teachers’ guide to policy debate

2nd Edition

By: Sophie Elsner & Matt Grimes

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Welcome to the Rhode Island Urban Debate League’s Teachers’ Guide to Policy Debate! This guide is intended to explain policy debate in a straightforward yet thorough manner and provide support for teachers of debate. Although simple in concept, the activity of policy debate requires a vast knowledge of rules and vocabulary. Do not be intimidated by the length of this guide; it is here when you need it, to answer all of your questions. By no means do you need to understand it fully to begin instructing your students.

We suggest using this guide as an introductory explanation for those new to debate and as a reference point for coaches with any level of experience. It provides a combination of definitions, explanations of debate concepts and ways to make debate more engaging. While this guide will help in understanding how to make policy debate arguments, it must be supplemented by a strong familiarity with the topic for any given year. Our aim is to provide a set of tools for engaging in these interesting and important real-world discussions.

The Teacher’s Guide to Policy Debate is written with the participants of the RIUDL in mind as a response to the need for a comprehensive tool for teaching debate in Rhode Island. The RIUDL was founded in 1999 in partnership with the Swearer Center for Public Service at Brown University and public high schools in the Providence area. Its mission is: “The Rhode Island Urban Debate League engages urban students in intellectually stimulating debate programs in order to improve academic outcomes, enhance leadership skills, and foster civic participation.” We hope this guide encourages the teaching of policy debate throughout the state, giving students the opportunity and confidence to speak out on central political questions.

Welcome to the great game of debate,

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Student Coordinators of the RIUDL

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TEACHING
DEBATE
ORGANIZING THE SCHOOL YEAR

Suggested Order

Figuring out where to start when teaching policy debate can be daunting. Students must learn a ton of information in order to compete on the most basic level and communicate effectively with one another. We suggest covering topics in the following order in an attempt to strike a balance between keeping students excited through the fun parts of debate and teaching them basic skills to get them started:

Basic Argumentation
The first step is showing students that debate is a) actually just a process of discussion and arguing and b) that arguing doesn’t mean disorganized yelling but rather focused, targeted thoughts.

First, allow students to play games that may not have anything to do with policy debate (SPAR Debates, Chain Debates, Two Truths and a Lie, etc.). Next explain the basic steps of an argument: Claim, Warrant, Data, & Impact (skipping the formal process of impact analysis for the time being). Identify what makes a strong argument.

The Resolution
Because the policy debate topic lasts for the whole year, students will get to know it intimately. Explain what a resolution is and how a given year’s topic is relevant in today’s world. This is a good time to begin the discussion of who might be affected by the topic, what types of institutions would be involved, and why a person might agree or disagree with the resolution.

Remind students that the basic burden of the affirmative is to defend the resolution and the negative’s is to attack it.

Speaking Drills
Although speaking skills (both organization and presentation) do not need to be addressed in any order, having students vocally participate as frequently as possible is essential for keeping them engaged. This can be as simple as
starting a discussion of current events or as formal as a full-on practice debate. Try to incorporate at least one speaking drill or opportunity to give a practice speech during each practice.

**Structure: Team-Wide Debate**

Rather than initially teaching the structure of policy debate through the assigned topic, first have the students create their own resolution, plan, and responses to it.

**Flowing**

Nobody looks forward to learning how to take notes, but keeping track of all of the arguments in a debate will be impossible without it. Practice flowing through games and watching practice debates and video clips of political speeches and debates. We recommend *The West Wing*. Try to integrate some amount flowing work into every practice.

**Evidence**

Go over the use of evidence and how we know if it’s credible.

**Back to Structure**

At this point, the various components of debate have been laid out, but students probably still will not understand how to get through a round. Now it’s time to get into policy debate specific discussions and jargon. It will probably be helpful to walk through the core files while teaching these skills, although the core files should not be the sole basis for teaching. Instead, use other, simpler examples to teach the concepts and then apply those ideas to specific topic-related arguments that they will likely encounter over the course of the year.

The first tournament of the year happens only a few weeks after school starts, so it will be a challenge to get through the important skills and specific arguments students will need to know prior to their first debate. Fear not—most leagues limit novices to certain affirmative cases and off-case positions for the first several tournaments. Try to make sure that students are familiar with most of the issues they will be up against, but
know that true understanding of these positions will take several tournaments (and that, at first, confusion is the norm).

Our suggested order includes:

- The structure of the round itself
  - Speaker order and times
  - Cross examination practice
- 1AC
  - Stock Issues & Plan
  - Affirmative cases on the topic
- 1NC & The Negative Block
  - Extending arguments
- On-Case Arguments (Offensive & Defensive)
- Off-Case Arguments
  - Disadvantages
  - Counterplans
- The 2AC
- Impact Analysis
- Turns
- Rebuttal Strategy
- Remainder of Off-Case Arguments
  - Topicality
  - Kritiks

While this guide will hopefully give you a sense of where to start, student interest and awareness of the concepts that are giving them the most difficulty should be the central factors guiding your teaching of debate. Pay attention to the tastes of your students. What kind of arguments do they consistently choose or use as examples? What do they avoid? Keeping students engaged through the early stages of learning debate can often be challenging, so strive to make it as accessible as possible.

**How to Introduce the Structure of Policy Debate**

After teaching argumentation, it’s time to put debate into the context of a policy round. As you may have noticed, there is a ton of information
involved in a debate, and unfortunately most of it needs to be at least somewhat understood just to make it through the first debate. We suggest that rather than trying to teach policy debate speech-by-speech or diving straight into the dozens of relevant vocabulary words, try an activity in which your entire debate team creates a resolution, an affirmative position and a negative position. Through this student-created topic, most of the key debate positions will reveal themselves organically.

The chart below gives an example of this model debate. In order to make this debate work, we need to ask a set of questions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Debate Terminology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is a problem at our school?</td>
<td>Food options</td>
<td>Problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What should be done about it (generally)?</td>
<td>PPSD should increase its food options for students.</td>
<td>Resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What should we do?</td>
<td>PPSD should allow students to go off campus for lunch.</td>
<td>Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the policy now?</td>
<td>Students cannot leave campus during the school day</td>
<td>Status Quo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are current barriers to implementing this plan?</td>
<td>School rules, availability of restaurants nearby, Free/ Reduced Meal Plan funding from State limits food options</td>
<td>Inherency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are some of the problems with the status quo?</td>
<td>Students are disappointed by food choices; leads to lower morale. Students do not eat and go hungry throughout the day; drop in focus and learning.</td>
<td>Harms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does our plan make the situation better?</td>
<td>Students perform better in school because food is not a distraction.</td>
<td>Advantages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Continued on Page 8)
How would you argue against the above claims?
Students perform worse in school when they focus on their eating options and look forward to leaving campus.
Turn

What is a possible alternative to this plan?
Deliver pizza to the school; students don’t have to leave campus
Counterplan

What are possible new problems created as a result of the original plan?
Students driving off campus increases risk of car accidents
Disadvantage

Students may come up with new questions and answers before you can put them in any order; that’s ok. In fact, any enthusiasm is great. Sorting out all of this information is tough and we want students to feel as much in control over the aspects of policymaking as possible. While students are answering these questions and throwing out new ideas, try to write them down on a chalkboard. At this point, you can group them by their debate lingo, but don’t focus too much on the labels.

The next step is transferring this policymaking effort to the real resolution. All of the concepts are the same, except the problem is likely more complex. First, go over the resolution with students to make sure they understand it. Then help them come up with a plan (i.e. the Federal Government should increase its aid to affordable housing programs). Ask the exact same questions as in the mock debate, and refer back to those examples.

From this point, you can focus on different aspects of the debate. This stage of laying out the debate is necessary in order to give students a sense of the types of questions each side will have to answer. Throughout the year, you can refer back to this simple debate or create new examples of more basic situations in order to ground these complex policy decisions and discussions.
RUNNING A PRACTICE

Tips

• Begin every practice with an activity or group discussion of interesting current events (See “Suggested Activities” for suggestions). Try to make the activity relevant to the lesson for the day.
• If students have a lot of energy after school, get them moving – in or outside of the classroom.
• Ask follow up questions.
• Give students the opportunity to teach lessons.
• Allow students to critique each other after debates.
• Ask for examples from students.
• Bring at least one news article to practice every day and discuss it. It’s preferable if the article is related to the policy debate topic.
• Prepare a specific lesson for each practice, related to a different topic of debate. If the lesson ends up being abandoned during the practice, that’s fine, but always have a plan.
• Listen to the arguments and cases that students gravitate toward. Encourage students to read more about the types of policies and arguments that interest them the most.
• Show up to practice before the school day ends.
• Treat students as scholars.

Checking In

The following are questions to ask of your students and observe throughout the year, especially after tournaments:

• What good arguments are you hearing?
• What new arguments are you hearing?
• To which arguments are you losing?
• What arguments do you wish you were covering? For what topics or types of arguments do you need more evidence or preparation?
• What feedback are you getting from judges?
RUNNING A TEAM

There are many critical components involved in organizing and sustaining a team. While parents, volunteers and debaters can and should have a role in the team’s success, the coach is ultimately the head of the team. We have suggested areas of focus for running a debate team:

Recruitment
The coach is the primary advocate for debate at her school. A few avenues to pursue for recruiting include:

• Talking about debate during class and asking other teachers to do so (debaters can also give brief presentations in their classes)
• Making signs
• Hold a demonstration debate at a school assembly
• Ask English and Social Studies teachers for suggestions of students who might be interested in a politically-minded speaking activity

Team Expectations
Many coaches have found contracts to be a successful motivation for debaters. These contracts are generated in collaboration between the coach and students and should include the team rules and goals (short term and for the end of the year).

Attendance should always be taken at practices and tournaments (either by the coach or a designated student). The individual contract can include the consequences or rewards concerning attendance.

Students should have roles on the team, as the coach sees fit (captain, secretary, treasurer, PR representative, etc.).

Community Engagement
Some schools send progress reports or updates to parents after tournaments. Parents can organize carpools to drive students to tournaments or mid-week workshops. Parents are welcome to tournaments (as observers or judges) and perhaps can also be invited to practices.
Positive results of tournaments can be announced over the loud speaker to publicize the success of debaters. Teams can also display trophies or photos in a display case at the school.

Contact the school newspaper to collaborate on a feature about the debate team.

Teams may also choose to work on a service project related to the topic. Policy debate topics always address real issues, and there are many opportunities for students to get directly involved in local, national or international efforts on a topic-related cause. In an election season, students may also want to participate in political campaigns; coaches and volunteers should help them to find outlets for volunteering if they are interested.
HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM & THE RIUDL

The Rhode Island Urban Debate League is working to align the skills learned in debate and its teaching methodologies with the Grade Span Expectations (GSEs) for high school students set forth by the Rhode Island Department of Education. Coaches are encouraged to focus on these goals to expand debate’s influence beyond an extracurricular activity. Here is a sampling of the areas in which participation in policy debate complements and builds upon in-school learning to prepare students to succeed in high school and beyond:

Reading GSEs:

• Policy debate requires students to glean information from complex academic and journalistic works and apply them to real-world problems. The competitive aspect of debate rewards students who can do this quickly and consistently across a wide body of literature.

• Urban debaters are constantly asked to make comparisons among different source materials to assess the validity of expert evidence presented to support a given argument. Identifying potential sources of bias and understanding how an author persuades her audience are central aspects of this important skill.

• Quick note taking is essential for debaters seeking to organize their arguments and allows students to highlight questions they wish to research in further detail after the debate has concluded.

Oral and Written Communication GSEs:

• In constructing arguments for and against governmental change, debaters must compile a variety of source material around a central premise or thesis statement.

• In addition to pre-round preparation, debaters must become adept at answering opposing teams’ questions during the debate round,
necessitating an ability to understand why a question was posed and the best strategy for mitigating the potential challenge. Moreover, effective oral communication skills form a central prerequisite for success in debate.

**Civics and Government GSEs:**

- Understanding political systems and institutions in the United States forms the heart of policy debate as students are frequently called upon to analyze current events, discuss which level of government is best suited to address a given problem, and propose alternative solutions within the framework of available government resources.

- Debaters become adept at connecting academic discussions of political concerns to their own opinions. Few other formal avenues exist for students to voice personal insights into government, making debate an excellent outlet for politically minded students.
ARGUMENTATION
CONSTRUCTING ARGUMENTS

Not surprisingly, debate is based on dialogue with conflict. No, this activity is not a platform for high school students to rant in front of an audience. Rather, it is an opportunity to construct well-reasoned arguments in favor of and against government policies. So how do energetic teenagers turn into future policymakers? First, by understanding how to construct an argument.

Constructing an Argument

In order to make a strong argument, we need at least three parts: the **claim**, the **data**, and the **warrant**.

**Claim** - a statement of fact without explanatory reasoning  
(example: Blue is the best color.)

**Warrant** - a statement or piece of evidence that includes reasons or justification for its conclusion  
(example: Pets are loyal to owners because the owners feed them.)

**Data** – the facts or evidence that support the warrant  
(example: Dogs do not run away when they are well fed.)

An argument: “The Coffee Company increases employee morale by throwing monthly staff parties.”

The **claim** is the statement: “The Coffee Company increases employee morale.”  
The **warrant** is the reasoning behind the claim - the reasoning is that throwing monthly staff parties increases morale.  
The **data** are the facts used to support the warrant – that the company holds parties and morale was lower prior to the parties

Here is another example of an argument. “Nobody should be a vegetarian because it is biologically natural to eat animals.” The claim is that “nobody
should be a vegetarian.” The warrant is that people should follow natural diets. The data is that according to the food chain, people eat animals.

The data can come in the form of statistics, expert opinions, observations, etc. In policy debate, some sort of expert source (a professor, a government agency, a think tank) is needed to back up the data.

Vocabulary

Claim: A statement of fact without explanatory reasoning

Warrant: A statement or piece of evidence that includes reasons or justification for its conclusion

Data: The facts or evidence that support the warrant

Activities

Chain Debating
Let the students pick a topic to debate (i.e. Schools should meet on Saturdays). One volunteer begins the debate by making an argument and presents an argument that is linked, or related to the first. The successive volunteers begin their arguments with “and” or “but” depending on whether they support or contest the prior claim. You may want to choose some students to listen and give feedback.

Example: 1. Students should attend school on Saturdays because they will learn more. 2. And they will stay out of trouble. 3. But students need their extra sleep on the weekends, etc.

SPAR Debates
SPAR Debates require students to spontaneously deliver speeches in favor or against a statement. In short, they are mini-debates with an abbreviated structure of a policy round. Pick a topic (or allow students to choose) and then give students five minutes to prepare their arguments. There is one person representing each side.

The debate is organized as follows:

- 90 second speech in favor of the resolution (affirmative)
• 60 second cross examination (questioning period) by the negative
• 90 second speech against the resolution (negative)
• 60 second cross examination (questioning period) by the affirmative
• 45 second Affirmative closing speech
• 45 second Negative closing speech

For the sake of saving time, the next two debaters should already know their topic and use their 5 minutes of preparation time while the first debate is in progress.

Either in between debates or after all debates are held, give students the opportunity to discuss what they noticed, liked/disliked or learned from the process.

