



*National Christian Forensics  
and  
Communications Association*

Judging  
Team Policy Debate  
Manual

# Judging A Debate Round

*Thank you for your willingness to judge debate. Your support is greatly appreciated by all the students and parents participating in this tournament, and your feedback provides valuable information that will help each debater improve his or her communication and debate skills. The following pages are designed to equip you to do the best job possible in judging a debate round. If after reading this overview you have any additional questions, the judges coordinator or tournament director would be happy to clarify any issues for you.*

Again, thank you!

## Before You Judge

As a debate judge, you are in control of the debate round. There is no need to feel nervous about judging. The debaters you will be seeing are probably more nervous about speaking. They want to impress you and win your vote. Your job is simply to listen and decide which team is the most persuasive.

### **AS A JUDGE YOU MAY . . .**

- stop a speech that runs significantly overtime.
- eject audience members who interfere with the debaters or are disruptive.
- request to see evidence that has been read by the debaters, if you need clarification.
- stop a round in which the teams have ceased to debate.
- reprimand debaters for grossly abusive conduct.

### **AS A JUDGE YOU SHOULD NOT**

- modify the rules or structure of debate.
- interrupt a speech or stop a round (as long as debaters abide by the rules).
- direct questions or comments to debaters during the round.
- allow debaters to answer a point outside standard speeches and cross-examination.
- reveal your decision in the round to the debaters, their parents, or the audience.

## In the Round

In team debate each team is made up of two debaters. When the teams enter the room, they should give you their team code (i.e., “Team A”), their names, and their speaker positions. You should fill in this information on the appropriate places on your ballot. When you and all the debaters are ready, you should let them know that they can begin the round. It is very important to start the round as close to the scheduled time as possible. Each speech and cross-examination is timed.

## Using Time in the Round

Debate is a strictly timed activity. You should receive (or can request from the tournament director) a sheet showing the time allotted for each speech. If you have a timer in the round, you may ask him or her to tell you the time elapsed after a speech, but this should not be disruptive to the debate.

There are two problems that can arise from the time requirements of formal debate:

### **1. Debaters use too much time**

A speaker should not be allowed to receive an unfair advantage by speaking over the time allotted. A speaker can be allowed to finish his thought or sentence, but should not be allowed to begin new arguments.

### **2. Debaters use too little time**

Depending on the round, less speaker time may be required to address all of the arguments in the debate. However, if a speech is significantly short, and due to its brevity fails to address the major issues in the round, you may deduct speaker points.

## Taking Notes

To help you decide which team to vote for at the end of a debate round, take as many notes as possible during the debate. “Flowing” (or “flow-charting”) is a note-taking method that both debaters and judges find helpful in understanding and following the flow of arguments from speech to speech. This process of note taking allows you to see how each speaker responds to the arguments of the previous speaker. Most debaters and judges use a legal-sized note pad as a flow chart. Keeping the pages attached to the note pad, fold two or three pages in half length-wise, then in quarters, then in eighths. When you unfold the pages, you will have eight columns made by the folds. Each of these columns represents a speech in the round. When you run out of room on the first page, go to the second page, keeping the same order of columns.

## Affirmative Team

The underlying goal of the affirmative team is to uphold the resolution. This simply means that the affirmative will be describing what the resolution means and why the judge should vote in favor of the resolution. In the end, the affirmative team should demonstrate how they have upheld the resolution based on a position of advocacy often called the “case.”

## Negative Team

The role of the negative team is to refute the resolution and/or the affirmative case. The underlying goal of the negative is to demonstrate how the affirmative has not upheld the resolution, and/or why the resolution itself should not be supported.

## The Affirmative Case

Team debate in the NCFCA league uses a policy resolution. This means that the affirmative will most likely be arguing for some change to the current system or “status quo.” There are many different styles of organizing cases. One way the affirmative team may choose to organize their case is by:

- identifying a current problem,
- proposing a plan or solution to that problem, and
- demonstrating advantages to solving the problem.

