Policy Debate: An Introduction for Urban Debate League Students and Coaches

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Introduction

You already know how to argue. Everyone does. We all learn at a very young age that we cannot have everything that we want, and that other people do not always agree with us or see things the way that we do. There are two ways to resolve these disagreements: through coercion and force, which can convince people to do something they do not want to do, or through reason and persuasion, which can convince people that they actually do want to do something they did not think they wanted to do.

Debate is the art of persuasion, the way in which people convince other people to change their minds about something or to form an opinion on an issue about which they previously had no knowledge. Those who are skilled at debating know how to develop an informed opinion, how to present that opinion to others, and how to defend that opinion against those who disagree. They have a powerful sense of their own voice and how to use it. They command attention and get their way, not because others fear them, but because others respect them. When they speak, others listen.

If this doesn't sound like you, don't worry. If you were already an expert debater, you would not need this book. If this sounds like someone you would like to be (or, if you are a teacher, someone you would like your students to become), then this book is for you.

This book is intended to introduce policy debate to the students and teachers who need it most: those who live and work in urban communities where their thoughts, feelings, and opinions are rarely solicited or acknowledged. For over a decade now, Urban Debate Leagues (UDL's) have been bringing this potent tool for self-empowerment and self-improvement to schools serving primarily ethnic and racial minorities, students from low-income families, and others who are too often ignored by those in the United States who wield social and political power. Armed with the confidence to speak up for themselves and the ability to make others listen, urban debaters have become powerful advocates for themselves and their communities.

Why Debate?

We have already said that everyone knows how to argue. Not everyone takes the time to think about what exactly she is doing or how she might become better at it, though. Policy debate provides a language and a structure for formalizing the arguing that people do all the time. As students become better at debating, they learn more about how to express their opinions in ways that others find persuasive, and they become more successful in the everyday disagreements that they have with friends, parents, teachers, etc. Sound, reasoned argumentation comes naturally to them.

They also become better students. Their grades improve and they have an easier time making sense of the things they learn in school. Once they have learned not only to read

but to find fault with or re-state in their own words the arguments made by journalists, academics, and politicians, assigned reading for school is a breeze.

Debaters find college opportunities that they never imagined they would. They are attractive candidates for admission to the top colleges and universities in the world, not only because their grades have improved, but because they have the reading, writing, organizational, and critical thinking skills that are crucial to success in college.

And admissions officers know it: many report that debate is the number one extracurricular activity they look for, both when making decisions about whom to accept and when awarding scholarships. In addition to the many academic scholarships for which they become excellent candidates, urban debaters also find themselves among the students most heavily recruited by top college debate teams, many of whom offer substantial scholarships.

Above all, though, debate is great fun. Students build lasting friendships with both their teammates and their competitors and often develop very close relationships with their coaches, as well. They enjoy coming together with students just like themselves who long for the chance to test their ideas against the best arguments their opponents can throw at them and who dream of Final Round judges announcing a unanimous victory in their favor as their team explodes in celebration.

Urban Debate Leagues

The activity of competitive academic debate has been around for decades, and those fortunate enough to have had the opportunity to participate in it have benefited immensely. At least five former presidents were members of their high school or college debate team: Woodrow Wilson, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, and Bill Clinton (not to mention recent presidential hopeful John Kerry, who was the president of Yale's debate society).

Although many of these men may have been destined for greatness anyway as a result of both personal characteristics and historical circumstances, it is not a coincidence that so many of those who go on to become members of the political and cultural elite have experience with academic debate. Unfortunately, it is also not a coincidence that so many of those who have used debate as a springboard to greatness were students at Ivy League universities and private secondary schools with tuitions that rival those of the most expensive colleges. For the majority of its history, academic debate has served primarily private schools and their most well funded public counterparts, located almost universally in wealthy suburbs.

There are a number of potential causes for this phenomenon: the cost of specialized training for students and teachers, texts and materials, research opportunities, and travel are high; stereotypes about the interests and abilities of urban students have led many to assume that debate could never take hold at their schools; and a history of discrimination

and exclusion have left debate communities with few role models for females, students from low-income families, and members of ethnic and racial minority groups. The result is that for several generations, academic debate has provided advantages to suburban and private school youth while countless thousands of equally deserving and talented but less privileged students at urban public schools have been left behind.

The Urban Debate League movement has begun to change all that. Confronted by an activity whose very structure seemed to exclude urban schools, those who wished to extend the benefits of academic debate to under-privileged students were forced to rebuild the game from the ground-up. They minimized the expenses of transportation and housing by creating indigenous leagues where students could compete without ever leaving their city. They overcame a lack of veteran debaters who understood the needs and experiences of urban students by developing training programs that turned urban education professionals into debate coaches. They raised money for students to attend summer institutes with the best debate coaches in the country. And while they were at it, the changed the face of academic debate forever.

What began as a small group of committed individuals working in the nation's largest cities has burgeoned into a rapidly expanding network of urban educators excited about the opportunities that debate offers to the students with whom they interact on a daily basis.

The National Association for Urban Debate Leagues exists to increase the number of urban youth who have access to competitive and academic debate programs nationwide. The NAUDL works to support the sustainability and qualitative development of Urban Debate Leagues within the framework of four Organizing Principles: to use debate as a mechanism for urban education improvement, to promote equal access and opportunity to participate in debate, to institutionalize competitive academic debate programs, and to support and professionalize urban high school teacher-coaches.

The Purpose of This Book

This book is a comprehensive introduction to the activity of competitive policy debate written especially for students and coaches in Urban Debate Leagues. It draws on a range of best practices culled from the experiences of numerous administrators, teachers, coaches, judges, and debaters in various UDL's from around the country. We hope that this compilation will serve to advance all four of the NAUDL's Organizing Principles:

Using Debate as a Mechanism for Education Reform. The excitement and student-centered nature of competitive debate drives many young people to read, research, and take an active interest in the world around them in ways that no other educational tool can. Debate can be overwhelming, however, without adequate training and support. This manual will help both students and teachers grasp the fundamentals of policy debate and overcome this first and highest hurdle to reaping the rewards of participation in competitive debate.

Promoting Equal Access and Opportunity in Debate. In some circles, debate has evolved into an activity where not only competitive success but even meaningful participation may require a large travel budget, thousands of dollars in tuition for summer institutes, a cadre of assistant coaches, and subscription to expensive research services. Students and schools from low-income communities, among whom racial and ethnic minorities are over represented, are *de facto* excluded from such communities.

UDL's lower the barriers to participation in academic debate by making resources available to urban schools in new ways. Rather than having to rely exclusively on costly (though valuable) university debate institutes for training in debate, UDL students can access the collective learning of many of the nation's top debate coaches for free in this manual, which not only passes along this knowledge but condenses it and presents it in ways that make it relevant and accessible.

Institutionalizing Competitive Debate Leagues. Urban Debate League's are the locus of the Urban Debate Network. While this movement encompasses non-competitive aspects such as the integration of debate methods into curricula and the use of public forums to empower student voices and drive social change, tournament debating remains at the heart of this education reform movement. The fun and excitement of gathering for healthy competition with peers drives students and coaches alike to improve their skills. Plus, the communities that form around competitive leagues create a forum for sharing ideas and generating fresh interest in debate.

Our intention is for this manual to help raise the bar for all levels of competition within UDL's by increasing the level of debate knowledge that students, judges, and coaches possess. It is not only a How-To book but also an exploration of the theory and logic that underlie familiar arguments. Armed with the knowledge that this book contains, UDL debaters and coaches will take their study of debate to new levels of rigor and sophistication.

Supporting and Professionalizing Teachers. Rather than drawing from a smaller (if expert) pool of veteran policy debaters, who may or may not have a particular aptitude for teaching debate in urban public schools, UDL's mostly draw on established teachers to serve as coaches. These teachers possess a wealth of knowledge about how to manage a classroom and meet the needs of urban students but often lack formal debate experience of their own. This manual provides an accessible introduction to the activity so that they can easily combine the knowledge presented here with their own methodological experience in the classroom.

Relationship to Existing Materials

Teachers who have been coaching debate for several years may already have favorite textbooks and resources. Students may have received such materials from their coach, an administrator in their league, or a summer institute they attended. There are a number of

very good debate textbooks in existence, and there are considerable benefits to be derived from using materials with which students and teachers are already familiar.

Debate is a constantly evolving activity, however, and textbooks can easily become dated. Teachers and students currently using resources that are more than a few years old may find this manual to be a valuable supplement that brings them up to date on recent trends in argumentation and advocacy.

The larger advantage of this manual is that it is the first comprehensive introduction to debate written by and for members of the Urban Debate Network. In many cases, Urban Debate Leagues do much more than expose new groups of students to existing debate practices in other college and high school communities. Instead, they adapt these techniques to the interests and needs of urban communities.

One of the most revolutionary changes UDL's have brought about is the introduction of a vast number of fresh perspectives on the activity. Prior to the birth of the UDL movement, a high school debate coach was as likely to be a college debater as a professional teacher. This tendency created a very insular community that too frequently valued competition and sophistication over education and inclusiveness. Necessity forced UDL's to make debate coaches out of hundreds of urban educators who had no experience of their own with the activity. Their ability to look on the activity with new eyes has led UDL's to develop a number of practices that reflect their commitment to the educational value of debate.

This is a process that each UDL has undertaken separately, leading to a considerable amount of variety in how things are done from league to league. Although this manual cannot possibly reflect every nuance of every debate community, it nonetheless aims to provide an introduction to debate that will be more relevant to the activity teachers and students will encounter in their UDL than that presented by any existing textbook.

The NAUDL has already produced publications designed to assist teachers in teaching debate and coaches in coaching debate. In both instances, however, these manuals presume that the teacher or coach already knows enough about debate to teach it. This manual will aid teachers and coaches of all ability levels in reaching a more thorough understanding of the material they are sharing with their students. Educators will be able to use this manual, for instance, to increase their understanding of what exactly a counterplan is, while other NAUDL manuals will assist them in imparting this information to their students and helping debaters improve their ability to argue counterplans.

How to Use This Book

This book is intended as a comprehensive introduction to participating in an urban debate league. Because it is an introduction, it is ideal for those who are interested in coaching or

debating but know nothing about the activity. Because it is comprehensive, it will continue to be of assistance for years to come.

There is only so much that a book can do, however. Debate is an activity that is learned through participation. That is, debaters must go out and debate, coaches must go out and coach, if they want to learn the game. Because debating is the best way to learn about debate, beginning debaters should read only as much of this book as is necessary to make them feel comfortable at their first competition. Some will want to read it cover to cover. Others would rather try their hand at debating before they read anything at all. These are both valid approaches- no minimum amount of knowledge is required to start debating.

It is not necessary for users of this manual to read it straight through from beginning to end. There are advantages to doing so, because later chapters do assume some knowledge introduced in earlier chapters, but it is far from essential. This book is designed to make it as simple as possible for students to read only the sections most relevant to them. Should they skip to a later chapter and encounter an unfamiliar word or concept, we have tried to make it as easy as possible for them to get up to speed quickly.

The first time that any specialized debate vocabulary is introduced, it is in bold and followed by a definition. Once a term has been introduced, it is used normally in future paragraphs, so that its meaning can be further grasped through context.

Getting up to speed on concepts that have previously been introduced is nearly as simple. The Table of Contents provides page numbers for chapters, headings, and sub-headings, so it is easy to find the section where a certain concept is introduced and explained.

Beginning debaters looking for a broad introduction to debate should begin at Chapter Two, which explains the rules of the activity and the ideas behind it. Chapters Three, Four, and Five detail the most basic arguments used by the Affirmative and Negative teams during a debate, and are good follow-up material to Chapter Two.

Those who fear being overwhelmed can hold off on the remaining chapters until they have competed in a few actual debates. The entire book is written with the beginning debater in mind, however, and these later chapters still have much to offer the ambitious.

The only material that is not specifically designed for beginning debaters appears in boxes clearly labeled "Taking It To The Next Level". These are concepts to which students can return once they are ready for a deeper understanding of debate.

Experienced debaters will benefit the most from the "Taking It To The Next Level" material, but the entire book is designed for them, as well. Boxes labeled "Tricks of the Trade", for example, contain advice from which even beginners will benefit. Though simple to understand, this material is often difficult to master, and experienced students in need of improvement in any area of debate will find plenty of advice to help them understand a certain concept more deeply and improve their ability to use it.

In short, this manual should be of great value to anyone in an Urban Debate League, regardless of his or her level of experience.

Acknowledgements

Policy Debate Basics

An Overview of Policy Debate

There are many different kinds of competitive debate that differ from each other with regard to style, content, and format. The specific activity practiced by most Urban Debate Leagues and promoted by the National Association for Urban Debate Leagues is called **policy debate**, or, in some circles, **cross-examination debate** (even though cross-examination is a feature of nearly all forms of debate).

The distinctive thing about policy debate is that it focuses on policy. Each year, a broad **resolution** makes a claim with which debaters across the country will both agree and disagree many times in the course of a season. An example of a resolution is "Resolved: That the United States federal government should establish an education policy substantially increasing academic achievement in secondary schools in the United States."

Schools organize their debate squads into multiple teams of two debaters and bring them to tournaments to compete with teams from other schools. Tournaments may begin and end in a single day or stretch into extended weekend affairs. Generally, teams debate anywhere from three to eight preliminary rounds in which they are paired against other teams based on their performance and alternate between being **Affirmative** (in favor of the resolution; often abbreviated **Aff**) and **Negative** (opposed to the resolution; often abbreviated **Neg**).

The Affirmative team speaks first and proposes a specific policy change, known as the **plan**, which fits within the confines of the resolution. The Negative then attempts to dismantle the Affirmative's justification for their plan and prove that the drawbacks of the plan outweigh its benefits. In other words, the teams spend most of their time debating the Affirmative team's specific plan, not the resolution as a whole. The Affirmative argues that their proposal should be adopted, the Negative argues that it should not, and the judges tries to sort it all out.

Each debater delivers an eight-minute **constructive** speech, during which new arguments may be presented, and a five-minute **rebuttal**, in which she evaluates and compares the arguments presented by each team. After the round, the judge renders a decision and critiques the performance of the debaters, either orally or in writing. In addition to choosing a winner for the round, the judge awards **speaker points** to each debater, evaluating her individual performance on a scale of 0-30, and ranks the four debaters from best to worst.

In most tournaments, a set number of teams with the best records advance to elimination rounds. These teams are arranged in a single elimination bracket, with the team with the best record paired against the team with the worst record, similar to the NCAA basketball

tournament. Teams continue to advance until they lose a round, at which point they are eliminated. The last debaters standing are declared the champions. As these elimination rounds involve only a fraction of the competitors at the tournament and frequently run late into the night, most tournaments hold an awards ceremony before all of the elimination rounds are over to acknowledge top-performing teams and individual speakers.

Speeches

There are two types of speeches in a debate round: constructives and rebuttals. The first four speeches in a round are the constructives. They are eight minutes in length and intended for each team to introduce their basic strategy and arguments for the round. Each debater gives one constructive speech. New arguments are allowed only during constructive speeches, so between them, the debaters on each team must make every argument that they will need for the entire round during their two constructive speeches.

Each constructive speech is followed by a three-minute **cross-examination** period. During cross-examination, an opponent questions the debater who has just spoken about the arguments she made during her speech. Generally, the questioner will be the member of the other team who is *not* about to give her own speech. While the questioner conducts her cross-examination, her partner gets to use that time to prepare her next speech.

If the league and the judge allow **open cross-examination**, then both members of the questioner's team may ask questions and both members of the speaker's team may answer them. Even when this is allowed, however, debaters should take advantage of it sparingly. The questioner's partner should be focusing most of her attention on preparing her speech, and the speaker will look bad if her partner answers all of the questions for her. Partners should involve themselves in cross-examination only to ask questions that are of the utmost importance or to help out a speaker who is genuinely stumped.

After all of the constructive speeches and cross-examination periods are finished, each debater gives a five-minute rebuttal speech. Debaters may not make new arguments during rebuttals. Instead, they should explain and compare arguments that have already been introduced during constructive speeches. There is no cross-examination after rebuttal speeches.

In a debate, the order of speeches is as follows:

First Affirmative Constructive (**1AC**) - 8 minutes
Cross-Examination (**C/X** or **Cross-Ex**)- 3 minutes
First Negative Constructive (**1NC**) - 8 minutes
Cross-Examination- 3 minutes
Second Affirmative Constructive (**2AC**)- 8 minutes
Cross-Examination- 3 minutes

Second Negative Constructive (**2NC**)- 8 minutes
Cross-Examination- 3 minutes
First Negative Rebuttal (**1NR**)- 5 minutes
First Affirmative Rebuttal (**1AR**)- 5 minutes
Second Negative Rebuttal (**2NR**)- 5 minutes
Second Affirmative Rebuttal (**2AR**)- 5 minutes

Each team is also given some amount of **preparation time** (also known as **prep time** or just **prep**), generally 5-10 minutes, which they may use before any of their speeches. The exact amount of time varies by league and by tournament. During preparation time, debaters may whisper with their teammates and make notes for their upcoming speeches.

Example: At a tournament where debaters are allowed eight minutes of preparation time, the Affirmative team might use none for the 1AC, one minute for the 2AC, and three minutes for the 1AR. This would leave the last speaker with four minutes to prepare her 2AR.

The Rules of Policy Debate

Speeches. Each debater gives one constructive and one rebuttal speech. These speeches may not be longer than eight and five minutes, respectively. Almost always, the debater who gave the 1AC also delivers the 1AR, the one who gave the 2NC also delivers the 2NR, etc. Teams can and occasionally do change this arrangement, though it is not generally advisable. Most leagues do not *require* teams to give every speech, allowing them to waive any given speech without conceding the round. Still, it is usually advisable for teams to give every speech and try to use all of their speaking time, even if they are not certain of what to say. Sometimes, a debater will say the right thing without even trying.

Partners. League policies vary with regard to whether a debater may compete without a partner ('go **maverick**', in debate jargon). Some disallow it completely, others allow mavericks to compete in preliminary rounds but not in elimination rounds, and still others limit each school to one maverick entry. There are many benefits to competing with a partner. Maverick entries caused by a partner's last-minute cancellation are one thing, but students (and their coaches) should think long and hard before voluntarily competing maverick.

Outside Assistance. The debaters can receive no outside assistance during the round. At the judge's discretion, anyone may be allowed to watch a round, but these audience members may not interact with the debaters in any way. The judge, too, is not to give comments during the round or provide any 'coaching' to either team, even if she believes she is doing so in an equitable manner. Policies vary from league to league concerning the use of technology such as laptop computers, but debaters are always prohibited from accessing information on the internet during a round.

Evidence. Debaters are generally expected to support their arguments with evidence. This usually comes in the form of quotations from books, newspapers, magazines, academic journals, law reviews, or websites. Though debaters are not required to read every word of a quote, they must have the full text on hand. They must also have available a bibliographic citation for the quote, including the author's name and qualifications and the date and place of publication. Leagues and tournaments vary with regard to how much of the citation must be read in a speech, but the bare minimum is the author's last name and the date of publication. Under no circumstances may evidence be falsified or presented in a way that distorts the intent of the author.

The Winning Team. Simply put, the team that the judge votes for wins the round. Except for having to adhere to the few rules presented here, the judge has complete discretion over which team prevails. This book will discuss a number of ways in which debaters may attempt to persuade judges to vote for them, but it is important to understand that these are only suggestions, conventions, and all around good ideas. They are *not* hard and fast rules, and if debaters want judges to vote for them based on any given argument, they are advised to explain why that argument should be the basis for the judge's decision rather than assume that she will treat it that way.

Speaker Points. In addition to deciding which team wins the round, the judge also assigns speaker points to each individual debater. Speaker points reflect the speaking skills that an individual debater demonstrated during the round and are technically given on a scale of 0-30, although in many leagues only the higher end of the scale is actually used. Some tournaments allow judges to give **low-point wins**, where a team wins the round but receives fewer speaker points than their opponents. Tournaments give awards to debaters who received the most speaker points and also use speaker points as tiebreakers when determining which teams will advance to elimination rounds.

Rank. Finally, judges rank the debaters in a round from one to four, with the debater who spoke the best receiving a one, second best receiving a two, etc. Ranks are used only as tiebreakers.

Other. Some leagues create additional rules of their own. As league policy always supersedes anything that appears in this book, debaters should check with their coaches and teachers should check with league administrators about any 'house rules' that their league may enforce.

Taking It To the Next Level

Everything is Debatable

In policy debate, nearly everything, even the rules themselves, are debatable. In other words, teams frequently debate not only whether a violation of the rules has occurred but

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whether the judge should care that a violation has occurred. This is something very distinctive about debate. Professional athletes and their coaches are notorious for arguing with umpires and referees about, for instance, whether a player stepped out of bounds. It is unheard of, however, for a player to argue that even if she did step out of bounds, her team should not be penalized. In debate, this is sometimes possible.

Debating about the rules of debate may seem like a strange practice, but it has a purpose. When even the rules themselves are up for debate, students must develop a skill called *critical reflexivity*. Critical reflexivity is the ability to think about and understand why something is the way that it is. So, debaters are forced to think long and hard about the activity in which they are engaged in order to generate reasons why something should be a rule in the first place and why it should apply in a particular situation.

In the end, a competitive debate round is about two teams trying to convince the judge to vote for them, and this philosophy extends to most of the rules as well. It is generally the responsibility of the debaters to convince the judge that a certain guideline should or should not be applied in a particular situation.

The Logic of Policy Debate

Debate is a communication-based activity. However, some people wrongly assume that this means it is about flowery rhetoric and witty retorts. In actuality, policy debate often emphasizes *what* is being said rather than *how* it is being said. Good presentation affects how the judge receives the content of a speech, but the team with better arguments usually triumphs over the team that gives prettier speeches.

At very advanced levels, policy debates can become quite audience *un*friendly, requiring the judge to pay close attention and take detailed notes on complex arguments delivered at a rapid-fire pace. In truth, while communication skills are important, logical analysis is probably the predominant skill tested by policy debate.

Good debating requires understanding the logical structure of policy debate. It may be helpful to think about a debate round in terms of **claims** and **warrants**. A claim is a statement that might be either true or false, for example, "The weather will not be very nice today."

A warrant is a justification for a claim. For example, "It will likely rain," is a warrant for the claim, "The weather will not be very nice today." Notice that a warrant is also a claim for which further warrants could be given. "A low-pressure system is headed this way," is a warrant for the claim, "It will likely rain."

In terms of claims and warrants, the Affirmative team's arguments during the round usually look something like this:

Claim: The Affirmative team should win this round.
Warrant: The resolution should be affirmed.

Claim: The resolution should be affirmed
Warrant: The plan, which is an example of the resolution, is a good idea.

Claim: The plan is a good idea.
Warrant: The plan has a number of benefits.

And the Negative team's arguments usually look something like this:

Claim: The Negative team should win this round.
Warrant: The Affirmative team has not proven that the resolution should be affirmed.

Claim: The Affirmative team has not proven that the resolution should be affirmed.
Warrant: The plan, which is their example of the resolution, is not a good idea.

Claim: The plan is not a good idea.
Warrant: The plan causes problems that outweigh the benefits.

Note that the Affirmative team has the burden of proof. It is their responsibility to demonstrate that the resolution should be affirmed. It would be impossible for the Negative to attack every example of the resolution. Instead, they must only attack the example that the Affirmative chooses to defend. If they can win that that example is not a good idea, then the Affirmative has not met their burden of proof and the Negative wins the round.

The Negative team is generally taken to have **presumption** in a debate round. That means that the judge will vote Negative unless the Affirmative convinces her not to do so.

The Strategy of Policy Debate

Debate is all about competing claims. The central goal of policy debaters is to convince the judge to accept their claims rather than those of their opponents. This can be achieved in one of three ways: by making deeper argumentation than one's opponents, by making broader argumentation than one's opponents, or by *sounding* as though one is making more credible claims than one's opponents (even if this is not the case!). The first two methods are discussed here. The third, using persuasive speaking techniques, is thoroughly addressed in the following chapter.

Deep Argumentation (Clash)

Debaters must compare their claims to those of their opponents by providing warrants for their own claims and by attacking the warrants that their opponents offer for competing claims. Because the judge is not supposed to base her decision on her own opinions about the issues at hand but rather on the way in which the debaters argue them, she will generally accept as true an argument which is not refuted, even if she does not agree with it. It is not her place to make those judgments.

Rather, it is the responsibility of the debaters to **refute** their opponent's arguments. To refute an argument is to demonstrate why that argument should not be accepted. Refuting an argument is not the same as responding to it. "No it will not," is a response to the claim, "It will likely rain," but it is not a refutation. Refuting an argument requires attacking its warrants.

Since every warrant is also a claim, the way to attack a warrant is to attack *its* warrants. As debaters get deeper into an argument, they may be comparing warrants for warrants for warrants for warrants. The team that reaches the deepest level of analysis is at a competitive advantage. Consider the following example:

Affirmative Claim: The weather will not be very nice today.
Warrant: It will likely rain.
Warrant: A low-pressure system is headed this way.
Warrant: This morning, TV meteorologist Clara Skies reported that a low-pressure system is headed this way.

Negative Claim: The weather will be very nice today.
Warrant: It is not likely to rain.
Warrant: A low-pressure system is not headed this way.
Warrant: Clara Skies is consistently dead wrong in her forecasts. If she says it is going to rain, it is time to plan a trip to the beach.
Warrant: The last twenty times that Clara Skies predicted rain, there was not a cloud in the sky.

Here, the Negative team has reached a deeper level of analysis than the Affirmative, having provided four levels of warrants rather than three. If this were the end of the debate, the Negative would most likely win. If the Affirmative were to get a chance to respond, they would need to refute the Negative's most recent warrant by defending the credibility of their expert, TV meteorologist Clara Skies.

This example reflects an important debate concept known as **clash**. Clash means that both teams are making arguments of their own *and* refuting the arguments made by their opponents. When teams argue back and forth on a single point, they are *clashing* on that point.

Judges sometimes compare debates without clash to two ships passing in the night. On a dark night in the middle of the ocean, two ships could pass relatively near each other

without either ever being aware that the other was so close. When debaters do not directly respond to the arguments of their opponents, it sometimes seems as though they are not even aware that there is another team in the round.

Debate and Football

Learning to clash with an opponent's arguments can be difficult, but it is an important skill to master. Imagine a football game in which one team made every effort to score when they had possession of the ball but never tried to tackle runners, sack the quarterback, or intercept passes when their opponents had possession. They might score a few points of their own, but their opponents would probably score considerably more.

The same is true in debate. No matter how well debaters explain their own arguments, they will have difficulty winning debates if they do not also respond to their opponents' arguments. Even if they manage to win a few of their own claims, their opponents will win considerably more, since their claims are going uncontested.

Debates without clash also tend to be boring for judges. Football would not be a very popular sport if neither team played defense when their opponents had possession. Teams would just take turns running the ball down the field until time expired. The same thing happens in debates without clash. One team stands up, makes eight minutes worth of arguments, and sits down. Then the other team stands up, makes eight minutes of completely unrelated arguments, and sits down. They go back and forth like this until the round is over. Meanwhile, the judge is left wondering how she will ever make a decision.

There is a four-step model that debaters can follow to clash successfully with their opponents' arguments:

1. **Signpost.** The purpose of a road sign such as "Welcome to Maryland!" is to inform motorists of their location. Debaters use similar techniques to inform their judges of where an argument fits into the round as a whole. This practice is called **signposting**. When a debater is going to refute one of her opponents' arguments, she should always signpost the argument for the judge first so that the judge will know what she is talking about. This means giving the letter and number of the argument as well as a brief summary. Remember to keep the summary *very* brief so as not to do the other team's work for them.

2. **Claim**. State the claim that clashes with the other team's claim. For example, if the other team claimed that it will likely rain, a valid response would be, "It will not likely rain." Keep claims short and to the point, and number them if there is more than one.

3. **Warrant**. Give one or more warrants that support the claim. This could involve reading evidence, making an analytical argument, or referring to a claim made elsewhere in the debate.

4. **Impact**. Explain why it is important to win this argument. For example, if rain is not likely, then the Affirmative has not proved that the weather will not be very nice today. If a debater doesn't know why it is important that she win a particular argument, then perhaps she should not be making that argument!

Box: Debate and Battleship

Those who are familiar with the board game *Battleship* know that players place small plastic ships on a grid that their opponent cannot see. They take turns 'firing' at each other's fleets by trying to guess the coordinates of their opponent's ships. For example, on her turn, a player would announce, "B3", and then her opponent would tell her whether there is a ship at that location, and hence whether her shot was a hit or a miss.

In debate, as in *Battleship*, players are trying to 'hit', or clash with, their opponents' arguments directly. If the Affirmative argues that, "School uniforms will prevent violence in schools by decreasing the presence of gangs," the Negative can either 'miss' (by making an irrelevant claim such as "School attendance rates are at an all-time high.") or 'hit' (by responding directly to the Affirmative's warrant: "School uniforms will not decrease the presence of gangs because students will find other ways, such as wearing colored socks or shoelaces, to display their gang affiliations.")

Broad Argumentation

In addition to progressing vertically towards deeper and deeper levels of analysis, debaters can also expand their argumentation 'horizontally' by presenting multiple warrants for a single claim. When a team makes more than one warrant for a single claim, their opponents must answer all of those warrants to refute that claim. Consider the following example:

Affirmative Claim: The plan is a good idea
Warrant #1: The plan will save thousands of people from starvation.
Warrant #2: The plan is a morally necessary response to a crime against humanity.
Warrant #3: The plan will avert a civil war that would kill tens of thousands of people.

Negative Claim: The plan is not a good idea.
Warrant #1: The plan will not save thousands of people from starvation.
Warrant #2: The plan is not a morally necessary response to a crime against humanity.

Even if the Negative team defeats the first two warrants, the Affirmative team will still have one left to justify the plan. In other words, even if the Negative wins that the plan would neither prevent starvation nor adequately respond to a crime against humanity, the Affirmative's claim that the plan is a good idea is still supported by the third warrant, that

the plan would avert a civil war and save tens of thousands of lives. Thus, the Affirmative would most likely win this debate.

Taking It To The Next Level

In addition to creating more options for themselves, teams that present multiple warrants for a single claim also constrain their opponents' options by forcing them either to take the time to answer all of the warrants or to concede the point. Eight minutes may seem like a lot of time to fill in a speech, but as they grow in experience, debaters find themselves rushing to say everything they need to in that time.

Much of the strategy of policy debate involves using one's own time productively and forcing one's opponents to use their time less productively. Teams who support their most important claims with multiple warrants force their opponents into a lose-lose situation: they can either concede the point or spend a considerable amount of time responding to each of its warrants individually.

The Organization of Policy Debate

Even the relatively simple rounds in which JV teams compete can involve fifty or more discrete claims over which debaters must clash. Keeping these many different arguments organized is essential to insure that nothing important is missed and that the judge always knows how the argument a debater is currently making fits into the bigger picture of the round as a whole. There are a number of conventions that have developed in policy debate to keep these highly complex rounds organized.

Flowing

In order to keep her own speeches clearly organized and ensure that she does not miss any of her opponent's arguments, a debater must have an exceedingly accurate record of the speeches that have been presented so far. In policy debate, there is a standardized method of note taking called **flowing**. Flowing is a systematic way of recording every argument that is made during a round and keeping track of how various arguments interact with each other.

Experience suggests that virtually every student of debate will insist that she has her own method of taking notes that is equally effective and that works for her. Experience also suggests that all of these students will be wrong. Even if a debater did manage to develop an equally effective method of taking notes, it would be of little use, because her partner, opponents, and judges would not be using that method and would have difficulty following her speeches.

