

BOSTON DEBATE LEAGUE

VOLUNTEER JUDGE GUIDE

2025-2026 Edition



RESOLVED:

The United States federal government should significantly increase its exploration and/or development of the Arctic.

WELCOME!

Thank you for volunteering with the Boston Debate League (BDL)! We are a nonprofit organization that works to integrate argumentation and competitive debate into public schools in Boston to develop critical thinkers ready for college, career, and engagement with the world around them. Our vision is that all young people in Boston are **engaged** in critical discourse, **informed** by evidence, and **empowered** to lead.

Why Debate?

As part of our larger mission, the After-School Debate League (ASDL) creates a space where young people come together to conduct in-depth research, dive into complex materials, use their voice, and are heard and respected by each other and by adults in the community.

Debate is an unparalleled academic experience that pushes students to strengthen their academic, analytic, and communication skills far beyond what they might experience in a typical classroom. It also builds confidence, intellectual curiosity, and creativity, and inspires students to engage more deeply in their education and the world around them.

Our Student Community

Our community of debaters includes more than **800 students** from **40 middle and high schools** from **Boston Public Schools**, several charter schools, and Somerville and Chelsea Public Schools. BDL debaters are racially diverse and come from different cultures, traditions, abilities, language backgrounds, and gender identities. BDL debaters also reflect the wider BPS population, of whom nearly half speak a language other than English at home. Approximately 100 students debate in Spanish through Debate en Español, our Spanish-language division.



"Debate rounds are conversations that we create around issues, our experiences, and theoretical analysis that otherwise we wouldn't have the opportunity to be a part of."

- Hasna, Boston Latin Academy Class of 2020

Our Volunteer Community

Each year, we work with as many as **700 volunteers** to make debate possible for young people in Boston. Our volunteer community includes BDL alumni and current debaters, college students, professionals, and community members from across and beyond Boston. What our volunteers share is a commitment to supporting and celebrating young people and youth voice through debate. Debate can't happen without judges, and debate tournaments can't happen without volunteers. We need you, and we appreciate each of you for your service.

INTRODUCTION TO POLICY DEBATE

Policy debate is a competitive academic activity in which two teams of debaters argue for or against a change in U.S. federal policy. In policy debate, the quality of the argument is more important than the style or rhetoric, and the team with better arguments and reasoning should prevail.

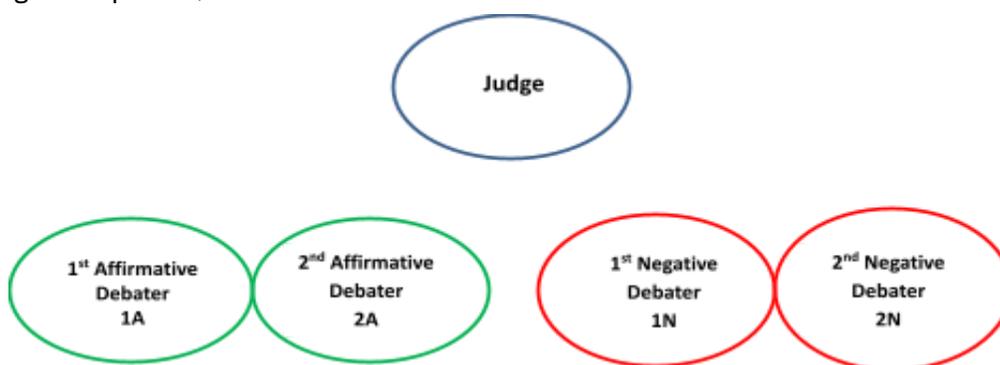
The Resolution & Cases

Policy debate starts with a **resolution**, a statement that a specific change should be made to U.S. federal policy to address a national or international problem. The resolution is the “topic” of the debate, and is the same for all policy debaters for each academic year. **Cases** are sub-topics that focus the debate on a specific policy, and vary by league and team. The BDL offers three cases to Novice and JV debaters each year. Varsity debaters may use these cases or create their own.

The Teams & Room Setup

Each team is made up of two debaters. (Occasionally, a team will have only one team member, called a **maverick**. Mavericks play both roles for their team.) One team, the **Affirmative**, must propose a plan to change federal policy, and argues *in favor of the plan*. The **Negative** team must argue against the Affirmative’s plan. Note that the Negative is arguing against the plan, not necessarily the resolution itself. Debaters alternate sides during a tournament.

