another way to overcome speech anxiety is to learn to

be a prepared and organized speaker. Debate improves your skills in these areas as well.

Debate improves critical thinking more effectively than almost any other activity. In a sense, what people mean when they say "critical thinking" is really debate. After all, critical thinking means the ability to analyze a situation and decide how best to judge it. This is, literally, what debate teaches you to do.

Debate makes you a better student, and a better learner. This is not to say that your GPA will automatically increase just because you start debating — you still have to go to class, do your homework, and study. What debate does is give you the tools to learn new things quickly. This includes teaching you to do effective research, and to isolate critical arguments and ideas. Debaters learn to organize their ideas, and to present them in a persuasive fashion. For many people, debate provides an environment where learning is much easier than in the classroom because debate allows you to take ideas and test them in an active way. It is not surprising that some research demonstrates a strong correlation between debate participation and educational achievement.

Perhaps the most important thing debate does is give you the ability to be your own advocate. This is what many people mean when they say "empowerment." Instead of relying on others to speak for you or allowing decisions to be made without your input, debate gives you the ability to make your voice heard in an effective way. In other words, debate gives you the ability to help determine your own social, educational, political, and personal future.

There are many other benefits to debate. Every year, new research provides us with more evidence that competitive debate can be a powerful, positive force in the lives of young people from every social and economic background.

And if that's not enough, just remember: it's fun, too.

*\* For a fully cited explanation of most of the reasons debate is good for you, read "A Research-Based Justification For Debate Across the Curriculum" in Argumentation and Advocacy, volume 36, issue 3, written by your humble author.*

# What Is Debate?

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Everyone knows what a debate is. You see debates every day. Presidential candidates have debates, senators have debates, sports commentators have debates, and even normal people at parties have debates about important topics like whether potato chips are better than French fries. And what about you? You have debates too, whether you know it or not. You and your friends might debate about a favorite athlete, or which rapper is better, whose fashion sense is the best, or whose momma is fattest.

This manual is not about those kinds of debate (though the experience you already have at debating with your friends will be very useful). The point of this book is to teach you about competitive policy debate, which is a formal kind of debate that deals with questions of change. One of the most important questions we ask ourselves (and each other) every day is “what should we do”? We ask what should be done about simple issues, like finding something to eat for dinner, and we ask what should be done about complex social questions like racism or war. Policy debate tends to be about those larger kinds of questions. Still, this doesn’t necessarily tell you what debate is. It’s time for a real definition of policy debate.

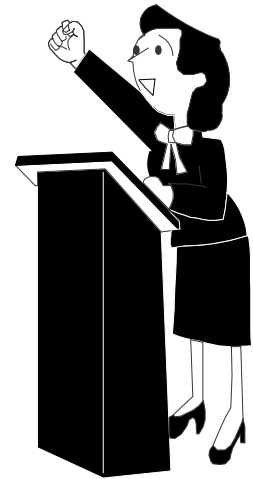
## Debate Is a Game

Wait, that’s it? That’s the great definition we promised you? Yes. Oh, don’t worry, we’re going to say more about what debate is later. At the beginning, though, it is important to understand that, whatever else debate is, it is a game. It has teams, points, winners, losers, tournaments, and trophies. Like many games, it is not always fair (even though we try hard to make it fair). Most importantly, debate is supposed to be fun. Keep that in mind.

The easiest way to begin understanding debate is for us to describe how the game is played – its basic structure and rules.

## The Players

A single debate team is composed of two people. That means that you will work with a partner. A round of debate competition involves two teams competing against each other. The winner of the round is determined by at least one judge who listens to the debate. Sometimes there will be more than one judge, and there will almost always be an odd number of judges. The debaters are usually students, and the judge might be a teacher, debate coach, graduate student, former debater, or some other person (like a parent or a community member). Judges may or may not have extensive debate experience (although most college judges do).



## The Topic

At the beginning of the year, a policy debate topic is chosen for the entire country. One topic is chosen for college, and one for high school. K-8 debaters usually debate about the high school topic. How are these topics chosen? The processes differ from high school to college, and there are many committees, procedures, and votes. In the end, representatives from the debate community pick a topic that is timely and deals with an issue of national concern.

The point is that there is one topic for every debate season (starting in the Fall at the beginning of school and ending in the Spring or Summer). Students debate about this one topic for the entire school year, which may seem like a long time, but the topic is designed to be interesting and flexible enough to keep you involved for a long time. The debate topic is called “the resolution” because it takes the form of a kind of proposal for change that might be made by a politician or a diplomat in congress or the United Nations. This means that the resolution (the topic) does not look or sound like a

question — it looks and sounds like a statement. Instead of asking “what should we do about racism?” (for example) a debate resolution would say “we should pass better laws to punish businesses that have racist hiring practices.” Just to make sure that you know a debate resolution when you see it, we start every topic with the word “resolved.” So, continuing the example above, a debate resolution might be something like “Resolved: that the United States Federal Government should enact a policy to eliminate racist hiring practices in the United States.” Some resolutions deal with problems within the U.S., while others deal with international issues or foreign policy.

### The Structure of a Debate Round

The two debate teams who are competing against each other have specific jobs to do. One team’s job is to argue that the resolution — the statement that we should make some specific change to address a national or international problem — is a good idea. We call that team “the affirmative” because it is their job to *affirm* the idea of the resolution. The other team’s job is to argue that the resolution is a bad idea. We call that team “the negative” because it is their job to *negate* the idea of the resolution. One team is for the kind of change described in the resolution, the other team is against that kind of change.

An important thing to know is that the affirmative usually proposes a very specific policy called the “plan.” So, if the resolution says the U.S. should enact a policy about racism, the affirmative has to come up with a specific proposal, or plan.

Will you be affirmative or negative? Well, there’s the interesting part — in some debate rounds, you will be the affirmative, and in other rounds you will be the negative. We’ll talk about debate tournaments more in just a minute, but get ready for the idea that you will learn to debate both sides of the resolution!

In a single round of debate competition, each person gives two speeches. The first speech each

person gives is called a “constructive” speech, because it is the speech where each person *constructs* the basic arguments they will make throughout the debate. The second speech is called a “rebuttal,” because this is the speech where each person tries to *rebut* (or answer) the arguments made by the other team, while using their own arguments to try to convince the judge to vote for their team.

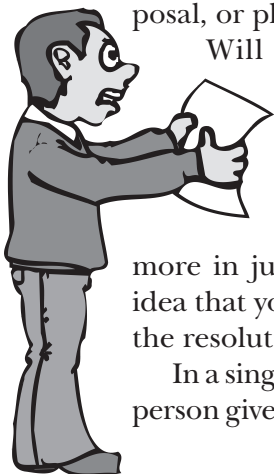
The affirmative has to convince the judge to vote for a change, which makes their job hard since people are usually unwilling to do things differently. Because we recognize this difficulty, the affirmative gets to speak first *and* last — this makes them kind of like the prosecution in a criminal trial, trying to overcome the presumption of innocence. The order of speeches in a debate is listed in the box to the right.

What do all these numbers and letters mean? Well, each debater on a team is either the first speaker or the second speaker. That is to say, a single debater gives the first constructive speech *AND* the first rebuttal speech. The other debater gives the second constructive speech *AND* the second rebuttal speech. The numbers in the list above indicate which debater we are talking about (the first or the second), the letters indicate what team the person is on (affirmative or negative) and what speech the person is giving (constructive or rebuttal). Thus, 1AC means “first affirmative constructive” and 2NR means “second negative rebuttal.”

But wait, there’s more. In a debate round, you don’t just get to give speeches. You also get to ask questions. Each debater gets to spend a period of time (usually 3 minutes) asking one

### Speeches In a Debate

1AC	Cross-Ex
1NC	Cross-Ex
2AC	Cross-Ex
2NC	Cross-Ex
1NR	
1AR	
2NR	
2AR	





of the debaters on the other team questions. We call this question-and-answer period “cross-examination” because it’s a lot like the time during a trial when a lawyer asks a witness for the other side questions. There is one cross-examination period *after* each *constructive* speech. The person who just finished speaking answers the questions. That makes sense, since the point of the cross-examination is to talk about the speech that just ended. The person on the other team who is *not about to speak* asks the questions. So, when the 1AC is over the second negative speaker asks the questions and the first affirmative speaker answers the questions.

## Debate Tournaments

Debate tournaments are held so that students from different schools can get together at a central location in order to compete against one another. This brings us to one of the most important things about competitive policy debate: teams from the same school almost never debate against one another at a tournament. The point of having a tournament is to allow many different two-person debate teams from many different schools to compete without having to debate against people from their own schools. One school (or some other debate-related organization) usually hosts a tournament and invites schools from all over the area (and sometimes all over the country) to come debate.

Going to a debate tournament means that you and your partner will debate several times. Everyone at the tournament debates for a certain number of rounds. At the end of this preliminary series of debates (or “prelims”), the teams with the best records advance to the elimination debates (or “elims”), where they

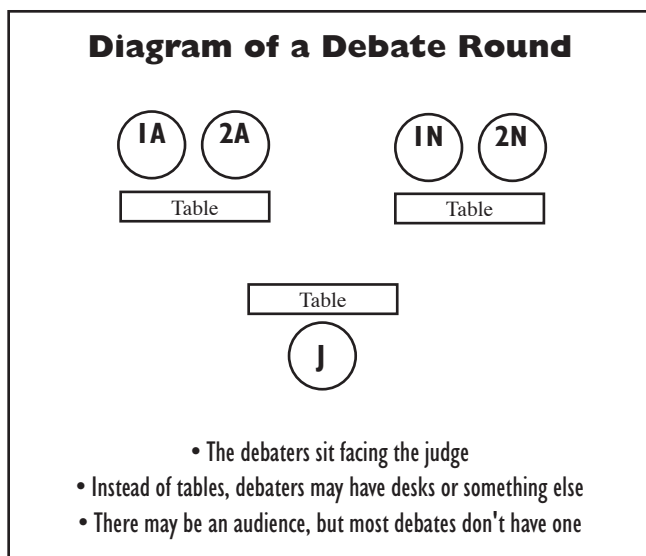
continue to compete in a single-elimination format until a single team is crowned champion. Tournaments usually have 4 or 6 prelims, though college tournaments might have as many as 8. An individual team will debate half their prelim rounds on the affirmative and half on the negative. So, in a tournament with 6 prelim rounds, you and your partner would be affirmative 3 times and negative 3 times.

If this whole situation sounds really complicated, don’t worry. You and your partner will not have to deal with the complicated part. Instead, when you arrive at the tournament, you will be given a piece of paper that tells you who you and your partner are debating in the first debate round, what side you are debating on (affirmative or negative), who is judging you, and what room you are debating in.. This piece of paper is called a “pairing” or a “schematic.” Before every round, you will receive another pairing that tells you where to go and who to debate. Remember that debate tournaments can

be busy and confusing places, so you may have to find the pairings yourself if no one shows you where they are. There may not be enough copies of the pairing for everyone, so bring writing supplies to copy down your own information for each round.

Pairings will usually tell you when each round is supposed to begin. However, a debate round can-

not start until both teams (all 4 debaters) and the judge are present in the room. Teams and judges are sometimes late, so do not assume that your debate has been cancelled if the other participants are not there when you arrive. Most students do not have a clear idea of what to do in the first few debate rounds. If you get confused, don’t hesitate to ask the judge for help.



# Speech Cheat Sheet

## Speech Order and Responsibilities

	<i>(all speech times in minutes)</i>		
	Jr. High	H.S.	College
<u>CONSTRUCTIVE SPEECHES</u>			
IAC — Read the case and plan. ....	4/5	8	9
CX — 2NC asks the questions ....	2	3	3
INC — Makes all the major negative arguments (disadvantages, case arguments, etc.) ....	4	8	9
CX — IAC asks the questions ....	2	3	3
2AC — Answer ALL negative arguments. Rebuild and strengthen the case. ....	4	8	9
Point out arguments that the negative has not attacked.			
CX — INC asks the questions ....	2	3	3
2NC — Present any additional case arguments not covered by INC. ....	4	8	9
Remember to take only part of the negative arguments — leave some for the INR speech			
<u>REBUTTAL SPEECHES</u>			
INR — Present all other negative arguments not covered in the 2NC. Do not present. ....	2	5	6
the same arguments as your partner. Decide ahead of time who will cover which arguments.			
IAR — Answer ALL of the negative arguments from both the 2NC and the INR. ....	2	5	6
Any dropped argument could mean a negative victory.			
2NR — Pick a few arguments that you think the negative side is winning and concentrate ....	2	5	6
on those. Tell the judge exactly why to vote for you. Tell the judge why the negative arguments outweigh the arguments of the affirmative			
2AR — Respond to negative arguments. Point out any arguments that have been dropped ....	2	5	6
by the negative team. Tell the judge why you win. Tell the judge why the affirmative			

## Debaters Talk Funny!

The judge evaluates who wins the debate by comparing the quality of the arguments made by each team — and by deciding how those arguments interact with each other. Judges who have been involved in debate a long time are able to evaluate a very large number of arguments in a short period of time. For their part, debaters have an incentive to make as many arguments as possible in the short period of time they have to speak. Thus, one style of debate has evolved in which debaters speak really, really fast. We're talking fast here. They make those guys who talk fast at the end of radio commercials sound slow. Debaters don't always talk fast. Sometimes your judge is not experienced enough to enjoy or appreciate fast debate, and some judges don't like fast debates no matter how long they've been around. Some debaters make the decision to

emphasize more traditional styles of persuasion. Speed is very common, though, so don't be shocked if you hear a fast debate.

There are two other elements of debate style that you should be aware of. First, debaters tend to use a lot of *structure* when they speak. That means that debaters organize their speech into individual arguments, and they even organize those individual arguments into larger groups or argument types. Debaters even like to number their arguments. Imagine an argument you're having with your parents. You want to stay out late and your parents have refused to let you. A normal person might say "but I'm so responsible, come on..." and so on. A debater would say "I have four arguments in favor of letting me stay out. First, I'm very responsible. Second, I have a cell phone so you can call me to check on me. Third, I've gotten three As on

my report card for three semesters in a row. Fourth, the other kids all get to stay out later than me and I'm worried that your reputation as cool parents will start to suffer if you don't change your policy."

Another thing about debate that's important to know is that debaters rely on *evidence* when they speak. The word "evidence" can mean a lot of different things, but in debate it generally means arguments made by experts and journalists in published documents like newspapers, magazines, web sites, and books. Debaters copy parts of published arguments to use in their own speeches. This doesn't mean they're stealing other people's ideas. Debaters are careful to tell the judge who wrote their evidence and when it was written. You might hear a debater make an argument and immediately follow it with the name of an expert, a year, and a long quote. This is an example of a debater reading evidence in a speech. Because debate is so reliant on evidence, you will end up reading a lot of things that have been written by experts on the topic. You will even end up doing your own research to find new arguments about the debate topic. Don't worry — it's not homework, so it's not as boring as stuff you have to do for school.

There are definitely kinds of evidence that don't involve academic experts. Personal experiences, stories written by normal people directly involved with important issues, and even arguments made in music or on film can count as evidence in debate rounds.

## Arguing About Change

There are many different ways to debate, and every year creative debaters and coaches come up with even more new ideas. Over time, however, debaters have developed some standard kinds of arguments that help them understand how to debate issues of national and international policy. For an affirmative to prove that the judge should vote for them — that the judge should vote to change the way we are doing things right now — the affirmative must address five "stock issues." The part of the 1AC that addresses these issues is called the affirmative "case" — as in "the case for change."

## Topicality

Remember that the affirmative is generally expected to have a specific policy proposal for change called "the plan." Topicality deals with whether the affirmative plan is an example of the resolution — whether the plan does what the resolution says should be done. If the plan does not support every word of the resolution, the affirmative team may not actually be supporting the resolution. This is unfair to the negative team, who is prepared to debate the resolution and not some random idea the affirmative has. The negative would say that the affirmative is "not topical" and should therefore lose the debate.

## Significance and harms

"If it ain't broke, don't fix it." This saying reflects the assumption that most people have about change — it isn't necessary unless something is wrong with the way we're doing things now. The affirmative must demonstrate that something bad ("harms") is happening now, and that the harms are important (or "significant"). If nothing is wrong right now, the judge won't be persuaded that a new plan is necessary. Debaters talk about "the way things are now" or "the current system" that we use the Latin phrase "status quo" (which means the same thing) instead.

## Solvency and advantages

It's great to have a plan for change, but not all plans work. Remember that time when you were 6 and you thought you would make the cat happy by plugging its tail into an electrical outlet? Didn't work too well, did it? Affirmatives must use evidence to prove that their plan *solves* the problems they have described as significant harms. If a plan doesn't solve any problems, the judge won't vote for it. If the plan *does* solve a significant problem, we call that an "advantage" of the plan. 1ACs are sometimes organized into different plan "advantages."

## Inherency

Sometimes you don't need to do anything about a problem because it's not going to be a problem for very long. One day, you may have a substitute teacher who is really annoying and



smells bad. You think about going to talk to the principal about this problem, but then you realize that your regular teacher will be back tomorrow and the classroom will be stink-free. Inherency deals with whether the significant harms identified by the affirmative will continue to be a problem unless the plan is enacted. Will the problems solve themselves? Are plans already in effect that will take care of the problems without the affirmative's new idea for a policy? Is the government already on its way to passing a similar plan to one the affirmative has proposed? If the harms are not inherent to the way we are doing things now, the judge won't vote for change.

### **Fiat**

Sadly, the government does not listen to you. It generally likes the way things are being done now, and is unlikely to change. Debate is not about whether the government *would* do the things the affirmative is recommending. Debate is about whether the government *should* do those things. For the purposes of debate, the judge makes a decision based on what would happen if the plan was enacted — even if it is very unlikely that the government would ever agree to do it. “Fiat” is the word for the idea that the judge gets to pretend they have the power to make the plan happen.

Not all debates involve fiat. Some debaters argue that we should focus on what we can accomplish in the actual debate round without pretending we have power over the government.

### **Judges and Winning**

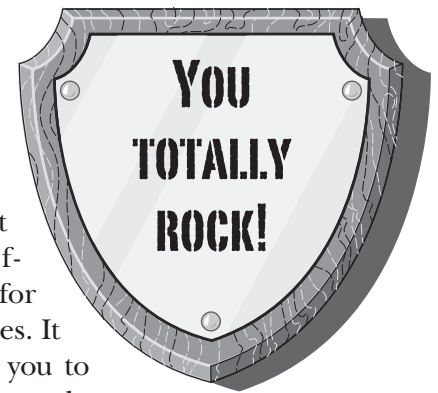
If you haven't already figured this out by now, you should know that the judge is crucial in determining who wins and loses a debate. In fact, the judge is the *only* person in the round who gets to decide who wins and who loses. The judge signs a ballot at the end of the debate voting for one team or the other. The judge also assigns speaker points to each individual debater and ranks the debaters as first, second, third, and fourth speaker in the debate. If you don't persuade the judge to vote for you, you *lose*, regardless of how great you thought your arguments were and how bad you thought your opponents were.

Every person sees the world just a little differently, so different judges have different methods for evaluating debates. It is important for you to know some things about

the judge who is evaluating the debate round, and to discover what their particular preferences are. Talk to your coach, your friends, and other debaters about the judge before the round. Don't be afraid to ask the judge what kind of debate they like or how they decide a round before you start debating. Most judges don't like to intervene in the round — they like to let the debaters decide who wins by evaluating only the arguments that are made in the debate (and not using their own biases to determine who won).

Generally speaking, judges are persuaded by debaters who do a good job of developing their own arguments AND answering the arguments made by their opponents. This means you have to explain your own arguments very clearly. When your opponents make a point against one of your arguments, you need to explain to the judge why that point is not valid. In addition, you need to answer the arguments your opponents make that are not necessarily related to your own arguments. You must help the judge to understand why, given all the different arguments in the debate, your side should win. It's a good thing you have two speeches and a partner to help you!

At the end of the debate, many judges will give what's called an “oral critique” — they will talk about what the two teams did well and what they did poorly. Some judges may even reveal their decision about who won the round. It is important to understand, however, that not all judges reveal their decisions and some judges do not even give oral critiques. It is okay to ask a judge if they reveal their decision, but they may say no. You will find out who voted for you and why at the end of the tournament (if not before) because your team will receive a copy of all your judges' ballots when the tournament is over.



# A Map of Debate Speeches: The Constructives

1AC	1NC	2AC	2NC
<p><b>Significance/Harm</b> There is or there will be a significant problem.</p> <p><b>Inherency</b> The present course of action is insufficient to cope with this problem. Absent preventative or corrective action, the problem will continue to occur.</p> <p><b>Plan</b> A specific proposal to change the present system in order to solve the problem. The plan must be an example of the sort of action called for by the resolution.</p> <p><b>Solvency</b> The plan is sufficient to solve the problem, or at least to mitigate it to some significant degree.</p> <p><b>The 1AC Structure</b> There are 2 basic types:</p> <p>I-Significance/Harm II-Inherency PLAN III-Solvency or I-Description of Status Quo PLAN Advantage 1 A) Significance/Harm B) Inherency C) Solvency Advantage 2 (&amp; so on) Same general structure as Advantage 1</p> <p>Debaters are creative, so don't be surprised by strange case structures.</p>	<p><b>“Case” Arguments</b> The negative may argue that part of the affirmative case is incorrect—there is no problem, the present system is sufficient to cope with the problem, or the plan is insufficient to cope with the problem in a significant way. The negative may also argue that any argument made by the affirmative is not only incorrect, but is actually the <i>opposite</i> of the truth.</p> <p><b>Topicality (T)</b> The plan is not an example of the sort of action called for by the resolution.</p> <p><b>Disadvantages (DAs)</b> The plan causes undesirable side-effects, not necessarily related to the resolution or the case. A) Brink/Uniqueness B) Link C) Impact The negative argues that the bad effects of the plan outweigh whatever advantage(s) the affirmative claims.</p> <p><b>Counterplans</b> A <i>Negative</i> proposal for action to solve the problem identified in the 1AC. These proposals are different from the plan and can be non-topical. Another requirement for counterplans is that they demonstrate some reason why the case is a bad idea—“competitiveness.”</p> <p><b>Critiques</b> The negative may argue that the plan should be rejected because the basic assumptions of the affirmative are bad or it uses bad language or ideas.</p>	<p><b>Answering the Negative</b> The 2AC attempts to answer the arguments made by the 1NC, but it is <i>also</i> the job of the 2AC to pre-empt the arguments that will be made by <i>both</i> of the next two negative speakers. The 2AC must therefore make much more extensive arguments in certain areas than the 1NC. This is a definite disadvantage strategically, as the arguments made by the 2AC must be good enough to withstand the entire block of negative attacks.</p> <p><b>Using the 1AC</b> Most 2AC's will attempt to use arguments and evidence which have been forwarded in the 1AC to answer arguments made in the 1NC. Affirmatives write their first constructive speeches not only to make their case to the judge, but also to provide themselves with arguments that will be usable by the 2AC.</p> <p>This is the last speech in which affirmatives are usually allowed to make new arguments.</p>	<p><b>Extending PART of the 1NC</b> The 2NC must choose some (but NOT ALL) of the arguments made by the 1NC to extend. The 2N and the 1N must communicate with each other to make sure that they are not trying to extend the same arguments.</p> <p>Most of the 2NC will be spent extending and expanding on arguments made in the 1NC. The 2NC must also answer the arguments made by the 2AC. The negative arguments may change substantially from their original form during this speech.</p> <p>There is no requirement that the 2NC cover particular arguments, but many 2NC's like to cover plan arguments, especially disadvantages.</p> <p><b>New Arguments</b> It is not common, but 2NC's will sometimes make completely new arguments. Even when the 2NC does not make a <i>completely</i> new argument, there will often be new links, impacts, or specific case or counterplan arguments. The 1AR can respond freely to both kinds of new arguments.</p>

# The Rebuttals

1NR	1AR	2NR	2AR
<p><b>Extending OTHER INC Arguments</b></p> <p>In many ways, the 1NR is like having several more minutes of 2NC. This is the second speech in what is called the “negative block.” Because the 2NC and the 1NR are like two parts of the same speech, the 1NR must be careful to extend <i>different</i> but <i>complementary</i> arguments from the 2NC. For example, if the 2NC extends disadvantages, the 1NR might extend arguments against the affirmative case.</p> <p>Unlike the 2NC, the 1NR is <i>not</i> allowed to make new arguments unless they are in response to arguments made by the 2AC.</p> <p><b>Pick and Choose</b></p> <p>There is no requirement that the 2NC and the 1NR extend ALL of the arguments made by the 1NC. Most negatives pick and choose their best arguments. However, the affirmative can extend arguments made in the 2AC that aren’t answered by the negative block, so BE CAREFUL! If the negative does not extend a disadvantage that the affirmative has “turned,” the affirmative is free to claim that disadvantage as an affirmative advantage.</p>	<p><b>The Hardest Speech in the Debate (maybe)</b></p> <p>The 1AR must respond to BOTH the 2NC AND the 1NR in a very small period of time. This means that most 1AR’s tend to be fast and at least somewhat confusing. This is the speech in which the affirmative begins to select the issues on which they will base the debate.</p> <p>Good 1AR’s will make these issues clear to the judge while still giving the 2AR plenty of options.</p> <p><b>Don’t Forget Your Previous Speeches</b></p> <p>The 1AR must answer the arguments made by the 2NC and the 1NR, but don’t forget to extend the arguments made in the 2AC. Even though it may seem like the 1AC was a long time ago, remember to extend your “case” arguments as well.</p>	<p><b>Overcoming the Presumption of the 2AR</b></p> <p>True, the 1AR has more speech time to cover, but the 2NR has to be so persuasive that the judge remembers his or her arguments even after the 2AR is over. The 2NR must make sense out of the 1AR and refute those arguments in a clear and conclusive fashion.</p> <p>At the end of a good 2NR, the judge should understand the fundamental negative position in the debate as well as the reasons the negative feels it should win the round.</p> <p><b>Telling the Story</b></p> <p>Given the number of arguments in the round, it is easy to get bogged down. Make sure to put all the arguments together into a “story”—an explanation of which issues (such as disadvantages and case arguments) the negative is winning and why those issues are more important than any arguments the affirmative might be winning. This story is usually told at the beginning of the 2NR as an “overview.” The overview should be short but comprehensive.</p>	<p><b>The Final Word</b></p> <p>The 2AR is probably the most powerful speech in the round because there can be no response to the arguments made in it. The 2AR usually walks a fine line between extending the arguments made by his or her partner and making arguments which have not been made before in the debate. Because new arguments are not allowed in most rebuttal speeches, it is important to stay on the right side of the line!</p> <p><b>Telling the Story</b></p> <p>A good 2AR traces the affirmative line of argumentation from the 1AC to the final speech, making the judge understand why, in light of the arguments made in the 2NR, the affirmative should still win the round. As with the 2NR, this “story” usually appears in the form of an overview to the speech.</p>

# Flowing the Debate: Some Tips

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1. Don't ever give up and stop.

When flowing a fast debater do not stop and listen. If you miss a response, go on to the next response. You can always ask the debater in cross-examination for your missed responses. Remember, the more you practice, the easier flowing gets.

2. Don't be disorganized.

When flowing the disorganized speaker, do not follow his or her example. Write all of his or her arguments in one column on a separate legal pad. Then in your speech, answer all of his or her arguments. Then go back to the structure and point out what you are winning and what your opponent failed to answer in his or her speech.

3. Use structure.

Structure and label all the arguments on your flow the same way that the speaker you are flowing is structuring and labeling his or her arguments. Be sure to write down all the numbers and letters you hear on your flow so that you can refer to specific subpoints of your partner or the other team later in the debate.

4. Use pre-flows

Flow all of your arguments clearly before you speak. Before the debate, it will sometimes be possible to pre-flow generic arguments on strips of paper, post-it notes, or post-it tape.

5. Use your partner.

If you cannot flow all of your arguments before you speak, hand your flow to your partner during cross-examination and have him or her fill in your flow for you. Use the other team's prep time to talk to your partner about arguments you might have missed.

6. Label your arguments

On your briefs and pre-flows, label your arguments with short, accurate, precise, and

specific labels, which are no more than four words long. As you are labeling, put the crucial words first. If you label arguments correctly, you will be able to give a better speech because your judge, partners and opponents will find you easier to flow.

## The Need for Lots of Flowpads and Many Sheets of Paper

You should use many sheets of paper for each argument and you may wish to use different flowpads for different arguments. In any debate you will have:

- a flow related to the 1AC structure.
- a flow listing arguments of the 1NC which are not related to the case (disads, T, counterplans, etc.)
- a flow listing any 2AC arguments
- a flow listing extensions of the 1NC or new arguments made by the 2NC

## Flowing Speech by Speech

1AC: Everyone flows this speech. The Affirmative team should have this speech pre-flowed on post-it notes or legal pads. Use lots of space between each argument.

1NC: Everyone flows this speech. The negative may have their generic arguments already pre-flowed. During the cross-examination period following the 1NC, the 2NC flows onto the 1NC's flow any responses that the 1NC didn't get.

2AC: Everyone flows this speech. Use cross examination to get parts that you missed or have your partner fill in the missing information.

2NC: Everyone but the 1NC flows this speech. The 1NR follows this speech with extension arguments.

1NR: Everyone flows this speech.

1AR: Everyone flows this speech.

2NR: Everyone flows this speech.

2AR: Everyone flows this speech.

# Symbols and Abbreviations

because	bc	outweighs	ow or o/w
causes/caused/leads to	→	overview	OV
change	Δ	plan/policy	P
competitive	comp	question	?
constitutional	C	ratios/per	/
counterplan	CP	real world	RW
decision rule	DR	repeat cite	ld or SS
disadvantage	DA	should	s/
dropped/conceded argument	Ø	should not	s/n
evidence/card	ev or X or ✓	significance	sig
fiat	F	solvency, solved	⑤
greater than	>	standard	std
impact	I or !	takeout (or takes out)	to or t/o
increase/high	↑	theory	Θ
inherency	Inh or ①	therefore	∴
is/equals/approximately	=	threshold	TH
is related to	~	topicality	T or ①
isn't/not equal/not/won't/don't	≠	turn, turnaround	T/
kritik/critique	K or ⑧	unconstitutional	UC
less than	<	underview	UV or U
link	L or ①	uniqueness	U or ①
low/decrease	↓	voting issue	VI or ①
no link	NL or Ø	was caused by	←
not unique	N/U	with	w/
number	#	without	w/o
observation	Obs or O	within	w/n

## Other strategies for abbreviation

Sometimes you will hear words that are too long to write out, but you don't know how to abbreviate them. Here are three possible strategies. Experiment and see what works for you.

	<u>Acronyms</u>	<u>No Vowels</u>	<u>First Letters</u>
<u>Description:</u>	Flow the first letter of each word in a phrase	Flow only the consonants in difficult words	Flow just the first few letters of long words
<u>Examples:</u>	"New York Times" = NYT "Peace Corps" = PC "United States Federal Government" = USFG "Plan of Attack" = POA	"service" = srvc "poor" = pr "death" = dth "nuclear" = nclr	"argument" = arg "volunteer" = vol "substantially" = subs "nanotechnology" = nano



# Flowing the “Case” Debate: This Is What It Sounds Like In a Speech\*

## *First Affirmative Constructive (1AC)*

Now, observation two: there is too much crime in America. This problem presents itself in several different ways. Subpoint A: Violent crime is ravishing our country. The Wall Street Journal explains in 2006: “There can be no question that gun violence is a major problem in this country. Last year alone, over ten thousand people fell victim to gun violence. The carnage has not been limited to the inner cities. The still of the suburban night is regularly broken by the sound of gunshots.”

This impact is worse than a full-scale war. The New York Times reports in 2005: “What is most surprising is that it has taken Americans so long to react to the horrible cost of gun ownership. After all, thousands of people are killed by guns every year. In some smaller countries in the world, this kind of loss of life would rival the death toll of a border war or a major famine.”

Subpoint B: Robberies plague our cities. John Willis, a reporter for the Alpharetta Gazette, in 2006: “The problem seems to be escalating. It is nearly impossible to attend a gathering of any size in this city and not hear stories of robberies, muggings, and carjackings. These criminals do not discriminate between old and young, rich and poor, man and woman. All are potential victims. If we do not address this problem soon, we will not be able to leave our houses without fearing for our lives.”

## *First Negative Constructive (1NC)*

On observation two, subpoint A, they say violent crime is a problem. Group the two cards. One, both these cards assume that we should pass gun control laws, not that violent crime is a problem. Two, neither of these cards says the problem is getting worse. For all we know, ten thousand deaths could be significantly less than two years ago. Three, violent crime is on the decline. Celeste Brown, professor of sociology at Emory, in 2005: “Ironically, amidst all this panic and paranoia, violent crime is on the decline. Unnoticed and virtually unreported by the supposedly liberal mainstream media, rates of murder, rapes and other violent assaults have reached ten-year lows.” Four, they over-state their impacts. The second card only says we’re a large country, not that crime is worse than war. Five, there are no qualifications for their sources. Are these real articles or letters to the editor?

On Subpoint B, they say robberies are bad. One, their author is awful. He’s a reporter for a tiny newspaper I’ve never heard of. Two, the evidence is weak. It only says that the author thinks there’s a lot of crime in her city. There’s no research and no warrant for her claim. Three, most robberies are insignificant. The Los Angeles Times in 2004: “Although robberies have been on the rise since the early 1990s, the increase has largely been in the area of small break-ins. More people are losing their car stereo, but there are few major robberies.” Four, the evidence overstates the impact. Robbery means you lose stuff, not that you fear for your life.

## *Second Affirmative Constructive (2AC)*

Now, observation two, subpoint A. Group their first three answers. One, they concede that the problem is significant. It doesn’t matter if our authors agree with our plan or if they think progress is being made, ten thousand people are dying every year. Two, both 1AC cards are from prestigious newspapers. The authors are both reporters. Three, predictions of a decline in violent crime are wrong. The National Review in 2006: “Those who think violent criminals are going to fade into the night are mistaken. Minor assaults are down, but newspapers are full of stories of mass murders. These reports will only increase in the years to come.”

On 1NC number four, I have two answers. First, extend the New York Times card. It proves that thousands die every year. Second, our card gives perspective. Just because we don’t think much of killing thousands of people in the US doesn’t mean that is the right mentality. On 1NC number five, that’s answered above.

Now, subpoint B. Group their first two answers. One, this card proves that robberies are threatening the suburbs. Two, their answers are elitist. Just because Willis is writing for a small paper doesn’t mean her arguments are wrong. Three, narratives like this prove that normal citizens think crime is a major problem, even though the negative refuses to open their eyes. 1NC three and four are nonresponsive. So what if robberies are small, they’re still bad. Even if you don’t die, you are robbed of your rightful property.

*\*This section represents only a small part of what an actual case debate would sound like. Throughout this text, the sample speeches and flows are meant to provide short examples, not full models.*

# This Is What It Looks Like On the Flow

## First Affirmative Constructive (1AC)

OB 2: Crime

A) Viol C

✓

WSJ 06

Gun C 10K dead.

✓

NYT 05

Gun ctrl? Like war.  
Ev bad - US=big

## First Negative Constructive (1NC)

1) Ass gun ctrl

2) Ev ≠ viol ↑

3) Viol C ↓

✓

Brown 05  
10 yr low

4) Exag !

5) No qual

## Second Affirmative Constructive (2AC)

1) Grant sig

2) 1AC ev = auth qual

3) Viol C ↑

✓

Nat Rev 06

aslt ↓, mrder will ↑

1) X NYT  
proves sig

2) = perspect

1) A

B) Robbery

✓

Willis 06

quals? Only SAY robs bad

1) Auth Bad

2) Ev bad

3) Robs ≠ sig

✓

LAT 04  
Small robs

4) Exag !

1) Grant sig

2) Ans = elitist

3) Narr = pop perc C

1) NR  
Still lose prop

**Note:** On an actual flow, you would NOT write the full titles of the speeches on the top of the page.

# Introduction to Speaking Style

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Debate is a form of competitive public speaking. This means that debaters need to develop their delivery skills. In this context, “delivery” just means your ability to speak well, or to speak in an appropriate way for the occasion.

Sounds pretty easy, doesn't it? It's not. Come on, you've read this much haven't you? You should know by now that debate is full of tricks. The real question is “what does it *mean* to speak well?”

## Audience Adaptation

The real answer to this question is that “good” speaking almost always means whatever kind of speaking your audience will like. In the case of debate, there is one person whose opinion matters most in terms of deciding what counts as good speaking: the judge.

Want to win a debate? Convince the judge to vote for you. It's that simple. Oh, you may *think* you won the debate even if the judge didn't vote for you. You may have great arguments about how wrong the judge was not to vote for you. You may commission a panel of national experts on debate to prove, scientifically, that you really should have won.

Guess what? None of that will matter. The only way to win a debate is to persuade the judge to vote for you. Period. If winning is your goal, adapting your speaking style to the judge's preferences is critical. In order to adapt effectively, you need to know some things about the different styles of speaking you might see in a debate. There are a lot of ways to find out about your judge—ask your coach, talk to other debaters, read a judge's philosophy (if one is available online or elsewhere) or talk directly to the judge before the debate.

## Speaking Style in Debate

You already know that debaters tend to speak with a lot of structure, and that some debaters choose to speak fast in order to make a lot of arguments in a short period of time. Other debaters choose to talk more slowly and emulate

great speakers like social activists or philosophers. As a debater, you must be aware of these different styles so you can choose which kind of speaking works best for you—or which style is most appropriate for a particular judge you might need to convince.

### ***Fast Debate (a.k.a. “straight up” or “traditional”)***

One very popular delivery style that has developed in debate involves speaking very quickly with a lot of structure. Most people can process a lot more information in a shorter period of time than they normally do. Fast debate takes advantage of this idea, and debaters who engage in this style practice extensively to increase the number of arguments and the amount of expert evidence they can read in a debate round. Fast debate is a style of delivery that is truly unique to competitive debate.

*Pros:* Allows debaters to make the maximum number of arguments in a short period of time, giving them a potential strategic advantage over their opponents. Allows discussion of multiple subjects within a single debate round. For those who are good at it, creates an adrenaline thrill. Promotes quick thinking.

*Cons:* Many debaters overestimate how fast they can speak and remain clear. Some judges, debaters, and regular folks find this style annoying and hard to follow. The uniqueness of this style means fast-talking skills don't necessarily translate to “real world” speaking skills.

*Best for:* Judges who have debate training and enjoy fast speech.

### ***Slow Debate (a.k.a. “performative” or “non-traditional”)***

This is really a group of very different kinds of styles all of which speak at a roughly conversational pace. Some debaters work to sound like great political speakers. Others take on the role of a professor or a philosophy teacher, emphasizing explanations of complicated ideas. Still others incorporate aspects of the performing arts (like rap



or theater) into their speeches so they can create powerful emotional responses or deep levels of understanding in their audience. Often, non-traditional debaters use different kinds of structure in their speeches than traditional debaters do.

