This belongs to _____

READY SET DEBATE

Member Handbook

Revised Seventh Edition

READY SET DEBATE
MEMBER HANDBOOK
REVISED SEVENTH EDITION

This handbook belongs to

Name _____

Phone _____

Table of Contents

Introduction

Debate, in the sense of a competitive academic activity, refers to a structured discussion between opponents about whether a given statement should or should not be agreed with. Typically, opponents take turns presenting their positions and reasoning, asking each other questions, talking about where they disagree and why, and then summarizing the debate and appealing to the judge to be given the win.

In an academic setting, you are often required to prepare for both sides of a debate. In Ready Set Debate, we refer to these different sides as Affirmative and Negative, and a coin flip will usually determine which side you will actually debate.

In the real world, you would generally only argue for the side that you truly believe in – for what you feel is the truth. Academic debate is less a quest for truth than an activity that will help you develop public speaking skills, confidence, critical listening and thinking, and efficient note-taking. In the process, you will gain insights into opposing points of view.

Most settings in life are not competitive academic debates, and you need to be conscious of whom you are trying to persuade and the best way to go about persuading them. For example, many people begin a debate program thinking that it's about trying to convince your opponent, when, in fact, it is the judge(s) alone whom you are trying to convince. And how you choose to convince a judge is not how you would probably try to convince your parent or a friend.

There are many popular styles of debate: Lincoln-Douglas, Public Forum, Policy, Parliamentary, Congressional, IPDA, World Schools, and more.

Whatever style you choose to debate in, the skills you'll learn in Ready Set Debate will generally apply, but you should be ready to adapt to the style of debate taught by your team, and to the techniques taught by your coaches.

The purpose of Ready Set Debate is for members to become proficient in the techniques of academic debate, and to learn to communicate in a persuasive, respectful way. We place an emphasis on teamwork and courteous, professional, respectful conduct that will enhance social and professional success.

H.E.R.O. Code of Conduct

- **Honest** - Arguments should not mislead or distort the truth. Statistics and sources must be accurate and never made up.

- **Equal** - While we may not agree on topics, each side of a debate, and each member, is presumed to have the dignity of an equally valid voice.

- **Respectful** - Members, parents, and coaches do NOT engage in class-clowning, disruptive, belittling, bullying, rude, or nasty behavior/commentary toward members or their families. Timely responses between teammates and coaches are expected.

- **Open-minded** - Participants and judges will not pre-judge based on the topic, but will instead focus on the relative success of teams in defending the arguments on their side of the resolution through effective argumentation.

_____ _____

Signed Date

Debate, in a Nutshell

Typically, debates have the same basic components:

- A statement to be debated, which we call the ***resolution***.
- At least one ***judge***, who votes on whether the resolution should be agreed with or disagreed with.
- A ***framework***; that is, a standard or set of standards by which the judge can figure out whether to agree or disagree with the resolution.
- An ***Affirmative*** team of one or more debaters, whose role is to persuade the judge to vote for the Affirmative team, indicating agreement with the resolution.

- A ***Negative*** team of one or more debaters, whose role is to persuade the judge to vote for the Negative team, which indicates disagreement with (or at least uncertainty about) the resolution.
- A series of ***speeches*** in which the teams take turns making arguments (often formatted as ***contentions***) to persuade the judge(s) to vote for their side.
- Some ***rebuttal*** element, in which each team attacks the other team's arguments.
- Some ***cross-examination*** element, in which each team has the opportunity to ask questions to the other team.

The differences lie in the length of each of these components, how many people are on your team, and the order in which each component happens.

Presentation Techniques

Eye contact

When you just look down and read your speech, a connection cannot be made with the audience. Chances are, if you're not paying attention to the audience, they're not paying attention to you. Get familiar enough with your topic/notes/speech, through practice, so you can mostly talk while looking at your audience rather than looking down to read.

Gestures

Gestures refers to our body language. It is the way we carry ourselves, our movements, facial expressions, eye contact, and hand and arm gestures. Gestures can be made with your hands, arms, face, shoulder, torso, legs, feet or a combination of these, but hand and arm gestures are the most common in debate.

Gestures don't refer to acting something out or "miming" it, but instead, are meant to emphasize natural body language that you would see in an everyday conversation and that make you appear comfortable in the situation. Avoid using the same gesture repeatedly.

Natural Speaking Style

Natural speaking style means sounding like you are having a conversation when you speak, rather than sounding like you are reading a report word-for-word. Your delivery should be smooth. A natural speaking style usually comes from being very familiar with what you are talking about, and this usually comes from practice.

Volume

Volume refers to how loudly you speak. If the judge can't hear you well, you will rarely win the debate. Pay attention to see if the judge seems to be straining to hear you.

Pacing

Pacing is the speed at which you speak. In some debate contexts, debaters normally speak extremely fast. This fast style of speaking in debate is called "spreading." While Ready Set Debate does not have a rule concerning how fast debaters should speak, we recommend trying to speak as quickly as you can without stressing out or confusing your judge. It's up to you to figure out how fast this is.

Clarity

If the judge doesn't understand what you're saying, you probably won't win the debate. It is important to speak clearly, and practice can help with this. Take opportunities to read aloud, enunciating each word clearly. Focus on emphasizing consonants.

Organization

Any audience appreciates being able to follow along without losing track of how the information you're presenting ties together. A judge is no different. Follow our recommendations for "signposting" (discussed in a later section), and for organizing your speeches.

Professional Appearance

Many judges are influenced by the appearance of a debater. To increase your chances of influencing the judge in a positive direction, we recommend wearing the traditional attire for academic debate tournaments, which consists of business suits and other dressy clothing.

Pro tips for debate presentation

- When you give a speech, avoid holding anything you have to read sentences from.
- Present to the judge and audience, not to your opponents (even during cross-examination).
- Never let anything block the view of you above your chest.

Debate Etiquette

Using your timer

In debate, all of the segments are timed – your speeches, your cross-examination periods, and your in-round prep time. You'll be expected to keep your own time using a timekeeping device, such as a countdown timer, smartphone, or online timer. Opponents and judges may also monitor your timekeeping with their own devices.

- Before you begin your timer at the beginning of your speech, it's customary to check in with the other participants in the debate: "Judge(s) ready? Opponent(s) ready?" Be sure to observe that they are, in fact, ready.
- Once everyone is ready, say, "Beginning my time now," and begin your timer. (Don't stall before starting your timer, and don't stop your timer during the middle of your speech.)
- Put the timer down where you can see it, glancing down occasionally to see how much time you have left.
- When your time ends, you don't have to stop mid-sentence, but do finish up immediately.

The best debaters manage their time well, meaning they use ALL of their time available.

Introductions

- You only need to introduce yourself at the beginning of your first speech.
- If you feel it is necessary, thank the judge at the beginning of the first and last speeches.

Throughout the debate

- Remember, your job is to convince the audience, and more specifically, the judge. Address the audience, not your opponent, even in cross-examination.
- Have your materials organized. File your evidence in a tabbed notebook, accordion file, or your computer.

After the debate

- Save your case and the notes you took during the debate (called your "flow") and review them later so you can reflect upon what went well and what you need to work on.

How to Prepare for a Full Debate

Over the next few pages, we will discuss the following steps to prepare for a full debate:

1. Building a top case
2. Brainstorming arguments for both sides
3. Researching and understanding
4. Building contentions
5. Anticipating opponents' arguments
6. Drafting cross-examination questions, blocks, and voters

Building a top case

The first step in preparing for a debate is to examine the resolution and figure out what is actually being debated. You can refer to the green sidebar to determine what kind of resolution is being debated. Once you've figured this out, you can start to build a ***top case***, which is defined as the elements of the debate that establish what is being debated and how it should be debated, but that don't serve as an argument for or against the resolution. The top case is effectively a shared foundation for the debate.

