

Judging for the Boston Debate League – Is the Plan a Good Idea?

What is Policy Debate?

Policy debate is an intellectual competition between two sides – the **Affirmative** and the **Negative**. Each side is represented by **2 person teams** from different high schools. Only **1 Judge** (you) will be in each debate round.



During the debate, the Affirmative team advocates a policy in their first speech. The Negative will argue that policy is a bad idea. The rest of the debate will be about whether or not the policy the affirmative presented is a good or bad idea. Your job, as the judge, is to decide if the plan is a good idea, or rather- which team does a better job arguing if the plan is good or not. If the affirmative's arguments that the plan is a good idea, and their use of evidence to support those arguments, are stronger then you should vote affirmative. If the negative's arguments are stronger, then you should vote negative. Just ask yourself the question- Is the Plan a Good Idea?

Elements of the Affirmative's Plan

The affirmative team will present a plan in their first speech. It will contain the following elements.

The Plan – the actual policy that's proposed

Inherency – the 1st step to convincing the USFG to do the plan; the Affirmative must prove that the plan has not been done.

Harms – the 2nd step; the Affirmative must prove that terrible impacts would occur if the plan is not done.

Solvency – the 3rd Step; the Affirmative must prove the plan actually solves, or prevents, the harms.

Notes:



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What BDL Students Are Debating: An Example

Affirmative	Negative
Plan: UFG should withdraw troops from Afghanistan	
Inherency: The US has troops stationed in Afghanistan	Negative Inherency:
Harms: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. US Troops are at risk of injury.2. US Troops cause injury and spur anti-American sentiment.3. Anti-American sentiment spills over to Pakistan and encourages terrorism.	Negative Harms:
Solvency: Removing a percentage of US troops from Afghanistan would prevent the Harms.	Negative Solvency:

If you are asked to judge in the varsity division, the negative team may make more sophisticated arguments. Specifically, they may argue that the plan could cause a complicated chain reaction that could impact other countries or politics or the economy at home, or they may propose an alternative plan.

Notes:



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Speech Order and Speaker Duties

Each Student gives two speeches; a constructive and a rebuttal. The constructive is 8 minutes and the rebuttal is five minutes. Each student also is cross examined once and cross-examines someone once.

On the Affirmative- there are two affirmative speakers:

- One student is **The First Affirmative Speaker** gives the First Affirmative Constructive and the First Affirmative Rebuttal
- One student is **The Second Affirmative Speaker** give the Second Affirmative Constructive and the Second Affirmative Rebuttal

On the Negative team- there are two negative speakers:

- One student is **The First Negative Speaker** gives the First Negative Constructive and the First Negative Rebuttal
- One student is **The Second Negative Speaker** give the Second Negative Constructive and the Second Negative Rebuttal

The Speeches:

1st Affirmative Constructive (8 minutes) -- the affirmative team presents its plan.

1st Negative Constructive (8 minutes) – the negative team presents all the reasons they believe the affirmative’s plan should not be done.

2nd Affirmative Constructive (8 minutes) – The affirmative team responds to the 1st Negative constructive

2nd Negative Constructive (8 minutes) – The negative team responds to the 2nd affirmative constructive and extends negative arguments

1st Negative Rebuttal (5 minutes) -- The negative team responds to the 2nd affirmative constructive and extends negative arguments

1st Affirmative Rebuttal (5 minutes) – The affirmative team responds to both the 2nd negative constructive and the 1st negative rebuttal

2st Negative Rebuttal (5 minutes)—the negative team tells you why they think they should win

2st Affirmative Rebuttal (5 minutes)—the affirmative team tells you why they think they should win

Notes

- Cross EX:
- Timing the Speeches
- Prep Time



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After the Round

Giving an Oral Critique:

1. Affirm the students.
2. Offer honest, constructive criticism. But limit the number of criticisms. As a rule of thumb, provide “3 Affirmations per Criticism”
3. Do not disclose your decision

Making a Decision:

Instructions for filling out a ballot

1. At the start of the round, make sure that each student has written his/her name in the appropriate spot (1A, 2A, 1N, 2N) and that each team has written their school at the top of the ballot.
2. For each speech, write down at least one great thing that each speaker did on the back of the ballot. Please be detailed in your explanation.
3. At the end of the round, evaluate which team provided the better arguments. Imagine that you are a judge in a courtroom that does not fall victim to emotional appeal, speaking style, etc... Your job is to evaluate the level of argumentation in the debate round.
4. Write the name of the team that won and circle whether they were Affirmative or Negative.
5. Give each student a speaker point. Below is a commonly used scale for assigning speaker points. Please note: You can give the same number of speaker points to multiple debaters in the round.