*Pros:* Develops speaking skills that translate easily into traditional public speaking situations. Allows great depth of discussion on certain issues. Appeals to a broad audience, including those with no formal debate training.

*Cons:* Slower speech means fewer arguments made in a given time period. Slower debaters may be at a strategic disadvantage when competing against fast talkers. Fewer issues can be discussed in a single debate, and there is less time for expert evidence to be read.

*Best for:* Judges who have no formal debate training, or who express a preference for slower debate.

### **Hybrid (no known alias)**

Because debaters are beginning to recognize the advantages of both fast and slow speech, some are working to develop a style that incorporates the best of both worlds. Typically, hybrid debaters speak faster than conversational speed but do not work to achieve their maximum rate. This style also emphasizes speaking efficiently (so as to compete with those who speak fast) and making a few arguments that deal with many of the other team's claims at the same time.

*Pros:* Allows discussion of multiple issues without sacrificing depth or acquisition of useful speaking skills.

*Cons:* By trying to walk the line between speed and slower styles, hybrid debate runs the risk of missing out on the advantages of both other styles. This style has not been developed as fully as the others, and can be difficult to learn.

*Best for:* If you are good at this, you can adapt to almost any judge. If not, it is best for judges with debate training but who are most comfortable with debate that is not top speed.

## **Transitions, Signposts & Roadmaps: Speaking with Structure**

Regardless of which style of speaking you choose, it is inevitable that you will end up dealing with many different issues in a single

debate. The best way to ensure that the judge understands the order in which you address these issues is *signposting*. Signposting is the practice of labeling arguments during your speech so that the judge and the other team can easily tell which issue you are talking about at any given time.

Transitions between arguments also help the judge to follow the order in which you move from argument to argument. This will be helpful not only to the other team and to the judge, but also to your partner. Having a coherent discussion of the issues will help the whole debate to move in a much smoother way and allow more clash with the other team.

Several terms are important to understand:

**On-Case.** The arguments on the flow pages that begin with the 1AC. These are arguments which are used to prove the stock issues of inherency, significance, and solvency.

**Off-Case.** These are the arguments that are brought up by the negative which do not directly refute the case arguments of inherency, significance, and solvency. They are usually disadvantages, counterplans, topicality arguments, or critiques.

**Roadmap.** Allows the judges and the other teams to know which major arguments will be addressed in what order.

- A. Usually done at the beginning of the speech for the judges and the other team. Usually short and not timed.
- B. Debaters usually put the most important arguments first (in the 1NC, that means off-case first, usually).
- C. Examples:
  - 1NC: "3 off case, then the case debate."
  - 2AC: Will identify the off-case arguments to be answered first, then the case.
  - 2NC: Since the 2NC usually extends some off-case arguments, the 2NC usually identifies the specific off-case arguments in the sequence they will be answered.

**Signposting.** Allows the judge and other teams to identify the specific argument being addressed within each major argument.

- A. Done throughout each speech, this requires distinguishing between each

- argument and labeling each argument.
- B. Usually numbers and letters are used, but debaters might also use other forms of distinguishing between each argument.
- C. Examples include: “One. Not-Unique. Present policies will cause the disad. Two. No link. The plan does not cause the disadvantage. Three. Turn. The plan solves the impact to the disad.” Debaters can substitute the word “next” in place of specific numbers, but the important thing to do is post a sign which indicates that the next thing you are about to say is a different argument. This will notify the judge and the opponent to record each argument and not miss your brilliance.

**Transitions.** Transitions provide information about where you are on the flow, while also providing the judge time to organize their flows.

- A. This addresses the way that we move from one off-case argument to another or between the off case and on case.
- B. Often in the 1NC, one disad will be read and when moving it to a second one, you should say “Next off-case.”
- C. When moving from the off-case to the on-case, you should say, “Now, on the case debate.”

### “Covering” the Other Team's Arguments

One of the most important ideas in most debate rounds is the *principle of clash*, also known as the *burden of rejoinder*. These phrases simply mean that it is each team's responsibility to answer the arguments their opponents make. When it comes to delivery, this means you need to explain to the judge how the arguments you are making relate to (and answer) the arguments made by the other team. If you forget to talk about an argument, the judge may assume you are admitting the other team is right about it.

One way to accomplish this is to do what's called “going straight down the flow” or “going line-by-line.” This style of delivery means that you think of your opponents' arguments as a kind of check-list. For each major issue (such as

a disadvantage or a case advantage), you answer each one of the arguments the other team made in the same order they originally made them.

A classic technique for covering arguments in this way is to use the “They Say - We Say” pattern of speech. Debaters signpost each of their opponents' argument, then provide at least one of their own arguments to answer the other teams claim. For example, in a debate about crime, you might hear someone say “They say we must pass new laws to prevent crime, but our evidence proves that criminals are not deterred by the threat of prison.”

There is more than one way to “cover” another team's arguments, however. Instead of dealing with every single argument individually, you can “group” several similar arguments and answer them all at once. For example, in a debate about politics, you might hear someone say “The other team reads about 5 pieces of evidence claiming that the president gets credit when new laws are passed, but none of their authors have qualifications. They are all newspaper reporters. Our authors are political science professors, and should be preferred.” In this way, a single argument can answer multiple claims by the other team.

It is possible to cover your opponents' argument even more efficiently if you can locate similar themes among many arguments. If the other team makes 15 arguments against one of your disadvantages, for example, you may notice that these 15 claims are not all very different. Instead of answering all 15 claims in order, you can treat similar arguments as a single claim and simplify the entire issue for the judge. You might hear a debater in this situation say “they have 15 answers to the disad, but there are only 3 arguments here. The first is a bunch of answers to our link, the second is three cards that disagree with our impact claim, and the last is cards that say the link is inevitable. Here are my answers to these three arguments.” Debaters who choose to speak in a slower style often use techniques like this to overcome a faster opponent's speed advantage.

Speaking with structure is not something we normally do in our everyday lives. Learning to do it well takes practice, but you'll be surprised at how quickly you catch on!

# Answering Arguments & the Flow of Debate

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Many beginning debaters wonder why we spend so much time talking about answering the other team's arguments. After all, it's hard enough explaining your own arguments without having to deal with what the other team says. The move from explaining your own arguments to explaining your arguments *and* answering the other team's arguments is one of the most difficult steps in a beginning debater's career. To understand why specific clash is important, it helps to consider some basic ideas.

## Debate Is About Making Decisions

Because competitive debate is a kind of game, it's easy to lose track of the purpose of debate in the real world. We have debates because we disagree about important questions and we want to make good decisions. Those of us who are supporters of debate generally believe that the best decisions can be reached by examining the strongest arguments each side has to offer.

Among other things, competitive debate is meant to simulate a good decision-making process. If your opponent makes an argument and you don't answer it at all, you aren't doing your part to make the decision. Imagine a situation where you and your friend are arguing about where to go to eat dinner. You want to eat leftovers but your friend wants to go out. You point out that neither of you has any money, but your friend just keeps talking about how nice it would be to go out. Are they being helpful or do you want to smack them? I thought so. Debate is like that. If you can't address all the important points in a discussion, you aren't moving the decision-making process along.



## It's Hard To Judge Debates

Competitive debates involve a lot of different, complicated issues. It's hard enough for the debaters to keep track of these. The judge has to keep track of both teams' arguments, then make a decision about who should win the round. To make things even harder, most judges try not to let their own personal opinions influence their decision. In other words, most judges won't vote for you just because they personally agree with your plan or your arguments. Judges want each team to have a fair chance to win the round.

So, how do judges decide rounds? There are many different theories among judges on how best to make decisions (see "Who Wins the Debate," later in the book). For many judges, however, keeping track of which arguments are answered and which ones are not is an important element of deciding who wins. Since the two teams of debaters are not likely to agree about who should win, judges often determine who to vote for by deciding which team won each argument, then deciding which arguments are most important. If one team made an argument the other team did not answer at all, it is easy for the judge to say "okay, that argument was won by the team that made it, since the other team never answered it."

This is true throughout the debate. If you are affirmative, for example, the judge will generally not consider arguments you made in the 1AC but never mentioned in any of your other speeches. Think of your arguments as tools you carry with you as a team. If you don't mention an argument in one of your speeches, that means you dropped one of your tools. You no longer have that tool, and neither does your partner. The only exception to this rule is the negative "block," when the 1NR speaks immediately after the 2NC. Those two speeches are like two parts of one long negative speech, and as long as one of the two negative speakers make an argument, it has not been "dropped."

## Fairness Is Key

Just in case you haven't figured this out yet, life is often not fair. Sorry to be the one to have to tell you, but sometimes evil triumphs over good, slackers are rewarded more than hard workers, and the person who really should go out with you decides to date a brainless loser instead. This is true in school, too. Sometimes you get bad grades when you should get good ones, and sometimes you cheat and don't get caught.

Debate strives to be different. Ideally, each team in a debate has a fair chance to win. That means judges will often try to reward good arguments and good speaking practices, while punishing your mistakes. When you make an argument, you are doing what we might call the “hard work” of debate. If the other team neglects to answer your argument, they are (in this case) making a mistake or just being lazy.

Let's say you are the 2NC. You argue that the affirmative's plan to pay teachers more will cost too much money. The 1AR does not answer this argument. In your rebuttal speech (the 2NR), you point out that the affirmative has conceded the argument that their plan costs too much, and that they should lose. The 2AR then gets up and reads two pieces of evidence saying that the plan won't cost very much.

Is this fair to you? In a word, no. Some people might say “it doesn't matter if it's fair to you or not, because it's just true, and true arguments are always fair.” This argument sounds compelling until you remember one little thing: just because the 2AR (or even a qualified expert) says something doesn't make it “true.” Maybe the evidence the 2AR read is bad. Maybe you have answers to the arguments their authors make. We'll never know what you might have said if you were given the chance, though, because the 1AR didn't answer your argument and give you that chance.

## What to Do

There are a lot of ways to answer an argument (or even a whole bunch of arguments at the same time). We've already talked about a couple of these strategies. Here is a more complete list:

- **Contradicting**. Disagree with the main claim of the other team's argument. They

say economic growth is good, you say it's bad. They say the plan will cost a lot, you say it won't cost anything. As with any of the strategies below, you can contradict individual arguments or “group” several of the other team's arguments and contradict them at the same time.

- **Denying relevance**. Argue that their claim doesn't matter. Even if what they say is true, it doesn't deal with the issues of the debate
- **Undercutting their assumptions**. Reveal the basic assumptions of their arguments, then disprove them. A plan to invade another country, for example, may assume we have more available troops than we really do.
- **Extending (or cross-applying)**. Explain why an argument your team already made (either in your own speech or one of your partner's) answers their argument.
- **Outweighing**. Explain that their argument doesn't matter as much as yours. For example, a plan to build new hospitals might cost money, but it will save lives.
- **Comparing evidence quality**. Demonstrate that your expert quotations should be preferred over theirs. Perhaps your evidence is newer, or perhaps it makes more complex arguments or considers more factors.
- **Indicting their author**. Argue that something is wrong with the person who wrote their evidence. Maybe the research they did was flawed, or they are biased or not properly qualified.
- **Conceding**. Agree with one of their arguments. Sometimes the other team makes an argument that really supports your claims. Don't contradict it just because the other team said it. Concede it, then explain why it helps you.



# Delivery and Staying “In Shape” for Debate

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## Debate Delivery

As the previous section on speaking style should make very clear, it is difficult to generalize about exactly how you should speak when you debate. Obviously, what style of debate you choose will do a lot in terms of providing you with appropriate models for good speech.

That having been said, there *are* some tips you should always follow when you speak.

1. Act like you freakin' care! This is the most important rule of public speaking. If you don't act like what you are saying is important, why should anyone else care? Sound passionate, and your audience will follow you.
2. Speak loud enough for everyone to hear you. It's natural to be a bit nervous in a public speaking situation, and that often translates into less volume. Everyone in the room should be able to hear you without straining. Also, *reasonable* increases in speech volume are often interpreted as evidence of forceful argument. It's better to be a bit too loud than a bit too quiet.
3. Stand up when you speak. You may see some debaters who sit down when they speak. Don't they look cool? Oh, well, maybe they don't look quite as cool when they turn red in the face and pass out. Standing up when you speak is the best way to make sure that the part of your body involved with breathing (from your mouth to your waist) stays straight. Sitting down or bending over cuts off your air flow. Also, standing up gives you more presence and makes you look bigger.
4. Look at the judge. Although you will probably spend a lot of time in your speech reading from evidence or your own notes, it is crucially important to look at your judge frequently. Eye contact gives people

a sense of involvement and makes them think you're a more powerful speaker. It is also important to see the judge's face so you can see, for example, if they are giving you the “what the @#\$\*! are you talking about?” look. You can't adapt to what you can't see.

5. Don't do anything stupid with your body. There are a lot of potential landmines waiting for you that can distract the judge or ruin your speaking cred. Chewing gum when you talk? Such a bad idea. Playing with your pen? It's always fun until it flies out of your hand and causes the judge to lose an eye. Drinking a bunch of carbonated soda right before you speak? Ew, yuck. Pounding the table or podium constantly when you talk? Can you say “migraine”? Pacing around the room while you talk? The judge will think you're leaving or you really need to pee. Got it? Just don't do anything stupid. These are important life rules we're teaching you here.

## How to stay in shape for debate

Like any other sport, debate requires physical and mental stamina. In order to win, you have to maintain your peak performance level. Here are some common ways to keep in shape—even during the off-season!

### Do speaking drills

The importance of speaking drills cannot be emphasized enough! Even if you do not want to speak fast in debates, you should do speaking drills to enhance your clarity of speech. Fast or slow, the most effective way to impress your judge is by reading as comprehensibly as you can.

Each drill should be done for at least 10 minutes. Since constructive speeches are 9 minutes each (in college), it is important to be able to maintain your pace for more than 9 minutes. Otherwise, you risk running out of steam. Gasping for breath at the end of your speech will only hurt

your speaker points. Since different drills address different problems, one strategy is to alternate drills for a period of thirty minutes to an hour. Still, even 15 minutes of drills can be helpful.

### ***Some basic drills***

1. **The Wide-Mouthed Frog.** Based on a bad joke, and it makes you look stupid, but boy does it work. Read through your evidence slowly, over-enunciating every syllable (e-ver-y syl-la-ble). For every syllable, open your mouth as wide as you can, but don't forget to over-pronounce any hard consonant at the end of the syllable. Do this until your jaw starts to hurt.
2. **The Pen In the Mouth.** Place a pen horizontally between your teeth as far back in your mouth as it will go without hurting yourself (like a horse's bit). Read as fast as you can and as comprehensibly as you can. Focus on overpronunciation and volume. The point of this drill is to learn to talk without opening your mouth too wide. It's a great thing to do after the frog drill.
3. **Flip the Script.** Read your evidence backwards, word by word, as clearly and comprehensibly as you can. This helps you to get through difficult evidence and solves any problem you might have with reading ahead of yourself.
3. **And-Infinity.** Read a piece of evidence, while saying "and" after every word. Go as fast as you can, but don't forget to insert "and," and stay comprehensible. This helps solve any problem you might have slurring words together, and aids enunciation.

### **Have practice debates**

Set up intrasquad practice debates. Ask a coach or fellow debater to be the judge and give a real critique. Treat them like real debates. You

should speak and conduct yourself in the same way you would in an actual debate round. You can use the speeches you give in these debates to do speech re-dos later or immediately following the debate. Make sure to set up enough debates so that you get practice being affirmative and negative.

Of course, between classes, jobs, and extra-curricular commitments, there is not always time to have a full-length practice debate. If this is the case for you, set up mini-debates with your teammates. Instead of the 8-5-3 or 9-6-3 format, you can do 4-2-1 debates. You can also have practice debates that focus on your specific weakness. For example, you

can pretend specific answers were read in the constructives and start the debate with rebuttal speeches. You can do the same thing for cross examination by having debates with shortened speech times and elongated cross ex time.

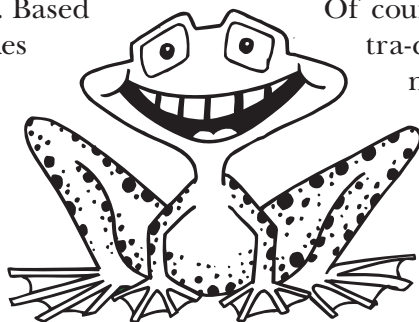
Practice debates are also a great way to get more experience flowing. If you hear that some teammates are having a practice debate, you can sit in to flow their arguments. After the debate, compare your flow to your teammates' to see where you need to improve and what you did well.

### **Do "re-dos"**

Save your flows from every tournament. Make sure you can tell by looking at them what everyone said in the round. Write down the suggestions your judge gives you as well. When you get back home, give one of the speeches again in front of a coach or a more experienced debater until you both agree that the speech is near perfection. This may require giving the same speech over and over again, but it will be worth it. The more you give great speeches, the more likely it is you will give one on the first try at the next tournament. The goal is to eventually give such good speeches that you will have a hard time making them better in re-dos!

### **Read or watch the news**

A huge variety of arguments is made in debate rounds over the course of the year. Of



course, it is impossible to be able to anticipate every argument, but being aware of what is going on the world can help a whole lot. Having smart analytical arguments about the current state of affairs will increase your credibility with judges.

You can keep abreast of current events by watching the news every night or reading the newspaper every day. And that doesn't mean just the first 5 minutes of your local news or the front page of the newspaper. Watch an entire newscast or browse through an entire paper. Keep your eyes open for articles that could relate to the topic, speak to the current political climate, or prove an argument you've heard (or you make) true or false.

If you happen to have regular access to the Internet, the possibilities are endless. While a lot of quality content on the Internet requires you to pay, there are great resources like Google News ([news.google.com](http://news.google.com)) that allow you to keep yourself educated. However, for this to work you have to have some regular practices. Instead of just browsing the Internet, make it a practice to, for example, enter the same search of key topic words into Google News every day. This will make your Internet time more like reading the paper and less like playing around.

### Read about debate

Knowing what is going on in the debate world is as important as knowing what is going on in the rest of the world. Preparation is a huge part of winning debates. The Internet gives you the ability to access a lot of debate information online. While the college and high school communities use different forums to talk about debate, there are resources available for you to learn more about theory or keep up with national trends.

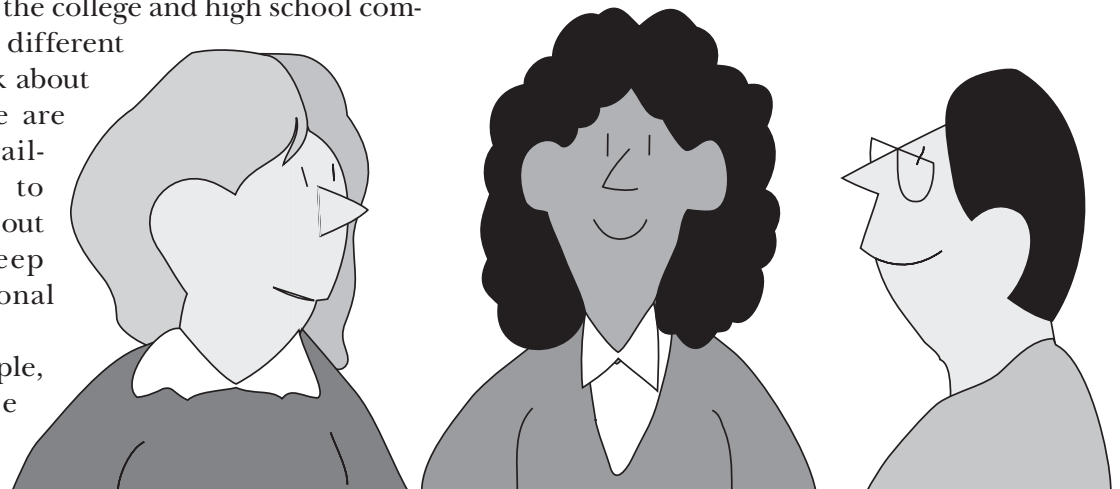
For example, after some

caselists are released to the debate community or posted on free web sites. Caselists outline both the affirmative and negative arguments made by the teams who attended. You should always read these! They will tell you what arguments you need to be ready to answer and perhaps give you some ideas on arguments to include in your own arsenal.

Be aware that some debate web sites will charge you for high-level access, but many (such as [www.planetdebate.com](http://www.planetdebate.com)) offer basic caselist and judge philosophy information for no charge. One more thing: the fact that people are involved in debate doesn't necessarily make them any smarter, more informed, or more mature than the next person. Like anything to do with the Internet, the online debate world is full of *both* geniuses and crazy people (and some who are both). Be careful who you talk to, and don't take candy from anyone.

### Talk about debate

A lot of beginning debaters tend to forget about debate when they are not at practice or tournaments. This is a big mistake! It is important throughout the season to keep your head in the game! That means, talking about debate with your teammates on the ride home from tournaments, calling, e-mailing, or instant messaging your friends and teammates with your thoughts about debate on your time off. Your teammates and friends in the debate community are a great resource. Talking with them can teach you ways to look at an argument that you would have never thought of on your own.









# **Section 2: Specific Tactics and Arguments**

# Cross-Examination

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Cross-examination is a series of question-and-answer periods in a debate round designed to allow debaters to clarify issues, gather information, and achieve strategic advantage. While most beginning debaters (and many judges) say they enjoy cross-examination (a.k.a. “cross-ex” or “CX”) more than any other part of debate, few can say they are truly skilled. With some preparation and basic strategy, you can become one of those few.

## Who speaks when?

The basic principle that will help you remember who cross-examines whom is this: the person who *just spoke* **answers** the questions, and the person from the other team who is *not* about to speak **asks** the questions. Here’s how it works:

After the 1AC:	2NC asks	1AC answers
After the 1NC:	1AC asks	1NC answers
After the 2AC:	1NC asks	2AC answers
After the 2NC:	2AC asks	2NC answers

## “Tag team” cross-examination

Okay, so now you know who is *supposed* to talk, but is that really a rule? Is it okay for you to answer a question someone asks your partner? Is it okay for you to ask a question when it is your partner’s turn to ask? The answer to these questions is “it depends.”

Like anything else in the debate round, the attitude of the judge is critical. Some judges consider this kind of “tag team” cross-examination a violation of basic rules, and they will not allow it. Others have no problem letting partners share cross-ex questions and answers. If you and your partner do this kind of thing regularly, make sure to ask the judge before the round what his or her attitude is. You can adapt to a judge who does not like tag team cross-ex by doing things like talking to your partner before you start asking questions to see if they have specific requests or passing notes to help out your partner if they are struggling.

The bottom line is that you and your partner *both* need to have the ability to ask questions and give answers. If you are the 1AC and you cannot explain your own affirmative plan, for example, you are in trouble.

## But what do I do?

Cross-examination gives you, the person who is asking the questions, an important opportunity to accomplish several basic tasks. Generally speaking, cross-ex is used to achieve one or more of the following five objectives, listed in the order of importance:

1. To clarify points or gather information
2. To expose errors
3. To set up arguments
4. To obtain admissions
5. To save prep time

## Clarifying points and gathering information

Regardless of what style the other teams chooses to speak in (fast or slow, simple or complicated), it is likely that *something* will be said by the other team that you do not really understand. Even if you understand the words, you might not understand the meaning. Even if you understand the meaning, you might not understand what the other team is trying to achieve by making a particular argument. The most important thing you can do in cross-ex is make sure you understand the other team’s arguments.

One way you can accomplish this is to ask the other team questions. This is particularly useful when you are asking questions of interpretation (“but why is that good?”). However, it does tend to take a lot of time, especially if you have a lot of questions. Another thing you can do in cross-ex is ask the other team for their evidence and their “blocks” (sheets of prepared evidence and analytical arguments). For example, if they other team reads a 1AC you have never heard before, it is common for you to ask them to let you look at their 1AC.

Do you have to let another team see your evidence? It is normally considered extremely rude to refuse a request for evidence or blocks. However, make sure that the other team gives you back your blocks when it is your turn to use them to prepare or at the end of the debate. Many teams carry two copies of their 1AC—one to read, the other to give their opponents after the 1AC.

### ***Exposing Errors***

Some debates are won and lost in the cross-examination. One of your jobs as a debaters is to pay close attention to what the other team says to see if it is logically consistent. If you find a major flaw in the other team's logic or in their evidence, you can use cross-examination to point this out.

Flaws in logic often occur in terms of what we call "links," or explanations of how one action can lead to another. Let's say the affirmative plan calls for a ban on building campfires in national parks as a way to prevent forest fires. However, as the 2NC, you know that studies show most forest fires are either caused by lightning or cigarettes. You might ask the 1AC "what evidence do you have that campfires cause most forest fires?"

Another common place to find flaws is in the other team's evidence. Especially if the other team is using quotes from experts, you will need to pay close attention to ensure that the quotes match up with the claims made by the other team. Because experts often make complicated arguments, debaters sometimes oversimplify or misrepresent their authors' opinions. It is also common for debaters to read only parts of a quote (or "highlight" the quote) so that only the important words are read in the debate. In these cases, you may notice that key quotes make arguments that might undermine your opponents' claims. Let's stay with the forest fire example. Suppose the 1AC reads a piece of evidence from an expert that is labeled "most forest fires are caused by campers." If you read carefully, you may find out that the part of the quote that is *not* read by your opponent goes on to say that campers cause fires by throwing cigarettes into the forest while they are still lit.

You might read that part of the quote to the 1AC and the judge, then ask "doesn't this mean that your plan doesn't prevent most forest fires, since you only deal with campfires?"

### ***Setting Up Arguments***

While debaters often try to simulate policy-making by advocating real pieces of legislation and using quotes from policy experts, a lot of debate is about interpreting arguments that are made in the round. Cross-ex allows you to encourage your opponents to interpret their own arguments in a way that will make your arguments seem better. There are several traditional strategies for setting up arguments. Here are two of the most famous:

#### **The Pit of Doom**

A classic cross-ex strategy is to "push" your opponent closer and closer to an answer that will help you destroy them. But how do you talk someone into walking closer to the edge of the pit? By acting reasonable and pretending there is no pit there, of course. Let's say that the 1AC is advocating a plan to offer financial incentives to get people to vote in presidential elections. You are trying to get your opponent to admit that their plan won't work. You can't just tell them to admit the plan is bad. You have to coax them gently toward the pit. Here is one way you might do this:

You: So, you're going to pay people to vote, right?  
Your Opponent: Yep. Our authors say this will increase voter turnout by 50%.  
You: Wow. I'd vote if they'd pay me. But there are still going to be people who don't vote after the plan, right?  
Your Opponent: Maybe.  
You: I mean, my uncle doesn't vote because he thinks the government is controlled by aliens. You can't get him to vote, can you?  
Your Opponent: Probably not.  
You: And the people who refuse to vote as a protest, you can't buy them off, right?  
Your Opponent: Yeah, but that's not many people.  
You: Sure. What about people who have to work all day and have families to take care of. They don't vote because they're too busy. Will you get them to vote?

Your Opponent: Actually, yes. Our authors say that paying them \$20 to vote will get them interested.

You: Oh, sweet. So, you've got evidence that \$20 is enough to get people to quit their jobs?

Your Opponent.: What?

You: Well, you know if I skip out on my job at WalMart to go vote, they're going to fire me. So, you've got evidence that \$20 is enough to get me to quit my job?

Your Opponent: No, that's stupid. You'd just go after you got off work.

You: Oh, okay, now I get it. So, you've got evidence that \$20 is enough to pay the babysitter to watch my kids and make dinner for them while I spend 3 hours waiting in line to vote? Can I see that evidence?

Your Opponent: Um...

At the end of the above exchange, your opponent is a lot closer to the edge of the pit. You've gotten them to say that their plan won't solve for people with fringe beliefs, people who hate politics, people who have to work all day, and people who have to take care of their families. That's a lot of people, especially if you've prepared by finding statistics about what percentage of people who normally vote fall into those categories.

### The Reverse Pit of Doom

Your opponent is not entirely stupid (well, *probably* not). They may be aware that you're trying to get them to say things that aren't in their best interest. They will be trying to figure out what you want them to say so that they can say the opposite. The "reverse pit" takes advantage of this situation by making your opponent think you want them to answer one way when you really want them to answer the other way.

Let's suppose you are negative and the affirmative is going to pay people to vote. But this time, you don't want them to say the plan won't work. You've looked, and you can't find any evidence attacking the plan that way. Instead, you want to argue that the affirmative plan would be too expensive. To make that argument, you need the affirmative to say that *everyone* will take their money and vote. To get them to say that, you start by convincing them you are really attacking their ability to solve. The exchange might go like this:

You: You're going to pay people to vote? That's ridiculous.

Your Opponent: Whatever. Our authors say that the plan will increase voter turnout by 50%.

You: Come on. You're not serious. Nobody's going to vote just because you pay them. Most people don't vote because they don't care.

Your Opponent: Wrong. The IAC contains five quotes by four different experts who've done studies that prove more people will vote if we offer them money. You got nothin'.

You: Puh-lease. When my partner gets up and reads 10 pieces of evidence that says your plan won't work, why should the judge vote for you?

Your Opponent: Bring it.

You: We will. What's your best piece of evidence say? 5 million more people will vote?

Your Opponent: You wish. Our evidence from Smith in 2006 says that the plan results in 20 million more votes, and Smith thinks that estimate is low. We'll claim that 30 million more people will vote after the plan is passed.

You: 30 million? That's your claim?

Your Opponent: Yep. Take that to the bank.

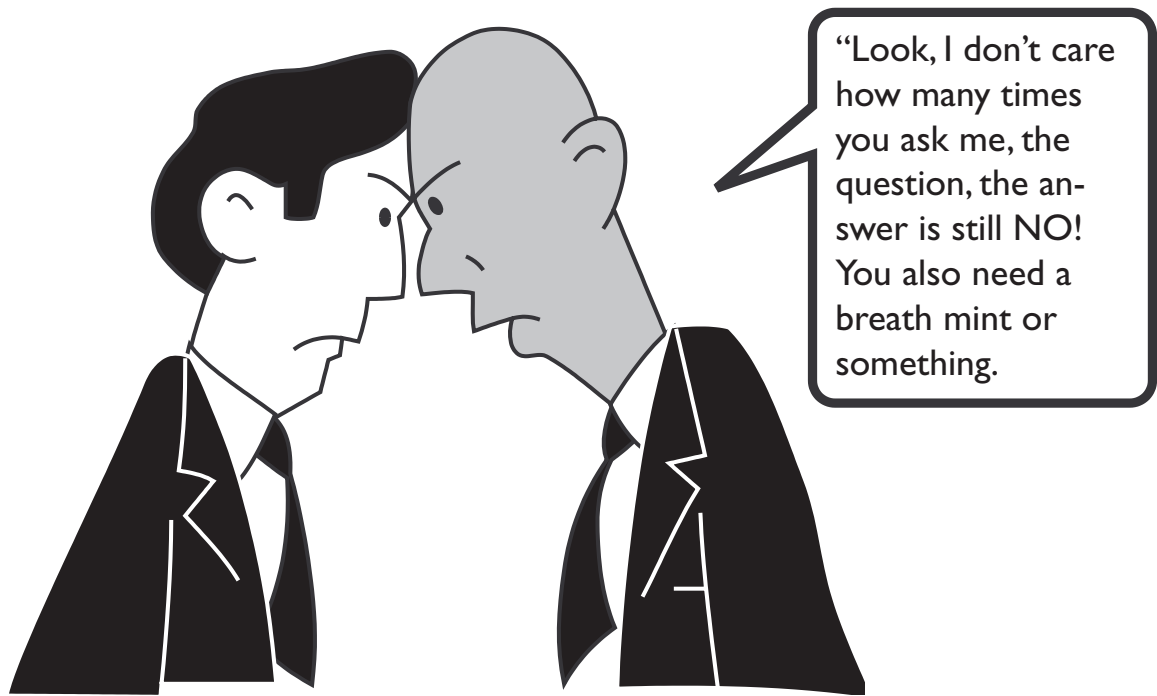
You: I think I will.

See how nice your opponent was? They gave you a giant link to your argument that the plan will cost the government too much money. The fact that they thought you were trying to push them to admit one thing caused them to overreact and give you 10 million more reasons (times \$20) why the plan is a bad idea.

### ***Obtaining Admissions***

I've got some bad news for you. You know all those cop shows you watch on TV? The ones where the cops catch this guy who they think committed a murder, and the guy confesses? I am sad to tell you that those are all lies. In the real world, no one confesses. In fact, one of the best ways to guarantee that someone *won't* confess is to say "you'd better confess because we know you did it!" Debate is like that, too. It is nearly impossible to get someone to admit they are wrong.

Still, there are times when you might ask your opponent to admit that something they said is wrong (or, at least, not relevant). For example, let's say the INC reads 10 pieces of



evidence saying that your plan to lower gas prices by getting people to buy hybrid cars won't work. The third piece of evidence says that electric-only cars are not practical. You might point out to your opponent in cross-ex that you aren't advocating electric-only cars. If they are willing to admit this is true, you might ask "so, I don't have to answer this argument, right?" If you're lucky, they'll say something like "no, but those other 9 pieces of evidence are all reasons you lose." See what I mean? Nobody confesses.

### ***Saving Prep Time***

Here's a dirty little secret we don't normally like to reveal. One of the most important uses of cross-ex from the perspective of the questioner is that it allows your partner time to prepare for their speech. Remember, the person who is *not* about to speak is the one who asks the questions. This means that, while you are asking questions, your partner is trying to figure out what to say.

What does this mean? The most important implication of this is that you should *never* cut your cross-examination short unless your partner tells you it's okay. Use every last second, even if you can't think of any brilliant questions. If you are negative, ask the affirmative to

explain why the judge should vote for them. If you are affirmative, ask the negative to explain the basic idea of their major argument. Pick important pieces of your opponents' evidence and attack them even if you haven't read them. Whatever you do, keep talking until the timer goes off. Your partner will thank you, and you will make it more likely that you will have some prep time left at the end of the debate for your own rebuttal.

### **Speech-By-Speech Tips**

Here are some questions that each speaker should try to get answered during their cross-examination. These tips will make even more sense after you have read the sections of this manual that discuss possible negative strategies.

#### ***2NC Cross-X 1AC***

1. Get missing signposts and arguments.
2. Center most of your questions on the plan. Look for plan errors and possible links to disadvantages. Ask for a copy of the plan and read it.
3. Make sure that you understand the thesis of the case and what advantages are being claimed. If you are not sure ask — now is the time to do it, not after the 2AC!



### ***1AC Cross-X 1NC***

1. If the 1NC argued topicality, make sure that you know what the violations are and what standards they are using to prove that you are not topical.
2. Make the 1NC explain any arguments that you do not understand.
3. Ask the 1NC to explain the links, thresholds, and/or impacts to the disads that were run out of the 1NC.
4. Ask the 1NC to explain why the counterplan is better than the affirmative. Ask them to compare specific quantifiable disadvantages.

### ***1NC Cross-X 2AC and 2AC Cross-X 2NC***

1. Ask for any responses that your partner missed.
2. Ask for any briefs or evidence that you or your partner need in order to answer every response given by the 2AC/2NC
3. Ask the 2AC/2NC to explain why he or she may have granted out some arguments—especially on advantages or disadvantages.

### **Answering Cross-Ex Questions**

One of the best ways to be a good answerer of questions in cross-ex is to understand how to ask good questions. If you know what strategy your opponent is using, you can anticipate their goals and adjust your answers accordingly. Here are some other tips for getting out of cross-ex without doing too much damage to your own team:

1. *Answer requests for information clearly and honestly.* You are not generally going to win debates by misleading your opponent about, for example, what the plan does—and if you do, the other team and the judge will hate you forever. You have prepared to answer logical arguments the other team might make against your claims. If you mislead them, they are more likely to make arguments that you have not anticipated. In other words, there are good reasons to be honest.
2. *Don't be a jerk.* Judges might sometimes want you to be aggressive, but nobody likes a jackass. If your opponent is hostile in cross-ex, respond by being reasonable. In fact, one of the best ways to take advantage of another person's hostility is to be even nicer than you normally would. This tactic helps the judge notice that the other person is being inappropriate, which will decrease their speaker points and increase yours.
3. *If you don't know the answer, say so.* More rounds have been lost by people who make things up than by people who admit they don't know the answer to every question.
4. *Avoid making claims beyond the ones in your speech.* The “reverse pit of doom” example above is a good case of what can happen when you exceed the basic claims you made in your speech or your evidence.
5. *Avoid hypotheticals.* Debaters like to ask “what if” questions like “what happens if we prove that your plan doesn't work?” You should answer “you won't.” Another kind of hypothetical question involves asking you to respond to arguments the other team has not yet made. You are not obligated to answer those questions. A common way to answer those kinds of questions is to say “if you make that argument in a speech, we will answer it” or “we have not taken a position on that question yet.”
6. *Refer back to your evidence.* If someone asks you about an argument you have made that is supported by a quote from an expert, explain the quote to them. They may try to get you to make arguments that aren't in the quote. In general, you should resist this and continue to explain the quote. Your evidence is a great source of explanation for questions you may not know how to answer completely.

# Case Attacks

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The negative team has the obligation of proving the affirmative's claims false. There are four major off-case strategies of which at least one is almost always used: disadvantages, kritiks, topicality, and counterplans. These three options will be discussed in separate chapters.

When you are relying on disadvantages (especially if you are not offering a counterplan), it will be helpful if you can either make the affirmative case seem less persuasive or argue that the plan makes the harms described by the affirmative worse than they are now.

Let's take a look at what the negative could argue about the affirmative case. We will call these case attacks.

## *Minimizing the Harm*

One way to attack an affirmative is to make (usually evidenced) arguments that deny the importance of the harm. If, for example, the affirmative claims to solve poverty in the United States, the negative might read evidence that suggests poverty is relatively low or that it is declining. One way to minimize a harm is to suggest it isn't very common. Another way is to suggest that the harm is not, in fact, not a harm at all. In a case where the 1AC claims to change a law that prevents us from exercising our First Amendment freedom to express ourselves, the negative might argue that we already have too much freedom to express ourselves.

## *Inherency As a Case Attack*

We normally think of inherency (will the harm continue or will the status quo solve the problem all on its own?) as a separate stock issue — and, for many judges, it is. However, one way to make use of inherency evidence is to suggest that the plan is unnecessary because the status quo is already on its way to solving the problem. This is a specific kind of “minimizing the harm” strategy. Another, more offensive, way to use inherency as a case attack is to look for evidence that the plan will get rid of (or replace) a more effective solution that is currently being planned.

## *Inevitability*

Some problems can't be solved. The negative may read evidence to suggest that the harm cannot be solved by any means, including the plan. This is almost the opposite of the inherency strategy, but if the problem cannot be solved then the plan is not a persuasive proposal.