Learning to flow a debate round can be one of the most difficult and tedious tasks involved in learning to debate, but it is also one of the most important. Early in their debate careers, students may feel as though the activity is beginning to make sense to them. They understand their own arguments, know how to refute arguments made by their opponents, and generally receive fairly high speaker points from their judges. They are frustrated, however, because they consistently lose debate rounds.

The problem may very well be that, although these students understand the arguments they need to make, they have not quite mastered how to present those arguments in a way that appeals to judges. Learning to keep an accurate flow of the round is often the turning point for these debaters. Once they understand this method of organizing arguments, their losses turn into wins. All they needed to do was figure out how to present their arguments in the correct way.

Hopefully, this step-by-step guide to flowing will minimize the difficulty that debaters encounter overcoming this hurdle:

1. Divide several sheets of paper into eight columns, each of which represents one speech in the debate. (Some people only use seven columns and flow the 2NC and the 1NR in the same speech, since no Affirmative speech comes between them and they should not be overlapping on the positions they are addressing. This is a matter of personal preference.)

2. During the 1AC, write each distinct argument in order from top to bottom in the leftmost column of the page. Try to record the number or letter of the argument, the author and date of any evidence read, the claim being made (usually this is the tag the speaker gives to her argument), and the warrants for that claim. At the very minimum, record the number or letter and the claim. Use multiple sheets of paper to keep track of all of the arguments.

3. Record the 1NC's arguments in the second column from the left. When she is responding directly to arguments from the 1AC, line up her responses immediately next to the arguments that they answer. When she is making new arguments, flow these in rows where there are no arguments from the 1AC recorded in the leftmost column.

4. Record the 2AC's arguments in the third column from the left. When she refutes 1NC arguments directly, align her arguments next to the ones they are refuting. Each new argument goes in a fresh row. If she points out any arguments from the 1AC that the 1NC did not answer, draw an arrow from where that argument is written in the 1AC's column into the same row of the 2AC's column.

5. Record the 2NC's arguments in the fourth column from the left. As before, her responses to arguments should be lined up next to the arguments they answer, and her new arguments should be put in fresh rows.

6. Record the 1NR's arguments in the fifth column from the left (or in the same column as the 2NC's arguments, depending on preference). Since new arguments are not allowed in rebuttals, all of the 1NR's arguments should line up with arguments from the 2AC. If the 1NR does make new arguments, they should be put in a fresh column with a star or some other indication that they are new and should not be allowed. Remember that it is ordinarily the responsibility of the debaters to flag their opponents' new arguments for the judge.

7. Record the 1AR's arguments in the sixth column from the left. Again, new arguments are not allowed in this speech, so every argument should either line up with one from the 2NC or the 1NR or with an unanswered argument from the 2AC. Be sure to make a note of any new arguments.

8. Record the 2NR's arguments in the seventh column from the left, lining them up with the 1AR arguments they answer or the 2NC/1NR arguments on which they expand. Make a note of any new arguments.

9. Record the 2AR's arguments in the far right column, lining them up with the 2NR arguments they answer or the 1AR arguments on which they build. Judges should be especially alert for new arguments in this speech, since the Negative will not get an opportunity to point them out. There is no point in debaters marking new arguments, since they will not get a chance to do anything about them. They can only hope that the judge is paying attention.

10. Practice, practice, practice! The best way to learn how to flow is by trying it. Even when they feel like they do not know what they are doing, debaters should flow every round that they see, whether they are participants or observers. The more they practice, the more quickly debaters will master the crucial skill of flowing.

Tricks of the Trade

Even the best flow-ers use tricks and shortcuts to make the task easier and record more information. These are things debaters can work on while they practice their flowing:

-*Never* stop. If a debater misses an argument, she should leave room to fill it in later and keep going. Stopping and trying to figure it out will only get her further behind. She can ask about the missed argument during cross-examination or check her partner's flow.

-Use short hand. It is impossible to write every word a debater says. Debaters should write just enough to allow themselves to recognize the argument when they look back at it later. She can use symbols for commonly used words (for example, '-->' for 'causes' or 'leads to') and abbreviate long words. One easy way is to write only the consonants of large words (for example, 'cnflgrtn' for 'conflagration').

-Impose order. If a debater is not numbering her arguments, everyone else should still number them on their flow (but realize that the judge's numbers may not match theirs exactly). If a debater is not making clear transitions from one argument to the next, everyone else should try to break down her speech as much as possible. If she is not stating which of her opponents' arguments she is answering, everyone else should try to line up her arguments with those they answer as much as possible.

-Pre-flow. Frequently used arguments can be flowed ahead of time, either on new sheets of paper or on sticky notes that can be re-used.

-Space out arguments. A single claim may get multiple responses in a future speech, all of which will need to be flowed next to that claim.

-Use a lot of paper. It is much better to get a new sheet of paper than to try to cram too much onto one sheet. Just be sure to recycle it all afterwards!

-Use larger paper. Writing small may make it possible to fit everything on a standard sheet of paper, but some debaters make more room for themselves by turning their paper horizontally or using a legal pad or other larger paper.

-Add color. Different colored pens are an easy way to distinguish between Affirmative and Negative speeches.

Debating From and For the Flow

Debate rounds are long and complicated, making it unlikely that the judge will remember any arguments that she does not write down. That means that if a debater is talking and the judge is not writing, the debater is probably wasting her breath (and valuable speech time!). Fortunately, the debater knows the basic method of note taking that the judge will be using: she will be flowing. The key to making arguments that will catch the judge's attention, then, is structuring speeches around the flow.

When possible, new arguments should be assigned a number or letter. This is easiest to do with positions that have been prepared ahead of time. From then on, as speeches become more extemporaneous, debaters refer back to these original organizational structures using **line-by-line** debating.

Debating line-by-line means responding systematically to the other team's arguments, one by one, in the order that they were made. Debaters should always tell the judge which claim she is answering with every argument that she makes. A 2NC debating line-by-line might sound something like this: "2AC #1, they say ____, my answer is ____. 2AC #2, they say ____, my answer is ____. 2AC #3, they say ____, I have two answers. First, __, and second, ____." If a debater has lost track of the numbering, she should continue to

flag transitions from argument to argument by saying, "Next," or something similar before moving on.

If a debater has been flowing the round, it will be very easy for her to prepare a line-by-line speech. She writes her responses in the appropriate column next to each argument that she is refuting. Now, to debate line-by-line, she reads from her flow. For example, she looks to the top of the column for her partner's speech and says, "1AC #1, my partner argues that the weather will not be very nice today because it will likely rain." Then she looks to the next column, where she wrote her opponent's answers to that argument: "The Negative says that rain is not likely." Now she looks to the column where she has written the arguments she will make during this speech: "But our Skies evidence says that a low-pressure system is headed this way."

Taking It To The Next Level

As debaters become more experienced, their rounds become even more complex. To be sure that the judge is following them, debaters should:

-Roadmap. Debaters need to tell the judge the order in which to arrange her sheets of paper before each speech. This is called a **roadmap**. For example, "The order will be: the counterplan, the disadvantage, Solvency, Harms, Topicality." It is up to the judge whether or not to count time spent roadmapping as part of a speech, but debaters should always give a roadmap, even if it does cut into their speech time.

- Debaters should signpost every new argument that they make by assigning it a letter or number. When referring to these arguments later, debaters should reference the letter or number and offer a very brief summary of the claim. If a debater loses track of the numbering, she should still say, "Next" or something similar to indicate to the judge that she has moved on to the next argument. This is the judge's cue to start writing again.

-Transition. When moving from one sheet of paper to the next (say, from Solvency to the disadvantage), debaters should indicate this and give the judge time to take out that page of her flow. If the debater has given a roadmap, then the needed page should be the next one in the judge's stack of flow sheets.

-Focus. When a debater is addressing a particular issue, she should make all of the arguments she is going to make about it before moving on to the next one. For example, she should say everything she has to say about the disadvantage before moving on to Solvency. Jumping back and forth will confuse the judge and waste time as she looks for the appropriate flow sheet.

Judges Who Do Not Flow

Not all judges are debate experts, and there are even some debate experts who have chosen to abandon flowing as their means of evaluating the round (Note that these are debate *experts*, not debate novices- they learned how to flow just like everyone else, and after many years of experience, they reached the conclusion that they did not need a flow anymore).

Even if the judge is not flowing, very little should change about the way debaters organize their speeches. Flowing is not an arbitrary convention; it is a way of taking notes that is consistent with the logical way in which people think and organize ideas. All of the tools that debaters use to keep the flow organized (roadmapping, signposting, transitions, etc.) also help non-flowing judges keep their thoughts and notes organized.

The only way debaters need to adjust the organization of their speeches for non-flowing judges is by making an extra effort to summarize the arguments they are extending or refuting, since the judge will not have recorded details such as letters or numbers.

Smart Debating

In many ways, debate privileges competitors with highly technical and specialized skills. Advanced debaters often practice their ability to speak quickly, give crisp line-by-line speeches, and rattle off debate jargon. Schools with large budgets compound these skills by providing their debaters with tubs of evidence from mail-order distributors, internet databases, summer institutes, and armies of assistant coaches.

Beginning debaters may find it difficult to keep up with their more experienced counterparts, and even the most successful debaters from schools without five-figure budgets may be overwhelmed by the amount of resources available to members of better-funded squads. Unfortunately, urban debaters who compete at suburban or National Circuit tournaments are likely to find themselves on the short end of the resource stick.

It is more than just sour grapes, however, to say that in some ways debaters who have not had the opportunity to develop a highly technical speaking style or had access to mountains of evidence are better off without them. Certainly rapid, jargon-laden speeches are of little use outside of debate.

Even within competitive debate rounds, though, they can be a crutch that actually inhibits success. Overly quick speaking leaves little room for emphasis, emotion, or connecting with an audience. Too much reliance on evidence discourages the development of critical analysis and the ability to think on one's feet. In short, no amount of evidence or technical skills can make up for the ability to debate smart.

This section will discuss ways in which debaters can outmaneuver more experienced or better prepared opponents with quick thinking, sharp analysis, and efficient use of speech time.

Cross-Applying Arguments

Often, the same argument will be relevant at several different places in the debate. It is not an efficient use of time, however, for a debater to make or explain the same argument multiple times. Once she (or her partner or in some rare cases the other team) has made an argument once, it can be **cross-applied** elsewhere in the debate.

To cross-apply an argument is to take an argument made in one place and use it in a new way without giving all of the details for a second time.

Example: Suppose that a young man has a very lengthy conversation with his mother about how he should be allowed to stay out for an hour past his curfew on a Friday night so that he can attend a concert. He makes many arguments about his responsibility, his maturity, and his reliability. Ultimately, she agrees and he is allowed to go to the concert.

The next Friday, he wants to stay out to see a movie. Rather than making all of the same arguments again, he would remind his mother about the conversation they had last week. That does not mean he would necessarily win the argument. She might argue that this is a different set of circumstances or otherwise question the relevance of last week's discussion. However, they would save a considerable amount of time by not having to discuss the same questions of responsibility, maturity, and reliability again.

Similarly, debaters can save themselves a considerable amount of time by cross-applying arguments or evidence rather than explaining or reading them for a second time. They will still need to debate the relevance of the cross-applied argument to its new context, but they would not need to go over the basics for the second time.

Grouping Arguments

Cross-application is a valuable technique because it enables smart debaters to kill two or more birds with one stone. Another way of accomplishing this same outcome is by **grouping** arguments. Grouping means answering several related arguments at the same time.

Example: The Negative team argues that China would feel threatened by the Affirmative team's plan and respond violently. The Affirmative answers this argument by giving three different reasons why the plan is not actually a threat to China. The Negative might group all three of these arguments and answer them all at once by arguing that it does not matter whether the plan is *actually* a threat to China, only that China *perceives* it as a threat.

What is the Difference?

Cross-application and grouping are two ways of using the same argument to answer several different claims. How do debaters know when to group and when to cross-apply? Debaters usually group arguments that are made consecutively. For example, if a debater wants to answer her opponent's third, fourth, and fifth arguments at the same time, she will ask the judge to group these arguments and then respond to them all at once.

Cross-application works best when the arguments being answered are at different places in the debate. If a debater addresses the first argument and then two minutes later gets to the second argument, she will ask the judge to cross-apply the relevant arguments. Asking the judge to group in this situation would be confusing, since the judge probably will not have the two arguments anywhere near each other on her flow.

Extending and Dropping Arguments

If a team wants the judge to consider one of their arguments at the end of the round, they must present it in either of their constructive speeches and then continue to address it in each subsequent speech. Any argument that a debater makes in one speech but her partner does not mention in the next is considered **dropped**. A dropped argument is one that is no longer part of the round. The other team is not required to refute it any longer, and the judge will not consider it when making her decision.

If a debater does not want to drop one of her partner's arguments, then she must **extend** it into her speech. Even arguments the other team did not answer at all must be extended, or they are considered dropped by both sides, and the judge will not factor them into her decision. Extending an argument means keeping it alive by reminding the judge of it and addressing answers that one's opponents have made to it. In other words, it requires more than just saying, "Remember when my partner said...." Extending an argument is really a five-stop process:

1) **Signpost** the argument. The debater must tell the judge which argument from her partner's speech she is extending. Arguments are usually numbered for this purpose, but since a debater can never be certain that the judge has the same numbering that she does, she should generally give a very brief synopsis of the argument to ensure that everyone is on the same page.

2) **Explain** the argument. This *is not* the same as re-stating an argument or re-reading a piece of evidence. Instead, the debater should present the warrants for the claim the she is extending.

3) **State** the other team's answers to the argument. Debaters should not spend too much time on this, as they do not want to do the other team's work for them. They do, however, need to make sure the judge knows which arguments they are answering.

4) **Refute** the other team's answers. There is no point to extending an argument without refuting the opponent's answers. Without this step, the other team would just extend their answers and, since they were conceded, the judge would have to accept them, leaving the original argument dead in the water.

5) **Impact** the argument. An impact is a reason why the judge should care about an argument. The debater must explain the implication that the argument she is extending has for the round. Debaters should always tell the judge why an argument matters rather than leaving it up to her to figure out.

The Debate Relay Race

In a four-person relay race, four runners work as a team to win a race. Each member of the team runs for a fixed distance. When she is finished running her portion of the race, she passes a baton to the next runner on her team, and then that person runs her allotted portion of the race. She, in turn, passes the baton to the next runner, and so on.

A debate round is a little like a relay race. Instead of four members running one distance each, there are two debaters giving two speeches each. And instead of a baton, debaters pass arguments on to the next speaker. For example, the 2AC extends an argument that the 1AC made. By doing so, she has passed this argument on to her partner, who can now use it in the 1AR. Had the 2AC not extended the argument, it would be dropped, and the 1AR would not be able to use it. Similarly, if a runner in a relay race drops her team's baton, the next runner is not able to continue the race.

Taking It To The Next Level

Beginning debaters often fail to make efficient use of their speech time. They make and extend fewer arguments than their more experienced counterparts, and consequently, even in their later speeches, they may not have to address more than a handful of claims. In short, they generally have more important things to worry about than picking and choosing among the arguments available to them.

Experienced debaters, on the other hand, tend to make a large number of diverse arguments. As their rounds progress, the number of arguments in play increases and the length of speeches decreases. This means that a debater will not be able to extend every argument from her partner's speech. Experienced debaters must learn to be selective, choosing only the best arguments to extend in later speeches. There are several criteria to use when choosing which arguments to extend.

-How big is the impact? An argument which will take out one of the opponent's claims altogether is much more valuable than one that will only mitigate a claim.

- Is it offensive? Offensive arguments are much more valuable than defensive ones because they have larger impacts and they force the opposition to respond to them. An Affirmative generally cannot get away with simply conceding that their plan will kill 10,000 people. The Negative, however, probably could safely concede the Affirmative's defensive argument that, actually, the plan will only kill 1,000 people. After all, that is still pretty undesirable.

-How good are the other team's answers? It is better to win a weak argument than to lose a strong one. If the other team's answers are especially strong on a particular point, it might be a wise decision to get away from that point and center the debate somewhere they are weaker.

-How long will it take to extend? Smart teams make many answers to good arguments, which means that sometimes extending them might require so much time that it is not worth doing. Similarly, a weak argument that can be extended very quickly might be worth going for. This is especially true if the debater expects that it will take the other team longer to answer the argument than it took her to extend it.

-Do I need this argument? One of the advantages of making multiple warrants for every claim is that it provides flexibility later in the round. If a debater has already extended one warrant for a claim, it is less important for her to extend another.]

Offensive Arguments

There is a central distinction in debate between **offensive** and **defensive** arguments. An offensive argument is one that says something is actively good or bad. A defensive argument merely says that something is not as good or bad as the other team has claimed.

Example: The Affirmative team argues that their plan to provide emergency food aid to a country suffering from prolonged drought will save 10,000 people from starvation. The Negative could respond defensively by making arguments that it will be difficult to deliver emergency assistance and that many people are already beyond help, so that really the plan will only save 1,000 people from starvation.

If this is their only argument, they are in trouble. After all, a plan that saves 1,000 people from starvation is probably still a good idea. The Negative would probably have more success responding offensively by arguing that such a large infusion of free food into an agricultural society would disrupt the local economy and ruin the livelihoods of thousands of small farmers. Destroying the only self-sustaining sector of the economy in a poor country might ultimately kill 50,000 people. Thus, even if the Affirmative is right that the plan will save 10,000 people in the short term, it will kill many more people in the long term and is probably a bad idea.

Debate and Basketball

Good basketball teams use a combination of offensive and defensive tactics during a game. That is, they try both to score points of their own and to prevent their opponents from scoring points. No matter how good a basketball team is at playing defense, they could *never* win a single game if that was all they did. In the best case scenario, a game would end in a 0-0 tie. If they made a single mistake and allowed the other team to score, it would be impossible for them to recover.

Much the same is true of debate. If debaters make only defensive arguments, they never 'score points' of their own. In other words, it is insufficient for the Negative to claim that the Affirmative plan is 'not that great.' At the end of the day, many judges will decide that a 'not that great' plan is still better than doing nothing at all. To win, the Negative must show that the plan is actively bad or harmful in some way. They must score points in their favor, not just prevent the Affirmative from scoring points.

Good basketball teams also know that the best defense is a good offense. A strong offensive basketball team keeps the pressure on their opponents and keeps the ball in their opponents' court. This forces their opponents onto the defensive. They are so busy defending their own basket and trying to steal the ball that they do not get many chances to take shots of their own.

Once again, the same is true in debate. Because debaters give speeches under strict time limits, they are constantly forced to choose whether to spend their limited time on offensive or defensive arguments. They would prefer to spend their time making offensive arguments, since these are more valuable to them. However, they also cannot ignore their opponents' offensive arguments. By consistently making offensive arguments, debaters can force their opponents to waste time playing defense rather than extending the arguments on which they hope to win the round.

The Affirmative Case

The **Affirmative case** is the set of initial arguments that the Affirmative team makes in support of the resolution. Generally, these consist of problems that the plan would solve or ways in which the plan would improve on things as they are now.

The Affirmative team spends their entire first speech building their case. Generally, they focus on establishing three things: **Inherency**, **Harms**, and **Solvency**. These three issues, along with **Significance** and **Topicality**, which the Negative may challenge when they make their case against the Affirmative plan, are called the **Stock Issues** of policy debate.

Stock Issues are burdens that the Affirmative team must meet in order to justify the resolution and win the round. A general rule of thumb is that if the Negative completely defeats the Affirmative on any of these five issues, they win the round. Otherwise, the Affirmative is considered to have successfully defended the resolution, and therefore they win the round.

The Resolution

Each school year, there is a single, broad topic that every policy debate league in the country uses. This topic is in the form of a **resolution** that each debater must argue for and against many times during the course of the season. A resolution is a statement that defines the area of discussion for that year's debates.

Example: Resolved: That the United States federal government should establish an education policy to substantially reduce violence in public schools in the United States.

The team arguing for the resolution is called the **Affirmative**, while the team arguing against it is called the **Negative**. Often, these are abbreviated **Aff** and **Neg**. It is essential that debaters and coaches memorize the resolution word-for-word, as it determines the arguments that each side will need to make to win a debate round. It may be helpful to think of the resolution as a *claim* for which the Affirmative team has the burden of providing *warrants*.

The Affirmative Plan

The Affirmative team speaks first in the debate round and presents their warrants for why the resolution should be affirmed. In other words, they explain why it is a good idea. Generally, the Affirmative supports the resolution by proposing and defending a specific example of it, called the Affirmative **plan**. The plan is a specific proposal for change to the present system.

The implicit argument here is that if this plan is a good idea, and if it is a legitimate example of the resolution, then the resolution is true, at least in this one case. That is, the United States *should* establish an education policy to substantially reduce violence in public schools in the United States; specifically, it should establish *this* policy.

Example: The United States federal government will require all public high schools to adopt mandatory school uniform policies.

Note that the Affirmative is not required to defend every possible example of the resolution. After all, the resolution does not say that the US federal government should establish *all possible* education policies. Rather, the resolution says that the US federal government should establish *an* education policy, leaving the Affirmative free to choose which one they want to defend. The policy that they choose to defend, the plan, is their warrant for why the resolution should be affirmed.

Fiat

Resolutions are always framed in terms of whether something *should* be done, not whether it *would* really happen. Thus, the Affirmative team is generally allowed to assume for the sake of argument that the plan actually gets passed and implemented. This ability to pretend that the plan is passed is called **fiat power**, and it allows Affirmatives to avoid arguments such as "Congress would never vote for that." It does not matter whether Congress *would* vote for the plan, only whether it *should*.

Since the proposal that the Affirmative team fiats, the plan, becomes the focus of the debate, they are expected to present it in their first speech. They are also expected to make it sufficiently detailed to allow for a fair and informed discussion and to continue to defend it without alteration throughout the round.

The exact responsibilities of the Affirmative with regard to specificity or the difference between a clarification and an alteration are generally left to the debaters to determine during the round. Arguing the limits of fiat can get very complicated, but for now it is enough to say that if the Negative feels as though the Affirmative is trying to take unfair advantage of this power, they should explain to the judge what exactly they are doing and why it is unfair.

Taking it to the Next Level:

Beginning debaters generally do not use plans that they write themselves and usually have more important things to worry about than the wording of the plan text they are using. Advanced debaters are more likely to be researching and writing cases of their own, and even if they are using a case that they did not write themselves, they may still want to make strategic adaptations to the plan. When crafting their plan text, Affirmatives should:

-Base the text on the policy recommendations of an expert. Often, this person will be one of the Solvency authors;

-Word the plan to avoid popular Negative arguments;

-Be sufficiently, but not overly, specific. The more the plan specifies, the more things the Negative can attack. The Affirmative can always clarify later if there are questions about how exactly the plan works;

-Be open to change. If Affirmatives frequently lose to Topicality (and league rules allow), they might consider altering the plan text to make it more closely mirror the language of the resolution.]

Inherency

A plan with **Inherency** is one that will not be adopted in the present system. If the policy they are proposing were going to happen anyway, then there would be no need for the plan, and the advantages that the Affirmative will lay out would not be *inherent* to their proposed course of action.

To establish Inherency, the Affirmative begins their case with a description of the **status quo**. Status quo is a Latin term meaning 'the state that was.' In debate, it refers to the way things would be if the plan were *not* passed. In other words, it is a description of what would happen if current policy remains the same and no change is made to existing laws, attitudes, or social forces.

Ultimately, the Affirmative will try to show that their plan is a definite *improvement* over the status quo. In the Inherency portion of their case, they need only show that it is qualitatively *different* from the status quo. That is, they must demonstrate that the plan they are proposing is not already in effect and that it is not likely to come into effect.

When there is a concrete measure in place that would prevent the Affirmative plan from coming into existence, then the plan has **structural Inherency**. When there is overwhelming political opposition to the plan, it has **attitudinal Inherency**. When there is merely no indication that any policy-making authority has any intention to implement the plan, it has **existential Inherency**.

Example: The majority of state and local boards of education show no sign of implementing school uniform policies (*existential*), both state and federal lawmakers are wary of expanded federal control over education policy (*attitudinal*), and federal law currently prohibits Congress from violating local control on questions of school policy (*structural*).

Tricks of the Trade

To win on Inherency, Affirmatives should:

-Read the newspaper carefully. Affirmatives rarely lose on Inherency, and when they do it is almost always because the Negative knows something they do not, for example that the plan passed last week;

-Avoid giving away too much. Every inherent barrier the Affirmative specifies is another argument the Negative can make against the plan. The Affirmative should prove that the plan will not pass now without going overboard and opening themselves up to too many Negative arguments. For example, it is sufficient to show that a majority of Senators oppose the plan. If the Affirmative claims that their proposal is universally hated by all members of government, the judge will probably suspect that there is good reason why it is so unpopular.

Harms

The **Harms** are the problems caused by the failure of the status quo government to pass the plan. The possibility of avoiding these problems justifies the need for the Affirmative plan. Harms can be **quantitative** (expressible as a number) or **qualitative** (a question of right and wrong).

Example: Gangs are responsible for hundreds of murders, thousands of assaults, and millions of dollars in property damage every year (quantitative Harms). Gang violence disproportionately affects the educational process at schools in minority communities, violating the right of those students to a free and equal education (qualitative Harms).

Harms scenarios consist of a series of Harms arguments that describe a specific problem in detail. Often, these arguments are arranged sequentially to demonstrate the logical chain of events leading to the ultimate problem (X causes Y, Y causes Z, Z causes thousands of people to die).

Example: Gang members identify themselves by their clothing. Currently, gangs thrive in many public high schools, and students are attacked for wearing the wrong colors. Fear drives more students to join gangs for protection, perpetuating the cycle of violence that has claimed thousands of young lives.

Taking It To The Next Level

To win on Harms, experienced debaters will often need to:

-Present multiple Harms scenarios. That way, even if they lose one of them, they will not lose the Harms Stock Issue altogether. A real world analogue to this strategy is the

multiple justifications given by the Bush administration for its 2003 invasion of Iraq. The White House asserted that Saddam Hussein was developing weapons of mass destruction, that he was supporting terrorist organizations such as Al Qaeda, and that he was oppressing the people of Iraq. This strategic decision strengthened Bush's position on this issue, as he was able to maintain that the invasion was justified even after his opponents refuted many of his claims about Iraq's WMD program and its ties to Al Qaeda;

-Make both qualitative and quantitative impact arguments. If the Affirmative fears that they are losing on the 'body count', they can resort to arguing that even if the plan does result in some pretty serious consequences, it ought to be enacted anyway simply because it is the right thing to do. Many nineteenth-century abolitionists, for example, admitted that eliminating slavery would undermine the South's economy and potentially result in a bloody civil war, but argued that nonetheless slavery was immoral and ought to be eliminated regardless of the consequences;

-Set up impact comparison. Since the Affirmative team gets to choose their plan and prepare their case well in advance of the round, they can and should construct clear and compelling Harms scenarios with large but believable impacts. The Negative's disadvantages will have big impacts, too, but the Affirmative's story should be much more realistic and compelling than any that the Negative tells. It should also be founded on better evidence with stronger warrants.

Solvency

Solvency arguments explain how the plan prevents the Harms from happening or makes them go away. By solving for the Harms, the Affirmative plan gains an advantage over the status quo. Solvency can be **comparative** or **absolute**. In the former instance, a plan reduces the Harms in the status quo but does not eliminate them. In the latter, the plan completely eliminates the Harms. The more of the Harms that the plan can solve, the more advantageous it will be.

Example: School uniform policies force students to wear school colors rather than gang colors. This makes it harder for gangs to operate in schools, preventing many instances of drug sale or violent assault (comparative Solvency). Making a genuine effort to deal with the gang violence that plagues schools in minority communities satisfies the government's obligation to provide free and equal education to all children (absolute Solvency).

Taking It To The Next Level

To win on Solvency, advanced debaters will often need to:

-Present multiple Harms scenarios that depend on different portions of the plan for Solvency. For instance, the Affirmative might argue that the right of all children to a free

and equal education obligates the government to try to address the problem of gang violence in minority communities. Note that this new Harms scenario has little to do with whether or not school uniforms actually prevent violence; it merely says that the government has an obligation to *try*. Thus, even if the Negative team wins that school uniforms do not prevent violence, the Affirmative can still claim to solve for some of their Harms merely by acknowledging the problem and trying to solve it;

-Set up impact comparison. Since Solvency functions as the link between the plan and the Harms claims, it plays a large role in determining the risk of the Affirmative's impacts. In the language of impact comparison, propensity depends on how likely the plan is to solve, and magnitude depends on how much of the Harms the plan solves;

-Justify the exact plan. The Affirmative should have Solvency evidence that explains the importance of every part of the plan. This will help them to defend against counterplans that exclude or change one of these parts;

-Pre-empt likely Negative case attacks. If there is time in the first Affirmative speech, they should read evidence that refutes arguments Negatives frequently use against them.

Advantages

Advantages are benefits that result from the adoption of the affirmative plan. Winning an advantage usually requires the Affirmative to prove both Harms and Solvency. That is, the plan gains an advantage over the status quo when it can eliminate all or part of a problem that exists in the status quo. While the plan is a warrant for the resolution, it can also be viewed as a claim, advocated by the Affirmative, for which the advantages are warrants.

Example: Gang members identify themselves by their clothing. Currently, gangs thrive in many public high schools, and students are attacked for wearing the wrong colors. Fear drives more students to join gangs for protection, perpetuating the cycle of violence that has claimed thousands of young lives. School uniform policies force students to wear school colors rather than gang colors. This makes it harder for gangs to operate in schools, preventing many instances of drug sale or violent assault.

Taking It To The Next Level

Impact comparison is such an important part of debate that it is never too soon in the round to begin arguing this point. The Affirmative's case should always be strategically constructed to set up future impact comparison arguments, but some teams go a step further and make an **Underview** or **Framework** argument part of their first speech. These arguments give the judge a way to think about the round that hopefully will shape her first impressions of all future arguments as well as her final evaluation of the Affirmative plan.

Example: The federal government's failure to address gang violence in schools is symptomatic of their larger neglect of the needs of minority communities. Arguing that other impacts are more important than gang violence perpetuates this shameful neglect. Elimination of gang violence in schools should be the top priority in this round.

This is especially common when the team is arguing a qualitative impact claim such as morality. They may use the last minute or so of their first speech to read evidence and make arguments about the moral framework they are using and why it ought to trump the traditional 'body-count' method of comparing impacts.

The underview is not restricted to these instances, though. A team claiming to solve for genocide might read evidence about how genocide has the largest possible magnitude of any impact, and they might even pre-empt likely Negative impact comparison arguments by spelling out why it is as bad as or worse than war.

Tying It All Together

The 1AC must present the entire Affirmative case in a logical and compelling way. Here is what the Affirmative case used as an example throughout this chapter might look like when structured in this way:

Contention One: Inherency. Many schools lack uniform policies and are not likely to adopt them soon.

> 1. The majority of state and local boards of education show no sign of implementing school uniform policies.
>
> 2. Both state and federal lawmakers are wary of expanded federal control over education policy.
>
> 3. Federal law currently prohibits Congress from violating local control on questions of school policy.

Contention Two: Harms. The lack of the school uniforms in the status quo creates several problems.

> Harms Scenario 1: Gang violence
>
> > A. Currently, gangs thrive in many public high schools.
> >
> > B. Gang members identify themselves by their clothing, and students are attacked for wearing the wrong colors.

C. Fear drives more students to join gangs for protection, perpetuating the cycle of violence.

D. Gangs are responsible for hundreds of murders, thousands of assaults, and millions of dollars in property damage every year.

Harms Scenario 2: Equal Education

A. Gang violence disproportionately affects schools in minority communities.

B. The presence of gangs in schools substantially disrupts the learning process.

C. All children in America are guaranteed the right to a free and equal education. By ignoring the problem of gang violence in minority communities, the US federal government is violating that right.