As the first speaker, the Affirmative delivers the top case, and although the Negative can add onto it or dispute the top case, there is typically agreement on most or all aspects. Regardless of which team you're on, if your top case is disputed, you'll need to spend some time explaining to the judge why your viewpoint should be preferred.

Definitions

It's important to decide if certain words should be defined or clarified for the judge, especially if a disagreement on their meaning seems likely at all. For example, if the resolution is, "College athletes should be paid," you might want to define "paid," "should," and "college athletes." Make sure to pick definitions that reflect the spirit of the whole resolution – if you just grab the first definition off Google, it might not reflect what the word means in the context of the resolution as you're interpreting it.

Policy Resolutions

These are proposals of courses of action.

- Example: "The United States should convert to the metric system."
- Example: "Buy gold."

Policy resolutions often (but not always) have the word "should" in them.

Value Resolutions

These are all other value judgements. Value resolutions can be divided into *brightline* and *comparative* value resolutions.

Brightline value resolutions make a statement about a value of something.

- Example: "The fast food industry is bad for our society."

Comparative value resolutions compare the value of something to something else.

- Example: "It is better to rent than to own."

Value resolutions often have judgment words like "good," "bad," "better," and "worse" in them.

Fact Resolutions

These are statements about observable elements of reality, which could conceivably be proved or disproved with real-world evidence or logic.

- Example: "Most Americans prefer Whataburger to In-N-Out."
- Example: "Outer space will most likely be taken over by private companies by 2030."

Fact resolutions often have terms like "is," "will be," "has been" and "are," in them.

Scoping

Scoping refers to the extent to which the resolution needs to be true for it to be agreed with (and, thereby, for the Affirmative to win). Some resolutions may not be particularly clear on this. For example, let's say the resolution is, "College athletes should be paid." For the judge to award the win to the Affirmative, how many college athletes would the Affirmative need to show ought to be paid? One? Two? Many? Most? All? The resolution could be interpreted in multiple ways – e.g. "at least two college athletes should be paid," "college athletes should be paid in general," "all college athletes should be paid" – so the Affirmative needs to figure out how they want to approach it.

We recommend trying to find and use the scope that is most consistent with what an ordinary person would interpret the resolution as saying.

Background information

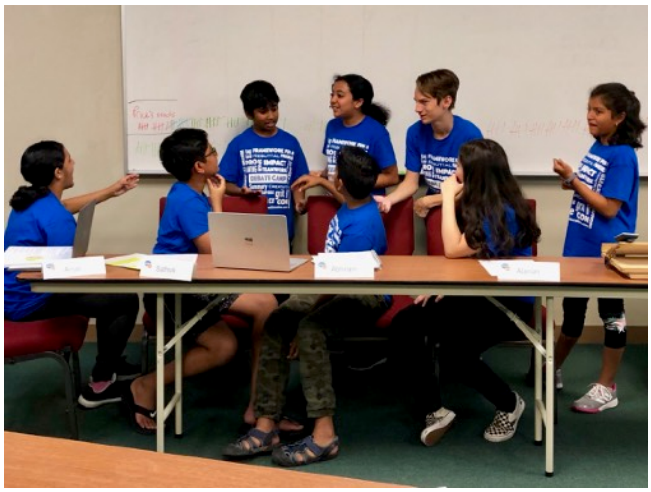
In cases when you are not sure if the judge is aware of other information that might be helpful in understanding the debate, it can be helpful to include some background information about the issue. For example, if the resolution is, "The U.S. should adopt a universal healthcare system," you may want to offer some details about the current healthcare system in the U.S., so the judge can put the new policy in context.

A plan (policy debates only)

When you're debating a policy resolution (defined on the previous page) it's almost always a good idea to offer a ***plan***, meaning a specific way of doing the policy in question. Your opponents may ask about how much your plan will cost, how you've estimated the likelihood that it will succeed in its aims, who will be putting it into practice, etc. A well-thought-out plan will allow you to answer relevant questions like this, and can help you avoid potential attacks by skirting around problems that other plans for the same resolution might have. For example, if the resolution is, "The U.S. should adopt a universal healthcare system," you might look up common problems with universal healthcare systems, then find or design a specific universal healthcare system that avoids those problems. That's your plan!

Framework

Framework refers to the standard (or set of standards) the judge uses to determine whether the resolution should be agreed with or not.



Framework is present in our lives all the time, even if we don't realize it: whenever you're deciding if you want to believe something or do something, you're applying some sort of framework to figure out whether you want to believe it or do it. Maybe you're thinking in terms of whether

the choice you're considering is consistent with a moral principle, or maybe you're thinking more in terms of what the outcomes of the choice might be, or maybe you're doing something else entirely. The bottom line is that whichever way you're weighing the choice, you are using some sort of framework.

You are free to be creative with framework; however, we have some general recommendations for debates on different kinds of resolutions:

- **Policy resolutions:** Use ***cost-benefit analysis*** (also known as ***net benefits***). This framework asks the judge to consider the expected advantages and disadvantages of the choice, then vote for the Affirmative if the potential advantages seem bigger overall, or the Negative if the potential disadvantages seem bigger overall. (Many judges also vote for the Negative if it's unclear which would be bigger overall.)

- **Value resolutions:** Come up with a specific value (sometimes known as a ***value criterion***) with which to evaluate the resolution. For example, if the resolution is, "Hamburgers are better than hot dogs," you might use ***nutritional value*** for your framework. In this case, the Affirmative would win if the judge feels that hamburgers are more nutritionally valuable than hot dogs, and the Negative wins otherwise.

- **Fact resolutions:** Use ***balance of probability.*** This framework asks the judge to award the win based on how likely they feel the resolution is to be true at the end of the debate. The Affirmative wins if the judge feels that it's more likely than not that the resolution is true, and the Negative wins otherwise.

The Affirmative presents a framework as part of their top case. You wouldn't generally mention the term "framework" because not all judges will know the meaning of this term in the context of debate. For similar reasons, it's almost always a good idea to explain what you actually mean when you state your framework. For example, you might say "The winner of this debate should be decided based on a cost-benefit analysis, meaning that if I can show you that the potential benefits of passing this policy outweigh the potential costs of passing this policy, you should vote for the Affirmative.

If you're on the Negative and you had a different framework in mind, think carefully before challenging the Affirmative's framework. A framework challenge can easily confuse the judge, so only challenge the Affirmative's framework if you believe it's really important to challenge it. Like any point in the debate, framework disputes can go back and forth for the entire debate, but this is rare.

Each of your speeches in the debate should make conclusions that demonstrate you should win from the standpoint of your framework. For example, if you are on the Affirmative and using a cost-benefit analysis, each of your contentions and impacts should stress how adopting the resolution would lead to outcomes that are beneficial overall. When you are comparing your opponents' points and your points, and when you are offering rebuttals to their points, keep your framework in mind.

Without the guidance of a framework, judges may rely (more than they should) on their personal feelings on the topic, or allow extraneous things like how you are dressed influence their decision. (This may happen anyway, but a well articulated framework can reduce the likelihood that this will happen.)

Researching and Understanding

Once you have a good understanding of the meaning of the resolution, it's time to start reading and learning about the topic.

Begin by writing down arguments you can think of, for and against the resolution. These can be a good starting point for search terms when you start researching. A great way to brainstorm is to search for opinion essays on the issue, which can be found in major newspapers and elsewhere on the internet. You can also ask your parents and friends for ideas.

