



SCHOLAR COACH

Boutique Academic Coaching & Tutoring

Policy Debate Starter Kit.

Everything a new or returning debater needs to understand a round before stepping up to the lectern: how the round runs, what the speeches do, the five stock issues, the six negative options, how to build an argument, and a printable flow sheet.

INSIDE

Free Resource

Format	Policy (CX) Debate
Level	Novice · Middle School · Returning
Pages	4
Includes	Round map · Stock issues · Big 6 · Flow sheet
From	Scholar Coach Debate

THE EVENT IN ONE PARAGRAPH

Policy Debate is two-on-two. One team (the **Affirmative**) proposes a **plan** that is an example of the year's national **resolution**; the other (the **Negative**) argues against it. Each debater gives one 8-minute constructive and one 5-minute rebuttal, and asks and answers one 3-minute cross-examination. At a tournament you debate 4–8 rounds and switch sides every round, so every team must be ready to argue both. The judge votes for the side that made the better arguments and answered the other side's. Success takes reading, listening, writing, organization, speaking, memory and critical thinking.

THE ROUND, SPEECH BY SPEECH

SPEECH	TIME	WHO	JOB
1AC	8 min	1st Affirmative	Pre-written case: the problem (significance), why it persists (inherency), the plan, and how the plan solves (solvency). Read it, don't improvise it.
CX	3 min	2N asks 1A	Clarify the plan and set up negative arguments. Ask for the plan text before the round begins.
1NC	8 min	1st Negative	All negative positions as "shells": topicality, disadvantages, counterplans, kritiks, theory, and on-case attacks. Give a road map first.
CX	3 min	1A asks 1N	Make sure the 2A understands every shell; expose missing links or evidence.
2AC	8 min	2nd Affirmative	Answer every negative position, in order, with tagged responses and cards. An unanswered shell loses most rounds.
CX	3 min	1N asks 2A	Pin down what the 2AC conceded or dropped.
2NC	8 min	2nd Negative	First half of the negative block : extend some positions in depth. Never duplicate what the 1NR will take.
CX	3 min	2A asks 2N	Set up the 1AR; clarify extensions.
1NR	5 min	1st Negative	Second half of the block: the positions the 2NC did not take. Be the defensive backstop against affirmative offense and turns.
1AR	5 min	1st Affirmative	Hardest speech in debate: answer thirteen minutes of negative in five. Breadth and depth of coverage; no new arguments.
2NR	5 min	2nd Negative	Collapse to the argument(s) the negative is winning and sell them. Explain why the judge votes negative.
2AR	5 min	2nd Affirmative	Why the affirmative wins, not just that it wins. Drive home dropped offense; make sure no negative offense was missed.
Prep	5 min	Each team	Total preparation time per team for the whole round, used before any speech.

Times shown are the standard high-school format. Middle-school and novice leagues sometimes shorten constructives to 5–6 minutes; check the tournament invitation.

WHAT THE JUDGE IS DECIDING

The Five Stock Issues

The affirmative has the **burden of proof**, like a prosecutor, and so speaks first and last. To earn the ballot it must present a complete (*prima facie*) case on all five issues below. The negative only needs to win one. In novice and local rounds, stock-issue debating is the bread and butter of nearly every decision.

Topicality

Is the plan an example of the resolution? Every word of the resolution matters. Know what each term means and have a definition ready before your first tournament.

Significance

Is there a serious problem, or a serious advantage to be gained? How many people, how badly, how soon?

Inherency

Why does the problem exist now, and why won't the present system fix it on its own? Point to the barrier: a law, a lack of funding, an attitude.

Solvency

Will the plan actually prevent or solve the problem? Evidence that the plan's mechanism works, and that it is the plan, not something else, that causes the fix.

Disadvantages

Does the plan create new problems bigger than the ones it solves? If the costs outweigh the benefits, the judge should reject the plan.

Burden & presumption

If the round ended after the 1AC, the affirmative would win because it met its burden. The negative must take at least one stock issue away, or show a disadvantage that outweighs the case.