Plan: The United States federal government will require all public high schools to adopt mandatory school uniform policies.

Contention Three: Solvency. School uniform policies reduce gang violence.

1. School uniform policies force students to wear school colors rather than gang colors, making it harder for gangs to operate in schools and preventing many instances of drug sale or violent assault.

2. Reducing the presence of gangs in schools will substantially improve the learning process.

3. Making a genuine effort to deal with the gang violence that plagues schools in minority communities satisfies the government's obligation to provide free and equal education to all children.

Answering the Case

The Negative begins the round at a disadvantage, as the Affirmative gets to choose the plan that will be debated and has months to prepare. Consequently, it will generally not be enough for the Negative merely to present their own arguments about the drawbacks of the plan, as the Affirmative's well-constructed advantages will outweigh them if left uncontested. Thus, the Negative must make inroads against the Affirmative case.

Inherency

Trends over the past twenty years in Negative strategy have been away from attacking the Affirmative's Inherency. This is because the Negative's goal is not generally to defeat the Affirmative case altogether (cases are generally much too well-constructed for that) but to mitigate it so that their disadvantages can outweigh it.

While this is a very feasible strategy against Harms and Solvency claims, which can be more or less strong, it is less effective against Inherency, which tends to be an all-or-nothing issue. Given that the Negative is unlikely to win Inherency outright and that there is no 'consolation prize' as with Harms and Solvency, they have no incentive to waste their time challenging it. Moreover, most plans have a solid inherent barrier, as public policy literature is filled with proposals not likely to be implemented.

Taking It To The Next Level

Just because the Negative is unlikely to win the round altogether on Inherency does not mean they should ignore it. Claims that the Affirmative makes when establishing Inherency are often potential Negative arguments elsewhere. Barriers to the implementation of the plan can become Solvency attacks. Political opposition to the plan can provide the link to a disadvantage. Lists of the many agencies and governments that have ignored a problem may suggest counterplans.

When Inherency is challenged, it is generally on the grounds that merely having existential Inherency is insufficient. Some Negative teams will claim that the Affirmative has the burden of presenting an actual barrier to the passage of their plan, either structural or attitudinal, rather than merely showing that the plan has not been adopted already. As with most things in debate, the rules here are not rigid; there is a convention that favors a loose standard for Inherency, but is up to the debaters to convince the judge that the Inherency standard they wish to defend is superior to that of their opponents.

Harms

Because debaters tend to inflate their quantitative Harms, it is always advisable for the Negative to attack the Affirmative's Harms claims. The simplest method is to read evidence to the contrary. If the Affirmative claims that a certain conflict threatens to escalate into war that would kill hundreds of thousands of people, the Negative might insist either that there is little danger of escalation or that the war would actually threaten a much smaller number of people.

Example: The amount of gang violence in schools is not nearly as high as the Affirmative team indicates. Their numbers are greatly exaggerated.

In Your Own Words

It is time for her 1NC, and Maria has absolutely no evidence to respond to the Affirmative case. This sounds like a Negative debater's nightmare, but it does not have to be. There are a number of ways to attack the Affirmative's Harms claims without using evidence:

-Look for exaggeration. No matter how obvious it may be that the Harms are exaggerated, if the Negative does not point this out and explain how they are exaggerated, the judge will probably accept the exaggerated claims. In debate, silence equals consent;

-Look for solutions in the Status Quo. Measures already likely to take place may solve most, if not all, of the Harms. Note that this is not an Inherency argument, because the Negative is not claiming that the plan itself is already going to happen. Rather, they are insisting that some other action will eliminate much of the need for the plan;

-Look for missing logic. A debater can try talking through the logic of a Harms scenario to herself, and if she finds any assumptions that have not been justified or logical connections that have not been established, she can point these out. After identifying the logical gap, the debater must explain the importance of the missing argument and, if possible, argue that this logical step is not only unproven but wrong. These arguments are sometimes called **presses** or **challenges**;

-Look for biased or unqualified sources. Authors with an agenda have an incentive to make strongly worded argument, so Affirmatives are likely to take evidence from these sources. If the Affirmative tries to get away with using evidence from Saddam Hussein to prove that the US invasion of Iraq was unjustified, the Negative needs to call them on it.

-Look for favorable comparisons. A statistic that seems large may look less bad if it is better than anywhere else in the world or any other time in history.

-Look for improvement. The rate of infant mortality in the US may sound high, but if that number has been consistently decreasing over the last fifty years, there may not be a need for a new plan to address that problem.

When possible, the Negative should make offensive arguments, called **turns**, against the Harms. A turn uses the Affirmative's own arguments against them by saying that the Harms are actually good things. This is easier to do with some Harms areas (economic development, increased American military power) than with others (rape, racism).

Example: Gangs can have the positive effects of allowing members to provide economically for their families or protecting minority youth from police brutality.

Notice that a turn does not necessarily take out the original Harms claim. That is, the Harms could be both good and bad. It may be true that gangs protect their members from

police brutality and help them economically, but that does not mean they do not also kill hundreds of young people every year.

Solvency

Affirmatives try to choose Harms scenarios that are hard to deny. It is difficult to argue, for example, that racism is not a problem or that civil war is unlikely in many parts of the Greater Horn of Africa. Solving these complex problems, however, is a much more difficult feat. Thus, Negatives are often more successful at challenging the Solvency of an Affirmative plan than they are at arguing the Harms.

Example: Gangs can still wear their colors on their shoelaces, or use hand signals to indicate their affiliation. The plan does not address the root causes of gang violence, such as poverty and the lack of opportunities for recent immigrants and their children.

In Your Own Words

Factual claims generally require the weight of expert opinion in the form of evidence to back them up. But when it comes to arguing the logic of the Affirmative case, debaters can and should make many arguments in their own words.

-Look for **alternate causality**. An industrious Negative team can think of any number of causes for the Harms that the Affirmative discusses. The plan, which inevitably addresses only a few of those causes, will therefore not be able to solve the Harms completely.

-Look for **conclusionary** evidence. Conclusionary evidence is evidence that contains claims but no warrants. Since an argument is only as strong as its warrants, conclusionary evidence is nearly worthless. Negatives should always identify such evidence when the Affirmative uses it, so that the judge will know to disregard it.

-Look for qualification. The plan will rarely solve 100% of a problem, but the Affirmative may try to make it sound like it will. Look for evidence that uses qualifiers such as 'some', 'improve', or 'decrease' rather than absolute terms like 'eliminate'.

-Look for speculation. If the Affirmative's plan has not been tried before, their solvency authors may say that they 'expect', 'anticipate', or 'think' that it will work. This is generally less compelling than evidence that cites specific studies or statistics to prove the effectiveness of a proposal.

The Negative should almost always be on the lookout for ways to turn the Affirmative's case back on them. Especially against Affirmative cases with difficult-to-turn Harms like racism, the Negative should focus on **Solvency Turns**, which argue that the plan will actually contribute to the Harms rather than solve them.

There is one important exception: The Negative should never argue both Harms turns and Solvency turns against the same advantage or Harms scenario. If the Negative has already made the argument that gangs are good, they do not want to argue that the plan would actually encourage students to join gangs.

Taking It To The Next Level

If the Affirmative takes the time to explicitly make arguments about the framework that the judge should use to evaluate the debate, it is imperative that the Negative respond. Giving the Affirmative uncontested control over a part of the debate as important as the framework that the judge will use to evaluate the round comes close to conceding.

Imagine what would happen if the Affirmative had presented the judge with a moral imperative to implement their plan and the Negative granted their arguments that morality should trump all other considerations. Even if the Negative could convince the judge that the plan would lead to the destruction of the human race, the Affirmative would be able to say that the judge must act on moral considerations, regardless of the consequences.

When answering framework arguments, the Negative should:

-Defend pragmatic policy-making. They should not concede that the demands of morality should take precedence over a utilitarian consideration of advantages and disadvantages;

-Be creatively strategic. Argue that risk calculation is necessary to determine what is moral. Especially for those charged with implementing public policy, what is moral might well be what will save the most lives. Thus, even using a moral framework will lead the judge back to the policy-making paradigm;

-Fight fire with fire. Contest the case from within the Affirmative's own framework. To continue with the morality example, the Negative could argue that the plan is not a moral action, or present their own disadvantages with morality-based impacts.

Example: The Affirmative framework is flawed. Large harms such as nuclear war would be bad for everyone, including minority communities, so there is no reason to value solving gang violence above them. Even if the judge accepts the Affirmative framework, the Harms turn that gangs prevent police brutality demonstrates that the plan is a bad idea *within* the Affirmative's own framework, as it ultimately contributes to violence in minority communities.

Defending the Case

Affirmative teams often know their cases inside and out, and over the course of the year may become very fond of them. It is important, however, to avoid the trap of getting bogged down by the case debate to the exclusion of the Negative's other arguments.

The evidence that the Affirmative reads in their first speech should be strong enough to withstand an onslaught of Negative attacks with little need for supporting evidence. Unless the Negative makes an especially devastating or well-developed case attack, it is rarely advisable for the Affirmative to read more Harms or Solvency evidence later in the debate. Instead, they should refer back to their original evidence frequently and explain how the arguments made there answer the Negative's attacks. This advice – though it represents a consensus of the most accomplished debate coaches in college and high school – is very often ignored, particularly by less experienced debaters.

Taking It To The Next Level

As debaters grow in experience, they must learn to be conscious of the relative strength of the Negative's case attacks. This is frequently where the Negative will make the most defensive arguments, which can usually be conceded if the Affirmative is pressed for time. Affirmatives must become comfortable with conceding or only briefly responding to relatively non-threatening Negative case attacks. This is exactly why the Affirmative case should have multiple Harms scenarios and Solvency mechanisms: so that they can afford to risk losing one in the interest of making many responses to the Negative's more threatening off-case positions.

Disadvantages

The Affirmative's ability to choose the ground they want to defend and meticulously craft their case makes it very difficult for the Negative to defeat their Inherency, Harms, or Solvency altogether. While the Negative can and should make some inroads on these issues, they will generally have to settle for mitigating the Affirmative's case rather than dismantling it completely.

To win the round, the Negative will want to shift the focus of the debate to arguments that *they* have taken the time to choose and prepare. Issues that are introduced into the round by the Negative are called **off-case** arguments.

Parts of a Disadvantage

A **disadvantage** (or **DA** or **disad**) is a drawback or cost resulting from the adoption of the Affirmative plan. Disadvantages are how the Negative argues the Stock Issue of **Significance**. If the disadvantages outweigh the case Harms, then the plan does not have a significant benefit.

Example: Education policy is a state power. Intrusion of the federal government on states' rights will erode the precarious balance of power between the state and federal governments. This balance of power is what protects the American people from the tyranny of a single government with the authority to control every aspect of their lives.

Note that this argument could be used against any plan that expands federal control over a state power. Since the Negative team will want to gain the benefits of preparing their disadvantages well in advance of the round but do not necessarily have the benefit of knowing which Affirmative plan they will need to use them against, disadvantages are generally written to be generic enough to apply to many different plans that might be run under the resolution.

Disadvantages have several components that the Negative team must establish if they want judges to find their argument compelling. These are uniqueness (there is not a problem now), link (the plan causes a problem), and impact (the problem is *really*, *really*, bad). Disadvantages are more compelling when the Negative also establishes brink (how close the problem is to occurring, and thus how likely the plan is to cause it), internal links (additional steps of logic that make the connection between the link and the impact more sound), timeframe (how long it will take the problem to happen), and intrinsicness (there is no way to stop the problem from occurring once the plan is set in motion. All of these components of a disadvantage are discussed in detail below.

Uniqueness

The Negative must show that the problem the plan causes will not happen if the judge votes for them. Since the Negative team is usually defending the status quo, a **unique** disadvantage is generally one that will not happen now.

Example: There is currently a balance of powers, called federalism, between the federal and state governments. This delicate balance ensures that no one government becomes too powerful.

If powers were not currently balanced, then the Negative would not be able to argue that the plan disrupts the balance. In other words, there would be no disadvantage to the plan, because the problem it supposedly causes is already happening.

Tricks of the Trade

To win on uniqueness, Negatives should:

-Stay up-to-date. Because uniqueness is usually a description of the status quo, which is constantly changing, uniqueness evidence can quickly become outdated. Uniqueness for commonly used disadvantages should be updated before every tournament;

-Avoid taking it too far. If the status quo is too safe, the plan may not be sufficient to cause the impact. Ideally, the status quo will be close but not quite there;

-Have uniqueness for everything. If the disadvantage involves a long chain of events that the plan triggers, every event in that chain must be unique. That is, each individual event must be something that is not going to happen in the status quo.

Link

The **link** is the explanation of how the plan causes the disadvantage. The judge will be very curious to see how the Negative makes their generic disadvantage relevant to the specific Affirmative plan they are debating.

Example: Education is a state power. By implementing a federal education policy, the plan intrudes on states' rights and disrupts the balance of powers.

Tricks of the Trade

To win on links, Negatives should:

-Be specific. While it is helpful to have **generic links** that apply to many different cases, disadvantages are more compelling when they contain a **specific link** to the plan. The argument that education is a state power is a generic link. If they wanted to make a specific link from the school uniforms plan to the Federalism Disadvantage, the Negative

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would need to argue that school dress codes are the responsibility of state governments. They could also point to the unprecedented nature of a policy giving the federal government the ability to control a decision as small and personal as the clothing that individuals wear every day;

-Vary the links. A plan may cause a disadvantage in a number of different ways. For instance, education, school dress codes, and violence prevention may all be state powers on which the federal government should not intrude. The Affirmative will have a harder time beating three link stories than one;

-Analyze. Especially if there are no specific links, the Negative should give reasons why their generic links would apply especially well to the plan in question;

-Look to Inherency. Often, the Affirmative team's own Inherency evidence will provide disadvantage links. The Inherency for the example case might say that state and federal lawmakers worry that mandating school uniforms is a violation of federalism. Other times, Inherency might point to political opponents of the plan or people who worry about specific costs or drawbacks of it.

Impact

The **Impact** is the reason why the judge should care about an argument. In the case of a disadvantage, it is generally a quantification of how bad the disadvantage would be.

Example: If the federal balance of powers is disrupted, millions of Americans will lose precious freedoms.

Taking It To The Next Level

Advanced debaters must learn to use disadvantage impacts strategically to help them counteract powerful Affirmative arguments. Here are some suggestions:

-Think big. The Affirmative often has case impacts that are more likely to occur than the impacts of a disadvantage, meaning that they will probably win the propensity portion of impact analysis. To compensate, the Negative must have impacts that are large in magnitude to compel the judge to give them more weight in her decision.

-Aim for variety. Negatives should present some impacts that are large in magnitude, some that have a high propensity of occurring, and some with a short time frame. That way, the disadvantage will be competitive at all stages of impact comparison;

-Focus on the big picture. If the Affirmative is winning a big impact somewhere else in the debate, the Negative can use disadvantage impacts to beat it back. For example, one of the Affirmative's advantages is about guaranteeing the right to a free and equal

education. If the plan gives too much power to the federal government, however, people may end up losing many more rights and freedoms.

Brink

The **brink** is an indication of how close a disadvantage is to occurring. The closer the status quo is to the brink of the impact, the more likely the plan is to cause it.

Example: Since September 11th, America has been in the midst of a nationwide debate about the power of the federal government versus the individual freedoms of citizens. The next few years could determine the future of these issues for decades to come, and the plan shifts the balance in the wrong direction: towards removing limitations on the power of the federal government to control the lives of individuals.

Tricks of the Trade

To win on brinks, Negatives should:

-Stay up-to-date. If the brink evidence is old, the Affirmative could easily point to some current event and claim that it should have been sufficient to cause the disadvantage. Update brinks for commonly used disadvantages before every tournament;

-Have brinks for everything. If the disadvantage involves a long chain of events that the plan triggers, every event in that chain should be on the brink of occurring.

Internal Link

Internal links are arguments that explain in greater detail how the link leads to the impact. When the connection between the link and impact of a disadvantage is not obvious, the Negative must make internal link arguments to connect them.

Example: The problem with the plan is not just the freedoms that it directly restricts. It also creates a precedent for similar expansions of federal power in the future. In other words, it opens the door for many new violations of individual rights.

Timeframe

A **timeframe** is an indication of how long it would take for a disadvantage's impact to occur. A short timeframe is beneficial for the Negative because it means that their disadvantage is a pressing issue that must be dealt with immediately.

Example: The impact to the disadvantage is immediate. As soon as a student is forced to wear a uniform, her rights are violated.

Notice that this sounds a little like a brink argument. In fact, brinks and timeframes are closely related. If an impact is on the brink of occurring, then it will probably occur quickly once triggered.

Intrinsicness

Intrinsicness means that two things are so closely related that it is impossible to separate them. Wetness is intrinsic to rain because it is impossible to have rain that is not wet. If a disadvantage is intrinsic to the plan, then it will always occur if the plan is implemented; there will be no way of avoiding it.

Intrinsicness is not an all-or-nothing issue, though. The harder it is to prevent a disadvantage from occurring once the plan has been implemented, the more intrinsic that disadvantage is to the plan.

Example: The nature of government is such that it easily expands its power and only with great difficulty can that power be restricted again. Once the plan grants the federal government the authority to determine school dress codes, it will be very difficult to prevent the further erosion of freedoms or regain them once they are lost.

Linearity

There are actually two types of disadvantages: **linear** and **threshold**. So far, this chapter has discussed only threshold disadvantages, which assert that the plan will cause some new problem. Threshold disadvantages are all-or-nothing issues, which means the plan either will cause the disadvantage, or it will not.

Example: The plan either will disrupt the balance of power between state and federal governments, or it will not.

Linear disadvantages assert that the plan will make some existing problem worse. Because the impacts to linear disadvantages are already occurring, they do not need brinks or uniqueness. Instead, they must be bolstered by evidence that indicates exactly how much worse the plan will make an existing problem and why that increase in the size of the impact matters.

Example: States' rights are chipped away little by little, and even seemingly irrelevant policies can establish dangerous precedents. Every intrusion on states' rights makes US citizens that much less free.

Tying It All Together

Pushing a Television Out of a Window

It may be helpful to think about a disadvantage in terms of pushing a television out of a window:

Uniqueness: The television is not going to fall out of the window on its own
Link: Pushing the television will cause it to fall out of the window
Impact: The television will break when it hits the ground.

This disadvantage would be even more compelling if the Negative added the following components to their story:

Brink: The television is very near the window, so even a small shove could knock it out.
Internal Link: The window is far enough from the ground that the television will break when it lands.
Timeframe: The television will fall very fast and hit the ground within seconds of being pushed.
Intrinsicness: Once the television has fallen out of the window, there will be no way to keep it from hitting the ground.

The 1NC Shell

The 1NC rarely addresses every possible component when introducing a disadvantage into the round. Instead, she reads a **shell**, which is a pre-written collection of only the most important arguments on the disadvantage. Generally, a shell contains uniqueness, one link argument, any necessary internal links, and an impact. In other words, it contains enough information to tell a simple story and confront the Affirmative team with an argument that they cannot ignore. If the Negative team decides to extend a disadvantage later in the round, they will probably make new arguments to develop it further at that time.

Here is what a shell for the Federalism Disadvantage used as an example throughout this chapter might look like:

A. Uniqueness. There is currently a balance of powers, called federalism, between the federal and state governments. This delicate balance ensures that no one government becomes too powerful.

B. Link. Education is a state power. By implementing a federal education policy, the plan intrudes on states' rights and disrupts the balance of powers.

C. Impact. If the federal balance of powers is disrupted, millions of Americans will lose precious freedoms.

Notice that this shell contains a uniqueness argument but no brink argument. It also contains only one link: a generic one. There is nothing about how school uniforms

specifically would violate states' rights. These other arguments would probably get presented in the 2NC if the Negative chose to continue arguing this disadvantage.

Answering Disadvantages

Disadvantages can sound scary when they are first presented, but it is important to remember that at the end of the round the judge will be comparing them to the Affirmative case. Generally, this will be a favorable comparison for the Affirmative team, who have had considerably more time than their opponents to carefully construct a strong and compelling story.

When answering a disadvantage, the Affirmative's job is not necessarily to blow it out of the water. That would be nice, but all they really have to do is enough damage to keep the disadvantage's impacts from outweighing the case Harms. The way to accomplish this is to make answers to each level of the disadvantage (uniqueness, link, impact, etc.), with evidence when possible, but in their own words if necessary. Making a variety of answers to a disadvantage gives the Affirmative options for later in the round.

Quick and Easy Affirmative Answers

A disadvantage is a little like a house of cards; it is impressive when all of the pieces are in place, but if even one gets knocked out, the entire thing falls apart. If the Affirmative is able to take out even one of the basic components of a disadvantage (uniqueness, link, or impact), the entire position falls apart. There are a number of arguments that, with or without evidence, Affirmative debaters can adapt into simple but effective answers to nearly any disadvantage they encounter:

-No link. The link is like the keystone on which the entire disadvantage rests. The Affirmative should always contest the link to the plan that the Negative asserts.

-No specific link. If the Negative's link evidence does not mention the Affirmative's plan specifically, the Affirmative should be sure to point out that this makes their entire story less plausible.

-No internal link. Think through the Negative's story on the disadvantage and look for unjustified assumptions or leaps of logic that are not supported by evidence. This can be a valuable exercise during cross-examination, as well. The questioner can have the speaker walk her through the story of the disadvantage and ask her to point to the evidence that supports each step.

-Non-uniqueness. The link, all of the internal links, and the impact to the disadvantage must all be things that are not going to happen in the status quo. The Affirmative can look for other causes for these things or reasons why they are already going to happen. This is one way in which keeping up with current events really pays off: debaters may be able to

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point to a recently enacted federal policy that also links to the disadvantage, making it non-unique.

-No impact. Look for ways in which the Negative's impact story is implausible or exaggerated.

-Uniqueness overwhelms the link. Sometimes, a disadvantage's uniqueness is so strong that the plan would not be sufficient to cause the impact. For example, if the Negative argues that the American system of federalism is as strong as it has ever been, then a single education policy probably would not be sufficient to disrupt it. This argument can only be made if the Affirmative does not attack uniqueness. It would be inconsistent to argue that the disadvantage both lacks uniqueness and is so unique that there is no hope of a link.

-Empirically denied. 'Empirically' means based on experience or history. An empirically denied disadvantage is one that should have occurred before but did not. For example, the No Child Left Behind Act vastly expanded the federal role in education, but it did not lead to loss of freedoms for citizens.

-Case outweighs. The Affirmative should always bring the round back to the issues on which they have the upper hand: their case advantages. The last argument against any disadvantage should always compare the Harms of the case (favorably) to the impacts of the disadvantage and explain why the plan ought to be implemented even if the disadvantage is true. This gives the Affirmative a way to win even if they lose the disadvantage, which the Negative is probably more prepared to debate.

Impact Turns

Strong turns are the key to winning a disadvantage debate, as they allow the Affirmative to turn the Negative's argument into another reason to endorse their case. **Impact turns** take whatever the disadvantage says is bad and say that it is good instead. When the Affirmative successfully defends an impact turn, then the disadvantage becomes a new advantage to their plan. That is, the Negative tried to argue that the plan causes something bad to happen. However, the Affirmative turned the argument around on them by arguing that what the Negative says their plan causes is actually a good thing. Thus, the plan causes something good to happen; that is an advantage.

Example: The impact to the disadvantage is that federalism is destroyed and the federal government takes too much power away from state governments, enabling them to oppress the citizens of the US. To turn this impact, the Affirmative would need to argue that taking power away from state governments and destroying federalism is actually a good thing. They could argue that historically, states have used federalism and states' rights to justify racist education policies such as segregated school systems. If federalism is a shield for racism, then destroying it would be a good thing.

Tricks of the Trade

To win on impact turns, the Affirmative should:

-Be prepared. Winning an impact turn often requires extensive and very well-researched evidence, as the Negative will most likely respond with a wide variety of new impacts and takeouts to the Affirmative's turn. This is especially dangerous because the Negative team, who initiated the impact debate, are more likely to be prepared for it;

-Deal with the original impact. Just because a civil war would bring a better government to power in Russia does not mean that it would not kill many people in the process. Hopefully the Affirmative will have defensive arguments such as impact takeouts, but they can also win this debate with strong impact comparison and good analysis of why the link evidence supports their turn story more strongly than the Negative's original impact story.

Link Turns

A **link turn** argues that the plan actually prevents, rather than causes, the impact to the disadvantage. Like an impact turn, a link turn is an offensive argument. In other words, it turns the disadvantage into another advantage of the plan; it is something bad that the plan prevents.

Example: Gang violence disproportionately affects the education of minority students. Ensuring equal access to civil rights such as education is the role of the federal government, at least since the 14th Amendment. That means the plan does not violate federalism but actually has the federal government play its proper role as a defender of the rights of minorities.

A Word of Caution

The Affirmative should *never* argue link turns and impact turns against the same disadvantage. This is called a **double turn**, which means that the Affirmative has flipped the disadvantage around twice, so that it is once again a reason why the plan is a bad idea. This virtually guarantees that the Affirmative will lose the disadvantage and quite possibly the entire round.

Example: If federalism is weak now (non-uniqueness), the plan strengthens it (link turn), and federalism is a shield for racist state education policies (impact turn), then the plan creates a shield for racist state education policies.

To make a link turn offensive (the plan prevents the impact) rather than just defensive (the plan definitely does not cause the impact), the Affirmative must take out the

uniqueness to the disadvantage. In other words, if they want to turn the disadvantage into an advantage by proving that their plan prevents something bad from happening, the Affirmative must first prove that something bad is going to happen in the status quo. The plan cannot prevent an impact that is not going to happen in the first place. For example, if federalism is strong now (uniqueness), it does not matter that the Affirmative plan will make it stronger (link turn). The Affirmative would have to win that federalism is in danger now (non-uniqueness) in order to claim that their plan restores it (link turn).

Taking It To The Next Level

Generally, even when the Affirmative has some strong turns to a disadvantage, they will want to maximize their options by also making a variety of defensive arguments. This makes the disadvantage less threatening to them, but it also makes the turns less threatening to their opponents, who can get away from the turns by conceding one of the defensive arguments. Affirmatives who feel very strongly about their turns and want to force the Negative to deal with them sometimes choose to **straight-turn** a disadvantage.

Straight-turning an argument means making only offensive answers to it. When a disadvantage is straight-turned, there is no defensive argument that the Negative can concede to get out of the disadvantage painlessly. Thus, they are stuck having to deal with the Affirmative's turns.

Straight-turning allows the Affirmative to limit their opponents' options (they can no longer choose to kick out of the disadvantage), but in the process it constrains their options as well (they cannot rely on link or impact takeouts to save the day if the turns do not pan out). Affirmatives who want to play it a little bit safer may wish to make defensive arguments that do not conflict with their turn strategy.

For example, if the Affirmative wanted to argue the plan would actually strengthen federalism, they could still make defensive arguments against the Negative's uniqueness and link stories. They need to win that the disadvantage is non-unique to make their turns offensive anyway, and attacks to the original links usually will not conflict with the link turns.

Pushing a Television Out of a Window

It may be helpful to return to this analogy to explain Affirmative answers to disadvantages. Recall that the Negative's basic argument looked like this:

Uniqueness: The television is not going to fall out of the window on its own.
Link: Pushing the television will cause it to fall out of the window.
Impact: The television will break when it hits the ground.

Possible Affirmative answers to this position would look like this:

No Link: The television is bolted in place. Pushing it will not cause it to fall out of the window.

No Specific Link: Even if it is possible that pushing the television will cause it to fall out of the window, the person who is going to push it is not strong enough to push it that far.

No Internal Link: The television will not break because it will land on a trampoline under the window.

Non-Uniqueness: The television is already rolling towards the window. It will fall out even if nobody pushes it.

No Impact: The television is old and it does not work. No one will care if it gets broken.

Uniqueness Overwhelms the Link: The television is so far away from the window that it will not fall out no matter how hard it is pushed.

Empirically Denied: The television was pushed out of the window yesterday, but it did not break. There is no reason why today would be any different.

Case Outweighs: Pushing the television out of the way is necessary to make room for a new stereo system. Even if the television gets broken, the new stereo system is so cool that it will be worth it.

Impact Turn: The television will break, but it is insured. The insurance money can be used to buy an even better television.

Link Turn: The television is already rolling towards the opposite window. Pushing it will stop it from rolling out of that window.]

Defending Disadvantages

Ordinarily, for each disadvantage that the Negative wants to argue against the plan, the 1NC presents a shell that outlines the basic components of that position. But what does the Negative do in their later speeches? How does a disadvantage go from being a shell to being a round-winning argument? And what if the Negative decides that they do not want to argue one of their disadvantages anymore? This section will explain how to defend and develop a disadvantage that the Negative wants to keep in the round, and how to safely get rid of a disadvantage that they do not want anymore.

Developing Disadvantages

Most disadvantages are not as compelling as they could be when they are first presented in the 1NC. Frequently, they are in form of a shell, which is like a skeleton of the argument. Skeletons, like disadvantage shells, may look scary, but by themselves they cannot do very much. They need muscles, skin, a brain, etc. to be complete.

Similarly, if the Negative team hopes to use a disadvantage to win the round, they need to 'flesh it out'. The Negative debaters must 'put some skin on the bones' and 'give it some muscle'. In other words, they must read more evidence and make new arguments to support the claims in the 1NC shell.

This step-by-step guide will help Negative debaters defend their disadvantages and develop them into arguments that can win rounds:

1. Signpost. The debater should make sure the judge knows she is about to address the disadvantage. This gives the judge the opportunity to turn to the appropriate place on her flow. Once she has signaled her intention to talk about the disadvantage, she should say everything she has to say before moving on to another argument, so that she will not have to confuse the judge by returning to the disadvantage later in her speech.

2. Overview. The debater should give a concise summary of the disadvantage, especially if she has reason to think it is one the judge has not heard before or that the judge is generally unfamiliar with disadvantages. She should explain the story that the disadvantage is telling and pay special attention to explaining the link to the plan. This is her best chance to step away from the evidence and explain the arguments in her words and in a commonsense way that the judge will find appealing.

3. Refute. Disadvantages are powerful tools, but they are also very flimsy. If one part of them falls, the entire argument falls. Thus, the Negative must refute every Affirmative answer to a disadvantage that they hope to win. Using the skill of line-by-line debating, the debater should address every single Affirmative response individually and be sure that at the end of her speech, none of them is left standing.

4. Develop. The Negative can strengthen their disadvantage and make it more credible with additional link, uniqueness, or impact arguments, or with new arguments about, for example, the brink or timeframe to the disadvantage. These new arguments can even be integrated into the line-by-line refutation of the Affirmative's responses. For example, when answering a 'No Link' argument, the debater could both refute the specific warrants for the Affirmative claim and read one or more new links to the plan.

5. Impact. The impact evidence for the disadvantage should have been read in the 1NC. But that does not mean that the Negative is finished talking about the impacts. Once she is sure that she is winning the disadvantage, the debater should explain the impacts and compare them to the case Harms. An especially good strategy is to use new impacts to turn Affirmative advantages. For example, if the Affirmative claims to solve for poverty and starvation but the Negative has a disadvantage with a war impact, they can argue that war causes poverty and starvation, undermining any benefit the plan may have in this regard.

Taking It To The Next Level

On important positions, Negative debaters can take advantage of the time inequity between the Negative block and the 1AR by **triple-pointing**, that is, making three responses to each 2AC answer. This bogs down the 1AR and prevents her from extending other arguments that the 2NR would need to answer.]