## *Attacking Solvency*

The “inevitability” strategy is just one way to attack the ability of the plan to solve. Perhaps the most common negative case attack is an argument that the plan will fail. This argument is usually accompanied by a variety of specific evidence indicting the plan.

## *“Turning” the Advantage*

The most offensive way to attack the case is to suggest that the plan makes things worse. A case can be “turned” in one of two ways. First, the negative can argue that the plan will backfire, causing the harm identified in the 1AC to get worse. Second, the negative can argue that the thing the 1AC calls a “harm” is actually a good thing. In either situation, the negative will claim to “turn” the case against the affirmative team. The 1AC is now a reason to vote negative.

## *Why Attack the Case?*

It is possible to win a debate entirely by attacking the case. If the negative persuades the judge that the plan is entirely pointless (either it doesn't solve any of the harm or the harm is absolutely nothing to worry about), then there is no reason to vote affirmative. In that case, the negative will claim that it should win the round on “presumption” — the belief that change is inherently risky. If the negative persuades the judge that the plan makes the world worse, then, of course, that is a reason to reject the plan.

But what if the negative only wins some of their case attacks? This is still good, because if the plan has only a small advantage, any disadvantage you prove the plan might cause is enough reason to vote negative.

# Disadvantages: An Overview

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We've talked a lot about the arguments the affirmative team needs to make to win, and we've talked a little about how to answer those arguments. But what about the negative? What kinds of arguments can be made *against* changing government policy?

Think about it this way: the heart of any argument in favor of changing anything is that the change will make something good happen. So, naturally, one of the best ways to argue *against* changing anything is to argue that the change will make something *bad* happen.

In debate language, we call this kind of argument a **disadvantage** (a “disad” or “DA”) for short. Get it? The affirmative claims its plan will produce advantages, so the negative responds by saying the plan will produce the *disadvantages*. Disadvantages are some of the easiest arguments to understand because we deal with them so often in our own lives. Why shouldn't you eat five pounds of Oreos in one sitting? Why shouldn't you tell your least favorite teachers that they suck? Why shouldn't you slap your little brother when he makes fun of you at the dinner table? While all these things might feel good, the reason you don't actually do them is simple: something bad would happen later. You would get sick, you would get detention, your momma would beat you senseless.

The decisions you make in your life involve weighing advantages versus disadvantages. Remember when your parents said you wouldn't get dessert if you didn't finish your meatloaf? Nothing was worth eating another bite of that nastiness, was it? Not even pudding. Not even *chocolate* pudding. You made your choice, and you weren't happy about it, but you knew the costs when you made your decision.

In many cases, debate is about these same kinds of calculations. The affirmative will try to emphasize all of good things that the plan might accomplish while minimizing the importance of the disadvantages. The negative will try to demonstrate that the plan won't produce real advantages while emphasizing the possible

disadvantages the plan might cause. The judge tries to decide whether the potential costs of the plan outweigh its potential benefits.

## Kinds of Disadvantages

There are probably an infinite number of ways to say that a change will cause a bad outcome. As a debater, you should always be on the lookout for new and different kinds of disadvantages. Here are several types of disadvantages debaters commonly use in arguing against changes in government policy.

### *Mistakes of Cause and Effect (or “Case Turns”)*

It is often hard to tell what causes important problems. Changing our policy to try to solve a specific harm might actually make the situation worse — especially if the affirmative is fundamentally wrong about what caused the problem in the first place.

### *Economic Costs*

Government programs cost money to create and enforce. These expenses may trade off with our ability to fund other, more important programs. Large costs may also damage the national economy by affecting overall government spending and budgetary priorities.

### *Political Tradeoffs*

Leaders who make changes that are unpopular with another political party or with their own supporters may lose the clout they need to carry out other, more important policy changes. Conversely, the plan may increase the popularity of dangerous leaders, allowing them to pursue bad, though unrelated policy changes.

### *Unexpected Consequences*

The world is a complicated place. Sometimes actions that we take in one area have profound consequences in ways that we never considered. The plan may lead to a chain reaction of causes and effects that causes disastrous changes completely unrelated to the original action.



# The Elements of a Disadvantage

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Disadvantages are potentially complicated arguments that string several different claims together to demonstrate that the affirmative plan will result in some bad outcome. Most “disads” tell a story that involves multiple parts: the plan produces a certain effect (or a series of related effects), that effect is bad, and the bad effect will not happen unless the plan is passed. Let’s talk about the different parts of a disad’s story:

## Brink

The brink states that a certain situation exists where something could go either way. This means there is a risk of a problem happening at some point in the future.

## Uniqueness

The uniqueness states that this problem will not happen in the future, or is happening now. This is referred to as the status quo, or what is going on right now.

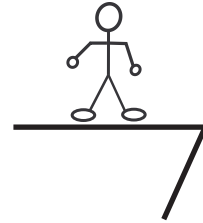
## Link

The link states why the affirmative plan causes this problem to happen. The negative usually reads a piece of evidence saying why the affirmative plan causes the way things are now to change.

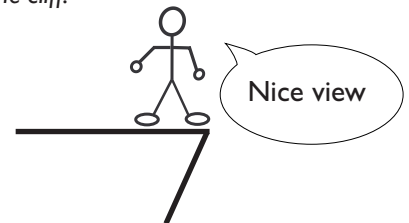
## Impact (and Magnitude)

The impact describes the problem that will happen and why it is bad. This impact is usually something very large and harmful. The negative uses this impact to say that the affirmative plan should not be done — although the plan might cause something good to happen, the problems the plan causes are worse. “Magnitude” is exactly how large the impact of the disadvantage is.

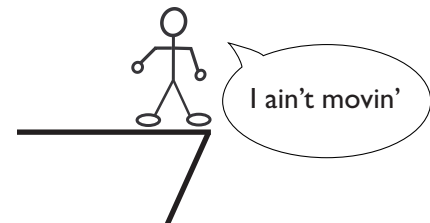
*A disad can be thought of like a person standing on a cliff:*



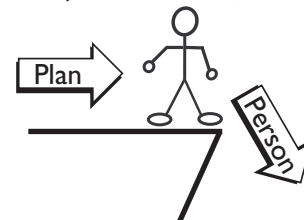
*The brink would mean that the person is standing on the edge of the cliff:*



*The uniqueness would mean that the person will not jump off the cliff unless pushed:*



*The link would mean that the plan comes up and pushes the person off the cliff:*



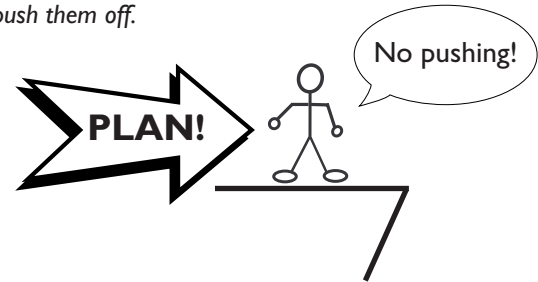
*The impact would mean that the person hits the bottom of the canyon really hard:*



## Threshold

The threshold is how big the plan has to be to cause the problem presented in the disad to happen. If the plan is a very big one, it will probably cause the problem. If the plan is tiny, it probably won't cause the problem. Saying that a disad has a small threshold indicates that it won't take a very large force to push the person off the cliff.

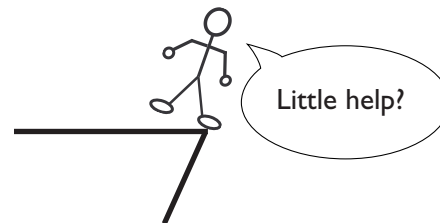
*The threshold would measure how hard the plan would have to push for the person to fall off the cliff. If the person was seven feet from the edge of the cliff, the plan would have to be huge to push them off.*



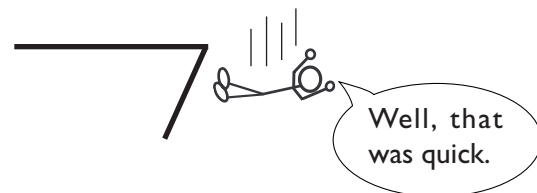
## Time Frame

The time frame is how long before the problem the disad presents happens. If there is an especially short time frame, then the problem the plan creates might happen before whatever good things the plan creates. If that happens, then the plan probably isn't a good one. If there is a long time frame, then the good things the plan creates would happen before the problems it creates. If this is the case, the plan probably is a good idea.

*The time frame would measure how long before the person fell off the cliff. If there was a long time frame, then the person would teeter on the edge of the cliff for a while before falling.*



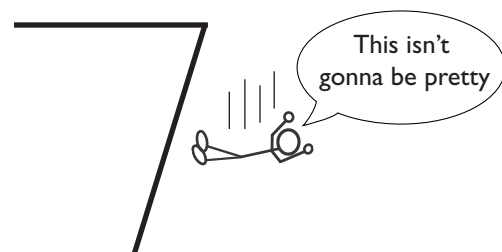
*If there were a short time frame, then the person would fall off the cliff right away.*



## Internal Link

Sometimes when the plan changes something, it does not cause a problem right away. This is when an internal link is needed. The internal link states that when the plan causes something to change, which is the link, then that causes the problem, which is the impact.

*The internal link would be that when the plan pushes the person off the cliff, the fall will be so big that the person will hurt. Connecting the fall and the hurt requires an internal link: falling hurts and the hurt is the impact.*



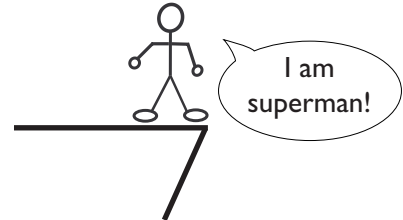
# Answers to Disadvantages

## Not Unique

The non-unique argument states that the problem the disad presents will happen anyway in the status quo. If it were to happen anyway, it doesn't matter if the affirmative plan causes the problem or not.

There are many affirmative arguments that give reasons why disadvantages are not true. Here are a few of the more popular ones:

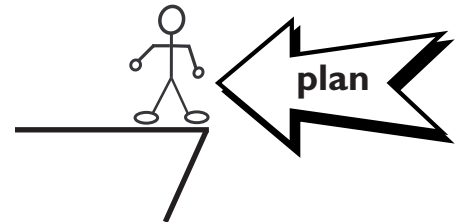
The non-unique argument would mean that the person is going to jump anyway. It doesn't matter if the plan pushes them or not.



## Link Turn

The link turn states that when the affirmative plan happens, the problem the disad presents is avoided. This often means that when the affirmative plan happens the exact opposite of the problem happens.

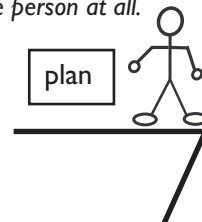
The link turn would mean the plan pushed the person away from the edge of the cliff.



## Link Take-out

The link take-out states that the affirmative plan doesn't actually cause the problem the disad presents.

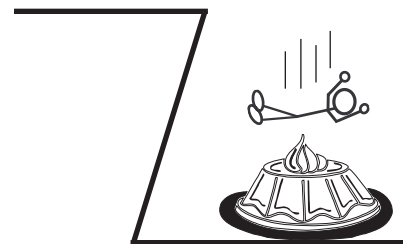
The link take-out would mean that the plan doesn't push the person at all.



## Impact Turn

The impact turn states that the problem the disad presents is actually a good thing.

The impact turn would mean that the person lands in lime jell-o. Mmmmm! J-E-L-L-O!



## Impact Take-out

The impact take-out states that the problem the disad presents is not serious or harmful.

The impact take-out would mean that the cliff was just two feet tall. The person only stubs their toe.



# Flowing a Disadvantage: This Is What It Sounds Like In a Speech

## *First Negative Constructive (1NC)*

First off-case is spending. Subpoint A: Uniqueness — Congress is in control of spending now. House Speaker Dennis Hastert in 2006. “I am proud of the job this congress has done in keeping a cap on new spending.... There will be no new unplanned programs requiring significant funding until, at worst, the start of fiscal 2008. We have kept the promise we made to the American people to be disciplined with their money.”

Supoint B: Link — New gun programs cost billions. The National Rifle Association in 2003: “Not only will these proposals fail to save lives, they will cost billions. Regulations that require government-supervised training or extensive criminal background checks have never been subjected to a neutral cost-benefit analysis. Even conservative estimates of these proposals indicate costs in excess of the \$2 billion range. This does not even begin to consider what will happen when angry victims sue government agencies for failing to keep guns out of the hands of criminals.”

Subpoint C: Impact. One: new spending snowballs. The Washington Times in 1999: “Normally sober members of congress see presidential approval of new domestic programs as an indicator that spending is in season. Like sharks who sense blood in the water, they go into a frenzy of new spending, losing whatever self-restraint they formally possessed.”

Two: massive increases in government debt will collapse the economy. American Enterprise Institute in 2004: “But debt is the Achilles heel of this new economy. We have managed to avoid disaster so far, but if debt continues to spiral upward there are dark times ahead.”

## *Second Affirmative Constructive (2AC)*

Now the spending disad. One, not unique. We spend billions on Iraq all the time and there's not impact. Two, not unique. Their own card says Congress has increased spending in the last year. Read the parts that aren't underlined. Since their brink is older than their uniqueness, it proves the disad's false. Three, their uniqueness card is horrible. It's from the republican majority leader of the House, of course he thinks they're doing a good job.

Four, no link. We don't require government-mandated training. Our plan simply requires people to show a certificate from a private training company before they can buy a gun. Five, no link. Extend the Brady in 2004 evidence from the 1AC. There are thousands of government-certified handgun training companies in the status quo. Nothing new would be required.

And, no link, gun programs don't cost money. Gun Control, Inc. in 2001: “Right-wind scare-mongering aside, a requirement that citizens receive training before they are allowed to buy guns would cost next to nothing. The government already administers complicated gun monitoring systems that could easily be modified to encompass this simple regulation.”

And, turn, training requirements save money. Volker in 2005: “Waiting periods and background checks are the most restrictive—and most expensive—conceivable gun restrictions. A training requirement could replace these ineffective and cumbersome requirements, streamlining the gun purchasing experience and saving millions in government oversight costs.”

## *Negative “Block” (either the 2NC or 1NR might extend this*

Spending. 2AC one, they say we spend on Iraq, but that's irrelevant. Our internal link in the B-subpoint is domestic spending. 2AC two, they say Congress has increased spending, but they uniquely risk a new spiral of spending. More debt means more risk of economic collapse. Also, prior spending is not enough to trigger collapse. The Wall Street Journal in 2006: “This administration has spurred massive growth in government spending. What is surprising is that we have not felt any impact to date. But this does not mean we're safe. If we keep up our free-spending ways, sooner or later the effects will be felt.”

2AC three, they say our card is bad but the Speaker is in a unique position to judge the quality of congressional action. 2AC four and five, they say no link and they extend the Brady evidence. Extend the NRA 03 card. This evidence is broad enough to include their answer. Their new requirement means lots of new government oversight of training programs. If it doesn't, they can't solve because I could just open up a store that gives certificates without any real training.

2AC six, they say gun programs don't cost anything. Our NRA 03 card indicts this claim. And, their plan in particular would cost over \$100 million. Clancy in 2002: “Requiring gun owners to prove they have received training is simply not practical. The government would have to establish 'best practice' training minimums, then certify every gun trainer in the country. The price would be in the hundreds of millions.” 2AC seven, they say the plan saves money. Cross-apply the card I just read. Also, the plan doesn't get rid of existing regulations.

They've conceded the impact. Outweighs the case.

# This Is What It Looks Like On the Flow

## First Negative Constructive (1NC)

DA: Spending

A) U - Cong \$ lo

✓

Hastert 06  
Cong = gd job  
No \$ til 08

B) L - P csts bils

✓

NRA 03  
Gov superv train = \$  
bckgrnd ✓s cost  
\$2 bil

C) I

1) \$ Snwbl

✓

Wash Times 99  
= frenzy

2) Debt → Ec Coll

✓

AEI 04  
dark times

## Second Affirmative Constructive (2AC)

1) NU - Iraq

2) NU - card = cong spnd in SQ

3) Neg U ✓ bias

4) NL - no gov train

5) NL - Brady 04 1AC

6) NL - P ≠ \$

✓

GCI 01  
USFG monit guns in SQ

7) T/ P saves \$

✓

Volker 05  
P t/o w/bckgrnd ✓s

## Negative "Block" (either the 2NC or 1NR might extend this)

Irrel - L = domest \$

1) risk = linear

2) SQ \$ ≠ I

✓

WSJ 06  
≠ safe, FX → felt

Spkr = good posit

1) X-Ap NRA 03  
P req govt o/sight of train

2) If not, no ⑤

1) NRA 03

2) P = \$100 mil

✓

Clancy 02  
Govt must cert

1) X-Ap above

2) Plan ≠ ban SQ regs

I = concede  
OW case

# Topicality

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## What Is Topicality? (a.k.a. “T”)

Debate is about making good policy, and you can’t have a good policy unless you know what the key words of the policy mean. Some words are very difficult to define, and there are huge debates about them. How do you define “good” or “bad,” for example? It’s easy to understand this concept by thinking about a conversation you might have with your parents. Let’s say your parents tell you to be home “at a reasonable hour.” When you show up at 2:00 a.m., you get in big trouble. “But I *was* home at a reasonable hour,” you complain. “All my friends stay out until 4:00.” Your parents are not impressed by this argument. “Reasonable means midnight,” they say. How were you supposed to know what “reasonable” meant? Topicality deals with arguments about what words mean.

Every year there is a different resolution for high school policy debate (college gets its own new resolution every year as well). It is the affirmative’s job to come up with specific policies (or “plans”) that support the general idea of the resolution. What if the affirmative policy is a good idea, but it doesn’t support the resolution? For example, the affirmative might argue that every hungry child in America should be fed. This may seem like a good idea, but what if the resolution says we ought to make schools better? The plan is fine, but it doesn’t support the resolution. The negative would argue that the affirmative plan is “**not topical**.” This kind of argument can be even more powerful than a disadvantage.

## Arguing About Definitions

Of course, most affirmative plans seem fairly topical at first. However, if you research different definitions for the words in the resolution, it is easy to find definitions that contradict what the affirmative plan does. For example, what if the resolution says we should increase aid to African nations? The affirmative might offer a plan to increase aid to Egypt. Is Egypt an African nation? Many people might say “yes,” since Egypt is on the continent of Africa. Many experts might

say “no,” however, because Egyptian culture might be considered “Middle Eastern” instead of “African.” There is no right or wrong answer for what a word means, but it is possible to make arguments about which definition is **better**.

## Winning With Topicality

Topicality exists to **limit** what the affirmative may talk about so the negative can have a reasonable chance to argue against the case. If the affirmative could talk about anything, how could the negative prepare for the debate? The negative argues that topicality is a “voting issue.” In other words, they argue that the affirmative should lose the debate if the negative can prove that the affirmative plan does not support the resolution. You can win the debate by talking about definitions!

Topicality is a very powerful argument because the affirmative can lose the debate on topicality even if they are winning every other argument in the debate! After all, if the plan is not an example of the resolution, then who cares what a great idea it is? The judge would throw out all the affirmative arguments, just like a judge in a courtroom can throw out a case if it is irrelevant. This argument is referred to as “jurisdiction.” It means that the judge cannot vote for a non-topical plan because it is not in her jurisdiction.

## Making a Topicality Argument

Topicality arguments can be written ahead of time, just like disadvantages. In general “T” arguments have the following format:

### A) Definition

Evidence that defines one or more important words in the resolution.

### B) Violation

An explanation of why the affirmative plan is not an example of the kind of action described by the resolution. Answers the question “why does the plan *violate* the negative definition(s)?”



C) Reasons to Prefer the Negative Definition  
Arguments about why the negative definition is better for debate than other definitions of the word(s) being contested. If the affirmative offers a different definition, why should the judge prefer the negative definition?

D) Voting Issue  
Reasons why the affirmative should lose if the negative wins topicality. The two main reasons are *jurisdiction* and *debatability*. Jurisdiction means the judge can't vote for the plan if it is not part of the topic. Debatability means that the negative would not have a fair chance to debate if the affirmative did not have to operate within the limits of the resolution.

### **Reasons to Prefer the Negative Definition(s)**

There are basically two types of arguments negatives use to prove their definitions are the best: Standards and Specific Arguments.

#### ***Standards***

Standards are very general arguments about definitions. They describe what kinds of definitions—in general—are best. For example, many negatives argue that definitions that draw a **bright line** are best. This means that the definition makes it clear what is topical and what is not. For example, if I wanted to find a definition of the word “apple,” I would not want a definition that described it as “a fruit.” That definition does not draw a bright line between apples and all other fruit. I would want a definition that distinguished apples from other kinds of fruit.

There are hundreds of possible standards for determining which definition is best for a particular situation.

#### ***Specific Arguments***

Specific arguments talk about the negative definition *in the context* of the resolution or the debate round. If the resolution is about computers, for example, I might argue that the

word “apple” should mean “a specific brand of computer” instead of “a fruit” because the first definition is more specific to the other words in the resolution.

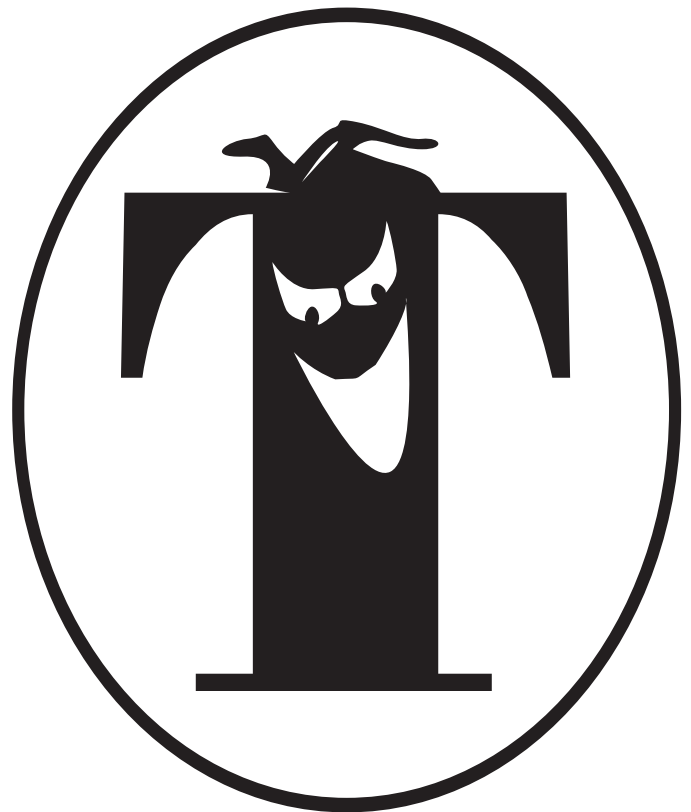
Specific arguments might also include arguments about grammar. For example, some words can be nouns **or** verbs. A specific topicality argument might discuss the fact that one of the words in the resolution should be defined in a certain way because it is used as a noun and not a verb. Like standards, there are hundreds of possible specific arguments.

### **Remember: To Win Topicality, the Negative Must Prove**

(1) That the Negative Definition(s) are Superior

AND

(2) That the Affirmative Plan Does Not Meet Those Definitions



# Answering Topicality

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Don't panic! Just because the negative makes an argument, don't assume that it's true. The truth is that it is very difficult to win topicality on the negative and relatively easy to win topicality on the affirmative. Don't get cocky, though. If you're not careful, topicality can ruin an otherwise successful affirmative round.

## Affirmative Topicality Tips

1. Write your plan with an eye to topicality. When you write the IAC, you make a series of strategic decisions. Most of these revolve around solving the problem your case identifies. Usually, you try to find the policy that solves the problem the best. Similarly, you should look for a policy that seems to be a clear example of the resolution. Does the plan sound like it takes the kind of action required by the resolution? Write the plan using as many of the words in the resolution as possible.
2. Research the words of the resolution. The negative will research various definitions of the important words in the resolution. The affirmative should do the same thing. Look for definitions that clearly include the kind of action taken by the plan. Failing that, look for the broadest possible definitions.
3. Research "contextual" evidence. Many people believe the function of topicality is to provide a reasonable limit on the number of cases the affirmative can run. If you can find evidence that talks about your policy and the words of the resolution in the same sentence or paragraph, you can read that evidence against topicality violations to make your case sound reasonable.
4. Remember: Advantages don't make you topical. Topicality focuses on what the PLAN does. The fact that your advantages talk about the same things as the resolution

is largely irrelevant. Make sure your PLAN is topical.

5. Prepare your topicality answers ahead of time. Anticipate the kinds of topicality arguments the negative is likely to run against you and write out answers and counter-definitions before the tournament.

## Common Answers to Topicality

1. Counter-definitions. The negative will read a definition of one of the words in the resolution that makes your plan sound non-topical. It is your job to answer that definition with a "counter-definition": a different definition of the same word that makes your plan sound topical. Once you read a counter-definition, make sure to make additional arguments about why your plan meets the counter-definition and why your definition is better than the negative definition.
2. Contextual evidence. Reading evidence from the topic literature that links your plan with the words of the resolution can help make your plan sound reasonable.
3. The "We Meet" answer. Read the negative's definition. Most of the time it isn't as exclusive as they say it is. Try to think of reasons your plan actually "meets" their definition. In other words, think of reasons why the negative's definition actually describes the plan, instead of excluding it.
4. Things that check abuse. Negatives will try to argue that the plan is abusive; they will say that, if the judge allows the plan to be topical, hundreds of other plans will also become topical. This is "abusive" because it puts too much of a burden on the negative to research those hundreds of new plans. The affirmative often argues that other things "check" or prevent this abuse:

- A) Literature checks. The affirmative should argue that their plan is reasonable because it is based on evidence found in the topic literature. In other words, the affirmative argues that the judge should not worry too much about topicality because the affirmative case generally concerns itself with the same issues as the resolution.
- B) Other words check. The resolution is composed of many different words. The affirmative often argues that, since the plan has to be an example of **all** the different words in the resolution, then violating a single word is not such a big deal. If the plan meets all the words in the resolution except one, for example, then it is still talking about the same general things as the resolution.
- C) Solvency checks. The affirmative has to prove that its plan solves the problem identified by the case. On topicality, the affirmative often argues that its definitions could not really add hundreds of new plans to the topic because most of those new plans would not solve any significant problem.
5. Counter-standards. The negative assumes that the judge must use certain standards to decide the issue of topicality. The affirmative should think of its own standards. The most common affirmative counter-standard is called “reasonability” or “debatability.” The affirmative argues that, as long as the plan is reasonable, the judge should ignore topicality. The affirmative must provide reasons why its plan is reasonable. These reasons might include things like “if the negative has evidence against the case—if the negative can fairly debate the case—then the plan is reasonably topical. The bottom line of reasonability is that it urges the judge not to choose between two competing definitions. Instead the judge is urged to decide whether or not the plan unfairly harms the negative in the round.
6. Reasons why topicality is NOT a voting issue. Most debaters are taught that topicality is an absolute voting issue, which means that the negative can win the entire round just by winning topicality. Not everyone agrees that this is true, however. Here are some common reasons affirmatives give why the judge should not consider topicality:
- A) Language is indeterminate. Is there such a thing as “the best” definition? Ultimately, the words we use to describe things are not precise. Using an earlier example, what is “a reasonable hour” for a teenager to get home at night? There is no precise answer to this question. Because language is imprecise (or “indeterminate”), many affirmatives argue that it is unfair to base a decision in a round on competing definitions.
- B) Topicality is not “real world.” Many topicality arguments are based on the assumption that a debate round is like a courtroom. In a courtroom, a judge can throw out a case if it does not meet certain strict definitions. In such a case, we would say that the judge lacks jurisdiction over the case. Many people believe that debate rounds are more like legislatures than court rooms. In a legislature (such as Congress), representatives are free to debate about anything, as long as it is important. Many affirmatives argue that topicality does not reflect the “real world” requirements of policy-making.
- C) Topicality silences important voices. In many cases, important ideas are not heard by policymakers because they come from people who have unpopular opinions. Policymakers avoid listening to these ideas by using rules and procedures. Some affirmatives argue that topicality is just another meaningless procedure which prevents important ideas from being heard. Evidence describing the importance of the plan is helpful in making this claim.

# Flowing a Topicality Violation: This Is What It Sounds Like In a Speech

## *First Negative Constructive (1NC)*

First off is topicality: human rights. A subpoint, definition. Human rights can only exist in a democratic system. The plan might improve human standards, but not human rights. Langlois in 03. “Only within a democracy are human rights standards or norms transcended such that the values articulated by these norms or standards are genuine rights. The difference between the right and the standard exists in the manner in which people properly conceptualize what they have in a human right, and this in turn depends upon the wider form of government in which the human rights are embedded. A so-called human right within an otherwise authoritarian governmental system, is not a right as such.”

B, violation. The plan pressures the government of China to treat one small group of people better, but does nothing to increase democracy in China. This means, at best, the plan improves human standards but not human rights.

C, reasons to prefer our interpretation. One, limits. If human rights means anything that helps people, then the affirmative has too much ground. Negatives could never prepare for all the topical plans. Two, bright line. Our definition gives a clear way to determine what is topical – if the plan includes democracy promotion, it’s within the resolution. Three, ground. There is a topical version of the plan. They can do the plan to help the group their advantages stem from as long as they also put democracy promotion in the plan. Ensures we have a predictable link to core negative ground.

D, topicality is a voting issue for reasons of fairness and debat-ability.

## *Second Affirmative Constructive (2AC)*

On topicality.one, we meet. Human rights are a part of democracy promotion. Cheema in 05. “Separation between democracy and human rights, however, is not tenable, because human rights ‘constitute an intrinsic part of democracy’ and the guarantee of basic freedoms is essential for people’s voice to be effective in public affairs.” Two, we meet. The plan is democracy promotion because it guarantees political freedom to a large group of Chinese citizens. Make them explain the distinction. Proves their bright line argument is false.

Three, literature checks abuse. If you do a search for “China” and “human rights,” you find all the articles on our plan. This proves we’re predictable and debatable. Four, their definition overlimits. Democracy promotion doesn’t give the aff enough ground. It basically limits us to one plan, meaning the negative would always win because preparation would be too easy.

Five, counter-definition. human rights include a list of basic freedoms. The World Health Organization. “The basic entitlement accorded to every human being. The rights include the right to health, education, shelter, employment, property, food, freedom of expression and movement.” Six, our definition is superior. Little A is ground. Our definition avoids overlimiting but provides a specific list of what freedoms affirmative plans can affect. Little B is education. If we only learn about democracy promotion we never study the full range of issues about China. Our education on the topic would be shallow.

Seven, context proves their definition is bad. All our cards say “human rights,” proving the plan is reasonably within the topic literature.

## *Negative “Block” (either the 2NC or 1NR might extend this*

Now, topicality. 2AC one, we meet. First, this card is terrible. It says democracy promotion guarantees human rights, not that human rights promote democracy. Second, our Langlois card from the 1NC makes a clear distinction between rights and standards, which their card doesn’t talk about at all. Plus, read the rest of our card. It’s in the context of China, meaning you prefer our evidence and our interpretation.

2AC two, we meet. Look, giving protection to a specific group within China doesn’t promote democracy. For example, party loyalists have always been protected in China, but that has never increased democracy. 2AC three, literature checks. Extend our reasons to prefer. Even if they are in the topic literature, their interpretation of the topic expands the number of topical plans to the point that we could never prepare for them all.

2AC four, overlimits. Extend C three from the shell. They can still do the plan as long as they also include democracy promotion.

Group the counter-definition debate. First, their definition is not exclusive with ours. Human rights include all the things their card says, but they only count as rights within a democratic system. We could concede their definition and you’d still vote for us. Second, their list proves our limits argument. There are literally thousands of possible plans that improve shelter, food, freedom of expression, and so on. Only our interpretation provides a debatable topic.

2AC seven, context. This is irrelevant. Their cards say human rights, but they don’t consider the distinction our Langlois card makes. Authors use words informally all the time.

# This Is What It Looks Like On the Flow

<i>First Negative Constructive (1NC)</i>	<i>Second Affirmative Constructive (2AC)</i>	<i>Negative "Block" (either the 2NC or 1NR might extend this)</i>
T: HR	1) WM - HR = demo promo ✓ Cheema 05 HR = intrinsc part of dem Dem = necess for HR	1) Bad ev Says Dem ↑ HR
A) Def: No HR w/o democ ✓ Langlois 03 Diff b/t rts & standards Auth = not rts	2) WM - P = demo promo Guar fdm to group in China	2) Langlois = BL on rt vs. stand = China context, pref our ev
B) Viol: P ≠ dem promo P = hum standards	3) Lit ✓s Srch → lit for our P	Prot spec grp ≠ dem promo Extend RTP Still unlimits topic
C) RTP	4) Overlim = 1 plan, neg wins	Extend Can still do P w/dem promo
1) Limits Neg ≠ prep for all HR cases	5) CDef: HR = list of rts ✓ WHO Hr = health, ed, food, etc	1) Aff def ≠ exclusive HR incl list, but only = rts w/in dem
2) BL P must incl dem promo	6) CDef > A) Grnd specific list B) Ed Dem promo = shallow ed	2) List proves limits arg Only neg interp = deb8bl
3) Grnd Top versn of P As long as incl dem promo = predict neg grnd	7) Context All aff ev says HR = P reasonable	Irrel - ev ≠ distinct b/t rt & stand Context = informal
D) VI - fair, debatbl		



# Counterplans

## The Negative's Turn to Argue for Change

Sometimes the world is messed up, and there's just no arguing about it. For the affirmative, this can be great news (well, in a totally weird kind of way). The point is that the affirmative has a great advantage when there are terrible, indisputable problems in the world that can be solved by the affirmative plan. Sometimes these problems consist of ongoing problems that are inherent in the current system (like racism, environmental destruction, poverty, disease, and so on). Other times these problems take the form of crises that are on their way but might still be prevented by timely action (global warming or imminent nuclear conflict, for example).

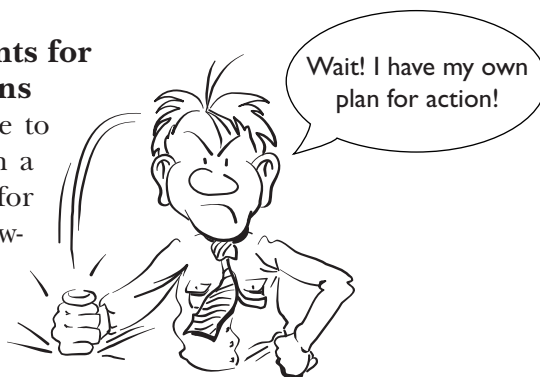
When the consensus of experts is that things are (or are about to be) really bad, the affirmative can have a competitive advantage that it is hard for the negative to overcome. After all, if we are sure that the current system is causing a lot of harms, then it may be a good idea to pass the affirmative plan even if it might not be completely effective — or even if it causes some disadvantages. If the harms caused by the status quo are bad enough, then the advantages of the plan can be nearly impossible for the negative to overcome.

A long time ago, some clever negative debaters thought to themselves, “hey, it isn't fair that the affirmative is the only team that gets to propose a plan for change! And anyway, that's not how the real world works. If someone proposes one idea for change, another person comes up with some different idea. We don't just debate about whether or not to act; we debate about what action to take, too.” It is because of bitter, unhappy rants like this that great progress is made. Before long, it became common for negative debaters to propose their own plans for change. These negative plans are called “counterplans.”

## Requirements for Counterplans

Being able to come up with a unique plan for change is a powerful tool for the negative team to have.

After all, the affirmative is limited to plans that are examples of the kind of change called for by the topic or resolution. The negative does not have to be topical, so it has no such limits. As with everything about debate, not everyone agrees about what kinds of limits are reasonable for negative counterplans. However, the following list represents the most common beliefs on this subjects.



### *Counterplans should be different from the plan*

Counterplans can be very similar to the plan, or they can be completely different from the plan. The point is that there has to be *some* kind of difference. Otherwise, why are you even debating, and how can the judge tell whom to vote for? However...

### *Counterplans should have something to do with the issues raised by the affirmative*

Judges are likely to consider counterplans that have nothing to do with the 1AC abusive and unfair to the affirmative. You must explain the counterplan in such a way that it seems like a *response* to the affirmative plan. You can do this by demonstrating that the counterplan solves the harms identified by the 1AC. If you choose to run a counterplan that claims to solve for harms other than those in the 1AC, you must still be able to explain a relationship between your new harms and the original 1AC harms. You can do this by demonstrating that the counterplan solves a problem that is larger or more immediate than the harms of the 1AC or avoids a potential pitfall of the affirmative plan.



### ***Counterplans must be competitive***

For a counterplan to be competitive, it must provide a reason to reject the affirmative plan. This is very important. It is not enough for the counterplan to be a good idea. It's not even enough for the counterplan to be a better idea than the affirmative plan. The counterplan itself must provide reasons why the plan is a bad idea. There are many ways to prove competition. Here are two of the most common:

1. **Mutual Exclusivity.** This means the counterplan and the affirmative plan cannot occur at the same time. They cannot exist together. For example, the counterplan might ban actions like the plan. It is also possible that the counterplan and the plan make use of the same scarce resource. In that case, you might argue that not doing the counterplan is an "opportunity cost" of doing the plan.
2. **Net Benefits.** When the negative runs a counterplan, the judge now has at least three options to consider: vote for the plan, vote for the counterplan, or vote for some combination of the plan and the counterplan (this usually means an affirmative ballot). To say the counterplan is "net beneficial" means that doing the counterplan alone provides more benefits than doing the plan alone *and* provides more benefits than doing the counterplan and plan together. Counterplans, like affirmative plans, can have advantages. These advantages prove why the counterplan is better than the affirmative. Often, the advantages of the counterplan are negative disadvantages to the affirmative plan. In some cases, the best "net benefit" for a counterplan is the fact that it does not link to one or more of the disadvantages caused by the plan.

### **Types of Counterplans**

There are so many different kinds of counterplans that we couldn't list all of them. However, here are some of the most common basic types.

### ***Alternate solvency mechanisms***

These kinds of counterplans offer a different plan designed to solve exactly the same problem as the plan. Usually, these counterplans come from experts in the same field as those who recommend the affirmative plan. If the 1AC tries to improve education by making school days longer, for example, the counterplan might try to improve education by paying teachers more.

### ***Agent counterplans***

These counterplans advocate the same action as the affirmative, but use a different agent of action. For example, they might advocate presidential action instead of congressional action, or they might act through another country's government.

### ***Plan-inclusive counterplans***

PICs (as they are often called) contain most of the actions taken by the affirmative plan, with only minor differences. In some cases, a PIC might leave a single word out of the plan (or add a single word to it). Affirmatives often argue that PICs are unfair because they "steal" arguments made by the affirmative.