30 Points	Absolutely brilliant! An <i>outstanding</i> speaker. A flawless performance.
29 Points	An extremely good speaker. Well above average. Unusually effective; highly persuasive.
28 Points	A good speaker. Slightly above average. Clear room for improvement.
27 Points	In the lower-middle of the pack. With strengths, but also with unmistakable flaws.
26 Points	An ineffective speaker, overall, though with some glimmers of skill.
25 Points	A significantly flawed speaker.

Please do not give less than 25 points

6. Circle whether or not it was a Low Point Win. A Low Point Win is defined as a win for the team that had the lower total of speaker points and ranks. (This is rare in debate, but can happen)
7. Rank the students in the round with 1 being the top debater and 4 being the bottom debater. Please note: No speaker can receive the same rank as another speaker in the round.
8. Write the reason you voted the winning team. Remember that you should base your decision on the arguments, not anything else! (Please write about the arguments, NOT about their speaking style, debate skills, etc...)
9. Sign the ballot and write your school affiliation.
10. Talk to the students for a few minutes about the debate round. Tell each student what you thought they did well. Be careful not to say who won or lost.

Division _____

Judge _____

Round _____

Room _____



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AFF. TEAM _____ POINTS RANK NEG. TEAM _____ POINTS RANK

1ST AFF _____ 1ST NEG _____

2ND AFF _____ 2ND NEG _____

Reason for Decision:

THE TEAM WINNING THIS DEBATE WAS _____ REPRESENTING THE **AFF** **NEG**

JUDGE SIGNATURE _____ SCHOOL/AFFILIATION _____

LOW POINT WIN **YES NO**

Individual Feedback

1ST AFF _____

1ST NEG _____

2ND AFF _____

2ND NEG _____

Division JV

Judge Hoffman

Round 1

Room 245



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AFF. TEAM T.J.H.S. POINTS RANK NEG. TEAM P.J.H.S. POINTS RANK

1ST AFF John Smith 27.5 3 1ST NEG Peter Kim 28.5 1

2ND AFF Jane Johnson 28 2 2ND NEG Lucy Jacobs 27 4

Reason for Decision:

The affirmative team proved that the plan was a good idea in the following ways:

- They identified a concrete problem in the status quo
- They explained and extended their arguments about how poverty hurts the economy and causes racism and discrimination
- They demonstrated that providing block grants would solve this problem through the provision of important social services that raise individuals out of poverty

The negative team:

- Provided several reasons why the plan would be a bad idea, but did not explain the impacts to those arguments
- Needed to more fully develop why the plan would not be a solution to this problem, and why it might be worse to attempt to do the plan

THE TEAM WINNING THIS DEBATE WAS T.J.H.S. REPRESENTING THE **AFF** **NEG**

JUDGE SIGNATURE _____ SCHOOL/AFFILIATION _____

LOW POINT WIN **YES** **NO**

Individual Feedback

1ST AFF _____ John Smith _____

- Very persuasive reading of the 1AC
- You had great answers in the cross-examination about your affirmative
- You did a good job extending and explaining the 2AC arguments in your 1AR
- Try to pace yourself in the 1AR because there will always be a lot to answer in a short amount of time

1ST NEG _____ Peter Kim _____

- Great analytical arguments in the 1NC
- You had some really interesting questions in the cross-examination of the 2AC
- Nice explanations of your arguments and extensions in the 1NR
- Try to fully explain the impacts to your arguments in order to answer the question “why is the plan a bad idea?”

2ND AFF _____ Jane Johnson _____

- Your answers in the 2AC were well-organized and numbered
- Your cross-examination of the 1NC did a great job of clarifying some difficult points
- Great explanation of why the plan is a good idea in the 2AC
- Try to fully explain the impacts to your arguments in order to answer the question “why is the plan a good idea?” in the 2AR

2ND NEG _____ Lucy Jacobs _____

- Great explanation of the disad and how the impacts weigh against doing the plan
- You had some really interesting questions in the cross-examination of the 1AC
- Good extension of arguments in the 2NR
- Try to fully explain the impacts to your arguments in order to answer the question “why is the plan a bad idea?” in the 2NR – this helps the judge make a final decision and weigh the arguments