Possible topics:
- Honesty is always the best policy
- Slavery still exists today
- True love really does exist
- Violence is a necessary means to settle disputes
- Police are necessary for safety
- People should eat meat
- Girls should be able to play on the boy’s football team
- Stories with violent content should be banned from school
- Animals think like humans
- Books are more fun than video games
- It is a good idea for radio stations to censor songs
- School starts too early
- Students should always obey authority
- The driving age should be lowered to 14
- School should last 12 months a year

**Claims and Warrants**
This exercise is designed to help students gain an understanding of the structure of a complete argument. Have each student get out a blank sheet of paper and sit in a circle. Ask them to write a sentence long claim at the top of the paper. Then they should pass the paper clockwise to the student
next to them. On the new sheet that they now have, ask the students to write two potential warrants (reasons and evidence that support the claim). When they are finished writing these warrants, have them write a second claim. They should pass the paper with the second claim clockwise. On the next paper students receive, they should write two potential warrants supporting the second claim. This can continue for years if necessary. Students could be asked to evaluate the warrants written by their peers.

**Perspectives in Current Events**
Find an Op-Ed piece in a newspaper. Have students find the point/perspective of the author. What are the claims, data and warrants for the arguments in the article? What is the significance of this claim? What is the perspective of the author? How credible does this argument seem? How would students begin to argue against this point?
**IMPACTS**

Explaining the significance or the “so what?” of a claim is an essential part of making any argument. In debate, we call this portion of an argument its **impact**. Debaters make many claims and counterclaims in a debate round, so establishing which arguments should matter more is a difficult but essential task. Affirmatives will claim that their plan addresses serious problems (the advantages), while negatives try to show that the plan will cause serious problems (disadvantages). For example, a team arguing for tighter fishing regulations might argue that the loss of specific sea creatures will cause negative chain reactions throughout the ocean (including other species loss or the collapse of coastal villages).

Simply building up your side’s position isn’t enough to win the debate round—you must compare the impacts of your position to the impacts that the other team claims will occur. In order to do this, debaters make the following types of impact comparisons, also known as **impact analysis**:

1. **Magnitude**: This type of impact analysis explains which side’s impact is bigger, or affects more people. If both sides claim that a war is going to happen, a smart team would try to show that the war they supposedly prevent is bigger than the other team’s war (and that the judge, in the interest of saving the most lives, should vote for that side). In general, the bigger the impacts the better, although you should avoid making ludicrous claims just to make your impacts seem bigger—this will hurt you in the long run.

2. **Probability**: A team attempts to prove that its impacts are more likely to happen than the other team’s impacts. Debaters often make absurd claims about how the plan may prevent or cause a nuclear war—if teams do not challenge these arguments by pointing out how unlikely they are, the other side will easily persuade the judge that the risk of losing millions of people justifies voting for it. Even if the impact to your argument has a relatively low magnitude (perhaps it would only affect a million people), you can still convince the judge that he should vote to prevent it if you can show that it is
far more likely to happen than the huge but exaggerated problems the other side describes.

3. **Timeframe**: These arguments highlight which impacts are going to happen more quickly. Winning that your impact has a shorter timeframe doesn’t necessarily mean you’ll win the impact debate, however. If your team prevents a small war in the next six weeks while the other side prevents a global war that will happen in six months, most judges would still vote to prevent the bigger war. Timeframe arguments are most useful if you can show that because your impact will happen sooner, the other team’s impact won’t be as serious or won’t happen at all.

**Vocabulary**

**Impact**: The result of an action in a debate round (the harm of a negative disadvantage or the advantage of an affirmative plan)
The Basics of Striking Down Arguments

Arguing with your opponent doesn’t mean fighting. But you do need to find clash in the debate – what are the points on which you disagree? There are three strategies for bringing down your opponent’s arguments: **deny, diminish, disbar.**

**Deny**

To deny an argument means that you are saying it is not true or lacks reasonable proof. You might find that the reasoning of the argument (the warrant) is incorrect; sometimes the data is inaccurate; other times the claim simply makes no sense and goes against conventionally accepted wisdom. Sometimes you can deny an argument just by pointing out the faulty logic; other times you will need to look up other research that counters your opponent’s statements.

**Diminish**

If the argument cannot be denied – perhaps the other team’s statement is in fact true – that doesn’t mean it is necessarily important. At this point, you can show that the significance (impact) of the argument is relatively low. Debaters love to make huge, paranoid claims about the terrible state of global security or the whole world exploding if we don’t pass their plan. If the argument seems out of proportion, say so.

**Disbar**

Disbarring an argument means showing that it has no relevance in the context of the debate. If someone is making irrelevant statements, unrelated to the topic in general or to the narrower debate that you have created, throw out their argument.

**Rebuttals in Policy Debate**

**Burden of refutation:** The negative must refute at least one of the affirmative’s stock issues (inherency, harms, solvency, topicality) in order to
win the debate. If the negative accepts all of the affirmative’s stock issues (its harms and their impacts, its ability to solve for the plan, that the status quo is inadequate), the judge has no reason to vote against the affirmative. Refutation is key for either team, especially the negative.

**Grounds for the negative to refute**

- **Policy**
  - The Plan is not necessary – there is no problem (inherency)
  - The Plan will not solve for the problem (solvency)
  - The Plan causes the situation to worsen (harms/impacts)
  - The problem could be solved better with a different plan (counterplan)

- **Values**
  - The values of the affirmative are wrong
  - The Plan does not uphold the values of the affirmative

- **Critique the underlying assumptions of the affirmative team** (if its plan rests on a fact, value or assumption that is in fact highly doubted or criticized)

**Organizing a rebuttal**

There are four basic steps to refute an argument:

1. Briefly identify the opponent’s argument that you are refuting (specify which contention and which subpoint, and summarize the argument)
2. Evaluate the argument and explain why it is wrong
3. Justify the refutation (warrant) by adding evidence
4. Compare the impacts of the opponent’s claim and your own in the context of the larger debate

By following these four steps, a debater allows the judge and opponents to clearly follow his arguments and explains the reasons for their superiority. It is fundamental that the rebuttal explains *why* this team has reason to oppose the Plan or the resolution.
Vocabulary

**Burden of refutation:** The negative must disprove at least one of the affirmative’s stock issues in order to win the debate

**Activities**

Create or use an existing affirmative case outline. Then choose the basic opposition strategy for a debate. How would you refute this argument? Is it a question of facts, values or implementation? Which stock issue(s) are you refuting?

**THE RESOLUTION**

Each year, debate coaches from around the country agree on a topic area for the upcoming debate season and construct a **resolution**, or a statement advocating a governmental policy change that forms the basis of every policy debate around the country.

For example, a possible topic area could be “Public Transportation” and a specific resolution under this topic might be “Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially increase the number of public transportation users in the United States.”

The most basic affirmative responsibility is to argue in favor of the resolution while negative teams argue against it. The resolution exists to help focus the discussion on a central political challenge facing the country or world and ensures that both sides have a general idea of what topics will be discussed in the round and can hence be prepared to debate them.

**Vocabulary**

**Resolution:** The area of discussion that is subject for debate that is uniform for all high schools in the country (Also known as the topic)
RESEARCH & EVIDENCE
RESEARCH

As intelligent as debaters are, their claims won’t get them very far without credible evidence. Evidence supplies the “data” part of an argument. Even the most logical statements need data or an expert opinion to back them up. This section provides tips for researching and using evidence in a round.

Research

Starting the research process can be a little daunting. Members of the NAUDL will receive a book with cases and research assembled, called the core files, but students will also benefit from doing their own research on the topic. Additionally, even if students do not write their own cases, they should become familiar with the process of finding relevant sources and updating time-sensitive materials throughout the year.

If possible, take students to a university library. The sources here will be far more extensive than at a high school or public library.

A few tips for library research:

• Be prepared to spend a few hours at the library; looking up, locating sources, and making copies takes time.
• Bring money to the library for copies.
• Once in the library, go to the reference section or the computer card catalog. You can always ask the librarians how to look up information.
• If searching by subject or keyword (which is the most useful way if you don’t have a specific author or title in mind), search for related words, not only one term. For example, if looking up articles connected to poverty, also check under welfare state, income gap, etc.
• After locating a book, browse other books in the area; they are probably on the same topic. Check the dates to make sure they are relatively new.
• Check out the books that you are allowed to take with you, which saves money on copying expenses. Otherwise, photocopy the most useful material (see suggestions for evaluating material below).
Credible Sources

Pay attention to the following when evaluating sources:

• The date – Is the material recent enough to be considered relevant? In debate, the more recent the better.
• The background of the author – Is this person qualified to make statements about the topic? Is this person known for having a strong or controversial opinion on the topic?
• The publication – Does the publication have an ideological bias? Who are its readers?

Note: Avoid mathematical or historical evidence. Getting caught up on an equation during the debate round is confusing, and debate is generally more concerned with the present rather than what happened in the past (unless it is directly related to predicting a future consequence).
EVIDENCE

Evidence serves a variety of purposes in making an argument: supporting the debaters’ claims (with expert analysis), providing facts, evaluating policies and predicting future outcomes. Using evidence shows that a knowledgeable person backs up what the debater is trying to propose or explain.

A card is the debate term for a piece of evidence. It is a quote taken from an author that directly supports or goes against the resolution. Cards are necessary to support almost all arguments.

Tips on evidence:
- A card should be about a paragraph, usually 2 to 6 sentences long
- After the evidence makes its point, cut it off
- The main point of the evidence should make an argument for or against the resolution
- Evidence needs a warrant (a reason)
- If there are unclear references (i.e. this, that, “the program,” etc.), write what these terms refer to
- Evidence should be firm (no “if,” “maybe,” etc. that could be later used against it by the other team)
- The quote that is cited needs to maintain the original meaning of the author’s whole argument (i.e. taking out “not” to change the significance of a phrase is unethical)
- If the article later on contradicts or disproves the quote you are citing, do not use that piece of evidence.

Organizing Evidence

In policy debate, there is a process for organizing cards so that debaters and the judge can keep track of the evidence. To make a card, do the following:

1. Cut out the selected evidence
2. Glue or tape the evidence to a piece of paper (if this is all retyped on the computer, you can spare the adhesives)
3. Cite the evidence, which requires:
4. Label the evidence to make an argument (also calling a **tag**)
   - Write a short, complete sentence (4-7 words)
   - State the main point of the evidence
   - The label should be a persuasive argument

A sample card:

**Tagline (Tag)**
There Are Large And Growing Numbers Of Homeless Youth In America.

**Citation**
National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2009
["Youth,” http://www.endhomelessness.org/section/policy/focusareas/youth]

**Body of Evidence**
National studies indicate a surprisingly high rate of homelessness among adolescents. Researchers estimate that between 5 and 7 percent (between 1 million and 1.5 million adolescents) of the general teenage population experiences at least one episode of homelessness each year. This number does not include young adults (aged 18 to 24) who experience homelessness. Homeless youth and young adults are at risk for physical abuse, sexual exploitation, mental health disabilities, chemical or alcohol dependency, and death.

**Vocabulary**

**Evidence:** All published material such as books, newspapers, magazines or government documents used as reference and support in a debate. This includes statistics, quotes, facts and examples.

**Card:** A single quote from a source that supports an argument (a single piece of evidence)

**Citation:** The source of the quotation or card

**Tagline/Tag:** A brief summary of what a card says (4-7 words long)
Activities

Select a piece of evidence used in the core files and then find the original article from which it was taken. Have students read the entire article or a section of it, and then ask: Why was this quote chosen? What are the author’s credentials? How do we know that this evidence is trustworthy? What are possible biases affecting the author?

Bring a few periodicals or books that relate to the topic for practice (you can check them out from the library). Students should then look through the table of contents and the index for possible relevant articles. After each student (or group) picks an article, have her explain how it is related to the topic, what she knows about the author, and how she would use it in a debate.

Writing Tag Lines

Choose an affirmative case with which your students are already somewhat familiar (but hopefully not one they have memorized yet). Select a few pieces of evidence and cut them out from the original case, leaving only the citation and body of the evidence (but not the tag line). Then ask students to work alone or in pairs to come up with their own summary (tag) line for each piece of evidence. They may have trouble guessing where it fits into the affirmative case, so provide some hints if necessary without giving away the main strategic value of the evidence. When students are finished, have them compare their answers with those of their peers and the original tag lines that accompanied the evidence.

Things to look for and ask students about:
-Do the tag lines communicate why the evidence is important?
-Do they mention the warrant in the evidence?
-Are they as concise as possible without eliminating critical information?
-Why did you choose to include the information you did? Why did certain details of the evidence seem unnecessary for the tag line?
BEING
AFFIRMATIVE
In policy debate, students learn both sides of an issue by advocating for and against a given proposal. Students switch between the “affirmative” position, which argues for a change in governmental policy, and the “negative” position, which contends that a policy change would be unnecessary or disadvantageous. This chapter will discuss the basic responsibilities of being the affirmative team in a debate.

**BASIC BURDENS OF THE AFFIRMATIVE**

At the most basic level, an affirmative team must defend the resolution – the general topic that will shape every policy debate for the entire school year. However, resolutions are fairly broad and it would be difficult for an affirmative team to defend all of the potential governmental policies that could be considered part of the resolution. Instead, affirmative teams choose a specific example of a policy that fits under the resolution. These specific policy changes in favor of the resolution are referred to as affirmative **cases**.

For the 2009-2010 school year, the policy debate resolution is "Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially increase social services for persons living in poverty in the United States." Some potential cases for this resolution could include expanding disaster relief services, increasing the availability of food stamps, or expanding government-sponsored healthcare programs. The affirmative team does not have to defend all of these programs but rather chooses one proposal to defend in any given debate round. If the team convinces the judges that its chosen plan of action is a good idea, it has successfully defended the resolution and will win the debate.

**Vocabulary**

**Resolution:** The area of discussion that is subject for debate. It is uniform for all high schools in the country (Also known as the topic)

**Affirmative:** The side that defends the resolution

**Negative:** The side that opposes the resolution

**Case:** The structured proposal of the affirmative team that functions as specific example of the resolution
Activities

To help students understand this concept, it might be effective to draft a series of potential “resolutions” and have students throw out case ideas that would satisfy them. For example, “Resolved: The federal government should expand public health funding in the United States” could solicit case ideas ranging from ‘increased funds to discourage smoking’ to ‘cleaning up toxic waste sites in neighborhoods.’ Once that exercise has occurred, try to pull the logic of debating one case instead of the entire resolution out of the students—Which is more educational? Which do you think would be more entertaining? Which is more challenging?
THE FIRST AFFIRMATIVE CONSTRUCTIVE (1AC)

Stock Issues
The first speech in a debate round is given by the affirmative, lasts 8 minutes, and is referred to as the “first affirmative constructive” (or 1AC). In this speech, the affirmative team lays out the entirety of its case, including:
• the reasons a policy change is needed in a specific area;
• the problems that will arise if the policy change is not made;
• a specific policy proposal that would alleviate the problems it has talked about;
• and, an explanation of why this specific proposal would be effective.

These central aspects of a case are called “stock issues” and by addressing each of these issues, the affirmative presents a coherent and well-justified case from the very start of the debate. Let’s pretend the affirmative team is advocating a plan to build a high-speed rail network in the United States, advocating for the resolution that the government should increase the number of public transportation users. The different parts of the affirmative case, including stock issues, are as follows:

INHERENCY: The affirmative explains the causes for the existing problems that the affirmative case will address, indicating why the problem has not already been solved. This portion of the case describes the status quo, Latin for the “the present system.” It will generally point out governmental policies or dominant political ideologies that are preventing action on the issue at hand. Even if the affirmative plan would never pass in the real world due to political or legal considerations, this does not mean the proposal is necessarily a bad idea. This simply indicates that the problem will continue to exist, and debaters discuss the best policy option available with the assumption that the judge has the power to put it into effect.