Disposing of Disadvantages

Sometimes the 1NC makes a mistake and reads a disadvantage that does not work very well against a particular plan or that the Negative team is not prepared to defend. Sometimes the Affirmative team has surprisingly good answers to a disadvantage and the Negative decides they would rather try to win the round in a different way. Sometimes there just is not time to develop every argument in the round and something has to get cut, or the Negative deliberately presents a disadvantage that they do not intend to develop in order to waste their opponents' time. Regardless of the reason, there are times when the Negative will want to get one of their disadvantages out of the round so that neither they nor their opponents have to talk about it anymore.

Frequently, this is not as simple as just dropping it and never mentioning it again. They need to 'make a clean getaway' so that the argument will not come back to haunt them later. How might a disadvantage come back to haunt the Negative? If the Affirmative has made any turns, the disadvantage becomes another advantage for their case. Worse, it is one to which the judge will assign a good deal of credibility, since many of the arguments were initially made by the Negative and at any rate are now completely uncontested.

Fortunately for the Negative, this hazard can frequently be avoided with minimal effort. Provided they put some thought into how they get rid of their unwanted disadvantages, the Negative will not have to worry about any of their own arguments coming back to haunt them.

Getting away from a disadvantage cleanly requires **kicking** or **punting** a disadvantage. Both terms refer to the process by which a team tells the judge they wish to remove one of their own arguments from the round and then makes sure their opponents will not be able to use the argument against them. This step-by-step guide to kicking a disadvantage should help Negatives make a clean getaway:

1. Signpost. As always, the debater must tell the judge that she is about to address the disadvantage. She should also tell the judge that she is going to kick the argument so that there is no confusion later about whether or not the judge is meant to consider it in her decision.

2. Concede. The debater should find a *defensive* argument made by the Affirmative that, if true, makes the disadvantage irrelevant. Link, internal link, or impact takeouts are often good choices. If the Affirmative argues that education policy never affects federalism, then the Negative can concede this argument and make the entire disadvantage go away. Even if the Affirmative also has a link turn (plan will strengthen federalism) or an impact turn (it is good to destroy federalism), they would be irrelevant; since education policy will not affect federalism one way or the other, the plan will neither cause nor prevent the impact. Since this argument was originally made by the Affirmative, the judge will most

likely not allow them to try to refute their own argument in later speeches in the interest of keeping turns alive.

A Word of Caution

If debaters do not choose the argument that they concede carefully, they may end up doing more harm than good. One common mistake is conceding a non-uniqueness argument to take out a link turn. While non-uniqueness arguments do take out impact turns (if the impact is going to happen with or without the plan, then it does not matter whether it is good or bad), they actually make link turns stronger. Recall that for a link turn to be offensive, the Affirmative needs to win that the disadvantage is non-unique (if the impact is not going to happen now, the plan cannot prevent it). The Negative are doing their opponents a huge favor if they concede a non-uniqueness argument in an attempt to make a link turn go away.

Another common mistake is to concede link takeouts against link turns or impact takeouts against impact turns. Link takeouts do make impact turns irrelevant (if the plan does not cause the impact, then it does not matter whether the impact is good or bad), they do not make link turns irrelevant (although the plan may not cause the impact, it could still prevent it). Similarly, impact takeouts make link turns irrelevant (if there is no impact, then it does not matter whether the plan causes or prevents the disadvantage) but do not make impact turns irrelevant (although the impact may not be bad, it could still be good).

If this sounds complicated, well, it is. Debaters worried about keeping all of this straight can protect themselves by taking a little extra time to concede multiple defensive answers. As long as they choose at least one correct argument to concede, it does not matter how many wrong ones they also concede; a single correct concession generally makes the entire disadvantage go away, turns and all.

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3. Explain. Debaters should never assume that their logic or arguments are obvious to the judge. Thus, it is not enough merely to concede a defensive argument and move on. The debater must explain why the argument she has chosen to concede makes the entire disadvantage, including any Affirmative turns, irrelevant. A relatively thorough understanding of disadvantages and how they work is helpful here.

Box: Taking It To The Next Level

Crafty Affirmatives who do not want to let the Negative get away from turned disadvantages so easily will occasionally **straight-turn** a disadvantage. Straight-turning an argument means making only offensive answers to it. When a disadvantage is straight-turned, there is no defensive argument that the Negative can concede to get out of the disadvantage painlessly.

There is no easy way to get away from a straight-turned disadvantage. The Negative's best bet is to buckle-down and try to beat back each of the Affirmative's turns. Once they have decided to invest this much time in the position, it probably is worth doing the extra work to extend the disadvantage rather than kick out of it.

In addition to making standard answers to the turns, the Negative should do what they can to keep their original link and impact scenarios competitive. In other words, if the Affirmative answers a Federalism Disadvantage with a variety of arguments about why federalism is bad, the Negative should both answer these and come up with reasons why federalism is still on-balance good. This may involve a comparison of the Negative's impacts versus the Affirmative turns on issues such as magnitude, propensity, and timeframe, and also a consideration of which are more consistent with the original link arguments (which the Affirmative has conceded).

If several of the Affirmative turns depend on the same premise, the Negative can deal will all of them at once by attacking that premise. For example, if the Affirmative has a number of different arguments about how bad racism is, the Negative can refute them all by refuting the claim that federalism is a shield for racism. No matter how bad racism it is, that is irrelevant if federalism does not actually uphold racism.

Topicality

Recall that each year, there is a resolution that defines the topic area that every debater in the country will discuss. It is the job of the Affirmative to uphold the resolution. The plan, which becomes the focus of any given debate, is an example that the Affirmative uses to demonstrate the desirability of the resolution as whole. In terms of claims and warrants, the Affirmative's argument looks like this:

Claim: The resolution should be affirmed
Warrant: The plan, which is an example of the resolution, is a good idea.

So far, when discussing the Negative team, this book has assumed that whether they are attacking the Affirmative's Inherency, Harms, or Solvency or whether they are arguing a disadvantage, they are fundamentally attacking the Affirmative team's claim that the plan is a good idea. That is, this book has assumed that the Negative's argument looks like this:

Claim: The resolution should not be affirmed.
Warrant: The plan, which is an example of the resolution, is not a good idea.

But what if, instead, the Negative wanted to contest the Affirmative's claim that the plan is an example of the resolution? Their argument would then look like this:

Claim: The resolution should not be affirmed
Warrant: The plan, though it may be a good idea, is not an example of the resolution.

In other words, the plan, no matter how good of an idea it is, does the Affirmative no good if it does not fall within the resolution.

The Affirmative has some incentive to propose an obscure plan that the Negative will not be prepared to debate. When the Negative feels that their opponents have pushed the envelope too far, they can use an argument called **Topicality** to argue that the Affirmative's plan, no matter how desirable, is irrelevant because it is not a legitimate example of the resolution. In fact, the Negative may have little choice but to make this argument; if the plan is truly unrelated to the resolution, the Negative may be completely unprepared to argue disadvantages or case attacks.

Topicality is the burden of the Affirmative team to advocate a plan that fits within the resolution. Although Topicality is an off-case argument, it is one of the Stock Issues that the Affirmative needs to win. Unlike Harms, Solvency, and Inherency, however, the Affirmative plan is presumed to be topical until the Negative challenges it. To win that the Affirmative is non-topical, the Negative must show that the plan is not actually an example of the resolution, and hence not something that they should be debating.

Parts of a Topicality Violation

Interpretation

When building a Topicality violation, the Negative first presents their **interpretation** of the resolution. An interpretation is an opinion about what the resolution requires of the Affirmative team. Though it usually includes a definition, an interpretation is more than just a definition. It must also explain what the resolution would require of the Affirmative if its definition is correct. Usually, the Negative narrows the scope of their interpretation by specifying one or more words or terms in the resolution that they feel the Affirmative fails to meet.

Example: Establish means "to make firm." Thus, the plan must make firm an existing anti-violence policy, by expanding it or increasing its funding, for example, rather than creating a new policy.

Although debaters choose the interpretation that they wish to defend during a Topicality debate, the interpretation should generally not be solely their opinion. Rather, debaters should support their interpretations with the opinion of experts, just as they would with any other argument. Evidence on this point could come either from a dictionary or from an expert in the topic area. Dictionaries are fine for common words like 'establish.' Words such as 'education policy', however, often have specific meanings in the context of public policy and are best defined by experts in the relevant field.

Such words are called **terms of art**, meaning that the way they are used in a particular field of study differs from their everyday usage. The word 'education', for example, has a very broad meaning in everyday English and could encompass nearly any learning that anyone does at any point in her life. In the context of the term of art 'education policy', however, it refers specifically to formal, government-sponsored instruction of children and young adults.

Violation

The **violation** is the Negative's explanation of how the Affirmative team's plan fails to meet their interpretation of the resolution. If the Negative is not able to explain why the plan does not meet their interpretation, then they should not be using that interpretation!

Example: There is no federally mandated school uniforms program now. Thus, the plan is not making an existing program firm, but rather creating a new one.

It is usually sufficient for debaters to explain the violation portion of Topicality in their own words. It could be supported by evidence, however, to give it extra credibility.

Taking It To The Next Level

Advanced debaters sometimes use Topicality violations even when they have no intention of trying to win the round on them. Usually, they have at least one of two other goals in mind: to force their opponents to spend valuable time answering it, or to get the Affirmative to unwittingly provide a link to a different off-case position.

When Topicality is used primarily as a way of consuming the Affirmative's time, it is sometimes derogatorily called a **time suck**. This can be a risky strategy both because judges often do not appreciate it and because, if the Affirmative recognizes what the Negative is up to, they may spend less time answering it then the Negative did bringing it up!

Using Topicality to get links to other positions, however, is considered by many judges to exhibit a sophisticated grasp of how various arguments interact in a debate round. Imagine, for example, that the Affirmative wanted to make sure they won a link to a spending disadvantage. They might interpret the phrase 'establish an education policy' as requiring the Affirmative to have the federal government provide money as part of their plan. In order to avoid losing on Topicality, the Affirmative might then argue that their plan does have the federal government spend money. In doing so, they have conceded the link to the spending disadvantage, which they might otherwise have contested.

Standards

The Affirmative plan will rarely meet the Negative's interpretation of the resolution. After all, if it did, the Negative would not have chosen that interpretation. The Affirmative, then, will need to offer their own interpretation of the word or words in question that their plan does meet. That means the debate will come down to the question of whose interpretation is better.

Standards are reasons debaters give the judge to prefer one interpretation to another. Standards are where the real meat of a Topicality debate should occur.

One interpretation can be 'better' than another in one of two senses: it can be either more correct or better for debate. An interpretation that is more 'correct' than another may be more grammatical (the **grammar** standard), come from a more knowledgeable or reliable source (the **source** standard), or make more sense within the larger context of the resolution (the **context** standard). These are all standards that the Negative might propose. As they propose each standard, they should explain why it favors their interpretation. If it does not, then they should not be proposing it!

The other major type of standards concerns which interpretation is better for debate. In other words, these standards evaluate which interpretation would lead to debates that best promote values such as fairness, education, and entertainment. Popular standards in this category include **limits** (does the interpretation restrict the Affirmative to a fair number

of cases, neither too large nor too small?), **ground** (does the interpretation allow the Negative access to potent case attacks and disadvantages?), and **bright line** (does the interpretation clearly distinguish topical from non-topical cases, thereby minimizing the need for the judge to interject her own opinion into the round?).

Example: This interpretation sets the best limits on the topic. The number of new anti-violence policies that the Affirmative could invent is literally infinite; the Negative could never prepare for them all. Forcing the Affirmative to expand an existing program limits them to a finite number of possible cases for which the Negative can reasonably be expected to prepare.

Tricks of the Trade

When arguing standards, the Negative should:

-Be specific. Rather than just saying, "the Affirmative's interpretation destroys limits on the topic," they should explain exactly which plans it justifies and why those are bad;

-Be creative. There is no comprehensive list of standards. Standards can be any reason a debater can think of for why her interpretation is the best one. The standards mentioned above are simply a few of the most popular;

-Aim for variety. Negatives should present several standards of both types;

-Make comparisons. Debaters should never leave it up to the judge to decide how to apply the standards. It is their job to explain why each standard favors their interpretation.

Voting Issue

A **voting issue** is an argument that can decide the round all by itself. When the Negative team argues that Topicality is a voting issue, they are saying that, if the Affirmative loses Topicality, they should automatically lose the round. Note that this is not the case with a disadvantage. The Affirmative could lose on the disadvantage but win the round anyway because the advantages of their case overwhelm the disadvantage. So, a disadvantage is not a voting issue.

Topicality is not necessarily a voting issue, either. The Negative has the burden of explaining why the Affirmative should lose the round if they lose Topicality. This may seem strange, as Topicality is essentially a rule of debate. This is one of the more extreme examples of how everything is debatable. The thinking is that if it is truly important for the Affirmative to stay within the confines of the resolution as strictly interpreted by the Negative, then the Negative should be able to explain why it is so important.

There are many arguments that can be made for why Topicality is a voting issue. One popular one relates to **fairness**. In other words, it argues that if the Affirmative plan is not topical, the Negative does not have a fair chance to win the round. The resolution is what guides the Negative team's research preparation. It is hard enough for them to prepare to debate all of the cases within the resolution; if the Affirmative is allowed to propose absolutely anything they want, then the Negative's task becomes impossible.

In order to vote on fairness, many judges will want to hear a clear explanation of **abuse**. That is, the judge will want the Negative to explain exactly which arguments they were unable to make against the plan and why those arguments are so important. Sometimes, judges will settle for explanations of **potential abuse**. Potential abuse means unfair things that did not actually happen in the round, but that could happen in future rounds if the Affirmative's interpretation of the resolution is accepted.

Another argument for why Topicality is a voting issue is **jurisdiction**. Jurisdiction means the area in which someone has authority. For example, a parent has jurisdiction over her own children, but not over a stranger's children. So, she can tell her own children what to do, but she cannot tell a stranger's children what to do.

Judges in courts of law also have limited jurisdiction. A state court judge cannot convict someone under federal law, nor can a federal judge convict someone under state law. The jurisdictional argument for why Topicality is a voting issue compares the judge in a debate round to a judge in a court of law by saying that she has no jurisdiction to vote for a plan that is not an example of the resolution. That means that no matter how good an idea the plan may be, if it is not topical, it does not help the Affirmative team meet their burden of affirming the resolution, and so the judge has no choice but to vote Negative.

Example: Topicality is a voting issue for fairness. If a policy already exists, there is more likely to be literature for and against it. When the Affirmative is allowed to create a brand new policy, the Negative cannot prepare for the infinite number of possibilities and even if they could, there may not be Negative literature in existence. This makes good case attacks impossible. The judge must vote on Topicality because the Negative does not have a fair shot at winning the round otherwise.

Tying It All Together

The 1NC Shell

Just as they do with a disadvantage, the Negative often presents their most important Topicality arguments in the form of a shell during the 1NC. A shell for the 'Establish' Topicality violation used as an example in this chapter might look like this:

A. Interpretation. Establish means "to make firm." Thus, the plan must make firm an existing anti-violence policy, by expanding it or increasing its funding, for example, rather than creating a new policy.

B. Violation. There is no federally mandated school uniforms program now. Thus, the plan is not making an existing program firm, but rather creating a new one.

C. Standards. This interpretation sets the best limits on the topic. The number of new anti-violence policies that the Affirmative could invent is literally infinite; the Negative could never prepare for them all. Forcing the Affirmative to expand an existing program limits them to a finite number of possible cases for which the Negative can reasonably be expected to prepare.

D. Voting Issue. Topicality is a voting issue for fairness. If a policy already exists, there is more likely to be literature for and against it. When the Affirmative is allowed to create a brand new policy, the Negative cannot prepare for the infinite number of possibilities and even if they could, there may not be Negative literature in existence. This makes good case attacks impossible. The judge must vote on Topicality because the Negative does not have a fair shot at winning the round otherwise.

Extra-Topicality

What if the Affirmative plan meets every word of the resolution, but also takes non-topical action? For example, a plan might require school uniforms in public *and* private high schools. The first part of the plan would be topical, so there is no word in the resolution that the Affirmative would not meet. However, the second part of the plan would not meet the term 'public'. This is called **extra-topicality**, which means that although the Affirmative's plan meets the resolution, it goes beyond it as well.

The Negative must explain why this is unfair to them, and hence why extra-topicality should be a voting issue. Frequently, the Affirmative is able to claim some unfair advantage from the non-topical action that their plan takes. Some Affirmatives, however, may suggest that even if they are extra-topical, they should not lose the round altogether. Instead, the judge should just disregard the extra-topical portion of the plan and then make her decision based on the topical part alone. It is the job of the debaters to convince the judge of how to resolve the issue of extra-topicality.

Effects Topicality

Effects topicality means that, although the action that the plan takes is not directly topical, it will *cause* something topical to happen. For instance, the plan might teach kindergartners non-violent conflict resolution skills. This policy will probably not directly decrease violence in schools. However, if more Americans grow up with the skills to resolve conflicts nonviolently, there might be less violence in schools five or ten years later.

The Negative would have to argue that the plan must itself be a topical action, not merely have topical action as one of its effects. It can be rather difficult to draw a bright line between plans that are on-face topical and those that are not. Thus, it is the Negative team's burden to explain why the action that a particular Affirmative plan takes is uniquely unfair to them.

Answering Topicality

While Topicality is very dangerous to the Affirmative if unanswered, Affirmatives must also decide how threatening a particular violation is before they spend too much time responding to it. It is easy to get so wrapped up in answering topicality that one runs out of time to make adequate responses to other arguments that may be at least as threatening, if not more so. This section explains how to answer each component of the Negative's Topicality argument: the interpretation, the violation, the standards, and the voting issue.

Counter-Interpretation

A **counter-interpretation** is an interpretation of the resolution that the Affirmative offers as an alternative to that of the Negative team. The Negative almost always interprets the resolution in a way that the Affirmative plan is unable to meet, making it critical for the Affirmative to offer a counter-interpretation that the plan does meet.

Example: 'Establish' means to create. The plan must be a new policy, not an expansion of an existing one. The plan does create a new policy because there are not currently federally mandated school uniforms.

Notice that in addition to presenting an interpretation of their own, the Affirmative also explains why their plan meets that interpretation. This should be easy (if it is not, the Affirmative should choose a different counter-interpretation), but it is essential. A counter-interpretation that the plan does not meet is no better than a Negative interpretation that the plan does not meet.

If the Topicality violation is an especially threatening one, the Affirmative may choose to hedge their bets by making more than one counter-interpretation. This can be very time-consuming, however, so they should do so only with very good reason.

"We Meet"

The Affirmative should always allow for the possibility that they might lose the counter-interpretation. Thus, they should also argue that the plan does, in fact, meet the Negative's interpretation. That way, even if the judge decides that the Negative's

interpretation is superior, the Affirmative will not necessarily lose the debate. As long as they meet the Negative's interpretation, it does not matter if it is better.

Example: Some schools already have school uniform policies. The plan expands this into a nation-wide policy.

Counter Standards

Counter standards are ways that the Affirmative proposes for the judge to choose between competing interpretations of the resolution. They function exactly like the standards the Negative team proposes, except that the Affirmative will want to choose standards that favor their interpretation.

Affirmatives should also make arguments about why the standards that the Negative proposes actually favor the Affirmative's counter-interpretation, but it is not sufficient for them to do only this. The entire Topicality debate is often decided based on which interpretation is better. If the Affirmative does not offer standards of their own, then the judge will have only the Negative's standards to use when making this all-important decision. It is dangerous, to say the least, for the Affirmative to grant the Negative so much control over the outcome of the round.

It is also wise for the Affirmative to compare their counter standards to the Negative's standards. It is quite likely that the Affirmative's standards will favor the Affirmative's interpretation and the Negative's standards will favor the Negative interpretation, in which case the judge will have to decide which standards are most important. As always, the debaters should not leave this decision up to the judge's discretion, but should instead make arguments for why the standards that favor their interpretation are best.

Example: The counter-interpretation guarantees the Negative unique ground. If the Affirmative were allowed to expand an existing policy, then most Negative arguments would be non-unique because of the existence of the previous policy. Requiring the Affirmative to create a new policy guarantees the Negative unique links.

Tricks of the Trade

When arguing counter standards, the Affirmative should:

-Aim for variety. They should present standards for why the counter-interpretation is both more correct and better for debate;

-Help the Negative. They should make arguments for why the counter-interpretation actually makes debate rounds easier for the Negative team than the Negative's own interpretation does

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Not a Voting Issue

While the inclination of many judges will be to treat Topicality as a voting issue, this is not always a foregone conclusion. The Affirmative can refute the warrants that the Negative gives for why Topicality should be a round-determining issue.

Example: The Affirmative should not have to comply with every possible interpretation of the resolution that the Negative can cook up. As long as the plan meets a reasonable interpretation of the resolution, that should be sufficient to satisfy the burden of Topicality.

Note that this argument is more nuanced than the claim that Topicality should never decide a debate round. While judges are rarely willing to accept that Topicality should never be a voting issue, Affirmatives can often win some middle ground.

Tricks of the Trade

When arguing that Topicality is not a voting issue, Affirmatives should:

-Prove there was no abuse. If the Negative was prepared to debate the case and had the evidence to make case attacks and links to off-case arguments, the plan was not unfair to them.

-Take credit for disclosure. In leagues that require disclosure of a case being run in advance of a tournament, the Affirmative can claim that this prevents any unfairness that might be caused by a non-topical case, as the Negative had an opportunity to prepare for it regardless. The same works for cases from Core Files that were distributed to everyone in the league, or if information about the plan is published on a caselist somewhere.

Defending Topicality Violations

Topicality is a popular argument for Negatives to make because they have everything to gain and nothing to lose from it. If they happen to win on Topicality, then they win the round. If they do not win on Topicality, they have lost nothing except the time they invested in arguing it. Unlike a disadvantage, Topicality cannot really be turned. Thus, the Negative can kick out of it whenever they like without having to worry about any offensive arguments coming back to haunt them.

Taking It To The Next Level

Very occasionally, Affirmative teams will make offensive answers to a Topicality violation. These may be in the form of theory arguments, called **reverse voting issues** because they ask the judge to vote against the Negative rather than for them based on Topicality, or they may be in the form of critiques of the topicality violation. In either

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case, the Negative must answer these offensive arguments before they can kick the Topicality violation.

The fact that Topicality is a must-win argument for the Affirmative but not for the Negative, however, also means that judges often give the Affirmative some leeway on the issue. That is, they may require more convincing to vote on Topicality than they do to vote on other issues. That means that when the Negative extends Topicality in later speeches and tries to win on it, they may have a little extra work to do. The remainder of this section offers some advice on how Negatives can overcome the slight reluctance of many judges to vote on Topicality.

Answering Counter-Interpretations

When the Negative first presents their interpretation and standards in the 1NC, they do not yet know exactly what the Affirmative's counter-interpretation will be. All they can do is take their best guess and try to choose standards that support their own interpretation fairly well.

That makes it all the more important to answer counter-interpretations thoroughly in future speeches. This step-by-step guide will help Negatives deal with Affirmative counter-interpretations:

1. **Claim They Do Not Meet.** The Negative can begin by arguing that the plan does not even meet the Affirmative's own counter-interpretation. This will often be tough to win, but the payoff is potentially huge. If there is no interpretation of the resolution that the plan meets, then the Affirmative cannot possibly win on Topicality.

2. **Use the 1NC Standards.** Most of the time, the Negative will not be able to prove that the Affirmative fails to meet their own counter-interpretation. Thus, to win on Topicality, they must convince the judge that the Negative interpretation is best. That means explaining why the original 1NC standards favor the Negative's interpretation over the Affirmative's counter-interpretation.

3. **Introduce New Standards.** The Negative should look for weaknesses in the counter-interpretation and suggest new standards that exploit them. For instance, if the counter-interpretation is especially grammatically incorrect, the Negative might want to introduce a new grammar standard. Since new standards are new arguments, they may only be introduced in the 2NC.

4. **Answer the Affirmative's Standards.** Usually, the Affirmative will give some of their own reasons for why the counter-interpretation is superior to the Negative's interpretation. When possible, the Negative should try to argue that these new standards actually favor their original interpretation.

5. **Weigh standards.** Later in the debate, the Negative must recognize which standards favor their interpretation and which favor the Affirmative's. Then, they must make arguments for why the standards that favor their interpretation are best.

6. **Repeat as Necessary.** Sometimes, Affirmatives make more than one counter-interpretation. If this is the case, the Negative must answer each one separately. Often they can cross-apply some similar answers, but they must be sure that they take relevant differences between the interpretations into consideration. If they were all the same argument, the Affirmative probably would not have taken the time to make all of them.

Selling It

Answering all of the Affirmative's arguments on the line-by-line is important, but even more so than with a disadvantage, the Negative cannot hope to win on Topicality if this is all that they do. Frequently, Topicality shells contain only very generic explanations of why Topicality is a voting issue. However, judges usually want to hear thorough and specific explanations of abuse and unfairness before they will vote on Topicality. That means that Negative speakers must devote time to explaining exactly what is so bad about the Affirmative team's plan if they want to win on Topicality.

This can come in the form of an overview or **underview** (like an overview, but at the end of a speech rather than the beginning) in which a debater tells a clear and convincing story about why the plan is unfair to them. This story should cover a number of issues:

-Arguments that the Negative wanted to run but could not. Debaters should reference some very specific arguments that they were unable to use and explain why the reason that they were not able to use them was the non-topicality of the plan. For example, if the Negative is arguing that the resolution requires the plan to spend money, then a Spending Disadvantage would be a good example of an argument that the Negative wanted to run but could not.

-Reasons why those arguments are important. Just because the Negative could not run their favorite disadvantage does not automatically make the Affirmative non-topical. The Negative must be able to explain why the arguments they were denied are so important. Usually, this will be because they are at the 'heart' of the topic; that is, they are the arguments that real-world experts in the topic area usually make. For example, if the resolution called for the Affirmative to defend censorship and the plan made it impossible for the Negative to argue that freedom of speech is good, they would have reason to complain: freedom of speech is the most common real-world argument made against censorship.

-Cases that are topical. The Negative must be able to prove that their interpretation is fair to the Affirmative. That means they must be able to give examples of popular Affirmative plans that *would* meet their interpretation. This requires a bit of familiarity with the current debate topic and how it is being argued, as debaters should refer to

specific cases that other teams in their league are using and specific policies that real world experts in the topic area advocate.

Finally, if the Negative wants the judge to take their Topicality argument seriously, they must take it seriously themselves. That means devoting a substantial amount of time to it during the 2NC or 1NR and during the 2NR. Beginning debaters should probably extend only Topicality into the 2NR if that is the argument they think they are most likely to win on. Even if they feel like they are forced to repeat themselves in order to spend a full five minutes on Topicality, they may also end up forcing themselves to say exactly the things the judge was waiting to hear.

As debaters become more experienced, more efficient, and better able to identify which arguments they will need to make, they may be able to extend Topicality and another argument into the 2NR. However, they must still be sure to treat Topicality seriously. If they spend 30 seconds on Topicality and the rest of their time on a disadvantage, they will probably win the round on the disadvantage or not win the round at all. Judges are not likely to vote on any argument that gets only 30 seconds in the 2NR, but they are especially unlikely to do so with Topicality.

Counterplans

Imagine that Roberto is hungry and wants to order a pizza. His friend, Dominique, wants to argue that ordering pizza is not a good idea. Using the arguments discussed in this book so far, she could attack Roberto's Harms ("You are not hungry") or Solvency ("Pizza will not fill you up"). She could also present disadvantages to the proposal ("Pizza is bad for your health").

But in the end, she is not likely to convince Roberto that he is not hungry. And if he is really, really hungry, then he is not going to care that pizza will not be completely filling or that it will be bad for his health. If Dominique is going to convince him not to order a pizza, she will have to come up with some other way to satisfy his hunger. This could involve making a sandwich or ordering another kind of food, but if she cannot offer some alternative way of dealing with his hunger, it will be very difficult to convince him not to order a pizza.

Negatives often encounter a similar situation in debate rounds. Sometimes, the Affirmative plan deals with a problem that is so bad that it does not seem to matter how many Solvency answers or disadvantages the Negative presents. Some Harms, such as racism, slavery, or genocide, are so important to address that judges are willing to pay nearly any cost to deal with them.

In such situations, a **counterplan** can be a valuable tool in the Negative's arsenal. A counterplan is a policy proposal that the Negative team defends as a superior alternative to the Affirmative plan. This allows them to agree with the Affirmative that the problem the plan addresses is an important one but disagree with the Affirmative's proposed solution. In other words, rather than trying to argue that racism is not a problem or that nothing should be done about it, the Negative can agree that it is a problem but claim that the plan is not the right way to go about solving it.

Fiat

Recall that the Affirmative team uses fiat power to overcome their inherent barrier so that, for the purposes of the round, everyone debates in a hypothetical world where the plan has been passed. This can create a bit of an imbalance: the Affirmative gets to defend any policy they want, even something that the federal government would never realistically do, while the Negative is stuck defending things as they are now.

The option of using a counterplan makes the power of fiat reciprocal. In other words, it gives the Negative the same opportunity to choose the policy they will defend.

Recall also that the reason the Affirmative gets fiat power in the first place is so that they can test the desirability of the resolution. They get to fiat their plan, an example of the resolution, into existence, and then the debaters argue about whether or not that plan is

desirable. If it is, then the resolution passes the test and the Affirmative wins. If it is not, then the resolution fails the test and the Negative wins.

The power of the Negative team to fiat a counterplan also contributes to this test of the resolution. By presenting a counterplan, the Negative is better able to test whether the Affirmative plan actually justifies the resolution. After all, if the Affirmative's entire case is just about how school uniforms decrease violence, does that really justify having the *federal government* mandate school uniforms? A Negative team running a counterplan would argue that the Affirmative has only shown that *someone* should mandate school uniforms, not that it must be the federal government. If the Affirmative cannot show some unique benefit to action by the federal government, that is, if they cannot show that the plan is a superior policy option to a counterplan that has a different actor implement school uniform policies, then they have not justified the resolution.

The Parts of a Counterplan

Text

Just like the Affirmative plan, the Negative counterplan must have a detailed **text**. A counterplan text spells out word-for-word the exact policy that the Negative team is advocating. Counterplans that are testing the need for a single word in the resolution will often change only that word from the Affirmative's plan text and read the rest of it without modification.

Example: The governments of the fifty states will require all public high schools to adopt mandatory school uniform policies.

Note that this sample counterplan text is identical to sample plan proposed by the Affirmative in Chapter Three except that it replaces 'the United States federal government' with 'the governments of the fifty states". This allows the Negative to agree both that gang violence is a serious problem and that school uniforms are a good way to deal with that problem. However, they will argue that state governments, not the federal government, should implement school uniform policies.

Non-Topicality

Some judges are of the opinion that counterplans should always be non-topical, since the Negative's job is to negate the resolution, and a topical counterplan would still demonstrate that the resolution is a good idea, even if the plan is not. Others feel that once the Affirmative has chosen a plan, they must defend that plan, and not just the resolution, to win the round. Ultimately, this is a matter that should be debated out within the round, if the Affirmative wishes to press the issue. Many Negatives choose to explain why the counterplan is non-topical as soon as they present it just in case.

Example: The counterplan is non-topical because it uses the state governments, violating the term 'federal government' in the resolution.

Competition

To say that a counterplan is **competitive** is to say that there is some reason why the judge must choose between it and the plan. If it were possible and desirable to implement both policies, then the counterplan would not be a reason to vote against the Affirmative plan. For example, just because the states *could* implement the plan does not mean the federal government *should not* implement the plan. In fact, having multiple governments working together on the policy might be the best choice!