Teams usually sit on opposite sides of the room, both facing the judge. To help you keep track of debaters’ speaking orders, you may encourage debaters to sit in order of their speaking positions, as pictured below. Speakers can be referred to by their side and speaking order, as in 1A for the first affirmative speaker, 1N for the first negative speaker, and so on.



The Speeches

Each debater makes two speeches: a constructive, and a rebuttal. In the first speech, called a **constructive**, a debater lays out the basics of their arguments and reads supporting evidence. Each constructive speech is followed by a period of **cross-examination**, or cross-ex, in which the debater who just spoke may be questioned by their opponent (usually by the team member who is not about to speak). In their second speech, called a **rebuttal**, each debater responds to arguments from their opponents and explains why the judge should vote for their team. There is no cross-ex after rebuttals.

Teams alternate turns within the round, with the Affirmative giving the first constructive and final rebuttal, and the Negative giving the final constructive and the first rebuttal. That means the Affirmative speaks first and last, and the Negative speaks two times in a row in the middle of the round. Each speech is timed, with slightly different timing at the middle and high school levels. See the Speech Order Guide (page 5) for the specific order and timing of each speech.

YOUR ROLE AS A JUDGE

Judges have important responsibilities within each tournament and round. Judges must listen to each debate round, determine a winner, share feedback, and complete and return a written ballot. The rest of this guide will explain how to complete each of these responsibilities.

In addition to these specific responsibilities, judges have an important role as a leader in the debate space. They play a crucial role in ensuring that each round and tournament is a positive experience and rich learning opportunity for students. Throughout their service, we ask that judges **model respectful and inclusive behavior** at all times, **engage and support students** as they progress through the debate round, and **uphold our values**: power of young people, analytic discourse, diversity and inclusion, racial and social equity, and joy in learning.

Best Practices for Judges

Judging is a skill that takes time to develop. With time, all judges develop philosophies and preferences that guide their decisions and evaluation of each round. As you begin or continue your judging career, please keep the following best practices in mind:

- **Be objective.** To judge effectively you must be open-minded to arguments, even if they conflict with your personal beliefs or outside knowledge. Be aware of your own knowledge, opinions, and biases as they relate to the topic, and do your best to avoid determining winners based on their alignment with your viewpoints. Let the arguments persuade you!
- **Be open-minded.** Effective judges must also remain open to ideas and arguments that are new, unexpected, or even controversial. This openness is part of what makes debate a safe space for grappling with new, complex, and exciting ideas that aren't usually part of classroom learning.

"If you want to feel good and be inspired and empowered, then judge tournaments at the BDL. It's a great opportunity to help out your community because these students are actually making a difference."

- Lorena, BDL Alumna and Volunteer



- **Be conscientious.** Debate is and should be an activity where students feel that they are important, that their opinions matter, and that judges care about them and their growth. Please give your full attention, celebrate students' work, and share constructive feedback to the best of your ability.
- **Be yourself!** Students benefit from the variety of experiences that our judges bring to each tournament. We do not expect all judges to be exactly the same, or even vote the same way. We ask you to do your best, as debate events are a learning opportunity for everyone.

SPEECH ORDER GUIDE

All speeches in policy debate are timed. In addition to speeches, each team has either 5 or 8 minutes of total **prep time**. Debaters may use prep time to review evidence, take notes, or confer with their partner. Prep time may be used before any speech, and does not count towards the allotted time for any speech.

