



Policy (CX) Debate Intro and Overview

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The Resolution, Aff, and Neg.

A resolution is a proposition which you will affirm or negate.

Affirm: To assert strongly and publicly.

Negate: To nullify; to make ineffective.

This year's resolution is "The United States Federal Government should substantially increase its funding and/or regulation of elementary and/or secondary education in the United States".

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The Format

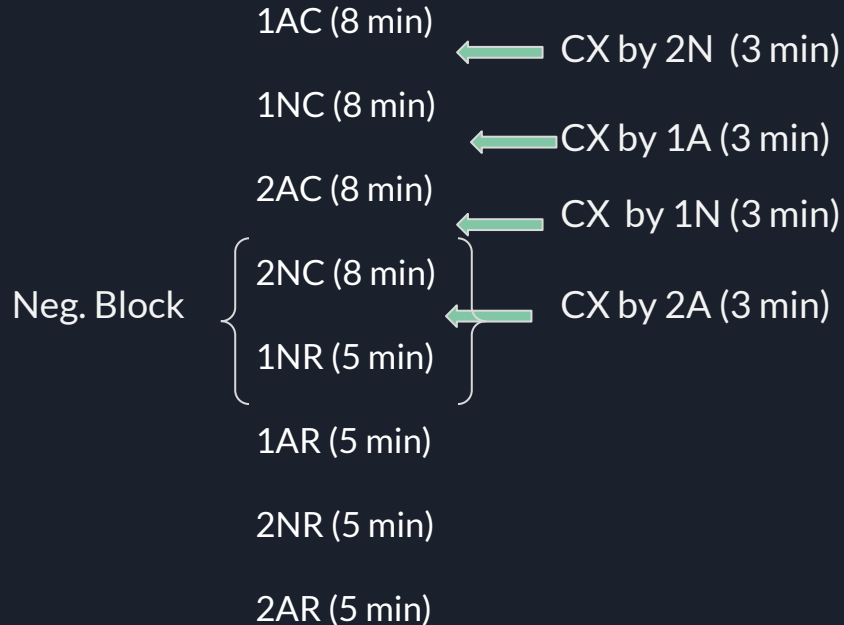
Constructive Speeches: Speakers construct their team's case and refute the attacks of their opponents. There are four constructives, each of which is eight minutes long. They are abbreviated as 1AC, 1NC, 2AC, 2NC.

Cross Examination (CX): After each constructive, a member of the other team will have the opportunity to ask questions of the speaker. This is a perfect time to feel out your opponents for weaknesses and corner them with well worded questions.

Rebuttals: Speakers continue to argue their case and refute the attacks of their opponents. New arguments may not be introduced during the rebuttals, but new cards may be read. There are four rebuttals, each of which is five minutes long. They are abbreviated 1NR, 1AR, 2NR, 2AR.



The Format



Each team has 8 minute of prep time which they can use to organize speeches, write responses to arguments, read over their opponents' arguments, converse with their partner, etc.

Speakers should give an oral outline of their speech before they start timing. This is called an off clock road map.

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The Aff Case (AC)

The Affirmative team has the **burden of proof**. They must prove their points. If, at any level, they fail to provide justification for their case, they will lose.

Stock Issues: Key issues in any policy round. These are the Aff's bread and butter.

- **Significance:** Why are the harms important?
- **Harms:** What bad stuff is happening in the status quo?
- **Inherency:** What barriers are stopping the harms from being solved in the status quo?
- **Topicality:** Does the plan address the resolution as it is worded?
- **Solvency:** How does the plan solve for the harms?

Status Quo: The world as it exists prior to the enactment of the Aff's plan.

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Plan Text

The plan defines policy debate, differentiating it from all other formats. The specific wording used to describe the plan is called the plan text. It is important that the plan text resembles the resolution as closely as possible in order to avoid topicality arguments, which are discussed in a future slide.

Note the similarities between the resolution and plan text in the following example:

- **Resolution:** The United States Federal Government should substantially increase its funding and/or regulation of elementary and/or secondary education in the United States.
- **Plan text:** The United States Department of Education should substantially increase its funding of speech and debate programs in the United States by subsidizing tournament fees for economically disadvantaged students.



Plan Text

The Aff must define an actor, the specific person or agency tasked with carrying out the plan. The USFG won't count. An actor might be congress, the president, the supreme court, or the department of education, as in the previous example.

Some plans have more than one action item involved in their implementation. Each action required to make the plan work is called a Plank.

- The United States Department of Education should substantially increase funding and regulation for speech and debate programs in the United States by subsidizing tournament fees for economically disadvantaged students and adding debate to the Common Core curriculum.

Multi-plank plans give the Neg more offensive ground. Only one plank needs to fall for them to win.

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The Neg Case (NC)

The Neg has the **burden of clash**. They must attack the arguments of the Aff. If they do not cast sufficient doubt on the accuracy of the Aff's description of the status quo, the efficacy of the Aff's plan, or the plan's ability to solve for the harms, the Neg will lose.

The Neg does not have a pre-written case; rather, they have a collection of pre-written arguments and original attacks on the AC. These original attacks are called case arguments. The types of pre-written arguments are as follows:

- Disadvantage (DA or Disad): Arguments focused on disadvantages to enacting the plan.
- Counter Plan (CP): An alternative plan advanced by the Neg.
- Kritik (K): An argument attacking the philosophical assumptions of the AC.
- Theory (T): An argument concerning the rules and interpretations of debate, as well as the roles of debaters and judges.



The Structure of an Argument

Every effective argument will have the following:

- Claim: The thing you are saying.
- Warrant: The reason(s) you are saying it.
- Impact: The bad stuff that happens.

