

BOSTON DEBATE LEAGUE

Volunteer Judge Guide



The BDL and the After-School Debate League

Thank you for volunteering for the Boston Debate League! The BDL is a non-profit organization that manages and administers the After-School Debate League for Boston Public School students.

During the 2014-2015 Tournament Season, we served more than **900 students** and benefited from the support of more than **800 volunteers**. The BDL is one of 22 urban debate leagues nationwide, and we have the largest debate teams in the nation, averaging 52 students per high school team and 29 students per middle school team. Debate builds confidence, self-efficacy, intellectual curiosity and creativity, and inspires students to engage more deeply in their education. It is our goal to make debate a signature element of what it means to be a Boston Public School student.

Policy Debate

Policy debate starts with a **resolution** that calls for policy change by the United States federal government. There are two teams of two students who argue either the **affirmative** or the **negative** of the resolution. On some occasions (when a debater is absent for example), a team may consist of one debater which is referred to as **going maverick**. In policy debate, the quality of the argument is more important than the style or rhetoric. Higher quality arguments should guide your decision making.

2015-2016 Resolution

Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially increase its economic and/or diplomatic engagement with the People's Republic of China.

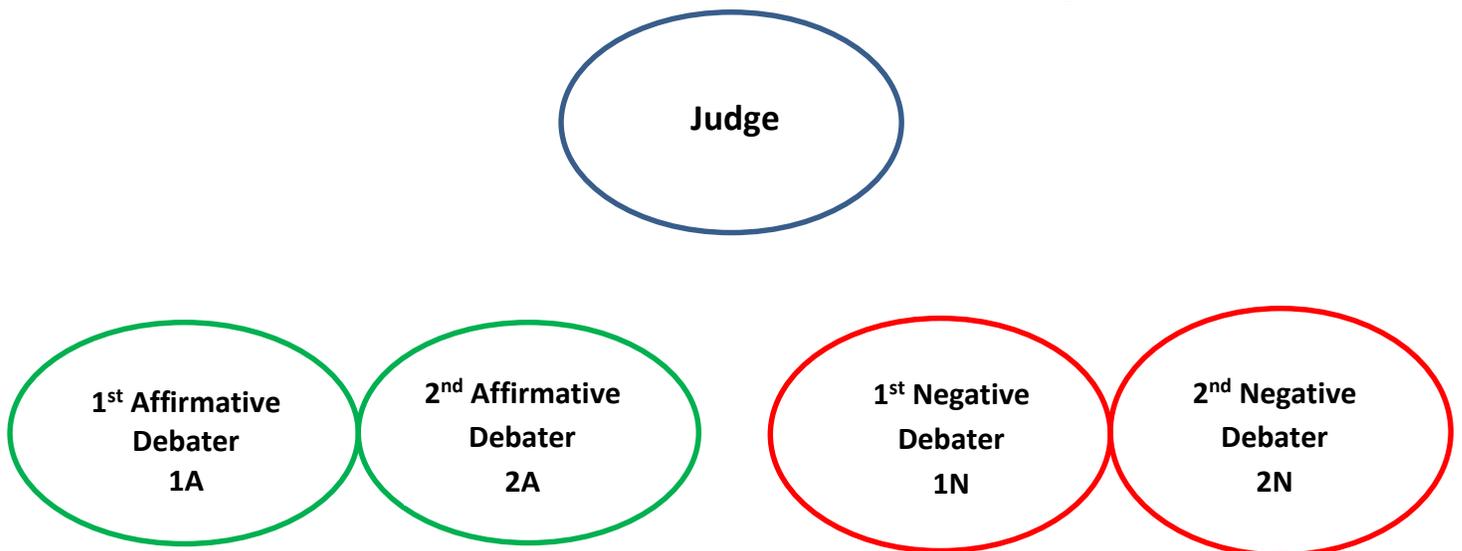


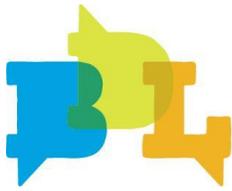
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Visualizing a Debate:

Please keep in mind that this is a general visual overview. Debate teams may be on opposite sides or even across a table from each other. The Judge will always be facing both teams of debaters.