### ***Consult counterplans***

Especially with the topic involves foreign policy, negatives might run counterplans that differ from the plan only in that they require binding consultation by the U.S. with some other country or organization (like China or the UN). These counterplans are sometimes considered illegitimate. Very few policy experts discuss whether the U.S. should consult with its allies about individual laws or policy changes, so the affirmative will have trouble researching answers.

### **The "Status" of the Counterplan**

When the negative makes arguments against the affirmative case, they can concede that any of their arguments is wrong at any time without penalty (except that they cannot use that argument to win the debate). Negatives can also "drop" (or "kick") a disadvantage at any time unless the affirmative has claimed to turn either the link or the impact.

Can the negative kick a counterplan at any time? It is important for the affirmative to know this, because if the negative can decide not to advocate their own counterplan part of the way through the debate, this will have an impact on which affirmative arguments will win the round. Many negative teams will argue that the negative should always get to choose from two options: the counterplan or the status quo. In other words, the negative gets to choose sometime in the debate if it is going to defend the counterplan or the current system. You will often hear the 2AC ask the 1NC “what is the status of the counterplan?” That means “can you kick the counterplan, and what happens if you do?” There are three popular answers to this question.

#### ***The counterplan is unconditional***

This means that the negative is committed to advocating the counterplan throughout the entire debate. They are promising not to kick the counterplan.

#### ***The counterplan is conditional***

The negative is warning you that they reserve the right to choose between the counterplan or the status quo any time during the debate. Many judges find this answer to be illegitimate because the affirmative won’t be able to tell what the negative team is defending until late in the debate..

#### ***The counterplan is dispositional***

The negative reserves the right to kick the counterplan at any time unless the affirmative “straight turns” it. That means they can kick the counterplan unless the only answers the affirmative makes are reasons why the counterplan is bad. If the affirmative makes theoretical answers — like permutations (see below) or objections to the kind of counterplan being run — the negative can kick the counterplan. Dispositional counterplans were developed as a way to compromise between the negative’s desire to kick the counterplan if it needs to and the perception by many that conditionality is unfair to the affirmative.

## **Answering Counterplans**

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Just as counterplans were developed by negative debaters to help them deal with troublesome affirmatives, clever affirmative debaters have developed a number of different strategies for answering counterplans.

### **Challenging the Counterplan’s Solvency**

Since most counterplans claim to solve most (if not all) of the 1AC advantages, one of the simplest ways to attack a counterplan is to challenge its ability to solve. Affirmatives often claim that the counterplan has a “solvency deficit,” which is to say that it does not solve the 1AC harms as well as the plan.

### **Answering the Net Benefit**

Net benefits often take the form of disadvantages that the counterplan does not link to. Sometimes they are advantages only the counterplan by itself can access. You can answer these arguments

in the same way you would answer a regular disadvantage or advantage. You might argue, for example, that the counterplan actually links to the disad that is supposed to be its net benefit.

### **Disads to the Counterplan**

All plans for change have potential problems. Affirmative often prepare disadvantages that link to commonly run counterplans. Make sure these don’t link to your plan, too.

### **Permutations**

A permutation (or “perm,” if you’re a cool debater) is a test to see if the counterplan is actually competitive. The affirmative suggests that the plan and the counterplan could be combined to form a single, successful policy. The affirmative describes how the plan and counterplan can be combined, then often argues (or even reads evidence) that the combination would

be the best possible policy. In this way, the affirmative demonstrates that the counterplan is not actually competitive. There are a number of common permutations.

### ***“Do both”***

This kind of permutation suggests that the entire counterplan can be merged with the entire plan, and that both policies can be successfully implemented at the same time. There are several different ways to interpret any example of “doing both,” however, so this kind of permutation should always be explained.

### ***Time-frame permutations***

Sometimes two policies can only be combined if one is implemented before the other one. Time frame permutations provide an order for implementing the plan and the counterplan. Sometimes these permutations suggest that a substantial amount of time should pass before the second policy is passed. Many negatives will argue that time-frame permutations are illegitimate, especially if the delay is very long. The idea is that the perm “adds” the idea of a delay to the combined policy that is not present in either the plan or the counterplan. This brings us to...

### ***Intrinsic permutations***

Some permutations combine the plan, the counterplan *and* another action that is not contained in either the plan or counterplan. While this kind of permutation is beneficial to the affirmative, most negatives will object to this strategy on the basis of the argument that no counterplan can win if the affirmative is given permission to add new, unrelated things to the plan.

### ***Severance permutations***

Some permutations do not include the entire plan and the entire counterplan. If the permutation includes the entire counterplan but not the entire plan, most negatives will object that the perm “severs” parts of the plan and is therefore illegitimate. The argument here is that the affirmative should, at least, have to advocate all of its original plan. If the affirmative can sever parts of the plan that link to negative argu-

ments, it would always win. Most judges seem to find this logic persuasive. However, it is less clear whether affirmatives can get away with perms that include all the plan but only part of the counterplan. There seems to be room for clever affirmatives to justify this kind of severance permutation.

## **Procedural Objections**

More than any other argument, counterplans tend to be subject to procedural objections. One of the most common arguments made by any affirmative is that the counterplan is, for one reason or another, unfair. Here are two of these procedural objections.

### ***PICs are bad***

Plan-inclusive counterplans are more popular than ever, and affirmatives are even more likely to argue that it is unfair for the negative to get to advocate most of the plan. They will say, among other things, that this forces the affirmative to argue against its own claims, that it results in bad debate because the judge must distinguish between tiny policy differences, or that it gives the negative too many counterplan options.

### ***Conditionality (or dispositionality) is bad***

Affirmatives are already unhappy that negatives have the option to offer their own proposals for change. Imagine how much more upset they are when the negative gets to make one of these proposals in the 1NC and then *change their minds* and go back to defending the status quo later in the debate. The 2AC asks about the status of the counterplan in almost every cross-ex of a 1NC where a counterplan is run because affirmatives almost always object to conditionality or dispositionality. The heart of this argument is that these two practices cause the negative to become a moving target (which policy they are advocating might change during the debate). 2ACs, in particular, are put under tremendous pressure because they have to defend the plan against the status quo *and* against a possible negative counterplan. Since the affirmative only gets one advocacy (the plan), they argue that the negative should also be limited to a single option within any debate.

# Flowing a Counterplan: This Is What It Sounds Like In a Speech

## *First Negative Constructive (1NC)*

Next off is the counterplan. Observation one is the mandates. China will provide public health assistance to Africa by giving 1.3 billion dollars to fund HIV/AIDS education.

Observation two is that the counterplan solves the case. China's help can improve health education in Africa. ChinaDaily.com in 2006. "China has made great efforts to train African doctors in traditional medicine, clinical medicine, disease prevention and control, and management of rural medical services."

Observation three is the net benefit. A subpoint. The plan undermines Chinese soft power because it will be viewed as the United States stepping on China's toes in Africa. The counterplan will boost China's soft power. Kurlantzick in 2006. "Among the tools available to Beijing in exercising its soft power, the most obvious are socioeconomic...China now portrays itself not only as a role model for the world's poorest countries but as their most vocal and sympathetic international ally...a similar approach characterizes China's dealings with Africa, where Beijing contrasts itself with Western nations."

B Subpoint. Increasing China's soft power is key to solving nuclear war. Axworthy 2003. "Asia is the most dangerous place in the world. North Korea is the world's most deadly problem...Right behind them is Pakistan...In this Asian cauldron of animosity, one optimistic possibility is the emergence of a peaceful, engaged China."

## *Second Affirmative Constructive (2AC)*

Now the counterplan. One, no solvency. Our 1AC Independent evidence says that the U.S. is key to promoting HIV/Aids education in Africa. If the U.S. does not act, African leaders won't be on board. Two, perm do both. The perm solves best. A, the U.S. will still be changing its position on sexual education in Africa, and China's money will help implement even more programs. B, working with China is best for Africa. British Prime Minister Tony Blair 2007. "We can work with China to serve the development of Africa in a way which benefits us all." Three, China's own problems prove they can't solve HIV/AIDS in Africa. Seattle Times 2006. "AIDS in China has spread beyond high risk groups...and the country is becoming 'like Africa.' in how the virus is transmitted."

Four, China's soft power is irrecoverable after inaction in Darfur. Kurlantzick 2007. "Africa's elite wondered why China, a country that was supposedly stood on the side of developing nations, stood silently by as the leaders of one of those nations eliminated their own people." Five, turn: Chinese aid to Africa undermines democracy. The Statesman 2007. "Chinese aid to Africa may do more harm than good. It risks...driving African countries back into debt and may undermine efforts to create stable democratic governments." And, democracy is key to stop extinction. Diamond 1995. "The very source of life on Earth, the global ecosystem, appears to be increasingly endangered. Most of these new and unconventional threats to security are associated with or aggravated by the weakness or absence of democracy."

## *Negative "Block" (either the 2NC or 1NR might extend this DA)*

The counterplan. The counterplan solves one hundred percent of the case. There is no reason why Chinese money couldn't fund HIV/AIDS education the same as U.S. money. The 2AC one is that the U.S. is key, but our 1NC ChinaDaily evidence proves China has the same capability to promote change in Africa as the U.S. Also, their 1AC evidence says the U.S. is hampering China now. It isn't reverse causal, nor does it say that the U.S. is the only country capable of getting African leaders on board with the plan. 2AC two is the perm. The perm can't solve our Chinese soft power net benefit, because an independent China is key. Working with the U.S. trades off with China's programs. Forest 2007. "The U.S. has a variety of programs and initiatives to engage Africa...and we are in competition with China and India, who offer infrastructure development with no strings attached." Also, their Blair evidence is talking about the E.U., not the U.S.

2AC three is that China can't solve because their infection rate is high, but that's irrelevant. If China's money can fund education programs and those programs solve in Africa, then what happens in China doesn't matter. 2AC four is that their soft power is irrecoverable, but Chinese aid to Africa can greatly increase Chinese soft power. Kurlantzick 2007. "China's aid programs may have been critical to its charm offensive in Africa...Some of China's aid explicitly goes to soften its image."

Now the democracy turn. First, this card is not specific to HIV/AIDS education — no link to democracy. Second, Chinese aid to Africa does not undermine democratization. Xinhua News Agency 2007. "China's increasing investment in and trade with Africa...has been accused by Western countries of undoing Africa's efforts to build democracy...But in the position paper, Beijing argued that there should be 'neither an invariable model nor a one-size-fits-all standard for good governance'."



# This Is What It Looks Like On the Flow

## First Negative Constructive (1NC)

CP: China

### I) Mand

PH asst to Af  
\$1.3 bil  
AIDS ed

### II) ☺ case

China imprv HE in Af  
✓  
ChinaDaily.com 06  
China has made efforts

### III) NB

#### A) Plan ↓ China SP

✓  
Kurlantzick 06  
China uses SP in poor ntns  
Contrst to west ntns

#### B) ↑ China SP ☺ NW

✓  
Axworthy 04  
Asia = > dang in wrld  
China = 1 optimistic possib

## Second Affirmative Constructive (2AC)

### 1) No ☺

1AC - US ky to AIDS ed in Af

### 2) Perm: Do both

A) US still Δ posit on ed in Af, + China \$

B) China best for Af

✓  
Blair 07  
Can wrk w/China

### 3) China probs prv not ☺ Af AIDS

✓  
Seattle Times 06  
AIDS sprd in China, like Af

### 4) China SP not recvble

✓  
Kurlantzick 07  
Darfur prvs Af elite ≠ China

### 5) Chinese aid to Af ↓ dem

✓  
Statesman 07  
> harm than good  
Und stable dem gyts

Dem ky stop extinct

✓  
Diamond 95  
Glbl ecosys endang  
Thrts ↑ by ↓ dem

## Negative "Block" (either the 2NC or 1NR might extend this)

CP ☺ 100%

No reas China \$ not fund AIDS ed

### 1) INC ChinaDaily China same as US in Af

### 2) 1AC ev: US hamp China now ≠ say only US ☺

### 1) Perm not ☺ China SP Ind China ky

### 2) Work w/US t/o China

✓  
Forest 07  
US in compet w/China in Af

### 3) Blair ev = EU, not US

Irrel - if fund works in Af

### China aid to Af ↑ China SP

✓  
Kurlantzick 07  
Aid softns China img

### 1) Card ≠ spec to AIDS ed

### 2) China aid to Af not ↓ dem

✓  
Xinhua News 07  
China not against dem in Af

# Critiques

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## A Different Way To Attack the Affirmative

There are many different ways of arguing against a proposal to change an existing policy. In many debates, the negative may choose to attack the plan by using arguments that would be very familiar to politicians and government bureaucrats — arguments about how much the plan might cost, how difficult the plan would be to implement, or even what political problems the plan might cause for the party in office. These kinds of arguments assume that the focus of the debate should be what actions we would take if we were in power ourselves. What would we do if we were the president, or a member of the congress, or a supreme court justice?

There are other ways to look at a debate round, however, and there are other ways to argue against a proposal for change. Critiques — or “kritiks,” as cool debaters like to call them — are a way of arguing against a policy for change without necessarily talking about what the government should or should not do.

Many critiques start with this basic idea: debaters do not actually control the government. Forget all those internet conspiracy theories. When students in a debate round suggest that the President should change a policy, or that the congress should pass a new law, we can be almost certain that no one in power is actually listening. No matter how good you are at persuading the judge that the government should, for example, make stop signs bright pink, at the end of the round the stop signs in your neighborhood will still be red. The judge has no magic wand to make your wishes (or your plan) come true.

## Yeah? So What?

The realization that the affirmative’s plan does not actually get passed at the end of the debate opens up a lot of different possibilities for the negative. One of these possibilities is that we should be focusing more on what actually happens in the debate than on what would happen if the plan was magically passed.

Wait a second. Didn’t we just establish that nothing actually happens in a debate? Not at all! Lots of things happen in a debate. The two teams speak. They make particular arguments. They choose particular words. They tell stories (both through their own arguments and the arguments made in the evidence they read) that try to make us see the world in a particular way. In fact, one of the most important things that happens in any debate is that the debaters choose a specific way of debating. So what?

Are you ready for this? The negative can win the debate by persuading the judge that the actions taken by the affirmative in the actual debate round are bad.

## Huh? What? Excuse Me?

Don’t worry if this seems very general or hard to understand. Critiques can be some of the most challenging arguments in all of debate to make or answer, and there are so many different kinds of critiques that it is hard to describe them all at once. In fact, some critiques *do* operate within traditional policy-making frames.

One way to get a sense of how critiques work is to talk about the different kinds of critical arguments negatives might make. Critiques tend to fall into one of several general categories. Remember: these are not the only kinds of critiques — they are just some of the most popular.

## Critiques of Representations

Sometimes people use words that they shouldn’t use. You remember. Your mom grounded you for a week for calling Aunt Peggy “sasquatch,” didn’t she? Some words are even worse than that. If, for example, the affirmative used racist words in the 1AC, the negative might argue that they should lose. While it seems hard to imagine that someone would use racist words on purpose, experts have argued that many words and metaphors we use every day are actually racist, sexist, or in some other way objectionable. In this case, the negative argues that the damage done in the round by using offensive words and



the need to educate the affirmative about their mistakes justifies a negative ballot.

### ***Critiques of Political Assumptions***

History is full of people who were wrong about really important things. The world is not flat. The moon is not made of cheese. Demons do not fly into your mouth when you burp. Recently, some very smart people have begun to argue that we are wrong about our most basic political beliefs. Maybe democracy does not, in fact, help make us free. Maybe capitalism is not a good way to reduce poverty and make the world better. Maybe the justice system is not just. Maybe there isn't much difference between us and the people imprisoned for being terrorists. The negative team can win a debate by arguing against the fundamental political assumptions made by the affirmative. If the 1AC is based on the assumption that democracy is good, the negative can win by arguing that it is bad — or by arguing that spreading democracy makes it easier for people to do other things that are much worse than whatever problems the affirmative has identified.

### ***Critiques of Values***

Let's say you're going to the store, and you only have \$30 to spend. You buy some candy, a few magazines, and a sweet DVD. Pretty good trip...except that you were supposed to spend that money buying Grandma's heart medicine. There's nothing wrong with candy or DVDs, but you clearly had your priorities wrong. Some critiques argue that the affirmative plan also has its priorities wrong. For example, it might be a good idea to give aid to foreign countries to reduce poverty, but can we justify that sort of expense when there are people starving in the U.S.? Should the government pass new laws to reduce racism when it still hasn't dealt with the injustices done to native americans? The negative can win the round by persuading the judge that the 1AC chooses the wrong place to start making the world better — even if the plan itself is a good idea.

### ***Psychoanalytic Critiques***

So, you have a plan to make the world better? Why did you pick that particular plan? *Very interesting.* While debaters are not psychologists, some debaters have begun to use evidence from experts in psychology to argue that the affirmative is suffering from some sort of men-

tal problem. No, no, not the affirmative debaters themselves. They're probably lovely people. Critiques of psychology suggest that political writers sometimes make arguments that are motivated by something other than logic. For

example, debaters love to read evidence from experts who are worried that nuclear weapons or environmental destruction will cause the end of the world. Some psychologists have written that we are obsessed with the end of the world, and that this obsession can cause us to do or say dangerous things. The negative can use this evidence to argue that the plan should be rejected.

### ***Critiques of Traditional Policy Debate***

Remember at the beginning of this book, when we said that debaters can't agree about anything? We weren't kidding. Other than time limits and the requirement that the judge fill out the ballot, there really aren't any rules in debate. A lot of debaters choose to debate by speaking fast, reading evidence, and writing plans for government change, but there are quite a few people who think these practices are bad. Some argue that reading fast prevents debate from being accessible to the public, or that it excludes those whose first language is not English. Others note that reading quotes from experts causes us to ignore our own experiences or other forms of evidence like individual stories or artistic expression. The negative can win the debate by persuading the judge that the WAY the affirmative debates is bad for education, or for debate.

Tell me about your mother.



## **The Role of the Alternative**

Many critiques are nothing more than disadvantages with unusual kinds of links. In other words, they are simply reasons why the judge should reject the affirmative team. However, other critiques are structured more like a counterplan than a disadvantage. Can't we keep all these different arguments separated? Well, think about it this way: many critiques identify large social problems (like racism, obsessive behavior, or the loss of individual freedom) that are not likely to go away on their own. These problems are so common that it's easy for us (or the affirmative team) to dismiss them by saying "sure, bad things happen, but what can we do about it?"

Some negative teams answer this question by providing an alternative to the critique. The alternative is a suggestion for dealing with the problems identified by the critique (and, in some cases, for dealing with the IAC as well). There are several different kinds of alternatives negatives might offer. Here are a few of them.

### ***Alternative approaches to the IAC***

Some alternatives are very much like counterplans — they explicitly try to solve the harms of the IAC. The difference between this kind of alternative and an actual counterplan is that critique alternatives do not usually take the form of a formal action by the government. For example, if the critique argues that the IAC is bad because it focuses too much on government action, the alternative might be for the people in the debate round to take individual action to deal with the harms of the IAC. Alternatives that try to "solve" or otherwise deal with the IAC often focus on what the debaters in the round can do to change the world.

### ***"Plan-Inclusive" alternatives***

Critiques often "link" to a very specific action on the part of the IAC (like using an offensive word or speaking too fast). In these cases, the alternative might be simply to advocate the IAC without the specific link. Sometimes the negative team will actually present a formal counterplan that reproduces the plan except for the bad parts. Other times the alternative will be described in

a more general way. The negative might say "the alternative is to advocate the plan without the offensive words," or "the alternative is to deal with the harms of the IAC without the offensive words." Some people describe this general way of describing the alternative as a "floating PIC" (or "Plan-Inclusive Counterplan"). This is a way of saying that general alternatives are unfair because they might or might not act exactly like a counterplan — and the negative never has to commit to a specific proposal.

### ***Different ways to see the world***

Some critiques argue that our most important problems involve the way we see the world. The alternatives for this kind of critique would be about changing our perspective. If our problem is that we misunderstand the nature of liberty, for example, the alternative might be to explore and embrace other ideas of freedom.

### ***Different kinds of "action"***

Traditional policy debate tends to focus on the actions of large governmental organizations. Some critiques offer alternatives that suggest different ways to deal with the world that do not directly try to solve the harms of the IAC. Critiques that are based in Buddhism or that deal with problems of ontology might, for example, suggest that meditation is the best way to overcome our problems.

### ***Different ways to debate***

If the negative is critiquing traditional debate practices, they will often present an alternative vision of what "good" debate should look like. This vision will range from very vague and difficult to understand to very specific and clearly explained. In many cases, the negative will actually perform the style they think best exemplifies good debate.

## **Things to consider**

You will need to think about what alternative best suits your critique. Many debaters choose alternatives that are described by the authors of their evidence. Others choose alternatives based on their personal experience.

# Answering Critiques

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Critiques can be complicated, and affirmative debaters often panic when confronted with a critique they are not familiar with. Because critiques can be so complicated, and because they often use words you may not be familiar with, it is easy to think of them as impossible to answer. Nothing could be further from the truth. Critiques are just like any other argument, and there are some simple steps you can follow to help you answer them.

## Reading Is Fundamental.

You can't debate what you can't understand, so the first step in answering any critique is to do your best to understand it. One way to do this is to get the evidence the negative is reading before their speech is even finished. Basically, this involves politely walking up to the spot where the INC is placing the pages she has already read and reading them yourself — while she is still speaking! This can obviously be very risky. Some judges find this kind of behavior inappropriate (so ask them before the round). Some debaters get offended or upset if you walk up and they don't know what you are planning (so let them know you might want to read the pages they are finished with during the speech). Perhaps most importantly, if you are too involved reading evidence you might miss an argument the INC makes. Even if you don't want to take the risk, you should always ask for the critique evidence after the INC so you can read it during prep time. Remember that reading critique literature outside of debate rounds can also help you understand new arguments in a debate.

## Cross-Examination Is Key

There are two goals in any cross-examination of a INC when a critique has been read. First (and most importantly) you must make sure you understand what the critique says. This means asking the negative team to explain the critique. Second, you have an opportunity to make the negative debaters help you answer the critique. You can actually accomplish both

of these goals at the same time during cross-examination, assuming that you ask the right kinds of questions. Here are some of the questions you should consider asking.

### *“So, can you explain this critique?”*

This is an incredibly broad question. One of three things will happen when you ask it. First, the negative might be really helpful and provide you with a nice, concise explanation that will efficiently help you and the judge understand the critique. The chances of that happening are roughly 1 in 250,000. Second, the negative might demonstrate their inability to explain the critique efficiently. They will start by trying to explain the entire history of philosophy or psychology, or they will give you a detailed biography of the main author of their critique evidence. It is very, very likely this will happen. If the negative does decide to wander off and not answer your question efficiently, you **MUST** interrupt them. Let them talk for a little bit, then proceed to ask one of the other questions below. Why would you even ask a question if you think the negative won't answer it efficiently? Because you want the judge to know that the negative can't explain its own argument. Finally, there is roughly a 1 in 4 chance that the negative will explain their own critique wrong. Many debaters use critiques they do not understand. In these cases, the negative's explanation of the critique is way too simple, and it makes no sense. If this happens, you should be very happy. They have just made it much easier to answer the critique. Try not to smile or pump your fist in victory. Work on your poker face.

### *“What are the links to this critique?”*

Wait, isn't "link" a disadvantage word? Well, kind of, but it is just as useful when debating critiques. You are asking the negative to explain what you did wrong, and how you did it. As you may have noticed, different kinds of critiques have different links. Some critiques argue that the plan itself is a bad idea

(critiques of political assumptions often do this). Other critiques argue that the words in your 1AC evidence are bad (critiques of representations commonly do this). There are also critiques that link to the style of presentation or argument you used (critiques of traditional policy debate). There are even critiques that seem to link to things that are happening in your mind (psychoanalytic critiques might make this kind of argument). You should write down every link the negative provides. When they are done, ask “is that it?” Negatives can be tricky, so make sure you get every single link out of them.

Second, use a trick interpersonal communication experts call “active listening.” This involves repeating what the other person said in the form of a question. So, if the negative says the link to the critique is the use of sexist words in the 1AC, you would ask “so, the link is that one of our authors uses the word ‘man-kind’?” If the negative says “no,” then figure out what other words they find objectionable. Maybe you didn’t notice the tricky thing we just did. When we asked the active listening question, we made the link sound really, really simple. This is a very strategic thing to do. When using the active listening technique, you should encourage the other team to simplify (or even oversimplify) the critique. If you can get the negative to agree that the critique is actually very simple, it will be much easier for you to answer it.

***“With all due respect, why is that bad?”***

This question is really asking “what’s the impact of the critique?” You would be surprised how often people have trouble explaining exactly why bad things are bad. Of course, this is particularly true when the impact in question is complicated — but you can ask this question even if the impact is very simple. Let’s say the critique argues that one of the key terms in the 1AC is racist. Instead of asking “why is racism bad?” you might ask “why is it bad for our 1AC to use this racist term 3 times? Is that worse than, say, allowing people to suffer and die?”

***“What affirmative doesn’t link to this critique?”***

This question is designed to get the negative to explain how to answer the link to the critique or to convince the judge that the link is unreasonable. If the negative can describe a plan that would not link to the critique, you can make arguments that your plan is similar to whatever the negative describes. If the negative can’t think of an affirmative that doesn’t link, you can argue that the impacts of the critique are inevitable (since any kind of action will cause them to happen).

***“Why does the critique outweigh the 1AC?”***

Many critiques argue that things that happen in the debate round automatically outweigh the impacts of the plan because in the “real world” the plan does not actually get passed. Cross-examination is a good time to discover if this is true in your debate. If it is, then you can ask questions about why the negative should get to ignore your speech and the problems it identifies. If it isn’t, you can ask how the critique interacts with the plan.

**Tips for Answering Critiques**

While critiques are a valuable negative argument, they are also vulnerable to some general affirmative answers. The following arguments are suggestions that require more substantive development from you as you research and debate critiques during the academic year.

***Don’t forget about the 1AC***

You spent a lot of time at the beginning of the debate arguing for change. Make sure you continue to remind the judge of those arguments, even if the negative is trying to use the critique to debate about something else entirely. Argue that the advantages of the plan outweigh those of the critique. Use the evidence in the 1AC to help answer the critique. Many of the implications of the critique are very generalized, but the affirmative can point to specific evidence to prove both their harms and their solvency. Thus, general indictments might not be as persuasive as the specific proofs offered by the affirmative.



***Answer the link and the impact, even if you don't have evidence***

Because many critiques come from experts who aren't talking about the specific debate topic, the link arguments made by the negative are usually analytical. What does that mean? It means the negative just made up the link between the critique evidence and the 1AC. There's nothing wrong with this, but it means you can make up your own reasons why the 1AC does not link to the critique evidence. The same thing is true for the impact.

***Find critical evidence that supports the plan***

The negative is using the critique to argue that something the 1AC "did" (whether it was using language or making political assumptions) is bad. Experts also make arguments that certain, similar kinds of "action" are good. For example, if your plan addresses a social problem, the odds are that some expert somewhere thinks this problem is really, really important. They may go so far as to say that overlooking or ignoring this problem is unethical. You cannot always predict what the negative might find objectionable in the 1AC, but you can find evidence that says the 1AC is ethically (or morally, or philosophically, or psychologically) necessary. You can then read this evidence to answer almost any kind of critique.

***Debate the specific critique***

There are many answers to critiques that merely require research like any other negative argument. Remember that philosophers and rhetorical critics get into arguments with each other just like legislators and policy analysts do. The general rule is: for every group of scholars who support the ideas behind the critique, there is a different group of scholars who think the ideas in the critique are terrible. If you find out that a certain critique is being run, research it just like you would any other argument in order to find those scholars who disagree with it.

***Permute the critique***

While permutations are most often used as an answer to counterplans, it is almost as common for the affirmative to use them against

critiques. If the critique offers an alternative, affirmatives will try to permute just as though it was a counterplan. Even when no alternative is offered, affirmatives will still use a permutation to try to demonstrate that the basic idea of the critique is compatible with the plan.

***Attack the alternative***

If the negative offers an alternative to the plan and the present system, then the affirmative can argue that the alternative is a bad idea. In fact, there are a number of different questions about critique alternatives that the negative often does not answer in the 1NC.

Can the alternative really be done? Who would do it? If someone other than the people in the room is supposed to carry out the alternative, isn't that really the same thing as saying the government should pass a law? You should turn these questions into arguments as to why the negative cannot offer a "way out" of the problems identified by the critique.

One common argument made against critique alternatives is that the alternative is "utopian" or that it represents what is sometimes called "object fiat." Basically, the affirmative accuses the negative of offering an alternative that is too unrealistic or that cannot really be implemented. For example, one alternative to modern political thinking about war and conflict would be for everyone to embrace nonviolence. Is this a good idea? Probably. Is it a realistic option for the whole world (or even a significant portion of it)? Many people would say no.

***Make the negative defend the idea of critiques.***

Many members of the debate community have accepted the idea of critiquing assumptions. However, many others do not believe that philosophical, rhetorical, and psychological ideas have any place in policy debate. Make the negative explain why we should consider these kinds of arguments if the goal of debate is to train students to study policy issues like legislators and political analysts do. Many debaters now carry evidence advocating traditional policy training for young people. For more information, see "Procedural Arguments."

# Flowing a Critique: This Is What It Sounds Like In a Speech

## *First Negative Constructive (1NC)*

First off is the critique: Normativity. The A subpoint is the link - the 1AC offers a legal policy precisely designed to solve the harms of the status quo. This vision of the law and our relationship to it is unrealistic. Schlag in 90. "...It's really nice to think that we are all self-directing, coherent, integrated, rational, originary selves who are engaged in a rational conversation in which we aim to resolve disagreement by resort to normative dialogue....It's nice to think that law and politics can be subservient to a grand conversation about who we think we should become. It is also absolutely unbelievable.."

The B subpoint is the impact: Normative thought changes debaters from active members of society into passive victims. Delgado in 91. "Normativity not only anesthetizes powerful actors, making it easier for them to do their work, it can paralyze the rest of us, leading us to cooperate passively in our own mistreatment."

The C subpoint is our alternative: reject the affirmative call to action so we can understand ourselves better and make real change possible. Schlag in 91. "Individuals who keep saying..."What should we do?" are...doing a kind of theater.... Now, you might think: We are free and we can choose which way to go. But, of course, we are not free. We... have been constituted as the kind of...thinkers who compulsively treat every intellectual, social, or legal event as calling for a choice. We must choose. What should we do? Where should we go? These questions are not helpful now. It's time to do a different kind of theater. And the first thing to do is figure out where we are and what we're doing."

## *Second Affirmative Constructive (2AC)*

Now, the critique. One, no link: their authors concede the critique does not apply to debate. Schlag in 98. "There is some basis for thinking that in American law reason is particularly compromised. The tasks that reason is called upon to perform in law are such that it may be unwise to extrapolate from the parochial character of the discipline of American law to other disciplines."

Two, case outweighs. The plan stops a global nuclear war and stops global warming. Both end in extinction, trumping their passivity. claim. Three, Perm: Do Both - the kritik allows us to keep an ironic attitude to the plan while still doing the necessary work of law. McGreal 01. "Many postmodern legal commentators tear down the edifice of current legal practices but offer no practical alternative. The fact is that the day after postmodern enlightenment is achieved, the world will continue turning on its axis...and regulators will still have to administer the law. But, how should they do so? Perhaps the best we can do is muddle through. Like the postmodernist, we can use the constitutional methods ironically."

Four, no link. We don't use normative thought. Debaters realize fiat isn't real, and the plan is an example of power politics, not legal theory. Five, turn, the kritik causes paralysis. Piety in 03. "Not knowing where one is in the world is the human condition. Yet, despite floating loosely in space, we must make decisions or choices, we must take action - all in the most appalling ignorance. It is horrible. But the alternative is the paralysis generated by focusing on the infinite regress of foundational questions. No one could keep doing 'turtles all the way down' and live in hope of finding a fixed point on the legal compass."

## *Negative "Block" (either the 2NC or 1NR might extend this*

On the critique. 2AC 1, no link. First, that's nonresponsive. Our links are specific to the practices of the 1AC, which definitely fiats a plan and assumes precise, predictable actions will follow. Second, normative thought is common in all academics, including the 1AC evidence. Schlag in 98. "Many disciplines in the humanities and in the social sciences share the same precritical commitment as law toward their own defining architecture." 2AC 2, case outweighs. They concede our Delgado card that normativity makes us passive. The 1AC prevents any action that might solve the harms. Only the alternative can outweigh anything.

2AC 3, the perm. First, they can't permute the alternative. There's no way to do the plan and reject it at the same time. Second, the perm destroys the entire structure of the law. Schlag in 97. "Law is constructed precisely through this kind of collective, projected objectification; get rid of the objectification, or, to put it another way, get rid of the illusion of objectification, and you get rid of law." 2AC 4, no link. Extend the first Schlag card in the 1NC. It lists about 5 different links, including the idea that we should resolve disagreements through dialogue. Fiat is not the only link.

2AC 5, the passivity turn. One, at worst this means both the plan and the critique link to passivity, which means you vote negative on presumption. Second, the critique inspires small-scale activism. Godrich 03. "A scholar inhabiting a concrete and local situation, someone seeking not to be integrated into the universal and concerned, therefore, with the events of their life and the ethics of their own situation, will find the critique of legal reason both insightful and useful."



# This Is What It Looks Like On the Flow

## First Negative Constructive (1NC)

K: Normativity

A) Link: 1AC vis of rel to law  
= unreal

✓

Schlag 90

Cong = gd job

No \$ til 08

B) I: → dbtrs passive

✓

Delgado 91

Norm = paralysis

coop w/own mistrmtnt

C) Alt: rej aff act  
→ undrstd self

✓

Schlag 91

≠ free 2 choose

choice ≠ helpful

## Second Affirmative Constructive (2AC)

1) NL - K ≠ apply to debate

✓

Schlag 98

NL from law to other discipl

2) Case OW

NW, Wrmng, extinct

3) Perm: do both

K = do P ironic

✓

McGreal 01

Pstmd ≠ pract alt

Use constit methds ironic

4) NL: ≠ Norm

Db8rs know fiat ≠ real

P ≠ lgl theory

5) T/K = paralysis

✓

Piety 03

Must choose in ignornce

K = inf regress of ?s

## Negative "Block" (either the 2NC or 1NR might extend this)

1) Nonresp - L spec to 1AC  
fiat, predict

2) Norm in all acad  
= 1AC ev

✓

Schlag 98

Discip = same as law

Concede I - passiv

1AC prev ⑤

Only alt = OW

1) Can't perm, alt = reject P

2) Perm dest law

✓

Schlag 97

Get rid of law

Many links - prob-slv thru dialog  
≠ just fiat

1) @ worst, both P & K = L  
vote neg on pres

2) K = activism

✓

Goodrich 03

local schlrs like K

# Attacking the Other Team's Evidence

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Sometimes the other team reads a piece of evidence that you have no prepared answer for. What should you do if you have no evidence that contradicts a particular claim made by the other team? Give up? Concede their argument? Of course not! You're a debater; you never concede. There are plenty of ways you can attack another team's evidence without having expert testimony of your own. Here are some kinds of arguments you might make:

1. Anecdotal evidence. If you hear the affirmative talk about one isolated example, you should make the claim that this is anecdotal evidence. Further, you should claim that one should not base policy on one example.
2. Assertions. If the affirmative makes a claim without giving any supporting evidence or reasoning, this is an assertion and not a proven argument. You should point this out to the judge, as an unsupported claim will usually not stand.
3. Conclusionary evidence. If the affirmative reads evidence which merely states the conclusion of the author without the reasons and evidence used to support that conclusion, it's impossible to tell if the claim is true. This is a poor use of evidence and should be noted to the judge (who will sometimes dismiss such evidence). Debaters making this argument will often say that there is "no warrant" for the claim in the evidence. This simply means that the author does not explain the link between her assumptions and her conclusions.
4. Biased sources. Be on the lookout for why an author might make certain claims. Sometimes bias can be revealed in their job, their affiliations, or the manner in which they state their case. Identifying biased sources will hurt the credibility of some evidence.
5. Dates. On rapidly changing issues, the date of the evidence is extremely important. If the affirmative reads evidence that says the economy is on the brink of collapse, or a war is about to start or some other timely issue, when the evidence was written can be extremely important. If your evidence is more recent than your opponent's, you should argue that your claims should be preferred because they "post-date" the other team's claims.
6. Vague references. Many times different authors will use the same word to refer to different ideas or situations. A political "disaster" for a Democrat might be entirely different than an political disaster for a Republican.
7. No causality. Sometimes evidence will refer to correlations between events, but this assertion does not mean that one causes the other. The tragedy at Columbine High School illustrates how some saw the cause as access to weapons, some as access to the Internet, some as access to violent games and movies, and others as part of an alienated suburban youth. The existence of all these variables in the same place does not guarantee that there IS causation between any of these problems and the tragedy in Colorado.
8. The "does it make sense?" test. Sometimes even highly qualified experts make arguments that are obviously flawed. Just because they're smart doesn't mean they're smart about everything. You should not allow the fact that the other team has evidence from an expert deter you from making your own arguments. Attack the logical connections in the evidence, or provide counter-examples from your own experience, or your own knowledge. This is one of those times you'll be glad you read the paper every day.

# Procedural Arguments

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## There's Something Wrong With You

Disadvantages, counterplans, and case arguments allow the negative to attack the specific arguments made by the affirmative. Critiques, on the other hand, allow the negative to attack the fundamental assumptions of the affirmative. Critiques can also allow the negative to attack the entire framework of debate. That seems like enough options for the negative, doesn't it?

Of course not! Negative debaters are never satisfied. What if you want to argue that one particular debate tactic used by the 1AC is bad, but you don't want to go so far as to attack the whole debate framework? That is where **procedural arguments** come in.

A procedural argument claims that a team should lose because it has violated the proper (or ideal) procedures of debate. For example, what should the negative do if the first affirmative speaker tries too hard to talk fast, slurring her words and spitting all over the place to the point that no one can understand a single word she said? Well, one thing the first negative speaker could do is make a procedural argument claiming that the affirmative should lose for being impossible to understand. Similarly, if the 2AC was incomprehensible, the 1N might run the same kind of procedural argument. It may seem unlikely that most debates would contain some sort of unfair or offensive action worthy of a procedural argument, but don't underestimate the creativity of debaters who are trying to find a way to win debates. There are actually a lot of different arguments that fall into this category.

## Procedural Arguments: Structure and Varieties

Like topicality arguments, "procedurals" (as they are often called in debate slang) are usually made as separate, off-case arguments. They are often first read during the 1NC. Of course, a procedural argument can be made by either team at virtually any time during the debate (as you will see shortly). Procedural argu-

ments are also usually structured like a topicality position: there is a standard explaining how a certain procedure of debate ought to be carried out, there is an explanation of what the other team did that violated that standard, and there is an argument that the other team should lose for that violation. Ultimately, the claim made by virtually every procedural argument is that the other team did something so unfair or so objectionable that the judge should punish them by voting against them.

