

Judging Policy Debate



Policy debate focuses on the advocacy of a **plan** or policy action. The affirmative team should outline the *harms* in the current system or some sort of need. Then they should present a policy that would satisfy the *need* they have outlined. In addition the affirmative may discuss additional *advantages* to the policy.

The negative team may argue that the affirmative policy fails to meet the need they have outlined (i.e. the affirmative does not solve). The negative also has the option to present *disadvantages* to the policy (the policy may solve the problem, but it will create new problems).

Other ways do exist for structuring an affirmative case or negative strategy, but in the end the debate should focus on whether or not a particular policy is an appropriate course of action.

Timing - Timekeeping is required. If no timekeeper is used, debaters may time for their opponent or the judge may keep time.		Each individual debater must give one and only one constructive speech, one period of questioning, one period of answering, and one rebuttal.
First Affirmative Constructive (IAC)	8 min.	
2nd Negative Cross-Examines IAC	3 min.	
First Negative Constructive (INC)	8 min.	
1st Affirmative Cross-Examines INC	3 min.	
Second Affirmative Constructive (2AC)	8 min.	
1st Negative Cross-Examines 2AC	3 min.	
Second Negative Constructive (2NC)	8 min.	
2nd Affirmative Cross-Examines 2NC	3 min.	
First Negative Rebuttal (1NR)	5 min.	
First Affirmative Rebuttal (1AR)	5 min.	
Second Negative Rebuttal (2NR)	5 min.	
Second Affirmative Rebuttal (2AR)	5 min.	
Prep time, per team	5 min.	

Stock Issues

Often, judges view the round in terms of stock issues, or major questions that both teams need to address. They are:

- ❖ **Topicality:** Does the affirmative plan meet the terms of the resolution? Is it an example of the resolution?
- ❖ **Harms:** What's the problem with the status quo?
- ❖ **Significance:** What is the scope of the problem with the status quo?
- ❖ **Inherency:** Does the plan exist in the *status quo* (the way things are now), and what structural or attitudinal barriers exist?
- ❖ **Solvency:** Does the affirmative plan solve the problem?

In the traditional view, the affirmative has to successfully defend the argument that their plan meets all five of the stock issues: it can't exist already (inherency), it has to address an important problem (harms and significance together), it has to fix that important problem (solvency), and it has to be an example of the resolution, to ensure a fair debate (topicality). If the

negative can prove that the affirmative violates any one of the stock issues – for example, that the plan won't fix the problem (solvency) – then the negative wins the debate.

Disadvantages

Sometimes an affirmative plan can solve for all five of the stock issues and still be a bad idea. For example, an affirmative plan to dissolve the entire U.S. prison system would certainly remedy the problem of excessive detention, doesn't exist in the status quo, and very substantially decreases the government's ability to detain without charge. However, there are still extremely good reasons not to vote for such a plan: prisoners might run rampant on the streets; people would be less afraid to commit crimes since they would know that there were no prisons to punish them for breaking the law; lots of prison staff would be out of employment, and so forth.

A disadvantage is a somewhat more structured way of arguing that the negative consequences of a plan provide a reason not to vote for it. Disadvantages have several important parts:

- ❖ **Uniqueness:** is the disadvantage happening in the status quo? If a disadvantage argues that an affirmative plan will cause the economy to stagnate (stop growing), then it can be proved non-unique if an affirmative effectively argues that the economy is already stagnating and, hence, the plan wouldn't make the economy any worse than it already is.
- ❖ **Link:** does the plan cause the problem to happen? If a disadvantage argues that releasing detainees held at Guantanamo Bay would cause terrorism to increase, the negative has to prove that prisoners there are involved in terrorism and that their captivity is important to preventing terrorism.
- ❖ **Impact:** does the plan cause something bad to happen? If a disadvantage argues that limiting the government's ability to conduct sneak and peek searches under Section 213 of the USA PATRIOT Act would impair the government's law enforcement ability, the negative has to prove that law enforcement by the government is a good thing.

Cross-Examination

The questioner shall control the use of the time and may interrupt the respondent, but may not comment on the answers or make any statement of his/her own views.

Evaluation

Judges are expected to carefully and fairly decide the outcomes of a debate. There are two outcomes for a debate. The judge must decide the winning side of the debate. That is the team that argued successfully on the topic. If the affirmative team proves its case, the judge should reward the affirmative team. If the affirmative team did not prove its case, the judge should declare the negative team as the winner. There are no ties in debates. Neither can two teams win a debate or both teams lose a debate.

In addition to deciding the winning team in the debate, a judge must award individual points to each of the four debaters. Student are rated on a scale of 0-30 points, with "30" points awarded for a perfect performance. The judge should consider public speaking, argumentation, and teamwork skills in assigning individual speaker points. It is possible to give the same speaker points to more than one student. Often, judges also must **rank** each of the four debaters, and there may **not** be a tie in *rank*.

A decision **SHOULD NOT** be based upon:

1. **The merits of the resolution.** The judge should not be influenced by prejudices in favor or against the resolution.
2. **Partiality.** The judge should not be influenced by the reputation of, or partiality for or against, either of the competing teams, their schools, or coaches.
3. **Preconceived notions on arguments.** The judge should not allow his idea of what the best affirmative or negative arguments or cases may be to influence the decision.
4. **Personal preferences on debating style.** A judge should not penalize a team if its style, either in case construction or delivery, differs from that which s/he personally prefers; but should evaluate all styles on the basis of effectiveness in winning conviction.

A decision **SHOULD BE** based upon the consideration of any or all of the following questions:

1. **Skill in analysis.** This includes not only the analysis of the proposition, but also analysis of the debate as it progresses.
2. **Use of evidence.** This includes the use of sufficient evidence and proper reference to source.
3. **Validity of argument.** This includes reasoning and conclusions drawn from the evidence presented.
4. **Clarity of organization.** This includes clear outlining of constructive arguments and easily followed handling of refutation.
5. **Effectiveness of delivery.** This includes all matters pertaining to oral presentation with special emphasis upon extemporaneous abilities.