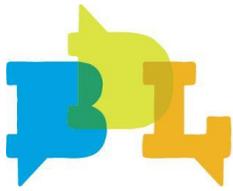


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General Logistics

- **Before the Debate**
 - Attend **judge training** and receive any updates specific to the current tournament.
 - Go to the **ballot table** and retrieve the ballot with your name on it.
 - Get a **timer** from the ballot table (or you can use the stopwatch function on your phone).
 - Go to your assigned **debate room** – the room is listed on your ballot.
- **During the Debate**
 - Set yourself up at the front of the room with your **ballot, timer, and pen**.
 - The debaters should **introduce** themselves to you. If they do not, introduce yourself. Feel free to tell the debaters about your background and any preferences you have.
 - **Keep time**. Alert debaters to how much time they have left by holding up your fingers (1 finger for one minute left, for example). Sometimes debaters will keep time for their partners. If they do, you need not. You are also in charge of tracking remaining **prep time** for both teams.
 - If any debaters (especially those in novice and middle school) are confused, **remind** them whose turn it is to speak and what they should be trying to do in their speech.
 - **Take notes** on well-made arguments, good cross-examination, and other comments that will help you give constructive feedback. The **back** of the ballot is an excellent place to take notes.
- **After the Debate**
 - **Do not announce the winner, even if debaters ask you to.**
 - Provide **specific, concise verbal feedback** to the debaters.
 - **Compliment** each debater for 1-2 things they did well, focus on content and presentation.
 - **Suggest** 1-2 areas for improvement, please be specific in your constructive feedback.
 - Many debaters are **English Language Learners** whose pronunciation will improve the more they debate. Judges should give feedback on the content of speeches, not on pronunciation.
 - **Provide concise written feedback**. Take no more than 5 minutes to give feedback as we often need the results of your decision before pairing the next round, and another debate may be scheduled to begin in the same room.
 - **Once the debaters have exited the room, return your completed ballot** to the ballot table immediately after your debate and **before** you go to your next round.
 - If you need **additional time** to complete your ballot, please bring your ballot to the ballot table, and **report** the outcome of your round **before finalizing your written feedback**.





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Making a Decision

If the affirmative side made the most compelling and well-argued case, vote affirmative. If the negative made the most compelling and well-argued case, vote negative. But **don't reveal your decision** to the debaters. Try to put aside personal beliefs and base the decision on what you heard during the round. *Note: While you may provide feedback on a cross examination, do not use this to decide a winner unless they reiterate those points in either a constructive speech or rebuttal.*

Filling Out a Ballot:

1. For each speech, write down at least one strong argument that each speaker made on the back of the ballot. Please be clear and concise.
2. At the end of the round, compare your notes on the arguments made and decide whether the world would be a better place **with the plan enacted (vote Aff)** or **without enacting the plan (vote Neg)**. *Please always vote before any judge or debater gives/receives feedback so that judging remains unbiased by comments made after the round.*
3. Write the name of the team that won and their numeric code and circle whether they were Affirmative or Negative.
4. Give each student **speaker points**. Below is the scale for assigning speaker points. *Please note: You can give the same number of speaker points to multiple debaters in the round. Some judges may also give speaker points in .5 increments (27, 27.5, 28, 28.5, etc.):*
 - **30 Points** Absolutely brilliant! An *outstanding* speaker. A flawless performance. Top 3%.
 - **29 Points** An extremely good speaker. Unusually effective; highly persuasive. Top 10%.
 - **28 Points** A good speaker. Slightly above average. Room for improvement. Top third.
 - **27 Points** An average speaker. Competitive in their division. Top half.
 - **26 Points** In the lower-middle of the pack. Still learning, shows potential. Lower third.
 - **25 Points** An ineffective speaker, overall, but with some glimmers of skill. Lowest 10%.
 - **24 Points** Unprepared or unable to express ideas, very rude or unprofessional (please explain on ballot if there is an issue that should be addressed by coaches)
5. **Rank** the debaters 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, even if you have given them the same number of speaker points.*
6. Write **the reason you voted for the winning team**. Remember that you should base your decision on the debaters' arguments, not anything else.
7. **Sign the ballot** and indicate your school, company name, or other affiliation.
8. Bring your completed ballot to the ballot table **before** going to your next round.