There are so many different kinds of procedural arguments that it would be impossible to list all of them here. In fact, every year creative debaters make up dozens of new kinds of procedural arguments. This is easier to do than it might sound, especially because you generally do not need evidence from published sources to write a procedural argument. Below, you will find the various categories into which most procedural arguments fall, along with some of the specific procedurals you are most likely to hear.

## Specification Arguments

By far the most popular procedural argument in modern debate is **agent specification** (also known as "**A-Spec**"). A-Spec arguments claim that the affirmative has failed to provide enough information about the agency or group that implements the plan. Since most high school and college debate resolutions contain very general agents (like "the United States federal government"), affirmative plans often use very general words to explain who will implement the plan. In fact, the plan usually just repeats the words the resolution uses to describe the agent. An A-Spec position claims that the affirmative has a responsibility to be more specific than that. If the agent of the resolution is the federal government, for example, an A-Spec argument might say that the affirmative needs to specify which branch (legislative, executive, or judicial) acts to implement the plan, or even which specific agency in the executive branch enforces the plan.

Why might it be unfair for the affirmative plan to have a general agent? In some cases, there are significant debates among experts about which part of the government should implement a specific policy. In those cases, the negative would argue that it cannot determine whether the plan solves without more information. Also, the negative might claim that it has specific disadvantages based on which agency implements the plan, and that it cannot run those disads without agent specification. These are just a few of the many possible claims that might be contained in an A-Spec argument.

If the 1AC *does* provide specific information about what agent will implement the plan, the negative might run **over-specification** (sometimes called “O-Spec”). In other words, the negative would claim that it is unfair for the affirmative plan to be more specific than the words of the resolution when it comes to an agent. For example, it is possible that the 1AC uses its specific agent to avoid linking to arguments the negative thinks it should have the right to make.

Specification arguments can focus on many things other than agent issues. Some procedurals might use topic-specific evidence to claim that the plan has to specify a particular action or manner of implementation. Specification arguments can even include the way a team debates. If a team uses more than one color of highlighter to mark their evidence (see “Debate Research: Cutting Cards”), the other team may claim that it should have to specify which color it is using for every piece of evidence. Remember, though, that to win a procedural argument you have to convince a judge the other team is doing something so objectionable they should lose the round. Silly arguments are often ineffective.

### ***Plan Structure Arguments***

The negative may use a procedural argument to object to the way the plan is structured. The most common argument of this kind is **vagueness** – the claim that the plan does not explain its actions well enough for the negative to debate it. Alternatively, a plan structure argument might claim the plan should have to

include all the key words of the resolution to provide the negative important general links to key disadvantages or critiques. Plan structure arguments might even include claims about whether the plan is grammatically correct, or whether it is written in a way that is too visually challenging (bad handwriting, for example, or ALL CAPS).

### ***Stylistic Arguments***

Stylistic arguments are like general critiques of debate, but they are usually specific to a particular action. For example, one team might object to the speed at which the other team debates (but not whether it makes policy arguments or uses expert testimony).

### ***Evidentiary Arguments***

Some procedural arguments deal with the other team’s evidence. For example, it has become common for teams to use a pen or highlighter to mark the place they stop reading if they do not read the entirety of the highlighted parts of a piece of evidence (see the section on evidence in this manual). If they fail to do so, the other team may argue that they should lose the debate. Other evidence-related procedurals might have to do with whether the evidence is being taken out of context or whether the source is being cited accurately. Be very careful with issues of evidence context, as many tournaments have specific, strictly enforced procedures for what happens if one team challenges the other team’s evidence in this fashion.

### ***Critique Arguments***

If you have read the “Critiques” section of this manual, you know that critiques are negative arguments that often challenge the philosophical assumptions or linguistic practices of the 1AC. To combat critiques, affirmative debaters sometimes make **framework** arguments. Framework arguments make claims about how the judge ought to evaluate or prioritize policy arguments versus critical arguments. Affirmatives often claim that debate ought to focus on training future policymakers, and that judges should therefore ignore critical arguments.

Framework arguments can also include claims that critiques are too difficult for affirmatives to answer or too hard for affirmatives to prepare for. This is one kind of procedural argument that usually includes some sort of evidence. There are actually scholarly journals where debate coaches and experts write about the benefits and drawbacks of specific tactics. Framework arguments have become so popular that some affirmatives even read them at the end of the 1AC if they think the negative is likely to run a critique.

Other critique-oriented procedural arguments might deal with a specific practice. If the 1NC reads a narrative from a specific individual, for example, the affirmative might make specific arguments about why personal narratives should not be allowed.

### ***Counterplan Arguments***

See the section of this document on “Answering Counterplans” for the kinds of procedural arguments most commonly made by affirmative debaters.

## **Answering Procedural Arguments**

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Procedural arguments can be some of the most difficult to answer because they do not necessarily have anything to do with the debate topic and because they tend to change from debate to debate. However, there are several simple tactics that will allow you to answer most of the procedural arguments you are likely to encounter.

### **Don’t Panic**

Remember that procedurals are just like any other debate argument — they contain a number of specific claims, each of which can be answered. Make sure to get a copy of the procedural argument from the other team as soon as they are done reading it so you can look at it more closely and make sure you understand what it says.

### **Fight Analyticals With Analyticals**

Most procedural arguments do not contain evidence. As a result, there is no reason that your answers to procedurals need to contain evidence. Think about the arguments the other team is making and come up with your own answers. They will talk about the problems with the way you debate. Think about the benefits of the way you debate. Fast debate, for example, is harder to understand, but it probably increases critical thinking skills and our ability to think quickly. Critiques may not involve the kinds of issues real-world policymakers normally consider, but if we’re training future policymakers shouldn’t we teach them to consider new things?

### **Ask “Why Didn’t You Ask?”**

Many procedural arguments claim that one team has done something confusing (like writing a vague plan or not specifying which parts of a piece of evidence it read). If that’s true, why didn’t the other team ask questions during cross-ex or prep time to clarify things? Make sure to point out that the other team had the opportunity to fix the problem itself.

### **Be Prepared**

Certain procedurals, like A-Spec and O-Spec, are very popular. You should write blocks (see “Briefing: Assembling Arguments For a Debate”) that answer these arguments before you even get to a tournament.

### **Reject the Argument, Not the Team**

The weakest link in any procedural argument is the claim that your team should lose for doing whatever the other team finds objectionable. The punishment does not fit the crime. If you failed to specify your agent in the 1AC, you should be required to do so in cross-examination instead of losing the debate. If you talked too fast, the judge should give you poor speaker points instead of voting against you. If one piece of evidence is flawed, the judge can simply ignore that piece of evidence instead of voting against you. Argue that the judge can solve the problem identified by the other team by doing something short of giving your team a loss.



# Flowing a Procedural Argument: This Is What It Sounds Like In a Speech

## *First Negative Constructive (1NC)*

Next off is A-Spec. A, standard. The 1AC must specify which branch of the USFG implements the plan.

B, violation. The plan just says USFG.

C, voting issue. One, ground. We lose access to the politics disad if we don't know whether congress or the president pushes the plan. Also, we have specific disads linked off congressional versus executive implementation. They unfairly avoid those links. Also, we have specific alternative agent counterplans based on which branch implements that they unfairly avoid.

Two, education. We can't debate the specifics of real-world policy implementation without knowing which branch does the plan. This destroys the value of reading all the topic literature, robbing debate of its educational value.

Three, moving target. The vagueness of the plan in the 1AC allows them to specify a branch later in the debate. This makes it impossible for us to win, since they can change what the plan does to avoid links after we have read them.

## *Second Affirmative Constructive (2AC)*

Now, A-Spec. One, no resolutional basis. The topic only says USFG. We're not bound by the topic to specify further. In fact, if we did specify it would make the plan not topical.

Two, infinitely regressive. If we specify the branch this round, next round they'll say we should specify the agency that implements it, or the individual senators that vote for it, or the exact number of dollars we spend on it. Proves it's a bad argument for debate, since we can never win.

Three, cross-ex checks abuse. They could have asked us after the 1AC or even before the round. Four, we meet their standard. When we say USFG, that means all three branches act at the same time. Congress passes the bill, the president signs it, the courts uphold it. And, this interpretation is fair since it's what really happens in government.

Five, specification hurts the negative. If we choose one branch, they lose links to the others. Only our interpretation guarantees they have access to all their generic links.

Six, they have no right to specific arguments. There is no reason the politics disad or even a specific link is key to competitive fairness. Make them prove they can't win any conceivable argument if we don't specify.

Seven, alternative branch counterplans are bad. They force us to debate generic issues of interbranch conflict, which means we never learn about the issues of the topic. This turns their education impact.

## *Negative "Block" (either the 2NC or 1NR might extend this)*

On A-Spec, 2AC 1 is resolutional basis. First, that's irrelevant. Extend the three reasons A-Spec is a voting issue from the 1NC. Something doesn't have to be in the topic for it to matter. And, two, turn. Their plan is more specific than the resolution. If their argument is true, then the aff only gets to advocate the resolution and not a specific plan. This proves being specific is a necessary part of debate.

2AC 2 is regression. Extend the 1NC A-subpoint. Our standard is that they must choose a branch. If we ask for more than that, then vote against us. Also, they have conceded the moving target argument from the 1NC C-subpoint. This means the plan is an in-round slippery slope toward abuse, and is enough reason to vote right now.

2AC 3 is cross-ex checks. One, no reason to believe cross-ex is binding. Two, asking in cross-ex takes up valuable time we need for other questions. 2AC 4 is all three branches act. This proves our moving target argument, since this constitutes a specification of their agent. The fact that they waited until now to specify proves they are shifting the plan agent.

2AC 5 is spec hurts the neg. That's only true if all our blocks assume one branch acts. They don't. 2AC 6 is no right to arguments. Extend all the different things we lose from the 1NC C-subpoint. Make them prove we *can* win without disads or counterplans. Just proves their interpretation is bad for debate.

2AC 7 is branch counterplans bad. That's not true. Learning about interbranch relations is key to real-world policy education. Also, those counterplans don't prevent us from talking about topic issues.



# This Is What It Looks Like On the Flow

<i>First Negative Constructive (1NC)</i>	<i>Second Affirmative Constructive (2AC)</i>	<i>Negative "Block" (either the 2NC or 1NR might extend this)</i>
ASPEC	1) No Res Basis Spec = non-T	1) Irrel, Ext VI
A) Stand: Spec branch		2) T/Plan = spec, prv must spec
	2) Inf Reg	Ext A-sub, only branch
		Conceded
B) Viol: plan = USFG	3) CX Checks	1) CX ≠ binding
		2) T/O with other Qs
	4) WM: All 3 branches act	= shift, proves mvg tgt
C) VI		
1) Grnd lose ptix, spec DAs, branch CPs	5) Spec bad for neg spec 1 branch = no L others	Only if all blcks ass 1 branch
2) Ed Dest val of topic lit	6) No rt to args Prv not win anything	Extend. Prv we <u>can</u> win prvs aff intrp bad for db8
3) Mvg Tgt Can spec later, avoid L	7) Alt branch CPs bad = gen branch args, no ed	Intrbrnch ed = key No t/o with topic ed





# **Section 3: Finishing Strong**

# How to Give Good Rebuttals

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Rebuttals are the most difficult and important speeches in a debate. Not only is there less time for each speech, but you have to sort through all of the issues raised during the constructive speeches to determine which ones are the most important! After all, the rebuttals are the final four speeches in the debate. They represent each debater's last opportunity to convince the judge to vote for their team, and most judges base their decisions almost entirely on what is said in the last two rebuttals. The decisions you make in your rebuttal will decide who wins the debate.

How do you give a good rebuttal? The answer to that question is different depending on which rebuttal you are going to be giving. The first negative rebuttal (1NR), in particular, has different goals and requirements than the 1AR, the 2NR, or the 2AR. In fact, most of what follows in this section applies to the last three rebuttals more than the 1NR. Still, some recommendations are helpful no matter which speech you are giving.

## General Standards and Expectations

Before you can give a good rebuttal, you have to understand what the purpose of a rebuttal is and what the standards for good rebuttals are. The purpose of a rebuttal is to summarize the round for the judge – to help the judge resolve the key issues of the debate in a such a way that it becomes clear who should win the debate. The assumption here is that you are going to do your best to summarize and resolve in such a way that the judge decides to vote for you.

While it should be clear by now that there are no hard and fast rules to debate, there are some general guidelines that judges expect most rebuttals to follow.

### *Explain the decision calculus to the judge*

Your single most important task as a rebuttal speaker is to explain how the different issues in the debate work together to justify

a vote for your team. Explaining the decision calculus means letting the judge know which team to vote for and why she should vote for that team. Is the judge voting for you because you are affirmative and the impacts of your advantages outweigh the impacts of the disadvantages? Is the judge voting for you because you are negative and the counterplan provides a superior way to solve the harms of the 1AC? You are literally trying to persuade the judge not only to vote for you, but to see the debate in a certain way that makes voting for you the only possible outcome.

This is harder than it sounds. Many rebuttal speakers (especially those giving the 2NR or the 2AR) begin their speeches by briefly explaining why they think they should win the debate. Effectively explaining a decision calculus, however, means that you must reinforce this idea during your discussion of all the major issues in the debate. If you are relying on a disadvantage impact to win the debate for you, talk about the importance of the impact at the appropriate place on your disadvantage flow. If you are planning to win the debate because your 1AC solvency evidence is fantastic, spend a bit of time on the case debate talking about your solvency evidence. At the end of your speech, the judge should not be able to forget the explanation of the debate you have constructed. Your arguments on each major issue should work together to form a clear explanation of the reason you should win the round.

### *Deal with all the important arguments in the debate round*

Starting in the 1AR, it is each rebuttal speaker's job to resolve all the key issues in the debate. It is quite common for the 2NC or the 1NR to "kick" one or more major arguments, which just means that they do not extend them or that they concede some of the 2AC answers to those arguments. If, for example, the 1NR reads three different disadvantages, it is fairly

common to see the 2NC/1NR kick at least one of those disadvantages.

The point is that, by the time the 1NR is over, it should be clear what the major issues in the debate round are. From that point on, it is each speaker's job to deal with all of those issues. If the 1AR decides not to answer a disadvantage, the 2NR will extend it and say it is a reason the negative should win the debate. If the 2NR does not extend a topicality violation, the 2AR will note that it has been dropped and argue that the judge should not consider it in making a decision. If the 2AR does not answer a critique, the judge will probably conclude that the negative should win the debate. After the 1NR is over, in other words, there is no margin for error in covering the main issues of the debate.

As a rebuttal speaker, you should make sure that you talk about each major issue, and that you make arguments as to why the judge should resolve each of these issues in your team's favor. This is often a good time to compare the quality of your evidence to that of the other team. Are your authors more qualified? Is your evidence more recent? Does your evidence contain arguments that their evidence does not answer? If so, point these things out to the judge as reasons your claims should be preferred over those of your opponents.

### ***Don't forget the structure of the debate***

The first two speeches in a debate round usually introduce the major arguments in a debate and provide a general structure of issues that helps organize the rest of the round. The 1AC has an outline that (usually) includes main points involving inherency, harms, and solvency. The 1NC makes arguments against the structure of the 1AC, while also introducing "off-case" arguments like disadvantages, topicality arguments, counterplans, critiques, and so on.



*It can be very difficult to decide which issues to focus on in your rebuttal.*

In a rebuttal, it is tempting to throw this structure of arguments away and just make a series of summarizing arguments on a new piece of flow paper. This is almost always a mistake. Remember that the flow is important to the judge, as well as the debaters. The whole idea of the flow is that it allows you to see how each argument is dealt with throughout the whole debate. If you take away the judge's ability to see how the arguments in your rebuttal relate to the earlier speeches in the debate, you will frustrate the judge and make it easier for your opponents to beat you by extending arguments you did not answer.

You may, of course, decide which order to place the main issues of the debate in. You could start with an off-case argument or the main case debate. You could deal with the third advantage of the 1AC before the second. You could put topicality at the beginning of your speech or the end. The point is simply that you should keep using the same flow you have been using during the first part of the debate round.

### ***Make as few new arguments as possible***

The point of the rebuttals is for debaters to start summarizing the arguments in the debate. As a result, starting with the 1AR it is considered unfair to make new arguments in a debate round. You may ask, "what, exactly is a new argument?" The answer to this question can vary quite a bit from judge to judge, but for the most part an argument is considered new if it cannot be traced directly back to an argument made by the 2AC, the 2NC, or the 1NR.

For example, let's say the 1AR reads a card on an economic disadvantage that says there is no link because the plan will not cost any money. If the 2AC said that there is no link to the disadvantage because the plan won't cost any money, then the 1AR argument is definitely not new. If the 2AC did not make a "no link" answer on the disadvantage, then the 1AR argument



is definitely new. So, what happens if the 2AC reads a card saying, in very general terms, that the plan would not cause the disadvantage to happen? In other words, if the 2AC evidence says that the plan will have no negative economic impact, is it okay for the 1AR to read a card that makes a more specific version of that general argument?

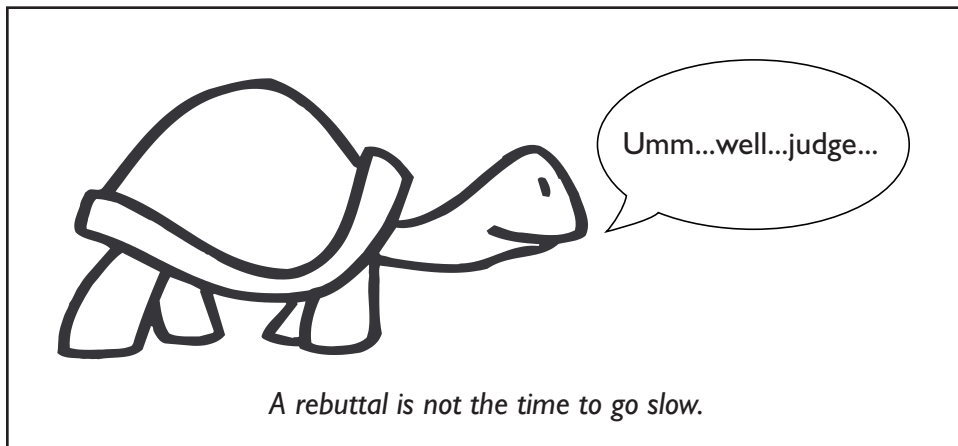
There is no clear answer to that question. Debaters will sometimes claim that the other team's rebuttal arguments are new, and their opponents will do their best to claim that their rebuttal arguments are not new. Before you make an argument that might be new in a rebuttal, think about whether you can make a reasonable claim that it is just an extension of a previous argument. If you hear a new argument in an opponent's rebuttal, point it out to the judge, explain why you think it is new, and make arguments about why new arguments are unfair at this point in the debate. Even if you do all those things, it might still be smart to answer the new argument anyway, just to be sure.

Don't let the prejudice against new arguments in rebuttals prevent you from reading more evidence when you need it (especially if the cards you are reading are clearly extensions of previous arguments). Furthermore, if the other team makes a new argument, you have every right to make new answers to it.

### ***Don't try to answer every single argument on the flow***

Many people say that the 1AR is the hardest speech in the debate because the first affirmative speaker must answer the 2NC *and* the 1NR in less than half the time those two speakers had to make their arguments. How can the 1AR make every argument that needs to be made? First affirmative speakers are, generally, faster than their partners. However, it is nearly impossible for anyone to answer every argument from the 2NC and the 1NR in the time allotted for the 1AR. The 2NR and the 2AR don't have things

much easier, as they must deal with all the preceding speaker's arguments *and* have time to provide the judge with a compelling decision calculus.



Fortunately, it is not necessary to answer every argument on the flow. One of the most important things a rebuttal speaker must do is to pick and choose which arguments to extend from her partner's last speech and which arguments to answer from her opponent's last speech. To do this effectively, you must know what kinds of answers can win each major argument and which arguments can lose each major argument. If you are affirmative, it is likely that the 2AC made both link and impact arguments against your opponent's disadvantages. Although it would be nice to extend both kinds of arguments in the 1AR, if you are pressed for time you can simply pick the stronger kind of argument. It doesn't matter whether a disadvantage has a large impact if it doesn't link to the plan, and it doesn't matter whether a disadvantage links to the plan if it has no impact. Similarly, it should be easy to see why negative teams often spend so much time attacking the plan's solvency. The negative can concede multiple harm scenarios in the 1AC and still win if the plan does nothing to solve them.

Another tactic that can help your rebuttals is to answer several individual arguments at the same time by "grouping" them. If the 2NC read ten uniqueness cards on a disadvantage but they are all a year older than the card read by the 2AC, the 1AR might say "group the uniqueness

debate — we’re post-dating their cards by at least a year.” Rebuttal speakers sometimes group entire major issues, but you should be very cautious about doing this. Grouping arguments that are not similar to each other is one of the easiest ways to miss unique arguments your opponent has made.

### ***Pay close attention to your time allocation***

Count the number of major issues you have to deal with in your rebuttal. Now divide that number by the number of seconds of speech time you have in your rebuttal. The result is, on average, how much time you will have to talk about each major issue. If you want to spend more time on one issue, you will have to spend less time on another. This means that it will be very important for you to keep track of how much time is left in your speech while you are speaking. You should always have at least one timer you can use to keep track of your own speeches — don’t rely on the judge to call out time for you. Some debaters like to keep track of their own time by holding a timer while they talk. Others prefer to have their partners call out time every minute (or even every thirty seconds).

As you get more experienced, you will want to have a general idea of how much time you want to spend on every issue before you stand up to give your rebuttal. Many debaters have trouble with the very first major issue they talk about in their rebuttal. Regardless of what that issue is, it is normal to want to spend more time on that issue than you really have. Debaters call this “getting bogged down” or having a speech that is “top-heavy.” Focusing on being efficient in the beginning of your speech will help you stay efficient the whole way through.

### ***Start thinking about your rebuttal before the round starts, then keep thinking about it as the round goes on***

If you have good information about what arguments your opponents are likely to make in an upcoming debate, then you can decide before the round what your arguments are going

to be. It is not too early, even before the debate starts, to begin thinking about what the important issues in the last few speeches are likely to be. Of course, your predictions might turn out to be wrong. You might think a negative team will focus on a disadvantage, for example, and they may end up spending the entire 2NR on topicality. Being wrong is not a bad thing in this case because thinking about your rebuttal before the round makes you more alert during the round.

As the round proceeds, you must constantly revise your thinking about your rebuttal. Keep track of what arguments teams drop, which major positions have been kicked, and what the other team’s strategy seems to be. It is often possible to tell what arguments the other team is most committed to simply by watching their body language and listening closely to their speeches. Keep asking yourself:

- Which arguments are we winning?
- Which arguments are we losing?
- Which arguments are most likely to win the debate for us?
- Which arguments are most likely to win the debate for the other team?

Considering the answers to these questions can help you decide what arguments to focus on, how to explain the decision calculus to the judge, and how much time to spend on each major issue in the debate.

# The First Negative Rebuttal

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The 1NR is the most unusual and underrated speech in a debate round. It's kind of like a constructive and kind of like a rebuttal. The thing that makes it the strangest is that it happens immediately after another negative speech (the 2NC). As a result, many debaters often see it as unimportant — just another few minutes of 2NC time. Far too often, the 2NC hands the job of extending the “unimportant” arguments to the 1NR.

An efficient and properly utilized 1NR, however, can be a deadly weapon in the negative's arsenal, and underestimating the power of the 1NR can be a mistake you soon regret when you are affirmative. If the 1NR can go for winning arguments and put pressure the 1AR, then it can prove to be one of the most important speeches in a debate round.

In addition to the general tips for rebuttals, here are a few ways to make the 1NR matter more than the affirmative wants it to:

## Never double cover

While the 2NC may occasionally have to ask you to finish an argument that she failed to cover in her speech time, you should *never* repeat or re-cover an argument the 2NC has already talked about. The 1NR should be making independent, potentially round-winning arguments

## “Split the block” before the round starts

Assuming that you know what your opponents are going to say on the affirmative, you and your partner should devise a negative strategy together before the debate starts. You should determine which major issues the 2NC plans on taking and which major issues the 1NR should take. If your plan for “splitting the block” of negative speech time has to change during the debate, the 2N should let the 1N know as soon as possible.

## Don't use prep time

Between the 2NC speech time and cross ex, the 1NR should have plenty of time to prepare his speech. In fact, all this free prep time is the

true luxury of the 1NR. Save that much-needed time for the 2NR!

## Balloon

The 1NR should pick one or two issues that were not big deals in the constructives and try to make them matter a whole lot more. This will catch the 1AR off guard, putting pressure on him to come up with new and creative ways to utilize 2AC arguments.

## Anticipate the 1AR

During all that prep time, think about what the 1AR's best answers could be to your arguments. Make sure that you pre-empt those arguments by answering them *before* the 1AR can. This is just another way to make the 1AR feel the heat.

## Drop and kick

The 1NR is a great time to get out of arguments that you don't want in the round any longer. It is more strategic to kick out of arguments in the 1NR, so that the affirmative has the least amount of time to think about the impact dropping that argument has on the rest of the debate.

## Make it matter

Even if you have to give one of those 1NRs where you know the 2NR is not going to go for anything you covered, you should never let the affirmative know that. The 1NR needs to be delivered with as much passion as the 2NC, so the affirmative team always assumes the 1NR arguments could appear in the 2NR. If the 1AR gets the sense that 1NR arguments aren't important, it will give her a strategic advantage by allowing her to spend less time and energy on your “throwaway” arguments.

**If you can remember only one thing from this section it should be this: Do not repeat the 2NC's arguments!**

# The First Affirmative Rebuttal

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**The 1AR must cover the major arguments from the 2NC and 1NR while making sure the 2AR has enough “offense” to win the debate**

The truth about the 1AR is that it cannot win a debate round, but it *can* lose one! The main purpose of the 1AR is to make sure that the 2AR has all the arguments she needs to win the debate round. This means not only extending 2AC arguments, but also answering and pre-empting negative arguments that could possibly lose the round for your team.

Because it is so difficult to answer two negative speeches worth of arguments in the short amount of 1AR speech time, the 1AR is often called the most difficult speech in the debate. On the other hand the 1AR can also be the most exciting and rewarding speech in the debate. In addition to the general tips for rebuttals, here are a few tips for having a good time with the 1AR while also making it effective:

## Reclaim the 2AC structure

This means you should base your responses to negative arguments on the structure of 2AC arguments. A typical 1AR argument might start “extend 2AC number one,” followed by a quick explanation of the argument, and responses to any negative challenges. This tactic subtly convinces the judge to base his decision in the debate on affirmative arguments.

## Exploit negative weaknesses

Because you have such a short amount of time to answer and extend so many arguments, you have to highlight any areas where the negative fell short. If the negative dropped or misunderstood any 2AC argument, make sure to point this out and briefly explain how the mistake affects the debate in your favor. This is one way to regain a strategic advantage after the block.

## Allocate time

In the 1AR, this should be decided *before* you stand up to speak. Many people even recommend writing down how much time should be

spent on each argument on the top of your flow as a little reminder to keep you on track in the heat of the debate. Good time allocation can be the difference between dropping a disadvantage and crushing the 2NR. Remember to take a timer with you when you speak — or ask your partner to help you stay on track with verbal cues.

## Anticipate the 2NR

Based on simple observations like time allocation, the amount of evidence read, and the energy put into certain arguments, you should be able to get a feel for what the negative thinks their best arguments are. Be very aware of these choices in the block and plan your 1AR accordingly. Remember the problems with time allocation in the 1AR we talked about before? Anticipating the 2NR can help you decide which issues to spend the most time on. If you do this effectively, you will have taken a lot of the steam out of the 2NR before she even gets up to speak.

## Prioritize issues

1ARs almost always run out of time before they can say everything they want to. As a result, putting the most important arguments at the beginning of your speech can mean the difference between winning and losing. As Sun Tzu wrote in *The Art of War*: where your enemy is weak, attack; where your enemy is strong, retreat.

## Make choices

Obviously, word economy is important in the 1AR, but matter how efficiently you speak the 1AR should still extend fewer arguments than the 2AC made. This means choosing only the best 2AC arguments, making sure that you are extending offense (see “Who Wins the Debate?”), and answering negative arguments. It seems like a lot to do, but that is why you have to pick and choose to avoid extending 2AC arguments that don’t get you very far. Being familiar with the 2AC evidence can make your choices a lot easier.



# The Second Negative Rebuttal

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While the 1AR has traditionally held the title “hardest speech in the debate,” there is an increasingly popular belief that the 2NR is the real winner in that category. The 2NR represents the last opportunity for the negative to frame the debate for the judge. Winning requires the 2NR to choose the right issues and approach to create a persuasive bottom line negative position.

The 2NR cannot pursue everything in the debate because there is never enough time to do that *and* explain the decision calculus to the judge in a persuasive fashion. If not given a clear strategic calculus, the judge will not know why to vote negative. A good 2NR should, in a manner of speaking, write the ballot for the judge.

In addition to the general tips for rebuttals, here are some hints to help the 2NR make the judge want to sign the ballot immediately:

## Give an overview

Since this is the last chance for the negative to speak, the 2NR has to be able to break the whole debate down to what really matters and tell a coherent story for the judge. The line-by-line arguments on each major issue are important, but a brief overview will give the judge a clear message about what you are attempting to do in the speech in case it becomes unclear at any point or the judge misses anything (judges are only human!).

## Make choices

The least successful 2NRs are the ones who try to go for too many arguments. The 2NR is the time to let the judge know what your best arguments are and why they are more important than what the affirmative has said. This is the time to put all of your eggs in one basket – or, at most, three baskets. Remember it is very difficult to go for a procedural argument like topicality *and* several substantive arguments (like the case debate, disadvantages, counterplans, and so on).

## Prioritize issues

You have a short amount of time to cover a lot of issues in the 2NR. There has been an entire debate and now you only have a few minutes to collapse it all down to what matters most. Put your strongest arguments first and let the judge know why they are the most important arguments in the debate. That way, if you run out of time later the judge may not think it matters as much.

## Be specific

Be very clear about what evidence matters in the debate. Extending block arguments by tag-line alone won’t make you look like a very credible 2NR. Be specific about authors and warrants you want the judge to remember. Some judges will only read evidence after the debate if the 2NR or 2AR referred to it by name.

## Exploit 1AR weaknesses

There are bound to be some arguments that the 1AR drops or under-covers. However, simply pointing out her error will not get you anywhere in the 2NR. If there is a dropped argument, you have to explain to the judge why that argument matters and how it fits into the debate round.

## Anticipate the 2AR

It should be fairly clear after the 1AR what arguments the affirmative thinks are important in the debate. Be very aware of the choices made by the 1AR in terms of time and energy allocation and the amount of evidence read. If something seems like it might be important in the 2AR, answer it in the 2NR! After all, you won’t have a chance to speak after the 2AR.

***The 2NR must match the efficiency of the 1AR and the persuasion of the 2AR. You must put your team far enough ahead to overcome the affirmative advantage of giving the final speech.***



# The Second Affirmative Rebuttal

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**The biggest advantage in the debate is the fact that the affirmative gives the last speech. Do not waste this opportunity!**

The strategy of the 2AR is usually to re-establish the importance of the affirmative case and to minimize the impacts of the negative arguments. That means reminding the judge of the harms that will continue in a world where she does not vote for the affirmative. In this speech, you want this to sound more like a passionate story-teller than a politician on the campaign trail, so don't be afraid to show your passion for your affirmative. In addition to the general tips for rebuttals, here are some hints for the 2AR:

## Pay attention to the 2NR

You should pay careful attention to the time allocation of the 2NR. That way, you can point out and exploit any place that the 2NR fell short. It also means that you can figure out where the debate is really close, spend a little more time there, and do a little more work than the 2NR did.

## Do everything a good 2NR does

Almost all the advice I would give to the 2NR also applies to the 2AR: give an overview, make choices, be specific, and exploit 2NR weaknesses. Instead of anticipating the 2AR, you should try to anticipate any reason the judge might consider voting against you. You should also prioritize your arguments, but we'll talk more about that below.

## Revive the 1AR

The 2NR will have done her best to make the 1AR sound like he didn't make a single argument. In the 2AR, you should make sure to trace major affirmative claims back to the 1AR, especially on the line-by-line of major arguments. If the 2NR made specific accusations about new arguments in the 1AR, answer those by explaining the link between the 2AC and the 1AR on those issues.

## Re-tell the story

As the affirmative, you have the first and last speech. Use that to your advantage by being rhetorically powerful. Every affirmative has a narrative behind it. Emphasize how your story is more plausible or more compelling or more anything than theirs is.

## Don't forget your impacts

Many 2ARs make the mistake of spending all their time answering 2NR arguments. Don't forget to re-assert the key parts of your affirmative case (and whatever other "offense" you have in the debate). This is a great time for you to extend any impact calculus you or your partner made in your previous speeches. The judge needs a positive reason to vote affirmative at the end of the debate.

## Make "even if" statements

As the final speaker, you are fortunate enough to already know where the negative team thinks they will win the debate. It does not hurt you to acknowledge that, and then let the judge know why the issues you are winning justify an affirmative ballot even if the negative team is a little ahead on one or two other issues. Try to think of reasons you should win the debate even if the negative wins their biggest argument.

## Prioritize arguments

This is the last speech in the round, and you know what you absolutely must answer in order to win. Put those arguments first. It is a short speech and if you run out of time, you don't want to have failed to answer the 2NR's best argument.

# Who Wins the Debate?

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At the end of a debate, the judge signs a ballot that determines which team wins the round. As a debater, you spend your time in the round trying to persuade the judge to vote for you, but if the judge decides not to vote for you there is really nothing you can do. You may think the judge made the wrong decision — you may even *know* the judge made the wrong decision — but you are not the judge, and you do not get to sign the ballot.

So, what does this mean, other than that life is not fair? You should realize that the judge has all the power when it comes to making the decision in the debate round. If you are at all interested in winning debates, it is in your best interest to try to understand how judges make decisions and to adapt to their preferences.

Now for the bad news: it is very, very hard to get accurate information on debate judges. For one thing, there are literally thousands of judges all over the country. New judges are constantly entering the activity, old judges are constantly leaving the activity, and folks who used to judge but have been away from debate are constantly coming back. Even if there were some centralized way to track judges, how would we get accurate information about their judging styles? The truth is that the process of judges' decision-making in debate rounds is one of the most poorly understood elements of debate.

What can you do about this? There are two general strategies debaters have followed over the years: collecting information about judges and understanding the different processes of decision-making judges might use.

## Collecting Information About Judges

The fact that it's not easy to collect information about judges doesn't mean you shouldn't try. Especially if you debate in the same general geographic region on a regular basis, a little bit of work will go a long way. What kind of information should you collect about judges? As a debater, there are several questions you will want answered about any judge:

- Does the judge have debate experience? The answer to this question will help you know if the judge will understand debate jargon, if the judge can keep track of a complex debate, and so on.
- Does the judge have any particular preferences? Some judges like certain issues (like topicality), certain arguments (like political disadvantages), and certain speaking styles (like fast talking). Others have particular issues, arguments, and styles that they hate. Finding out these preferences can help you choose what to say and how to say it.
- How does the judge feel about the particular choices you and your partner have made? This includes the kinds of arguments you like to make as well as the style of debate you favor. If you know what kinds of choices your opponents are likely to make, it would also help to know how the judge feels about those choices.
- What kinds of arguments and practices have successfully persuaded this judge in the past? Sometimes judges will say they like certain kinds of arguments or practices, but their actual voting record does not agree with their claims. It is important to know a judge's history.

Some of these questions may seem repetitive, but it never hurts to ask a question more than one way. The more specific information about a judge you can collect, the more you will be able to adapt to the judge's preferences and win the debate.

There are a number of different tactics you can use to collect this information.



### ***Round reports***

If there is any information about judges that you should always have access to, it is the information you collect through your own experiences. The way to make sure you have this information is to write round reports of every debate you are in. Essentially, a round report is a short summary of each debate round: what tournament you were at, who you debated, what side you were on, what arguments the other team made, and how the judge voted. Many teams have a form they use for these purposes. Your job is to fill out the form, including taking notes about what the judge says at the end of the debate. Then, the next time you debate in front of the same judge (or if you debate the same team), you can consult your round report to refresh your memory and prepare for the debate more effectively.

Schools that have multiple two-person debate teams usually collect round reports from every team and have them available in a central location so that you can benefit from the experience of your fellow debaters, as well. Another benefit of the round report is that it will also help your coaches understand what happened in each of your debates so that they can know what to work on in between tournaments.

### ***Judge philosophies***

It has become increasingly common for judges to write “philosophies” – short statements (usually a page long) that explain their background and their judging preferences. Some tournaments even require all the judges attending them to fill out philosophies. For the most part, judge philosophies are now made available online. Several web sites make a practice of storing large numbers of philosophies (see “If You’re Not Cheating, You’re Not Trying,” below). This can be helpful to you at a tournament if you have web access and can read a judge’s philosophy prior to the debate. Once you have been to a tournament or two, you can also use these web sites in between tournaments to familiarize yourself with the philosophies of the judges who commonly judge in your region.

Remember that judging philosophies are a form of autobiography. While most people who write them try their best to be honest about their own preferences, it is very hard to see your own prejudices. The point is that you should not believe everything you read in a philosophy. Always use at least one of the other tactics in the section to verify what you read in a judge’s philosophy.

### ***The grapevine***

One of the best ways to learn about judges and get to know more people in the debate community is to ask other people at tournaments for information about an upcoming judge. Many people in the community are willing to help you, especially if you are polite and if you try not to interrupt them when they are very busy. Coaches and experienced debaters are usually the best sources of information. Don’t forget to ask the members of your own coaching staff, but if they aren’t available or don’t know the judge, don’t be afraid to ask a coach from a different team. Even if the person you talk to does not have a lot of useful information, she can often direct you to someone who does.

When making use of the grapevine, remember two things. First, the person you are talking to is usually very busy coaching teams or preparing for their own debate. Don’t spend all day asking them questions. Just ask enough to get a sense of what they know. If you don’t get enough information, ask someone else. Second, coaches and debaters have their own preferences – just like judges. The fact that another debater or a coach does not like a particular judge is not a reason to conclude that the judge is not good. Try to get more than one opinion, then compare what you hear with your own personal experience.

### ***Talking to your judge***

Debaters are often reluctant to speak with a judge before the debate. This is unfortunate, as one of the best ways to answer a specific question about a judge is to ask the question directly. There are two times this tactic works particularly well. If you don’t know anything at all about a

judge (your other tactics have failed you), tell the judge you aren't familiar with him and ask him to tell you a bit about his background and how he judges debates. You may not get the best possible information, but you can usually find out things like whether the judge has any debate experience.