An affirmative plan should include following four components:

- **Agency:** the entity that will administer the plan (i.e., the government, or an organization).
- **Funding:** the source of funds, if necessary, to carry out the plan and its enforcement.
- **Mandates:** the specific action(s) of the plan that will solve the harms and provide advantages.
- **Enforcement:** the entity that will make sure the mandates of the plan are carried out.

## Policy Stock Issues

The policy stock issues paradigm is a way to evaluate whether the affirmative has upheld the resolution. It is designed to provide a framework to help the judge decide whether the affirmative has justified a change to the current system. These stock issues often become voting issues when identified by either the affirmative or negative. This paradigm is based upon the idea that to demonstrate the need for a change to a policy you should show there is a harm or harms, provide a plan that solves the harm(s), and show benefits to adopting the plan. The following are four policy stock issues and a few of the ways that affirmative and negative teams may attempt to argue them.

### Topicality

*Affirmative:* The affirmative team’s case should be topical. In other words, the affirmative case should correspond with the resolution. The wording of the resolution describes the elements that the affirmative team should uphold. Definitions by the affirmative team further describe the nature and boundaries of the resolution. To uphold the resolution, the affirmative team should demonstrate that they support the resolution as it is defined by their case.

*Negative:* The negative team may refute the resolution as defined by the affirmative case. The negative team also has the prerogative to argue against the affirmative definitions, provided they themselves introduce other definitions and provide reasons to prefer those definitions.

### Inherency

*Affirmative:* The affirmative should show that harms exist in the current system and will not be solved unless action, such as the affirmative plan, is taken.

*Negative:* The negative team has many options when arguing against inherency. They may try to show that there is another cause for the problem outside those cause(s) identified by the affirmative. They may show that the status quo is solving or is about to solve the problem. They could also argue that the harms do not exist.

### **Significance**

*Affirmative:* Significance is one of the ways the affirmative team demonstrates a reason for change. To show significance, the affirmative team usually shows that the current system causes injury to something we value. This can be measured in many ways including, but not limited to, injuries to life, values, property, rights, nature, or society as a whole.

*Negative:* The negative team may argue that any harms that the affirmative team identifies are not significant harms and do not warrant a change in the status quo. They may also argue that the harms identified are beneficial instead of detrimental.

### **Solvency**

*Affirmative:* The affirmative should show that their plan will solve the harm(s) they have identified.

*Negative:* The negative team may argue that the affirmative plan does not solve the harms identified. They may also argue that there are flaws in the plan that are unworkable, or that there is a lack of resources necessary to carry out the plan. Basically, the negative will try to show that the solution provided by the affirmative will not work.

## **Deciding Who Won the Policy Stock Issues**

When deciding who won the round, the policy stock issues may be helpful in determining whether the case provided by the affirmative has upheld the resolution. In the end, your decision should be based upon the foundational idea of whether you believe the affirmative has upheld the resolution. For most policy resolutions this means you are going to decide whether a change should occur to the current system or status quo. The policy stock issues serve as a tool to determine whether several burdens that correlate to the principle of harm-plan-benefits have been met. Based on the wording in the resolution, the affirmative usually has the resolitional burden of proof to demonstrate that a change is needed in the status quo. If you decide, based on the arguments in the round, that a change is not needed, then you may choose to side with the negative.

## **Debate Protocol**

### **Fiat Power**

In order to allow the affirmative team to create a plan for a new policy, it is assumed for the purposes of the debate round that the affirmative's plan would be enacted by the agency identified in the plan. This is called “fiat power.” Fiat usually extends to actions of a legislative or decision-making nature made by entities such as the government and other organizations. Fiat does not have to extend to allow for inappropriate agencies to take actions outside of their jurisdiction.

## **Prima Facie**

“Prima facie” is Latin for “on its face.” In the debate round, the first affirmative speaker must present a “prima facie” 1AC. By the end of the first affirmative speech, the case provided should reasonably affirm the resolution. If there are significant portions of the case missing, then, based on the arguments in the round, the judge may vote against the affirmative team and in favor of the negative.