The Best Evidence

- Recent
- Respected
- Relevant

When you make an argument that requires factual evidence, we recommend citing news articles from established news organizations and/or academic journal articles written by experts in the field. You can find the latter on sites like Google Scholar. Sometimes, you will not be allowed to view full articles via these sites. In those cases, try your library's online services, which will often give you access to full articles. Often, journal articles will include a short summary, called an "abstract," that will give you an idea of whether the article will be useful to you.

All else equal, the more current your evidence is, the better the judge will find it, and when you cite your evidence during the debate, you should generally name its source and date.

As you begin to discover the strongest arguments and evidence from your research, we recommend creating a spreadsheet to keep track of where the information came from, and the important parts of what it said, including exact quotes, if you plan to use them.

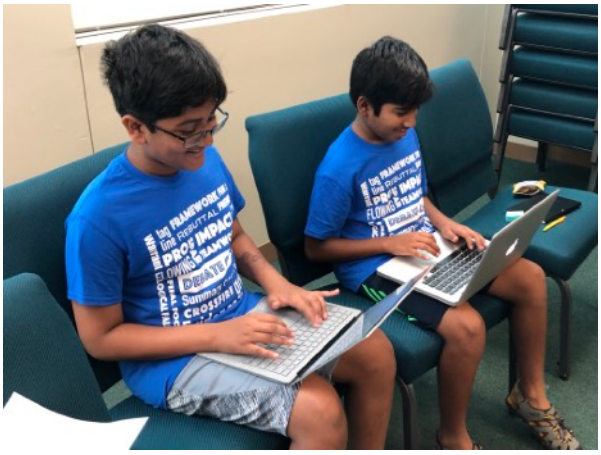
When competing in a tournament, you may be expected to share physical and/or digital copies of your evidence. Always review your tournament's rules before competing to make sure you're aware of what you need to do.

When you present evidence during the debate, it will usually be a combination of expert opinion and empirical data. Empirical information is information that has been verified by observation or experience rather than theory or pure logic. It's testable, measurable, and reproducible.

Building Contentions

Whether you're debating Velcro vs. laces, or if the U.S. federal government should enforce antitrust regulations on tech firms, if you want the judge to give your team the win, you have to:

1) Present a convincing case for your side,
2) Be able to defend your case against your opponents' attacks,
3) Be able to identify and describe the weaknesses in your opponents' case,
4) Explain to the judge why they should decide the debate in your favor.



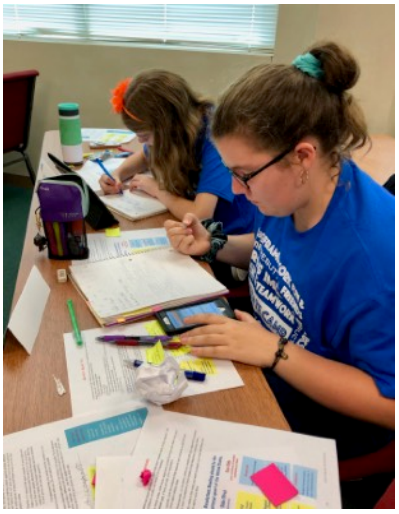
Each team presents its case during its first speech. Your case is made up of reasons – called ***contentions*** – why you think the judge should give your side the win.

Let's use the example of the resolution "Bowling should be the national sport of the United States." In Ready Set Debate, you will often be asked to prepare both the Affirmative and Negative sides of the topic, so after your research, you'll probably have lots of good reasons for both sides. However, you'll want to narrow them down to what you feel to be the *most* convincing reasons why bowling should (Affirmative) or shouldn't (Negative) be the national sport. The number of contentions you use is up to you; the complexity of your contentions will influence how many you can fit within the time limitations.

Each contention (and often subpoint – see p.19) is made up of four parts: tagline, claim, warrant, and impact.

Tagline

Your tagline is simply a one-word (or very short phrase) version of your argument. It's the headline for the story. If your contention has subpoints, you'll move straight to the tagline of your first subpoint after giving the tagline of your contention. "For my first contention, bowling is good for health. Subpoint A, muscle development…"



If your coach were to ask you to describe your case in one sentence, you should be able to weave your taglines into a single, simple sentence. Your Affirmative sentence might be, "Bowling is a healthy, inclusive sport that can be played anytime." Your Negative sentence might be "Bowling is dangerous, unpopular, and expensive."

If you can clearly describe your entire case in one sentence, it is easy to stay on track throughout future speeches in the debate, ensuring that you continue to support your contentions each time you speak.

Claim

Your claim is the point you are trying to make. A claim can be as short as one sentence, or possibly longer if more explanation is necessary. For example, let's say you are debating "Bowling should be the national sport of the United States," and one of your taglines is "muscle development." Your claim could state that "multiple studies have found positive impacts on different muscle groups that occur when you bowl." It can be as simple as that – a summary of the findings of the evidence. Claims may also rely on logic, reasoning, and/or values; for example, let's say one of your taglines is "building community." Your claim could state that "strong communities are essential for a healthy nation, and bowling is an excellent way to promote community."

A Complete Contention

- Tagline
- Claim
- Warrant
- Impact

Warrant

The warrant of your contention or subpoint is where you get to specify the reason why you think your argument is true. This can take various forms, such as specific data (or other empirical information), expert opinion, and/or logical analysis. For example, you might say, "in a 2017 University of Anacapa study, bowling regularly was found to result in improved grip strength and stronger bicep muscles."

Impact

The impact of your contention is where you will tell the judge why your point matters in light of the framework. Even if you don't start your impact this way, you can think of your impact as beginning with "This matters because…"

Let's say you're using a cost-benefit analysis framework. In the muscle development subpoint example, you could say something like, "Better muscle development is good in itself, but it also promotes fitness in other areas, as well as an improved self-image. By making bowling the national sport of the United States, we can promote these positive health outcomes to more Americans. This constitutes a major benefit."

Putting the Contention Together

There are many qualities that characterize a strong contention, but first among these is good phrasing and organization. If you follow the structure laid out in this section, you can help put yourself and your team at an advantage before the debate even begins.

Let's put the contention together: "My first contention is health. Subpoint A: Physical health starting with muscle development. Multiple studies have found positive impacts on different muscle groups that occur when you bowl. In a 2017 University of Anacapa study, bowling regularly was found to result in improved grip strength and stronger bicep muscles. Better muscle health is good in itself, but it also promotes fitness in other areas, as well as an improved self-image. This matters

because, by making bowling the national sport of the United States, we can promote these positive health outcomes to more Americans. This constitutes a major benefit. Further under Health, let's talk about Heart Health. The same 2017 study found that risk of heart attack was reduced by [complete the point]. Subpoint B: Mental Health. In a 2019 article in Bowler's Journal, it was found that league play helps with social connectedness [complete the point]. My second contention is Inclusivity. Subpoint A - All Ages," and so on.

Here is an important caveat about contentions. After your team has presented its case, most judges heavily frown upon introducing new contentions into the debate. This is because it is largely regarded as unfair to bring up new points when your opponents have less time to respond to them. So, it would probably be a bad idea to suddenly add, "I also wanted to mention that bowling improves international relations" in the middle of your second or third speech.

If you hear your opponents attempting to introduce new contentions later in the debate, we recommend highlighting this to the judge and arguing that they should disregard it. You would highlight this in your next speech, not by interrupting your opponents during their speech. (Because the Negative is not able to respond to the Affirmative's final speech, which is also the final speech in the debate, some Negatives choose to preemptively argue that the judge should disregard any new contentions raised in the final Affirmative speech.)