In terms of claims and warrants, the argument for a counterplan looks like this:

Claim: The plan is a bad idea.
Warrant: By implementing the plan, the judge loses the opportunity to implement a better policy: the counterplan.

This demonstrates that competition is really the heart of a counterplan, because it is what ensures that, by implementing the plan, the judge loses the opportunity to implement the counterplan.

If a counterplan is not competitive, then it is not an argument against the plan. To return to the pizza analogy, suppose Dominique suggests that, instead of ordering a pizza, Roberto listens to the new CD that he bought. That might be a fine idea, but it is not a reason not to order pizza. In fact, Roberto would probably prefer to order pizza *and* listen to his new CD. For her counterplan to be competitive, Dominique would have to prove that Roberto either could not or should not do both the counterplan and the plan.

If a plan and a counterplan cannot both be done, then the counterplan is **mutually exclusive** with the plan. For example, if the plan proposes giving more money to the Department of Homeland Security and the counterplan proposes eliminating the Department of Homeland Security, they are mutually exclusive. If the department were eliminated, it could not be given money.

Mutual exclusivity is the best kind of competition: since both policies *cannot* be implemented at the same time, the judge has no choice but to pick one or the other. If the Negative wins that the counterplan is the better policy option, the judge will choose the counterplan. Then, she will have no choice but to reject the plan, since she cannot implement both.

It is very rare for two policies to be completely mutually exclusive, though. Fortunately for the Negative, a counterplan is also considered competitive if it is simply a bad idea to implement both it and the plan at the same time. In other words, just because a judge *could* implement both policies does not mean that she *should* do so. If the Negative team

can demonstrate that their counterplan is preferable to both the plan *and* a combination of the plan and counterplan, then the counterplan is competitive.

When a counterplan is superior to a combination of the plan and the counterplan, it is said to compete by **net benefits**. Net benefits simply means that on balance, there are advantages to choosing that counterplan over any other policy option, including any possible combination of the plan and the counterplan.

To win that a counterplan is competitive, the Negative must prove that it is mutually exclusive *or* net beneficial. It does *not* have to be both.

Example: Whenever the federal and state governments work together to implement a policy, the federal government always takes over. That means that the federal government ends up trampling on states' rights, which is the link to the Federalism disadvantage. The only way to avoid the Federalism disadvantage is to implement just the counterplan, which has the state governments act alone.

This is an example of competition by net benefits. The net benefit here is the Federalism Disadvantage, which only implementing the counterplan by itself avoids. According to the Negative's assertions in the Chapter Four examples, the plan links to the Federalism Disadvantage. According to the Negative's analysis in this example, any combination of federal and state government action (i.e., any combination of the plan and the counterplan) also links to the Federalism disadvantage. Disadvantages that the counterplan avoids but permutations do not are often used as counterplan net benefits.

Solvency

Counterplans are rarely helpful if they do not solve at least part of the Affirmative's case, as their purpose is generally to show that there is some way to achieve the benefits of the plan without incurring the drawbacks. While the similarities between the counterplan and the plan often allow the Negative to capture some of the Affirmative's Solvency evidence, judges are most persuaded by counterplans that have at least some specific Solvency of their own.

Example: Schools need the funding they get from their state governments. State mandated school uniform policies will be implemented for fear of losing that money. The counterplan captures all of the Affirmative Solvency evidence about why uniforms are good.

In this example, the Negative both borrows some of the Affirmative's Solvency arguments and makes some new ones of their own. Since the counterplan also uses school uniforms, all of the Affirmative's evidence about how school uniforms are effective applies equally well to the counterplan. The Negative also makes arguments about how state governments, which the counterplan uses and the plan does not, would be even better at implementing school uniforms than the federal government, which the plan

uses and the counterplan does not. Superior solvency is another popular way of providing net benefits for a counterplan.

Taking It To The Next Level

Occasionally, advanced debaters may want to use a counterplan as part of a very different strategy: to provide uniqueness for a disadvantage or critique. Usually, this occurs when the Affirmative is expanding on some existing policy that the Negative wants to criticize.

For example, if the Affirmative plan is to provide more money for the Department of Homeland Security, the Negative might want to say that the Department of Homeland Security is bad. They could do so in the form of a disadvantage, a solvency turn, or a critique, but no matter what, the Affirmative will probably say that the argument is non-unique, since the Department of Homeland Security already exists in the status quo.

To get around that otherwise devastating argument, the Negative could use a counterplan to abolish the Department of Homeland Security. For this type of counterplan, they would not use solvency evidence to demonstrate that the counterplan solves for the case Harms, since that is not the purpose of the counterplan. Instead, they would use Solvency evidence to prove that the counterplan solves the disadvantage, making it unique to the Affirmative plan. They would need to find a different way to deal with the Harms.

Net Benefits

The **net benefits** are the reasons why the counterplan is better than the plan. These include superior solvency, disadvantages that link to the plan but not the counterplan, or new advantages that link to the counterplan but not the plan. The Negative might read these arguments as part of their counterplan, or they might read them separately and just explain why they are net benefits when presenting their counterplan.

Example: The counterplan solves all of the case and avoids the Federalism disadvantage.

A Word of Caution

Do not be confused by the use of the term 'net benefits' in different places. It always means the same thing: a reason why one policy is on-balance better than another. In other words, it might have both advantages and disadvantages when compared to another policy, but in the end the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.

The term appears in multiple places here because the counterplan must be net beneficial when compared to the plan and when compared to any possible combination of the plan and the counterplan.

Tying It All Together

Ordering a Pizza

Returning to the pizza analogy introduced at the beginning of this chapter, imagine that Dominique decides to offer a counterplan to Roberto's plan to order a pizza. In terms of the counterplan structure used in policy debate, her argument might look like this:

Text: Order a sandwich.
Non-Topicality: A sandwich is not a pizza. (If Dominique's counterplan were to order a pepperoni pizza, it would be topical. Since pepperoni pizza is still pizza, her counterplan would support Roberto's original plan to order a pizza).
Competition: Roberto does not have enough money to order both a pizza and a sandwich, so the counterplan is mutually exclusive. Even if he could afford to do both, it would still be a bad idea. He is not hungry enough to eat both, and it would cost him twice as much money. Thus, the counterplan would still compete by net benefits.
Solvency: Sandwiches are filling, so Roberto would no longer be hungry if he ordered a sandwich.
Net Benefits: A sandwich would be less expensive, more filling, and better for Roberto's health than a pizza.

The 1NC Shell

As with a disadvantage, the Negative generally presents their basic arguments in favor of a counterplan in the form of a shell. A shell for the States Counterplan used as an example in this chapter might look like this:

Text: The governments of the fifty states will require all public high schools to adopt mandatory school uniform policies.

Contention One: Non-Topicality. The counterplan is non-topical because it uses the state governments, violating the term 'federal government' in the resolution.

Contention Two: Competition. The counterplan competes by net benefits.

> A. Whenever the federal and state governments work together to implement a policy, the federal government always takes over.
> B. That means that the federal government ends up trampling on states' rights, which is the link to the Federalism disadvantage.
> C. The only way to avoid the Federalism disadvantage is to implement just the counterplan, which has the state governments act alone.

Contention Three: Solvency. Schools need the funding they get from their state governments. State mandated school uniform policies will be implemented for fear of losing that money. The counterplan captures all of the Affirmative Solvency evidence about why uniforms are good.

Contention Four: Net Benefits. The counterplan solves all of the case and avoids the Federalism Disadvantage.

When arguing net benefits, the Negative here refers to a disadvantage that they have presumably introduced into the round already. Had they not introduced it already, they could choose to read the entire disadvantage shell under their net benefits contention.

Uniqueness

Generally, a debate round is decided by a comparison between two different policy options: the plan, which the Affirmative team defends, and the status quo, which the Negative team defends.

The introduction of a counterplan into the round changes things. The round is still decided by a comparison between two different policy options, but now it is a question of the plan versus the counterplan rather than the plan versus the status quo. By changing the policy that the Negative team is defending, counterplans, even more so than other arguments, affect every other issue in the round.

Recall that a unique disadvantage is a "problem the plan causes that will not happen if the judge votes for the Negative team." It was added that, "Since the Negative team is usually defending the status quo, a unique disadvantage is generally one that will not happen now."

When the Negative team advocates a counterplan, they are no longer defending the status quo. Thus, uniqueness becomes more complicated. Once there is a counterplan in the round, a unique disadvantage is one that links to the plan but not to the counterplan. The disadvantage would occur if the plan were implemented but would not occur if the counterplan were implemented, so it is *unique* to the plan. This also makes it a net benefit to the counterplan.

Given the complications that counterplans introduce into the round, some leagues restrict their use to the Varsity division, requiring Negative teams in Novice or JV divisions to defend the status quo.

Answering Counterplans

The key to beating a counterplan is understanding it. Affirmatives should ask questions about it during cross-examination and be sure to get the exact text. They should also ask if the Negative team is committed to defending the counterplan for the entire round, or if they are reserving the right to kick it at some point and revert to defending the status quo.

To beat a counterplan, the Affirmative needs to show that it is not a reason to reject the Affirmative plan. They can do this either by proving that it is not competitive (the judge could and should do both), that it is not net beneficial (the plan is at least as good, if not better), or that it is theoretically illegitimate (it gives the Negative an unfair advantage).

Permutations

A **permutation** (or just **perm**) is a new policy option, proposed by the Affirmative, to test the competitiveness of the counterplan. A permutation must combine all of the plan and all or part of the counterplan in order to demonstrate that the two policies could and should be implemented together.

In other words, permutations allow the Affirmative to challenge the Negative's contention that the judge will lose the opportunity to implement the counterplan if she chooses to implement the plan. In terms of claims and warrants, the argument for a permutation looks like this:

Claim: Implementing the plan will not cause the judge to lose the opportunity to implement the counterplan.

Warrant: Implementing both the plan and the counterplan would be better than implementing only the counterplan.

Permutations are policy options, just like plans and counterplans. They have texts that specify how exactly the Affirmative advocates combining the plan and the counterplan, and they have advantages and disadvantages. A permutation is defended in the same way that a plan or a counterplan is defended: by comparing its advantages and disadvantages to those of a competing policy option. The Negative's counterplan is the policy option with which a permutation must be compared.

Example: The US federal government and the fifty state governments will both require all schools to implement mandatory school uniform policies.

Note that although this would be redundant, there is no reason why it *could not* be done. The Affirmative only needs to demonstrate that the permutation is at least as good as the counterplan. It is the Negative's burden to demonstrate that the permutation is in some way inferior to the counterplan. If they cannot do so, then the counterplan is not a reason to reject the Affirmative plan.

Tricks of the Trade

To win a permutation, the Affirmative should:

-Measure it against the plan. The permutation is only helpful if it does something the plan does not. Affirmatives should carefully craft permutations to avoid disadvantages that link to the plan, solve counterplan advantages the plan does not, and solve the case Harms better than the counterplan;

-Read new net benefits. The Affirmative can read a new advantage that only the permutation captures, such as some benefit to cooperation between state and federal governments. This gives them something to counteract disadvantages to the permutation that the Negative is using as counterplan net benefits;

-Write it out. If the permutation is any more complicated than 'do both', having it in writing will be essential to avoid arguments about what was originally said, and even in the simplest of cases many judges prefer to have permutation texts written out word-for-word, just like counterplan and plan texts are;

-Make more than one. The Affirmative can suggest several different ways of combining the plan and counterplan that capture different combinations of advantages and disadvantages. It can become a real time burden for the Negative to cover all of them;

-Keep the round organized. As the policy options in the round multiply, comparison between them gets more complicated. Affirmatives should take the time to write crystal clear overviews for rebuttals that sort out which disadvantages link to which policy options and explain how each permutation measures up to the counterplan.

Net Benefits

Whether the Affirmative is defending their original plan or a permutation against a counterplan, the round will come down to a discussion of net benefits. That is, both teams will have to make complex comparative analyses of how each impact in the round interacts with each policy option. This requires arguing that their policy option avoids as many disadvantages as possible, captures as many advantages as possible, and that the advantages it captures outweigh the disadvantages to which it links. This can make for a muddled round, so overviews and clear explanation are a must.

The Affirmative should treat the counterplan just like any other plan and attack it as necessary. This can mean pointing out Solvency problems or even running completely new disadvantages to the counterplan (remember that to be unique, these disadvantages must not link to the Affirmative plan).

Example: State governments are already facing budget crises. The cost of enforcing the counterplan would bankrupt them. The plan avoids this disadvantage because the federal government foots the bill, but the counterplan links because it uses state governments.

Tricks of the Trade

When arguing net benefits, the Affirmative should:

-Use add-ons. **Add-on advantages** are new benefits of the plan that the Affirmative introduces in the 2AC. They are called 'add-ons' because they are not part of the original case presented in the 1AC, but are added on later. Presenting add-on advantages that the counterplan does not capture is a great way to make the plan net beneficial;

-Use the case as offense. If there is any part of the case that the counterplan does not solve, the Affirmative should take full advantage of it. They can read new impact evidence for that advantage and make arguments about why it is more important than any of the disadvantages that the counterplan avoids;

-Turn disadvantages. The Negative will need to rely on a disadvantage that the counterplan avoids to be their net benefit. Turning this disadvantage makes it a net benefit that the plan (and possibly the permutation) has over the counterplan.

Theory

In debate, even the rules themselves are sometimes debatable. **Theory** is the name given to arguments made by either team about what the rules of debate should be and how they should be applied in a given situation. Theory arguments are not just for counterplans; the Negative could make a theory argument about how specific the Affirmative team's plan text must be, and the Affirmative could make a theory argument about how their fiat power should allow them to avoid a certain solvency takeout.

In fact, even Topicality is a theory argument: it is about what the resolution means and how it should be applied to the Affirmative's plan. Just as some Affirmative teams occasionally write plans that are so unfair that the Negative must challenge their Topicality to have a chance in the round, Negatives sometimes use counterplans designed to give them such an advantage that the traditional methods of defeating them are virtually doomed to fail. Theory arguments are the Affirmative team's check against these abuses.

There are literally an infinite number of theory arguments that can be made by both sides of the debate, and even a comprehensive list of the most popular is too lengthy to include here. Instead, this section offers some general advice and an in-depth example of one especially popular theory argument.

Tricks of the Trade

To win on theory arguments, the Affirmative should:

-Be specific. Winning any theory debate is very similar to winning a Topicality debate. Debaters must spell out what the other team has done wrong and exactly why this infraction is bad. The Affirmative should point to an abusive argument the Negative was able to make or a particularly important argument the Affirmative was unable to make;

-Avoid potential abuse. Potential abuse means that if the offending team's behavior were imitated by other teams in other rounds, very unfair things could result. A popular example is that if counterplans that change only a small detail of the Affirmative plan are allowed, then Negative teams could counterplan to spend one cent less than the Affirmative and read evidence from Benjamin Franklin as a net benefit: "A penny saved is a penny earned." This example betrays the flaw in relying on potential abuse alone as a voting issue: no team is likely to try anything that patently abusive, and if they did, the judge in that round would no doubt vote against them. In other words, voting against the team in this round is not necessary to prevent other teams from doing more abusive things in other rounds;

-Diversify impacts. Asking the judge simply to disregard an abusive counterplan rather than vote against the Negative is much more likely to succeed and is still a major victory, as it allows the Affirmative to reclaim their entire case and all of its advantages.

Debating Conditionality

There is nothing unfair about the Negative team abandoning a case attack, disadvantage, or Topicality violation that they have presented. In fact, it is rarely advisable for the Negative to continue defending all of these arguments all the way into their last speech. Counterplans are arguably an exception to this rule, however, as they change the Negative team's advocacy in a way that affects every other argument in the round. If the Negative kicks their counterplan and reverts to defending the status quo, disadvantages that were non-unique might suddenly become relevant and others that were unique might suddenly become irrelevant. This has the potential to massively disrupt the Affirmative's strategy during rebuttal speeches.

The Affirmative should *always* ask about the status of the counterplan in their first cross-examination. If the Negative says it is conditional, they should ask under what conditions it can be kicked. Some Negatives will say, "Whenever we feel like it", others will claim the right to abandon the counterplan only when the Affirmative has made a permutation. If there are conditions on the Negative's ability to kick the counterplan, the Affirmative should decide whether or not to give them the opportunity before making their next speech.

To raise a theoretical objection, the Affirmative should make the arguments above about the abuse that can be caused by conditional counterplans, along with any other arguments they can think of (this brainstorming is best done in writing and before the round). More

importantly, they should include specific analysis about which arguments in the round would be affected by the Negative's decision to kick the counterplan.

When it comes time to impact the argument, there are several options. They could ask the judge to vote against the Negative team just for advocating a conditional counterplan. Even if it is never kicked, Affirmative strategy is still disrupted by the need to prepare for that possibility. As always, specific examples will be necessary to win the round.

The Affirmative could also ask the judge to vote against the Negative only if they actually kick the counterplan. This should encourage the Negative to keep it in the round, but the Affirmative should be careful what they wish for: it is often to their advantage for the counterplan to go away, even if this does skew their strategy somewhat.

Defending Counterplans

Presenting a counterplan can have huge benefits for the Negative team's strategy, but with these benefits come considerable liabilities. A counterplan is more than just an argument; it is an **advocacy**. An advocacy is something that a team says *should* happen. When the Negative presents a disadvantage, they are simply asserting that if the plan is passed, something bad *will* happen. With a counterplan, however, they are proposing that a certain policy *should* be implemented, just as the Affirmative are when they propose their plan.

Thus, the Negative open themselves up to a whole slew of new offensive arguments: disadvantages, add-on advantages, and permutations. To make matters worse, it is not as easy for the Negative to kick a counterplan as it is for them to kick a disadvantage. This section will help Negatives defend themselves against the many different attacks an Affirmative may make against their counterplan and learn how to get away with kicking a counterplan which has turned into a liability.

Answering Permutations

Counterplans are often won or lost based on whether the Affirmative wins a permutation. Once the judge decides that she is not forced to choose between the plan and the counterplan, the counterplan is completely useless to the Negative team. Thus, the Negative must be sure to have strong answers to permutations if they want to win their counterplan.

Generally, the Negative's options for attacking permutations are the same as their options for attacking the plan. They can argue that disadvantages to the plan also link to the permutation, and they can present new disadvantages to the permutation. They can also call into question the ability of the permutation to solve the Harms of the Affirmative case. Again, Solvency arguments already made against the plan usually apply just as well to the permutation.

The importance of permutations sometimes encourages Affirmatives to push the envelope in terms of what types of permutations are fair. Counterplan debaters must be prepared to call foul when the Affirmative has gone too far, as there are certain permutations that are almost impossible for the Negative to defeat on their merits. While the exact restrictions on permutations are a matter for the debaters to settle within the round, a good rule of thumb is that a permutation should include all of the plan, all or part of the counterplan, and nothing else.

A permutation that includes only part of the plan is called a **severance permutation** and is considered illegitimate because it allows the Affirmative to change their advocacy in the middle of a round for the express purpose of gaining an unfair advantage.

Example: The federal government will provide the funding for the plan, but the state governments will enforce it.

This permutation severs out of the federal enforcement that was part of the original plan. That is, it differs from the original plan in that the federal government is no longer responsible for enforcing the mandatory school uniforms policy. That is unfair because if the Negative has any Solvency takeouts or disadvantages that link to federal enforcement, the permutation would allow the Affirmative to get out of those arguments. Thus, the permutation does not prove that it would be desirable to implement the plan and the counterplan together, which is the purpose of a permutation.

A permutation that adds some new action proposed by neither the plan nor the counterplan is called an **intrinsicness permutation**, and is illegitimate because it does not actually test the compatibility of the plan and the counterplan. The judge is interested in whether it is more desirable to implement both policies or to implement just the counterplan. If the permutation is only desirable as a result of adding some third thing that was part of neither proposal, then it does not demonstrate that the counterplan is not competitive.

Example: The federal and state governments should both require all schools to implement mandatory school uniform policies, and the federal government should repeal the Patriot Act.

This permutation would allow the Affirmative to avoid the tyranny impacts of the Federalism disadvantage, which is the net benefit that the counterplan has over the plan. However, it does so by pulling a new policy action, repealing the Patriot Act, out of thin air. Thus, this permutation does not demonstrate that it is better to combine the plan and the counterplan than to implement only the counterplan.

Taking It To The Next Level

There may be times when the Negative concedes that the counterplan is not competitive, but the Affirmative wants to keep a permutation in the round because it avoids the link to a disadvantage that the plan alone does not. That is, they want to treat the permutation as a new policy option that they can advocate instead of their plan, rather than simply as a test of the counterplan's competition.

This is another theoretical argument whose fairness the debaters will need to dispute in the round, if the Negative chooses to press the issue. Judges are much more likely to accept this strategy if the Negative has reserved the right to 'kick' their counterplan.

Kicking a Counterplan

If the Negative wants to get rid of one of their disadvantages, they can usually concede one of the Affirmative's defensive answers that makes the argument irrelevant. Recall, however, that a counterplan is just any argument. Rather, it is of a special type called an advocacy. That is, when the Negative present a counterplan, there is a fundamental shift in their role in the round. They are now defending the counterplan rather than the status quo. Given that this decision affects every other argument in the round, there is some question as to whether it should be as easily reversible as the decision to argue a disadvantage.

Those who think that it should be argue that a counterplan is actually very much like a disadvantage. The Negative team argues that one of the costs of the plan is the loss of the opportunity to implement the counterplan. So, if the Negative concedes an argument that the counterplan is not competitive, that is like conceding that there is no link to a disadvantage. In other words, it makes the counterplan irrelevant, since it means that the judge does not lose the ability to implement the counterplan just because she implements the plan. The counterplan goes away, and the Negative is once again in the role of defending the status quo. When they are run in this way, counterplans are sometimes called **dispositional**.

According to these same people, a counterplan can also be turned just like a disadvantage, in which case it cannot be kicked so easily. If the Affirmative presents disadvantages and Solvency turns to the counterplan, it could turn out to be an even worse policy option than the status quo that the Negative team was originally defending. Thus, it is an actively good thing that implementing the plan closes off the possibility of implementing the counterplan, since the counterplan is actually undesirable.

There are some who think that it should be even easier than this for the Negative to get away from a counterplan that has become a liability for them. They contend that advocacy of a counterplan should be **conditional**, meaning that the Negative can kick it any time that they want, even if the Affirmative has not made any defensive answers that they can concede to make the argument irrelevant.

Finally, there are those who feel that advocacy of a counterplan should be **unconditional**, meaning that once the Negative has introduced a counterplan, they must stick with their new advocacy even if it turns out to be worse than the status quo. To win the round, all that the Affirmative must do is defeat the counterplan.

Negatives should be prepared to tell their opponents how they are running their counterplan (dispositionally, conditionally, or unconditionally) and to defend their choice against Affirmative theory arguments that say it is unfair.

A Word of Caution

Debaters and judges often differ on the meanings of terms like 'dispositional' and 'conditional'. Thus, Affirmatives who get a one-word answer when they ask in cross-examination how a counterplan is being run should always follow-up with additional questions about what exactly that means and when the Negative is reserving the right to kick their counterplan. They should not assume that the judge and the other team know what they mean when they use a term such as 'conditional'.

Critiques

Fundamentally, the claim that the Negative team is making in any given debate round is that the judge should vote for the Negative team. So far, this book has considered two possible warrants that the Negative might give for this claim: 'the Affirmative plan is a bad idea' (Case attacks, Disadvantages, Counterplans) and 'the Affirmative plan is not an example of the resolution' (Topicality).

A critique (sometimes called a **kritik** or just a **'K'**)is a reason to vote for a particular team that is not directly related to that team having defended the best policy option in the round. Instead, it is a reason to prefer the language or assumptions of one team to those of another. In other words, the argument for a critique might look like this:

Claim: The Negative team should win the round.
Warrant: The assumptions or language used by the Affirmative team make it a bad idea to vote for them.

Or like this:

Claim: The Negative team should win the round.
Warrant: The resolution is a bad idea.
Warrant: The resolution uses problematic language or embodies problematic assumptions.

Thus, critiques deal with aspects of a debate other than the search for the best policy option, which is generally the focus of a policy debate round. During a debate round, debaters (and the judge) learn about a lot more than just the issues of policy being debated. They learn about the process of debating and how to be an advocate. Feelings get hurt. People get offended. Friends are made. Some assumptions get challenged, and others get entrenched. Critiques deal with these 'real-world' impacts that are *not* dependent on the hypothetical world of fiat.

Example: The Affirmative responds to the problem of gang violence by punishing its symptoms (how students dress) rather than addressing its causes (poverty, racism, segregation). Their assumption that young people must be treated like criminals who are guilty until proven innocent contributes to problems of police brutality, school and prison overpopulation, and the overrepresentation of minorities in prisons.

In practice, critiques often look like a combination of a disadvantage and a counterplan, with the important exception that the alternative, links, and impacts don't depend on the power of fiat. Instead, they are in-round, or **pre-fiat**, meaning that they relate to the five or more people actually in the room, debating and listening to each other, rather than to the hypothetical advantages of disadvantages of policies that occur as a result of fiat.

The critique is the newest argument to be added to the Negative's arsenal, and consequently it is the least well-defined and understood. Add to this its intrinsically confusing subject matter, often drawing on texts written for an audience of academics in fields such as philosophy and media criticism, and the result is a complicated and controversial argument, to say the least. This complexity prompts some leagues to restrict critiques to the Varsity division.

Parts of a Critique

Thesis

A critique does not often need uniqueness in the traditional sense, because the Negative team is not usually defending a policy alternative such as the status quo. Rather, they are defending some alternative way of approaching the problem than the one the Affirmative team proposes. So, instead of uniqueness or brink arguments, critiques usually have a **thesis** that establishes the basic assumptions underlying the critique.

Theses are intended to change the way in which the judge evaluates the entire round, as well as each individual argument that is a part of it. A critique about racism might have a thesis about how racism unconsciously shapes the basic assumptions of a racist society. This would require the examination of every claim made during the debate for evidence of unconscious racial or cultural bias. As always, the team arguing the critique should do this work for the judge.

Example: Society's first response to youth violence, especially when it occurs in low-income minority communities, is to bring in the police and crackdown on civil liberties. Young minorities are assumed to be guilty until proven innocent.

Tricks of the Trade

When arguing theses, the Negative should:

-Hide important arguments. The thesis of a critique may mention many arguments that affect how the judge will evaluate the round. Affirmatives frequently ignore the thesis of a critique in order to attack links and implications, so if important arguments are hidden here, the Affirmative may concede them. They must explain how damaging these concessions are later in the round.

-Speak slowly and clearly. Critiques are often complicated, and the thesis is the only chance to introduce the judge to the argument. Negatives should make a special effort to be sure evidence they read here is easy to understand, provides a good introduction to the position, and is presented at a pace that gives her time to digest complex claims.

Link

Like a Disadvantage, a critique needs a link. With a critique, though, the link may not be to the plan. Instead, it could be to the assumptions or language used to support the plan.

Example: The Affirmative's Harms evidence indicates that, in some schools, gang membership is as high as 70%. By punishing the entire school, however, they are treating the other 30% like criminals even though they admit those students have done nothing wrong. This is both ageist and racist.

Tricks of the Trade

To win links, the Negative should:

-Use analysis to get specific. Often there will be evidence to support the link, but it is much more difficult to find case-specific critique links than it is to find them for disadvantages. Combining generic link evidence with very specific analysis about how that evidence applies to a case and/or team in particular is very effective;

-Use cross-examination. They should ask questions that expose the assumptions the other team is making, and refer to these admissions when presenting the links;

-Aim for variety. They can link to multiple parts of the Affirmative team's entire performance: their assumptions, their language, their evidence, and their plan.

Implications

Also like a disadvantage, a critique will have impacts. These are sometimes called **implications** because they don't deal only with the fiat world. While a critique may contain some implications for a policy-making paradigm, they usually have more to do with in-round implications. Teams advocating critiques should indicate the problematic consequences of the assumptions or rhetoric of the other team.

Example: Responding to the problem of youth violence by treating young people like criminals is the same mindset that justifies police brutality and the mass incarceration of young minorities (*pre-fiat*). Policies motivated by such racist assumptions breed hostility, hopelessness, and poverty in these communities, perpetuating the root causes of school violence (*post-fiat*).

Tricks of the Trade

When arguing implications, the Negative should:

-Aim for variety. They can present pre-fiat and post-fiat implications to the critique;

-Turn the case. The Affirmative will want to argue that the judge must choose between the critique and the case advantages. If the critique takes out the advantages of the case, however, the choice will be easy;

-Be specific. They should talk about how the assumptions being criticized affect the participants in the round directly and why the assumptions of the critique are better.

Alternative

The assumptions being criticized generally exist in the status quo. This doesn't mean that the critique is non-unique, however, because the Negative is not generally advocating the status quo. Instead, the critique carries with it at least an implicit **alternative** that asks the judge to endorse the Negative's language or assumptions over those of the Affirmative.

A Word of Caution

Sometimes critiques contain evidence about how alternatives aren't necessary, or are even bad, and the Negative will claim that they don't have an alternative, nor do they want one. That is not true. They may not have an alternative in the sense that their authors assume (i.e. an alternative policy action or even an alternative paradigm for thinking about a particular issue), but they do have an alternative for the judge. They are asking her to vote Negative for some reason, and presumably it is not because the status quo is good. The alternative might be something tricky like "Reject the Affirmative!" or "Embrace Alternativelessness!" but it is still an alternative as far as the judge's decision is concerned, and the Negative had better explain why the judge should choose it over the plan.

Example: The Affirmative tries to solve school violence by criminalizing its symptoms and perpetuating its root causes. The Negative advocates addressing the causes. This approach works, while the Affirmative's only makes the problem worse.

Tricks of the Trade

When arguing alternatives, the Negative should:

-Be specific. The alternative is usually the sticking point for judges who dislike critiques, and with good reason. Teams that fail to make their alternative explicit leave the judge, even if she agrees with the premises of the critique, with little understanding of how a vote for the Negative team makes things any better. A plan is a very detailed proposal with concrete advantages. If the critique alternative doesn't approach this level of specificity, the judge is unlikely to give up the clear benefits of the plan in favor of a nebulous criticism;

-Use Inherency. It may be possible to argue that, even if the plan is a different policy from the status quo, it still embraces the same flawed mindset and so is essentially just more of the same. If the status quo doesn't work, then the plan will not work either, because fundamentally they approach the problem in the same way;

-Be competitive. Just like a counterplan, a critique alternative must compete with the Affirmative's advocacy. The difference is that the competition here is between philosophies or worldviews rather than policy options. Thus, the Negative must make arguments about how the critique's worldview is incompatible with the Affirmative's.

Tying It All Together

The 1NC Shell

When presented by the Negative, a critique usually comes in the form of a shell, just like a disadvantage, a Topicality violation, or a counterplan. A shell for the critique used as an example in this chapter might look like this:

A. Thesis. Society's first response to youth violence, especially when it occurs in low-income minority communities, is to bring in the police and crackdown on civil liberties. Young minorities are assumed to be guilty until proven innocent.

B. Link. The Affirmative's Harms evidence indicates that, in some schools, gang membership is as high as 70%. By punishing the entire school, however, they are treating the other 30% like criminals, even though they admit those students have done nothing wrong. This is both ageist and racist.

C. Implications.

> **1. Pre-Fiat Implications.** Responding to the problem of youth violence by treating young people like criminals is the same mindset that justifies police brutality and the mass incarceration of young minorities.

> **2. Post-Fiat Implications.** Policies motivated by such racist assumptions breed hostility, hopelessness, and poverty in these communities, perpetuating the root causes of school violence.

D. Alternative. The Affirmative tries to solve school violence by criminalizing its symptoms and perpetuating its root causes. The Negative advocates addressing the causes. This approach works, while the Affirmative's only makes the problem worse.