For the high-speed rail case mentioned above, the affirmative team could argue under inherency that certain key congresspersons are opposed to high-speed rail (and hence the plan would never be put into effect) or that
current law prohibits federal funding of high-speed rail for whatever reason (and therefore the proposal by the affirmative could never be legally implemented in the present system).

*Ask your students why inherency might be important. Would proposing a plan that’s not inherent be unfair for the negative team? (Most likely yes, as the affirmative team could simply argue that professional policymakers all agree that the plan is a good idea.) Would the lack of inherency limit the affirmative’s ability to claim it makes a “substantial” change, as the resolution demands? (Yes again, since the current system would likely address the affirmative team’s problem area even without the adoption of a plan.)

**HARMS:** The affirmative team goes into detail about the problems that exist in the status quo and how those problems are likely to get worse without immediate governmental action. The harms section is the easiest place for the affirmative to justify a need for change. Widespread injustice, innocent people dying, and war are compelling harms arguments, while a couple of people being denied a minor tax rebate would probably be less persuasive.

The harms arguments are often subdivided into different **advantages**, or specific benefits that would arise as a consequence of the plan (e.g. ending discrimination or improving quality of life). These advantages don’t necessarily have to be related to one another; in fact, it’s often beneficial to have a diversity of harms arguments. Using our high-speed rail example, one harm could be the problems caused by pollution from frequent air travel. The affirmative could then claim that prevention of global warming is an advantage to doing their plan. Another harm area might be general unemployment in the country and the affirmative could claim that building a high-speed rail network allows people to get to their workplaces more easily and the affirmative’s plan would ultimately benefit the economy.

**PLAN:** After harms, the affirmative generally presents a plan of action, the central part of the affirmative case (though not in itself a stock issue). The plan text indicates what specific actions the federal government should take
to address the above issues. The affirmative team must defend the plan, as it is written, throughout the entire debate.

A plan includes two essential parts: 1) action (what is going to be done); 2) agent (who is going to do it). The plan may further specify two other important areas: 3) enforcement (what happens when somebody doesn’t follow the plan); and 4) funding (paying for the plan).

The high-speed rail plan text might be written, “The United States federal government should construct a high-speed rail network connecting the 10 most populous cities on the eastern seaboard.” Note that the plan identifies some agent of action (the United States federal government) and refines the general idea of building a high-speed rail network by indicating where it should be built. Ultimately, the exact plan text will depend on what expert sources identify as the best mechanism for addressing the general case problem.

**SOLVENCY:** This explains how and why the plan will be effective in addressing the harms and producing the advantages claimed by the affirmative team. Given that identifying a problem in the status quo is fairly simple but coming up with an effective solution is decidedly more difficult, strong solvency arguments are essential for a solid affirmative case.

Some example solvency arguments for the high-speed rail plan include “high-speed rail on the eastern seaboard is cost-effective,” “completing such a network is possible in the next ten years,” “implementing high-speed rail brings jobs to struggling communities,” and “high-speed rail construction reduces our dependency on carbon-emitting airplanes.” As this example demonstrates, there is a wide variety of approaches for claiming the plan would be effective, and affirmative teams should choose the best arguments that they can fit into the 8 minute speech.

*Note: At this point we have not discussed the role of experts and statistics in the case (included in the Research and Evidence Section). Keep in mind, however, that a well-researched case is fundamental. Without some credible people backing the arguments, a case will not get far.*
Delivering the 1AC

The 1AC is the only pre-scripted speech in the debate, and most teams use the same affirmative case for at least a few tournaments in a row. Because the 1AC should have no surprises, first affirmative speakers are expected to know their case extremely well and be able to deliver it almost from memory.

The first speaker should practice reading the speech several times prior to a tournament and do his best to know each piece of evidence in the speech. This serves two purposes: first, knowing your evidence will be essential during the first cross-examination period after the 1AC, when the negative team will do its best to poke holes in the affirmative case. Being able to cite specific arguments and experts’ opinions in response to negative questions will make the affirmative seem well prepared. Second, being extremely comfortable with the text you are reading makes it easier to deliver a persuasive speech. Knowing the most effective places to pause in the speech – whether for emphasis or to make the information being presented clearer – will help earn speaker points. Moreover, the more of the speech that is memorized, the easier it will be for the speaker to make eye contact with the judge. We will discuss more persuasive speaking techniques later on, but the critical lesson here is that with practice, the first affirmative speaker can appear confident, knowledgeable, and emotionally invested in the issues discussed in the case.

Activities

Stock Issues Identification
This activity should be completed without reference to the lingo of the case. Students should brainstorm problems to be solved. For instance, they may want to talk about unemployment, low wages, bad schools, pollution, police brutality or homelessness. Write their list of problems on the board.

Break students up into small groups. Assign a “case” (from the lists they made) to each small group. For “cases” write the following phrases on the board. 1) What’s the problem? (Harms). 2) Why isn’t something being
done about it? (Inherency). 3) Why does the problem matter? (Significance). 4) How can we fix the problem? (Solvency). Still do not write the lingo (Harms, etc.) on the board. Have each group answer these questions for the “case” and present them to the group. Then, next to the questions on the board, write the lingo that describes the answers they came up with. Hold a discussion about the meaning of the lingo.

*Refer to the “Structure of a Round” lesson in the Teaching Debate section. This hypothetical debate with a fake topic (likely more accessible to high school students than national policy) will be a useful reference point when explaining an affirmative case for the actual resolution.

Case Walk-Through
Go through one of the cases in the core files with your students. You don’t need to read the whole case in this activity. Instead, work with students to answer the following questions. The answers can come from reading the case and students own responses to the topic.

- What is the resolution? What subtopic is this case choosing to address?
- What are the inherency, harms and possible advantages of the new plan?
- What is the plan and how does it intend to solve the harms mentioned above?
- Can you think of any problems in the affirmative argument (possible arguments for the negative team)?

Vocabulary

Inherency: The reason why the plan is not going into effect at present
Status Quo: The present system
Harms: A problem in the current system that justifies the need for the affirmative plan
Plan: The specific part of affirmative case that identifies specific actions to be taken and how those actions will be administered, enforced, and funded; the affirmative’s example of implementing the resolution.
Solvency: Ability of the plan to fix the problems (harms) claimed
ADVANTAGES

Presenting a complete affirmative case does not guarantee that the team will win—it simply ensures that the negative team will not be able to dismiss the affirmative’s arguments right off the bat. The biggest challenge for the affirmative team throughout the rest of the debate is to convince the judge that the advantages of doing the plan are greater than the potential disadvantages that could arise from changing the status quo. At the end of the debate, the judge decides if the potential good the plan can offer “outweighs,” or matters more, than the potential negative effects that may occur.

Note: The affirmative team is said to have the burden of proof in the debate, much like the prosecutor has the burden to prove his case beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law. As the team arguing that the present system (status quo) needs to be changed, the affirmative must overcome the basic inclination among policymakers to do nothing unless there is substantial reason to believe it will improve conditions. If the affirmative makes an extremely weak case for change, most judges will vote for the negative team because the status quo is said to be working well enough.

Types of Advantages

As we discussed earlier, affirmative advantages are explained under the stock issue of harms, and they often compose the bulk of the 1AC. The affirmative can offer many different types of advantages, a strategy that ensures the negative cannot eliminate all potential benefits to the plan with only one argument. Advantages can be broken down into the following basic groupings:

Cost / benefit arguments (also called utilitarian or straight-up advantages): These are the bread and butter of most affirmatives. They argue for changing the system by identifying all the lives that will be saved, injuries that will be prevented, or wars that will be averted by the adoption of the affirmative plan. The more suffering that will be stopped, the better. These types of advantages are always quantifiable. Examples include: "our
plan will stop thousands from starving in Africa” or “the economy will stagnate, harming thousands, without the implementation of the affirmative plan.” Most negative teams make challenges along these lines (called disadvantages), claiming that the plan will in fact induce suffering.

**Rights-based arguments** (deontological advantages): These advantages identify an ongoing injustice in the status quo and argue that the plan should be adopted because it corrects this problem of discrimination. These arguments differ from straight-up advantages in that they contend that the judge has an ethical obligation to vote for the plan in order to stop rights infringements, even if the negative team notes that there may be more disadvantages than advantages of plan. These arguments call on the judge to remove himself from the traditional policymaking mindset in which costs are weighed against benefits and instead to vote for the most ethical course of action (even if it has some short-term costs). These arguments tend to be very persuasive and open the debate to discussions of values and their proper role in public policy discussions.

**Vocabulary**

**Advantage:** The benefits that come from implementing the affirmative plan

**Activities**

**Re-assemble the case**
To help students get a firm grasp on the parts of an affirmative case, it is helpful to have them organize the evidence from an existing 1AC. For this activity, take a simple 1AC and cut out each piece of evidence, including its tag line and citation. Make sure to remove any wording that indicates where in the case a piece of evidence should appear. Give students a brief rundown of what the case is arguing and then have them divide the evidence into different stock issues. Next, have students identify the advantages being discussed and subdivide the harms evidence into different advantages.
THE SECOND AFFIRMATIVE CONSTRUCTIVE (2AC)

Note: Before beginning to teach the 2AC, explain the first negative constructive, the speech that comes between the 1AC and 2AC. The following section will make much more sense after students understand the negative speech.

The second affirmative speech in the debate is called the “second affirmative constructive” (or 2AC). This speech follows the “first negative constructive” (1NC), which attempts to attack the specifics of the affirmative case (on-case arguments) while offering its own set of objections to governmental change that are less tied to the proposed affirmative plan (off-case arguments). In general, it is the second affirmative speaker’s job to reassert the importance of solving the affirmative advantages while downplaying the negative’s more generic objections to the plan. Refer to the argumentation module to understand how to respond to arguments in more detail—for now, we will talk about 2AC strategy.

It is most important for the 2AC to defend the case advantages. If the negative team attacks these, either by directly responding to the harms or challenging the solvency of the case, it is the 2AC’s responsibility to build the case back up by extending evidence or reading additional quotations from experts who agree with your position. If the negative does not attack the advantages, the second affirmative speaker should still remind the judge about the benefits of the proposed plan (also called “extending” the advantages).

Extending Arguments

Although the affirmative may have already read evidence that responds to a negative objection to their case, the 2AC cannot assume that the judge remembers that evidence or knows how it applies. To ensure this argument remains relevant in the debate, the speaker must extend it by briefly reciting the argument and indicating where in an earlier speech it was first made, referencing the author or source of the evidence supporting the argument, and explaining why it applies to the negative side’s argument.
For example, in response to a negative claim that the plan would cost too much money, a 2AC might say “Extend the second solvency argument from the first affirmative constructive. This evidence from Professor Jones at UC Berkeley indicates that the plan would actually be affordable and save money in the long term. This evidence takes into account how the plan would affect the economy over many years, making it more relevant to the debate.”

At first this statement might seem intimidating or wordy, but the affirmative is simply explaining that this point was already brought up in the 1AC and that it is still relevant, despite the negative’s attempts to attack the argument. Not only do “extensions” save time that would be spent on reading new evidence, they also take advantage of the fact that the best pieces of evidence in support of the case should already be in the 1AC. Extending arguments is an important skill that will be essential for the rest of the speeches in the debate as well.

**Order of the 2AC**

Prior to each speech, the speaker should list the order in which arguments will be discussed. For the 2AC, on-case arguments should be answered before off-case arguments. This puts the focus of the debate back on the affirmative’s strongest arguments and ensures that even if the speaker runs out of time in the 2AC, the most basic parts of the affirmative case are still intact. (The exception to this is a topicality argument, which contends that the case does not fall within the resolution. Because affirmative advantages are irrelevant if they do not support the resolution, topicality attacks should be answered first in the 2AC).

Once the on-case arguments have been effectively answered, the 2AC should move onto the more generic off-case arguments made by the negative. Much of the time, the affirmative team will have some idea of what off-case arguments a negative team is likely to use against its plan and should prepare responses to these objections ahead of time. The 2AC must answer each off-case argument offered by the negative—avoid getting bogged down making 12 great answers to one position but not having time
to address another challenge to the plan. The Being Negative section will address specific off-case arguments, but for now remember that the 2AC must vigorously defend the case and address all other negative contentions.
THE FIRST AFFIRMATIVE REBUTTAL (1AR)

The first affirmative rebuttal (the 1AR) is probably the hardest speech in the round. In five minutes, the affirmative speaker must address all 13 minutes of arguments from the negative block, making sure not to drop any significant points. Becoming good at giving a 1AR requires substantial practice, but here are a few tips to make the task more manageable.

1. Be selective in choosing which arguments to extend from the 2AC. You should only extend your best responses to each off-case position that the negative side discussed in the block while ignoring the arguments that the other side has already abandoned. When extending these selected arguments, make sure to either explicitly or implicitly answer the negative’s responses to your 2AC arguments while reminding the judge of why your argument takes out their overall position. Also, make sure to extend responses to the negative off-case positions. The negative may use much of its time to promote its off-case arguments, but this does not mean the affirmative has lost them; it is worthwhile to refute off-case arguments to keep them alive in the debate.

2. Always keep moving. It’s tempting to completely explain your position on every issue, but you don’t have the time. Moreover, most judges are willing to give the 1AR some leeway, given the time constraints. Clearly you need to get the basics of your argument out, but this speech is not a time for rhetorical flourishes or significant detours.

3. Don’t forget to talk about your case. The negative side just had 13 minutes establish all sorts of reasons why the plan might be a bad idea, so it’s your responsibility to remind the judge of the pressing problems that your case addresses. Even if they don’t extend any on-case arguments, spend a few seconds explaining why the impacts to your advantages matter more than the negative’s impacts. If they do make on-case arguments, you need to respond to each one of them (otherwise you’ll have a hard time proving that your case is as strong as you originally claimed).
In general, the 1AR’s job is to keep the affirmative team in the debate. The affirmative team should extend enough arguments so that in the final speech it can make a persuasive case against whichever strategy the negative ultimately employs in the 2NR but avoid most unnecessary extensions (unless they are likely to throw off the negative side). It is helpful to know which arguments are your strongest (and hence the ones you will extend in the 1AR) as soon as the 2AC finishes speaking. This will allow you to focus your energy on forming answers to the negative’s responses to your best arguments instead of trying to answer every single negative response and then deciding which ones to extend.
THE SECOND AFFIRMATIVE REBUTTAL (2AR)

This is the last chance for either team to speak, and the affirmative must take advantage of its opportunity to have the final word. This is a short speech that focuses on the big picture rather than the details of the round.

First, the affirmative should provide a broad overview of the round that explains why this team should win the debate. The contents of this overview should directly engage with the reasons that the negative team claims it should win. In the vast majority of cases, the speech should then reiterate the main points of the affirmative case (responding to negative objections) and extend the best argument or two against each off-case position that is discussed in the 2NR. The speaker may need to clarify how the judge should decide who wins the debate (particularly if there is some dispute over this issue in the debate itself). In most situations, the judge will try to compare the advantages of the plan to the disadvantages, so the 2AR needs to spend considerable amounts of time making the affirmative impacts sound strong while deemphasizing the importance of the impacts cited by the negative.
BEING
NEGATIVE
BASIC BURDENS OF THE NEGATIVE

To win a debate, the negative team must demonstrate that the resolution is untrue (in other words, that the government shouldn’t make a policy change). However, just as the affirmative team defends a specific example of the resolution (its case) and not the entire thing, the negative side attacks the specific plan offered by the affirmative team instead of the whole concept of the resolution. Good negative teams are prepared to debate the specifics of every case on the topic, meaning this side has a heavy research burden. Fear not: this task is much more manageable for beginning debaters because each tournament or league limits the scope of affirmative cases that can be used.