So, to recap, the body of your case is your contentions. Each contention should be unique, simple to describe, be backed up by evidence, and have a meaningful impact.

Subpoints

Related arguments will often be grouped under the umbrella of a larger contention as "subpoints" of that contention, which function as smaller contentions that make up the larger contention. To illustrate this concept, let's say that you're debating the Affirmative side of the resolution, "Bowling should be the national sport of the United States," and you've found arguments about the positive effects that bowling has on muscle health, heart health, and mental health. You could make each of these arguments a subpoint of a contention about health effects.

Part of your opponents' challenge will be to respond to all of your contentions and subpoints, so if you were to simply say, "My first contention is that bowling is healthy, my second contention is that bowling is inclusive, and my third contention is that bowling is accessible, your opponents only have three things to respond to. But, by adding unique, related subpoints to some or all of your contentions, suddenly your opponents have a lot more things they need to respond to. And in debate, if they don't respond to one of your points, that point is considered "won" by you.

The best subpoints are unique enough to avoid your opponent trying to "collapse" or "group" them into fewer arguments. Fewer arguments, obviously, are easier to rebut. In our example contention of "Health," we cited muscle development and heart health under the subpoint of physical health, but considered mental health unique enough from physical health to make it its own subpoint.

Resolution: "Bowling should be the national sport of the United States."

Health

A. Physical Health
   - heart health
   - muscle health

B. Mental Health

Inclusivity

A. All ages, Young, Old
B. Men, Women, Children
C. Groups, Individuals.
D. Competitive, Non-Comp.
E. Weak, strong

Accessibility

A. Can be played 24-hours per day.
B. Simple rules
C. Easy to televise.

A subpoint IS . . .

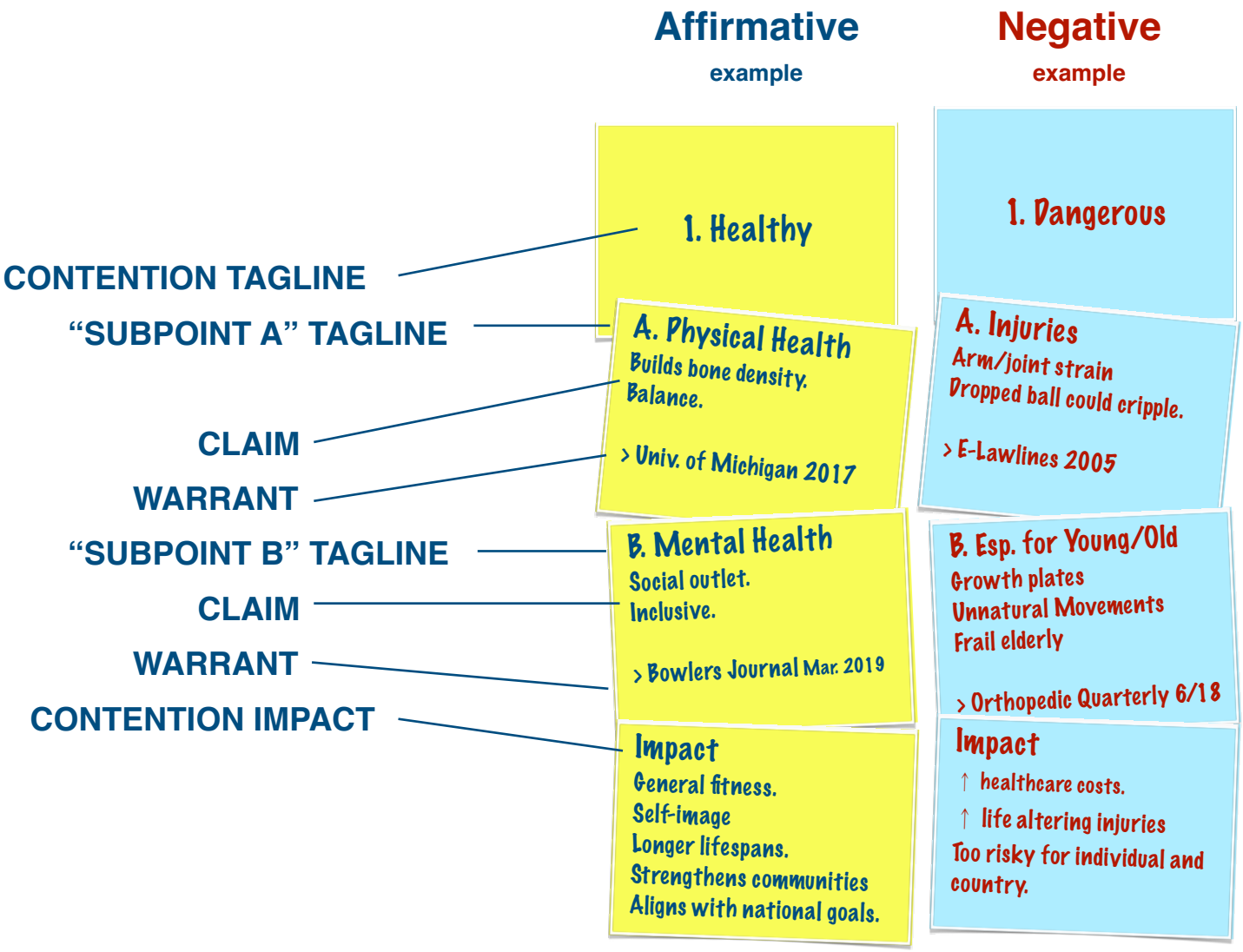
- a unique example or category related to the contention's tagline. ("Health" is an example of a contention tagline. "Physical Health" and "Mental Health" can be subpoints. They are examples of types of "Health.")
- a point formatted as a contention within a contention; a subpoint includes an argument, evidence, and (often) an impact of its own. (Sometimes, it will be more efficient to include a single impact at the end of the contention.)

A subpoint IS NOT . . .

- your next thought within your contention.
- additional evidence.
- an impact.

COMPONENTS OF A CONTENTION

Resolution: "Bowling should be the national sport of the United States."