Affirmative Critiques

Though less common, critiques run by the Affirmative are not unheard of. These may be critiques of status quo assumptions that the plan disrupts, or critiques of language or assumptions that the Negative team has engaged in during the round. The former provide another way for the Affirmative to diversify their Harms claims. In addition to quantitative and qualitative policy impacts, the Affirmative Harms claim could also feature critical implications of the status quo's problems.

In any event, very little about a critique changes as a result of its being run by the Affirmative. There would still be a thesis, a link, an impact, an alternative, though generally the alternative would be the plan, or at least the act of advocating the plan. That is, the Affirmative might argue that their in-round advocacy of the plan by itself disrupts the problematic assumptions they are criticizing, before they invoke their fiat power to pretend that the plan is actually adopted.

Answering Critiques

As with counterplans, the key to beating a critique is understanding it. Critiques may rely on complicated arguments from evidence full of sophisticated vocabulary, but that does not mean that they cannot be explained and understood in more simple terms. In fact, if the team running the critique does not find a way to make the critique understandable to their opponents, the judge will most likely fail to understand it as well.

Ask questions about the critique during cross-examination and be sure to focus on understanding the exact links. Try to nail the other team down to a specific alternative, and then pick it apart. As with a counterplan, it is also a good idea to ask about whether the alternative is conditional, dispositional, etc.

Defense

Defense against a critique is similar to defense against a disadvantage, meaning that debaters need to attack the links and impacts. Links to a critique are especially likely to be tenuous, and often the team advocating a critique may deliberately take one of their opponents' claims somewhat out of context. Be sure to call them on this when they try it.

Example: The plan doesn't criminalize high school students, and no one is sent to jail for not wearing a uniform. School uniforms are not even a punishment; they are merely a violence prevention measure.

Just like legislators and pundits, philosophers and other academics disagree with each other. There are almost certainly critics of the authors who support the critique, and most likely these critics have publicly disagreed with the claims made by the articles from which the critique evidence has been drawn. Once debaters know which critiques they need to prepare for, they can research answers just as they would to any other argument.

Debaters should also defend the policy-making framework. In some sense, it is true that policy impacts are just 'make-believe'; after all, the plan is not really going to go into effect because the judge signs a piece of paper. But is that really news to anybody? There are still 'real-world' advantages to debating in a 'make-believe' world: getting education about the policy-making process is the most obvious one, but creative teams should be able to think of more. In other words, the case may have its own pre-fiat implications!

The Alternative

Critiques can be attacked as though they were counterplans. Because their alternatives occur in the 'real world', they are especially likely to be exaggerated. Will the judge's abandonment of a criminalization mindset really make a difference when it comes to problems like police brutality? The judge probably is not a racist police officer, so how does her opinion contribute to this problem? While it may be true that change starts with one person, that doesn't mean that changing one mind will have an appreciable impact. When compared to the concrete advantages of the Affirmative plan, these 'pre-fiat' scenarios often seem especially flimsy.

A critique alternative must be competitive just like a counterplan, so a permutation is often the best way to beat it. In fact, since the critique alternative usually calls for personal change on the part of the judge, while the plan calls for the implementation of some policy proposal, they are quite likely to be compatible.

Example: Implement the plan and address the root causes of gang violence. The permutation solves for gang violence that already exists and prevents future gang violence.

Offense

Many debaters who are otherwise very good about making offensive arguments forget how to do this when debating critiques. They act as though they must accept the Negative's framework and play defense by arguing that they are not guilty of the crimes of which they are accused. Often, a superior alternative is to defend the assumptions being criticized. If these assumptions are as prevalent as the critique claims, there may be good reasons for them.

Like a disadvantage, a critique can be link turned or impact turned (but not both!). The equivalent to a link turn is a claim that the case solves for the assumptions being criticized.

Example: Assumptions about the inherent criminality of minority youth are grounded in actual incidents of gang violence and in media portrayals of students wearing clothing that advertises their gang affiliations. The plan solves for these things, so that those images will no longer shape assumptions about minority youth.

An impact turn entails arguing that the critique implications are actually good things and that the basic assumptions of the critique are flawed. Since critiques often make their assumptions explicit in the form of a thesis, they are easy to criticize. Arguments such as these are sometimes called **counter-critiques** because they are essentially critiques of critiques.

Example: Guilty white liberals who live in safe suburbs love to complain about police brutality in low-income neighborhoods, but the truth is that the failure of the police to crack down on drug trafficking and gang violence is an instance of racism that places the vast majority of law-abiding minorities at risk.

Theory

Arguing critique theory is just like arguing counterplan theory: isolate some particular thing the critique does that is abusive, and then demonstrate exactly how that has made the round unfair. Because the critique always carries at least an implicit alternative, counterplan theory arguments such as conditionality are often relevant.

There are also some theory arguments that are unique to critiques. Usually, these focus on the claim that a policy debate round is not an appropriate place for a critique.

Example: *Policy* debate should be about policy alternatives. If the Negative wanted to propose some specific measure to address the so-called root causes of gang violence, the Affirmative would be happy to debate it. But it is not fair for the Negative to just say they advocate something nebulous like "addressing root causes" as their alternative to the Affirmative's specific policy proposal.

Another example of a critique-specific theory argument is the **performative contradiction**. A performative contradiction occurs when someone uses some concept while attempting to criticize that concept. For example, a philosopher who used reason to criticize reason would have made a performative contradiction. In debate, this term is generally taken to refer to a team that violates their own critique.

A **contradiction** occurs any time a team makes two claims that cannot both be true. For example, if the Affirmative team claims that the plan will be popular with teacher's unions in their Solvency contention but answers a disadvantage link by arguing that teacher's unions would hate the plan, this is a contradiction. Ordinarily, the Negative would be able to concede one of these arguments, thereby taking out the other. They would still have to deal with the implications of the one that they conceded, however.

When caught violating their critique, debaters will most likely argue that the critique debate is a draw -- kind of like a non-unique disadvantage -- since both teams link to it. Their opponents, however, can often turn this error into a voting issue by making some theory arguments about performative contradictions.

For instance, they can argue that a violation of the critique by the team that first presented it is especially bad, since they should have known better. This is akin to the distinction between manslaughter and pre-meditated murder. While it is always bad to kill someone, it is considered worse to plan the crime and then commit murder deliberately and knowingly.

Secondly, an infraction on the part of the original advocates of the critique may provide a stronger link to the critique's implications than a violation by their opponents. After all, what does it say about the viability of a critique if even its own advocates cannot avoid it?

Finally, the Affirmative should at the very least be able to argue that, if the Negative can advocate an alternative that links to their critique, the Affirmative should be able to do so as well. Thus, the Negative will not be able to respond to a permutation by pointing out that it still links to the critique, since their alternative now links to it, also.

Defending Critiques

Like other arguments, critiques must be developed as the round progresses. Unlike other arguments, however, developing a critique generally entails a lot more explanation and analysis than new arguments and evidence. Often, evidence in a critique shell will make some rather broad claims that, if true of the team being criticized, are quite serious. Thus, what is important is not to read more and more implications, but rather to make clear exactly how these broad and generic claims apply to the specific team being criticized. This explanation must be done for all levels of the critique except for the thesis, which by its nature is going to be a generic introduction to the premises of the critique.

Links

When it comes to links, debaters must be able to point to very specific places where their opponents exhibit the assumptions or language they are criticizing. One place to find these specific links is in the other team's evidence. While one speaker is presenting the generic links in the critique shell, her partner can be reading through the other team's evidence looking for specific links to point our in her next speech.

Implications

Getting specific with implications just requires good analysis. The debaters need to think through the exact implications of the practices they are criticizing for the round in question. In other words, they need to point to exactly what the harmful consequences of their opponents' language or assumptions are for the five people actually involved in the round.

Alternative

Finally, debaters need to be able to tell a compelling story about why voting for them will solve the implications of the critique. All too often, judges will acknowledge that the critiquing team had a point but vote against them because they don't understand what good it will do to vote for them. In other words, it is easy to criticize, but hard to come up with solutions. Thus, debaters must invest extra effort into making their solution as clear and credible as possible.

Speeches

So far, this manual has introduced some basic debate concepts and reviewed the different types of arguments that might be made by each side of a debate. Now it is time to see how these concepts and argument types come together into a full debate round. This chapter will discuss each speech in a debate round individually, explaining what the speaker's objectives should be, considering each speech's unique challenges, and offering advice to help debaters overcome those challenges.

Cross-Examination

Before leaping right into a discussion of the speeches in a debate, however, it is important not to overlook cross-examination. These three-minute sessions at the end of each constructive speech are the only opportunity that debaters get to speak to each other directly. Furthermore, nearly 20% of a debate is spent in cross-examination. Debaters who treat it as anything less than an integral part of the round are doing themselves and their team a great disservice.

When a debater finishes giving a constructive speech, she should say something like, "I now stand open for cross-examination." This is her cue to the other team that she is ready to answer their questions.

The **examiner** is the debater who asks questions during cross-examination. Ordinarily, this is the debater from the opposite team who will *not* be speaking next. The debater who will be speaking next uses this time to prepare for her speech.

The **witness** is the debater who answers questions during cross-examination. This is the debater who just finished speaking. Now that she has given her speech, she must answer her opponents' questions about it.

Some leagues and judges allow **open cross-examination**, in which both members of the examiner's team may ask questions and both members of the witness' team may answer them. Even during open cross-examination, the examiner should be the primary one asking questions, and the witness should be the primary one answering them. Their partners may intervene to ask an especially important question or add an especially important fact to an answer, but otherwise, they should allow their partners to handle the cross-examination. This ensures that every debater has equal participation in the round and usually results in better speaker points for everyone.

The debaters involved in cross-examination should stand side-by-side, facing the judge. This is more respectful and more persuasive, but it also reminds them that this time is not intended for arguing with each other. Just as in a speech, the judge is the audience during

cross-examination, and all questions and answers should have the overall purpose of persuading her. They may also have more immediate purposes, discussed below.

Clarify Arguments

If there were any arguments that she or her partner did not hear or did not understand during the speech, the examiner should get them cleared up during cross-examination. It is especially important for the Affirmative to understand Harms and Solvency turns, Topicality violations, counterplan texts, and links to disadvantages and critiques. It is especially important for the Negative to understand the plan and how it solves, counter interpretations on Topicality, and turns on disadvantages, critiques, and counterplans.

Sometimes, debaters are deliberately vague on a certain point so that they can see how an argument evolves before taking a position on it. Clarification can involve pinning down an opponent's position on important issues such as the conditionality of a counterplan, how a plan is enforced, or what exactly the alternative to a critique is.

Finally, debaters looking for clarification should read their opponents' evidence for themselves. During cross-examination, the examiner may ask to borrow any evidence read during the speech. It is always common courtesy to allow one's opponents to read one's evidence, and in some leagues it is even a rule.

Expose Errors

Cross-examination may be used to point out logical flaws in the witness' reasoning, omissions in her argumentation, or evidence that does not actually support the claim for which she is using it. It is important to remember that this must still be done in the form of a question. That is, the examiner must ask questions that demonstrate the witness' errors, not merely point them out herself.

Many witnesses will never admit to an error, no matter how clearly the examiner has exposed it. The examiner must remember that the goal of cross-examination is to make a point to the judge, not to the witness. Once she has exposed an error, she can move on to her next question, even if the witness does not admit the error. Asking the question again will only waste time; it will not convince the witness to change her answer.

Set Up Arguments

The examiner should have a general idea of the arguments that her partner will make in the next speech, so that she can set them up during cross-examination. She could, for example, ask about how a plan is enforced to get a link to a disadvantage, or about what a counterplan does to set up attacks against its Solvency.

Often, this will entail a bit of secrecy or misdirection, because if the witness figures out what the examiner wants her to say, she will go out of her way not to say it. For example, if the examiner asks questions about how difficult it will be for the federal government to force schools to adopt school uniform policies, the witness might think that she is setting up a Solvency takeout and respond by explaining all of the different ways in which the federal government could pressure state and local authorities. If the examiner is actually trying to set up the link to a Federalism disadvantage, then the witness would have inadvertently given her exactly what she wanted.

Her partner would still need to refer to this concession in her speech, however. Judges do not flow cross-examination and usually will not consider arguments made or concessions obtained unless they are mentioned during a speech as well.

Tricks of the Trade

During cross-examination, the examiner should:

-Be polite. This is doubly important when the witness is pushy or rude. If she rambles on, the examiner can interrupt politely by saying, "I'm sorry, but I need to ask a new question now." Shouting over her or making snide comments will anger the judge and often result in loss of speaker points.

-Control the floor. This is her cross-examination. She should not ask open-ended questions that will give the witness an opportunity to ramble. If the witness rambles anyway, she should politely insist on moving on to the next question.

-Know the answers. The examiner is not in control if she does not know how a question will be answered. She should always know what she wants the witness to say before asking questions, so that she can phrase questions in order to get exactly that response.

-Ask questions. This may seem obvious, but many debaters are tempted to offer commentary on the witness' responses or initiate a back-and-forth argument. The time for those things is during a speech, not during cross-examination.

-Focus on the witness' weakest arguments. Spending three minutes talking about weak arguments make the preceding speech seem weak. Giving the witness the opportunity to talk about her strongest arguments, conversely, will make her speech seem strong.

During cross-examination, the witness should:

-Be polite. When the examiner is ready to move on, the witness should stop speaking, even if she does not feel as though she has answered the question. Cross-examination is the examiner's time to use however she likes. Humor is encouraged, but rude or sarcastic answers are never appropriate.

-Be confident. Even when the witness is surprised by a question or is not certain of her answer, she should do her best to *sound* completely prepared for it. Whatever answer she gives, she should give it confidently. Even if she is admitting that she does not know the answer, she should sound like there is no reason why she would know it.

-Take control. Whenever possible, the witness should seek to explain her arguments further and emphasize her strongest points.

-Answer questions. This is not the time for the witness to ask questions. She should also avoid giving vague or unhelpful responses, as she will look as though she has something to hide. Instead, she should seek to answer questions by explaining and emphasizing her own strongest points.

-Avoid being pinned down. The witness may say, "I did not take a stance on that in my speech," if the examiner asks a hypothetical or irrelevant question. Answering these questions is usually a trap. For example, if the questioner asks the 1AC, "Will the plan help or hurt the president's credibility?" she is probably prepared with a disadvantage to go either way. Unless the speaker said something about the president's credibility during her speech (in which case she should give a straightforward answer), she is not required to take a position on that during cross-examination.

The First Affirmative Constructive (1AC)

As the first speech in the round, the 1AC establishes what the rest of the debate will be about. The speaker presents the plan that the Affirmative team will defend for the rest of the round and makes the case for why the judge should endorse that plan as a good idea. Recall that the case consists of three Stock Issues: Inherency, Harms, and Solvency.

The primary objective of the 1AC is to build a *prima facie* case for adoption of the Affirmative plan. *Prima facie* is a Latin term meaning 'at first view'. In other words, the 1AC must construct a case that, if uncontested, would be sufficient to convince the judge to vote Affirmative. At the end of the 1AC, the judge should not feel like anything is left unexplained.

The Affirmative case will not go uncontested, however. The Negative will try to find problems with it and present costs and drawbacks that the Affirmative has overlooked. If time allows, the 1AC can try to anticipate and pre-empt some likely Negative objections. What is most important, however, is that the basic work of making the case for the plan gets done, so that future speeches can worry about addressing the specific objections of the Negative team.

The 1AC should always be completely written before the round, so that the speaker can read it without pause. The speaker should practice reading the speech out loud until she sounds polished, pronounces all of the difficult words correctly, places emphasis

appropriately, and finishes in exactly eight minutes. If the speech is too long, she can remove evidence or highlight it down until it fits. If it is too short, she can add evidence that the 2AC frequently uses.

A coach or teammate should quiz the 1AC about the specifics of the plan and the evidence she has read. This will help her answer questions quickly and confidently during cross-examination. It is very bad for an Affirmative speaker to appear as though she does not know the details of her own case.

The First Negative Constructive (1NC)

As the Negative's first speech in the round, the 1NC should present the Negative's basic case against the plan. That is, it should include all of the Negative's attacks against the Affirmative's case, as well as all of the off-case arguments (Topicality violations, disadvantages, counterplans, or critiques) that the Negative wants to make. There is no rule against making these arguments in the 2NC, but it is better to avoid doing so. The 2NC will have plenty to do developing the original arguments and responding to the Affirmative's answers.

Like the 1AC, the 1NC should build a *prima facie* case. That is, the arguments that the speaker presents should be sufficient to convince the judge to vote against the Affirmative plan if they are not refuted. Usually, this requires presenting a mixture of offensive arguments, which are problems serious enough to warrant a Negative decision, and defensive arguments, which prevent the Affirmative's case from overwhelming the Negative's offensive arguments. A 1NC that focuses too heavily on one or the other will probably not be strong enough to stand up to solid Affirmative responses.

When outlining her team's strategy for the round, the 1NC must choose whether to focus on **depth** or **breadth**. Depth means that the 1NC chooses to present only a few arguments, but to make them very well-developed and sophisticated. A team that is confident in their arguments and knows with a good deal of certainty which arguments they will be trying to win the round on in the 2NR may make little or no effort to conceal their strategy. The 1NC will read a large amount of evidence, pre-empt likely Affirmative responses, and develop the position thoroughly.

This is most effective with complicated arguments such as critiques, which require long pieces of evidence and substantial explanation. When her 1NC is focused on depth, the speaker does not care if the other team can easily guess which Negative arguments are the most important and spend a lot of time answering them, because she is confident that her team can beat those answers, whatever they may be.

Breadth means that the 1NC makes a large number of short, less-developed arguments in the hopes of overwhelming the 2AC. In later speeches, her team will kick out of

arguments that were well answered and spend a lot of time developing those that were answered less thoroughly.

This can be an effective strategy against Affirmative teams that are substantially less skilled and experienced than the Negative, but against good teams, it can backfire. The 2AC may make so many offensive answers that the Negative team is forced onto the defensive during the 2NC and the 1NR. They end up being so busy trying to defend against the Affirmative's offense that they never have time to develop their arguments.

As much as possible, the Negative team should have their strategy set before the round even begins. Against cases that they know they are likely to hit (for example, Core Files Affirmatives, in leagues that use them), the 1NC should be completely written out, just like the 1AC. Otherwise, the speaker should have several generic strategies with which both she and her partner are familiar, and she should know when to use which ones.

It is the 1NC's responsibility to make sure the team has up-to-date uniqueness evidence, especially for their most commonly run disadvantages. She should also know which disadvantages have specific links to which cases, and either read these in her speech, or be sure they are available for use in future Negative speeches.

In practices, a coach or teammate should quiz the 1NC about the details of the off-case positions she reads most commonly. She should be able to tell a succinct story for each disadvantage, explain the links thoroughly, detail what exactly a counterplan does and how it solves, give a plain language summary of each critique, and know things such as whether the team is running a counterplan conditionally.

The Second Affirmative Constructive

The 2AC is the Affirmative's last constructive speech, so if there are any arguments they will need to win the round, the speaker had better make them now. In particular, her job is to rebuild the Affirmative case, defend it from the Negative's attacks, and establish her team's strategy against new arguments that the Negative has presented, such as disadvantages, Topicality violations, counterplans, and critiques.

Against these new arguments, the 2AC can use pre-written **frontlines**, which contain all of the evidence and analytical arguments she needs to make against them. She must keep these frontlines well organized so that she can pull them at a moment's notice and save preparation time for the more difficult rebuttal speeches. She must also be familiar enough with them so that she can adapt on the fly if the Negative argument contains an unexpected twist.

The key to a good set of answers against an off-case position is having a variety of offensive and defensive responses. Often, winning only one or two arguments will be enough to defeat the entire position, so if the 2AC is able to make 5-8 answers or more,

her team will have a great deal of flexibility later in the round to decide which arguments are the best.

When defending the case, she must know it inside and out, so that she can use it to make link turns and outweigh impacts against disadvantages, demonstrate Solvency deficits to counterplans, and defend its assumptions against critiques. After a tough 1NC, she may not have time to make as many new arguments as she would like in defense of the case. Thus, she must know how to use the 1AC evidence effectively.

Finally, it is her responsibility to make sure non-uniqueness and other time-sensitive arguments in the 2AC are up-to-date.

The Negative Block

The Negative team now has two speeches in a row: the Second Negative Constructive and the First Negative Rebuttal. Collectively, these two speeches are known as the **Negative block**. Since no Affirmative speech comes between them, they have the same purpose: to refute the 2AC's answers and develop the arguments presented during the 1NC.

It would be pointless for the 2NC to spend eight minutes saying everything that needs to be said, and then for the 1NR to give a five-minute version of the same speech. Instead, the Negative speakers should **divide the block**. That is, they should treat it like a single, 13-minute speech that they share. The 2NC addresses some of the arguments in the round, and the 1NR addresses the rest of them.

The Second Negative Constructive

The speaker giving the 2NC will also be giving the 2NR, which means she is the one who will ultimately have to sell the Negative strategy to the judge. Thus, she has the primary responsibility for deciding what that strategy will be and how the speakers will divide the Negative block.

As a general rule, she should take positions which require new arguments, a lot of new evidence, or more than five minutes to cover thoroughly. Often, these are arguments such as disadvantages and critiques, especially when the Affirmative has made a lot of offensive answers to them. The 2NC has the time and flexibility to make new arguments that her partner does not, so she should be the one to handle such positions.

The 2NC is also in a better position to explain complex arguments than is her partner. Especially on off-case positions with which the judge may not be familiar, the 2NC should have brief, pre-written **local overviews** that summarize the position and highlight important arguments such as links.

A common question is whether the 2NC can present new off-case positions such as disadvantages. Generally there is no rule against this, as new arguments are permitted in constructive speeches. This is a very bad strategy for the Negative, however, as their arguments will never be properly developed. The Affirmative will not make their first answers until the 1AR, meaning that the 2NR will have to defend the position for the first time, explain it, and sell it to the judge all at once. This is a formidable challenge in a five-minute speech, and often takes up time that would be better spent on impact comparison.

The First Negative Rebuttal

The 1NR should cover positions that are heavy on explanation and analytical arguments, such as Topicality, counterplans (unless she anticipates an in-depth permutation debate), and case attacks. Even if the 2NR will most likely not be going for these arguments, the 1NR must extend them thoroughly so that they are credible threats to which the 1AR will be forced to respond. Frequently, the job of kicking out of disadvantages also falls to the 1NR.

Unless the 2NC runs out of time and must hand off an argument to her partner at the last second, there is no excuse for the 1NR to take preparation time. She has the 2NC's preparation time, the entire 2NC, and the cross-examination of the 2NC to prepare her speech. The Affirmative will not speak between the end of the 2AC and the beginning of the 1NR, so there is no reason not to be working on this speech the entire time. If the 1NR takes preparation time, the 1AR can use that time to prepare answers to the 2NC, which she has now heard. In other words, when the 1NR takes preparation time, she is also giving free preparation time to her opponent.

The First Affirmative Rebuttal (1AR)

The 1AR is an intimidating speech: the speaker has five minutes to respond to thirteen minutes of Negative argumentation. This requires ruthless efficiency and excellent argument selection.

A good rule of thumb for the 1AR is to begin with arguments such as Topicality or a counterplan that, if lost, will cost the Affirmative the round. Then, she should move to arguments that, if won, will win the Affirmative the round. These include counterplan theory arguments and counter-critiques. Next come other offensive arguments, such as disadvantages, and finally positions that were poorly argued in the Negative block, are purely defensive (such as solvency takeouts), or would be a nice option to keep around but are not central to the Affirmative's strategy (such as turns on a disadvantage that the Negative tried to kick in the block).

1AR's who tend to be **top-heavy** (that is, who spend too much time on the first argument they address and not enough on those at the end of their speech) might want to make an

exception to this rule to put an argument on which they do not intend to spend very much time first. If they accidentally spend forty seconds instead of twenty on the case debate, they are only out twenty seconds, but spending two minutes rather than one on a Topicality violation can be deadly.

When it comes to argument selection, some 1AR's consult with their partners after the 2AC and circle on their flow the 2-4 most important arguments on each issue. Then they extend only those arguments in the 1AR. These should include a variety of offensive and defensive arguments in order to maximize the 2AR's options.

The 1AR can often get away with minimal explanation. Her primary job is to keep alive as many Affirmative arguments as possible, so that her partner can choose the best ones and explain their implications more thoroughly. The 1AR should not, however, sacrifice refutation. It does her no good to extend an argument but ignore the answers made in the Negative block, as all the 2NR will have to do is extend the conceded arguments.

Last Rebuttals

The 2NR and 2AR have very similar objectives: to narrow the round down to their strongest arguments, sort out all of the refutation that has occurred so far, and paint a clear picture for the judge of how she should compare the impacts and evaluate the round. The best way to accomplish this is with an overview that lays out exactly what the team's final strategy for the round is and how it compares to that of their opponents.

Honesty is the key to a good overview in a last rebuttal. Many debaters simply explain why their team is winning every issue in the round. This is not often true, and in the rare case that it is, the judge will not need any help making her decision. The speaker should tell the judge what to do in the much more likely event that her team has lost some issue in the round. This requires getting the most out of the arguments they are winning and downplaying those they are losing, which in turn requires an honest assessment of where they stand on each issue. Last rebuttalists should say "Even if...", as in "Even if we lose the disadvantage, we still win the round because the case outweighs it."

Sometimes, the last rebuttalist will be in the sticky position of having to deal with an argument that her partner dropped in her previous speech. It is too late for new arguments against this conceded point. However, the speaker can try to think of ways in which arguments extended elsewhere in the debate might neutralize the problem. For example, even if the 1AR dropped one disadvantage, arguments that she extended against the other disadvantage might mitigate the dropped one as well.

A debater can also make arguments about how a dropped argument will affect the round. For example, if the 1AR dropped the link to a disadvantage but answered the uniqueness, then as long as the 2AR can win uniqueness, she does not need to worry about the link.

The most important task of the last rebuttalist, however, is settling on a winning strategy and selling it to the judge. A common mistake is trying to win on too many arguments. The last rebuttal is a team's last chance to explain their positions to the judge, so they must allow themselves time to draw out the warrants for their claims fully, defeat their opponent's answers once and for all, and give a detailed and compelling evaluation of their impacts.

There are no bonus points for winning the round in three different ways. For the Negative, this means picking one strategy and devoting time to winning it. For the Affirmative, it means selecting only the best answers against each position the 2NR goes for. For example, if the 2AR thinks she is likely to win her link turns to a disadvantage, she will need to go for the non-uniqueness arguments as well, but can concede the impacts, since she plans to capture them anyway.

Persuasive Speaking

Debate is about more than just the things that the debaters are saying. It is also about how they look and sound while they are saying those things. If it were not, then debaters would just submit their speeches in essay form to the judge, and she would decide whose arguments were better. The truth is, communication is a central skill in debate, and participants must put some thought into how they present their arguments.

This is especially true during public forums, public debates, or any time when the audience will consist primarily of individuals who do not have very much specialized debate knowledge or training. However, speaking persuasively is important even in front of the most highly technical judges. Judging is an inherently subjective task, and as much as a judge may try to base her decision solely on the arguments that the debaters present, the manner in which they present their arguments always influences how the judge perceives them. This chapter offers debaters advice on how to influence their judges' perceptions of them and their arguments and how to communicate ideas in the most persuasive and effective way possible.

Confidence and Credibility

The team to win a debate round is often the team that looks like they are winning. The judge is more likely to believe a speaker who sounds like she believes her own arguments, and she is more likely to decide that the winner of a round is the team whose members act as though they were winning throughout the round.

The easiest way to sound confident is to be confident. Debaters who understand the arguments they are making, can anticipate the answers they are likely to hear, and know how they will defend their claims in later speeches tend to exude confidence. It also helps for debaters to choose arguments they believe in, as their passion will shine through during their speeches.

Practice, Practice, Practice

In addition to their many other benefits, practice debate rounds accustom beginning debaters to going through the motions of a debate. Things that they may not even realize they will need to know, such as when it is their turn to speak, where they should stand when speaking, and where they should sit and how they should behave when not speaking, could unnerve them or make them self-conscious during a round. Coaches should always walk novice debaters through at least once practice debate round before taking them to their first tournament.

Practice builds confidence in more experienced debaters as well. Speakers who practice reading their evidence and making arguments in their own words are less likely to stutter,

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mispronounce words, and use junk words such as 'uh', 'um', and 'like'. Especially with evidence that they use often, debaters should practice reading it out loud and seek out assistance pronouncing and understanding difficult vocabulary.

Confidence is about more than knowing the arguments, however. Debaters employ specific speaking styles and techniques to help them sound confident, even when they are not. There are certain debaters who always sound as though they know what they are talking about and are 100% right, even when they have no clue and are dead wrong. These debaters have a definite edge over their peers, especially those who do not have a confident speaking style and end up sounding confused, uninformed, and wrong, even when they know they are right.

One skill that confident debaters possess is **presence**. Presence means that others are always aware when this person is around, especially when she is speaking. She has a voice and a speaking style that causes others to take notice. In a debate round, the judge should certainly be paying attention when any debater is speaking! But some speakers are a chore to listen to, and others make the judge *want* to pay attention. Debaters with presence fall into this second category.

To convey presence, that is, to make their judges hang on every word they say, debaters should be conscious of their voice and their appearance. Debaters who stand up straight and make eye contact look like they have something important to say; those who slouch and stare at their shoes or their evidence look like not even they are interested in what they are saying. If debaters look like they do not care about their own arguments, the judge will not care about them either.

Debaters can also communicate interest by paying attention to their voices. Speakers who mumble, talk very quietly, and never vary the pitch of their voice are not enjoyable to listen to. Even a judge who tries her best to pay attention may find her mind wandering, especially early in the morning or at the end of a long day.

This does not mean that debaters should shout their arguments, but they should speak loudly enough that they can be heard easily. The judge should not have to expend any effort just to hear a debater's arguments. Every ounce of energy she spends trying to hear the arguments that a quiet or unclear speaker is making is one less ounce that she can spend thinking about those arguments.

Finally, confident debaters are polite debaters. For example, during cross-examination, debaters who are bullying when asking questions and defensive or sarcastic when answering them look like they have something to hide. When debaters are confident that their arguments are correct, they have no reason not to give helpful, straightforward responses to questions that their opponents have. In fact, they are proud of their arguments and *want* to explain them. Debaters who act like arrogant know-it-alls and

treat their opponents' arguments with disdain are more likely to alienate judges than persuade them.

Enunciation

Enunciation is a speaker's ability to talk so that her audience can understand the words that she is saying. 'Understand' here does not mean comprehending what those words mean or what point the debater is trying to make. Rather, it means something much more basic: recognizing the individual words that a speaker is saying.

Unfortunately, it is all too common for debaters to hurry through their speeches, mumbling into sheets of paper held directly in front of their faces, and making it nearly impossible for the judge to catch more than every third word out of their mouths. A judge cannot evaluate a debater's arguments if she cannot understand what that debater is saying. Fortunately, enunciation is one of the easiest skills for a speaker to improve.

Pronunciation

Debate evidence often comes from sources, such as academic journals and law reviews, that are written for an audience with a post-graduate education. This means that they may contain advanced vocabulary that most high school students will never have seen before. It is understandable that these students will not know how to pronounce those words the first time that they see them, which is why it is important for them to make sure they know how to pronounce the words in their evidence *before* they intend to use that evidence during a debate round.

Debaters should read through their evidence carefully before every tournament and ask a coach, teacher, parent, or other adult about the pronunciation of any difficult words. Most likely, these adults will be very impressed by the debater's interest in such advanced vocabulary! Judges will also be impressed when the debater pronounces one of these words as though she has known it her entire life.