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Speaker Point Categories

**Note different categories appear on ballots from different divisions, the four on your ballot are the most pertinent for the division that you will be judging.*

Clarity: The quality of being clear. A debater with weak clarity would make a speech that consisted mostly of reading evidence with no judge adaptation. A debater with strong clarity would read evidence, summarize evidence, and provide persuasive analysis. Strong debaters should adapt perfectly to judge's speed, background, and debate preferences.

Fluency: The ability to express oneself easily and articulately. A weak debater would read at about half of normal conversational speed, making a great deal of reading errors. A strong debater will read faster than normal conversational speed, while making minimal errors.

Presentation: The way in which information is relayed to the judge. A weak debater will not engage the judge at all in their presentation. A strong debater will adjust speed to provide emphasis at appropriate times and use oral and body language to support the ideas they are expressing.

Conviction: A firmly held belief or opinion. A weak debater will not attempt to show that they believe in the arguments they are making. A strong debater will make it clear that they believe in the arguments they are making and show this through changes in language and tone.

Signposting: A clear indication of the argument that is immediately going to follow; this occurs during the speech itself. A weak student will give a speech without clear direction or organization. A strong student will provide an indication before each argument they make that conveys to the judge what the topic is they are discussing, as well as the specific opposing argument and evidence they are responding to.

Roadmap: A short overview of arguments that a debater will make in their upcoming speech, this happens before the speech time begins. A weak debater will not indicate to the judge what arguments they will be making before their speech, and a disorganized speech will follow. A strong debater will clearly announce what arguments they will be making in an orderly manner before the speech begins and then follow the order they have established.

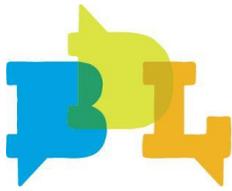
Cross-Ex: A question and answer period following each constructive speech. A weak debater will ask aimless or off topic questions and respond to questions in a way that is detrimental to their argument. A strong debater will ask focused questions aimed at clarifying, trapping, and illustrating deficiencies and provide answers to questions that support their overall argument. Strong debaters will reference arguments from cross-ex in their following speeches.

Affirmative and Negative Arguments Section

*"In this section, focus on the **clash** between Aff and Neg while weighing **impacts** presented."*

Clash: Direct response to arguments made by the opposition.

Impacts: The outcomes of scenarios posed in arguments throughout the debate, impacts should be analyzed on magnitude affected, risk of occurrence, and timeframe of occurrence.



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Example RFDs

Strong Reasons for Decisions (RFDs) discuss: the impacts of the affirmative and negative arguments, including *why* certain impacts were proven to outweigh other impacts in the round. Strong RFDs also discuss the plan or advocacy, and whether or not enacting the plan makes the world a better place.

Weak RFDs discuss: superficial elements. Items like presentation and clarity can affect how a judge votes because they can make an argument seem more persuasive. However, speaking skills should be addressed by the judge's award of speaker points. The round should be decided on the strength of the *arguments* made. Weak RFDs almost always are unclear, nonspecific, and unrelated to the content of arguments.

Example Strong RFD – Voted for Affirmative Team

The affirmative team won this debate because they established that human rights violations were occurring due to deportations, they proved that deportations are still increasing now, despite plans to decrease deportations, and they proved that their plan will reduce deportations, thus reducing human rights violations.

The negative team made some strong arguments about the economic impacts of deporting immigrants and proved the economic impacts that immigrants have in this country may be minimal. However, in my mind, the affirmative team proved that the positive impacts that ending deportations would have on human rights significantly outweighed the negative economic impacts that would result from ending the deportations.

Example Weak RFD – Voted for Affirmative Team

I voted for the affirmative team because they sounded great and had good explanation. I think they really knew their argument. They gave good eye contact and could answer all the questions in cross examination.