The second scenario that calls for speaking directly to your judge is when you have some information about the judge but you want to know the answer to a very specific question. For example, consider a situation where you have been assigned a judge who has judged you once before. In the previous round, you were affirmative, and your affirmative arguments are very policy-oriented. However, in the upcoming debate you want to run a critique, and you don't know how your judge feels about critiques. Ask her! Of course, you should also use the other tactics I have described to double-check her answer.

When talking to your judge, remember to be as polite as possible. It is very easy to sound confrontational or angry when asking someone about their judging preferences. People are more likely to give you more information (and more *honest* information) if they think you are friendly.

## How Judges Decide Rounds

If a judge has no debate experience, it may be very difficult to determine how he makes decisions in debates. Most inexperienced judges make decisions by deciding which team they most agree with, or which team's argument make the most sense. On the other hand, if your judge has debate experience, you have some hope of understanding how she makes decisions. If we were being philosophical about this, we would have to admit that there are probably as many ways of deciding debates as there are debate judges. From a practical perspective, though, it is possible to make some educated guesses about how an experienced judge will make decisions.

The best of all possible worlds is one in which you have detailed information from round reports, advice from friends, and a recent

judging philosophy. Even if you do have great specific information about a judge, however, you may still lack an understanding of how judges make their decisions *in general*. Judges often go through a process that can include any number of specific steps and procedural considerations.

### *Resolving the "truth" of the issues*

Debates normally contain a series of issues the opposing teams disagree on, ranging from "facts" (is the world's temperature rising due to human activity?) to opinions about values (is freedom more important than security?). When the teams still disagree about key issues at the end of the debate round, many judges start their decision-making process by going through these issues and trying to resolve them. They might accomplish this by reading key pieces of evidence, examining their flow to see whose arguments were most skillfully made and answered, or simply by deciding which team sounded more convincing during the round. Once all the individual issues have been resolved, the judge can move on to consider the debate as a whole.

### *Cost-benefit analysis*

When considering questions of policy, many judges make their decisions by asking themselves what the costs and benefits of voting for each team's policy recommendations would be. Often, this comes down to asking whether the affirmative plan would solve more problems than it creates – whether the plan would do more good than harm. If the plan's advantages outweigh its disadvantages, the judge will vote affirmative. If not, the judge will vote negative.

Of course, many things can change this calculation. If the negative runs a counterplan, the judge is now evaluating two competing proposals for change. This may mean that the judge decides the debate by comparing the costs and benefits of the plan to the costs and benefits of the counterplan. If the negative team runs a critique, the judge may be persuaded to disregard the cost-benefit analysis approach in favor of some other method of evaluation.



### *Offense and defense*

Some judges prefer to see the debate in terms of “offense” and “defense.” This means they focus on arguments that are capable of resolving whole issues (or the entire debate) by themselves. For example, a negative disadvantage is an offensive argument in that it provides a reason why the affirmative should lose the debate. In answering the disadvantage, the affirmative might say that the impact is not probable. This is considered a defensive argument because it only diminishes the importance of the disadvantage. A link turn is an example of an offensive answer to a disadvantage because it makes the disadvantage into a reason that the negative (not the affirmative) should lose the debate.

While it might seem that the offense-defense metaphor confuses debate with athletics, this perspective can help both debaters and judges in a number of ways. For judges, focusing on offense allows them to see which arguments are capable of resolving each issue (or the whole debate) quickly. If a judge realizes that the affirmative has no offensive answers to a disadvantage, for instance, he may be able to summarize the debate on the disadvantage by saying that the affirmative is only minimizing the likelihood of the disadvantage. From this perspective, the disadvantage is still important in the debate even if the affirmative is winning a number of arguments against it.

For debaters, the offense-defense metaphor serves as a constant reminder that debaters must pick their arguments carefully. Affirmatives must make sure that their answers to negative positions are not only defensive. If the affirmative expects to win an issue with nothing but defense, they must work hard to emphasize the quality of their defensive arguments and evidence. Negatives, on the other hand, must make sure that they develop offense against various affirmative advantages. Ultimately, the metaphor is simply a reminder that more powerful arguments need to be prioritized in debate rounds.

### *Likes, dislikes, and priorities*

Each debate judge has his or her own preferences about debate. These can include

everything from the way debaters speak to the particular arguments they make. One judge might like to hear topicality debates while another thinks they are a waste of time. In many cases, these are just an issue of preference. In other words, judges like certain arguments or styles, but they are flexible enough to vote for you even if you don’t do or say the things they prefer. On the other hand, some judges have made their minds up about specific arguments: they might be convinced that global warming is true, that counterplans should not be allowed to be dispositional, or that debaters should be forced to read the qualifications of every author they quote. No matter what you say, they will not vote for you if you stake the round on an argument they disagree with or debate in a style they dislike.

When collecting information about judges, it is crucial to determine whether their preferences are things they like or things they demand. If another debater tells you a judge does not like critiques, for example, it is your job to ask whether they don’t prefer critiques or whether they refuse to vote for them entirely. In some cases, judges who complain about certain kinds of arguments continue to vote for those arguments anyway.

What should you do with the information about judges you collect? In general, it is a good idea to make choices in the debate round to suit the kind of debate your judge likes. This is usually just a question of what you prioritize. If your judge likes topicality, find a topicality argument to make in the debate and then put it near the beginning of your speeches. If your judge likes slower debate, prioritize your style of speaking over reading a lot of evidence. If your judge simply refuses to vote for political disadvantages, don’t bother running one.

Still, there is a limit to how far you should go with judge adaptation. Most judges are not so extreme in their preferences that they won’t vote for you if you win the debate. At least as important as adapting to your judge is choosing arguments that you are comfortable with. You will not win the debate if you choose to run an affirmative case you don’t understand just because



you think your judge will like it. Furthermore, the information you get on any judge is not always reliable. Someone may tell you a judge refuses to vote for certain kinds of arguments when in fact the judge in question just didn't like the specific argument your source made. Debaters often blame their losses on the judge—it is easier to believe that a judge doesn't like certain arguments than it is to believe the judge just didn't like the way you made that argument in the debate round.

### ***Telling the judge what to do***

One of the most frequent complaints made by debate judges when they talk to each other is that most debaters do not tell them how to decide the debate. Most judges are hoping that at least one of the teams in the round will explain which impacts are most important, which link arguments are most reliable, and how the debate should be decided in general. Is topicality more important than a critique? Is the harm solved by the affirmative plan more likely or larger in scope than the harm claimed by the negative disadvantage? How does the counterplan figure into the debate? Whose evidence is most believable on the crucial issues of the debate? Most judges do not want to have to answer all these questions themselves. They want your help.

Debaters are sometimes reluctant to make arguments about how the round should be decided because they are afraid of offending the judge. While it is important to be respectful to the judge, it is okay to make arguments that are backed up by good reasons. It might conceivably be offensive to say "you can't vote for their disadvantage, judge!" You are unlikely to offend anyone, however, if you say "you should prefer the impact of the 1AC to the impact of the disadvantage for three reasons: our impact author is a professor of political science and their author is a reporter for a local newspaper; our impact has a quicker time frame since our evidence says the impact will happen in two months and their evidence doesn't even say when their impact will happen; and, our impact is larger in magnitude because it involves global warming which our

evidence says will kill millions while their impact evidence just talks about political unrest." The difference is that the second example is a series of arguments backed up by reasons. Nearly all judges love debaters who make the round easier for them to decide.

### **What To Do After the Debate**

What is this, a trick question? After the debate round, you either go home or go to the next round. That's the easy part. The real question is what you should do after the debating is over but before the judge has made a decision — *and* what you should do after the judge announces the decision. Here are some basic guidelines.

#### ***Shake hands with your opponents***

One of the oldest traditions in most competitive activities is to shake hands with your opponent after a game. Debate is no different. Most folks will expect that, after, the debate, you will get up, shake the other team's hands, and say something like "good debate." You would be surprised how much good will you develop around the community just for showing some class and respect. If you give no respect, you will get none.

#### ***Wait patiently, and wait quietly***

If your judge announces the decision in the debate and/or gives an explanation of the decision to the debaters after the round (some judges don't talk after the debate), you should wait patiently for the decision to be made. Nothing good ever came of a debater staring angrily at a judge or encouraging a judge to hurry up. If you absolutely have to leave for your next debate, apologize to the judge and ask if you can talk to her later about the round. If you agree to do this, actually follow up on your promise and go find your judge later in the tournament. While you are waiting for the judge, resist the urge to have loud conversations with your partner or your friends. Give the judge the peace and quiet necessary to making a good decision.

***At least one member of your team should stay in the room***

Some judges will want to look at specific evidence you read in the debate while they are making their decisions. You need to be there to give them what they want. Also, if both members of the team leave the room the judge will have to track you down when a decision has been reached. Don't be rude to the judge. The member of the team who is not in the room should not go too far away, and should check back in the room frequently in case the decision has been made or the other member of the team needs a break.

***Clean up after yourself***

As soon as the judge finishes talking to you, you will either have to go to another debate or you will have to go home. In either case, you need to pack up your evidence to get ready to move. Remember that the room you are debating in is going to be used by other debaters. Put your trash in the trash can and clean up the mess you have made.

***Listen to the decision, and take notes***

Every judge has something to teach you. Even the worst, most idiotic judge in the world can teach you how to debate better in the future when you are confronted with another idiotic judge. You owe it to yourself to listen to what the judge says and to write down notes. This is also crucial for your round reports. Taking notes is also a good way to distract yourself so you don't do anything inappropriate (like yelling "what?" when the judge says something you disagree with). Practice your poker face. No one likes a sore loser, and even fewer people like a winner who gloats.

***Ask questions***

If you are confused about something the judge said, ask questions politely. Do not be afraid to ask about things the judge didn't talk about. If the judge did not mention you, feel free to ask about arguments you made or things you did. "What could I have done better?" is almost always a good question to ask a judge. Judges are often very experienced and knowledgeable about debate. This is your best opportunity to learn from them.

***Do not yell at the judge***

I do not think a debater ever convinced a judge to change a decision by yelling or being rude. I am, however, sure that many debaters have upset their judges by being disrespectful. Some debaters think they should yell at judges in order to intimidate them into voting for them the next time they see them. In fact, being rude is much more likely to cause a judge to look hard for a reason to vote against you the next time they judge you. Furthermore, word will get around that you are a jerk. Remember that the other members of the community are going to have a lot of influence over the rest of your debate career and, in all likelihood, the rest of your life. There will be times when you need advice, information, recommendations, and various other kinds of help from them in the future. You want to be the sort of debater everyone roots for, not the kind everyone secretly hopes will fail.

***Complain in the bus, not at the tournament***

Complaining about judges' decisions and other teams' behavior is one of the great debate hobbies. Everyone who has been in debate for more than a few tournaments has a story about a bad decision by a judge or bad behavior by an opponent. Telling these stories, and letting off steam about upsetting things that happen in debate rounds is important to maintaining your sanity. However, if you tell a negative story when the person in question is listening — or even when someone who knows or likes that person is listening — you can damage your reputation and make a lot of people angry at you.

The safest place to tell your "war stories" is in the vehicle your team drove to the tournament (or some other place where only you, the other debaters from your school, and your coaches are present). Countless debaters have been at a restaurant with their team the night after a tournament telling loud stories about how stupid some judge is, only to look over their shoulder and see that judge glaring at them from another table. Do not underestimate how much damage you can do by complaining at the wrong time in the wrong place.





# **Section 4: Research and Preparation**

# Debate Research: Cutting Cards

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One of the things that makes competitive debate different from the arguments we have in everyday life is the use of formal evidence. In other words, debaters do more than just make claims; they back their arguments up with different forms of “proof” designed to persuade the judge that their arguments are true.

What kinds of evidence do debaters use? Remember that there are a lot of different ways to debate. The style you choose will have a big impact on what kinds of evidence you might choose. Personal experience certainly counts as evidence. If you have relevant experience to the topic at hand, you should not hesitate to use it when you make arguments in a debate round. Debaters who choose more performative styles of argument might use evidence in the form of artistic expression, such as part of a song or artistic image.

Statistically speaking, however, most debate evidence comes in the form of “expert testimony.” This means that debaters read published quotations from people who write or speak about the issues in the debate. Debaters quote experts to support their arguments for two reasons. First, debaters are trying to demonstrate that educated and experienced people who are familiar with the issues agree with their arguments. This kind of “argument from authority” is a powerful persuasive tool, and can help convince the judge to vote for you. How does this form of persuasion work? Imagine you and a friend were talking about which football team will win the Superbowl:

**You:** So you think the Colts are going to win?

**Your Friend:** Definitely. My uncle Fred says they have the best running game he’s ever seen.

**You:** So? What does your uncle Fred know about football?

**Your Friend:** Well, he owns a nice TV.

Are you persuaded? No, I didn’t think so. Now imagine a slightly different conversation:

**You:** So you think the Colts are going to win?

**Your Friend:** Definitely. My uncle Fred says they have the best running game he’s ever seen.

**You:** So? What does your uncle Fred know about football?

**Your Friend:** He’s the running backs coach for the Chicago Bears. He has two Superbowl rings.

See? Much more persuasive. We tend to believe that people who have specific kinds of experience or expertise are more likely to be right about a specific claim than people who don’t. Debaters take advantage of this belief by using “testimony” (or quotations) from experts to make their arguments seem more likely to be true. This isn’t literal legal testimony; we call it that because it’s as if the author is appearing in defense of a debater’s arguments.

A second reason debaters use expert testimony is that it’s an easy way to make a series of arguments quickly. When experts write an article or a book for publication, they spend a significant amount of time coming up with their arguments — deciding which claims are the best, choosing exactly the right words to best communicate their ideas, and picking examples or statistics that will persuade their audience. Especially in the case of magazine or newspaper articles, authors have a limited amount of space in which to make their arguments. As a result, they will work hard to use the most efficient possible language in their writing. This makes expert testimony even more attractive to debaters, since reading these kinds of quotes allows debaters to say a lot in a short amount of time.

Evidence in the form of expert testimony is so popular among debaters that, in many debate rounds, you will see the first two speakers use a quotation to back up every major argument they make in their constructive speeches. The 2A and the 2N also tend to use a lot of quotes to back up their arguments. As a result, having a lot of evidence on every conceivable issue related to the topic gives debaters a big advantage in many debate rounds. If you see debaters carrying around several large plastic tubs, you will now understand what’s going on: they’re carrying a lot of evidence. In some cases, debaters carry



so much evidence that it can be hard to imagine what they can possibly use it all for.

### But What's a "Card"?

In debate language, a single quotation from an expert source is called a **card**. This is because in ancient debate days students would photocopy quotes from books or magazines. Using scissors, they would then cut the relevant paragraphs from the copied page, then tape the quote to an index card. Even though we are no longer in prehistoric times and we mostly use computers to do this kind of thing for us now, most debaters still refer to the act of doing research as **cutting cards**.

So, what's a card again? Usually, it consists of three things: The full text of a published quotation by an expert (or someone else who is qualified to write about the subject), information about the author and where the quote can be found (called the **cite**), and a short summary of the argument(s) made in the quote (called the **tag**). Most of the time, the tag comes first, followed by the cite and the quote. Here is an example of what an actual card might look like:

#### **US economic downturn leads to global depression and war**

**Mead 1998**

(Walter Russell, fellow, Council on Foreign Relations, *Esquire*, Oct., vol. 130, #4)

**If the American stock market falls and investors lose faith that it will rise again quickly, many European investors are likely to take their money home.** While the U.S. is nearing the end of a long expansion, Europe's economy is just starting up. Growth seems to be accelerating, in Germany, and countries like France, Italy, and Spain are also reporting good economic news. Furthermore, there is probably more long-term potential in European stocks now than in U.S. stocks. For twenty years, American companies have been growing leaner and meaner as management worked to unlock value and return it to shareholders. European companies are, generally speaking, at a much earlier stage in this process. **If financial markets turn sour in the U.S., look for the rats--pardon me; our trusty NATO allies--to desert the sinking ship. A European flight from our stock market would accelerate the market's decline. This would also lead to a dollar crisis.** Like the yen, the ringgit, the rupiah, and the bart, the dollar could sink to new lows as foreign capital flees the U.S. **If our currency collapses in the midst of the crisis, look for a global depression** on the scale of the one in the 1930s. **And a major war is more than likely to follow.**

The tag is the very bold sentence at the top. The cite is the next line. You will notice that it starts with two bold words: the author's last name, followed by the year of publication. When this card is first read in a debate round, these are the only two words on the cite line that will definitely be read out loud (sometimes debaters also read qualifications out loud, but they always read the name and date). The rest of the cite line contains information that is available in case

someone (the judge, the other team, or another debater) wants to know more about the author's qualifications or wants to find the original source of the quotation. In this case, that means the rest of the author's name, the author's qualifications, the name of the magazine the quote came from, and information about the exact issue of the magazine the quote came from.

### What's With the Underlining?

The quote that follows the tag and the cite in the sample card does not just contain text – it also contains formatting. Some of the words in the quote are bold and underlined. This is an example of what debaters call **highlighting**. Not all the words of a given quote are necessary to make the basic claim the author is trying to get across. Debaters often choose to read only the minimum number of words necessary. They remind themselves which words to read by marking those words in some ways. Sometimes debaters print out the whole quote in a single style of text, then use colored highlighting pens to indicate the words of the quote that should be read. In other cases, like the sample card to the left, debaters use bold text and/or underlining to indicate which

words of a quote should be read in a debate round for maximum efficiency. You may even see some cards where the unhighlighted words are made smaller so that it's really easy to tell which words to read at a glance.

Highlighting cards makes them much easier to read quickly, and can prevent you from reading irrelevant ideas in a debate round. However, it is easy to misuse highlighting. If you remove the right words (or the wrong

words, depending on your perspective), you can make a quote say the opposite of what the author intended. For example:

"I really like vanilla, but I'm allergic to chocolate, so I can't eat that kind of ice cream."

See what I mean? It is each debater's obligation to make sure that they do not use highlighting to leave out critical information or to take quotes out of context. When examining the other team's cards, read the un-highlighted text, too.

# Evidence: the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

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Perhaps you haven't noticed, but people are crazy. They'll say anything. Somewhere in the world there is someone who believes even the most ridiculous things you can think of. There is a group of people who think the world is flat. No, really. They have a website.

What does this have to do with debate? Debaters often rely on published evidence to "prove" their arguments. There have been crazy people forever, but now that we have the Internet and relatively cheap paper printing it is very easy for anyone to get published in an obscure magazine, an unmoderated website, or a blog. Debaters need to have the ability to determine the quality and believability of any given card, or they risk losing debates because they didn't realize the other team's evidence was bad.

When you look at any card, whether it is one you have, one you are thinking about cutting, or one an opponent has read in a debate round, you should think about the author's qualifications, the source of publication, the date of publication, and the content of the quote itself.

## The Author: Who Is This Loser?

It's easy to be impressed by arguments that are made in writing. In fact, it is common for people to assume that if they see something in print it must have a solid basis in fact. The painful truth is that people often write about issues they know nothing about, and your opponents in a debate round are not about to tell you if their authors are unqualified. So, what can you do to distinguish between authors you should trust and those you shouldn't? Here are several questions you should ask if you want to undermine the other team's evidence:

### *Is the author a person or a publication?*

Some newspapers or magazines don't list an individual author for their articles. If the card just lists the publication, you should ask your opponent to explain who wrote the article, how the publication arrived at its conclusions, and even who owns the publication. Most people never think about

this kind of thing, so they have a hard time explaining it. This is also a wake-up call to you to research this process for yourself.

### *Does the card list the author's qualifications?*

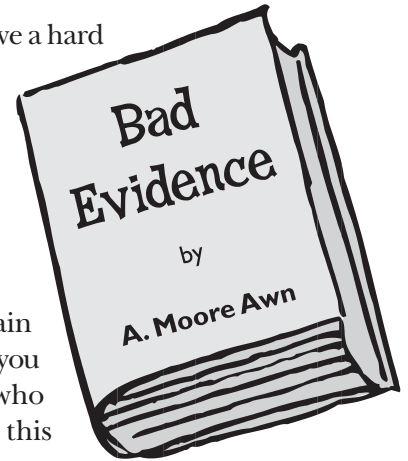
If the card doesn't explain why the author is qualified, you should ask your opponent who this person is. Sometimes this will result in them giving you a valid qualification. Most of the time, however, your opponent will have no idea how to answer your question. You can assert that the person might be unqualified — after all the percentage of qualified people in the world is significantly smaller than the percentage of unqualified people, so the chances are that any given author is unqualified. This is also a good reason for you to find qualified authors when you are doing research, and to list their qualifications in the cite of your cards.

### *Do the author's qualifications have anything to do with the claims of the evidence?*

Just because someone is a professor of something or a member of some prestigious organization doesn't mean they know everything. A professor of physics, for example, doesn't necessarily know anything about politics. A member of the U.S. Senate doesn't necessarily know anything about atmospheric science. Pay careful attention to the exact nature of the author's qualifications, and ask yourself (and your opponent) what the author's expertise has to do with the claims in the evidence.

### *Does the author have a vested interest in saying what she said?*

Even qualified people can be biased. Many people write about issues they have a personal interest in. Can you trust the President of the United States to be honest about whether one



of his policies is working? Probably not. Can you trust a lawyer who is representing someone accused of murder to tell the truth about the person's guilt or innocence? Not really. If one of your opponent's authors seems to be biased about an issue, you should argue that the evidence cannot be trusted.

### ***How do they know?***

If all else fails, this question will often ride to your rescue. Sometimes, experts make arguments based on extensive research and careful consideration. Other times, they are just guessing. Especially if the other team's evidence does not do a good job of explaining its claims (see "Data, Warrants and Claims," below), ask your opponent how their author arrived at the conclusions of the evidence. Again, many debaters will be unable to explain this process, and the credibility of their evidence will be undermined.

### **The Source of Publication: Who Printed This Stuff?**

Sometimes the most important piece of information in a cite is the name of the publication where the quote was originally found. This is especially true when it is difficult to tell if an author is qualified, or when no individual author is listed in the cite. Some publications are more credible than others. For example, major newspapers like the *New York Times* hire trained journalists and have a large editorial staff who check the quality of the writing and research in their articles. Here are some questions you should ask when you are trying to decide if a publication is credible:

#### ***What kind of publication is this?***

Was the quote published in a newspaper, a magazine, a book, a web site, or something else? The answer will help determine what else you might ask about, and if your opponents don't know what kind of publication their own evidence comes from it makes them look less believable.

#### ***Is the publication peer reviewed (or edited)?***

Some publications (like blogs) don't have any standards concerning what they print. For many

web sites, all you have to do is write something and the site will automatically post it. You could be writing nonsense words or listing the names of all your pets, and your words would still get printed. Other publications have tough screening processes. Writers must submit their articles to an editorial board or a committee of scholars to determine if they will get published. Publications whose articles have gone through a process of expert screening are called "peer reviewed," and it is easy to see why these publications are considered more reliable than some random web site. If a piece of evidence comes from a non-peer-reviewed publication, you can argue that it should not be trusted as much as a piece of evidence you might have that has been peer reviewed.

#### ***Is the publication related to the topic?***

Some publications seem naturally connected to certain topics. For example, I might not trust an article from [www.garden.org](http://www.garden.org) to provide a solution to the conflict between Israel and the Arab world. On the other hand, [www.garden.org](http://www.garden.org) would be a great source for articles about how to grow the best flowers. Similarly, publications that operate in other countries (like foreign newspapers) might be good sources for issues of foreign policy but might not be as reliable when discussing U.S. politics.

#### ***Does the publication have an obvious bias?***

Some publishers have a particular political viewpoint that affects all the articles printed by their companies. *The Washington Times*, for example, is a famously conservative newspaper, while *The Nation* advertises itself as an explicitly liberal paper. Publications can also be biased in other ways. The web site for the National Cattleman's Beef Association ([www.beef.org](http://www.beef.org)) is probably not a good place to look for unbiased information on the benefits of vegetarianism.

### **The Date of Publication: Yesterday or Back In the Day?**

The date of a quote's publication can be very helpful in determining the quality of the evidence. If you are debating about a situation that

can change a lot in a short amount of time (like public opinion about politics or the health of the U.S. economy), it is crucial to have the most recent evidence possible. Debaters often argue that their cards should be preferred because they “post-date” their opponent’s cards. This just means their cards are more recent. In some cases, however, having the most recent cards is irrelevant. Do the ends justify the means? The answer to philosophical or moral questions like this does not change over time.

You should pay close attention to dates when there are important historical events concerning the topic. If you are debating terrorism, for example, it is important to have evidence that was written after September 11, 2001. Dates can also be important with regard to specific authors. You would be surprised how many books are published by certain authors *after* the author is dead. Think about it: is a card from Aristotle in 2007 any better than a card from Aristotle in 1952? The guy is just as dead now as he was in 1952. The fact that a book or article is published after the author is dead doesn’t mean the evidence is bad — it just means that the date of publication is not a reason to prefer one piece of evidence over another.

### **The Content of the Quote: Blah, Blah, Blah**

You could have a quote from the most qualified author in history, printed yesterday in the most reputable publication in the world, and the evidence would still be bad if the quote itself was not good. Of course, determining the quality of a printed argument is a complicated thing. Without this skill, however, you will have trouble cutting your own cards as well as determining whether your opponents’ cards are good. At the end of the day, nothing will help you develop this skill more than reading evidence yourself and getting experience cutting cards. Here are some specific questions that will help you along the way:

#### ***Does the quote say what the tag says?***

Labels can be misleading. The fact that the tag on a card makes a claim doesn’t necessarily

mean that the quote itself makes the claim in the tag. In many cases, tags are a lot more definite and specific than the actual quote. For example, the quote may say that government spending “seems somehow related” to inflations, but the tag may say “spending causes inflation.” You can point these inconsistencies out in cross-examination or in your speech.

#### ***Does the card answer itself?***

Authors (especially experts) make complicated arguments that are full of words like “if,” “maybe,” and “however.” Debaters like evidence that sounds conclusive. As a result, it is important for you to read the parts of your opponents’ cards that are *not* underlined or highlighted. It is possible that the non-underlined parts of the card include arguments that go in the opposite direction from those in the tag. For example, the author of an article might say that gun control legislation is generally not effective. However, she might go on to say that one or two specific kinds of gun control would work if they were done correctly. If your opponents only read the first part of the author’s argument, you might be able to use the part they did not read to answer their claim.

Be aware that some debaters (intentionally or unintentionally) highlight their evidence “out of context,” which means that they use highlighting to make the quote say something contrary to what the author intended. Some debate tournaments have specific and harsh rules regarding what happens if a team reads a card out of context, so be very careful about using the word “context.” In many cases, you can make the same point (without causing a ruckus) just by saying that the text of the card does not agree with the tag.

#### ***Is the author talking about the same thing the debate is about?***

There is sometimes a mismatch between evidence and the debate round involving the specific claims and examples used by the author of the evidence. The author might be making a small claim about a specific situation, for example, and your opponent might be trying to use the evidence to make a larger, more general



argument. You can point out that the evidence is too specific to justify its tag.

Similarly, authors are often talking about a specific historical example when they make arguments. Just because a certain chain of events took place in the past does not mean it will take place again in the future under different circumstances, yet your opponent may be using evidence in a way that makes this exact kind of assumption. Differences in place can be just as important as difference in time. If an author is talking about a conflict in Europe, can we really assume that his claims can be applied to conflicts in Africa? If the assumptions of the evidence are different than the those of the debate round, you can point out the inconsistencies and argue that the evidence should be disregarded.

### *Has any part of the card been disproved?*

Experts often try to predict the future, and when they do they tend to make more than one prediction. When your opponents read evidence predicting what will happen in the future, read it carefully to see if any of the author's other predictions have failed to come true. If the author has been wrong about one thing, we can assume it's a distinct possibility that the other predictions in the evidence are suspect.

### *Does the card contain a complete argument?*

Experts who study arguments have developed different ways to evaluate whether a particular argument is complete (or solid). The next section describes one popular way to identify potential problems with debate arguments.

## **Data, Warrants, and Claims**

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There are probably hundreds of models of a good argument that have been developed over the years by different theorists. One of the most influential of these models – at least in the debate community – was originally published by Stephen Toulmin in his book *The Uses of Argument* (2003, Cambridge University Press). Although Toulmin's writings about argumentation are extensive and complicated, it is his terms for the three main parts of any argument that have been used most by debaters. Of course, most debaters use these words without knowing where they came from, so get ready to be one of the enlightened few. Oh yes, you are the coolest of the cool.

The most basic thing an argument needs is a **claim**. A claim is the point you are trying to make, or the thing you want to persuade the judge to believe. In the course of any debate, there will be many claims made by both sides. A claim could be anything – a prediction, a judgment, a statement of "fact," or a belief.

In order to convince the judge to believe your claim, your argument will also need to contain **data**. Data is information that your audience (the judge, or just people in general) already believes, or is willing to accept without a fight.

The crucial element of any argument in Toulmin's model is the **warrant**. A warrant explains how accepting the data in the argument should lead you to believe the claim. In other words, warrant explains all the assumptions that connect one idea to another.

What if your friend said: "Dude, your car looks like a piece of trash. It won't last you another year." This is an example of an argument that has a *claim* (your car will break down within a year) and *data* (your car looks awful), but no *warrant* (what does how your car looks have to do with whether it will keep running?). You might say to your friend: "Your argument has no warrant. My car has looked like crap for ten years, and I've never had a problem with it."

In the Toulmin model, things can change quickly. Once you convince someone to believe one of your claims, you can then use that claim as data to support a new and different claim. Likewise, if your audience doesn't believe a piece of data, then you have to treat the data like a claim and persuade them to believe it before you can use it as the basis for a new argument. If that's not complicated enough for you, go read the rest of Toulmin's book.



# How to Cut Cards

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If you have never done debate research before, it can seem overwhelming. Where do you start? What are you supposed to do? Don't panic! Basically, the process known as "cutting cards" has four key steps:

- 1) **Locate** useful quotes in their original form (books, newspapers, online sources, etc.)
- 2) **Copy** the relevant section of the quote (photocopy it, scan it, use the "copy" command on your computer)
- 3) **"Process"** the copied section (paste it into some sort of document and add a cite and tag)
- 4) **"Brief"** or **"block"** the cards you have collected this way (organize individual cards into more comprehensive collections of arguments)

This section will deal with step one. Steps two and three will be described in "The Word: Processing With a Computer." Step four will be covered in "Briefing: Assembling Arguments for a Debate."

## Locating Evidence

This step is more complicated than it might seem. It really consists of two different steps that you tend to do at the same time. So, if we are being technical, I suppose we'll have to describe step one in this way:

- 1) **Locate** useful quotes in their original form (books, newspapers, online sources, etc.)
  - a) **Find** published material that is relevant to the debate topic
  - b) **Identify** the specific quotes from that material you might want to use in a debate round

Ah, the magic of outlining. Won't your fourth grade teacher be happy you're using all those skills she taught you? Of course, she probably won't be as happy when she learns that we're going to talk about these two subpoints out of order (this *is* debate, after all — we can't follow

the rules all the time). It's really hard to explain what kind of material you want to find for debate if you don't know what kinds of quotes you are looking for in the first place. So, in the spirit of rule-breaking, let start with:

## Identifying the Quotes You Want (What Is a Card? Part 2)

It is important to understand that the process of finding the "right" quotes to copy from the publications you find is an art as much as a science, and even very experienced debaters can disagree on how to cut a single article. Here are some answers to very common questions.

### *What am I looking for?*

The most basic thing you need from any piece of debate evidence is a **claim** (see "Data, Warrants, and Claims"). Remember that the defining characteristic of a claim is that it is something you want the audience to believe — but it is not something they are just going to take your word for. A claim is, in some way, controversial. Do you need a piece of evidence to prove that the sky is blue, or that ice cream is yummy, or that George Washington was the first president of the U.S.? Probably not. Do you need a card to prove that the ozone layer is being damaged by human activity, or that the dairy industry is responsible for obesity, or that Washington was the best president in the history of the U.S.? Probably.

Your own personal idea of what counts as a claim will change as you become more experienced in debate and more familiar with the topic. In the meantime, here is a list of the kinds of claims you might want to look for when cutting debate cards.

- **Status Descriptions:** explanations of the current state of the world, especially current government policy on an issue. Status descriptions also include harm statements (such as "hundreds of thousands of Americans die each year from cigarette smoke").

- Evaluations: conclusions regarding how well something is working. In particular, debaters look for expert evaluations of how well a specific policy is working. Almost all affirmative plans are reactions to some perceived failure of a status quo policy. Evaluations also include comparisons between two or more possible solutions. The idea is to find authors who write about why one particular solution is better than others.
- Predictions: claims that a specific event is coming in the status quo, or that one action will have a certain kind of result. Predictions can include very complicated hypothetical claims (“if this policy is passed, and if the economy gets worse, and if there is a major hurricane, then something bad will probably happen” — that kind of thing).
- Causal Claims: claims that one thing causes another thing. Sometimes several intermediary steps take place between one event and its ultimate outcome, so it’s usually important to collect causal claims even if you don’t know what they’re good for when you cut the card.
- Judgments: conclusions regarding the value or moral nature of something. In other words, judgments are claims about whether something is good or bad — and how good or bad it is. Even claims that something is neither good nor bad are useful, as they can be used to answer arguments that the thing in question is either good or bad.

#### *How much of any quote should I cut?*

It is generally considered important for each individual piece of evidence to consist of at least one whole paragraph, and it is generally considered wrong ever to cut only part of a paragraph. The idea is that authors use paragraph separations for a reason: to separate major ideas. If you cut only the first couple of sentences in a paragraph, then you may be leaving out an important part of the argument your author is making. The other team should be able to read

at least the entire paragraph surrounding the quote so they can tell if the author is actually claiming the same thing you say she is claiming. In practice, authors sometimes include a lot of unrelated ideas in the same paragraph, but it’s a good idea to cut entire paragraphs anyway, just to be sure to avoid unnecessary conflicts in debate rounds.

Can you include several paragraphs in one card? Definitely. In fact, if you are cutting cards from a source like a newspaper, you will probably have to include several paragraphs in a single card because many journalists write in extremely short paragraphs. Additionally, when dealing with very complicated arguments like critiques, it is common to include several paragraphs in a single card in order to include enough explanation to get the general idea of the claim across.

#### *How many cards do I need?*

How much chocolate do you need? The answer, of course, is that you can never have too much. In debate, you always want at least one good card to support each important claim. Why do you need more than one card? There are two main reasons. First, you want different cards that give different reasons or provide different kinds of evidence to demonstrate the truth of the same claim. Second, you want multiple cards that come from different sources to prove the same point. Having more than one source is important because it can show the judge that there is some kind of consensus among experts that your claim is true. Also, some sources will have other advantages, such as more qualified authors or a more recent publication date.

Many debaters seem to believe that having more evidence is always useful, or that the team with the most evidence always wins. This is not necessarily true. Having good quality evidence — evidence that includes strong explanations, good logic, and qualified authors — is much more important than having hundreds of cards on each topic. On the other hand, having a good *breadth* of evidence (evidence about a lot of different topics) can be very useful. When

you see debate teams carrying around multiple large plastic tubs full of evidence, it is usually because they are interested in having answers to every conceivable argument (including some that really stretch the definition of the word “conceivable”).

## Finding Published Materials Related To the Topic

Finding evidence about a debate topic is easy. Finding *good* evidence about the topic is harder. Finding good evidence about the topic that contains the *exact* claims you’re looking for as a debater is really hard.

When it comes to finding debate evidence, there are really two different kinds of research that debaters do. The first kind is **general research**, which is work that debaters do when they are looking for a lot of different kinds of evidence about the topic without a specific kind of argument (disadvantage, critique, 1AC, etc.) in mind. This kind of research is generally done at the very beginning of the competitive year, often before the first tournament of the season. The second kind is **spot research**, which is work that debaters do when they know what specific claims they are looking for before they even go to the library or get online.

While each of these kinds of research require slightly different skills, they do have a lot in common. We will start by talking about general research, then discuss how to do spot research. However, the experience you get in each kind of research will also help you become better at the other kind.

### *Before you start: Learning enough to know how to search*

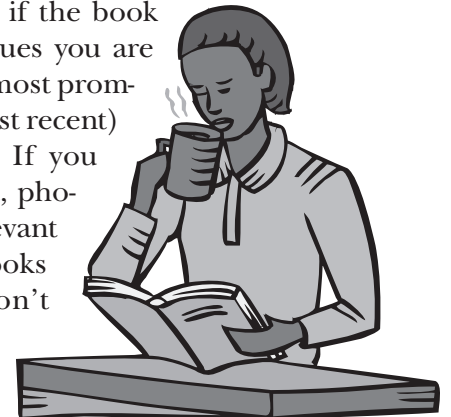
If you are already fairly familiar with the debate topic, then you will be able to jump right into searching for evidence. In many cases, however, debate topics deal with issues that are either completely unfamiliar to us or that are so technical we don’t immediately understand all the details. So, before you can really research a topic, it is a good idea to familiarize yourself with its basic ideas and terms. You could use purchased evidence for this purpose (see “If You’re

Not Cheating, You’re Not Trying,” below), but a more effective strategy would be to find a couple of good, general books about the topic area and read them. Among other things, this will teach you the basic terms that people who write about the topic use and the important controversies that exist in the topic literature.

### *The library: Doing book research & more*

If you do not already have borrowing privileges at a good library (a big public library or a university library), then find one and figure out how to become a borrowing member. Public libraries are, well, *public* — which means that anyone can become a member and check out books. Most university libraries are also open to the public, although they don’t always advertise this fact, and you may not be allowed to check books out of the library.

Libraries of all varieties use some sort of numerical system to organize and categorize their books (most university libraries use the Library of Congress call number system). This means that, even in the largest library, books related to any specific debate subject will all be grouped together in two or three spots in the stacks. Start any large, general topic search by looking in the book index at the library to find out where these spots are. In most cases, the most efficient way to do book research is the “shotgun” method: walk to the stacks where the books about your topic are housed, then take every book that looks like it might contain good evidence off the shelves and stack them in a work area. Once you have done that, go through every book in the work area, looking in the table of contents, the introduction, and the conclusion to see if the book is really about the issues you are researching. Pick the most promising (and, usually, most recent) books to check out. If you can’t check books out, photocopy or scan the relevant sections of the best books to take with you. Don’t forget to copy information concerning



## What's a Lexis?

Lexis-Nexis is one of the most powerful and inclusive private databases in the world. It contains the full text of nearly every major newspaper in the world, hundreds of magazines and journals, transcripts of TV shows. Virtually no other database can equal its library of law journals, court cases, and legal documents.

Debaters use this database so often that they will often simply include the word "Lexis" after the author, year, and qualifications, as though that is enough of a citation (it isn't).

You will even hear debaters use the word "Lexis" as a verb, as in "just Lexis the terms 'terrorism' and 'Cuba' and you'll find all the cards you need." Lexis has its own search language that you will need to learn if you are lucky enough to have access to it.

