



POLICY DEBATE INTRODUCTION

University Interscholastic
League



Getting started in policy debate; an introduction by
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WHAT IS POLICY DEBATE?

- **National, Year-Long Topic:** Policy debaters debate the topic as selected by the National Federation of High Schools.
- **2-Person Teams:** You will have a debate partner; you will debate a two-person team from another school.
- **Affirmative or Negative?:** All policy debate is “switch-sides,” meaning you will be affirmative one round, but negative the next.





WHAT DO WE DEBATE ABOUT?

- **2024-25 Policy Debate Resolution:** “Resolved: The United States federal government should significantly strengthen its protection of domestic intellectual property rights in copyrights, patents, and/or trademarks.”
 - **The Affirmative Case must present a “plan”:** Think of the resolution as a umbrella – the affirmative must present and defend a plan that falls under the resolution.
 - **Yes or No to the Plan?:** The affirmative says “yes” to the plan; the negative says “no.”
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WHAT IS AN AFFIRMATIVE PLAN?

- One or two sentence description of what the affirmative thinks should be done: Patent, Copyright, or Trademark? What particular change do you propose?
- Falls under the resolution: Think of the resolution as an umbrella – the affirmative must present and defend a plan that falls under the resolution.
- Yes or No to the Plan?: The affirmative says “yes” to the plan; the negative says “no.”






WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF A PLAN?

- The United States federal government should increase its protection of patents by Congress passing and the President signing the Patent Eligibility Restoration Act (PERA). The PERA will restore the ability for U.S. firms to file patents for emerging technologies.
 - The U.S. federal government should increase its protection of copyrights by passing the Generative AI Copyright Disclosure Act; this Act will require that companies using generative AI companies identify all copyrighted material used to train their software.
 - The U.S. federal government should increase its protection of trademarks by passing the Shop Safe Act that will make Online platforms legally responsible for counterfeit products sold from their sites.
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THE FORMAT FOR POLICY DEBATE

- **Constructive Speeches**
 - First Affirmative Constructive (1AC): 8 Minutes (Layout the whole Aff position)
 - Cross-Examined by 2NC: 3 Minutes
 - First Negative Constructive (1NC): 8 Minutes (Layout the whole Neg position and answer the Aff position)
 - Cross-Examined by 1AC: 3 Minutes
 - Second Affirmative Constructive (2AC): 8 Minutes
 - Cross-Examined by 1NC: 3 Minutes
 - Second Negative Constructive (2NC): 8 Minutes
 - Cross-Examined by 2AC: 3 Minutes
 - **Rebuttal Speeches**
 - First Negative Rebuttal (1NR): 5 Minutes
 - First Affirmative Rebuttal (1AR): 5 Minutes
 - Second Negative Rebuttal (2NR): 5 Minutes
 - Second Affirmative Rebuttal (2AR): 5 Minutes
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WHAT ARE THE PARTS OF THE AFF CASE?

- **Plan:** This usually comes first in the speech
 - **Harm:** What is wrong now, and why is it significantly harmful? This argument must be supported with direct quotations from authoritative evidence.
 - **Inherency:** What is the defect or defect in the present system that keeps it from resolving the harm (what law, Supreme Court decision, Executive Order, prevailing attitude, etc.)? Needs direct quotations from authoritative evidence.
 - **Solvency:** Why will the plan solve the problem? This too needs to be supported by direct quotations from authoritative evidence.
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WHAT ARE THE PARTS OF THE NEG CASE?