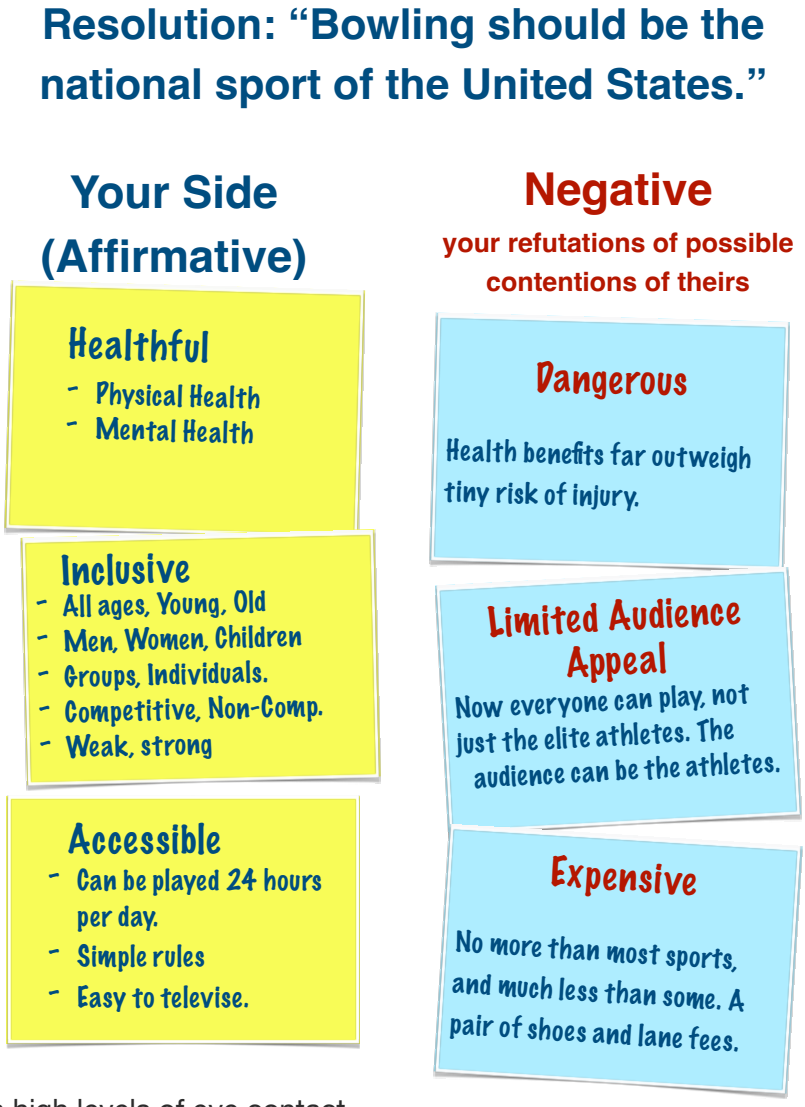


Sparring

Sparring debates are short debates on topics that don't require much – if any – research. The prep time allotted to both teams before the debate begins is usually under 30 minutes.

Sticky notes are a popular tool to prepare for sparring. Here is one way you could use them.

- On separate sticky notes, write down contentions you can think of for your side of the debate *and*, if time permits, your opponent's side.
- As prep time permits, look for warrants for your contentions and add that information to your case's sticky notes.
- Again, as prep time permits, on the sticky notes you created with your opponent's possible arguments, write down rebuttals to them.
- Arrange your sticky notes in the order you want to present your case, and keep your rebuttals ready to add to your your notes during the debate (called your "flow").



Some of the most effective debaters actually speak from their sticky notes during full debates, rather than relying on reading word-for-word, particularly when they only have a short prep time. Work towards being able to speak from brief notes like these to better establish a connection with the judge and audience with high levels of eye contact.

Why use sticky notes?

They are easy to rearrange.

They help you improve eye contact.

Basics of Flowing

Note-taking in debate, called ***flowing***, is the best way of understanding and keeping track of what's going on in a debate. It helps you understand your opponents' case, it helps you remember to respond to all of their contentions, and it helps you see where your opponents didn't respond to one or more of your contentions.

The judge, typically, is also flowing and seeing these things, but sometimes you need to direct the judge where to look on their flow or where arguments were missed. Some judges don't flow, so don't rely on the assumption that they will flow. If you've numbered your contentions and made it clear what your evidence and impacts are, it will be easier for the judge to follow along, regardless of whether they are flowing or not.

Flowing is challenging because you have to listen and write things fairly quickly, so you'll want to come up with shorthand and abbreviations to help you keep up.

Use numbers for contentions, a circle or other mark to indicate citations, an exclamation mark or capital I to show an impact, and/or an underline to emphasize something. Shorten words, or use individual letters for words you

Word/phrase	Abbreviation
leads to, will cause	→
will increase	↑
will decrease	↓
equals, same as	=
money, spending	$
high cost	$$
with, without	w/ , w/o
government, U.S. federal government	gov, USFG
status quo	squo

What is the status quo?

the existing situation; the state of affairs if no change is made

would use a lot. Find what works for you. Some typical abbreviations are shown on the previous page.

During the debate, flowing is a top priority. If you fail to flow a point, write a question mark, then move on and plan to fill in that info later during cross-examination or prep time.

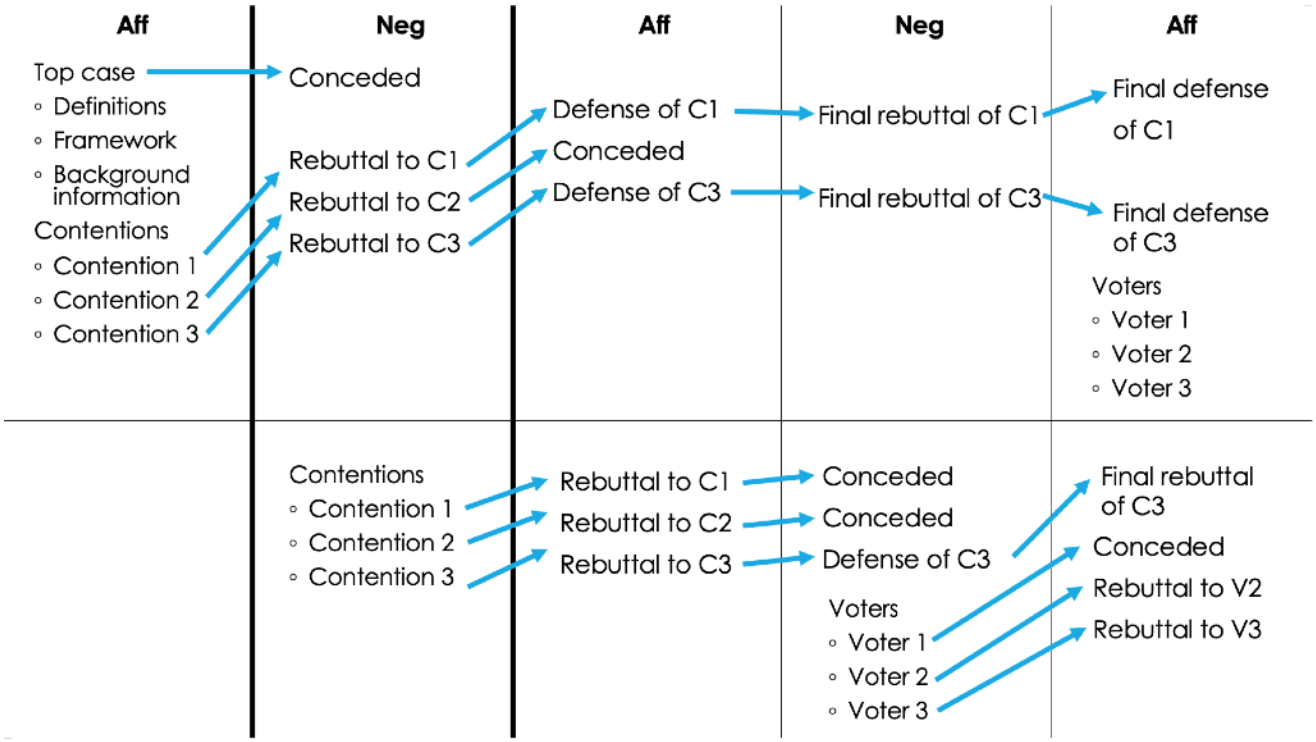
Something to keep in mind is that when you're flowing, you are writing down the speaker's actual arguments, not how you think their points would be better argued. Try to write in such a way that you could describe a recognizable version of their actual argument.

Always remember that it's up to *you* to be understandable, so speak clearly and directly to the judge(s) because they can't fill in blank spots on their flow unless they hear it, and in most debate formats, they don't ask questions.

One of the best ways to get good at flowing is by practicing it. Taking notes in school is a form of flowing, but you can also try flowing a segment of the news, or a dinner table discussion, or a phone call with a friend, or an internet video.

It is very helpful to pre-flow your own case using simple abbreviations, so you know what has, and has not been responded to.

Suggested flowing arrangement



Meeting Flowing Activity: Zombie Apocalypse!