As a general rule, the negative can propose multiple objections to the plan and then expand on the most successful arguments later in the round while abandoning the ones that the affirmative team is clearly winning. This approach requires quick thinking by the negative team to identify which strategies are working and which should be abandoned but has the benefit of keeping the affirmative team unsure of which objections the negative team will ultimately prioritize. Although it is essential to have multiple strategies of attack, the negative team should be sure it has not stretched itself too thin and is unable to create a coherent story for why the plan is ultimately a bad idea.
ON-CASE ARGUMENTS

The types of arguments available to negative teams break down into two general categories: on-case arguments and off-case arguments. **On-case arguments** directly attack certain parts of the affirmative case, ranging from the feasibility of the plan to the need for a policy change in the first place. These arguments are particularly effective because they directly challenge central claims made by the affirmative team and demonstrate that the negative team is as qualified to discuss the specific affirmative proposal. However, it is difficult for negative teams to fill up eight minutes of speaking time with objections directly related to the affirmative plan—being prepared to do so would require dozens of hours of research for each affirmative case on the topic, a decidedly unmanageable expectation. That being said, every negative team should strive to include some on-case arguments in their speeches.

**Types of On-Case Arguments**

When clashing directly with the affirmative case, the negative should rely on a mixture of expert evidence and logical thinking to downplay the importance and efficacy of the plan. Attacking each stock issue is a good place to start for making on-case arguments, making objections to the plan with and without evidence. The following sections provide basic negative responses to the affirmative stock issues.

**INHERENCY**

-The status quo is already addressing the problem. These arguments allow the negative team to present the affirmative plan as overkill and hence a waste of resources. If specific evidence can be found that mentions congressional, executive, or judicial changes that will soon go into effect, the negative can make the claim that persons far more qualified than the affirmative team are about to address the issue.

-The status quo understands the problem and is (slowly) moving toward a solution. This argument works well when coupled with solvency arguments indicating that the plan is unfeasible at the moment. Affirmative teams like to harp on the heartlessness of negative teams for refusing to stop the
harms identified in the 1AC. By arguing that the system is approaching a solution but needs more time, the negative can mitigate the persuasiveness of the affirmative’s call for immediate action and paint itself as the more pragmatic team by acknowledging a problem but asking for restraint until an acceptable solution can be found.

HARMS

-The problem identified by the affirmative is not a big deal. The most basic of negative harms contentions, this argument is hard to win outright since most affirmative teams choose cases that address major issues in order to persuade the judge that a policy change is necessary. Nevertheless, if a negative team shows that the affirmative problem is smaller than initially suggested, it will have a much easier time convincing the judge that the costs of doing the plan outweigh the limited benefits it might provide.

-The affirmative harms actually serve some positive purpose. These arguments are tricky and the negative team risks being offensive by arguing that some problem areas are good (like racism). However, in some cases, these arguments can undercut the entire logic of the affirmative plan. For example, if the affirmative argues that the plan is critical to improve the US’s strained relationship with China, a negative team could argue that the world is a safer place when tensions exist between the two countries. With this argument, the supposed advantages to doing the plan become undesirable.

SOLVENCY

Solvency challenges are a ripe area for on-case arguments given the complexity of the problem trying to be addressed the affirmative team. Asking the affirmative team why their problem still exists in the first cross-examination period will often reveal a host of real-world concerns that have previously hampered solutions to the identified problem and these can easily be converted into a series of powerful logical objections to the plan.

-The plan won’t solve the identified harms. In picking cases that address huge problems, the affirmative risks lacking a solution that addresses the full range of those problems. Good negatives will use these types of solvency arguments to distinguish between the harms the affirmative plan can actually address and those it merely talks about, diminishing the
desirability of the plan and revealing that the affirmative claims to solve more problems than it actually will.

-The plan is unpractical/unworkable. The more complex the plan, the more places it is likely to have feasibility questions. The negative team should press the affirmative debaters on the specific mechanisms by which the plan operates (funding sources, enforcement, etc.), challenging them for evidence to support their claims of efficacy. On the flip side, negative teams can argue that vague plans will do little real-world good. If the plan lacks details, the negative should directly tell the judge that she should not consider it valid without further explanation. Making these arguments allows the negative to set a high burden for a realistic plan and forces the affirmative team to use time explaining an issue that should have been clear in the 1AC.

-The plan itself will make the problems worse. This argument agrees with the affirmative that the harms are a problem but instead counters that the affirmative plan will only worsen them. Identifying how, for example, building high-speed rail would make air pollution worse challenges the core premise of the affirmative case and can stand alone as a reason for the judge to reject the affirmative plan.

**Offensive Versus Defensive Arguments**

Points that refute opponents’ claims can be divided into “offensive” and “defensive” arguments.

**Defensive arguments** contend that the argument made by the other team is simply untrue. Perhaps the opponent has overstated its position or there is more recent evidence that indicates that the phenomenon discussed is no longer true. For example, if an affirmative team argues that over-fishing will cause massive declines in sea creature populations, a defensive negative response might be “humans can do little to affect the ecosystem in the ocean,” “over-fishing isn’t actually that common,” or “a law has recently been passed through Congress to minimize fishing.” Defensive arguments minimize the point made by the opposing side, but they do not completely deny the opposing point—by the end of the debate, the judge will probably
conclude that some degree of over-fishing will hurt the ocean, but not nearly to the extent that the affirmative team initially argued.

By contrast, **offensive arguments** contend that the opposite of what the other team has argued is in fact true. Unlike defensive arguments, these reject the premise of the affirmative contention and then turn it into an argument in favor of the negative side. Thus, they are often referred to as **turns**. Using the over-fishing example, an offensive argument (although somewhat implausible) might be “over-fishing is good for the ecosystem—the ocean currently has too many predator fish.” If the negative side can win this argument, then the whole premise of the affirmative case is faulty and the plan could actually risk doing more harm than good. These arguments are incredibly strategic because if they are not effectively refuted, it is relatively easy for the negative side to win that particular stock issue and likely the entire debate. In the 1NC, it is important to include offensive arguments whenever possible, although a good defensive argument is more effective than a mediocre or weak offensive argument.

**Vocabulary**

**On-case arguments**: Negative positions that refute the specific affirmative case offered in a debate

**Off-case arguments**: Negative positions that can potentially be applied to any affirmative case

**Defensive arguments**: Contend that what the other team stated is untrue (but do not necessarily explain what is true)

**Offensive arguments**: Contend that the opposite of what the other team claims is true

**Turn**: A type of argument that states that the truth about a given issue is the opposite of what the other team says (Ex: The affirmative team argues that poverty is a problem, but our side has a piece of evidence saying that economic inequality it actually good. The negative’s evidence “turns” their argument.)
Activities

Offensive vs. Defensive
Have students decide which arguments are offensive and which are defensive. You may have to walk through one of these examples with them, and then have them work through the second individually or in pairs.

Affirmative contention: “A United States military operation in Sudan would stop the genocide in Darfur.”

Negative responses:
-Military action to stop genocide has been ineffective in the past. (D)
-There is no genocide in Darfur. (D)
-A US presence in the region would embolden rebels to attack more civilians. (O)
-The US military is unable to dedicate sufficient forces to stop genocide. (D)
-More innocent civilians would be killed if the US intervened. (O)
-A military intervention would make a truce between the warring sides impossible, ensuring further conflict. (O)

Affirmative contention: “If schools stayed open until 5pm, students would have more academic success.”

Negative responses:
-Students already spend enough time in school to be academically successful. (D)
-Longer school days would bore students, hurting performance. (O)
-Longer school days would eliminate extra curricular activities, which are actually essential for academic success. (O)
-Two more hours of in-school instruction could do little to boost academic performance. (D)
-Students would have less time for homework assignments that reinforce in-school lessons. (O)
-Students don’t pay attention during school hours anyways. (D)
INTRODUCTION TO OFF CASE ARGUMENTS

To complement the on-case arguments, negative teams make off-case arguments, or generic arguments that are designed to apply to multiple affirmative cases on the topic. For example, if the resolution requires affirmative teams to expand governmental services, the negative team may have a generic off-case argument claiming that increased governmental spending is a bad idea. This argument would need to be mildly adapted to the specific plan in each debate, but the logic for why more governmental spending is undesirable would apply to most cases. These arguments are essential negative tools, as they shift the debate away from the issues the affirmative is most prepared to debate (the case itself) and toward arguments that the negative knows well.

While it is tempting to provide as strong a defense of your off-case arguments as possible in first negative speech of the debate, debaters have found that it is more effective to present only a basic outline (or shell) of each off-case argument in the 1NC. This allows greater flexibility in selecting which arguments to pursue in later speeches and forces the 2AC speaker to respond to more positions in their limited speech time.

Vocabulary

**Off-case arguments**: Negative positions that can be applied to any affirmative case

**Shell**: The outline of an off-case argument; a shell is presented in the 1NC and then the position is explained in more depth during the Negative Block
DISADVANTAGES

Disadvantages (also called disads or DAs) are the bread and butter of most negative strategies. A disadvantage argument outlines a problem that will arise if the affirmative plan is adopted. Teams may read multiple disadvantage arguments in a single debate, all with the intention of demonstrating that the costs of doing the plan outweigh the potential benefits. Because the negative team does not know the specifics of the affirmative case prior to hearing the 1AC, it is helpful to have a couple distinct disadvantage arguments that the negative feels comfortable making depending on which relates best to the affirmative case.

Types of Disadvantages

The scope of potential disadvantages is extremely wide and the negative should be creative in researching problems that may arise from the plan. Nevertheless, most disadvantages fall under a few broad categories:

SPENDING/BUDGET TRADEOFF: These are pretty intuitive arguments—essentially they contend that the affirmative plan will spend government money, which is a problem. The money used by the plan may cause the government to go further into debt and thus harm the economy, or it could be cut from other government programs that the negative team will argue are more essential than the affirmative plan. Any affirmative that spends money should be prepared to answer these arguments, although the government’s attitudes toward spending in recent years may limit the negative’s ability to argue that this particular cost will be the straw that breaks the camel’s back.

POLITICS: This position contends that the political ramifications of passing the affirmative plan would be bad. By focusing on the issues of the affirmative plan, Congress may not have the wherewithal to pass other, more important legislation. Alternatively, the passage of the plan could build credibility for a certain congressperson or party, allowing them to push through more legislation that the negative side contends will do more harm than the plan does good. These arguments can become very complex and
change frequently based on the political climate. Students should keep abreast of major political developments so they can make or respond to these arguments convincingly. Debating these positions is also an invaluable tool for learning about the current political landscape and the legislative process.

FOREIGN RELATIONS: These disadvantages contend that the affirmative plan will cause an undesirable change in the United States’ relationship with one or more foreign country. If the plan will improve relations between the US and the given country, the negative argues that this relationship is somehow damaging. Conversely, should the plan harm our relationship with the country, the negative argues that that relationship is essential. These arguments are most common on topics that deal with foreign policy but can also appear in debates over domestic issues.

Structure of a Disadvantage
Disadvantages are comprised of three essential components: uniqueness, link and impact. These components and their respective pieces of evidence form the “shell” of the argument, read in the 1NC. To win the disadvantage, the negative team must defend all three parts throughout the entirety of the debate, while the affirmative can defeat the position by disproving only one of these arguments.

To help explain these three parts, let’s pretend that the affirmative team read a plan that calls for $50 billion in government spending to construct a high-speed rail system. The negative’s disadvantage contends that spending that amount of money will cause the US government to cut back on foreign aid to developing nations, resulting in starvation.

UNIQUENESS: This portion of the disadvantage explains why the disadvantage would not happen in the status quo (or “present system”). Think of it as inherency for the negative side—a description of the current system, except the negative portrays the status quo as functioning whereas affirmative inherency focuses on its problems. Without uniqueness, the affirmative team can argue that the problems highlighted by the negative
will happen inevitably and the plan at least makes the system a little better. Uniqueness evidence should be recent and possibly even updated before each tournament to avoid being caught off-guard by political changes that make the disadvantage argument irrelevant (for example, a recent law passed by Congress that spends billions of dollars on foreign aid).

Using our example, the negative’s uniqueness argument could be: “Congress isn’t spending any new money on large-scale government projects.”

**LINK:** This step connects the affirmative plan directly to the disadvantage. This evidence should explain why passing the plan would negatively alter the well-functioning system described in the uniqueness argument. While not essential, having evidence that directly ties the specific affirmative plan to the major problem your disadvantage argument targets will make the position much stronger, especially since the affirmative team likely has some specific evidence explaining why the disadvantage argument doesn’t apply.

For the spending disad example, this argument might take the form of “high speed rail will cost billions of dollars and probably overrun the cost estimates offered by the affirmative.”

**IMPACT:** The impact explains the problems that arise as a result of passing the plan. It demonstrates that the problem to which the plan links is more important than the case advantages to doing the affirmative’s proposal described in the 1AC.

In order to catch the judge’s attention, some teams make hyperbolic claims about worst case scenarios (like extinction, nuclear war, or genocide) and provide “internal links,” or connecting steps between the specific action of the plan (the link) and the ominous end result. However, the more steps to the impact (on either side), the more likely that the opposition can question the probability of the supposed result.

As mentioned before, the impact for our example is that money will be directed away from foreign aid projects that are essential to prevent starvation. For this disadvantage, we’ll need both an internal link piece of
evidence and an impact piece of evidence. The internal link might declare, “Congress has indicated that any new spending projects will be paid for by cutting the foreign aid budget.” Then would come the impact, which might state, “cutting foreign aid will result in massive starvation in developing nations.”

**Extending the Disadvantage in the Negative Block**

In the 2AC, the affirmative team will do its best to disprove one or more aspects of the disadvantage argument. In either the 2NC or 1NR, the negative team must respond to each affirmative argument in turn and convince the judge that the disadvantage shows that the plan ultimately does more harm than good (and thus that the negative team should win the entire round). A team extending a disadvantage should follow these steps:

1. **Give an overview of the position.** First, give a one-sentence summary of the position itself. (“Our disad argues that the money spent by the plan will be taken away from important foreign aid spending, causing starvation in the developing world.”)

Then extend each piece of evidence from the 1NC shell, mentioning its basic claim, the source, and how the evidence functions in the broader scheme of the disadvantage:

“First, extend our uniqueness evidence from the New York Times in 2009. It indicates that Congress is resistant to new spending plans because the budget is already tight. Our link evidence from Professor Jones says that high-speed rail is incredibly costly. The Washington Post internal link evidence notes that any new expenditure will require a cut in the foreign aid budget. Finally, a huge cut in the foreign aid budget will translate into millions of people dying of hunger, according to the World Bank in 2007.”

Rehashing the arguments already made may seem redundant, but it underlies a critical aspect of debate: some arguments fall by the wayside over the course of the round, so it is important to highlight the positions that each team deems most significant in every speech. (The exception to this is
the negative block, in which important arguments should be mentioned in either the 2NC or 1NR.)

2. Explain why this disadvantage is more important than the affirmative advantages. This type of argumentation is called “impact analysis.” For more information, see the “Impact Analysis” section in the Argumentation module.

3. Answer each affirmative response, adopting the organization of the arguments used in the 2AC. Start by describing enough of the affirmative argument so the judge understands which argument you’re trying to answer. Generally, noting where the argument appears in the 2AC order and the part of the disadvantage it tries to refute is sufficient (i.e. “in response to their second argument that the disad does not link to the plan...”). Then make your responses. These responses can include an extension of the 1NC evidence that is more detailed than the explanation that appears in the overview, new evidence to refute affirmative claims, and statements of why affirmative evidence doesn’t support their position. Making a few arguments in response to each affirmative point is advisable, but don’t waste time making multiple poor arguments if you only have one good response.