Do you have access to Lexis? Most universities now offer their students free access to a limited version of Lexis called "Academic Universe." While definitely useful, this version is not nearly as powerful as regular Lexis. Unfortunately, the full version is only given to law school students. You or your school can purchase a Lexis account, but it's quite expensive.

citation and author qualifications.

Books contain in-depth discussions of debate issues that are considerably more comprehensive than what you will normally find in magazines or online sources. Many books are actually collections of articles by different authors, all of which are about a single topic. Book authors also tend to do a lot of work assembling

bibliographies about the topic they are discussing. Basically, if you find a few good, recent books about your debate topic you will discover that the authors have done a lot of your researching for you. Libraries also contain people called "reference librarians." These poor, lonely souls get paid to sit around and wait for someone they can help. If you're having trouble finding information on a topic, go talk to them. They are usually nice and are always desperately bored. No one knows the library better than they do. They will often go so far as to help you figure out how to do the advanced search functions on your favorite database (see the section on "Free riding," below).

Libraries provide a couple of other services that can be very useful for debaters. For one thing, they almost always provide free Internet access of one kind or another (although university libraries have started getting stingy about this unless you're a student). In some cases, public libraries subscribe to some of the research databases we will talk about in the next section. Libraries also carry paper copies of the most recent magazines and journals. If you can't access these things online, the library may be the best place to go. You may have a hard time believing this, but some magazines and journals are actually *not available online* in any form! I know, I know: what are these people thinking? Anyway, libraries are the best places to get copies of this kind of content.

### *The net, part 1: Searching for newspapers, magazines, and journals online*

While the vast majority of people in the world still read newspapers, magazines, and academic journals in paper form, there has been increasing interest in providing online versions of major publications. There are now a number of publications that are only published on the Web, and most major papers and magazines are now available online in at least a limited form. This is incredibly convenient for debaters, since you can now do useful research from a computer instead of having to walk all over a library — and, once you find what you're looking for you can easily cut and paste it into a word processing document (see "The Word," below).

So, how can you access all this digital goodness? If you are a university student at a decent school, then you are set. In all likelihood, your school provides you with access to some private databases that contain the full text of thousands of papers, magazines, and journals. Your job is to find out how to access those databases, then figure out what kinds of publications are indexed in each of them.

What if you're not a university student? Then your life is harder when it comes to debate research. If your high school or middle school is really cool, then they might also be able to give you access to some of these really



cool databases — but don't hold your breath. You could always pay for database access yourself, but we're talking about a lot of money. If you have that much cash, why are you reading this? Shouldn't you be having your butler cut cards for you? No, the likelihood is that you'll have to learn to get by with the free resources that are available on the Web.

Don't forget that you can get access to paper copies of a lot of publications at the library. In other words, don't let the Internet make you lazy when it comes to research.

Still, isn't laziness just another word for efficiency? Luckily for debaters everywhere, the Internet gives us the resources to be very lazy/efficient. Let's talk about the free research you can do on the Internet. When doing general research, you should probably start with general search tools. One of the best methods of doing free research online is to use a large search engine to find articles. Some search engines can be specifically set to look only for publications (in the "advanced search" link, usually). Google provides debaters with two of the best free search tools in the world. The Google News site ([news.google.com](http://news.google.com)) allows you to search online newspapers and other publications, and provides you with links to the (usually free) articles you find. When looking for scholarly articles, your best friend is the Google Scholar site ([scholar.google.com](http://scholar.google.com)). This site indexes a staggering number of academic journals and books. The bad news is that, while Google Scholar tells you what articles you want, it usually does not provide free access to those articles. You will have to find most of the articles in a private database or in paper form in a library.

## ***If You're Not Cheating, You're Not Trying***

Debaters cheat, and I don't mean that thing you did with your date's best friend at the prom. I mean that people do not always do their own debate research. Of course, if you go to a school where there is a large debate program then you will share the work you do with the other teams, they will share with you, and your coach may do research for you as well. That's not the cheating I'm talking about. You see, doing research is hard, and doing a ridiculous amount of research is ridiculously hard. There are professional debate researchers who put together topic-related research and who will sell it to you. There is a small industry of debate research materials available online and in paper form.

Should you cheat, too? There are pros and cons to buying prepared research. First the good part. A lot of debaters do this, and it's not really considered cheating. Buying research allows you to have evidence that deals with a broad range of topic areas. It saves you a lot of time and effort. Especially if there aren't a lot of other debaters or coaches at your school, you may not be able to research all the important parts of the topic without buying evidence. Similarly, if you are just starting debate and don't have a lot of good coaching, buying evidence may help you understand what kinds of cards you should be cutting on a topic.

Now, the bad part. Buying evidence will not really teach you how to cut your own cards. At best, it gives you some good examples of card-cutting that you can emulate. Also, some evidence that you buy will be of questionable quality. Sometimes this is because the person cutting the cards was not skilled or motivated by quality. Most times it is because they are cutting a lot of evidence on a broad range of topics and were not trying to find the exact argument you are looking for. Finally, using purchased evidence means you may not understand the arguments your authors are making because you did not read the original article (or book or web site or whatever).

So, should you buy this stuff? If you can afford it, and if you plan to use it as a starting point for your own research, it's really nice to have. Still, there is no substitute for doing your own work, especially when it comes to things like your 1AC and your major negative arguments.

### **Some Places to Buy Evidence Online (and get other debate stuff)**

[www.planetdebate.com](http://www.planetdebate.com)

[www.evazon.com](http://www.evazon.com)

[www.wcdebate.com](http://www.wcdebate.com)

[www.baylorbriefs.com/b/](http://www.baylorbriefs.com/b/)

[www.debate-central.org](http://www.debate-central.org)

A number of web sites index the free academic journals that are available online. These include the Directory of Open Access Journals ([www.doaj.org](http://www.doaj.org)), the Internet Public Library ([www.ipl.org](http://www.ipl.org)), and others. Google Scholar also indexes a number of free online publications, but it does not always indicate which of the results it produces are free.

Many regular publications (including most newspapers) have their own individual web sites, and you can access these one by one.



While it can definitely be boring to search so many individual publications, if you find a few reliable sources you can narrow down the list pretty quickly.

It is worth noting that it is possible to search books online. Several restricted-access databases (www.netlibrary.com, www.questia.com) allow you to access the full text of many different books. There are even a few free web sites (such as onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu) that give you access to the full text of a limited number of books. Other free web sites (www.amazon.com, scholar.google.com) allow you to search the full text of many books without actually being able to read or copy whole pages. This can be useful when you are trying to decide which books might contain good evidence.

### *The net, part 2: Searching for other kinds of evidence online*

There are a lot of Internet publications that go beyond traditional magazine or newspaper formats. While the nature of the Internet is that it constantly changes, here is a short list of the kinds of web sites debaters often find useful:

- **Reference materials:** Dictionaries, encyclopedias, thesauri (the plural of “thesaurus”) and other reference materials are easily accessed online. Be careful: some reference sites (like Wikipedia) allow users to modify entries without anyone editing or fact-checking those entries. Sites that do this are generally considered inappropriate as sources of debate evidence.
- **Government sites:** the U.S. federal government produces a truly huge variety of publications on virtually every topic you can imagine. This includes reports prepared by various executive agencies, hearings held by congressional committees, and speeches given by various politicians. Increasingly U.S. state and local governments also have web sites, as do many foreign governments.
- **Interest group sites:** many different groups put up web sites containing useful information and opinions about debate issues. This includes think tanks, advocacy

groups, unions, lobbying groups, academic organizations, and others.

- **Corporate sites:** some corporations and many industry-wide organizations have web sites that defend the actions and interests of specific kinds of businesses. In some cases, industry groups even fund research on controversial issues concerning their business sector.
- **Index sites:** some individuals and organizations offer sites designed to help researchers access information about a specific topic. These sites are often composed of a series of links to useful articles or other web sites. While the site itself does not necessarily contain evidence, it acts as a kind of topic-specific index to the web.
- **Blogs:** depending on who you ask, blogs are either the best thing since the invention of the newspaper or the final sign of the apocalypse. The truth is that many blogs are nothing more than online diaries written by people who have no idea what they are talking about. However, other blogs contain well-reasoned and researched arguments made by qualified experts. As a debater, it is your job to find out whether a blog you are reading is the good kind or the bad kind. Start with the author’s qualifications — if you can find them on the blog and they are impressive, then you are probably looking at one of the good kinds of blogs.

### *Spot research: Doing targeted searches*

Creating a debate argument is often an act of imagination. You imagine what kinds of claims would fit together into a persuasive argument, then you try to find those claims in the form of published evidence. The problem, of course, is that you’re usually not really sure if the evidence actually exists. How do you find out?

The answer is that you start looking (in web search engines or private databases) for the key words that are likely to be in the evidence you want. The most important step of this process is finding out enough about the topic in question that you know what words to look for. You’d be

surprised how often experts use different words than we do for the things they study.

Once you have determined what words to do, you're ready for a second act of imagination: you must imagine what a good piece of evidence that makes the claim you are looking for would actually sound like. What sort of words would it include? What sort of phrases would be in it? What words would be near each other? What words are you definitely *not* looking for? Write down the answers to everything you come up with. Now you have a list of words and phrases to use in doing your research.

The first rule of targeted searching is: *always start by trying to get lucky*. If you start by doing really general searches you may spend the rest of your life reading without finding the right card. Start by doing the most specific search you can think of. To accomplish this, you will need to do more than just enter a bunch of words into your search engine or database. There are a number of different search tricks to help you narrow down your search. The most important is the trick of searching for phrases, not just words. In most search engines and databases, you can search for a phrase just by putting quotation marks before and after the words you want to search for as a phrase.

Let's assume, for example, that you are looking for cards about how great peanut butter and jelly sandwiches are. You could just search for the words *peanut*, *butter*, and *jelly*. A more specific search would be the phrase "peanut butter and jelly." To get even more specific, you could add a word and search for the phrase "peanut butter and jelly sandwiches." Even that phrase isn't specific enough for you? What kind of phrase would be in a really good piece of evidence about the beauty of the PB&J? Below is a list of actual Google searches and the number of hits they produce (as of this writing):

- peanut butter jelly (1.58 million hits)
- "peanut butter and jelly" (873,000 hits)
- "peanut butter and jelly sandwiches" (140,000 hits)
- "love peanut butter and jelly sandwiches" (93 hits)
- "peanut butter and jelly sandwiches are the best" (4 hits)

See? If I had started my search with the last phrase, I would quickly have found the most specific hits. Especially in a good database that contains the full text of tens of thousands of articles, doing specific searches is critical.

Searching for phrases is useful, but it's not the only trick in the book. Another trick is to use connector phrases, specifically *and*, *or*, and *not*. Most good private databases require that you use connectors when searching for more than one words at a time. You may need to read the search instructions or the "help" section of a database or search engine to determine how to use connectors (you don't have to use the word "and" in a Google search, for example). When doing targeted research, you should always look for the "advanced search" button on any web page. This will often allow you to do the next-level trick of combining phrases and connectors.

Do I need to explain what *and*, *or*, and *not* do? Okay, here's my explanation, and I'll try to use small words. If you search for *word1* AND *word2*, the computer will produce only hits where both *word1* and *word2* occur. If you search for *word1* OR *word2*, the computer will produce hits where either *word1* or *word2* or both words occur. If you search for *word1* NOT *word2*, the computer will produce only hits where *word1* occurs and where *word2* does not occur. In other words, all three connector words do *exactly what they sound like they do*.

The debater's best friend in the world of targeted searches is a special (and, unfortunately, rare) connector that is either called *near* or *within*, depending on which database you are using. This connector allows you to search for words only if they appear near other words. Why is this useful? Well, there's a limit to how effectively you can imagine the right kind of evidence before you start doing a search. You will be able to figure out what words will be in a good card, and you can even figure out what words need to be near other words, but the odds of you being able to imagine the exact phrases different authors will use are slim. One of the most popular disadvantages in debate involves the amount of "political capital" (or political power, or clout) the president of the

So, when I get my bobcat back from the taxidermist...

Dude, that is such a SIP! Who says that kind of thing?



U.S. has at any given time. Wouldn't it be nice to search for articles where the word *president* is near the phrase “*political capital*” without having to know the exact wording of the card in question? If the database you are using offers a *near* or *within* command, you're in luck. Some databases (like Lexis-Nexis and Factiva) allow you to specify how close the words have to be to each other.

### ***Free riding: Finding cards other debaters have already cut***

Why do all the work yourself? If your opponent reads a good card in a debate round, ask to see the card and copy down the citation information for yourself. In addition to information like the author, the year, and the specific publication, you should also copy down the first few words in the card and the last few words of the card. In this era of the Internet, you can often find a card more quickly by looking for SIPs. What's an SIP? It's a “statistically improbable phrase”: a group of words in a sequence that

you don't normally see. If the first and last phrase in a card sound too normal, find a sequence of words in the card that seems unusual, and copy that down.

If the card is from a source that is published in some form online, you can just Google the SIP and you'll often find a link to the article the card came from. Just don't drop phrases like “I was Googling some SIPs” in front of your non-debate friends. You're enough of a geek already.

The point of all this is that once you find the card your opponent read you can cut it for yourself. You may even decide to cut it just a bit differently than your opponent did. While you're at it, read the rest of the article (or book, or whatever) for yourself. Just because your opponent only found one card, that doesn't mean there aren't other cards in the article just waiting for you to find them. Remember your opponent? They're not too bright. They probably missed something.

## ***The Word: Processing With a Computer***

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So, you've located a bunch of published material related to the topic, and you've even identified all the specific quotes you want to use as debate evidence. How do you transform the information in the books, articles, web sites, and so forth into practical, usable debate evidence? You've already done the difficult, creative part of the research. Now it's time to act like one of those factories that turns nutritious corn and cheese into unhealthy, soul-destroying cheesy poofs. That's right: it's time to process your evidence.

By now, you've probably figured out that the main things involved in processing evidence are:

- Copying the quotes you've chosen, so as to separate them from the rest of their original publications
- Adding a *tag* and a *cite* to each quote (see “Debate Research”)
- Highlighting or underlining each quote

Once you get going, this process can be very efficient. However, there are a number of factors to take into consideration before you start processing your evidence. The difference between being a card-cutting machine and the debate equivalent of the three-toed sloth involves knowing how to go about the three steps of processing evidence.

### ***Copying Your Cards***

We live in an age of technological wonders, and debate has benefited from the rise of computer technology more than almost any other competitive activity. These days, it is possible to carry around tens of thousands of pages of debate evidence in a little plastic thing that fits on your keychain. The holy grail of debate processing is to have all your evidence in a series of word processor documents that can be e-mailed, rearranged, backed up, and printed out at will.

Did you lose an important page of evidence? No problem. Just call up your e-mail account or stick your flash drive in your computer's USB port.

Before we can achieve debate nirvana, though, we need to ask some important questions. First, what form is the original publication in? If you are reading books, articles, or web sites in digital form — that is, the publication is already available on your computer or on the Internet — then copying cards is easy. Open up a word processing document (let's just admit that you're probably using Microsoft Word) to store your evidence in. Then, select the quote you want to copy, use your computer's "Copy" command, go back to the Word document, and use your computer's "Paste" command. Repeat as necessary.

Unfortunately, we do not live in the magical future when all publications will be easily available on your computer. Some publications (like most books) are not available on your computer, and need to be physically copied.

This is one of those moments where it matters what kind of technology you have at your disposal. If you have good tech, you can actually turn paper publications into Word documents. This involves scanning the paper document, saving the scan, then using an OCR program to convert the images of the pages into editable text files you can open in Word. If you have good tech, either read the instructions that came with your scanner or Google the phrase "optical character recognition."

If all you have is a scanner (you can't afford fancy OCR programs), you may still be able to copy quotes from paper documents and insert them into your Word documents. You can do this by telling your scanner to scan only the portion of each page that includes the quote you want (read the instructions). Save the image of each quote as a separate file. Then use Word's "Insert Picture" command to place the picture of each quote into its appropriate place in your Word document. This process takes up a huge amount of memory — your Word file will get very large quickly — but it's better than nothing.

Now, let's say that you are technologically deprived. You have no scanner. Don't despair!

Shockingly, debaters got by without scanners or even computers for many, many years. You can use the trio of old-school technologies that made debate possible for all that time: a photocopier, a pair of scissors, and a roll of tape. Just photocopy the page(s) of the original publication that have quotes on them you want, write down the citation information, and you can then use the scissors to cut the quote out of the photocopied page and tape the quote wherever you want. Where should you tape the quote? Under the appropriate tag and cite, which you're going to generate on your computer. That brings us to...



Archaeological evidence proves that prehistoric debaters (all debaters before the year 1990) actually survived without computers. Scientists cannot explain this mystery.

## Adding Tags and Cites

Even if every card you cut is from a printed publication, and even if you have to use the copier-scissors-tape method to copy every card, you should still use your computer to generate tags and cites. Why? Well, for one thing it's just easier to read. Have you looked at your own handwriting lately? Most of you have lost the ability to write clearly, and the rest of you dot your i's with little hearts. Another reason to use your computer for tags and cites is that it's faster, especially if you are cutting a lot of cards from the same source.

Let's start with cites. As we learned in "Debate Research: Cutting Cards," cites usually start with the author's last name and the year (or full date) of publication. The cite should also include the author's qualifications and enough information about the source of publication that another debater or judge could easily find the source for themselves. Here are some specific suggestions:

- If the original source is a book, include the title of the book, the author or editor (if it's different than the author of your card), and the page number. You don't need to include the publisher or the city it was published in.



- If the original source is a web site, include the full URL or web address (the thing that starts “http://”). Also include enough of the title of the page that a researcher could Google it in order to find the page if the URL is wrong – or if it changes, something that happens quite often on the web.
- If the original source is a magazine or newspaper, include the name of the publication, as well as the volume and issue number. Including the title of the article is optional, but it’s often considered a sign of good manners. If you got the article from a private database like Lexis, you might choose to include that information if the rest of your citation is not extensive.

Remember that debate is a less formal environment for citation than, say, your term paper in English class. You don’t necessarily have to follow a standard citation format. The important thing is that you include all the information a reasonable judge or opponent would want.

When it comes to tags, things are not quite as clear. Naturally, you want a tag to provide a nice, short summary of the card. Debaters disagree on how long tags should be, and how many of the claims in the card they should contain. Generally, the simpler the arguments in your card are, the shorter the tag can be. If you are reading a piece of evidence to prove, for example, that the President already signed a specific bill into law, you don’t need a very long card or tag. That is basically a claim of fact, like “the Colts won the Superbowl” or “Disney is the largest media company in the world.” You don’t need to do a lot of persuasion to convince someone it’s true. If you are reading a card explaining postmodern philosopher Giorgio Agamben’s idea of the “state of exception,” on the other hand, your tag might need to be much longer. Some debaters prefer very short tags, while other like to include specific claims from the evidence to help the judge understand their arguments better. Ultimately, you will form your own opinion on this subject as you gain experience.

## Highlighting, Underlining, and Messing Around

It is becoming increasingly common for debaters to spend time highlighting and doing other formatting things to their evidence when they first process it – especially if their evidence is in a form that can be modified within Microsoft Word. Remember that highlighting is designed to eliminate all the unnecessary words and sentences from a piece of evidence, indicating to the debater reading the card which words need to be spoken out loud in the round.

The word “highlighting” used to refer exclusively to the practice of using a highlighter (one of those pens with a thick marker tip that writes in neon colors you can see through) on paper. In the computer age, debaters use a lot of different highlighting techniques in the actual computer file: bolding, underlining, making text bigger (or smaller), using that actual “highlight text” function in Word, using the “dark underline” command, or some unholy combination of all these.

There are as many theories of how to highlight cards as there are debaters. Some prefer to leave out as much of a card as possible when reading evidence in the round. Others prefer to keep as much as possible. Remember that the judge will almost always only consider evidence that was actually read out loud in the debate, so be careful how you highlight. Here are a couple of other suggestions:

- When highlighting in Word, remember that debaters often take printed evidence and re-highlight it with a pen, even if it has already been highlighted. Don’t go for the absolute minimum on your first attempt.
- Make sure the highlighted text forms complete, understandable sentences.
- It is acceptable to highlight letters of words to form acronyms (e.g., “United States”), but this is the only time it is okay to highlight only part of a word.
- Do not cut out part of a card and replace it with an ellipsis (...).

Always remember that the point of highlighting is to make the card more efficient, not to change its meaning. Highlight with care!



# Briefing: Assembling Arguments For a Debate

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Cutting and processing evidence are the basic tools you need to make debate arguments, but these are only tools. Actually organizing and assembling these arguments in a coherent form is called “briefing” or “blocking.” Remember that the term “cutting cards” comes from the old days when debaters taped each individual quote onto its own index card. While this did make evidence easier to handle, it necessarily meant that debaters treated each quote separately.

Eventually, some debaters realized that it would be better to organize their individual cards into longer argument positions. This meant combining **carded** (or evidenced) arguments and **analytical** (or non-evidenced) arguments on sheets of paper. They called these sheets “briefs,” after the term for the well-evidenced formal arguments written by lawyers. The practice of using briefs instead of index cards spread through debate, and by the middle 1980s virtually all debate evidence was carried in brief form.

## What’s In a Brief?

Briefs are designed to organize different kinds of debate resources (like cards and analytical arguments) into functional units. To that end, all briefs contain the following things:

- The brief’s title: a very short explanation of what the brief is about.
- Author information: who wrote the brief — the individual and/or the school that created it. Useful if you misplace your brief, or if you get your evidence mixed up with evidence read by your opponents.
- Page information: expressed in the form of “page x of y” or the simpler “x/y,” where x is the number of the specific page and y is the total number of pages in the brief. Briefs that are part of a larger **file** contain another page number, meant to indicate which page of the larger file you are looking at. This is done for indexing purposes (more about this later).

Depending on what kind of brief you are looking at, you may also find one or more of the following:

- Card(s): one or more pieces of evidence, including tag(s) and cite(s).
- Analytical arguments: one or more individual arguments backed up with explanations and examples instead of quotes.
- The full text of part or all of a speech: meant to be read word-for-word during part or all of a constructive or rebuttal.
- Explanations: discussions of issues that are meant to be read by debaters before the round (but not out loud during the round).

As you can see, briefs can be either very simple or very complex.

How do you know which of these elements to put in a brief? It is important to understand that briefs can generally serve one of two purposes. First, **specific briefs** can be created to present or answer a particular argument. The speech given in the 1AC is a perfect example of a specific brief that is intended to present an argument (your affirmative case and plan). The 2AC might want to have a brief that answers a disadvantage the 1NC is likely to read. That is an example of a specific brief that is intended to *answer* a particular argument. Specific briefs almost always contain both cards and analytical arguments.

Unlike a specific brief, a **general brief** is simply designed to provide evidence about a particular subject. This kind of brief is simpler in that it rarely contains analytical arguments, and almost never contains a word-for-word speech text. General briefs contain cards, almost exclusively. For example, you might suspect that one day you will need evidence that free trade is good. You don’t know when, you don’t know whether you will be affirmative or negative, and you aren’t sure what context the argument will appear in. You might create a multi-page brief

that contains nothing but various carded reasons that free trade is good. This is a good example of a general brief.

If you are writing a general brief, your job is fairly easy: create a page header, page numbers, and identifying information for every page, then add cards in the order of quality or effectiveness. Specific briefs are considerably more complicated. These briefs are tailored to particular needs that you might have in a debate. To understand how this process works, it helps to know about the different kinds of specific briefs debaters write.

### ***Front lines***

Front lines are briefs that are designed to be read in their entirety, exactly as they are written, during a debate. Front lines can take up an entire speech (like the 1AC), or they can take only a couple of minutes (like a disadvantage read in the 1NC or answers to a disadvantage read in the 2AC). Since front lines are almost always read in one of the constructive speeches, it is very important that they be written carefully. The arguments and the structure of the front lines will help determine how the rest of the debate takes place. It is easier to write 1AC front lines than anything else, since no one speaks before the 1AC. It is harder to write 1NC front lines because you have to predict what kind of 1ACs you are likely to hear. 2AC front lines are even harder, because you have to predict what kinds of arguments the negative will make against your case. 2NC front lines are the hardest because you have to predict three speeches worth of arguments correctly to write your briefs.

It is important to understand that front lines can be any length and can deal with any argument. The 1AC is a front line that takes an entire speech to read. A 2AC front line, on the other hand, might contain only a single analytical argument because that front line is designed to answer only a single, very specific potential 1NC argument.

### ***Extensions***

Extensions are arguments designed to support the claims made in front line briefs. After you write a front line for your constructive

speech, you should realize that the other team is likely to answer those claims in their next speech. In anticipation of this, debaters write extension briefs to give them the resources they need to restore the credibility of their front line claims. Imagine that you are the 2AC speaker. You know that the 1NC is likely to include a spending disadvantage. You write a 2AC front line brief with ten answers to the spending disadvantage. What is going to happen after you give your speech? The 2NC or the 1NR is going to answer your front line. You must write extension blocks that include evidence and analytical arguments so that your partner will have something to say about the spending disadvantage in the 1AR. It is common for debaters to write at least one extension brief for each of the claims in their front lines.

### ***Overviews and underviews***

Good debate is about more than reading evidence and making short analytical arguments. Good debate is about explaining the most important arguments in the debate to your judges in such a way that they are persuaded to vote for you. Let's face it: debate arguments can be really complicated, and even the smartest judge needs good explanations in order to understand difficult claims. Additionally, public speaking research teaches us that speeches are more effective when they include introductions that outline the major ideas the speaker will discuss.

To deal with these issues, debaters have developed overview and underview briefs. These briefs most often contain carefully worded explanations of difficult ideas. One common kind of overview brief simply explains the general idea of a disadvantage or critique read by the 1NC. This brief explains the thesis of the 1NC argument, including the links and impacts, and is meant to be read in the 2NC or 1NR just before answering the 2AC's claims. Underviews work the same way as overviews, but are meant to be read after a speaker is finished answering the opponents' arguments on an issue. Overviews and underviews can include cards, but it is more common for them to be purely analytical.

## Explanations

Just because briefs take up an entire page, that doesn't mean they have to be long. Debaters often write short briefs intended only to explain a single, difficult argument or idea. Explanation briefs might also, for example, provide reasons to prefer your own evidence over your opponents' cards. One of the most common explanation briefs makes a short series of arguments that one team's impact is larger or more important or more likely than the other team's impact. Explanation briefs are commonly used to explain how the judge should evaluate the competing arguments in the debate.

There are no rules to writing briefs, and there is no real guideline that will help you decide what to write a brief about. There is one thing you can rely on, though: writing more briefs is better than writing fewer briefs. If you have an argument already written down, you will save time during the debate and sound better when you make the argument. If nothing else, the process of writing briefs helps you spend time thinking about the kinds of arguments you might hear in a future debate, and what you might say when you hear them. This alone will help make you a better debater.

## The Word, Part 2: Using Your Computer to Write Briefs

Preparing to be a successful debater means writing a lot of briefs, and writing briefs doesn't do you much good unless you can organize them and locate them when you need them in a debate round. This is one reason that debaters tend to carry around so much paper with them from round to round, and it is the reason why good debaters spend time between tournaments organizing their paper files.

But where do those paper files come from, and how do you know how to organize them in the first place? In the old days before computers, when dinosaurs roamed the earth, debaters spent a lot of time with paper, scissors, tape, and a photocopier in order to write briefs. These days, it is much more efficient to create and organize debate arguments on your computer. We have already

talked about using Microsoft Word (or another word processor) to cut and process evidence. And, seriously now, you're a child of the digital age, aren't you? I mean, everyone these days knows how to use a word processor, don't they?

Well...no. In fact, virtually no one knows how to use a word processor. Don't get me wrong – most people know how to do simple things with Word, like writing a letter or a paper for school. Most people can change the font of a word, make it larger, underline it, and so on. What virtually no one knows how to do is take advantage of the more advanced functions available in your word processor. Word doesn't cost so much just because Bill Gates likes rolling around in giant mounds of cash at night. It costs a lot because it does a lot. One of the best things you can do for yourself – and I mean for your long term employment prospects, not just your debate skills – is to check a good book on how to use Word out of the library and read it. This is not that kind of book, but in order to be a competent debater these days, you do need to learn about three functions in Word you probably don't already know about: paragraph styles, templates, and indexing.

## Paragraph Styles

In Word (and most other word processors), there are a lot of choices you have to make about how your text looks. What font? What size? Is it bold, italicized, underlined, or some combination? Is the text centered, flush left, or flush right? Are there special tabs? When you want to change any or all of these elements from paragraph to paragraph, it can get really tedious if you have to make each change individually. Why would you want to make changes? Consider the average debate card:

### War Between India and Pakistan Would Cause Nuclear War Sheppard 2001

(Ben, new content coordinator @ Jane's Information Group,  
"Ballistic Missiles in South Asia: The Ramifications for Regional Stability," April 5,  
[http://www.brookings.edu/fp/projects/south\\_asia/events/20010405.htm](http://www.brookings.edu/fp/projects/south_asia/events/20010405.htm))

The prospect of either side launching a pre-emptive nuclear attack is aggravated by Pakistan's declaration that it will be the first to launch a nuclear strike if necessary. Islamabad's refusal to follow India's decision to adopt a policy of 'no first use' is due to Pakistan's concerns that such a stance would restore Indian conventional superiority. Pakistan views its nuclear capability as a means to compensate for the nation's conventional inferiority with India. Should for whatever reason Indian troops cross the Line of Control into Pakistan, New Delhi would be justified for fearing Pakistan may be tempted to launch a pre-emptive nuclear strike should Islamabad perceive its national survival critically under threat. The fear of an pre-emptive strike, the prospect of command and control failure, and the threat of unauthorized launch in the context of the Kashmir dispute altogether combine to create a precarious situation for maintaining stability and averting nuclear war.

As I mentioned in “Debate Research: Cutting Cards,” every piece of evidence has at least three parts: the tag, the cite, and the text of the card itself. From the example above, you will notice that these three elements are all different kinds of text. The differences in the text format make it easier to read the card in a round. You can quickly distinguish the tag because it is darker and a different font. The cite is the same text as the quote, but it’s bigger and bolder. The cite also contains a special tab that allows you to separate the author’s qualifications and the publication information from the author’s name and the year of the quote.

Hopefully, you are going to be cutting, processing, and briefing a lot of cards. It would be really inconvenient to have to change each element of the text’s format every time you wrote a tag or created a cite. Instead of making format changes one step at a time, Word enables you to create paragraph styles (usually just called “Styles” in Word) that allow you to make a bunch of format changes all at the same time. With styles, you can apply a specific format to any paragraph with one click.

### *Creating a style*

Instead of reading what I’m about to write, you should probably go to the library (or the bookstore) and find a book that describes how to use the specific version of Word you are using. Failing that, you might want to use the “help” function in your version of Word or even the tutorials that came with your software. They will all be more detailed than this book can be, since I don’t know what software you’re using or what kind of computer you have. Still reading? Well, I guess we have to start somewhere.

There are essentially three steps to creating a style. Step one is to pick a paragraph to be the example of what you want the style to look like. It doesn’t have to be a lot of words — you can even use a single line that has only one word on it. Step two is to format that paragraph with all the different things you want the style to include. Pick a font, a size, bolding, tabs, alignment, and so on. Once the example paragraph is formatted just the way you want,

the final step is to tell Word to use it to create a new style. Make sure that you have clicked somewhere in the example paragraph, then choose the “Style” submenu from the main “Format” menu. Click on the “New” button, and name the style.

Now your new style is ready to apply to any paragraphs you want formatted. Click on the drop-down menu for styles in your toolbar. When you open a new document, this menu usually reads “Normal.” If you click on it (or the arrow next to it), you will see a list of the available styles. The style you just created should now be on that list. To apply that style, just click in the paragraph whose format you want to change, then go to the drop-down menu for styles in your toolbar and select the name of your new style. The paragraph you clicked on should now have all the features of the new style. Cool, huh? Okay, not necessarily cool, but when you use this trick to apply twenty formatting changes to a tag for the hundredth time instead of doing them all one by one, you’ll be happy you learned how to do this.

You’re going to need to create at least four separate styles for any debate brief: one for the tags, one for the cites, one for the main quote of each card, and one for the page heading of each brief (see the sample briefs following this section). You might also want to create a specific style for analytical arguments. Debaters all tend to have their own preferences on exactly what kinds of formats to use for each of these styles, but the examples we have provided are a good general guide on what to do.

One of the nice things about styles is that they are saved as part of a document you create in Word. This brings us to the next advanced function in Word that debaters need to know how to use.

### *Templates*

When you open a new document in Word, what do you see? Usually, nothing but your cursor slowly flashing at the upper left-hand corner of page one. What if, instead of nothing, any new document you created already contained some of the ele-



ments you were going to need? Word allows you to accomplish this by creating document templates. A template is simply a document that has information already saved on it. The difference between a template and a normal document is that when you open the template the computer automatically creates a new, untitled document that contains everything you saved in the original template. In other words, opening a template doesn't open the actual template — it opens an exact copy of the template, ready for you to modify and use for your own needs.

What kinds of information might you need to save in a template that would make it worth the trouble? You could, of course, save things like your own author information already typed out in the header (read that book about how to use Word we discussed) and that sort of thing, but the real reason to create debate templates is that you can use them to save those paragraph styles you just created. After all, the reason you want to create a style in the first place is to save time formatting your text. Wouldn't it be nice to only have to create a style once, then have it available every time you opened a new document? That's the point of debate templates.

### *Creating a template*

Creating templates is very much like creating styles. First, open a new document in Word. Format the document's margins the way you want them to be for this template. I normally find that Word's default margins are too large for debate briefs, since you want to pack as much information onto a single page as possible for debate purposes. I often use .75-inch margins on all sides, but do what works for you. Next, create all the paragraph styles you think you might want for a debate brief. When you are done creating the styles, make sure to erase all the actual text you typed in to create style so you have a blank document to work with. Now, if you want to add author information or any other text that will appear on every new document you create with this template, go ahead.

Now, save the document as a template. How do you do this? Did I mention that you should get a book on how to use Word? I did? Usually, you go to the "File" menu and choose the "Save As..." command. Somewhere in the box that pops up when you do this will be a drop-down menu that allows you to choose what kind of format to save the document as. Choose the "Document Template" option. Now, name the template. You will notice that the template name contains the suffix ".dot" instead of the normal ".doc." Click the "Save" button. Now you have a new template.

Different versions of Word deal with templates very differently. You might access templates through a menu that pops up every time you open word, or from a sub-menu within Word, or as a separate document that you store somewhere on your hard drive. You really *are* going to have to read a book or use the "help" function to find the answer for your particular software and computer set-up. The point is that when you open your new template, your styles, your margins, and anything else you put in the template will be ready and waiting for you, making your life as a debater that much easier.

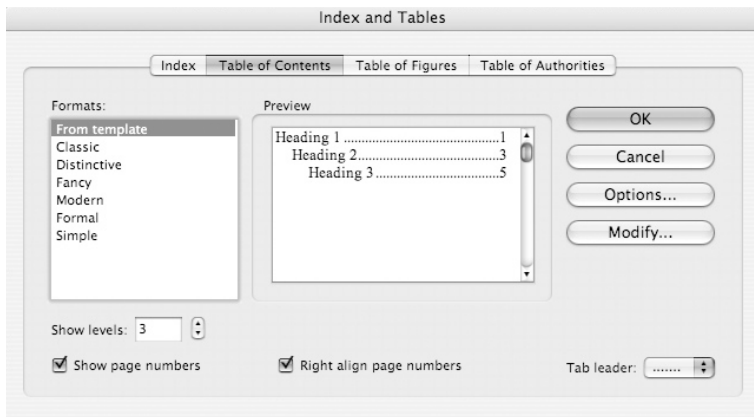
### *Indexing*

If you're going to write one or two pages of debate briefs, you won't need an index. Of course, at some point, you're going to want to write more than one or two pages. You're going to want to write hundreds of pages of briefs in a single file. A good example of such a file would be all the briefs you're going to need to support your IAC. Whatever sort of file you write, if it's more than ten pages long, you're going to want to produce an index. Fortunately, Microsoft Word makes this easy for you. Well, relatively easy, anyway.

Depending on what version of Word you're using (I'm not going to mention that book you should buy again), somewhere in one of the menus is a function that allows you to insert indexes and tables. In the version of Word I have, this command is under the main "Insert" menu, just between "View" and "Format." Find



this command in your version of Word. If you select this option, you will get a sub-menu that has a number of different choices. One of the buttons is labeled “table of contents.” That is the one you want. Yes, yes, I know. I labeled this section “Indexing,” and here I am telling you that I really should have labeled it “Tables of Contents.” You’ll live.



Now that you have told Word to insert a table of contents, you have to tell it what kind of table you want. One of the choices you will see in the sub-menu is “Show levels:” followed by a drop-down menu with single-digit numbers. Usually, you will see “Show levels: 3.” This option controls what your table of contents will include. Word allows you to create a table that will show not only the major subject headings of your document, but the minor ones as well. For debate briefs, you will rarely need to “show” more than one “level” of headings in your table of contents. Basically, all you want your table of contents to show is the title of each page of your briefs.

How does Word know what to list in a table of contents? The answer involves the paragraph styles trick you just learned how to do. Word comes with a few paragraph styles already created. One of these styles is always called “Heading 1” (you also get “Heading 2,” “Heading 3,” and so on). Word automatically uses this style to determine what gets put in a table of contents. In other words, whatever text is assigned the “Heading 1” style will automatically get listed in the table of contents if you tell Word to “Show levels: 1” in your table

settings. If you tell Word to “Show levels: 2,” your table of contents will include all the text styled as “Heading 1” *and* all the text styled as “Heading 2.”

In order to take advantage of the indexing function in Word, you’re going to have to make sure that you use the “Heading 1” style for the titles of each page of your briefs. To do this, when you are creating your document template, type some text (it doesn’t matter what) and apply the “Heading 1” style. In most cases, you will see that style automatically in your Styles menu. If you don’t, use the help function or your written guide to Word to figure out how to add “Heading 1” from Word’s built-in style library. Once you have assigned the “Heading 1” style to your text, re-format the text however you want the headings of your pages to look. Then, re-apply the “Heading 1” style to your text. In most versions of Word, you will then get asked if you want to update the style to match your text, or if you want to re-apply the original style. Choose the option that redefines the style. Your “Heading 1” style is now changed to match the look you want your page headings to have. Continue saving your document template as described in the section above.

Many debaters use the “Heading 2” style to format the tags of each of their cards. They do this because Word uses the “Heading” styles for more than just tables of contents. One of the other functions you can use those kinds of styles for is the “Document Map” or “Outline View” commands. Want to know what those do? Want to know how to save your “Heading” styles under a different name? *Get a freaking book on how to use Word!*

All this formatting stuff can seem really complicated and unnecessary. The truth is that, in many cases, it isn’t necessary. If you are doing a lot of debate work, however, learning these complicated techniques at the beginning will save you literally hours of boring work later on. Templates and Indexing are advanced debate skills, but they are very useful in your later life as well as in your debate career. You will be one of the few people who really know how to use a word processor.