After weeks on the run and losing many of your friends to zombies, your group comes across a remote bunker of people who are making a stand against zombie attacks. At last! Safety! But, no, there isn't room in the bunker for your entire group. It turns out there's only room for two people to enter.

Tearfully, it's agreed that each member of your party will make a 90-second case for why he or she should be one of the two people allowed into the bunker. After the cases are made, the bunker residents and the members of your group will vote two people in.

It is assumed that you would vote for yourself, so you may only vote for one person to enter with you. Do not vote for yourself.

Fortunately, all of you have important skills you can bring to the bunker. This is because each member of your group has a different job (drawn from a hat); for example, golfer, mechanic, photographer, historian, etc. You'll need to plan out a 90-second case to present to the group as to why you should win their vote. Note: given your "job," <u>don't exaggerate</u> the skills and supplies available to you.

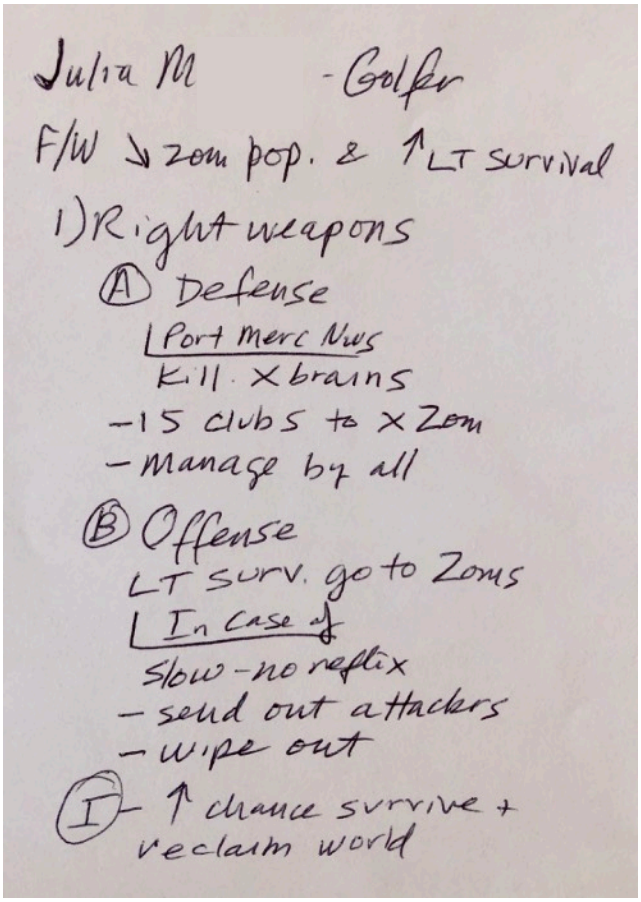
TIPS FOR ORGANIZING YOUR CASE

- State your name and your job
- Explain how this important decision should be made.
- Describe how your skills in your job will help you meet their needs.
- Restate your job.

A Well-Signposted Zombie Apocalypse Case With a First Contention

My name is Julia, and I am a golfer. This debate should be decided by who can have the greatest impact on reducing the zombie population and improving our chances of long term survival. For my first contention: The right weapons. Subpoint A - Defense. According to the Portland Mercury News, to kill zombies, you need to destroy their brains. In my golf bag I have 15 lethal weapons, called golf clubs, for destroying the brains of attacking zombies. The clubs are manageable by everyone in this bunker. Subpoint B - Offense. For long term survival we also need to take the fight to them. The "In-case-of" website says that the main weakness of zombies is their inability to move fast and their almost non-existent reflexes. With our advance planning we can send out large parties with my clubs to reclaim territory, eventually wiping them out. Selecting the golfer will have the most significant impact on the bunker because I can both provide weapons for defense and for giving us the greatest chance of recovering the world for humans. For these reasons, I encourage a vote for the golfer.

The Judge's Flow of a Case with First Contention



Signposting
Show that you're organized

Your goal of winning a debate will be much easier if the judge has an easy time following what you're talking about and understanding your points. A judge has to take in a lot of information during a debate, and a key way to help the judge follow along is through what's called ***signposting***.

Signposting means announcing where you are in your speech or what you're referring to from another of the speeches during the debate, so when the judge takes notes he or she can just direct their attention to the right spot on their flow and number and jot down information where necessary. For example, if you are about to deliver your first contention, you might say, "For my first contention . . ."

By organizing the speech with clear signposts it will be easy in later speeches to refer to "Contention 1, Subpoint B," for example, and the judge can just glance to that area.

If you don't signpost your contentions, the judge will often not realize where one ends and another begins. The case can seem muddled and confusing. You really want to verbally hold the judge's hand throughout the debate, directing them where to look on their notes and how to write it down.

Organizing your speeches

Regardless of which side you're on and which speech you're giving in the debate, we recommend following the same basic steps. That said, you may choose to emphasize some steps more than others, or skip a step altogether, depending on what speech it is and what has happened so far in the debate.

Introductory elements

1. **Make any (optional) opening remarks** that can be a "hook" for your case – possibly an anecdote or a quotation to catch the judge's attention.
2. **Introduce yourself and announce your stance on the resolution**, for example, "My name is Chris Smith and I am representing the Affirmative in this debate on the resolution, 'Gun control reduces gun crime.'"
   You typically only need to introduce yourself once, during your first speech.

Top case

Typically, this is only discussed in the first Affirmative speech, but Negatives sometimes challenge one or more elements of the top case.

3. **Define key terms in the resolution (or beyond the resolution, if needed).**
4. **Scoping.** If you feel it is necessary, clarify the extent to which you think the Affirmative needs to prove the resolution worthy of agreement in order to win the debate.
5. **Background information.** This may include a summary of the status quo, including relevant recent events (for example, a significant recent news item that actually impacts the resolution).
6. (If it's a policy debate) a **plan**. This is a specific method of doing the policy the resolution is advocating for, and, as such, provides a basis for a more substative debate. (The Negative may propose an alternate plan, known as a ***counterplan***. We recommend writing counterplans that cannot reasonably be interpreted as supporting the resolution.)
7. **Framework**. Your framework is a standard that the judge will use to figure out whether to agree with the resolution or not, so don't skip this!

Your case

8. If it's your first speech, a set of **contentions/subpoints** (discussed earlier). If it's a later speech, a defense of your case against any rebuttals your opponent has offered to it.

Rebuttals to your opponents' case

9. In all speeches other than the first Affirmative speech (at which point their opponent hasn't spoken yet), you'd offer a set of **rebuttals** to your opponent's case (or their rebuttals to your rebuttals of their case).

Conclusion

10. **Recap**. If you have time, quickly reiterate your taglines/claims
11. **Impact analysis and voting advocacy**. Using your framework, explain to the judge why you're winning based on what has happened so far. In your final speech, we recommend providing a list of "voters," meaning reasons to vote for your side.
12. **Remind the judge of your side** - e.g. *"and for these reasons, we urge an Affirmative ballot."*

Sample speech

Resolution: "The voting age should be lowered to 16."

First Affirmative speech

Hi, my name is _____ and I'm representing the Affirmative on the resolution, "The voting age should be lowered to 16."

First, I'd like to offer some definitions and background information. I'll be using "the voting age" to refer to the minimum age at which a person can legally cast a ballot in a national election in the United States. "Should" is used to indicate that I am recommending this policy change. The current voting age is 18; I'll be arguing for it to be changed to 16, hence the term "lowered."