Example Strong RFD – Voted for Negative Team

The negative team won this debate because they were able to prove that the human rights violations discussed by the affirmative team would not be solved as a result of enacting the plan for two reasons:

1. States will continue to exclude immigrants in many ways, even if deportation reform occurs. Human rights violations will still exist even if we end surveillance intended for deportations.
2. Current policies already in place are already solving for those human rights violations. Since ICE is already reforming, there is no need for the plan. Although deportations have not decreased yet, the negative team proved that current policies will soon address human rights violations.

The affirmative team was unable to prove that positive economic impacts would result from reducing deportations by reducing surveillance. Since the affirmative team could not prove that their plan would result in an improved state for either the economy or the human rights of immigrants, their two main harms, I have to vote against the plan for the negative team.

Example Weak RFD – Voted for Negative Team

I voted for the negative team because I liked their argument about the economy. They also spoke clearly and presented their argument well. They asked great questions in cross examination which really stumped the other team.



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EXAMPLE VERBAL FEEDBACK

Examples of Strong, Clear, Informative Feedback

- I found your argument about _____ persuasive because...
- Your cross-examination did a good job (clarifying) (illustrating deficiencies) (entrapping opponents) by...
- Your cross-examination answers supported your arguments well by...
- You did a good job extending your team's argument about _____ in your (speech)
- I thought your argument about _____ showed great analysis because...
- Your answers in the (name of speech) were well-organized and numbered.
- Your cross-examination after the (name of opponent's speech) did a great job of clarifying some difficult points.

Examples of Strong, Clear, Constructive Feedback

- You could improve your argument by providing more evidence about...
- You could have done _____ to improve your organization and clarity in the round.
- Try to fully explain the impacts to your arguments in order to answer the question "why is the plan a good/bad idea?"
- Try to help guide the judge's decision making by explaining why (I) should vote for your team. This explanation should include a comparison of arguments in the round, reasons why you believe you won those arguments, and why they were the most important arguments in the round.
- You could improve your (clarity) (presentation) (fluency) by ...

Examples of unclear feedback:

- You were clear.
- Good eye contact.
- Great speech.
- Don't stutter.
- Keep your head up.
- Be louder.
- You were very convincing in your speech.
- You were a persuasive speaker.
- Good eye contact.



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Judge Glossary – Novice/JV

Affirmative: The team in a debate which supports the resolution by proposing and defending a plan, usually a policy change, that improves upon the status quo.

Burden of proof: 1) The requirement that sufficient evidence or reasoning to prove an argument be presented 2) the requirement that the affirmative prove the stock issues.

Constructives: The first four individual speeches of the debate in which both sides build their arguments with evidence. Each of these speeches is immediately followed by a cross-examination of the speaker.

Cross-examination: A period which follows each of the constructive speeches in which a member of the opposing team directly questions the most recent speaker.

Disadvantage: A disadvantage, sometimes referred to with the shorthand phrases "DA" is an undesirable effect of a plan. A 'DA' must explain what part of the status quo the plan will change (**uniqueness**), how the plan is related to negative effect (link), and why the plan will ultimately make the world worse than before (**impact**).

Inherency: Barriers in the status quo that keep problems from being solved.

Harms: Problems caused by the **inherency**.

Solvency: How the affirmative solves the **harms**.

Extending an argument: Bringing an argument up again in speeches after which they were initially presented. This sometimes involves reading new evidence to further explain or support the initial argument. Arguments that are not extended are considered "dropped" and are not supposed to be considered by the judge when deciding the round.

Policy-making: A philosophy that debate rounds should be evaluated from the perspective of pseudo-legislators weighing the advantages and disadvantages of two conflicting policy systems. Judges generally assume this role unless debaters convince them otherwise.

Prep time: The time allotted to each team for getting ready for their speeches once the debate has begun. This may be taken before any speech.

Negative: The team in a debate which defends the status quo.

Rebuttal: Any of the last four speeches in a debate. During rebuttals, new arguments are usually not allowed. Debaters should weigh the impacts of arguments previously introduced.