Such preparation will inevitably miss something, however, so debaters also need to be prepared to deal with pronouncing new words on the spot. Stopping, stuttering, muttering, and slurring through the words will both confuse the judge and disrupt the speaker's rhythm. Instead, the speaker should sound out the word, syllable by syllable, as best she can, and then continue her speech. Often, the judge will be able to recognize the word if the speaker sounds it out clearly, and may even help her with its pronunciation after the round.

In any event, it is not the end of the world if the judge misses one or two words. Provided that the debater does not allow this to shake her confidence and reads the rest of the evidence clearly, her meaning should be easy enough for the judge to figure out from context.

A Word of Caution

Students with diagnosed reading or learning disabilities, those for whom English is not their first language, and those who have just never enjoyed reading very much will have extra difficulty with many speaking skills, including pronunciation. It would be wistful thinking to say that debate does not present special challenges for these students. However, if they are willing to devote the extra effort that debate will require of them and put up with the extra frustrations that they will encounter, they have more to gain from participation in the activity than any other student. Debate is proven to improve reading, speaking, and language skills, so it can be a great tool for those who need extra help in these areas.

Posture

Posture means the position of a person's body, and it can have a drastic effect on her enunciation and clarity when she is speaking. Although sound is created in the **larynx**, or voice box, which is located in the neck, the power behind the sound of a speaker's voice comes from deep within her body. She controls her volume and projects her voice by regulating the amount of air that leaves her lungs and travels to her larynx, where it is turned into sound.

When a debater is sitting down, or standing but slouched over, she cannot take in as much air, and she does not have as much control over the air that she does take in. Breathing is controlled by a muscle called the **diaphragm**. Located just below the lungs, the diaphragm helps the lungs expand to take in more air and contract to force air out. When a person is not standing up straight, her diaphragm is crushed and cannot do its job as well. Thus, she cannot take deep breaths, and hence cannot speak as loudly or for as long as she could if she were standing with good posture.

Good posture comes when someone stands in a way that balances and supports every part of her body. When someone stands with good posture, her ankle, knee, hip, shoulder, and ear are aligned. Her legs, back, and neck are straight (not leaning forwards, as many are accustomed to doing, but not arched backwards, either), her chest is pushed slightly forwards, and her shoulders are pulled slightly back. This posture opens the passageway that brings air in through the nose and mouth, down the throat, and deep into the lungs, all the way down to the diaphragm. It enables a speaker to project her voice by using her diaphragm to push the air from her lungs, through her throat, and out of her mouth.

This controlled breathing is what allows opera singers to fill cavernous performance halls without a microphone, and it is also what enables debaters to make themselves heard over the sounds of a humming air conditioner in the ceiling, football practice outside, and shouting debaters in the next room over. As an added benefit, good breathing requires less breathing. That is, if debaters take in more air with every breath, they will not need to pause to breathe as frequently.

Dress affects posture, too. High-heeled shoes encourage their wearers to tilt their upper bodies for balance, throwing off the alignment of the back and making it more difficult for air to travel to and from the lungs. Tight clothes, especially tight shirts, prevent the stomach from expanding to accommodate increased air intake, and they may also make their wearer self-conscious about puffing out his or her stomach in the first place. A buttoned suit jacket can have the same effect, while a tie that is too tight will restrict the movement of muscles in the neck that are crucial for speaking.

Practice

As with most skills in debate, practice is the best way to improve enunciation. Debaters can master pronunciation by reading difficult evidence over and over again until the correct pronunciation comes naturally to them.

Correct posture should always be practiced. One way is simply to be conscious of it. Taking a few minutes to concentrate on what happens when one breathes, to feel the diaphragm contracting and the lungs expanding, may be all it takes to create awareness of what good posture feels like. Visualizing the process can also help. Imagine the air traveling into the lungs, and the voice traveling back out.

At school, traveling between classes is a good time to practice correct posture for standing and walking, and sitting up straight during class, with the back of the chair supporting one's lower back, is good practice, too.

Finally, there are some simple drills that debaters use to improve their ability to enunciate. When the words coming out of a speaker's mouth sound like mush, so that they cannot be distinguished from one another, the problem is usually that she is not moving her lips, tongue, and teeth enough. These are the parts of the mouth that shape sounds, turning voice into words.

One popular drill is to read evidence while holding a pen in one's teeth, so that the lips and cheeks are in a smiling position. This forces the speaker to exaggerate the movement of her lips and tongue in order to pronounce her words, which is exactly what she should be doing any time that speaks.

While the pen drill is especially helpful, speaking of any kind is an important warm-up before a debate tournament. Just reading the newspaper out loud and with good posture warms up all of the body parts involved in speech: the diaphragm, lungs, throat, larynx, tongue, and lips. When all of these parts are stretched out and fired up, a debater will speak with greater ease, and her judges will have much less difficulty and much more fun listening to her.

Dynamism

Dynamism is the property of having energy and activity. It is what makes a speaker interesting to listen to, and what debater does not want her judge to be interested in listening to her? Debaters make their speeches dynamic in a number of different ways: by varying the tone and pitch of their voices, gesturing with their hands, moving their bodies, and speaking fluidly.

Tone

Tone refers generally to the quality of a speaker's voice. A tone could be serious, humorous, conversational, dramatic, nervous, angry, etc. Varying the tone of her voice enables a debater to mark transitions between her arguments, emphasize important points, and make her speeches more compelling. However, when she uses an inappropriate tone, she can come across as disrespectful, immature, nervous, phony, or just plain boring. Thus, it is important for debaters to be aware of their tone of voice, and to alter it for effect.

When discussing the Harms portion of her case, for instance, a debater should use a serious, dramatic, or even outraged tone to convey how bad they are and how important it is to address them. Making the exact same arguments in a humorous or happy tone, however, would be disrespectful or even downright offensive, especially when she is talking about problems such as genocide and racism. There is nothing funny about problems such as those, and if a debater is not taking her own Harms seriously, the judge probably will not do so, either.

Pitch

Pitch is how high or low a speaker's voice is. As a general rule, larger people tend to have naturally deeper voices, while smaller people tend to have naturally higher voices. However, everyone, no matter what size they are, has the ability to vary the pitch of her voice considerably, and in fact everyone does this to some extent without even thinking about it.

Anyone who has ever heard a truly monotone voice produced by a computer knows how bizarre it sounds. People are so accustomed to hearing voices go up and down to mark the beginning and end of a sentence, emphasize a certain phrase, or even pronounce a word correctly that speech without any variation in pitch can be nearly unrecognizable.

Unrecognizable is the last thing that a debater wants her speech to be, but too often, they get so caught up in reading their evidence or their flowsheets that they forget to vary the pitch of their voices. Thus, they sound a little like robots, droning on and on in a language that the judge can barely understand.

To avoid this problem, debaters should always make their arguments and read their evidence in a natural voice. That is, they should emphasize key words, allow their voice

to rise when ending a question and fall when ending a statement, and otherwise speak as they otherwise would, even though they are actually reading aloud rather than having a conversation with someone. This makes it much easier for the judge to process the words that she hears and to pay attention to the debater who is speaking. Plus, it makes her appear authentic, which is a quality that always makes a speaker more credible and persuasive.

Embrace Nervousness

Speaking in public is many people's greatest fear, so it is understandable for debaters to get nervous when speaking during a round. Rather than allowing this nervousness to distract them and interfere with their ability to speak naturally and comfortably, they should use it to become more conscious of themselves. Being self-conscious is not necessarily a bad thing, because it also means that one is very much aware of what one is saying and doing, and of how others are responding. Debaters can use their self-consciousness to help them monitor their own behavior and adapt it to the reactions of the judge. Everyone gets nervous. What sets good speakers apart from their counterparts is their ability to use their nervousness to their advantage.

Hand Gestures

Many people have a tendency to forget what their hands are doing when they are concentrating on other things, such as speaking or reading. During speeches, many debaters play with their hair, adjust their clothing, or exhibit other nervous hand behavior without realizing it. While hand gestures can be an effective way of adding dynamism to a speech, they can also be very distracting when they are not used deliberately.

Debaters should always know where their hands are during their speeches, especially if they are prone to nervous fidgeting. It helps to put them in one place, such as behind one's back or on the podium (but *not* in one's pockets or hair), and leave them there until they are needed.

Hand gestures *should* be used for emphasis (chopping the air or banging the podium, though these can be distracting and should be used sparingly), to aid in explanation (pointing, indicating motion, position, or direction, etc.), or to indicate transitions (flipping to a new sheet of paper, for example).

Body Movement

Like hand gestures, body movement can be very distracting when it is not deliberate. Pacing nervously and swaying back and forth or side-to-side are bad habits that debaters should make a conscious effort to break. However, the body can also be an effective tool for communication, especially during cross-examination, when speakers are already out from behind the podium.

It is generally not a good idea to move around too much while reading, as it is easy to lose one's place in the text and confuse everyone. Especially during rebuttals, however, when debaters are primarily making direct appeals to the judge in their own words, moving around a bit can be very effective. A podium is a useful tool for organizing notes and evidence, but it can also become a barrier between the speaker and her audience. Moving around helps the speaker to engage the judge directly and immediately.

Fluidity

Speaking with **fluidity** means that one's words have a graceful and natural flow to them. The alternative is to sound artificial and choppy, which suggests that the speaker is just reading with little understanding of what she is saying.

It can be especially tempting to give in to these bad habits when reading difficult evidence, because one's attention is focused primarily on just getting through it. However, when the speaker is not reading with understanding, it is hard for the judge to listen with understanding. When reading evidence, speakers should still pause at natural places such as commas and periods, and not in the middle of a phrase. This conversational style of delivery sounds much more natural and is easier to follow.

Transitions should also be fluid. When a speaker moves from making arguments in her own words to reading a piece of evidence, for example, her words should lead naturally into the presentation of the evidence. This is easier to do when the tag line for the evidence is written in the speaker's own words, even if she did not research the evidence herself. Her words will flow naturally into the tag line for the evidence.

This is also why evidence citations are sometimes written in a 'natural' way, for example, 'Professor Delgado explains in 2003,' rather than just, 'Delgado, professor, '03'. This style of presenting a citation makes the transition from the speaker's words to her expert's words less abrupt.

Humor

Even though it often gets competitive and deals with weighty topics, debate is a game that nearly all of its participants enjoy. Despite debate's many social and educational benefits, very few people are able to continue their involvement with it if they are not having a good time. In fact, enjoying debate enough to invest a lot of time and energy in it is probably necessary to gain most of its other benefits!

Students are not the only ones who want to have a good time while they are debating. They must remember that their judges are often giving up their weekend for little or no pay to judge debate rounds. Think about what those judges would probably be doing if they were not judging debate. They might go to a movie or play, have dinner with a friend, or spend time with their families. In other words, they would be doing something

entertaining and enjoyable. Instead, they are judging debate, and they usually appreciate it when debaters try to make their rounds as entertaining and enjoyable as possible.

One way of making a debate enjoyable is to employ humor. Debaters should not have a sense of humor only out of charity for their kind-hearted judges, however; it is also good debate strategy. Humor helps speakers connect to their audiences, appear interesting and likeable, keep the judge's attention, emphasize and make memorable their most important points, and convey an aura of confidence in their arguments.

Atmosphere

People appreciate humor the most when they are in the mood to laugh. Before a professional comedian performs, an opening performer usually warms the audience up and gets them ready to laugh, just as musical performers often have opening acts that get the crowd pumped up.

Debaters do not get opening acts, so the burden falls on them to create the right atmosphere for humor. If they are taking the round too seriously and appear irritable or stressed out, the judge will also be on edge, and will not be in the mood to laugh. Any jokes these debaters try to tell will bomb. Conversely, if the debaters are friendly with each other and the judge and relaxed while making their arguments, the mood of the round will be more light-hearted, and it will be easier to get laughs.

A debate tournament is not a comedy club, though. Humor is only one tool in a speaker's arsenal, and there are times when it is inappropriate. Mean-spirited jokes at the expense of one's opponents rarely go over well, nor do inappropriate or disrespectful jokes about serious subject matter such as racism or genocide.

In short, timing is the key to humor. At the right time, nearly anything will seem funny, but at the wrong time, nearly any joke will bomb.

Metaphors

Metaphors compare one thing to something else that is seemingly unrelated. Especially good metaphors reveal surprisingly insightful similarities, and surprise and insight are two things that make people laugh. Debaters who come up with or find especially clever metaphors for explaining an argument will often get an appreciative laugh from their judge.

Not only does this instance of humor guarantee that the judge will remember that argument and give it some thought, but it also makes it harder for the other team to refute. Trying to respond to a humorous and insightful metaphor as one would to any other argument is rarely effective. This is because the metaphor is persuasive at two levels: at the level of logic (because of its warrants) and at the level of intuition (because

of its humor). Traditional answers respond only to the logic of the argument, ignoring its intuitive appeal.

It is difficult to do, but turning a metaphor back on its creator is even more devastating. It is humorous and appealing for all of the same reasons as the original metaphor, but generally it is even more so because it builds on the original metaphor's success.

As an example, consider the famous metaphor, "A rising tide floats all ships." This metaphor is generally used to justify economic policies that directly benefit primarily business or wealthier citizens rather than the middle and lower classes. The argument is that helping these sources financially will improve the economy more generally, and that when the economy is doing well, even the poorest citizens benefit. The economy is the tide, and the citizens are the ships. When the tide rises in a harbor, all of the ships floating in the harbor rise with it. When a country's economy does well, so do all of its citizens.

The intuitive appeal of this argument makes it difficult to disprove. Although opponents of this type of economic policy make many rational arguments about how wealth does not 'trickle down' very effectively from the higher rungs of an economy to the lower and how people most in need do not benefit very much from such policies, their arguments simply do not resonate with people as well as this metaphor.

Responding to the 'rising tide' metaphor requires addressing its intuitive as well as its logical appeal. A more effective answer might be that when the tide rises too quickly, smaller ships are often battered by large waves and rocky shores. In other words, economic policies that benefit primarily the wealthy may improve overall economic indicators, but that does not mean that they are beneficial for everyone. They may destroy the competitiveness of small businesses, drive renters out of their homes and neighborhoods, and generally worsen the problems of those most in need. This argument reinterprets the original metaphor, using a moderately humorous means to make a very serious point.

Social Criticism

Clever and insightful commentary on social issues, either current events or those that a particular argument in the round address, can be another source of humor, provided that it is employed with care. Treating serious subject matter lightly or disrespectfully is more likely to be offensive than funny, but humor that merely makes an insightful statement about these problems can be very effective.

When answering the school uniforms case used as an example in Chapter Three of this book, for instance, the Negative could quote comedian George Carlin: "School uniforms. Bad theory. The idea is that if kids wear uniforms to school it helps keep order. Don't these schools do enough damage making all these kids think alike, now they're gonna get

'em to look alike too? And it's not a new idea, I first saw it in old newsreels from the 1930's, but it was hard to understand 'cause the narration was in German!"

Although the punch line to this joke is about Nazi Germany, it is not making light of the Holocaust, anything that Hitler or the Nazis did, or the suffering of any of their victims. In fact, it relies on the assumption that Nazi Germany was terrible to criticize school uniforms and make a point about the dangers of enforcing conformity and order at the expense of individual freedom.

Reading evidence from comedians who comment on social issues, such as Chris Rock, Jon Stewart, Dave Chappelle, and George Carlin, is one way of employing this type of humor, but there is no reason why debaters cannot make similar jokes of their own. If the Affirmative were to argue that anti-gang policies would not unfairly target minority youth, for example, the Negative could draw on their own experiences with racism to make a joke or cynical comment about racial profiling. The joke would not imply that discrimination and racial profiling are funny or justified, but rather that the Affirmative team, or at least their authors, are naive about the influence of race and racism.

Again, this is a difficult claim to refute with rational argumentation alone. Such a joke would introduce the assumption that the judge and the Negative team share a sophisticated understanding of racism, and that the Affirmative team just does not 'get it'. Thus, all of the Affirmative's claims on this point will be suspect, and since the Negative first made this argument covertly (as part of a joke, rather than as an explicitly warranted argument), it is harder for their opponents to address it directly.

Self-Effacement

Self-effacement means making oneself the butt of a joke. When used too frequently, self-effacement makes the speaker seem to have a low opinion of herself, and can be awkward for the audience to hear. However, when used sparingly, it makes the speaker appear confident and powerful. The perception is that people who are weak need to inflate their image, while those who are strong can afford to poke fun at themselves playfully.

Self-effacement also helps the judge relate to and like the speaker, which is always valuable in a debate round. No one likes to deal with a person who takes herself too seriously, and this kind of humor is a great way for a debater to come across as down-to-earth and in-touch, even with her own shortcomings.

One popular way to employ self-effacing humor is when arguing that a theory argument should be a voting issue ("I'm just not a good enough debater to beat a non-Topical case"). Another is when admitting and dealing with a mistake made earlier in the round ("I'm just too slow to cover everything in the 2AC, but here's why it doesn't matter that I dropped the disadvantage..."). By making light of the error, the speaker encourages the judge not to treat it as a big deal, either, which is exactly what the speaker is trying to accomplish by addressing the error in the first place.

As long as they have a good relationship, a debater can extend self-effacement to situations where her partner is the butt of a joke ("Don't allow new answers in the 2NR, my partner isn't smart enough to answer them"). This still counts as *self*-effacement because the humor is at the expense of the speaker's own team.

Ribbing

Ribbing is good-natured humor that comes at the expense of someone else, usually the other team or the judge. More than with any other type of humor, debaters walk a fine line when they rib their opponents or judge. While good-natured teasing can help to establish a personal connection with a judge with whom the debater is already on good terms, it can easily go overboard and antagonize her. Similarly, when ribbing of one's opponents appears the least bit confrontational or mean-spirited, judges will not appreciate it at all.

Unless a debater is absolutely certain that a joke will go over well with no hurt feelings or misunderstandings, it is best to avoid ribbing altogether. Humor is funniest and most effective when it is true, but this is precisely when ribbing is least appropriate. Claiming that an opponent has a big nose when she clearly does not probably will not cause hurt feelings (although it could- many people are very sensitive about their appearance), but it probably will not be very funny, either. Similarly, no matter how humorously a speaker points out her opponent's genuinely bulbous nose, there are certain to be hurt feelings and probably punishment from the judge, as well. In other words, when it comes to ribbing, debaters have little to gain and a lot to lose.

Preparation

Funny people usually come across as clever because others assume that one must be quick-witted to quickly sum up a situation and make a humorous comment about it. While this is probably true, the inverse is not. That is, funny people may be clever, but not all clever people are funny. No matter how smart a debater is, she may not be very funny.

Fortunately, as with most things in debate, humor can be practiced and prepared. A debater can read evidence from a humorous source, such as a comedian. She can think of jokes ahead of time and write them into her prepared briefs, shells, and frontlines. She can practice snappy responses to common cross-examination questions until she can deliver them in a way that sounds both funny and spontaneous. In other words, a little extra work can more than make up for a lack of innate talent.

A Word of Caution

As much as a well told joke can help a debater, a poorly told one can really hurt her. This section has already discussed the dangers of mean-spirited humor or joking around about serious topics. However, even perfectly appropriate humor can go horribly wrong if it is not delivered properly. Here are a few things that a debater should *never* do when trying to work humor into a speech:

-Take her time. With humor, timing is everything. A speaker has a window of several seconds after something happens to make a humorous comment about it. If she can think of something funny to say, then she should jump through the window immediately, before it closes. If she cannot think of anything, she should just move on. Just like a real window, a window of opportunity is very painful to jump through once it has closed.

-Repeat a punch line. If a debater says something that she thinks is funny and no one laughs, the worst thing she can do is repeat the joke. It will *not* be funnier the second time around. She should either move on, or go double-or-nothing and take the opportunity to make a self-effacing comment about her own inability to get a laugh.

-Explain a joke. Even if the audience did not get the joke, they will not laugh when it is explained to them. If they did get it, but it just was not funny, explaining it is insulting to them and makes the speaker look foolish.

Adapting to the Audience

Baseball, football, and similar sports are *objective* competitions. That means that there is no room for disagreement over which team is the winner at the end of the game. The team with the most points wins, and that is all there is to it. These sports involve subjective decisions (Did the receiver step out of bounds before catching the ball? Was the pitch a strike or a ball?), and people can and do argue over those decisions. But if the score at the end of the game is 14-5, there is no argument about which team won.

Debate is different because it is a *subjective* competition. That means that the winner is a matter of opinion. Reasonable people might disagree over which team should win the round. Different judges would evaluate the exact same round in very different ways, and might very well reach opposite conclusions about which team is the winner.

Football players do not need to change their strategy to suit the referee. The game is played the same way no matter who the referee is, and the goal is always to score as many points as possible.

Debaters, however, need to think about who their audience is. Since they will win or lose based on the opinion of one person, they should try to learn as much about that person as they can.

Judge Paradigms

Different judges have different preferences about types of arguments, the speed at which debaters speak, the way in which they interact with each other, and the strategies that they pursue during a round. Some judges are more aware of their preferences or better at setting them aside than others, but all judges have preferences. Adapting to a judge requires understanding as much as possible about that judge's preferences.

One convention that has developed in debate to help judges express their preferences is the concept of **judge paradigms**. A paradigm is a framework that a judge uses to evaluate a debate round. Essentially, a paradigm is a set of answers to some fundamental questions about debate:

What is the purpose of a debate?
What does a team have to do to win a debate?
What things are debaters not allowed to do?
What is the most effective way to present an argument?
What is the judge's role in the round?

This section will introduce the most common debate paradigms, how they shape a judge's preferences, and how debaters should adapt to judges who employ them.

A Word of Caution

Judge paradigms mean different things to different people, so debaters should be careful not to assume too much about a judge based on the paradigm that she claims to use. Other judges may claim not to have a paradigm, and many will not even know what a paradigm is. That does not mean that these judges are without preferences; it simply means that they cannot communicate their preferences in terms of a paradigm.

The simplest way to learn a judge's preferences is to ask. Even if a judge claims to employ a particular paradigm, debaters should still ask follow-up questions: "Does that mean you will vote Negative on purely defensive case attacks? Does that mean you allow the Negative to present multiple counterplans? Does that mean you never vote on critiques?" Most judges will try to answer honestly. After all, it is in their interest for the debaters to give them the kind of debate they most enjoy watching.

However, there are limits to how well a person can be aware of her own preferences, and sometimes debaters will have to do a little detective work to figure out a judge's hidden preferences. For example, although they may not say so, judges with recent debate experience of their own are more likely to appreciate complex arguments about debate theory than judges who have never debated themselves. The latter usually prefer more 'real world' arguments that do not rely on intricate internal link scenarios and large impacts.

Stock Issues

Recall that there are five Stock Issues: Inherency, Harms, Solvency, Topicality, and Significance. These issues are necessary for the Affirmative to construct a winning case in any paradigm, but they have special importance to Stock Issues judges. These judges view their role as parallel to that of judges in a court of law. The Affirmative team are trying to convict the status quo of a crime, and the judge's job is to determine whether or not it is guilty.

The decision of a Stock Issues judge is usually based on whether or not the Affirmative has won all five Stock Issues. If they have, the status quo is guilty, and the Affirmative wins the round. If they have not, then the status quo is not guilty, and the Negative wins the round.

For the Stocks Issues judge, however, winning a Stock Issue requires more than just demonstrating some risk of its being true. These judges place an especially high burden of proof on the Affirmative team, just as, in a court of law, the prosecution has the burden to prove, not only that the defendant is *probably* guilty, but that she is guilty *beyond a reasonable doubt*. They believe that policy changes always have unintended consequences, so that even if the Negative team have not won a strong offensive argument against the case, the Affirmative must nonetheless prove a significant advantage to the adoption of their plan in order to win the round. The ability to save a handful of lives is usually not, in the eyes of the Stock Issues judge, sufficient to overcome a presumption against change.

When debating for a Stock Issues judge, teams should pay more attention to the case debate than to the Negative's off-case positions. While disadvantages do affect the Significance Stock Issue, they are a small factor. Furthermore, turning disadvantages will not be nearly as effective a strategy for the Affirmative as it usually is, because as far as the Stock Issues judge is concerned, a turn does not contribute to any of the Stock Issues. The Affirmative must still win Harms, even if they turn one or more disadvantages. Counterplans and critiques will carry little, if any, weight for these judges, but Topicality will always be a voting issue, as will Inherency.

Policymakers

Policymakers see themselves as members of a policymaking body such as the United States Congress. The Affirmative team comes to them with a proposal for a new policy, and they must decide whether or not to adopt it. They are primarily concerned with a cost-benefit analysis of the proposed policy. If its advantages appear to outweigh its disadvantages, they will vote for it. If the disadvantages outweigh the advantages, they will vote against it.

Policymakers are in search of the best policy option. This means that they generally err in favor of allowing more policy options to be considered. They tend to allow conditional counterplans, as these make it possible to consider both the counterplan and the status

quo, and in extreme cases, they may even allow the Negative to advocate multiple counterplans.

While they may recognize that it is has some value for preserving the fairness of a debate round, policymaker judges are not overly concerned with Topicality. Other Stock Issues are important only insofar as they contribute to a discussion of costs and benefits. The Affirmative team could lose Harms and Solvency completely but still win a policymaker's ballot if they turned the Negative's disadvantage into an advantage for their plan.

To win in front of a Policymaker judge, teams should avoid theory arguments and focus on the advantages and disadvantages of the various policy options in the round. Impact comparison is especially important. Many Policymaking judges decide the round based on a strict body count: if the plan saves more people than it kills, then it is a good idea. Critiques are relevant to them only when their implications can be expressed in terms of lives saved or lost.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis Testing judges view themselves as scientists trying to determine the truth or falsity of the resolution, which is the hypothesis that they are testing. If they decide that the resolution is true, they will vote Affirmative. Otherwise, they will vote Negative.

Hypothesis Testers are similar to Policymakers in the way that they evaluate competing policy options, but Topicality is of the utmost importance to them. If the Affirmative is not topical, then their plan, no matter how beneficial, does not prove the resolution true. Some Hypothesis Testers will also listen to arguments that the Affirmative's plan does not actually justify the resolution. That is, although it might use the federal government, it does not actually prove the *need* for federal action. This argument is best when accompanied by a counterplan that proves that another actor could implement the plan, but some of these judges will vote on the justification argument alone. However, if the Negative's counterplan is topical, then it might end up proving the resolution true, in which case the Affirmative team could still win the round.

Hypothesis Testers are more likely than Policymakers to listen to critiques and other alternative forms of argumentation. For them, a discussion of policy is only one means of arguing for or against the resolution. A critique of the status quo or the resolution, even if it is not attached to a concrete policy option, could still be a voting issue. In extreme cases, these judges may allow multiple counterplans or multiple plans! As long as there is one topical policy option that is better than any non-topical policy option in the round, they will vote Affirmative.

When debating for a Hypothesis Testing judge, debaters should always keep their focus on the resolution. They probably will need to discuss the details of various policy options,

but they must always tie them back to the resolution. The Affirmative must win Topicality, and the Negative should not present any topical counterplans. Otherwise, the strategy should be very similar to that used for policymakers.

Games Player

Games Player judges view debate as a game for which they are both the referee and the audience. It may be an educational game, but it is still a game, and they encourage debaters to have fun and expect to have fun themselves. The process of debating is both more fun and more educational, in their opinion, than the particulars of what is being debated. Thus, they may enjoy Affirmative who advocate humorous plans or Negatives who present outlandish disadvantages. Some will vote on any criteria that the debaters choose to establish, even something as bizarre as 'the team that makes the best use of sock puppets during the round.'

Because debate is a game to these judges, they recognize the importance of fairness. They will vote on theory arguments about one team's behavior is unfair. However, these arguments are usually not as fun to evaluate as critiques, counterplans, and disadvantages, and so many Games Players would rather they were not brought up.

When debating for a Games Player judge, debaters should relax and try to make the round enjoyable. They should employ humor during their speeches and be friendly with both the judge and the other team. Games Player judges still recognize a good argument when they see one, so teams should still use their best arguments and not get carried away about the fact that the judge says she will vote for anything. However, teams can also not ignore crazy arguments made by their opponents, because no matter how silly or ridiculous they may seem, the judge will probably be willing to consider them.

Argument Critic

Argument Critics see themselves as educators. They are usually teachers by profession, and may even be formally trained in communication and rhetoric. Professional judges and lawyers who volunteer their time as debate judges also tend to fall into this category.

These judges want to share their expertise with the debaters, and often they are more concerned about making the round educational and upholding rigorous standards than they are about remaining objective. Thus, they may disregard claims that they consider frivolous or wrong, even if the other team did not make those arguments. They will not usually vote on an argument just because it was dropped. They will often ask to see the debaters' evidence after the round, and if it does not support the claim that it was used to make, they may disregard it.

Many Argument Critics have very strongly held opinions concerning the purpose of debate and in some cases the meaning of a given resolution. They do not appreciate

Affirmative teams whose plans seek to evade what they consider the core issues of the topic, nor do they appreciate Negatives who present overly generic or tangential off-case arguments. These judges vary based on how they will punish such teams, but loss of speaker points and even loss of the round are not out of the question.

Fortunately for debaters, Argument Critics usually make their preferences very clear before a round. They will tell the debaters exactly what they expect, and debaters are advised to listen carefully. If they want to win an Argument Critic's ballot, debaters should demonstrate a desire to learn from her. They should ask follow-up questions about her preferences and her expectations, but they should do so very respectfully. If the judge thinks that the debaters are just trying to win the round rather than following her instructions out of deference to her expertise, she will not appreciate it.

Debaters must choose their arguments carefully. The Affirmative should present a clearly topical plan with commonsense advantages, and the Negative should focus on strong case attacks and specific links to off-case positions. Both teams should avoid far-fetched link and impact scenarios in favor of smaller but more plausible arguments. They should take the round seriously and treat the judge and their opponents with respect but not too much familiarity. Argument Critics frequently disapprove of debaters walking around or whispering to each other during someone else's speech.

Tabula Rasa

Tabula Rasa is Latin for 'blank slate'. These judges often admit that they have preferences but do everything that they can to keep those preferences out of the round. They expect the debaters to tell them how to evaluate the round, and they may even be willing to adopt one of the above paradigms if a team convinces them to do so.

While *Tabula Rasa* judges will accept nearly any argument if it is conceded, they, like other judges, prefer good arguments with strong warrants. When two arguments are in conflict, they will try to choose the one for which the most or the deepest warrants were given in the round, regardless of their personal opinion about the quality of the argument. Theory arguments, like any other issue, are potential voting issues as long as good reasons are given for why they should decide the round.

The biggest problem that *Tabula Rasa* judges have is deciding a round in which neither team has made arguments about how the round should be decided. For example, if the Affirmative wins a moral justification for their plan, but the Negative wins a disadvantage with a large impact, and neither team makes arguments about which is more important, the judge is forced to interject some opinion of her own.

Thus, it is always important for debaters to try to determine the default preferences of a *Tabula Rasa* judge. In truth, these judges often end up employing their preferences more

than they think. It is just not that easy to keep one's preferences from influencing one's decision-making.

When debating for *Tabula Rasa* judges, debaters must keep meticulous flows, because failing to answer a single argument made by an opponent could be fatal. They must also give very clear and well-organized speeches so that the judge can flow them easily, because she will be relying very heavily on her flow when deciding the round.

All arguments should be well warranted and impacted, because an argument without an impact might as well not be made at all. The judge is not going to make any assumptions about what an argument means for the round. If the team that makes that argument does not tell her what to do with it, she is likely to ignore it.

This makes rebuttals especially important. In rebuttals, debaters must explain the implications of their arguments thoroughly, present the judge with a clear framework for evaluating the round, and compare their own arguments to those of their opponents. They cannot count on the judge to do any of this work for them.