4. Make sure to answer every affirmative argument. You’ll have a hard time winning the disadvantage in the end of the debate if you don’t respond to (or concede) any 2AC response. That would allow the 1AR to extend the affirmative’s argument and any response you make in the 2NR will probably be considered a “new” argument and hence unacceptable in a rebuttal.

**Affirmative Responses to Disadvantages**

Most affirmative teams can predict the disadvantages that will be read against them and should be prepared to address them prior to the debate. The affirmative can attack any or all parts of the disadvantage and should strive to make at least three responses to each negative disadvantage argument. Here are some of the most common responses to disadvantages:
Defensive arguments

**NON-UNIQUE:** This argument directly refutes the uniqueness claims made by the negative team. These arguments are best if the affirmative’s evidence is more recent than the negative’s. Affirmatives should be able to explain why a non-unique argument takes out the whole disadvantage: if the argument is non-unique, the disadvantage will occur regardless of the affirmative plan. Since the undesirable outcome will happen whether the judge votes affirmative or negative, it shouldn’t factor into the equation. Using our example, an affirmative non-unique argument might claim “Congress has voted for billions of dollars in new expenditures over the past month—it recently approved a massive increase in healthcare spending.” After reading this evidence in the 2AC, the 1AR might extend it and then explain, “There is no difference in how healthcare spending and transportation spending affect the federal budget. If it is true that foreign aid will suffer if we spend more money, then that budget cut will happen regardless of the approval of this plan because Congress is spending tons of money right now.”

Related is the **no-brink argument.** This claims that there is no way to determine if the affirmative plan will have enough of an effect to trigger the worst-case scenario described in the disadvantage. For example: “There is no brink to this argument—the negative cannot tell you how much spending will break the budget and force us to cut the foreign aid budget.”

**NO LINK:** This argument claims that there is no link between the impact of the disadvantage and the affirmative plan. The affirmative team will have a hard time completely disproving the link, but it can significantly downplay the connection and thereby make the worst-case scenario described by the negative seem less probable. For the foreign aid disadvantage, one might argue that “The plan will be relatively cheap, accounting for less than .01% of the federal budget, which is hardly enough money to trigger mass starvation even if the funding comes directly from the foreign aid budget.”

**NO INTERNAL LINK:** Like the “no link” argument, a “no internal link” argument denies the connection between the plan action and the massive
repercussions in the negative’s impact claim. The affirmative might say, “new spending by Congress won’t be taken out of the foreign aid budget—the government will simply go a little more into debt than it already is.”

**NO IMPACT:** These arguments deny the importance of the problem the negative team claims will arise. The impact can be attacked for a variety of reasons: it is unlikely, will take a long time, or hasn’t been true in the past (called “empirically denied”). Impact arguments tend to be exaggerated and often little time is needed for reading evidence to make a persuasive case. In our example, the affirmative might say, “Food aid is a relatively small part of the foreign aid budget—their claims about starvation are overblown,” or “The United Nations has traditionally come to the assistance of famine victims even if the US has withdrawn its support—hence starvation will not occur.”

**CASE OUTWEIGHS:** These arguments contend that even if each individual part of the negative’s disadvantage is true, the advantages to doing the case are greater than the potential drawbacks. Arguing that the case outweighs the disadvantage should be a part of every 2AC—in addition to downplaying the importance of the disadvantage, it gives an opportunity to remind the judge of how urgently the plan needs to pass in order to avoid a catastrophe. For example, an affirmative might argue “Our plan stops global warming, which threatens the existence of the entire species. While starvation of millions may be bad, the death of billions would clearly be much worse.”

**Offensive arguments**

**LINK TURN:** Like all offensive arguments, this position contends that the plan will have the opposite effect of what the negative team claims. In other words, the plan would actually prevent the impacts of the disadvantage from happening. So, a basic link turn for the foreign aid disadvantage would argue “the plan actually saves money by bolstering the economy, thereby increasing tax revenue for the federal budget.”
IMPACT TURN: An impact turn agrees with the earlier parts of the disadvantage but contends that the supposed bad things that the plan will cause are actually good. These arguments are pretty straightforward, although depending on the impact presented by the negative side, it may be difficult for the affirmative team to find evidence to support certain outcomes (few people judges are moved to believe that hunger is good). In our example, the most effective impact turn argument would claim “Foreign aid is bad because increases dependency on outside help, making starvation and underdevelopment inevitable.”

*NOTE: In all circumstances, avoid making both a link turn argument and an impact turn argument. If you argued both that the plan prevents foreign aid from being cut (your link turn) AND that foreign aid is bad (your impact turn), you’ve given the negative team a whole new disadvantage argument to make against you. Err on the side of caution if you’re unsure if your offensive arguments might contradict each other.

“Kicking” a Disadvantage

Sometimes it will become clear that a certain disadvantage argument in a round is weaker than some of the other objections made by the negative team. In this case, the disadvantage should be explicitly abandoned (or “kicked”) in order to focus efforts on the most effective strategy. It is not satisfactory to simply never mention the disadvantage again. Depending on the types of arguments the affirmative has made in response to the disad, there are several ways to go about doing this:

If the affirmative has only made defensive arguments against the disad (i.e. no “turn” arguments), simply tell the judge that you’re not going for the disadvantage and then explicitly concede one of the affirmative responses that would take out a central aspect of your argument. For example, you may concede that there’s no link between the plan and the disad or that the disad is going to happen even without the affirmative plan. This is the easiest way to kick out of a disadvantage.
A more likely scenario is that the affirmative team has “turned” your argument in some way. If the turn arguments are also accompanied by other defensive responses, you can simply concede one of these defensive arguments (such as a no-link argument) when you tell the judge you’re not going for the position. For example, the affirmative might answer the example disadvantage by making 2 arguments: 1) new spending will not trade off with the foreign aid budget (an argument that takes out the internal link) and 2) foreign aid is itself a bad thing (an impact-turn argument). So, you would tell the judge that you’re no longer defending the position and concede to the affirmative team’s first response. Then, explain that even if foreign aid is a bad thing (affirmative’s second response), both sides agree the plan would not cause any change in the foreign aid budget. This way the affirmative cannot claim that stopping foreign aid is an added benefit to doing the plan.

Occasionally, the affirmative team will only make offensive arguments against your disadvantage. In this scenario, the negative team CANNOT kick out of the disadvantage without refuting these arguments explicitly. Simply conceding one of them will only bolster the affirmative position.

**Vocabulary**

**Disadvantage:** A negative off-case argument that explains the added harms of passing the plan  
**Uniqueness:** The concept that the negative’s claimed harms would only occur if the plan were passed and not under the status quo  
**Link:** The connection between the affirmative plan and the new harms (or impacts)

**Activities**

**Are You My Link?**

Find out the number of students with whom you are working, and divide the number by three. The result is the number of DA skeletons you will need to construct. Figure out the link, uniqueness and impact of the DAs. On three separate note cards, write out the link, uniqueness and the impact of DA; do
this for each DA. If you are really industrious, you could even attach a piece of evidence to each note card, but a detailed explanation should be more than enough. If you have a number of students not divisible by three, you can always create DAs with multiple links and/or impacts.

Hand out the note cards to the students at random, and then turn them lose. They will need to talk to most of the members of the group to find their missing link, uniqueness and/or impact. The idea is for the students to talk to each other (and in so doing meet each other) in order to put the component parts together to form a coherent argument. After all students think they have found their mates, have the trios present their DAs to the whole group.
TOPICALITY

One of the burdens of the affirmative side is to propose a plan that directly falls within the resolution. It seems pretty simple, almost to the point that we can take it for granted, yet affirmatives often push the envelope to catch negative teams off-guard. Topicality arguments act as a check on this tendency, and if the negative can prove that the affirmative plan does not address the resolution (that it is not topical), the affirmative team will lose the debate because they have not met their basic obligation to defend the resolution.

Writing a Topicality Violation

The negative chooses to put forth a topicality argument only if it believes the affirmative’s plan is not an example of the resolution. This is called a topicality violation.

For example, imagine that the resolution is that “the U.S. Federal Government should significantly increase the number of people who use public transportation” and the affirmative plan proposes to increase incentives for carpooling. The negative can argue that, according to its interpretation of public transportation, carpooling does not qualify.

There are four basic steps for making a complete topicality argument:

**Interpretation:** The negative team defines a word (or multiple words) in the resolution and uses this definition (from a dictionary or expert on the topic) to describe what counts as a topical affirmative case.

**Violation:** The negative explains why this particular affirmative case does not fall within their interpretation of the resolution.

**Standards:** The negative argues that their description of topical cases is the best way to understand the resolution. At the most basic level, a standards argument contends that debate topic would be impossibly large if the affirmative isn’t limited to certain types of cases.
Voting Issue: Finally, the negative side explains why topicality should matter. This argument can be as simple as saying “topicality is a voting issue—without it, we won’t have educational debates, which is the point of the activity.”

This structure is pretty advanced for novice debaters. Initially, learning the names of the four parts is probably much less important than having them understand that a topicality argument needs solid definitions and a reason why the affirmative team’s failure to meet them makes their case unfair.

Most negative teams prepare multiple topicality violations in preparation for a variety of affirmative cases. The negative can anticipate how affirmative teams might interpret the resolution and prepare responses to general types of affirmative plans. If all the topicality arguments prepared by the negative are completely irrelevant for a specific case, the negative should accept the affirmative’s interpretation of the resolution and not bring up topicality.

If a negative team chooses to run a topicality argument, it should be the first position presented in the 1NC.

Answering a Topicality Argument

An affirmative team will typically offer an alternative definition of terms in the resolution in order to make the plan topical. When the two teams offer different definitions of the resolution, each one must explain why its interpretation is better and should be used as the standard in the round.

You might also argue that your plan falls within the definitions offered by the negative team. Of course, most negative teams intentionally pick interpretations of the resolution that exclude the affirmative case, so making this your only affirmative response can be pretty risky.

Many affirmatives will argue that topicality violations are just picky word games proposed by the negative, provided the case isn’t too far out in left
field. Although a strong topicality argument can be highly effective, a weak one will likely appear like a petty distraction in front of the judge.

**Vocabulary**

**Topicality**: The burden of the affirmative that requires that the plan must be an example of the resolution

**Topicality Violation**: A structured off-case argument in which the negative team contends that the affirmative case does not fall within the boundaries of the resolution

**Voting Issue**: An issue in the debate that one side argues is the most important point that the judge should consider
COUNTERPLANS

Up until this moment, debating on the negative side may have seemed like it required a rejection of the status quo. However, sometimes the negative agrees that there is a problem, but it rejects the affirmative’s approach to solving it. The negative’s proposed alternative plan is called a counterplan. A counterplan can be an advantageous tool because it avoids the potential weakness of having to defend the status quo and might be more effective than the affirmative’s plan.

A counterplan is just like an affirmative plan in that it comes up with a proposal to address a problem. The wording in the text must describe exactly how the plan would be implemented.

A Competitive Counterplan

In order for the negative team to win, it must prove that the counterplan is competitive, or that it is a substitute for the affirmative’s plan. The counterplan alone must be better than the plan or the combination of the plan and the counterplan. A few ways to show that the counterplan is competitive are listed below. The negative must prove one these arguments in order to win and should explicitly state how the counterplan is competitive in the 1NC shell.

**Mutual Exclusivity:** The affirmative and negative policies cannot be implemented at the same time.

**Net Benefits:** It is preferable to implement only the negative plan, even if both can be done. For example, the federal and state government can implement a plan for Food Stamps, but perhaps it is more efficient if only the state does it. To prove a net benefit, the negative will often present a disadvantage that applies to the affirmative’s plan but not its own.

The counterplan must also have an advantage that the affirmative case cannot address. Just like the affirmative case, the negative plan needs to solve for a problem. Sometimes the counterplan’s advantage is that it is
able to avoid a disadvantage that the affirmative proposal does not. This advantage over the affirmative plan is called the net benefit.

Also like the affirmative, the negative must explain how the counterplan will work, or the solvency of the policy.

**Answering a Counterplan**

The affirmative team can beat a counterplan by showing that the best strategy is to implement both its own plan and some or all of the negative counterplan. This is called a permutation or perm. If the affirmative shows ways in which both plans can and should be done, it wins the debate because the negative plan is no longer competitive. For example, the negative might propose space colonization as an alternative to implementing high-speed rail. The two plans are not mutually exclusive, however, and therefore the counterplan is not competitive. While space colonization might save the entire species if an asteroid were to hit the Earth, it doesn’t disprove anything about the affirmative case and hence there’s no reason you couldn’t do both at the same time.

There are a few types of permutations:

**Logical:** Both can be done at the same time

**Temporal:** Plans are done in sequence

The affirmative can also beat the counterplan by refuting its net benefit outright. The majority of this portion of the debate will occur on the disadvantage itself, but the affirmative should explain in the counterplan debate that without a net benefit, there’s not reason to vote for the counterplan.

Many counterplans do not solve the entirety of the affirmative case. In this scenario, affirmatives should emphasize that they are the only ones offering a solution to the harms arguments made in the 1AC. Then they should make impact comparison arguments explaining why the case advantages that the counterplan doesn’t solve matter more than the net benefit.
In a round, affirmative teams should clarify the wording of the counterplan text and ask questions during the CX period to make sure they understand it. Additionally, affirmatives should verify early on if the negative team is planning to defend the counterplan for the entire round or if it reserves the right to drop it at some point and return to defending the status quo. This will matter more in advanced debate, but novices should be aware that negative teams will often simultaneously defend a counterplan and the status quo (and so the affirmative must be equally flexible).

**Vocabulary**

**Counterplan:** The negative creates a plan text that provides an alternative to both the present system and the affirmative plan

**Competitive:** The negative must prove that its plan and the affirmative’s cannot or should not be executed at the same time

**Net Benefit:** Advantage of the negative counterplan over the affirmative plan

**Permutation:** The affirmative’s test of competitiveness the counterplan, which argues that both the affirmative and negative plan can and should be done

Note: Many counterplans propose an alternative policy that is very similar to the plan advocated by the affirmative team but choose a different level of government to implement it (often times state governments). So, your discussion of counterplans is a great opportunity to engage students in a discussion of separation of powers, state-federal relations, and the overall structure of the US political system.
KRITIKS

When debate gets to its most intense stage, it turns international: “Kritik” is German for “critique” and the two terms are interchangeable. Also, these arguments are often referred to as “the K.”

Kritiks are off-case arguments made by the negative to point out problematic assumptions or language used by the affirmative team. They contend that the judge should not determine the winner of the debate based on the merits of the policy advocated by the affirmative but instead on whether the assumptions that underlie that policy approach are sound. They avoid getting into the specific costs and benefits of the policy and operate in a more abstract realm of general ideas. Kritiks are often hard to grasp for beginning debaters but expose students to a wide range of philosophical discussions.

Structure of Kritiks

This is a basic scenario in which a team might run a Kritik: an affirmative plan calls for the United States military to intervene to stop genocide. For part of the 1NC, the negative team might offer a kritik of militarism, the idea that we should look to military solutions to our problems.

LINK: The first aspect of a kritik is the link to the affirmative case. Here the negative team identifies the underlying problematic assumptions or language used to justify the affirmative case. Like most off-case arguments, this evidence will probably be fairly generic, but good kritik debaters should become comfortable identifying specific examples of the argument of the kritik in the affirmative team’s evidence.