I'd like to ask you to judge this debate using a cost-benefit analysis, meaning that you'll consider the expected benefits and the expected costs of the policy change I'm proposing, and vote based on which is greater overall: the benefits or the costs. As the Affirmative, I will be arguing that the benefits are greater than the costs overall.

Now, I'll get into my contentions.

My first contention is Civic Engagement. U.S. voter turnout data reported in Bloomberg Government shows that voters aged 18-24 consistently vote less overall, compared to older population groups. This is no surprise, since the years of 18-24 are often very busy for Americans – these are the years most people move out, get a job or go to college, and so on. This makes it harder for them to get involved in civic life as young adults. By contrast, if we lower the voting age to 16, we can expect to increase civic engagement among young people to some extent, since 16-year-olds are generally still living at home and attending high school, meaning that they have relatively more time to learn how to vote and to establish a voting habit that will stick over time. This outcome is a benefit to society because a vote is an opportunity to shape your community, and this opportunity will inspire at least some young people to care more about the issues impacting their communities and get involved in solving them.

My second contention is Taxation Without Representation. In the U.S., 16- and 17-year-olds are legally permitted to work and must pay taxes on their labor

income just like people aged 18 and up, but are not permitted to vote on the policies that their tax contributions are taken based on, and the policies that their tax contributions will go to fund. This contradicts the core values of the United States, and is a direct ongoing harm to the political freedom of 16- and 17-year-olds. If we lower the voting age to 16, this harm will finally be stopped, which is a benefit in itself. Moreover, by resolving this significant contradiction between its values and policy, the U.S. will become a more politically stable country that can be taken more seriously when it advocates for political rights on the global stage, which is a major benefit not just to Americans, but to people around the world.

My third contention is Innovation. Because 16- and 17-year-olds are younger and are seeing the world through fresher eyes, they are inherently better equipped to imagine new and better ways to modify our policy to meet the challenges we face today and will face tomorrow. This is not to say that 16- and 17-year-olds should be running our government, only that they offer an important perspective that would help us develop and institute policies that are better thought out overall. This is a benefit to society for obvious reasons: a better-thought-out policy is a policy that serves the people's interest more fully and consistently.

To recap: in my first contention, I showed you how my policy would increase civic engagement among young people, benefiting society by inspiring previously disengaged but resourceful young people to get involved in solving issues that affect society at large. In my second contention, I showed you how my policy would resolve a startling contradiction between the U.S.' stated values and its policies, expand a crucial political right to a group of Americans who do not yet have it, and improve the U.S.' standing to advocate for political rights on the global stage. This benefits not only 16- and 17-year-olds who are gaining the right to vote, but also the American people as a whole (who get a stabler and more consistent society) and our neighbors around the world (who get a greater chance of having their own political rights expanded). In my third contention, I showed you how my policy would enable innovative young Americans to add their voices to the chorus of democracy, benefiting society by forcing us to grapple with and weigh newer ideas that will suit a greater share of the population and are likely to serve us better as we tackle contemporary challenges.

Through the lens of a cost-benefit analysis, I believe these benefits strongly recommend a vote in favor of the resolution. Thank you, and I now stand open for cross-examination.

Sample evidence card

The point of this piece of evidence

Affirmative
Morgan Mitchell

CORRELATION OF SOCIAL SKILLS AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE.

Catherine R. Meier, et al, Dept. Psychology Penn State, August 2006, "Importance of Social Skills in the Elementary Grades" Education and Treatment of Children, Vol. 29, No. 3 pp. 409-419 Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/42899893

Source

Contributions of Social Skills to Academic Success in the classroom

Wentzel (1993) examined the relationship between measures of academic outcomes (i.e., grades and standardized achievement test scores) and students' social and academic behavior. In this study teacher ratings of **students' prosocial behavior were a significant predictor of standardized achievement test scores. In addition, prosocial, antisocial, and academic behavior were significant independent predictors of students' grade point averages.** Prosocial behavior also contributed indirectly to students' grade point average through its relationship with academic behavior.

Malecki and Elliott (2002) extended the work of Wentzel through the use of standardized measures completed by multiple informants (parent, teacher, and student) to explore the relationships between social behaviors and academic outcomes. In addition, they collected data at two points in time to explore the longitudinal relationship between social behaviors at Time 1 and academic outcomes at Time 2.

Using regression analyses, Malecki and Elliott found that social skills were a significant predictor of academic competence (ß = .61, f> < .01). Like Wentzel (1993), Malecki and Elliott concluded that **social skills have a significant predictive relationship with academic outcomes.**

Text you are quoting distinguished from surrounding contextual text

Like Wentzel (1993), Malecki and Elliott (2002) concluded that social skills have a significant predictive relationship with academic outcomes.

Study authors' credentials

Authors' credentials:

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- Kathryn Wentzel Ph.D., University of MD Professor; Developmental Science Specialization & Educational Psychology Specialization, Human Development and Quantitative Methodology (HDQM)

Cross-Examination

After each team's first speech, there is a ***cross-examination*** period where the opposing team gets to ask them questions. Cross-examination is sometimes referred to as ***cross-ex***, ***crossfire***, or ***CX***. For in-person debates, cross-examiners stand at their seats, facing the judge. When it's your turn to ask questions, your goals are first to understand, and second to weaken, your opponents' case. Poke and provoke! Make them explain and defend their case, make them compare impacts. Keep framework front and center in your questions and answers, and be sure both you and your opponents' questions and answers relate to, or matter to, the resolution.

Make an effort to prepare questions in advance, and practice answering questions you think you might receive. When actually participating in the cross-examination, show confidence and courteousness. Also, remember that you're trying to persuade the judge, not your opponent, so direct your body and body language toward the judge during all debate segments, including cross-examination.

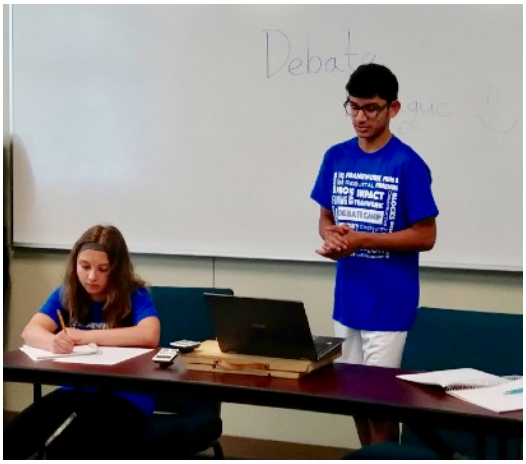
Rebuttals

Rebuttals are arguments designed to defeat other arguments. We recommend following a ***line-by-line*** approach to your rebuttals. This is preferable to jumping around from contention to contention, because it makes it easier for the judge to follow which point you are refuting.

When rebutting your opponents' points, avoid aggression or condescension. This is your chance to calmly but confidently explain to the judges why your opponent is wrong; your demeanor should reflect that.

Also, be sure to signpost; for example, *"In subpoint A of my opponent's first contention, he said _____, but that doesn't give you the full context because _____"*

When you are deciding how to point out problems in your opponents' argument(s) here are some angles to consider (keep this list at hand to prompt ideas):



- **COLLAPSIBILITY**: Point out where multiple contentions or arguments by your opponents can be collapsed into fewer, making them easier to rebut.
- **EVIDENCE**: Use your evidence, or their lack of evidence, or their weak evidence, and explain why it matters.
- **TOPICALITY**: Point out where an Affirmative argument doesn't support the resolution in some way.

Blocks

It can be extremely helpful, while preparing for your debate, to brainstorm and write down **ways to respond to cross-examination questions and arguments your opponent will probably make. We call these pre-written responses *blocks***. And you would have these available during the debate to read or refer to during cross-examination and rebuttal.