HOW THE NEGATIVE FIGHTS BACK

The Big 6 Negative Options

#	POSITION	ON / OFF CASE	THE ARGUMENT IN ONE LINE	WHAT THE AFFIRMATIVE SAYS BACK
1	Topicality (T)	Off	The plan is not an example of the resolution (non-, extra- or effects-topical). Shell: interpretation, violation, standards, voters.	We meet; counter-interpretation; reasonability; T is not a voting issue here.
2	On-case attacks	On	Challenge significance, inherency or solvency with specific evidence. Judges reward direct clash with the 1AC.	Extend 1AC cards; explain why your evidence is more specific and more recent.
3	Disadvantage (DA)	Off	Plan causes a new harm. Shell: uniqueness (not happening now), link (plan causes it), internal link, impact.	Non-unique · no link · no internal link · case outweighs on size or time · no post-plan impact · turn.
4	Counterplan (CP)	Off	A better way to solve the problem than the plan, with a net benefit. Must compete with the plan.	Permutation (do both) · CP doesn't solve · CP has its own disadvantages · theory.
5	Kritik (K)	Off	The assumptions or language behind the plan are harmful. Shell: criticism, links, implications, alternative.	Stay calm and listen. Perm · alternative fails · case outweighs · policy framework is good.
6	Theory	Off	Something the other team did is unfair to the debate itself (vague plan, conditional positions, abusive counterplan).	Answer every theory argument; a dropped theory argument can lose a round on its own.

THE BUILDING BLOCK

Making and Answering an Argument

Every complete argument has three parts. Arguments supported by logic rather than a quotation are called **analytics**; arguments supported by a quoted source are read from a **card**.

- 1 **Claim.** The specific point you are making.
- 2 **Warrant.** The reason or reasons the claim is true.
- 3 **Proof.** The evidence: fact, expert opinion, or clear reasoning.

FIVE WAYS TO CLASH WITH ANY ARGUMENT

- ◆ **Deny it.** They say black; you say white, with proof.
- ◆ **Challenge relevance.** True, but it doesn't matter to this issue.
- ◆ **Attack the warrant.** The reason given doesn't support the claim.
- ◆ **Attack the evidence.** Old, biased, unqualified, or misread.
- ◆ **Outweigh it.** Even if true, our impact is bigger, sooner, or more likely.

THE EIGHT-STEP RESPONSE (SAY IT THIS WAY, EVERY TIME)

- 1 **Name the argument** you are answering. "On the spending disadvantage..."
- 2 **Signpost** how many answers you have. "Three responses."
- 3 **Tag** each answer in a short label. "First, non-unique."
- 4 **Explain** the tag briefly if it needs it.
- 5 **Cite** the author and date before reading.
- 6 **Read** the evidence, clearly.
- 7 **Weigh.** Say why this answer beats their argument.
- 8 **Move on** to the next answer. No commentary.

BEFORE YOUR FIRST TOURNAMENT

The Readiness Checklist

- ◆ ☐ I can explain my affirmative case and plan in plain English without reading it.
- ◆ ☐ I know what every word in the resolution means and have a definition for each.
- ◆ ☐ I have pre-flowed my own 1AC and have a clean copy to hand the negative.
- ◆ ☐ I have 2AC answer blocks ready for topicality, two likely disadvantages, a counterplan and a kritik.
- ◆ ☐ I have three or four negative strategies I understand and can explain.
- ◆ ☐ I have read my evidence aloud with a dictionary nearby; no word will trip me.
- ◆ ☐ Timers, pens in two colors, colored flow paper (legal size if possible), and the plan text are packed.
- ◆ ☐ I have talked to each teacher about missed classes and finished assignments early.
- ◆ ☐ At the tournament I will find who I am debating, who is judging, and which room, then go there as a team.
- ◆ ☐ Before the 1AC starts I will ask for the plan text and advantages.
- ◆ ☐ My partner and I know who takes which positions in the negative block.
- ◆ ☐ After every round I will read the ballot and update my files.

Five rules of flowing. Write legibly so your partner can read it. Leave room between arguments so you can see what you answered. One sheet per position (each off-case shell and each case advantage gets its own page), argument label at the top. Flow on the far left and move right, one column per speech. Use abbreviations you will remember a week later.

PRINT ONE PER POSITION

Flow Sheet

POSITION / ARGUMENT LABEL			ROUND · SIDE		OPPONENT · JUDGE	
1AC / 1NC Shell or case	2AC Answers	NEG BLOCK 2NC / 1NR	1AR Extend & answer	2NR Collapse	2AR Why we win	

How to use it

Each off-case shell (T, each DA, CP, K, theory) and each case advantage gets its own sheet. Flow the first speech in column one, then answers directly to the right of the argument they answer. An empty box in a later column means a drop.

Shorthand that saves time

T = topicality · DA = disadvantage · CP = counterplan · K = kritik · UQ = uniqueness · L = link · IL = internal link · ! = impact · NU = non-unique · NL = no link · O/W = outweighs · perm = permutation · ✓ = conceded · X = dropped

The habit

Flow every practice round and every recorded round you watch. Flowing lecture notes in class the same way builds the skill and improves grades at the same time.