Using the militarism example, the link argument would claim “the affirmative team’s reliance on military solutions reinforces the militaristic nature of United States foreign policy by glorifying military solutions to the world’s problems.” In a later speech, the negative might point to specific lines from the affirmative team’s evidence that explicitly tout the importance of a strong military intervention to stop genocide for the United States’
international image. The more you can show that the entire logic of the affirmative plan depends upon the idea you are critiquing, the more effective your argument will be.

**IMPACT:** Next, the negative team explains why this assumption is such a bad thing. This portion of the argument is sometimes called the “implication” of the kritik. In addition to pointing out the broad-scale negative repercussions that will arise if the affirmative’s assumptions or language continue without being questioned, many negative teams also contend that the problematic portions of the affirmative’s logic will doom the policy to failure in the long run. This type of impact argument is called a **case turn.**

The militarism kritik might have two impact arguments. The first is fairly general, explaining that a strong belief in the importance of the military will lead to an ever-expanding reliance on it, inevitably resulting in conflict with other militaries around the world that are forced to respond to US provocations. Second, the negative can point out that military action raises the stakes of any disagreement, solidifying the opposition and prompting backlash by the attacked parties, and thus results in more deaths of innocents in the specific area of the world that the affirmative plan intends to aid.

**ALTERNATIVE:** Because kritiks often target ideas that are common in our society, simply pointing out the existence of a problem or idea that will continue whether or not the affirmative plan is put into effect doesn’t necessarily mean the judge should vote for the negative. In order to complete the kritik argument and justify a negative win, the negative team needs to offer a different way of understanding the world that avoids the problematic assumptions or language of the affirmative side. This portion of the argument is called the **alternative** and functions similarly to a counterplan text—the negative provides a specific alternative to the affirmative plan that they ask the judge to endorse instead. Alternatives may simply ask the judge to reject the kritiked ideas on principle, or may go further and describe a specific way of approaching the world that avoids the negative impacts associated with the affirmative’s underlying assumptions.
For the militarism kritik, the alternative might declare, “Reject the affirmative team’s insistence on the predominance of military solutions and instead endorse an ethic of United States humility in international affairs.”

**Framework arguments**

As you might have noticed, a kritik does not fit well into the cost/benefit analysis that mot debaters and judges typically use to determine the winner of a debate. Instead, a negative team that runs a kritik asks the judge to vote for or against certain values. To convince the judge to endorse a certain set of beliefs, most teams running a kritik argument offer some sort of framework for deciding the debate round that does not rely on a cost/benefit analysis. Framework arguments are really arguments about debate itself—they question what should matter most in the judge’s decision and allow debaters to engage in discussions about which approach to understanding debate would be most educational and fair for debaters. Although framework arguments vary, the most basic negative framework contends that the affirmative side should be able to justify the assumptions that underlie its case. The philosophical theories of framework arguments are generally not discussed until more advanced levels of debate, but novices should be familiar with the idea that kritik arguments not only question the assumptions of the affirmative plan but also the norms of how judges decide who should win a debate.

**Extending a Kritik**

Kritiks should be extended much like other arguments—the 2NC or 1NR should provide an overview for the position and then proceed to answer the affirmative responses in the order they were presented in the 2AC. Here are a few tips for extending a kritik argument:

1. Give a very clear overview of your argument. Kritiks are probably the most difficult argument to grasp—for both debaters and judges. If your argument is so abstract that other people in the debate don’t understand it, you’ll have a hard time winning the round. Simplify difficult words in your evidence and do your best to apply the evidence you’re using to the specifics
of the affirmative case. The more affirmative examples of your criticisms you can find, the better.

2. Clearly identify how the judge should evaluate your argument (i.e. what framework she should employ), especially if you have not made framework arguments in the 1NC.

3. Answer all affirmative responses, but pay particular attention to any permutations they might make. Remember that permutations are a combination of the entire affirmative plan and some or all of the kritik alternative. The best answers to these positions point out: 1) how the kritik alternative and plan are mutually exclusive (cannot logically exist at the same time); 2) how the inclusion of the plan with the alternative means that the alternative loses all value (and therefore the problematic assumptions leading to the kritik’s impacts will continue); or 3) how critical parts of the alternative are left out of the permutation, again eliminating any hope that the affirmative assumptions could be reworked.

Affirmative Answers to Kritiks

Just as with other off-case positions, affirmative teams can attack each part of the kritik and should employ a mixture of offensive and defensive arguments. Affirmative teams can make various types of arguments that require expert evidence or rely only on logic.

**NO LINK:** These arguments challenge the link to the affirmative plan. In general, they are pretty difficult to win—negative teams tend to kritik ideas that are central to the affirmative case’s logic. By pressing the negative team on this point, however, affirmatives will require them to spend time reading the 1AC evidence for specific links and may be able to demonstrate that the negative team doesn’t fully understand the issues they are critiquing in the first place, especially if the negative cannot find link arguments beyond the generic evidence they read in the 1NC.

**LINK TURN:** This argument contends that the affirmative plan actually stops the negative impacts from happening. For the militarism kritik, the
affirmative team might argue that using the military for humanitarian intervention challenges our traditional understanding of military force, thus de-emphasizing the destructive nature of military use. If this argument is successful, stopping the impacts of the kritik is now an additional advantage to doing the affirmative plan.

**NO IMPACT:** A no-impact argument contends that the negative repercussions of the affirmative’s logic are overblown. These arguments can be pretty persuasive—many of the ideas criticized by negative teams are old and have guided political decisions long before the affirmative plan. If the impacts identified by the negative team haven’t happened already, why should we believe that applying that logic one more time would make any difference?

**IMPACT TURN:** This position maintains that the so-called bad assumptions identified by the negative team are actually good. These arguments shouldn’t be run at the same time as link-turn arguments or the affirmative has “double-turned” (or contradicted) itself. For the militarism kritik, the affirmative could argue that regardless of what ethical position we would uphold in an ideal world, other countries have militaries and will use them. Thus, having a strong military is essential to preventing international conflicts, which would probably increase if the United States disbanded its military.

**PERMUTATION:** A kritik permutation functions just like a counterplan permutation—it advocates a third option that combines the affirmative case and all or part of the negative’s alternative. The permutation is the most desirable option in the round (and deserving of the judge’s vote) if it addresses the harms of the case identified in the 1AC and shows how the alternative can still be partially implemented to reduce the chance of the negative’s accused repercussions. Permutations are essential tools in combating negative kritik arguments and should be a part of every 2AC that responds to a kritik. Multiple permutations are (with few exceptions) also permissible—just be clear what the differences are between each permutation.
**ALTERNATIVE FAILS:** Arguments that challenge the efficacy of the kritik’s alternative are powerful positions, and the affirmative team should strive to make them every time a kritik argument is run. Kritiks often target cultural values that have been around for centuries. The longevity of these ideas suggests that they are useful for many people in making sense of the world and are likely to remain around even if the idea is rejected in this particular instance. The kritik alternative can often be painted as wishful thinking that the judge should be highly skeptical of, particularly in comparison to the very specific solvency evidence the affirmative team has read in the 1AC.

**FRAMEWORK ARGUMENTS:** These can be pretty theoretical discussions (and difficult for novices to master), but framework arguments challenge the negative side’s contention that the judge shouldn’t pay attention to cost-benefit analyses in her decision. If the affirmative wins that the cost-benefit analysis is preferable, it should then explain why the kritik loses in this framework. This is easier than it might sound: if the problematic assumptions of the affirmative are constantly employed by many real policies, the affirmative’s plan will do little to make the problem worse but does address an important set of harms (case advantages), that should warrant the judge’s ballot.

**Vocabulary**

**Kritik (Critique):** A negative strategy that points out the problematic assumptions employed by the affirmative team; focuses on moral standards rather than cost/benefit analysis

**Framework Arguments:** Arguments made by the negative team that contend that the judge should vote for or against certain values rather than look at the pragmatics of the plan

**Alternative:** A method of avoiding the problematic assumptions underlying the affirmative case that the negative kritiks

**Permutation:** Affirmative argument that contends that the ideal option is to adopt the affirmative plan and part or all of the kritik alternative
Activities

**Introduction to the Kritik**

Start a conversation with an extremely value-laden statement. For instance, a child asks her parents why she cannot go out with friends on Friday night. The parent responds, “Because I said so.” Ask the students to isolate the assumptions implicit in this response. What does it say about young people? About rational decision-making? About authority? When the group has discussed many of the implicit assumptions of a couple of value-laden statements, begin a discussion of kritiks. Use examples from the earlier conversations to talk briefly about what kritiks are and how they work. This conversation should take place before they formally learn about kritiks.
THE FIRST NEGATIVE CONSTRUCTIVE (1NC)

The **first negative constructive (1NC)** is the second speech in the debate and the negative team’s first opportunity to speak (besides cross examination). The negative team should start out by making multiple attacks against the affirmative case, so this speech should include a diverse and broad set of arguments, sometimes at the expense of fully developing those arguments when they are first presented. This flexibility allows later negative speeches to adapt the 1NC arguments to the specific affirmative responses and avoids making the negative team’s most strategic line of attack obvious early in the debate. Of course, this need for flexibility must be balanced by the need to make complete, coherent arguments in the 1NC. If the judge or opposing team does not understand the basic premise of the negative side’s argument in this first speech, those unpersuasive arguments will harm the negative team’s credibility and ultimately force the negative to invest far more time later explaining its initial objections.

**Order of the 1NC**

In general, debaters pick out the 2-4 off-case arguments that they are most comfortable reading and pull out the shell of each of these arguments. These can be ordered as the debater sees fit, but topicality arguments are often read first because they are relatively short. After all of the off-case arguments have been read, the debater should then make her on-case arguments. The on-case arguments should be prioritized from best to worst (and ideally offensive to defensive) so that if time runs out, the strongest arguments have already been made. Organizing the on-case arguments by stock issue will help the judge flow and avoid confusing the debate. The logic behind ordering the speech in this way rests on the idea that the selected off-case arguments are essential for the negative’s strategy and the team shouldn’t risk not having time to introduce them in the first speech. The 1NC should leave time for on-case arguments and prepare extra possible on-case arguments to ensure the entire 1NC speech time will be filled.
THE NEGATIVE BLOCK

The second and third negative speeches in the debate (the second negative constructive and the first negative rebuttal—2NC and 1NR, respectively) are collectively referred to as the “negative block” because they occur in succession, with no opportunity for affirmative responses in between. This gives the negative team 13 minutes of speech time interrupted only by a cross examination period, a massive advantage given the mere 5 minutes the affirmative team has to respond to these arguments during the “first affirmative rebuttal” (1AR). The block is the negative’s main opportunity to substantially expand on the arguments made in the 1NC, abandoning the weaker arguments and focusing on a couple negative points of opposition that have the most likelihood for success.

Because no new affirmative responses occur between the 2NC and 1NR, the first negative rebuttal (1NR) should avoid discussing any of the issues already discussed in the 2NC. This technique is called splitting the block and is essential if the negative hopes to capitalize on the time advantage it has in this portion of the debate. So, the 2NC might cover one of the off-case arguments made in the 1NC and many of the on-case arguments, while the 1NR would discuss one of the other off-case arguments. Deciding how to divide the arguments in the block can be done before the debate or on the fly, but it should be determined by the middle of the 2AC so that the second negative speaker can prepare her speech during the next cross-examination period.

Note that many affirmative teams expect the arguments made by the 2NC to be the most important in the debate. Smart negatives can take advantage of this tendency by unexpectedly putting one of their key points in the 1NR, meaning the 1AR speaker will have less time to prepare answers to that argument. Most importantly, however debaters should stick to their strengths; if one team member is better at advancing a certain type of argument, that debater should cover that position during the negative block.
Making and extending arguments in the Block

The negative block should avoid introducing any entirely new positions and instead focus on advancing some of the 1NC arguments. During the 2AC, the affirmative team will have made a set of arguments against each off-case position (organized differently than the 1NC shell) and ideally respond directly to each on-case argument. The negative block is the primary opportunity to respond to affirmative arguments and deepen its offensive strategy.

Speeches in the negative block include the following components:

**OVERVIEW:** When extending an off-case argument, the first step is to explain the basic premise of the argument to the judge, making the tag lines as specific to the affirmative case as possible and reminding the judge of the experts who back your claims. This is called an **overview**. After this basic reminder of the position, the next step is to compare the impacts of the negative position to the impacts of the affirmative case (the advantages). The overview of each off-case position should always include impact analysis.

**RESPONSE TO AFFIRMATIVE ANSWERS:** After the overview (which can be pre-scripted, especially if it’s an argument made frequently), the speaker proceeds to address each affirmative response to the negative position in the order it was presented by the 2AC. (Judges expect the negative block to follow the structure of off-case argument responses from the 2AC.) More evidence can be read in response to affirmative claims or it is acceptable to explain how evidence already provided applies to this specific argument. *Each 2AC argument must be addressed.* Note that the affirmative’s offensive responses will be the most challenging to the negative position, so the most time should be spent covering them.

**ON-CASE ARGUMENTS:** For on-case arguments, the 2AC tends to adopt the organization of the 1NC. The 2NC/1NR should do the same to preserve clarity in the debate. Like advancing off-case positions, making on-case arguments requires a summary of the position (this can be done very briefly), a reference to the author who supports your position (if possible),
and then a refutation of the affirmative’s responses. It is probably to the negative team’s advantage to pick a few of the best on-case arguments instead of extending all of them.

**Vocabulary**

**Extend:** To bring up an argument that has already been presented. (Ex: In response to the 2AC’s argument that poverty is on the rise, extend my Johnson card that explains that poverty is in fact decreasing in the United States.)

**Negative Block:** The back-to-back Second Negative Constructive (2NC) and the First Negative Rebuttal (1NR). The negative has 13 minutes of speaking time without interruption in which it can divide its arguments between these two speeches.

**Splitting the block:** Strategically dividing negative arguments between the 2NC and 1NR so as not to repeat arguments and to allow time to thoroughly explain each position.

**Overview:** A brief summary of an extended argument; includes impact comparison. The overview is especially important in the last affirmative and negative speeches because it clearly explains why each team should win.
THE SECOND NEGATIVE REBUTTAL (2NR)

This is the second to last speech in the round and the negative’s last chance to present its position. By this point in the round, the negative should no longer focus on all of the details of the debate and needs to prioritize certain arguments. That being said, the negative must respond to all affirmative arguments if it expects to win on those specific points. Any unanswered affirmative arguments will be viewed as conceded. Remember that new evidence is not allowed in the 2NR.

The negative speaker should settle on one overall strategy, kicking out of positions that are not necessary to win the debate. She should provide an explanation of how the judge should understand the debate and make sure to include impact analysis. It is also essential to account for the possibility that the affirmative team will win some of the issues in the debate. Including statements like “even if they win this argument, we will still win because…” helps to diffuse the potency of those positions and gives the impression that you have a reasonable understanding of how successful your arguments have been. Finally, try to predict how the affirmative team is likely to respond and provide answers to those arguments before they’re even made. Make the point that “they’ll try to tell you x, y, and z, but that’s not true because…” Without this type of strategic thinking, you’ll risk being blindsided by a tricky 2AR.
SKILLS
FLOWING

Flowing is nothing more than a snazzy term for taking notes during a debate. Given the many arguments that are put forward in a debate round and the weight given to organization in speeches, keeping track of all of this information is essential. Flowing has a specific format and style, based on the combined wisdom of many debaters over the decades reaching a general consensus on the easiest way to stay organized. A good flow will show how each argument has progressed (or been dropped) throughout the round.