Speech		Purpose	Middle School Time (min) Nov / JV / Var	High School Time (min) All divs
1AC	1st Affirmative Constructive	Introduce the problem, the Affirmative's plan to fix the problem, and reasons why the plan will work.	3 / 5 / 6	8
Cross-Examination		2N questions 1A	2	3
1NC	1st Negative Constructive	Introduce arguments against the problem or the Affirmative's plan.	3 / 5 / 6	8
Cross-Examination		1A questions 1N	2	3
2AC	2nd Affirmative Constructive	Respond to arguments made in the 1NC. "Extend" (bring back up), expand on, and/or refine arguments from the 1AC. Introduce any final new arguments in favor of the plan.	3 / 5 / 6	8
Cross-Examination		1N questions 2A	2	3
2NC	2nd Negative Constructive	Extend, expand on, and/or refine arguments made in the 1NC. Introduce any final new arguments against the plan.	3 / 5 / 6	8
Cross-Examination		2A questions 2N	2	3
1NR	1st Negative Rebuttal	Continue to extend, expand on, and/or refine arguments made in the 1NC or 2NC.	3 / 3 / 3	5
1AR	1st Affirmative Rebuttal	Respond to the 2NC and 1NR. Remind the judge of arguments made in the 1AC and 2AC.	3 / 3 / 3	5
2NR	2nd Negative Rebuttal	Summarize the Negative arguments and explain why the Negative should win.	3 / 3 / 3	5
2AR	2nd Affirmative Rebuttal	Summarize the Affirmative arguments and explain why the Affirmative should win.	3 / 3 / 3	5
Prep Time		Coordinate, plan, and research.	5 - counted separately	8 - counted separately

COMMON HABITS & PRACTICES IN DEBATE

Organization in Speeches

Effective debaters use specific techniques to help everyone in a round stay organized and follow the arguments being made. Debaters should take a moment before each speech to give a **roadmap**, or a list of the arguments that they plan to address during the speech and the order in which they plan to address them. Time spent giving a roadmap is free time and should not be counted against the team.

During the speech, debaters typically give a one-sentence summary of each argument before addressing it. This is called a **tagline**. Taglines are part of speeches and should be included in a speaker's time. Stronger debaters find ways to emphasize their taglines, often by slowing down or changing their tone.

Common Habits in New Debaters

Newer debaters are still developing presentation skills and confidence. They might not make eye contact or project their voices effectively, and they might pause or stumble more frequently. This is all part of the learning process, and there's no need to comment on it. Nervousness is natural, and you can help make debaters feel comfortable by introducing yourself, shaking their hands, smiling, and letting them know how excited you are to be judging their round.

Debaters with less experience might also be uncertain about whose turn it is, and they might not use all of their cross-ex, prep, or speech time. You can use your speech order guide to help remind them of whose turn it is, and you should always encourage debaters to keep going when they seem like they might want to give up. You may pause time to do this if it feels appropriate.

Common Habits in Experienced Debaters

More experienced debaters are known for speaking quickly and with a unique cadence. If this interferes with your ability to understand the round, don't be afraid to ask debaters to slow down or speak up if necessary. Experienced debaters may also use debate-specific terminology: if you're not familiar with the language, focus on the arguments and/or use the glossary on page 14. You can also ask debaters about words they used after the round.

Experienced debaters usually have a lot more to say than newer debaters, and may run out of time. It's common courtesy to allow debaters to finish their sentence when the timer goes off. Higher-level debaters may be more competitive, and on very rare occasions this can lead to unsportsmanlike behavior. If this happens in your round, you can remind debaters to speak or behave respectfully. If it continues, you may bring the issue up in feedback, lower the debater's speaker points, or pause the round to speak with tournament staff. If you lower speaker points or bring up the issue in feedback, please let a tournament staff member know after the round.

Encouraging & Supporting Debaters

Debate is and should be a safe space for learning, but safe doesn't always mean comfortable. As a judge, you should push and encourage debaters even when they look like they're struggling, nervous, or overwhelmed, and celebrate their hard work and growth at the end of the round.

A Note for Varsity Judges

We encourage debaters to bring their full selves to debate, and support them in trying new and creative forms of argumentation and expression within the format of policy debate. Please keep an open mind toward ideas or presentation formats (such as poetry or song) that might be outside of your personal experience or what is traditionally considered to be part of policy debate. If you have any questions or concerns about a particular round, please feel free to speak with a BDL staff member.

DETERMINING A WINNER

Determining a winner is one of a judge's most important responsibilities. In choosing a winner, we ask that all judges:

- **Wait** until the round is complete and all debaters have spoken before making a decision.
- Take **notes** to help you track and evaluate the arguments, and review them before making a decision.
- Remember that there is **no correct answer!** Debate is about persuasion, and only you can determine which team persuaded you.