- **Topicality:** Do you wish to argue that the plan is an illegitimate example of the resolution? (optional)
 - **Disadvantage(s):** Do you wish to argue that adopting the affirmative plan would create more harm than good? (optional)
 - **Counterplan:** Do you wish to propose that there is a better way (other than the resolution) to solve the affirmative harm? Note: There must be a good reason why one shouldn't just do both the plan and the counterplan.
 - **Answers to the Case:** Can you provide answers (supported with evidence) to the harm, inherency, and solvency arguments made by the affirmative?
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CONSTRUCTIVE SPEAKER RESPONSIBILITIES

- **1AC:** Present a “Prima Facie” Case:
 - Plan, Harm, Inherency, Solvency
- **1NC:** Present the Negative Attack
 -]The “front-line” of all negative positions (Topicality, Disadvantages, Counterplans) then answer the Case arguments
- **2AC:** Re-Defends Against 1NC
 - Follows 1NC point-by-point (Answer whatever the 1NC wanted to talk about)
- **2NC:** Answer selected parts of the 2AC positions, leaving the rest for 1NR
 - Divide positions with the 1NR (division of labor)






REBUTTAL SPEAKER RESPONSIBILITIES

- No new arguments in rebuttal (new evidence OK)
- 1NR: Answer remaining 2AC arguments
- 1AR: Answer all 2NC & 1NR arguments
- 2NR: Extend winning negative arguments
- 2AR: Answer all remaining negative arguments & claim all affirmative positions that are no longer contested





CROSS EXAMINATION

- The speaker completing the constructive speech remains at the podium for questions
- Both questioner and respondent stand and face the judge
- The questioner controls the cross examination period
- What to ask?
 - Set up arguments for later speeches
 - Use all of your time (it's prep time for your partner)



KEEPING A FLOW SHEET

I. Patent ineligibility for genetic testing undermines innovation.

A. Genetic testing essential to modern medical care

B. The Supreme Court's Myriad decision denies patent filings for genetic tests

C. Myriad decision should be overturned

1. Patent protection is more likely to harm innovation than to promote it.

2. Openness and collaboration best promotes research

Myriad decision has promoted an international norm for openness in genetic research

Overturning Myriad would open the floodgates for patent trolls.

Without patent protection, companies resort to trade secrets; this undermines research

Collaboration is undermined when companies are forced to resort to trade secret protection.

Leading genetic researchers are moving overseas where their work can receive patent protection.

Other protections are in place (Inter Partes Review and the activity of the Patent and Trademark Appeal Board) to prevent patent trolls.





FLOW SHEET TIPS

- Use abbreviations appropriate to the topic (C=Copyright, P=Patent; TM=Trademark, SC=Supreme Court, USPTO=US Patent and Trademark Office)
 - Use symbols for common claims: (up arrow for increasing, down arrow for decreasing, right arrow for “causes” or “results in”, etc.)
 - Establish priorities: 1. Contention labels first priority, 2. Subpoints second priority, 3. Evidence reference third priority (Davis ‘24), 4. Key words of evidence fourth priority.
 - Ask for missed points (in CX or prep time).
 - Use lots of paper (separate sheets for plan arguments and for case arguments; each big argument should have its own sheet).
 - Line up flowsheet paper with debaters’ “road-maps”
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WHAT HAPPENS AT A TOURNAMENT?

- You will receive (either in print or digitally) a schedule showing the team you will debate, the judge you will have, and the room for the debate. You won't know whether you will be affirmative or negative until you see the schedule – if you are affirmative in one round, you will likely be negative in the next.