Layout of a “Flow”

The most logical and simplest way to organize a flow is to create one column for each speech in the round. Although there are eight speeches, the negative block (2NC & 1NR) can be grouped together. Therefore, there are seven columns.

Each debate will have more than one flow sheet. Every major issue requires a different sheet of paper; typically there will be one sheet for the 1AC and then for each off-case argument. Every argument that is brought up later in the round should apply to one of these topics and will then be written down on that flow sheet. It might be overwhelming at first to bounce from sheet to sheet, but it is not impossible.

Although the content of each flow differs, the format and purpose is the same: an initial argument will be presented in the 1AC or 1NC sections. The responses to and the extensions of that argument will be written in each of the following columns. Arrows connect each response to the same argument, and a person should be able to follow the linear progression of the debate point by point (see model on the next page).

Every debater should take notes on each speech, even if it is not one that he must directly answer. While listening to an opponent’s speech, debaters should both take notes and begin to write arguments for their next speeches. Debaters can also use CX and prep time to jot down more notes or organize speeches.
What to include on the “Flow”

A strong flow will include every argument brought up in the round and the responses to it during the entire debate. The first step in taking notes during debate is concisely writing the arguments. The following information should be included for each point:

• The number or letter of argument
• A brief summary of the tagline
• The Source (Name and Date)
• The reason, statistic, or fact to support argument

Tips for Flowing

The process of taking notes in debate requires major multi-tasking skills. No one ever said this was easy, but with practice, flowing becomes natural. Here are a few tips that will help any debater keep information organized:

• Practice – Flowing will get easier the more it is done.
• Use different flows (sheets of paper or entire notepads) for each type of argument (i.e. one for the 1AC, counterplan, and disadvantage, etc.).
• Leave space between arguments – yours or your opponent’s. This will help maintain organization if an argument becomes highly contested.
• Flow the entire debate, even when you have finished speaking.
• Make all major heading and tags clear.
• Use prep time and other breaks in the round (transition period between speeches) to clean up the flow.
• Reword opposition arguments and then write them down – this gets students to process the content, rather than just repeating.
• Use abbreviations (standard or your own).

Activities

Practice

The best way for students to learn how to flow is simply to practice. Whenever one student gives a speech all the others should be flowing.
**Playing Cards Drill**
Start out flowing drills with students by using playing cards. For example, if the reader says “Five of Hearts,” the students should make up an abbreviation for that card. Then the lists will build: “The Four of Spades off of the Five of Hearts, followed by the Queen of Clubs.” Rebuttal speeches can be added, extending, refuting or even dropping “arguments,” or the names of cards. This drill gets students to write down, condense and organize information quickly, even if there is no real content. The student that produces an accurate flow can be the next reader. Encourage him to increase reading speed.

Give prizes for the most organized, most legible, most accurate or most creative flows.

**Coach Debate**
Two coaches or varsity students should hold a debate about a smaller issue (dress code, off-campus lunch) in front of students. All students must take notes, using the column format. After the debate, ask: How did each argument relate to the next? Were all of the arguments relevant? Was one debater missing or “dropping” any arguments?

**“Real World” Debate**
Show a real (or *The West Wing*) debate to students – perhaps a video clip of a presidential campaign debate or the passing of a bill in the Senate. These are obvious forms of debate that don’t necessarily follow a CX format but contain the basic principles of argumentation. Students should take notes on what these speakers say and then prepare cross-examination questions and rebuttal arguments in response. Students can then compare their flows.

**Flow Along**
The teacher flows on a chalkboard or on a computer hooked up to a projector while students are debating. The rest of the team can check this flow to compare their notes to the coach’s.
Flow Evaluation
After a debate or one of the exercises during which you required the team to flow, collect all the flows. Let the students know that you want the chance to look over their flows and see how they are doing. Emphasize how important good flowing is: if they can flow, they can win rounds. Before the next practice, prepare one-page typed responses to their flows. Compliment them on what they did well, and offer suggestions on ways they can improve. Do not be too critical. The purpose of this exercise is to emphasize the importance of flowing while demonstrating that you care enough about their work to spend time typing up a specific response to their flow. This exercise can also be done as an evaluation of speeches that the students write.
CROSS EXAMINATION

Given that policy debate can also be referred to as “cross examination debate,” it makes sense that the cross-examination period of each round is important. This is the opportunity for each team to show its knowledge, to weaken the arguments of the other team, and to clarify any questions about the constructives.

There are four CX periods in the round, one after each constructive, lasting three minutes each. The team that has just presented its constructive answers the questions that the other team will then ask. Depending on the judge’s preferences, CX can be “open” (all four debaters can participate) or “closed” (only the two designated speakers are involved). Encourage your novices to evenly split CX time so they become comfortable with the process.

Goals of CX

Many beginning debaters imagine that the entire round will be like one big cross examination period, and that in this time they will be able to crack their opponent’s argument just like the lawyers on TV do. Unfortunately, CX in real life is less glamorous and more difficult than these shows suggest. There are a few goals for CX time, some more difficult to achieve than others, but with time a debater will learn how to effectively use the CX process.

• Fill up time – Asking 3 minutes worth of questions is a noble achievement.
• Ask questions to clarify information from the constructives.
• Find flaws in the argument (evidence that is out of date, an author who is not credible, illogical/wrong assumptions).
• Ask questions that will get information that affects the plan (For example: after establishing that the plan spends a lot of money, the asker might later criticize the plan’s funding in its own argument).

Ultimately, the goal of CX time is to establish oneself to win the round, not just that 3-minute period. To start out, just fill up the time; then move on
to questions that show real flaws in the opponent’s arguments or even will directly benefit the asker’s position.

**Tips**

- Be assertive and also respectful.
- As an asker, make sure the person’s answers do not go on for too long.
- As an answerer, take up time responding to questions (within reason).
- The asker should already have a sense of what the opponent’s response will be (unless trying to clarify information).
- Listen to the answers of the questions asked.
- Make eye contact with the judge.

**Activities**

**Cross Examination Circle**¹

One of the students reads a copy of an affirmative case. After the case is read, have students sit in a circle and each one asks a question based on what was just read. The individual who read the case can answer the question, but the teacher and other students can help him out with the answers.

After everyone goes around and asks a question, the teacher should come up with a question that is central to the case. The group asks follow up questions based on the response that was just given. This time around the circle, each student must ask a question based on the answer that was given before. The idea of this second part is to formulate deeper questions that push the affirmative team’s argument.

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¹ Activity suggested by Tara Tate at Glenbrook South High School
BLOCK WRITING

Over the course of a year, you will find that you repeatedly encounter many of the same basic arguments. Instead of trying to come up with responses in prep time prior to your rebuttal speech, it is helpful to compile your best evidence and analytical arguments ahead of the round. In debate, this preparation of responses is called writing blocks. In addition to allowing you to focus on trickier new arguments when preparing for your speech during the round, block writing familiarizes you with your evidence, making rebuttals much easier.

When writing a block, first, you should identify what arguments you are most likely to encounter. For the affirmative, you should focus on common off-case positions that link to your case. The negative is slightly less predictable, but if you tend to read the same disadvantage or counterplan arguments in most rounds, it is probably worth writing a block to frequently made affirmative responses.

Next, identify the central arguments you'll need to make and try to find evidence to support these claims. Then, cut out your evidence from the original file and decide the order in which you want to present your arguments. When you can't find evidence (or it doesn't seem necessary), write down the argument using as few words as possible while maintaining the central thrust of your point. Generally, you should have your best argument appear early on the block in case you don't have time to read the whole thing. Avoid making many analytical arguments (ones without evidence) in a row and instead intersperse them with evidenced points.

The length of the block will depend upon the argument you are trying to answer. If you are answering a strong off-case position, you will want to prepare five to ten solid responses. For smaller issues, two or three can often do the trick (particularly if you're writing them for the negative).
SPEAKING SKILLS

Although debate values content over style, the ability to present information persuasively is critical. A lack of confidence or organization distracts the judge, and strong speaking helps to sway the audience and possibly intimidate one’s opponent. Specific attention should be given to speaking skills for at least a few minutes in every practice. Coaches should pay attention to the “speaker points” given by a judge to each debater in order to know who needs the most practice speaking.

Tips for Style

• Use a clear, strong voice.
• Speak at a consistent pace; do not rush.
• Stand tall and straight.
• Keep steady eye contact.
• Project a confident but not defensive tone.
• Be polite.

Tips for Substance

• Make an outline of the speech.
• Present a roadmap at the beginning of each speech to indicate the major points presented.
• Summarize and explain your position at the end of each speech.
• Take notes on the opponent’s speech (Flow).
• Signpost – specifically note to which argument you are responding.
• Use evidence to promote your point and compare the validity of your evidence to your opponent’s.
• Ask questions to confirm information.
Activities

Delivery Charades²

We often tell students what to do and what not to do during a speech, but this information is more effectively transmitted through acting. In this activity, students use poor delivery techniques in a speech in order to reveal how distracting poor style can be from the message.

- A student volunteer gives a brief impromptu speech, but instead of selecting a quotation or other prompt for the speech, he will draw a delivery technique from the envelope. The student can give his speech on an acceptable topic (remember this exercise stresses delivery, not content).
  - Possible delivery techniques:
    - Speaker grips the podium
    - Speaker paces
    - Speaker rocks back and forth
    - Speaker mumbles
    - Speaker speaks too loudly
    - Speaker does not speak loudly enough
    - Speaker plays with hair
    - Speaker does not make eye contact
    - Speaker looks at back wall
    - Speaker reads entire speech
    - Speaker does not gesture at all
    - Speaker is monotonous
    - Speaker has no enthusiasm or energy
    - Speaker is heavy on vocal fillers like “umm”
- The student will speak for 1-2 minutes on his/her chosen topic, focusing on the delivery technique.
- After each speech, the class identifies the delivery technique performed during the speech.
- Once the class has successfully determined the delivery technique, have them discuss the technique’s impact on the overall effectiveness of the speech.

² Activity suggested by Chris Joffrion at the National Forensics League
**Reading Drills**

Students should practice reading in order to get them energized and awake (particularly on the morning of a tournament). All students should read simultaneously so that no one feels singled out.

**The Pen Drill:** Students practice reading while clenching their teeth around a pen or pencil placed horizontally in the mouth. This helps with enunciation, and is particularly valuable for students with a tendency to mumble.

**The Reading Backwards Drill:** Students start reading from the end of a piece of evidence instead of the beginning. This trains the brain to read each word individually instead of predicting what will come next based on what has come before. This ensures accurate evidence presentation and trains focus.

**The “a” drill:** Students read a piece of evidence but insert the word “a” between each word (inserting “and” works as well). This trains students to focus on each individual word they’re reading, much like the Reading Backwards Drill.

**Tongue Twister Speaking Drills**

You need several sheets of tongue twisters for this activity. This activity can be done as a replacement for reading drills. Pass out a sheet with several tongue twisters on them to the students. Have two minutes with every student reading. Walk around the room offering feedback to students by saying “clearer” or “keep up the good work.” When everyone is warmed up, hold a timed contest. See who can accurately read a particular tongue twister the fastest.
FACTS & RESOURCES
STRUCTURE OF A DEBATE ROUND

Speech Times & Speaker Roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speech</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Affirmative Constructive (1A)</td>
<td>1AC</td>
<td>8 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2N cross examines 1A</td>
<td>CX</td>
<td>3 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Negative Constructive (1N)</td>
<td>1NC</td>
<td>8 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1A cross examines 1N</td>
<td>CX</td>
<td>3 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Affirmative Constructive (2A)</td>
<td>2AC</td>
<td>8 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>1N cross examines 2A</td>
<td>CX</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Second Negative Constructive (2N)</td>
<td>2NC</td>
<td>8 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2A cross examines 2N</td>
<td>CX</td>
<td>3 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Negative Rebuttal (1N)</td>
<td>1NR</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Affirmative Rebuttal (1A)</td>
<td>1AR</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Negative Rebuttal (2N)</td>
<td>2NR</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Affirmative Rebuttal (2A)</td>
<td>2AR</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 The 1A refers to the first affirmative speaker in the round, the 1N the first negative speaker, etc.
4 The notes in parentheses denote which speaker gives each speech.
GLOSSARY

**Affirmative (“Aff”)** – Team advocating the resolution

**Card** – A piece of evidence

**Case** – The structured proposal of the affirmative team that functions as specific example of the resolution

**Citation** – The source of the quotation or other piece of evidence

**Competitive** – Description of an acceptable counterplan, one that cannot or should not be done along with the affirmative proposal

**Contention (or Observation)** – Organizational term that makes a general argument and is further supported by subpoints

**Constructive** – The first speech given by every debater; used to establish a particular position

**Counterplan** – Argument of the negative team presenting a competitive alternative to the affirmative plan

**Cross Examination Period (Cross X or CX)** - The time in a debate round when questions are asked/answered

**Disadvantage (“Disad” or “DA”)** – Argument read by the negative team stating if the affirmative plan passes, additional problems will occur

**Drop** – Slang term meaning a speaker did not respond to an argument

**Flowing** – Process of shorthand note taking that debaters use to summarize the arguments made in a debate round.

**Harms** – Stock issue; problems within the current system that the affirmative plan solves
**Impact** – The portion of an argument that explains why the overall position matters

**Inherency** – Stock issue; reason why the affirmative plan is not going into effect right now

**Internal Link** – Part of a disadvantage; extra step that connects the plan to the disadvantage

**Kritik (Critique)** – A negative strategy that points out the problematic assumptions of the affirmative team; focuses on moral standards rather than cost/benefit analysis

**Link** – Part of a disadvantage (or kritik); what connects the affirmative plan to the disadvantage (or broader problems associated with the kritik).

**Link Turn** – Specific type of turn argument that says, “our plan actually does the opposite of what you claim it does” (in relation to a disadvantage or kritik argument). A common example is arguing that a plan saves, rather than spends, money.

**Mutual Exclusivity** – Two things cannot happen at the same time

**Negative ("Neg")** – The team that opposes the adoption of the resolution

**Negative Block** – Period of time extending from the 2NC to the 1NR when the negative team has back-to-back speeches and can divide its answers to and extensions of arguments

**Net-Benefit** – Part of a counterplan; advantage of the negative counterplan over the affirmative plan

**Off-Case Arguments** – Arguments that do not directly attack the 1AC; include topicality, disadvantages, counterplans and kritiks
**On-Case Arguments** – Arguments that are specifically intended to address the stock issues presented during the First Affirmative Constructive

**Permutation** – An affirmative argument that tests the competitiveness of a counterplan or kritik (if both the affirmative and negative plans can be done together)

**Plan** – Part of affirmative case that identifies specific action(s) to be taken and how those action(s) will be administered, enforced, and funded

**Rebuttal** – Speeches in a debate during which arguments are answered or summarized but not introduced

**Resolution** – The area of discussion up for debate (the topic)

**Solvency** – Stock issue; ability of plan to fix the identified problems

**Status Quo** – The present system of laws and attitudes

**Tagline (Tag)** – Brief summary of what a card says; is put on the top of the card and is usually 3-7 words long.

**Topicality** – Stock issue; argument questioning whether or not the affirmative case falls within the boundaries of the resolution

**Turn** – Argument saying, “we do not do this, but instead do the opposite”

**Uniqueness** – Part of a disadvantage; states why the disadvantage is not happening in the present system
SUGGESTED GAMES/ ACTIVITIES

These activities are organized by category. Also see each section in the Guide for additional options.