Every impact should be assessed in terms of the following:

- Timeframe: When will it happen?
- Probability: How likely is it?
- Magnitude: How bad will it be?

Arguments can be confined to single cards, or they can be spread out over several cards. The best arguments span multiple cards, have multiple warrants, and/or multiple impacts. There is strength in numbers. Should one warrant be shown to be unfounded, or one impact to be insignificant, the card is compromised but the argument is not.

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Structure of a Card

A card is the smallest component of a case. It is how your opponents and the judge will keep track of the various points that you make. Each card has the following components:

- **Tagline:** This is the basic gist of what the author says in the full text. It gives an idea of what you are about to read and helps people understand how the card links to your other points.
- **Citation:** This is a way for you to refer to the card quickly and efficiently, and to credit the author properly. Academic integrity is critical in debate.
- **Text:** This is what the author actually says. You do not need to read all of it. Highlight and underline the most important portions in order to cut down on what you actually read. Some cards have several pages of text, but you only need to read a single paragraphs worth of sentences to get your point across.

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Extension vs. Expansion

Dropping an argument means that you did not address your opponent's attack on it.

Extension: The act of referencing a previously read argument to avoid dropping it.

- Extend the broad claims of your argument, citing specific cards that warrant the extension. Focus on the impact and what it means for the debate.

Expansion: The act of reading new cards in support of an argument.

- Expand to add detail to an argument. You can add warrants and/or impacts, so long as they apply to a claim you have already made.
- Expand when your opponents have effectively attacked a card you read in support of your argument. The new card will force them to continue addressing the argument.

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Organizing Rebuttals

When it comes to rebuttals, there are two approaches which you may use. You will use both to varying degrees in a single round, but you should ask your judge which he/she prefers in order to better accommodate them.

Overview: Tell the judge what has happened in the round. Summarize the AC and the NC, explain the big issues of the round and why you have won those issues, citing a few key cards for each argument. This approach is good for judges who are less familiar with debate, as it paints a simple picture of the round.

Line By Line (LBL): This is the “they say...”, “we say ...” approach. Give a brief summary of your opponent’s argument before giving a detailed explanation as to why that argument does not work. You want to cover every major argument in the round. Try to fit the minor arguments in too.

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On Defense and Offense

Regardless of which side you are on, it is critical that you play defense as well as offense. Your arguments will fall if you do not spend at least a little bit of time addressing the opposition's attacks on them.


“Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the mouth”. - Mike Tyson

The trick to winning in debate, as in combat sports and chess, is to attack with as much speed and intensity as you can while avoiding attacks by the opposition. Your opponents will clash with your arguments, but you cannot lose sight of the big picture when one of them inevitably falls. Adapt and keep going.

No matter how well things may go, never grow complacent. Your opponents will take advantage.

No matter how badly things may go, never surrender. You can still learn from the experience.

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Glossary of Key Terms

Affirm: To assert strongly and publicly.

Case Argument: An argument directly attacking the specific claims of the other team.


Citation: The part of a card following the tagline, referencing the author, year of publication, and publishing entity. Debaters only read the author and year of publication.

Claim: What an argument says.

Constructive: An eight minute speech in which the case is built.

Counter Plan: A plan advanced by the Neg, that attempts to solve the harms better than the Aff plan.

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Glossary of Key Terms

Cross Examination: A three minute period following a constructive speech in which the speaker is asked questions by his opponent.


Disadvantage: An offensive argument that attempts to link a plan to a set of unintended negative consequences.

Drop: To fail to address an opponent's argument.

Expansion: To add additional warrants and/or impacts to an argument by reading new cards.

Extension: To reference a previously read argument in a speech and explain why it is still valid despite attacks from the opposition, or due to a drop by the opposition.

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Glossary of Key Terms

Harms: The bad stuff in the status quo. Things the plan aims to solve.

Impact: The component of an argument that explains the consequences of a claim being true. Has three components: Timeframe, probability, and magnitude.

Inherency: The barrier in the status quo that prevents the harms from being solved without implementation of the plan.

Kritik: An argument attacking philosophical assumptions of the opposition.

Line By Line: An approach to analyzing the debate during rebuttals that focuses on specific arguments and follows a “they say...”, “we say...” format.

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Glossary of Key Terms

Magnitude: Component of an impact, the size of the population affected by the impact.

Negate: To nullify; to make ineffective.

Off Clock Road Map: An oral outline of a speech.

Overview: An approach to analyzing the debate during rebuttals that focuses on painting a general picture of what has happened during the round for the judge.

Plan Text: The specific wording of the plan.

Plank: An action item in a plan.

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Glossary of Key Terms

Rebuttal: A five minute speech in which new arguments may not be read. Speakers discuss various aspects of the debate and attempt to persuade the judge to accept their arguments.

Resolution: A proposition to be affirmed or negated.


Significance: The reason(s) the harms are important.

Solvency: The reasons the plan is able to solve for the harms.

Status Quo: The world as it exists before the enactment of a plan.

Stock Issues: Key issues in every round of policy debate: Significance, harms, inherency, topicality, and solvency.

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Glossary of Key Terms


Tagline: The component of a card that is read before the citation. Introduces the ideas contained in the text.

Text: The component of a card that contains the specific information needed for an argument to make sense.

Timeframe: Component of an impact, the amount of time before it becomes a problem.

Theory: An argument that focuses on interpretations of debate, competitive equity, and the role of the judge.

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Glossary of Key Terms

Topicality: The ways in which the plan addresses the resolution.

Warrant: The reasons to believe the claim of an argument.

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