- **TURN**: Point out how some aspect of their case proves or helps your side instead of theirs.
- **IMPACT**: Point out where your impacts are comparatively more important in terms of one, or more, of the following: probability (how likely is it to actually happen), timeframe (how soon or far in the future), magnitude and breadth (how large and widespread), and the possibility of reversibility (can something be done to stop/slow it). This process of comparing impacts is called "weighing" or "analyzing" impacts.

EXAMPLE: "I'd like to remind the judge that the policy outlined in my first contention will positively affect up to 70 million people and beyond, based on evidence from a

similar policy that was implemented in Canada in 2011. By contrast, the unsubstantiated concerns my opponent has raised would negatively affect five million people at most, by his own admission."

EXAMPLE: "In my case, I provided clear and significant benefits (backed up by the effects of similar policies in other developed countries) and weighed those benefits against the real-world costs expected after the implementation of these policies. My opponent has only proposed some minor costs that are hypothetical. If we're looking at this round through a cost-benefit analysis, it's clear that the magnitude of the Affirmative's benefits outweigh."

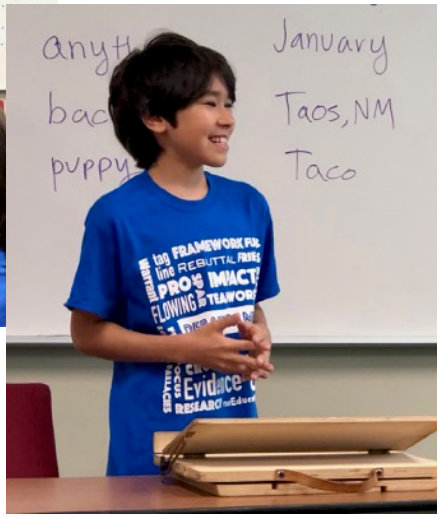
- **NON-UNIQUE**: Point out where an impact or result would be the case regardless of which side wins, so neither side should get to use the impact/result as a reason to win.

- **LOGIC**: Point out where facts don't tie together, there is a lack of causation, too broad generalization, opinions instead of facts, misrepresentation of your argument, logical fallacies, etc.

- **CONTRADICTIONS**: Point out contradictory arguments within the same case that can't both be true, or that cancel each other out.

What does it mean when we refer to "weighing" in debate?

Simply put, it means comparing.



Wrapping up

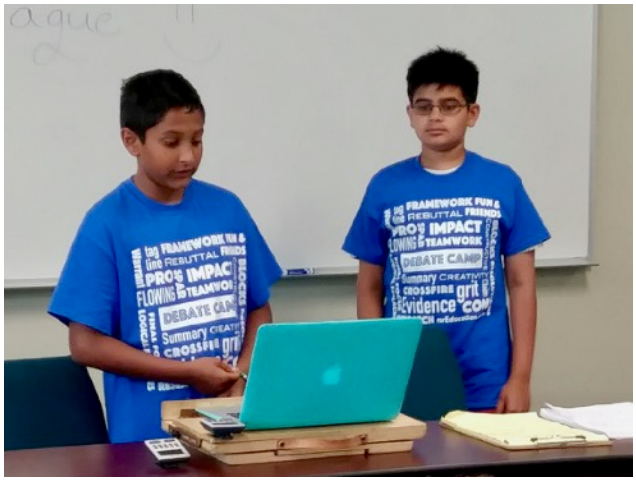
In your final speech, you want to tie up loose ends and explain why you're winning in light of the framework. Start this process by explaining what you're about to do:

> *EXAMPLE: "We discussed at the beginning of the debate that this round should be decided with the costs and benefits in mind, and I've tried to highlight these throughout the debate. In this final speech I'll lay out to you exactly why I've provided a better balance of benefits to costs in terms of social impact, versus my opponent."*

Once you've done that, explain why the impacts of your contentions are more important overall. This does not need to be a lengthy, line-by-line comparison of every impact mentioned in the debate. Instead, take your strongest impacts and describe why they are more powerful than your opponents', using weighing vocabulary:

- **Probability**: How likely is the IMPACT to actually happen?
- **Timeframe**: How soon or far in the future will the IMPACT occur?
- **Magnitude**: How severe is the danger of the IMPACT? (Often combined with Scope.)
- **Scope**: How widespread is the IMPACT in terms of effect on numbers of people or things? (Often combined with Magnitude.)
- **Irreversibility**: How difficult is it to stop, slow, or reverse the IMPACT?
- **Strength of Link**: Is the IMPACT even pertinent to the topic in the first place? Is it a weak link?
- **Prerequisite**: Will doing your side first (or as a "prerequisite to doing your opponents' plan) lead to a better result?

EXAMPLE: "Let me weigh my impacts against my opponent's. My opponent has brought in no clear impact in terms of [e.g. mental health]. He hasn't shown [e.g. where this would happen anywhere else in the world], and hasn't given us any sort of proof that [e.g. this will actually work], versus my impacts are likely in the short term and irreversible. I've given you the research that shows you [e.g. this is not only going to happen around the world, but also here in America"]. [e.g. Mine are more immediate, they're more severe, and people are going to die."]



Sum up the round by signposting your voting issues, known as “voters.” These can be anything you think favors you in the debate.

Common voting issues

- Did any of their contentions make no sense given the wording of the resolution?
- Was your evidence more current, from better sources, and make sense given the wording of the resolution?
- Which of your impacts were more significant (probability, magnitude, timeframe, reversibility, etc.)?
- Did your opponent concede/agree with you on any points?
- Were any of your arguments or subpoints dropped?

Help the judge write out your list of voters by creating a short tagline-like statement before (very) briefly commenting on the voter.

EXAMPLE: “Let me list out the reasons Negative has won this debate:

- ***Voter 1: Their second contention isn’t relevant**. The resolution refers to whether gun control reduces gun crime. Their entire second contention relates to suicide, which is non-topical. You’ll recall our opponents admitted this in cross-ex.*
- ***Voter 2: Biased evidence**. Their third contention relied on a study by a think tank known for its political bias. Our evidence from the FBI crime statistics and the meta-analysis from the 2019 ‘Study of Cities’ was clearly better sourced, relevant, and unbiased.*
- ***Voter 3: They dropped our third contention**. By not responding to it, that point automatically flows to us.*
- ***And, finally Voter 4: Negative best met the judging criteria**. We laid out at the beginning that the winner of this debate should be the one who presents the course of action that will protect the greatest number of people from gun crime. We proved that gun control reduces access to guns by law-abiding citizens for self-protection, while criminals will continue to have them regardless of gun laws, resulting in increased gun crime. For these reasons you can confidently cast your ballot for the Negative.”*

Working as a Team in Debate

Before the debate

- Get everyone contributing. Try to discover what each member of your team is good at. There are lots of important things to be done leading up to a debate. There are roles for researchers, skeptics who find the holes in your arguments, block-writers, presenters, flow-ers, cross-examination question creators.
- Good communication is key. Be sure you have every teammate's contact information. If you have a large team, consider starting a group text or GroupMe.
- Set up a shared web folder (for example, one hosted by Dropbox or Google Docs) for sharing documents, research, drafts, etc.
- Create a plan for communication and who is responsible for what during the debate. If debating online, you may want to create a phone connection with your partner(s).

During the debate

- While debating as a team it is important for the judge to sense that each team member is a significant contributor. Each person is expected to contribute to the debate in speaking time, cross-ex, and paying attention.
- Avoid feeding responses to teammates or hovering over them.
- As a teammate, stay visually engaged in the debate, listening, looking, flowing, etc.