# Sample Briefs

## A Sample IAC Page (specific brief, front line)

Make sure the title of the brief is written in large, dark, clear print. Someone else may have to read this, so write neatly. You should be able to identify this brief at a glance.

Label your briefs with your team and school so you can identify them if they are lost or misplaced. You may also list other information, such as Aff or Neg or even which case they involve.

Tags in a IAC are often longer than those on an average card. Remember that the IAC introduces all the main ideas of your affirmative to the judge. Make sure to explain difficult concepts as fully as possible.

One-Child Policy Aff

### **One-Child Policy 1AC**

GSU 2005-2006

page 5 of 11

#### **Contention 3: Regional War**

**The reforms of the One-Child Policy in China have failed. Growing sex imbalances will cause economic collapse, sex trafficking, crime, revolution, war, and open conflict with India.**

**The National Journal 05**

August 6, "Too spoiled, too male?"

In an attempt to reverse this trend, in the mid-1990s, the government outlawed the use of ultrasound for elective abortions based on gender. But the prohibition has proved difficult to enforce, and the birth imbalance keeps growing In 2000, the census showed 116.9 males born for every 100 females. In Anhui, Hunan, and Hubei provinces, the number for boys was closer to 127. In Guangdong Province, it was 130.3; and in the towns and cities of Hainan, it was a stunning 140. China is already beginning to suffer from the social pathologies attendant on such statistics. Rural villages without marriage-age women are facing extinction; men from those villages have resorted to buying wives. A black market selling kidnapped girls and women to be wives -- or sex slaves -- is flourishing From 2001 to 2003, the government reported freeing some 42,000 kidnapped women and children. In China, men who cannot form their own families are called *guang gun-er*, or "bare branches." And in any culture and in any era, too many of such men means trouble. Unattached men are more likely to gravitate toward crime, gangs, fringe politics -- or perhaps revolution. In their 2004 book *Bare Branches: The Security Implications of Asia's Surplus Male Population*, political scientists Valerie Hudson and *den Boer* suggest another logical outlet: war They hypothesize that a society dealing with 20 million to 30 million unmarried males is a society that will have to become increasingly authoritarian just to control that population Hudson and den Boer noted that China's history shows that when demographic cohorts of unmarried men reach critical mass, they form monastic cults that sometimes morph into mercenary armies. This happened in the 19th-century Nien rebellion, and again at the dawn of the 20th century, culminating in the Boxer Rebellion. Such a development would probably increase friction with India, which has a looming bare-branch problem of its own "The government of China is very concerned about the problem of surplus men ... [and] has a historic concern with monastic groups turning against the government in a militant fashion," says Rose McDermott, a political scientist at the University of California (Santa Barbara). "I believe it is the motivation behind the crackdown on Falun Gong." As if to underscore McDermott's hypothesis, Beijing authorities invariably refer to Falun Gong as a "cult"; similarly, they treat followers of Tibet's Dalai Lama much more harshly than Westerners see as warranted.

#### **Sino-Indian friction leads to conflict and a possible nuclear war over Nepal**

**Dillon 03**

Dana Robert, sr. policy analyst @ Heritage, "Preventing the Maoist overthrow of Nepal,"

[www.heritage.org/Research/AsiaandthePacific/em862.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/Research/AsiaandthePacific/em862.cfm)

A communist takeover in Nepal would also have serious geopolitical consequences. Nepal is a landlocked country in the Himalayan Mountains between China and India. For New Delhi, the Maoists are a security problem because of their links to "Maoist Group" terrorists in India. For China, Nepal is the gateway between India and Tibet Most of the Tibetan refugees in India crossed through Nepal and Bhutan, and 30,000 Tibetans remain in Nepal. Moreover, instability in Nepal could inflame Sino-Indian border disputes. Thus, the overthrow of the Nepalese government could undermine both countries' interests in Katmandu. If the situation destabilized, India or China might choose to intervene. Each of these nuclear-armed peer-competitors would consider an occupation of Nepal by the other as a threat to its own security, thereby raising tensions in South Asia

If you are writing a file with an index, make sure to put an overall page number in the footer of your template, so it is easy to match the brief titles in the index with the actual page of the brief

## A Sample 2AC Page (specific brief, front line)

*The abbreviation “A2” is often used in place of the longer “Answers to.”*

*This brief is written to answer a very specific argument, so it uses numbers for the arguments. When writing more generic briefs, leave spaces marked by parentheses so future debaters can fill in their own numbers*

*Use both analytical arguments and evidenced arguments on the same brief, alternating between the two. This makes it difficult for the other team to group your arguments.*

One-Child Policy Aff

### **A2 Nationalism DA (front line)**

GSU 2005-2006

page 1 of 3

- 1) No specific link.** No evidence says this is a key issue for nationalists.
- 2) No threshold and empirically false.** The US pressures China all the time.
- 3) Turn:** One-Child is the cornerstone of CCP weakness to nationalism

Aird 2004

John S., “China: Human Rights Violations and Coercion in One-Child Policy Enforcement”

Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, December 14

The Chinese Party leaders have paid a price for their promotion of coercive family planning. It is one of the most, if not the most, unpopular of China’s domestic policies, and has at times been responsible for “the alienation of the masses from the Party.” In the late 1990s efforts to enforce family planning rules sometimes led to rioting and attacks on officials. The program undoubtedly adds to the current popular disillusionment with the Chinese Communist Party, which in the early 1950s enjoyed the respect of most of the Chinese people. As one American journalist puts it, the Chinese government has, in effect, offered its people a new contract, by which it promises the people greater freedom in their everyday lives so long as they do not challenge its authority and abide by its one-child policy.[63]

- 4) No link:** human rights pressure is no longer perceived negatively

Lin 03

Chris, prof. of law @ CUNY, “A quiet revolution,” 4 Asian-Pacific L. & Pol’y J. 180

China’s accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) has been hailed as the harbinger of a new age. Contrary to their past reservations based on ideological reasons, policy makers and opinion molders in China now openly embrace the notion that, in order for China to be a respectable member of the international community, it must follow certain universally accepted norms, whether they be the United Nations Human Rights Convention, or rules proscribed by the WTO. Indeed, this recognition has become so much of the national consciousness that a new term has been coined and widely circulated. It is comprised of five Chinese characters: “yu guo ji jie gui,” and literally means “making (the railroad) tracks consistent with the international gauge.” China’s entry into the WTO has provided a much-needed outside impetus for it to adopt certain universally accepted principles such as transparency and judicial review. But China’s resolve to enter the WTO even if it meant that fundamental changes are necessary, reflects a much deeper current in thinking. The conversion of Chinese society from a planned economy to a market economy has fundamentally changed the relationship between the individual and the government, or at least it requires such a change.

As Nobel Prize winning economist Milton Friedman recently put it, the key to the success of such a transition is not privatization, as he thought ten years ago, but rule of law. n1

- 5) Case outweighs.** Regional war and economic collapse make their impacts inevitable absent the plan.

- 6) Turn:** Political reforms are the only way to defuse nationalists

Shambaugh 02

David, Sr. Fellow @ Brookings, “Will the Party Lose China?,” [www.brookings.edu/views/op-ed/shambaugh/20021107.htm](http://www.brookings.edu/views/op-ed/shambaugh/20021107.htm)

Aside from propagandistic clichés, what the party seems to advocate today is really no different from the core themes that all Chinese rulers since the 1870’s have advocated: attaining wealth and power; enhancing nationalism and international dignity; preserving unity and preventing chaos. These ideas still resonate deeply in China and continue to lend the current party leaders some degree of legitimacy and continuity with the past. But the party’s legitimacy is growing weaker as it proves itself incapable of dealing with increasing social disparities. The central challenge for the party’s new leadership is how to remain relevant to a rapidly changing society. The loss of party control in China is an incremental process, a gradual decay instead of the sudden implosion that occurred in the former Soviet Union and its satellites in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. If the Communist Party’s rule is frontally challenged, as in 1989 during the Tiananmen crisis, it can probably maintain power through armed force—although even that is no longer entirely certain. But if the party is to remain in power without having to resort to force, it must develop means of governance that share power with the people and civic organizations. A remarkable public opinion poll released this week by a research center affiliated with the prestigious Chinese Academy of Social Sciences found that 91 percent of respondents said the justice system was unfair while 80 percent said they wanted to elect their officials directly. A majority said the party Congress should focus on improving social welfare and job creation and should adopt new political reforms. If the party fails to respond effectively to these growing demands, its ability to maintain its power will only continue to decline

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*The practice of underlining or highlighting cards is designed to help debaters make maximum use of their speech time. Similarly, you can work to make your tags efficiently worded. Debaters try to say as little as possible in this kind of brief without sacrificing clarity.*

*There are 3 total pages of answers to the Nationalism Disadvantage in this file. The author of the brief has put what he thought were the strongest arguments on the first page. Prioritizing arguments is critical, since the 2AC will rarely have time to read 3 pages of answers to any affirmative argument.*





# **Section 5: Glossary**



# Boring Words You Need to Know

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**A2:** *n.* an abbreviation for the phrase “Answers to” or “Answer to.” Debaters often use this abbreviation on briefs that are designed to answer an opponent’s argument.

**add-on:** *n.* an advantage of the affirmative plan usually presented in the 2nd Affirmative constructive speech and independent of whatever advantages were presented in the 1st affirmative constructive. Add-ons are often short (2 cards), and are used as an answer to disadvantages and counterplans. The idea is to prove either that the advantages of the plan outweigh the disadvantages or that the counterplan does not solve all the advantages.

**advantage:** *n.* an advantage is a description used by the affirmative to explain what beneficial effects will result from its plan.

**affirmative:** *n.* the team in a debate which supports the resolution. This team presents the affirmative case (see below).

**affirmative case:** *n.* generally refers to the part of the affirmative position which demonstrates that there is a need for change because there is a serious problem (harms) which the present system cannot solve (inherency) but which is none the less, solvable (solvency). The affirmative’s case provides a specific plan to solve the problem.

**affirmative plan:** *n.* The policy action advocated by the affirmative.

**Agamben:** *n.* A critique based on the work of Giorgio Agamben, an Italian postmodern writer. Agamben critiques often reject the idea that democratic change or reform can improve life. Agamben argues that we live in a “state of exception,” in which the state now has almost infinite power to ignore the law and the obligations that a sovereign government has to its citizens.

**agent (or agent of change):** *n.* The actor that the affirmative or the resolution calls for to act. The agent in the resolution is usually the United States federal government. Affirmatives can specify specific agents within the federal government, such as Congress or the President to implement their plan.

**agent counterplans:** *n.* a counterplan which argues that the plan you are implementing through one agent of change, should instead, be implemented by another agent of change.

**anarchy:** *n.* an argument (usually a counterplan) that the government should dissolve itself rather than carry on any resolitional action or other action. Some teams argue this action can be taken by the United States alone and others argue that all government should dissolve.

**analytical:** *n.* yes, it’s a noun, not an adjective – at least in debate jargon. An analytical is a general term for any argument made in the debate that does not have a piece of evidence attached to it.

**a priori:** *n.* literally, prior to. Usually an argument that a particular issue should be resolved before all others. Frequently used to argue that procedural concerns such as topicality should be considered before substantive issues such as advantages.

**arg:** *n.* slang for “argument.”

**A-Spec:** *n.* an argument (also called “agent specification”) made by the negative that the affirmative has failed to specify the agent that implements the plan. For example, if the plan says that “the US Federal Government” should perform a particular action, the negative might claim that it is unfair for the affirmative to fail to specify which branch of the government takes action. Usually run in the INC as an off-case positive, A-Spec is usually impacted as a voting issue.

**attitudinal inherency:** *n.* this type of inherency identifies an unwillingness of those in power in the present system to take corrective measures to solve the harm cited by the affirmative.

**backfile:** *n.* an extensively constructed set of arguments (see “file”) that is not necessarily related to the current year’s debate topic. Often, backfiles are generic arguments that might apply to any topic, such as answers to common impacts like global warming or free trade. Some backfiles are generic offensive arguments (see “spark” or “wipeout”) that usually work only if the other team has no corresponding backfile to answer them with.

**backfile check:** *n.* slang for an argument that is capable of winning the debate only if the other team is not carrying answers to it in their backfiles. Most often used to describe generic, relatively silly arguments like wipeout or spark (see the relevant entries).

**bipartisanship (or “bipart”):** *n.* the spirit of political goodwill that (allegedly) allows politicians from both parties to work together to achieve success. In debate, politics disadvantages often claim that the affirmative plan will disrupt bipartisan working relations within the Congress, making it more difficult to enact other important policies. The argument could also be made the opposite way. The negative could argue that the plan will spur bipartisan cooperation and therefore cause bad policies to be enacted.

**block:** *n.* see “brief”. Also, see “negative block.”

**brief:** *n.* a sheet of paper (or series of sheets of paper) that contains a series of prepared arguments of a particular variety. Briefs might contain all your arguments against a particular disadvantage, or you might have briefs that contain only a series of very particular pieces of evidence. Briefs can contain analytical arguments and/or evidence.

**budget deficit DA:** see “Spending DA”

**burden of proof:** *n.* 1) The requirement that sufficient evidence or reasoning to prove an argument be presented 2) the requirement that the affirmative prove the stock issues.

**card:** *n.* a single quotation from a published source. A card is also sometimes referred to as “a piece of evidence.”

**card clipping:** *v.* the practice of skipping over a significant number of the highlighted words in a card, then pretending that you read all of them. This is almost universally considered cheating, and many tournaments have strict rules governing rounds where an accusation of card clipping has been made. A notoriously hard claim to prove.

**circumvention:** *n.* a type of argument which argues that certain actors will attempt to avoid the mandates of the plan. Because it argues that the plan will be avoided, it is a type of solvency argument which implies that the plan will not be able to solve the problem the case cites as the harm.

**citation:** *n.* specific information on the source of evidence regarding publication, date of publication, page excerpt, and the author’s qualification. Also known as “cite.”

**clash:** *v.* to respond directly to an opponent’s argument. Also, *n.*, the amount of direct refutation occurring in a debate (“there was no clash on the link to the disadvantage”).

**comparative advantage:** *n.* an advantage that emphasizes the benefits of the plan in contrast to the present system without claiming to solve the problem completely. For example, if the affirmative argues that their plan simply decreases racism but does not solve it completely, they are arguing that, compared to the status quo, the plan is a superior alternative.

**competitiveness:** *n.* 1) The quality of a policy which makes the policy a reason to reject another policy. 2) a situation where one policy is mutually exclusive with another policy or is more preferable alone than in conjunction with another policy. It is traditionally expected that a negative prove a counterplan to be a competitive alternative to the affirmative plan.

**conditional counterplan:** *n.* conditional counterplans are counterplans that the negative presents, but the negative can remove it as their advocacy at any time In the debate.

**constructives:** *n.* the first four individual speeches of the debate. Arguments are initiated in these speeches and extended in rebuttals. They consist of the first affirmative constructive (1AC), the first negative constructive (1NC), the second affirmative constructive (2AC), and the second negative constructive (2NC). These speeches are interrupted by cross-examination periods of each speaker.

**contention:** *n.* 1) A major point advanced or maintained in a debate. 2) a subdivision of an affirmative case.

**context:** *n.* 1) The relationship of the evidence read in the date to the original source material. It is expected that evidence read in a debate will be consistent with the meaning of the evidence as it is written in the original source. 2) a standard for evaluating topicality arguments which is used to determine if the definition offered in the debate is consistent with the meaning of the term in relationship to authors who write about the subject matter of the topic or, to determine if the definition offered in the debate is consistent with the meaning of the term in relationship to other terms in the resolution. *adj.* contextual.

**contradiction:** *n.* a type of fallacy in argument. It merely says that the two or more arguments presented by one team cannot be true because they disprove each other. Example: having one team present arguments that prove that U.S. hegemony is both good and bad.

**co-option:** *n.* the influence of outside parties hampering an agency's efforts to carry out its instructions.

**counterplan:** *n.* a counterplan is proposed by the negative as an alternative method of solving the same problem cited by the affirmative or as an alternative which goes beyond the affirmative's plan. It is generally thought that a counterplan should be competitive. That means that It should not be possible or desirable to adopt both the affirmative plan and the negative's counterplan. *v.* to employ the negative strategy of presenting and defending a competitive program to solve the affirmative need or advantage.

**counterplan advantages:** *n.* benefits which result from the adoption of the counterplan.

**critique (also "kritik"):** *n.* an argument that the assumptions or language of an issue should be the first consideration (or an "a priori issue") in a debate. The effects of a policy should be considered only after one has decided if the assumptions and/or language of an argument are philosophically or morally acceptable. Frequently, the critique argues that—since the plan is not truly enacted as a result of the debate—the impact of the language, philosophy, or political strategy used in the round is more "real" and more important than any other argument in the debate.

**cross-examination:** *n.* a period (usually lasting three minutes) following each of the constructive speeches in which a member of the opposing team directly questions the most recent speaker.

**cut evidence:** *v.* a term used to describe the process of compiling evidence from books, magazines, articles, etc. This involves copying the portion of text that you desire to use citing, and tagging the text as evidence.

**debatability:** *n.* the degree to which an argument contributes to, or detracts from, the theoretical ability of debate to exist as a desirable

activity. To say that the other team's argument hurts debatability, for example, is to say that it is the sort of argument that would make debate more difficult or less attractive if made the argument. Debatability is often cited as the main reason that judges should vote on topicality arguments.

**debatability standard:** *n.* a topicality standard which argues that as long as the definition provides fair grounds for debate, it should be accepted.

**disadvantages:** *n.* a disadvantage, sometimes referred to with the shorthand phrases "DA" or "Disad," is an undesirable effect of a plan. A negative team runs a disad to show that adoption of the plan is going to cause more problems than it will solve. In order to prove a disadvantage, a negative team must prove several things. First, they must link it to the affirmative plan. Second, they must be able to prove it is unique to the affirmative plan, and third, they must prove that the impact of the disadvantage is bad enough to outweigh the affirmative advantages.

**disco:** *v.* a general term used to describe complex debate tactics that involve conceding several of your opponent's arguments in order to win a debate round. For example, the negative might argue that there are disadvantages to solving the affirmative harms AND that the counterplan does a better job of solving the harms than the plan. The affirmative might then concede both of those arguments and claim they should win because the plan links less to the disadvantage than the counterplan.

**discursive impact:** *n.* derived from the word *discourse*, this argument usually says that the language used within the debate is more important than the issues debated. Discursive impacts are usually claimed by critiques.

**dispositional counterplan:** *n.* counterplans that the negative presents, that the negative can not abandon at any time. The negative is forced to defend the counterplan if the affirmative does

not read any theory arguments or permutations against the negative. Dispositional counterplans are often compared to "conditional" counterplans.

**double-turn:** *n.* a situation that occurs when a team "turns" (or says the opposite of) both the link and the impact of one of the other team's arguments. For example, if the negative runs a disadvantage saying the plan causes economic collapse and that economic collapse is bad, a double-turn would occur if the affirmative answered by saying that the plan prevents economic collapse and that an economic collapse is good. In essence, a double-turn means that the answering team has run a disadvantage against themselves, and that the other team can simply grant both turns to win the argument (and possibly the round).

**drop:** *v.* to concede an opponent's argument by not answering it. Also, to concede that one of your own arguments is not relevant by failing to extend it.

**existential inherency:** *n.* this kind of inherency argues that if the affirmative can demonstrate a massive problem exists then the affirmative has met the burden of inherency by showing that the present system is not solving it.

**evidence:** *n.* quotations which tend to prove or provide grounds for belief; also, broadly, the reasoning that tends to prove a claim.

**extending an argument:** *v.* bringing an argument up again in speeches after which they were initially presented. This sometimes involves reading new evidence to further explain or support the initial argument. Arguments that are not extended are considered "dropped" and are not supposed to be considered by the judge when deciding the round.

**extra-topical:** *adj.* a portion of an affirmative plan that falls outside the resolution. Different from non-topical plans, which do not fall under the topic at all, extra-topical plans are plans that

are partially topical, but also have a part that is non-topical.

**fiat:** *n.* a term used to describe the process that allows us to debate an affirmative plan as if it were adopted. This four letter word is much disputed in debate theory as to what it actually means, what powers it gives the affirmative, and what powers the negative has to implement a counterplan. For a quick reference, it would be best to think of it as a little spark of imagination which allows us to pretend a judge could adopt the affirmative plan (and perhaps the negative's counterplan) if he/she choose. *v.* to implement a plan over any objection — a power granted to advocates of change.

**field context:** *n.* a topicality standard that says it is better to have a definition which is derived from the writings of experts on the subject of the resolution.

**file:** *n.* a set of arguments (in the form of multiple briefs) that is usually focused on one particular issue. A complete set of briefs concerning the politics disadvantage, for example, might be referred to as a "politics file."

**floating PIC (Plan-Inclusive Counterplan):** *n.* a counterplan that is not formally read by the negative, but is merely implied by the negative critique. Many critical arguments seem to imply that an alternative action to the plan would be taken either immediately or at some point in the future. It is called "floating" because the implicit nature of the counterplan makes it easy for the negative to alter the implied action, making it a moving target.

**flow:** *v.* to take notes of the debate, argument by argument in a linear fashion. *n.* referring to a flow sheet.

**flow sheet:** *n.* paper used to take notes and keep track of the arguments in a debate.

**Foucault:** *n.* a critique based on the writings of Michael Foucault (pronounced "foo-ko"), usually

advocating individual resistance to regulation and criticizing the idea of government reform. Foucault was concerned that when society regulates what is and is not acceptable behavior people are locked into particular ways of thinking and acting. For example, laws define deviance and thus create groups of people who are considered "abnormal." He argued against the idea that power is held only by those at the top. Instead, he claimed that all people have power.

**framework:** *n.* generally, the assumptions about debate a judge uses to determine who should win the round. Usually, "framework" refers to an argument made by one or both teams about whether the judge should consider (or prioritize) policy arguments or critical arguments (critiques) in the debate.

**functionally concede:** *v.* answering an argument without actually refuting it. For example, the 2AC might answer the impact of a disadvantage by reading evidence that answers the link. While the 2AC has "answered" the impact on paper, she has functionally conceded it by reading evidence against the link.

**generic arguments:** *n.* arguments, usually negative, that are general and apply to a wide range of affirmative cases or plans.

**generic disadvantage:** *n.* a disadvantage designed to link to most affirmative plans on the topic.

**grammatical context:** *n.* a topicality standard that argues that when searching for the best definition we should find one which is derived from the relationship of words in a consistent grammatical form with other terms in the resolution.

**hegemony:** *n.* while this word has several distinct meanings, in debate "hegemony" almost always refers to the ability of one nation to dominate other nations (militarily, economically, and so on). Most hegemony arguments deal with



whether the plan increases or decreases the U.S.'s hegemony over the rest of the world, and whether that is good or a bad thing.

**impact:** *n.* the good or bad results of an affirmative case, counterplan or disadvantages (see significance). *n.* the consequences of an argument, including theoretical arguments, which make the argument important in evaluating the debate.

**independent advantage:** *n.* an advantage that can justify adoption of a plan even if the other advantages may not be true.

**inherency:** *n.* the cause of a problem's existence, the proof that the problem will continue, and the barrier preventing current programs from solving a problem.

**insides (or "ins and outs"):** *n.* an affirmative strategy that changes the nature of which debater gives which speech. A team doing the "insides" has one debater give the 1AC and the 2AR. The other debater gives the 2AC and the 1AR. The strategy is often employed to take advantage of a situation where one affirmative debater speaks significantly faster than the other. Some judges regard this strategy as illegitimate.

**intrinsicness:** *adj.* used to describe a type of argument in which the affirmative illegitimately adds an action onto their plan that was not originally advocated by the aff.

**jurisdiction:** *n.* an argument (often used in topicality discussions) that the resolution provides limits on the judge's power. This argument states that if the plan is not topical, the judge has no power to fiat the plan. A nontopical plan could therefore not be voted for because the plan is outside the judge's authority.

**kick:** *v.* To argue that one of your own arguments should no longer be considered relevant in the debate. Kicking an argument sometimes involves not extending it, but other times debaters must answer their opponents' arguments to

kick one of their own arguments without risk that it will later be used against them.

**kritiks:** see "critiques." Also known as "the K."

**link:** *n.* That component of a disadvantage which shows how it is caused by the Affirmative plan.

**masking:** *n.* an argument that says the affirmative plan leads everyone to believe the problem is being solved, when in fact the plan will fail to solve and prevent other solutions from being enacted. Frequently used as part of critique arguments such as Foucault. (see "critiques").

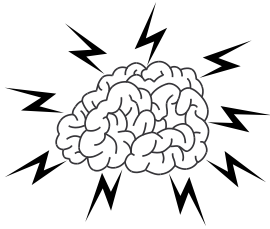
**mutual exclusivity:** *n.* one competitiveness standard that the counterplan and the affirmative plan cannot co-exist.

**negative block:** *n.* the 2nd negative constructive and the 1st negative rebuttal; the two negative speeches in the middle of the debate.

**net benefit:** *n.* An argument that the counterplan alone is a superior policy to adoption of both the counterplan and the affirmative plan together.

**normativity:** *n.* A critique based largely on the work of law professor Pierre Schlag. Normativity critiques generally suggest that the language we use to discuss the law is not realistic. "Normative" legal language causes us to believe that we have a magical control over the law and the results of the law that we do not really have. This makes us think of ourselves as judges and law professors, not as active member of society. Normativity critiques often focus on the concept of fiat as an important link.

**object fiat:** *n.* An argument that the negative has offered a policy (counterplan or critique alternative) that unfairly uses fiat to create the desired end-state (or "object") of the affirmative plan. For example, if the affirmative plan is to change US foreign policy in order to get the factions in Iraq to stop fighting, the negative might coun-



### **WARNING:**

**Learning too many debate terms can overload your fragile brain, causing it to melt like cheese**

terplan to have the Iraqi factions stop fighting. Is it a good idea? Yes. Is it cheating? Maybe.

**objectivism:** *n.* based on the philosophy of author Ayn Rand, the argument says individual freedom is the most important value.

All government regula-

tions innately infringe on individuals and are therefore evil. Only complete freedom from government controls can allow the human race to achieve its full potential.

**observation:** see “contention”

**olive branch:** *n.* generally speaking, an “olive branch” is slang for a gift or service performed for an opponent in the hope of creating good will and other feelings necessary for peace. In the context of debate, this most often refers to a link argument for the politics disadvantage. The negative claims the affirmative plan will act as the president’s peace offering to the opposing party in congress, creating bipartishanship (see the relevant entry) and making it more likely for one of the president’s agenda items to become law.

**patriarchy:** *n.* a governmental and/or social system that ensures the dominance of male-centered values and interests. This is sometimes used literally to suggest that a social system ensures men will remain dominant over women. In other uses, it is intended to suggest that a social system ensures the dominance of certain values or activities traditionally associated with men (i.e., war or domestic violence).

**performance:** *n.* a type of debate that abandons the concept of debate as policy-making and focuses on the activity’s ability to cause change in our society. Performance debates usually do not include plans, and may incorporate music, videos, and other forms of expression into speeches.

**permutation:** *n.* a type of argument used by affirmatives to illustrate non-competitiveness of counterplans, a legitimate permutation includes all of the plan and all or part of the counterplan. Affirmatives argue that, despite the texts of the plan and the counterplan, if it is possible to imagine the coexistence of the two plans, then the negative has not illustrated why the resolution should not be adopted. (see competitiveness)

**philosophical competition:** *n.* a standard of competition for counterplans which argues that since the two plans under consideration have different philosophical approaches they are exclusive of one another.

**PIC:** see “plan-inclusive counterplan”

**plan:** *n.* the action or policy advocated by the affirmative. This usually comes in the form of a more specific, detailed version of the resolution.

**plan flaw:** *n.* a negative argument that there is something wrong with the wording (or grammatical structure) of the plan as presented in the 1AC. The impact of a plan flaw is usually an argument that the plan will not solve or that it links to a specific negative argument.

**plan-inclusive counterplan (PIC):** *n.* a counterplan that substantially replicates the plan mandates, with only minor changes. In this sense, the counterplan “includes,” or contains, most of the actions taken by the plan.

**plan mandates:** *n.* the resolitional action specified in the affirmative plan.

**plan-meet-need (PMN):** *n.* an argument claiming that a plan does not solve the need. Usually a subdivided and structured argument presented in second negative constructive.

**plan spike:** *n.* a part of a plan designed to aid the workability of the plan or diminish its disadvantages. Plan spikes are sometimes considered

illegitimate, since they are not a necessary part of the plan or the topic.

**policy-making:** *n.* a philosophy that debate rounds should be evaluated from the perspective of pseudo-legislators weighing the advantages and disadvantages of two conflicting policy systems.

**political capital:** *n.* the amount of good will a politician can muster to get policies enacted. In debate this argument says passing the plan will consume so much political capital that those enacting the plan will have to sacrifice other important issues on their political agenda. The capital expended passing the plan sacrifices the capital necessary to get other policies passed.

**political focus:** *n.* the ability of political leaders to concentrate on the particular issues. In debate, the argument says that passing the affirmative plan will require so much energy and time, that policymakers will be unable to get other more important issues passed.

**political popularity:** *n.* the approval rating of a politician. In debate, the argument considers the public approval of the plan. If the plan is unpopular, policymakers will lose credibility making it nearly impossible to pass other more important plans. If the plan is popular, it may boost the credibility of policymakers, making it easier to get other less desirable plans passed.

**politics disads:** *n.* (see disadvantages) These arguments claim that the political consequences of passing the plan will lead to impacts that outweigh the case.

**post-date:** *v.* a verb indicating that a certain piece of evidence is more recent than another piece of evidence. The newer card is said to “post-date” the older card. This is usually assumed to be a reason to prefer the newer piece of evidence.

**posthumanism:** *n.* see “postmodernism”

**postmodernism:** *n.* although the various people who write postmodern theory don’t really agree on what it means to be “postmodern,” there are a couple of common elements of postmodernism. Postmodern authors often claim that we cannot know what is and is not true because truth is a product of culture. They often indict scientific reasoning, especially the argument that only science can tell us how to view the world. Many postmodern authors claim that policymakers focus too much on solutions, when they ought to be investigating the philosophical and linguistic nature of the problem instead. Critiques based on postmodern philosophy often point out the ways in which the affirmative relies on faulty assumptions about truth.

**preemption or preempt:** *n.* an argument designed to respond to another argument that has not been made, but is anticipated.

**prep time:** *n.* the time allotted to each team for getting ready for their speeches once the debate has begun.

**presumption:** *n.* the assumption that a system should not be changed unless there is a clear reason to change it. In debate rounds, this normally means that the judge assumes it is safest to vote negative (for the status quo) unless the affirmative can make a persuasive case for change. Many debaters interpret this to mean that, in case of a tie, judges should vote negative.

**procedural arguments:** *n.* the general name for arguments that claim a team should lose because it has violated the proper (or ideal) procedures of debate. Procedurals most commonly appear as off-case arguments made by the negative, but can technically be made by either team at any time.

**procedurals:** see “procedural arguments”

**proliferation (or “prolif”):** *n.* the acquisition of nuclear weapons by an increasing number of countries in the world. When either team talks about “proliferation,” they are generally referring to the possibility of one or more countries

getting access to nuclear weapons who do not currently have nukes. Sometimes, “prolif” is a generic disadvantage which claims that the expansion of nuclear weapons capability to more countries is increased or decreased by policies supported by the affirmative. The consequences under either condition are increased instability and terrorism thereby increasing the risks of nuclear war. It can also be argued that proliferation of nuclear weapons is good because nukes deter aggression and increase caution.

**reasonability:** *n.* a topicality standard which claims that the affirmative only needs to offer a definition which is not excessively broad and would appear legitimate at first glance.

**rebuttal:** *n.* Any of the last four speeches in a debate. During rebuttals, new arguments are usually not allowed.

**reify:** *v.* using language that makes “false” or “illusory” things seem real and/or legitimate. Some critics might say that advocating aid for minorities actually makes racism more legitimate because it “reifies” the idea of race. These critics argue that, because there is no biological basis for race, targeting people of specific races for help supports (or “reifies”) the false notion of race, thus legitimizing racism.

**resolution:** *n.* a proposition of fact, value, or policy which the affirmative is obligated to support; topic, a statement which focuses debate by dividing argument ground on any given issue.

**retrench:** *v.* to reinforce the present system. Usually occurring in discussions of critiques, the argument says that the effect of a policy is to reinforce the prevailing attitudes in the status quo. Thus, the problems which exist won’t be solved and may worsen.

**reverse causality:** *n.* a quality attributed to a relationship between cause and effect. In debate, a situation is said to be “reverse causal” when eliminating the cause of a problem solves the problem. For example, it might be true that you

drove your mother crazy by bothering her all the time. However, if you stop bothering her right now she won’t necessarily become sane. The relationship is not reverse causal.

**reverse voting issue (or RVI or “reverse voter”):** *n.* an argument that a team should lose the debate for having run a theoretical or procedural argument. For example, if the negative runs a conditional counterplan and the affirmative responds by saying conditionality is bad, the negative might then say the affirmative should lose for having challenged the negative’s right to run a conditional counterplan. RVI’s are sometimes considered illegitimate by judges who don’t like theory or debates that focus too much on the flow

**run:** *v.* to make an argument in a debate round. This word is most commonly used in phrases like “we’re going to run the politics disadvantage.” This means that a team is planning to include a politics disadvantage in the INC.

**sandbag:** *v.* to delay in presenting the impact of an argument until a later speech.

**scenario:** *n.* a term used to describe the type of situation which might exist when the impact to an advantage or disadvantage occurs.

**shift:** *v.* to alter in a later speech one’s position on an issue.

**significance:** *n.* the measure, qualitative or quantitative, of the need claimed by the affirmative. Significance has diminished in importance as a stock issue in recent years because most topics now include substantial or significant in the resolutions.

**sit out:** see the verb form of “squirrel” (below)

**solvency:** *n.* the ability of the affirmative plan, or a counterplan, to solve the problems being discussed in the round

**spark, the:** *n.* an argument that nuclear war is good. Usually, a team argues that a small nuclear war would produce some good outcome (global nuclear disarmament) or would prevent some more destructive long-term impact (a larger nuclear war or the destruction of the world via new technology).

**spec:** *v.* pronounced “speck,” this is slang for the word “specify.” Specification arguments are usually procedural arguments made by the negative regarding the affirmative plan. These arguments range from claiming that the affirmative should be forced to specify which branch of the federal government enacts the plan (see “A-Spec”) to demanding that the affirmative specify what color of highlighter it has used to mark its evidence.

**spending:** *n.* a generic disadvantage that argues that the act of spending government funds on the plan will result in massive economic damage. Usually, spending disads claim that money for the plan will exceed government limits on the current budget, leading to new rounds of spending and inflation or some other kind of economic instability.

**spending tradeoff:** *n.* a generic disadvantage that argues that the cost of the plan will be taken from programs that could better use the money.

**spread:** *v.* to introduce a large number of arguments into the debate, usually by speaking at a very rapid rate. *n.* a description of the process of delivering many arguments.

**squirrel:** *v.* to be in the minority of a split decision on a debate judging panel (e.g., if the decision of a panel of 3 judges is 2-1 for the affirmative, the judge who voted negative is said to have “squirreled.”). *Also, n.* an argument (especially a plan or 1AC) that is unusual, obscure, or of questionable validity. Most often used in the phrase “squirrel case.”

**squo:** *n.* an informal contraction for “status quo” (see below). Often used in the phrase “the squo.”

**standards:** *n.* a set of criteria which allows the judge to evaluate the superiority of competing arguments. cf., topicality standards or competition standards.

**status quo:** *n.* the present system, the way things are now, the world as we know it. Also used to describe the current direction or nature of government policy in a specific area.

**stock issues:** *n.* those issues that the affirmative must prove (i.e., significance, inherency, solvency and topicality) in order to win a debate. *n.* a paradigm or perspective for evaluating rounds based on the notion that the affirmative has to meet the burdens of significance, inherency, solving and topicality.

**structure:** *n.* the outline of an argument. Also, the arrangement of the various issues of the debate into a coherent order.

**subpoints:** *n.* a specific supporting part of an argumentative structure.

**tag-team:** *adj.* a term usually used to describe a cross-examination in which debaters might take on duties that are not technically theirs. For example, a debater might ask questions even if it is not their turn or might answer questions even though they did not just speak. Some judges consider this practice unacceptable.

**topicality:** *n.* 1) the quality or condition of falling under the range of the resolution’s possibilities. 2) an argument suggesting that the affirmative plan is not an example of the resolution.

**topicality standards:** *n.* a set of criteria designed to aid the judge in evaluating the topicality argument.

**try or die:** *v.* a situation where one must accept a policy (a plan, a counterplan, etc.) even though it is not preferable because the alternative is death. Debaters use this phrase to emphasize the idea that choosing even disadvantageous



or potentially ineffective policy options is better than giving into inevitable extinction. This phrase has been used so often that debaters sometimes use it ironically or as a joke.

**turn:** *n.* an argument that says the exact opposite of what the opposing team said is true in order to prove why you win. For example if the affirmative read a hegemony is good advantage, the negative can turn the advantage by arguing hegemony is bad.

**uniqueness:** *n.* that component of a disadvantage which illustrates that the disadvantage impact which the negative claims results only from the adoption of the affirmative plan. That is, the disadvantage impact would not occur absent the affirmative plan.

**voting issue:** *n.* an argument which justifies voting for the team that initiated the argument. For example, topicality, critiques, and counterplan competitiveness are frequently considered voting issues.

**winners win:** *n.* the claim that the successful passage of a policy gives the person responsible for the policy more political power. The term is most frequently used to describe the idea that passing the plan will give the president more political clout to pass other, unrelated policies.

**wipeout:** *n.* an argument that it would be good for the human species to become extinct. Usually, a team argues that human survival inevitably leads to some larger, galactic harm such as the spread of ecological destruction throughout the galaxy or the destruction of the entire universe through new technology.

**world government (or WOMP):** *n.* a generic counterplan derived from the World Order Models Project (W.O.M.P.) commissioned to study the feasibility of a world government. The argument's basic idea is that each action taken by a single government (like the United States federal government) makes it harder to achieve

a world where all countries are governed by a single global power. The negative therefore argues a world government should be established to accomplish the objectives of the affirmative and prevent wars between nations.

**Zizek:** *n.* a critique (or an answer to a critique) based on the work of Slovenian cultural critic Slavoj Zizek. Zizek's collected works are so numerous and so varied that it is hard to predict which of his arguments will appear in a debate round. Zizek is widely known for his dislike of capitalism, his dislike of much of the theory that has been labeled "postmodern," and his respect for the work of psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan.