



Rebuttals and Voters: How to Win the Ballot.

The last speeches decide rounds. Learn how to collapse to your best argument, explain why it matters, and use a script template to practice it.

What rebuttals are for

Constructive speeches build arguments. Rebuttals (5 minutes each in the standard format; check your league) do not add much new. Their job is to **sort, compare and conclude**. By the last speeches, the judge needs a simple answer to one question: "Why should I vote for you?"

Collapse

To collapse means to stop defending everything and focus on your strongest one or two arguments. A team that says a clear, complete story about two arguments usually beats a team that rushes through ten.

The collapse method

- 1 **Look at your flow.** Which arguments did the other team fail to answer well?
- 2 **Choose your winner.** Pick the one or two arguments where you are ahead.
- 3 **Drop the rest.** Say briefly that you are moving on. Do not waste time on weak arguments.
- 4 **Extend.** Restate the claim, the evidence and the answer to their response.
- 5 **Weigh.** Compare your impact to theirs on size, likelihood and speed.
- 6 **Tell the judge the vote.** End with one clear sentence.

Weighing words that win

COMPARISON	WHAT YOU SAY
Magnitude	Our impact affects more people or is more serious
Probability	Ours is more likely because our evidence is stronger
Timeframe	Ours happens sooner, theirs is far off
Reversibility	Ours cannot be undone, theirs can be fixed
Turn	Their argument actually helps our side

A **voter** (also called a voting issue) is a reason the judge should decide the round for you. Name your voters out loud, such as "voter one is solvency, voter two is the disadvantage."

Final rebuttal script template

Fill in the brackets and practice it aloud in under five minutes. Always use your own words and the real arguments from your round.

- 1 Overview (20 sec):** "This round comes down to [issue one] and [issue two]. On both, we win."
- 2 Issue one (90 sec):** "Their claim was [claim]. We said [answer]. They did not respond to [point], so extend [card]. This matters because [impact]."
- 3 Issue two (90 sec):** Same structure, one answer at a time.
- 4 Weighing (60 sec):** "Even if they win [small point], our impact is bigger because [magnitude, probability or timeframe]."
- 5 Voters (30 sec):** "Vote for us because [one sentence]."

Common mistakes

New arguments in the last speech may be ignored by the judge, running out of time before weighing, and reading evidence without explaining it. Fix them by practicing with a timer and finishing with your voters first, then adding detail.

MY VOTERS FOR THE NEXT ROUND

Want a plan built around your debater?

Scholar Coach can coach rebuttal speaking with a timer and feedback. Book a free consultation at the link below.

Built from public guidance: NSDA High School Unified Manual, 2021-2022 edition (speechanddebate.org) · DebateUS: The Basic Structure of Policy Debate. Rules change by league and tournament, so always confirm against your tournament invitation and current league rules.

NOTES

Want a plan built around **your** debater?

Book a free consultation. The short intake takes about a minute and opens right away.

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