Lay Judges

Lay judges are judges who do not have much, if any, formal debate training. They may include parents of debaters, non-coach teachers at schools with a debate team, new coaches with no debate experience of their own, or just community members who volunteer as judges.

While lay judges are not the top choice among many debaters, they are critical to the success of debate tournaments and leagues. In some UDL's, the majority of judges are lay judges. Were it not for their willingness to give up their weekends for little or no compensation, thousands of students would never get the opportunity to debate. Thus, it is absolutely essential that debaters treat them with the respect and appreciation that they deserve. Not only will this increase their likelihood of success in front of these judges, but it will also ensure that such judges continue to volunteer their time to make Urban Debate Leagues and tournaments possible.

When debating for lay judges, debaters must check their jargon and debate theory at the door. They can still use most of their favorite arguments, but they cannot expect the judge to pick up on them as intuitively as a college debater would. Rather, they must explain everything in the most basic terms possible: what is the disadvantage saying, why is it important, how does it compare to the Affirmative team's case, etc.

Arguments must be plausible and realistic. It is virtually impossible to convince most lay judges that a mandatory school uniforms policy would result in nuclear war. They will, however, be very interested in arguments about freedom of speech and local control of

education. These are real world issues that are familiar to most educated and involved citizens.

Having good, believable arguments is important, but the way in which those arguments are delivered is sometimes even more important. Lay judges are not trained to evaluate the intricacies of policy proposals with the depth and complexity to which many debaters are accustomed. Thus, they often base their decisions on which team sounds and looks more persuasive. They expect debaters to be courteous, well dressed, and well spoken. Fortunately, they often give very high speaker points and a lot of encouragement to debaters who meet their expectations.

The hardest part about debating for lay judges is also what makes it a valuable exercise: learning to 'turn off' specialized debate training and practicing advocacy and communications skills in a more real world context. Debaters have to forget about jargon, forget about debate theory, forget about technicalities, and just talk to someone in the same way that they would talk to a teacher, a friend, or a parent who knew nothing about debate. In fact, practicing one's arguments in front of any of these people is great preparation for debating in front of lay judges.

Multi-Judge Panels

Elimination rounds are often decided by a panel of three or more judges, making the task of adapting to the audience that much harder. Thankfully, the basics of good debating are the same no matter who the judges are. There is not a judge in the world who prefers poorly reasoned arguments to those supported by strong warrants, disorganized speeches over those with a clear structure, and rude debaters over those who treat each other with respect. In other words, the fundamentals of debate do not change: debaters should always try to make the best arguments that they can, in the most compelling way that they can, and trust that a panel of reasonably intelligent and conscientious critics will reach a fair decision.

There is some strategizing that debaters can do to improve their odds of winning the round, however. At nearly all tournaments, multi-judge panels consist of an odd number of judges, and there is no bonus prize for winning for than a majority of them. That is, a team advances to the next elimination round whether they win on a 2-1 decision or a 3-0 decision. So, if two judges have very similar preferences, and the third judge does not share them, the best strategy may be to focus primarily on winning the first two judges.

While this strategy is annoying for the third judge, she will usually understand the predicament that the debaters are in and not take it personally. Judges with debate experience of their own are more likely to be understanding of debaters who do not adapt to them when they are in the minority on a panel, as they have most likely been in the same situation as the debaters at some point during their own careers.

Still, writing off one judge completely is dangerous. Thus, it is often a good idea to focus a bit more on breadth rather than depth of argumentation. That is, debaters should make a wider variety of arguments in support of their side, even at the expense of developing their best arguments as well as they would like, in order to appeal to a wider audience. If two judges love counterplans and hate Topicality, and the third judge loves Topicality and hates counterplans, the Negative might want to go for both Topicality and a counterplan in the 2NR, rather than choosing one or the other, as they would in an ordinary round.

Finally, debaters must be conscious of all of their judges during their round. They must be sure to make eye contact with all of them from time to time. This can be especially complicated because elimination rounds may have large audiences. It is important for the debaters to know which of the twenty people in the room are the judges so that they can focus their attention on those individuals.

Preparing to Debate

There is an old saying in debate: 'Good debaters do not talk, they read.' This does not mean that arguing in one's own words is not an important part of debate. What it means is that as much of that arguing as possible should be done before the round. That is, debaters should plan ahead by brainstorming the arguments that they will need to make, writing out those arguments ahead of time, and researching evidence to support their claims.

During a debate round, teams have ten minutes or less to prepare all four of their speeches. In the weeks and months before a debate tournament, they have thousands of hours to prepare. It is not surprising that teams who take advantage of those thousands of hours to prepare arguments ahead of time tend to be more successful than teams who do not prepare, leaving themselves with only ten minutes to construct their speeches.

Research

The basic unit of evidence in policy debate is the **card**. A card consists of three parts: the **tag**, which is a summary of what the evidence says and how it fits into the debate; the **citation**, or **cite**, which consists of the author's name and qualifications, the source in which the evidence was originally published, and the date of publication; and the text, which is the full quote. Here is an example:

C. Impact- An Oil Shortage Would Be Nearly As Devastating As Nuclear War (Tag)

Riva, Congressional advisor on oil and gas, '00 [Joseph, Hubbert Center Newsletter] (citation)

A major oil shortage in the United States would be a catastrophe, ranking just below nuclear war. There is a near total dependency on oil for transportation and food production. If these two industries are severely crippled, the results will be apocalyptic, dwarfing a surely related collapse in an already inflated stock market. With this in mind, it would appear wise to consider the world's oil supply and its dependability, beginning with the United States. (text)

When a debater is presenting evidence during a speech, she is not required to read all of this, though she must have it available for reference. She must read the author's name and the date of publication, though often she will want to read the author's qualifications as well. She may also underline or highlight just the portions of the text that are essential to the argument she is making. The rest of the text must be on hand, but during her speech, she may choose to read only the highlighted or underlined parts.

These cards will be organized into **briefs**, which are sheets of paper containing several pieces of evidence that make similar arguments. Briefs make it easy for debaters to find the evidence they need quickly. Each page should have a heading that summarizes the evidence found on that page. A heading for a page containing the sample evidence above might be "Oil Dependency Bad Impacts." When a debater needs to make the argument that oil dependency is bad, she would turn to this page and find a number of different cards with different reasons why oil dependency is bad. Generally, the best evidence is nearest to the top of the page.

A **file** is a collection of briefs that all contain evidence to be used when arguing a single issue. For example, an Oil Dependency Disadvantage file would contain briefs with headings such as Uniqueness, Links, and Impacts (which is where the sample evidence above would be found.) The author of a file should include a **table of contents** or **index** at the beginning to help debaters using it find the evidence they need quickly and easily.

Using Other People's Research

The ability to research high-quality information about any issue, using a variety of media, is one of the most valuable skills that debate can impart to its participants. It is also one of the most challenging, however, and until students have mastered the basics of debate they will have great difficulty undertaking substantial research projects of their own.

Beginning debaters will need to use evidence that they get from someone else: senior members of their team, their coach, their league, a local university debate team, a commercially available handbook, or a summer debate institute. Even making sense of this research will be challenge enough for beginning debaters. Attempting substantial research of their own would be prohibitively difficult.

However, there are some disadvantages to using other people's research. The debater will not know the argument as well as she would if she had written it herself. This means it will be harder for her to find what she is looking for, decide which pieces of evidence are best, and explain the arguments in her own words. Here are some things debaters can do to familiarize themselves with other people's evidence and add their own personality to it:

-Skim it. Debaters should leaf through the file to get an idea of what kind of evidence it contains.

-Rate it. The best evidence for each argument should be at the top of the first page of briefs for that argument. If this isn't the case, debaters should re-cut the brief so that it is, or star the best cards so that they can find them quickly and easily.

-Read it. Debaters should go through each card with a highlighter, marking the portions they would read in the round. The goal is to make the evidence as concise as possible while retaining the original claim and all of its warrants.

-Re-Tag it. Debaters should re-write the tag for each card in their own words. This both helps them to integrate the evidence naturally into their speeches and forces them to become familiar with each piece of evidence.

-Know it. The more familiar debaters are with their evidence, the more successfully they will use it.

Getting Started on Independent Research

Producing high-quality debate evidence is a challenge even for experienced debaters. Still, it is never too soon to start trying, as that is the only way to get better. When undertaking a first research project, the most important thing is to keep it small. Debaters should not jump right off trying to research an entire Affirmative case. Debaters looking for a good first project should consider:

-Reading the newspaper. Even if they do not find any evidence this way, it is important for debaters to read major newspapers so that they know what is going on in the world. Each debater on a team can take responsibility for one or two of the major national papers: New York Times, Washington Post, LA Times, Chicago Tribune, Christian Science Monitor, US News and World Report, Atlanta Journal and Constitution, etc. Debaters can read the current news and a week's worth of archives for free online on the websites for most of these papers.

-Finding updates. Arguments that describe the status quo, such as Inherency and uniqueness, quickly become outdated. Before every tournament, each debater on a team can take responsibility for updating a few disadvantages or Inherency arguments. In most cases, this requires nothing more than searching major newspapers from the last week or so looking for more recent evidence that makes the same argument as the current evidence.

-Finding answers. If a team hears a Negative argument for which they have no answers, they should prepare answers before their next competition. Debaters should also be sure they have answers to all of the arguments they plan to use on the Negative themselves-after all, if they thought of it, someone else probably did, too. The best place to start looking for answers, believe it or not, is in the sources from which the Negative took their evidence. Often, these authors will mention some possible objections to the arguments they are making. They may also reference their more prominent critics.

-Writing a new Harms scenario. If the 1AC has no difficulty reading the entire Affirmative case, or if the team is just looking for something different, they can keep the Affirmative case with which they are already comfortable and write a new Harms scenario for it. Ideas for this could come from a current Harms author, especially good disadvantage turns, or current events.

-'Borrowing' a disadvantage. Debaters can get the citations for a disadvantage that they do not already have from another coach or team and then research the argument themselves. This saves the trouble of finding good sources and lets debaters focus on finding good arguments that those sources make and putting them into a usable format.

-Finding specific links. Negatives can make their favorite disadvantages much more effective by finding specific links to the Affirmative cases they expect to use them against. A good way to get started is to do an internet search using some key words from the disadvantage and the cases it will be used against.

Finding Sources

The hardest part about debate research is deciding where to look. Finding good evidence within an article is a fairly intuitive process, but finding articles likely to contain good evidence can be a real challenge. Debaters will want to consider the following sources:

-The internet.

Plusses- The amount of information on the internet is growing exponentially. This information is convenient to access, and powerful search engines like Google make it easy to find articles that reference a specific topic. The ease with which anyone can publish information on the internet makes available some unique perspectives on many different issues, and hyperlinks allow researchers to find more and more evidence easily once they have one good article. Evidence found online can be copied and pasted into a word processing program, eliminating the need for scissors, tape, and photocopying.

Minuses- Much of the information on the internet is biased or unreliable. Longer works, such as books or articles from academic journals, contain some of the most specific evidence but are not generally available online.

-Online databases (Lexis-Nexis, FindLaw, JSTOR, etc.)

Plusses- Databases archive a large amount of longer materials, such as academic journals, that are not otherwise available online. Often, researchers can perform full text searches of these materials and find related sources easily by following hyperlinked citations.

Minuses- It is frequently expensive to access these databases, though many university libraries have subscriptions that can be accessed from their computers. Yahoo! News is a free alternative to Lexis-Nexis. These materials are often written for an audience with substantial post-graduate education, making them in some cases prohibitively difficult for high school students to read and understand.

-University libraries

Plusses- Even small research libraries sport an unrivalled variety of high-quality materials that cannot be found any other way. Highly trained librarians are available to assist researchers in making the most of their time at the library.

Minuses- Most university libraries are not easily accessed by the general public. Especially at public universities, it may be possible to arrange for a debate team to get special permission, but this usually requires a written request from the coach or principal and may entail a fee.

-School and public libraries

Plusses- The most popular books, magazines, and newspapers are available for free, they are generally written at an appropriate reading level, and librarians who are specially trained to work with high school students are on-hand. They may even agree to create a special corner of the library containing materials specific to the debate topic. Students without internet access at home can use library computers for this purpose.

Minuses- Collections at these libraries are very limited and may not contain the more rigorous materials that produce the best debate evidence.

Finding Evidence

Debate research should begin with a large literature survey. When researching on a computer, debaters can either print the relevant articles, or copy and paste them into a word processing program. When at a library, students should leaf through books that seem relevant to their topic, checking the table of contents and index and thumbing through the book to see whether it looks like it will have anything of use. The same can be done with journals, magazines, and newspapers. Debaters should then photocopy the relevant articles and chapters and read their photocopied versions more closely, with pen in hand. Debaters should *never* write in or tear pages from the original materials. Not only is this rude, but it may result in the entire team being banned from the library.

As debaters read through their photocopied materials, they should bracket the portions that they want to use as evidence and write tags for each card in the margins of the page. Some debaters write the page number in the margin as well, so that they will not forget it when they cut out the text. When looking for evidence, debaters should:

-Know what they are looking for. Before beginning their research, debaters should list the evidence they will need. A debater researching a disadvantage, for example, will need uniqueness, links, brinks, internal links, impacts, specific links to common Affirmative cases, and answers to likely Affirmative responses. Although she should bracket any other evidence that seems like it would be useful, preparing this list ahead of time will help her know what to bracket when she sees it.

-Look for warrants. Debate evidence is only as good as its warrants. Researchers must be sure to bracket, not only the claim that they need, but also the warrants for that claim.

-Maintain context. A good rule of thumb is to include an entire paragraph if even a single sentence from that paragraph will be used. This allows debaters and judges to get a sense of the context in which the author is making her argument.

-Respect the author's intent. Debaters should never deliberately use an argument out of context. This includes evidence that begins "Some would argue that...." If this were an argument that the author endorsed, she would not qualify it in this way. Most likely, she will refute this argument in the next paragraph.

Briefing Evidence

Once a debater has read through an article and bracketed the portions to be used as evidence, she must cut these portions out and affix them to a blank sheet of paper using scissors and tape or the 'cut and paste' feature on a word processor. She must then add the citation for the evidence and give it a tag. Tags and citations should be handwritten neatly or typed and then printed, cut, and taped in the appropriate places. Good tags should:

-Capture the main argument of the card.

-Be in the form of complete but concise sentences.

-Indicate how the argument functions in the round. For example, does the evidence support Harms, uniqueness, counterplan competition, etc?

-Avoid symbols or abbreviations. Acronyms are acceptable, as long as they are common enough that everyone using the file will know what they are (e.g., USA).

-*Not* exaggerate or misrepresent the argument.

-Contain signposts. If they are part of a shell or frontline, they should contain numbers or letters. Otherwise, they should contain a blank space where the debaters using them can write in the appropriate number or letter.

Cards making similar arguments should all be on the same page, with a heading at the top of the page indicating what that argument is. The best evidence should come first. Coaches should establish and teach to their students a uniform way of briefing evidence. They may ask debaters to include their names, their school's name, the name of the file in which the brief will appear, page numbers, or other information on their briefs. Students should always follow their coaches' instructions, even if they contradict advice given here.

Learning the Topic

At the beginning of every debate season, debaters face the tremendous challenge of coming to grips with a complex new public policy topic about which they may know little or nothing. Before they can begin in-depth research or strategizing, they must learn as much as they can about this topic and what it will entail for both sides of the debate. Following are some tips on how to get the most useful knowledge about the topic as quickly as possible:

-*The Rostrum*, a monthly magazine published by the National Forensics League (NFL), often runs several articles written specifically for coaches and debaters looking for an introduction to the topic. Schools that are members of the NFL should receive this magazine every month. In any event, the relevant articles can easily be found in the NFL's online archive of Policy Debate material that has appeared in *The Rostrum*, at http://www.nflonline.org/Rostrum/PolicyDebate.

-The school librarian will probably be willing to introduce students to the materials that the school library has on the debate topic. She may even allow the coach to gather all of the relevant materials in one place so that the debaters will have ready access to them.

-Collections at the local public library or a nearby university library will be even more fruitful, though special arrangements may be required to access them.

-A quick internet search for key words in the resolution should turn up the websites of many government agencies, think tanks, and interest groups related to the topic. These sources are especially helpful because they are often advocating for some position rather than simply explaining the topic, providing a useful survey of arguments that could arise.

-Each student on the team can take responsibility for investigating a narrow topic within the resolution and giving a brief 'scouting report' to the entire team about her topic.

-Any files provided to the entire league will be especially important to learn, as the competition is guaranteed to have them on hand.

Brainstorming

Once the team has spent some time getting familiar with the topic and developing a base of knowledge about it, there should be a team brainstorming session. Working as a group, students should develop a list of likely Affirmative cases, Harms areas, Solvency mechanisms, disadvantages, counterplans, critiques, and topicality violations. This will serve as a 'wish list' for arguments to develop throughout the year as well as preliminary 'opposition research' that can help determine which arguments debaters will need to be prepared to answer. When running a team brainstorming session, coaches should:

-Require every student to contribute. Beginners may feel unqualified or just too nervous to contribute. However, their unique perspective may allow them to think of an idea that more experienced debaters would overlook. Besides, as debaters they will have to get comfortable speaking out loud, even when they aren't certain about what they are saying.

-Forbid criticism. Ideas can be sorted out and critiqued after the brainstorming session. Allowing students to criticize each other during the session discourages the open atmosphere that is essential to successful brainstorming.

-Guide their students. If students are stuck, the coach might encourage them to think of narrower sub-topics within some of the larger ones they have already listed, or about possible answers to arguments they've already thought of.

-Distribute the list. Every student should have a copy of the list of likely arguments. This will guide their research and preparation for the rest of the season, and can also be used for examples during lectures, practice rounds, and other activities.

-Revisit the list. After every tournament or research session, students should be encouraged to add new arguments they heard or thought of to the list.

Affirmative Preparation

Selecting an Affirmative Case

Some leagues limit debaters, at least at early tournaments, to the Affirmative cases in the league's Core Files. Others allow teams to run cases of their own creation at the very first tournament. Either way, debaters should select an Affirmative case that they understand and are somewhat passionate about. Not everyone will become a political activist as a result of an argument they learn about in debate, but at the very least, debaters should stick to arguments they believe and are interested in. They will use their case in half of all the rounds they debate in a year, so they might as well enjoy it. Plus, when they believe the arguments, they will be much more effective advocates for them. When selecting an Affirmative case, debaters should:

-Strategize. They should keep an eye on their list of likely Negative arguments and think about which Affirmative cases will be least vulnerable to them.

-Keep it simple. If this is the team's first year in debate, they will do themselves a huge favor by having the entire team use the same Affirmative case. This cuts everyone's workload considerably: the coach can teach everyone the same things at the same time, and students will learn from each other's experiences and benefit from each other's preparation much more effectively.

-Personalize it. The vast majority of debaters use cases that they did not write themselves, meaning that they do not know the arguments inside and out, and that the rhetoric of the case is not in their voice. Debaters should read through the entire case and highlight the portions of the evidence that they think should be delivered during the round. Then, they should re-write evidence tags in their own words. This will both increase their familiarity with the case and help them deliver it more naturally.

-Brainstorm again. Debaters will need a more specific version of the team's brainstorming list that contains arguments likely to be used against their case. They can develop this list by consulting with their teammates and coach, looking for possible responses that their own case authors acknowledge, and thinking about what they would argue against the case if they were Negative.

2AC Blocks

The 2AC is an incredibly important speech, as it establishes the Affirmative's strategy for the entire round. Thus, debaters should be as prepared for it as possible. Thankfully, many of the arguments they will need to answer are predictable, so there is no reason why they cannot prepare their answers ahead of time, thereby conserving their limited prep time for more difficult speeches later.

Debaters prepare for the 2AC by writing **frontlines** or **2AC blocks** that compile all of the evidence and analytical arguments they will make against a particular Negative position. These arguments should be numbered and organized exactly as they will be during the speech, so that the 2AC needs only to pull the appropriate blocks in order to read her entire speech.

Ideally, debaters will have 2AC blocks for every position on their list of likely Negative arguments against their case. Especially if the Affirmative case in question is from a set of Core Files provided by the league, in which case the debaters already know that the Negative team is likely to use the arguments provided in those same files, there is simply no excuse for not being prepared.

When preparing 2AC blocks, the Affirmative should:

-Use the 1AC. The Affirmative spends eight minutes presenting their case, but it does them no good if they never mention it again. The 2AC should constantly reference her partner's speech, using these arguments to outweigh impacts, beat back links, or take out uniqueness to Negative positions. The 2AC should never read evidence that duplicates arguments from the 1AC. Instead, she should simply cross-apply the 1AC argument and explain its relevance.

-Be offensive. A link turn is always more valuable than a link take-out, as it does more damage to the Negative's position, forcing them to spend more time answering it. Debaters should strive to include at least one offensive argument in every 2AC block.

-Look to the future. The 1AR should know which arguments she is most likely to go for, and the 2AC blocks should contain other arguments that support those. For example, if the 1AR will probably be going for link turns, the 2AC should include a variety of non-uniqueness arguments and takeouts to the original link and avoid attacking the impact.

-Keep their options open. Although the 1AR should have a strategy in mind, the 2AC should also give her the flexibility to alter this strategy if necessary. Attacking multiple parts of the Negative's position (uniqueness, link, and impact to a disadvantage, for instance) and making a variety of offensive and defensive arguments expands the 1AR's strategic flexibility. The 1AR is likely to be pressed for time, so the 2AC should try to give her a few defensive arguments that she can extend quickly in a pinch.

-Collaborate. 2AC blocks are not the sole responsibility of the 2AC. Especially since they should be designed with the 1AR in mind, the 1AR should talk to the 2AC about which arguments she'll most likely be going for and how those can best be supplemented.

-Pool their resources. If multiple teams on the squad use the same Affirmative case, they can share 2AC blocks. Each team can take responsibility for a few Negative positions, and then photocopy the blocks that they assemble and distribute them to everyone using that case.

-Never lose to the same argument twice. If they hear an argument they've never heard before at a tournament, they should write a 2AC block before the next tournament. If they have answers and still lose to an argument, they need to develop better answers. Teams will debate their Affirmative case far more than any other issue, so there is no better place for them to invest their time and energy.

-Stay up-to-date. Time-sensitive arguments such as uniqueness takeouts should be updated before every tournament.

Negative Preparation

Many debaters are much more nervous about debating on the Negative than on the Affirmative, because while they know they will be talking about their own case on the Affirmative, they feel as though they are at the mercy of the other team when they are Negative. This does not have to be the case. By planning strategies against familiar cases and learning several generic arguments to use against unfamiliar ones, teams can make sure they are always debating issues they know well. This makes them more confident, better prepared, and more successful.

Moreover, by doing this strategizing and preparation before the round, teams conserve prep time for the more challenging rebuttal speeches, which beginning debaters often have difficulty filling. If debaters know the cases they could run into on the Negative, they can write out their entire 1NC ahead of time. All they have to do is stand up and read it, just like the first Affirmative speaker does with the 1AC. This step-by-step guide demonstrates how to prepare Negative strategies before the round.

Step One: Know Thy Enemy

The single best thing debaters can do to prepare for their Negative rounds is to make sure they know the possible Affirmative cases. If the league uses Core Files, they'll already have a copy of the cases they are likely to hit. Otherwise, they should use their brainstorming, their knowledge of the topic, and any intelligence they have gathered at tournaments and from talking to other teams to prepare a list of likely Affirmative cases.

Step Two: Decide How to Win

Debaters need to work backwards here. Rather than just deciding which arguments to run in the 1NC and then picking whichever ones look best as the round progresses, they should plan their 'end-game' strategy against each case. Which arguments will they try to win on? Which arguments will be in the 1NC but get kicked later in the round? These decisions are not set in stone, and if an Affirmative team has especially bad answers to something or drops an argument, the debaters can always adjust during the round. They should decide ahead of time what their strategy will be if the Affirmative does not make any strategic mistakes, though, and then plan the rest of the round around it.

There are several ways the Negative could win the round. They could:

-Win a topicality violation or other theory argument;

-Take out the case advantages with harms and/or solvency arguments, and then outweigh the case with a disadvantage or case turn;

-Capture the case advantages with a counterplan and win with a disadvantage that the counterplan avoids;

-Win a critique.

A good negative strategy will include at least two of these options in the 1NC. By the 2NR, however, the Negative should decide which one they are going to win and focus on that one. For example, a 1NC might include Topicality, Harms and Solvency Attacks, and a disadvantage. This gives the Negative two 'end-game' strategies: Topicality, or case attacks and the disadvantage. The 2NR should choose only one of these strategies to focus on, and it is best if she is pretty sure which one that will be before the round.

A Word of Caution

Beginning debaters often try to do too much in the 2NR, and as a result they spread themselves thin and do not give any issue the attention it deserves. Teams should choose a single end-game strategy (preferably before the round even begins) and go for only this strategy in the 2NR. They should speak for a full five minutes about it, even if they feel like they have nothing new to say. As they grow in experience and become more efficient, they may want to give themselves more options even in their last speech.

In deciding what their end-game strategy will be, debaters should think about both the strength of the arguments available and their particular skills and styles. A really good topicality violation still might not be a good strategy for someone who is not comfortable arguing topicality. This debater might be better off arguing a disadvantage, even if that argument is a bit weaker, because she will do a better job with it.

Becoming familiar with a few generic end-game strategies guarantees that the Negative will always have something to say, even if they run up against an Affirmative case they have not anticipated. Though they may have to make impromptu case attacks, they can still rely on a well-known disadvantage or two to provide them with solid offense.

Step 3: Build the 1NC

Once they've decided which arguments they will try to win on, debaters should figure out how much time they need to devote to each in the 1NC. The 1NC should read the entire shell for any off-case position that is central to their end-game strategy. When it comes to case attacks, though, they can choose just the best ones.

When she has gotten together everything she will need in the 1NC for her team's end-game strategy, the 1NC should time herself reading these arguments. Any time remaining can be filled with a secondary strategy. For example, if the end-game strategy is to attack Solvency and outweigh the case with one disadvantage, the secondary strategy could be a topicality violation, Harms attacks, or a different disadvantage. This way, the team has somewhere else to go with the round in case something goes wrong with the primary strategy. If the 1NC is pressed for time, it should always be the secondary strategy, not the main one, which gets cut down.

Step 4: Plan the Rest of the Round

Once they know which arguments they will be making, debaters need to discuss how they are going to argue them in the round. The biggest thing to think about is how to divide up the Negative block. *This is not a decision that should be made during preparation time before the 2NC!* At the same time that they write the 1NC, debaters should decide who will handle which issues in the Negative block. The 2NC should cover issues requiring new evidence and argumentation, since she will have more time and is allowed to make new arguments. The 1NR should handle issues that need a lot of explanation and extension, but not a lot of new argumentation.

Since the 2NC is given by the same person who will give the Negative's last speech, the 2NR, it may seem logical for her to take the end-game strategy and leave the secondary strategy to the 1NR. Except in situations where the 2NC is a much more skilled debater than the 1NR, this isn't a good criterion for the decision. For one thing, the Affirmative may assume that the issues in the 2NC are the ones the Negative will go for at the end of the round. This means that the 1AR will probably spend a disproportionate amount of time on the issues that the 2NC took. Letting the 1NR take all or part of the end-game strategy can be a great way to throw off the Affirmative team.

As a general rule, issues like Harms, Solvency, and Topicality require a lot of analysis and extension, but little new evidence or argumentation. This makes them ideal for the 1NR. Disadvantages and counterplans that were not well answered are also ideal for the 1NR. New Harms or Solvency attacks, disadvantages that will require evidence to answer the 2AC, and critiques, which require a large investment of time to explain, are best handled by the 2NC. These are very general guidelines, though, and the decision is best made on a case-by-case basis. If one debater knows a particular argument better than her partner, she should probably be the one to take it regardless of her speaker position.

Step Five: Write Out As Much As Possible

By anticipating the arguments the Affirmative is likely to make, debaters can prepare answers ahead of time. If they need to use evidence, they can cut it out and tape it onto the appropriate page. These 2NC and 1NR blocks are very similar to 2AC blocks in both form and function.

The same can be done for arguments requiring a lot of explanation. Debaters should write out overviews for these positions rather than trying to explain them off the top of their heads. Overviews should be concise summaries that require less than a minute to read.

The bottom line is that it is always advisable for the Negative to do as much preparation as they can before the round. If they know the Affirmative case well, and they know their own arguments well, then they should be able to predict most of what will happen during the round. There will always be surprises, but the more preparation they have done, the more time and energy they will have to devote to dealing with these surprises.

This may seem like a lot of work, but there is no reason it cannot be shared. If each team on the squad prepares a Negative strategy for a few cases and shares these strategies with everyone else, everyone will quickly build up an array of tools they can use to take down even the best Affirmative cases.

Last Minute Preparation

So far, this chapter has consisted of things that debaters can and should do days, weeks, or even months before a tournament. No matter how prepared a team is, however, there is

always last-minute work that can be done before a round when they know who the judge is and which team they are debating.

Tournaments vary with regard to how much time debaters get between the release of pairings and the beginning of rounds. Whether they have five minutes or over an hour to prepare, debaters should never delay the start of a round. As soon as they find out where they are debating, they should retrieve their evidence and bring it to the appropriate room. If the other team has not arrived yet, or if the judge allows, they may then take some time to strategize.

It is advisable for coaches to speak with their teams during this time when possible, but again they should not delay either their students' rounds or the one they have been assigned to judge. When time allows, coaches and debaters should discuss:

-The judge. If this is someone that these debaters or any of their teammates have had before, they should review her comments and preferences. What did she say after the round? What did she like and dislike? How did she vote and why? How much does she know about debate? Is she a coach, a former debater, someone's parent, or a community volunteer? Coaches may want to keep a briefing book that contains notes about each judge that they can reference quickly.

-The other team. Debaters should talk with their coach about whether she has ever judged this team or another team from their school. If so, she may have valuable insights about the arguments they run and the answers they make. Teammates or friends who have debated the team in question or another from their school may be able to offer similar advice.

-Disclosure. When on the Negative, debaters should ask their opponents if they will disclose the Affirmative case they run (this is a common courtesy in many leagues). When on the Affirmative, teams should generally disclose their case, both because it makes for a better debate and because they will want to be extended the same courtesy when they are Negative.

-What to run. When up against an unfamiliar case, debaters should discuss which of their prepared generic strategies they will use against it. If it is a case they have prepared for, they only need to discuss how they will adapt their strategy to this team and judge. Drastic changes to strategy should be avoided, as teams will have neither the preparation nor the confidence to argue their positions as well as they should.

Conclusion

In the end, the most important preparation for debate is not about researching, strategizing, brainstorming, or anything like that. It is about preparing to learn. This is as

true for experienced debaters as it is for beginners. No amount of reading or theorizing about debate can substitute for the experience of actually debating.

Debaters should enter every round prepared to learn something about debate. Sometimes they will learn how to argue a particular argument or how to persuade a particular type of judge. Other times, they will acquire a deeper mastery of a fundamental concept such as flowing or line-by-line debating. But none of this will happen if students are not prepared to learn.

Preparing to learn means preparing to do one's best, but also means preparing to lose. Especially before their first competitions, debaters must realize that sometimes they are going to do something incorrectly and maybe look a little foolish. There is nothing wrong with that. In debate, as in many other things, people learn from their mistakes.

This book is *not* intended to prevent debaters from making mistakes. Rather, its purpose is to help them learn from their mistakes once they have made them. Our parting advice to debaters, then, is to go forth, argue, and make many mistakes. Then come back, find out what went wrong, and avoid making the same mistakes twice!