



Writing a PF Constructive: Contentions, Warrants, Impacts.

A step-by-step template for building a four-minute case from scratch. Students can fill it in, and parents can use the checklist to see whether a draft is ready to practice.

Anatomy of a contention

A contention is one main reason to vote for your side. Strong PF contentions follow a simple chain. If any link is missing, the argument feels thin.

PART	JOB	QUESTION IT ANSWERS
Tagline	A one-sentence claim	What am I arguing?
Warrant	The reasoning and evidence	Why is it true?
Impact	The consequence	Why does it matter?

Think of it as: **Claim, because, so what?** A claim says something. A warrant proves it. An impact tells the judge why they should care.

Case skeleton for four minutes

Most spoken cases fit in about 650 to 800 words, depending on how fast the student speaks. Plan for the lower end if the judge is new to debate. This structure is a good starting point, not a rule.

- 1 Introduction (15 seconds).** One sentence that frames the debate, plus a quick roadmap: 'We have two contentions.'
- 2 Definitions or framework (optional, 20 seconds).** Only if needed. A framework is a standard for how to judge the round, such as 'weigh the overall benefit to people.'
- 3 Contention one (about 90 seconds).** Tagline, one or two warrants with evidence, then the impact.
- 4 Contention two (about 90 seconds).** Same shape as contention one.
- 5 Conclusion (10 seconds).** Restate the two taglines and ask for the vote.

A worked mini-example

Sample neutral resolution for practice: **Resolved: Schools should start the school day after 8:30 a.m.** (This is an example for practice, not a current-season topic.) Here is one Pro contention in outline form. The evidence slots are blanks because students should find and cite their own real sources.

PIECE	EXAMPLE WORDING
Tagline	Later start times improve student learning.
Warrant 1	Teenagers' sleep patterns shift later. [Insert author, year, and a quote from a real source.]
Warrant 2	Students who sleep more focus better in morning classes. [Insert real source.]

PIECE	EXAMPLE WORDING
Impact	Better attention in class means better learning for millions of students and fewer mistakes made when tired.

Evidence rule

Never write a number, quote or study into a case unless you found it in a real source and can show it to the judge or opponent on request.

Fill-in template

Copy this onto paper and fill in one for each contention.

- ♦ **Tagline:** Our [first/second] contention is that ____.
- ♦ **Warrant:** This is true because _____. According to [Author, year], '_____.'
- ♦ **Link:** This leads to _____.
- ♦ **Impact:** This matters because _____ will affect [who] by [how much or how badly].

DRAFT CONTENTION ONE HERE

Case readiness checklist

- ☐ Each contention has a clear one-sentence tagline.
- ☐ Each contention has at least one warrant with a cited source.
- ☐ Each impact says who is affected and why it matters.
- ☐ The case reads aloud in under four minutes at a normal speaking speed.
- ☐ Terms are explained in plain language a new judge would understand.
- ☐ A partner can summarize each contention in one sentence.
- ☐ Sources are saved so they can be shown quickly if asked.

Want a plan built around your debater? Book a free consultation at the link below.

Built from public guidance: NSDA Public Forum Debate event page (speechanddebate.org) · Wikipedia: Public forum debate. Rules change by league and tournament, so always confirm against your tournament invitation and current league rules.

NOTES

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