Introductions

Skittles (Or M&Ms)
Buy a bag of Skittles and offer them to the students. Tell them they can have as many as they want but that they have to take at least three. Let them know that they cannot eat the candy until you say so. After they have taken the candy, tell them that they have to tell something about themselves. They must say one thing for each Skittle they have taken. Require them to tell their name, grade level, and why they debate.

Short Impromptu Speeches
Have the students give 45-second speeches about a topic of their choice. If they do not want to choose, offer topics such as “What is the most surprising thing you ever learned in school and why?” This type of question demonstrates that you are interested in the students’ experiences. It sets the tone to have the students speaking almost immediately in practice or at camp.

Non-Verbal Cooperation
This icebreaker is intended to promote community and the understanding of non-verbal communication. First, clarify the rule that there is no speaking during the course of the exercise. Second, tell them that everyone in the room has four minutes to line up according to their birth date (not the year they were born but the month and day). This is a fun, non-verbal activity.

Introduction to Debating (Not Policy-Specific)

Chain Debating
Let the students pick a topic to debate (i.e. Schools should meet on Saturdays). One volunteer begins the debate by restating the original topic and presents an argument that is related to it. The successive volunteers begin their arguments with “and” or “but” depending on whether they
support or contest the prior claim. (For example: Schools should meet on Saturdays because students will have more learning time...But students will not focus as well during the rest of the week if they spend all of their time in school, etc.) You may want to choose some students to listen and give feedback.

**SPAR Debates**

SPAR Debates require students to spontaneously deliver speeches in favor of or against a statement. In short, they are mini-debates with an abbreviated structure of a policy round. Pick a topic (or allow students to choose) and then give students five minutes to prepare their arguments. There is one person representing each side.

The debate is organized as follows:

- 90 second speech in favor of the resolution (affirmative)
- 60 second cross examination (questioning period) by the negative
- 90 second speech against the resolution (negative)
- 60 second cross examination (questioning period) by the affirmative
- 45 second Affirmative closing speech
- 45 second Negative closing speech

For the sake of saving time, the next two debaters should already know their topic and use their 5 minutes of preparation time while the first debate is in progress. You can also have students debate in teams of two if time is limited.

**The Animals**

This exercise is designed to emphasize the importance of direct, accurate and concise communication. Ask each debater to pick an animal in her head but not to write the name on the page. Give them four minutes to write as accurate a physical description of the animal as possible without saying its name.

Then have each student trade her sheet with another student. Each student should have a sheet that is not her own. The students have two minutes to draw a picture of the animal described on the page. When the time is up, they will compare notes with the student with whom they traded. Follow
this up by asking questions about the disparity between the words and the picture. Discuss miscommunication, accuracy, and misunderstanding as important concepts in debate.

**Debate Raps**
Have students write out raps related to debate topics and about the team or the Debate Institute experience. This fun exercise will showcase participants’ talents.

**Round Table Debates/Open Discussions**
Sit around in a circle and discuss topic area or non-topic area related issues. Moderate and facilitate the discussion in order to ensure that every student talks. Acknowledge a student when he speaks well and have a good idea. You can also use this time to begin to introduce the structure of debate. Say things like, “Justin’s argument was a great example of what we do in debate. He made a claim, and then supported it with reasons and evidence. That is a really powerful way to build and support an argument.”

**Argumentation**

**Claims and Warrants**
This exercise is designed to help students gain an understanding of the structure of a complete argument. Have each student get out a blank sheet of paper and sit in a circle. Ask them to write a sentence long claim at the top of the paper. Then they should pass the paper clockwise to the student next to them. On the new sheet that they now have, ask the students to write two potential warrants (reasons and evidence that support the claim). When they are finished writing these warrants, have them write a second claim. They should pass the paper with the second claim clockwise. On the next paper students receive, they should write two potential warrants supporting the second claim. This can continue for as long as you want. Students could be asked to evaluate the warrants written by their peers.

**Meet and Greet – Claims & Warrants**
The purpose of this activity is to introduce one another and learn the parts of an argument. This exercise requires pieces of evidence written on note
cards. Each statement should be part of an argument, including Claim, Data, Warrant and Impact. Write out the different statements and then shuffle the cards so that they are randomly ordered. Next, pass out the cards to the students. Have the debaters sort the positions out and get to know each other in the process.

**Introductions to Policy Debate**

**Brainstorm About the Resolution**
Write the resolution on a piece of butcher paper or on the board. Start generating a list of topic related issues. Ask questions to help facilitate the process. Ask the students to describe what they know about the concepts related to the resolution. Explain the terms that they do not understand. Provide examples of what the topic calls for to show the diversity of potential arguments. Encourage the students by talking briefly about the relevance of their ideas to arguments that will be talked about during the year.

**Jargon**
Divide the team into three groups. Pass out cards with a single jargon related term (for example, impact) to one group. The second group should get a series of cards with the definitions of the first group’s terms. Give the third group a series of examples of each of the terms without the definition (for example, “collapse of federalism leads to tyranny”). Have the students walk around talking to each other and trying to team up with the other students who have statements relating to their topic. Give acknowledgement to the group of students that accurately finds each other in the least amount of time.

**Group Debate Round**
Each person on the team will perform some part of the debate by giving a speech or participating in cross-examination. Debaters will learn to be more versatile in their arguments because they may have to defend arguments another student has made. This will ensure that they have a more complete understanding of all the arguments and that they learn to listen.
All students will need to flow the entire round and be prepared to speak (on either side) at any moment. Without telling them beforehand, choose which student will give a speech, rebuttal, or cross-examination. You can also put all the names in a hat and randomly call on a student for each part of the debate. Call on a student when it is his or her turn to speak.

If there are more students than there are parts of the round, two students can give the same rebuttal speech. This could in fact be useful to compare the different ways to execute the same speech.

The Affirmative Side

Group Debate on the Affirmative
Divide the group in two. Have one coach help a group come up with what is good about the affirmative and the other help them think of what is bad about the idea. Put the group back together and use a point, counter-point method to get them all talking. Everyone must speak at least once.

Stock Issue Football
The purpose of this exercise is to reinforce the meaning and relevance of each of the stock issues for the students.

You will need a Nerf football and a black permanent marker. Write the words Significance, Harms, Inherency, Topicality, and Solvency so that each side panel of the football is marked with a word.

Throw to the football to a student. Ask the student which panel their thumb was on when they caught the football. If, for instance, their thumb was on the work “Harms,” then they must explain the meaning of Harms. If the student successfully defines their term, then they have completed a pass. They can then throw the football to whomever they choose. However, if they do not define the word correctly, then they “fumbled” the ball and must throw it back to the person who threw it to them. That person can then throw the ball to whomever they choose.
This activity can also be used to teach students about Disadvantages if the side panels say Link, Brink, Uniqueness, Internal Link and Impact.

**Stock Issues Identification**
This activity should be completed without reference to the lingo of the case. Students should brainstorm problems to be solved. For instance, they may want to talk about unemployment, low wages, bad schools, pollution, police brutality or homelessness. Write their list of problems on the board.

Break students up into small groups. Assign a “case” (from the lists they made) to each small group. For “cases” write the following phrases on the board. 1) What’s the problem? (Harms). 2) Why isn’t something being done about it? (Inherency). 3) Why does the problem matter? (Significance). 4) How can we fix the problem? (Solvency). Still do not write the lingo (Harms, etc.) on the board. Have each group answer these questions for the “case” and present them to the group. Then, next to the questions on the board, write the lingo that describes the answers they came up with. Hold a discussion about the meaning of the lingo.

The preceding activity can be completed as a Disadvantage Identification exercise as well. Once the first part of the activity is completed and the case area is isolated, have the students brainstorm bad things that will happen if a particular change is implemented. For the second activity, ask the following DA structural questions: 1) What causes the bad thing to happen? What’s the trigger? (Link) 2) What’s preventing the bad thing now? (Uniqueness) 3) What is the bad thing that will happen? (Impact)

**Refutation**

**One on One Refutation**
Have two students sit face to face in desks. One will make a proposal (e.g. “ice cream is healthy”). The second student comes up with 3 or 4 arguments against the proposal, numbering their arguments. The original speaker then answers the 3 to 4 arguments on-point, making one or two arguments to each original one. She must make reference to her opponent’s arguments. Everyone must flow the speeches, including the speakers.
Off-Case Arguments

Disadvantage Brainstorm
This exercise builds on the topic area brainstorm. It should be completed before the students formally learn about disadvantages in order to build a foundation for that lesson.

Remind students about an affirmative case that they came up with before. Let them list all sorts of bad effects that might occur as a result of those plans. Students are more likely to remember what a budget DA if one says, “It sounds too expensive; who’s going to pay?” and you say, “you just stumbled upon a popular argument” than if you simply tell them the idea in a lecture.

Meet and Greet - Disadvantages
The purpose of this activity is to introduce one another and learn the parts of Disadvantages. This exercise requires cards that are parts of a Disadvantage, including Uniqueness, Link, Brink, and Impact. First, make the cards. Second, shuffle the cards so that they are randomly ordered. Third, pass out the cards to the students. Have the debaters sort the positions out and get to know each other in the process. This exercise can be done with things other than DAs. In particular, with novice students, it might be best to have claims and warrants or a logical string of arguments related to the affirmative case.

Introduction to the Kritik
Start a conversation with an extremely value-laden statement. For instance, a child asks her parents why she can’t go out with friends on Friday night. The parent responds, “Because I said so.” Ask the students to isolate the assumptions implicit in this response. What does it say about young people? About rational decision-making? About authority? When the group has discussed many of the implicit assumptions of a couple of value-laden statements, begin a discussion of kritiks. Use examples from the earlier conversations to talk briefly about what kritiks are and how they work. This conversation should take place before they formally learn about kritiks.
Research

Tabloid News
This exercise is intended to underscore the importance of critically examining evidence. You will need a class set of copies of an article from a tabloid. Make it humorous. Give the students a brief description of how to find cards in articles. Ask the students to find the crucial arguments in the article and bracket them. When they have found the cards, ask them to write tags in the margins. When they are finished, have them turn the articles in to you. Look over their work write suggestions and corrections on their article. Show the group a couple of articles as “best practices.” After that, discuss with them how to cut cards and write tags.

Writing Tag Lines
Choose an affirmative case with which your students are already somewhat familiar. Select a few pieces of evidence and cut them out from the original case, leaving only the citation and body of the evidence (but not the tag line). Then ask students to work alone or in pairs and come up with their own summary (tag) line for each piece of evidence. They may have trouble guessing where it fits into the affirmative case, so provide some hints if necessary without giving away the main strategic value of the evidence. When students are finished, have them compare their answers to those of their peers and the original tag lines that accompanied the evidence.

Flowing

Playing Cards Drill
Start out flowing drills with students by using playing cards. For example, if the reader says “Five of Hearts,” the students should make up an abbreviation for that card. Then the lists will build: “The Four of Spades off of the Five of Hearts, followed by the Queen of Clubs.” Rebuttal speeches can be added, extending, refuting or even dropping “arguments,” or the names of cards. This drill gets students to write down, condense and organize information quickly, even if there is no real content.
The student that produces an accurate flow can be the next reader. Encourage him to increase reading speed.

Give prizes for the most organized, most legible, most accurate or most creative flows.

“Real World” Debate
Show a real (or The West Wing) debate to students – perhaps a video clip of a presidential campaign debate or the passing of a bill in the Senate. These are obvious forms of debate that don’t necessarily follow a CX format but contain the basic principles of argumentation. Students should take notes on what these speakers say and then prepare cross-examination questions and rebuttal arguments in response. Students can then compare their flows.

Flow Evaluation
After a debate or one of the exercises during which you required the team to flow, collect all the flows. Let the students know that you want the chance to look over their flows and see how they are doing. Emphasize how important good flowing is; if they can flow, they can win rounds. Before the practice, prepare one-page typed responses to their flows. Compliment them on what they did well, and offer suggestions on ways they can improve. Do not be too critical. The purpose of this exercise is to emphasize the importance of flowing while demonstrating that you care enough about their work to spend time typing up a specific response to their flow. This exercise can also be done as an evaluation of speeches that the students write.

Speaking Skills
Delivery Charades (From Chris Joffrion at the National Forensics League)
We often tell students what to do and what not to do during a speech, but this information is more effectively transmitted through acting. In this activity, students use poor delivery techniques in a speech in order to reveal how distracting poor style can be.

• A student volunteer gives a brief impromptu speech, but instead of selecting a quotation or other prompt for the speech, she will draw
a delivery technique from the envelope. The student can give her speech on an acceptable topic (remember this exercise stresses delivery, not content).

- Possible delivery techniques:
  - Speaker grips the podium
  - Speaker paces
  - Speaker rocks back and forth
  - Speaker mumbles
  - Speaker speaks too loudly
  - Speaker does not speak loudly enough
  - Speaker plays with hair
  - Speaker does not make eye contact
  - Speaker looks at back wall
  - Speaker reads entire speech
  - Speaker does not gesture at all
  - Speaker is monotonous
  - Speaker has no enthusiasm or energy
  - Speaker is heavy on vocal fillers like “um”

- The student will speak for 1-2 minutes on her chosen topic, focusing on the delivery technique.
- After each speech, the class identifies the delivery technique performed during the speech.
- Once the class has successfully determined the delivery technique, have them discuss the technique’s impact on the overall effectiveness of the speech.

**The Pen Drill**
Students practice reading while clenching their teeth around a pen or pencil placed horizontally in the mouth. This helps with enunciation and is particularly valuable for students with a tendency to mumble.

**The Reading Backwards Drill**
Students start reading from the end of a piece of evidence instead of the beginning. This trains the brain to read each word individually instead of predicting what will come next based on what has come before. This ensures accurate evidence presentation and trains focus.
The “A” Drill
Students read a piece of evidence but insert the word “a” between each word (inserting “and” works as well). This trains students to focus on each individual word they’re reading, much like the Reading Backwards Drill.

Tongue Twister Speaking Drills
You need several sheets of tongue twisters for this activity. This activity can be done as a replacement for reading drills. Pass out a sheet with several tongue twisters on them to the students. Have two minutes with every student reading. Walk around the room offering feedback to students by saying “clearer” or “keep up the good work.” When everyone is warmed up, hold a timed contest. See who can accurately read a particular tongue twister the fastest.

Possible Impromptu Speech Topics

- The NBA should require each team to have a female player.
- President Obama should conquer Canada.
- Harvard University should admit any student who graduates from a Rhode Island public high school.
- The Providence Place Mall movie theater should give a 50% discount on candy to high school students.
- Bacon is better than eggs.
- Shampoo is better than conditioner.
- Sneakers are better than flip-flops.
- Baseball is a better sport than football.
- Peanut butter is better than Jelly.
- You should not have to see the car to call shotgun.
- The voting age should be lowered to 16.
- School should start at 9:00 am.
- Funny movies are better than action films.
- Honesty is always the best policy.
- Slavery still exists today.
- True love really does exist.
- Violence is a necessary means to settle disputes.
• Police are necessary for safety.
• People should eat meat.
• Girls should be able to play on the boy’s football team.
• Stories with violent content should be banned from school.
• Animals think like humans.
• Books are more fun than video games.
• It is a good idea for radio stations to censor songs.
• Students should always obey authority.
• School should last 12 months a year.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
Rhode Island Urban Debate League (swearercenter.brown.edu/riudl/home)
National Association of Urban Debate Leagues (naudl.org)
National Debate Coaches Association (debatecoaches.org)
National Forensics League (nflonline.org)
Providence Public School District (provideschools.org)
Brown University Swearer Center (swearercenter.brown.edu)
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