## **Negative Division of Labor**

The 1NC speaker must at least generally address each part of the affirmative case. The negative block – 2NC and 1NR (back to back negative speeches) – may be treated as one speech by the negative team. In other words, they may address different issues in each of these speeches.

## **Rebuttal Arguments**

Rebuttal speeches are designed to clarify the important arguments in the round. They should focus on issues proposed during the constructive speeches. Major arguments that are significant to the round are often called “voting issues.” This simply means each debater is going to pick out several arguments that he feels are the most persuasive reasons for voting for his side. In rebuttals, completely new lines of argumentation that have not been addressed in constructive speeches should not be proposed. The judge is encouraged to disregard new lines of argumentation presented in the rebuttals.

## **Evaluating Evidence**

Debaters may cite evidence from many sources including magazines, newspapers, journals, and books to support their arguments in the debate round. Look for the following qualities when you are evaluating evidence:

- credibility
- timeliness
- continuity with the argument
- peer review

Sometimes a team may say that they have evidence to prove their point and then quote information that does not apply. Sometimes a team may misquote a piece of evidence to make it say something it did not say. In the very rare case of evidence that is fabricated or falsified, bring the evidence to the tournament director for review.

The debaters may ask to review pieces of evidence read by the opposing team in the round. It is expected that if a piece of evidence is requested in cross-examination it will be produced for review by the opposing team during prep time. A common practice is for the negative to request the entire 1AC after it is delivered.

## **Cross-Examination**

A cross-examination period follows each constructive speech. Debaters should be confident and persistent but should not become hostile or rude during the cross-examination. It is up to you to determine the line between persistence and hostility. You should deduct speaker points if you think that a debater is being rude.

## **Deciding Who Won**

At the end of the debate round, you will have to decide who has won the round. In making this decision it may be helpful to ask yourself the following questions. It may be that the answer to some of these questions is “no.” That does not mean either the affirmative or negative should lose the round. Instead, these questions are helpful in determining the general direction of the debate and who you think has persuaded you in the round. Also remember that each of these questions is based on the arguments and refutation in the round. You must analyze whether the team has successfully overcome the refutation to their arguments in the round.

### **Affirmative Questions**

Has the affirmative persuaded you to vote in favor of the resolution?

Does the affirmative present a case that corresponds with the resolution? (topicality)

Does the affirmative identify a harm in the status quo that will not be changed without the plan? (inherency)

Does the affirmative demonstrate the harm in the status quo is significant? (significance)

Has the affirmative proposed a plan to solve the harm(s)? (solvency)

### **Negative Questions**

Has the negative persuaded you to vote against the resolution and/or the affirmative case?

Has the negative persuaded you that the harm(s) are not inherent in the current system?

Has the negative shown that the harm(s) identified by the affirmative are not significant?

Has the negative persuaded you that the plan is not workable and/or does not have advantages?

Has the negative provided disadvantages that outweigh the affirmative advantages?

Has the negative proposed a counterplan that solves the harms and provides an additional benefit?

### **Your decision in the round SHOULD be based on:**

- arguments raised in speeches and cross-examination.
- valid evidence cited during the round.
- conduct of debaters.
- [very rarely] verification of crucial matters of fact or evidence.

**The basis for decision should NOT include:**

- opinions held by the judge but not mentioned by the debaters.
- conversation with any persons (such as parents) during or after the debate round.
- arguments or explanations obtained from debaters after the round.
- material conveyed by media other than speech (i.e., visual aids).
- audience response, whether verbal or non-verbal.
- consideration for younger or less-experienced teams.

The judge is responsible for taking any steps necessary to ensure that the decision will be unaffected by such inappropriate factors.

**Filling Out the Ballot**

On the ballot, you will record which team won the round, the reasons why you voted for that team, and any constructive comments you have for each of the debaters in the round. The ballots are then taken to the tabulation room to record the results of each round. After the tournament, every team receives a copy of each ballot to see why they won or lost and to learn from the judges' critiques. You should not tell the teams for whom you voted during the tournament.