UIL CX 4A-5A-6A State Tournament 4A Cross-Examination Debate

Round 1 - Friday, 9:00 AM

Judge	Room	Competitors	
1 Kenneth Adcock	BEN 1.102	Midland Greenw WC Lindsey White and Weston Cummings (AFF)	Paris North La GH Sophia Green and Adisyn Hedricks (Neg)
2 Cooper Armstrong	BEN 1.104	El Campo BD Brooke Bacak and Cadence Dornak (AFF)	Livingston RR Braxton Ratliff and Annabel Rasberry (Neg)
1 Philip DiPiazza	BEN 1.106	Orange Little LR Arden Robison and Mikayla Landry (AFF)	Bridgeport MC Andrea Martinez and Brook Case (Neg)
21 Timothy Haynes	BEN 1.108	Godley GI Alejandro Garcia-Robles and Kori Iglehart (AFF)	Smithville PG Evyan Parnell and Arabella Gutierrez (Neg)
3 Terry Hunt	BEN 1.122	Port Lavaca Ca CR Allie Chiu and Mason Rodriguez (AFF)	Salado WS Peyton Whitaker and Adelaide Shenkir (Neg)
2 Brock Hines	BEN 1.124	Glen Rose EG Paisley Evans and Avery Gray (AFF)	Aubrey BW Brody Burton and Jayden Wolsey (Neg)
4 Chris McHatton	BEN 1.126	La Vernia CH Melina Cortinas and Lillian Holm (AFF)	Lampasas CR Marley Champeau and Phoebe Rounds (Neg)
2 Seth Trevino	CAL 100	La Joya Carter CM Mariana Castillo and Jesus Menchaca (AFF)	Smithville BM Amelia Blaeuer and Will Metcalf (Neg)






POLICY DEBATE VOCABULARY

- **Road Map:** Debaters often pre-list for the judge the order of the arguments in the speech. Example for the 1NC: “I will have a topicality argument, two disadvantages, then the case.”
 - **Prep Time:** In UIL (University Interscholastic League) Policy Debate, each team is typically allowed eight minutes of prep time. This prep time can be used by the team at any point between speeches to prepare responses, strategize, or organize arguments. Teams can divide their prep time however they see fit, using it all at once or spreading it out across multiple breaks between speeches.
 - **T:** Debaters often use this short-hand way of referring to Topicality arguments.
 - **DA or Disad:** Short-hand for Disadvantage.
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POLICY DEBATE VOCABULARY

- **Spread:** Speaking quickly in order to fit more arguments into the limited speech time.
- **Drop:** When a debater does not address or respond to an argument made by the opposing team.
- **Extend:** Continuing to emphasize or elaborate on a point from earlier in the debate.
- **Kritik (K):** A philosophical argument challenging underlying assumptions of the other team's case; this could potentially involve a critique of the language, the value systems, or the broader implications of the other team's case rather than focusing directly on the policy proposal. Some coaches and judges advise against the use of kritik arguments.





POLICY DEBATE VOCABULARY

- **Turn:** An argument that flips an opponent's point to benefit the other side (e.g., an advantage can be turned into a disadvantage).
- **Status Quo:** Debaters use this Latin term to refer to the “present system,” or things as they now are.
- **Line-by-Line:** Going through the flow argument by argument, responding to each point made by the other team.
- **Cross-Apply:** Taking an argument from one part of the debate and applying it to another argument or issue.
- **Off-case:** Arguments made by the Negative that are not directly responding to the Affirmative's case structure (e.g., topicality, disadvantages, or counterplans).






POLICY DEBATE VOCABULARY

- **Disadvantage Terms:**

- **Uniqueness:** An argument showing that the disadvantage will not happen in the present system; therefore, the disadvantage is unique to the passage of the affirmative plan. If the disadvantage will happen in any case, it gives no reason to vote against the affirmative plan.
 - **Link:** An argument showing why the affirmative plan will cause the disadvantage.
 - **Internal Link** – The causal step between the link and the impact.
 - **Impact:** An argument showing the extent of the harm brought about by the disadvantage.
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POLICY DEBATE VOCABULARY

■ Counterplan Terms:

- **Counterplan Text:** Just as the affirmative plan needs to be described in the first affirmative speech, so the counterplan must also be specific.
- **Competitiveness:** An argument showing why it is impossible (called “mutual exclusivity”) or undesirable (called “net benefits”) to do both the plan and the counterplan.
- **Perm:** Short for permutation, a test to see if parts of both the Affirmative plan and the Negative counterplan can work together. If the Affirmative wins a permutation argument, they have shown that the counterplan should be rejected because it fails the “competitiveness” test.





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