What to Consider

Always prioritize substance over style. Choose the team that presented the strongest arguments and responded best to their opponent's arguments. Focus on the major issues in the round, and look for arguments that make sense and are supported by reasoning and evidence. When both teams have good points, try to weigh the arguments against each other.

What Not to Consider

Above all, avoid basing your decision on your personal opinion or debaters' presentation skills. Decisions should never be made based on pronunciation, accent, or reading fluency.

All arguments should be introduced in early speeches and fully explained by the end of the round. You can disregard any points made during cross-ex that weren't reiterated in a constructive or rebuttal, as well as any minor points and arguments that don't make it to the final speeches or that are introduced during rebuttals. Arguments that are not discussed in rebuttals are generally considered **dropped**, or conceded.

When to Vote Aff, When to Vote Neg

The burden of proof lies with the Affirmative. In other words, the Affirmative must prove that enacting their plan is better than taking no action. The Negative must only prove that the plan is not a good idea.

You should vote for the **Affirmative** if they have convinced you that:

- An urgent, significant problem exists in the world today
- The plan presented by the Affirmative can solve the problem, and
- Fixing the problem will make the world a better place

You should vote for the **Negative** if they have convinced you that:

- The problem identified by the Affirmative isn't urgent or significant
- The proposed plan won't work as intended, or
- The harmful costs of implementing the affirmative plan are more significant than any benefits

Still having a hard time deciding? Look for the Judge Trainer or a fellow judge to talk through your decision. Once you make a decision, please **do not disclose the winner to the students.**



WRITING A REASON FOR DECISION (RFD)

The purpose of a Reason for Decision (RFD) is to explain why each team won or lost. The RFD should focus on the arguments and evidence that were presented in the round. This helps ensure that the judge's decision is based on argumentation, rather than style, and helps promote academic rigor in the league.

- **Strong 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, like presentation and clarity. (Remember that strong presentation skills and clarity can be recognized through speaker points.) Weak RFDs are usually unclear, nonspecific, and/or 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 are occurring due to deportations, they proved that deportations are increasing 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 that 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 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 explanations. I think they really knew their argument. They gave good eye contact and could answer all the questions in cross-ex.

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 couldn't prove that positive economic impacts would result from reducing deportations by reducing surveillance. Since the affirmative team couldn't prove that their plan would result in a better state for either the economy or the human rights of immigrants, their two main harms, I have to vote 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 spoke clearly and presented their argument well. They asked great questions in cross-ex which stumped the other team.

EVALUATING THE SPEAKERS

Speaker points and speaker rank are an evaluation of debaters' individual arguments and presentation skills during a round. They are used together to calculate the top speakers in each tournament.

Speaker Points

Speaker points are an evaluation of each individual student against all debaters. In the BDL, judges can award in each of two categories: storytelling and presentation skills.

- **Storytelling** refers to how effectively a debater weaves their arguments together to create a cohesive narrative about why their team should win. Debaters who do this well demonstrate strong organization and explain clearly how their arguments connect to the resolution, to each other, and to their opponent's arguments.
- **Presentation skills** refers to what we often think of when we think of public speaking skills: enunciation, use of emphasis, conviction, etc. Debaters with strong presentation skills are able to use them to emphasize key points of their speeches and arguments and inspire confidence in their arguments.

Between 12 and 15 points can be given in each category in whole- or half-point increments. Add the two scores together to calculate the speaker points for each debater: the total should be between 24 and 30. Scores on the very low end (24-24.5) are rarely awarded and often indicate that the debater was very rude or unprofessional. Scores on the very high end (30) are also quite rare and indicate a speaker with no room for improvement.

Note that the same number of speaker points can be given to multiple debaters in a single round.

Speaker Rank

Speaker rank is a comparison of speakers within the round, and is used to break a tie when students receive the same number of speaker points. Speaker rank ranges from 1-4 (or 1-3 if there's a maverick in a round), with the best speaker in the round ranked number 1. There can be no ties in ranking. For instance, if two speakers both receive a 27, you must rank one above the other.

Low-Point Wins

Occasionally, a team will win a debate, but receive fewer overall speaking points. This happens when a team has stronger argumentation skills than their opponent, but weaker presentation skills. This is called a **low-point win**.



GIVING VERBAL FEEDBACK

The purpose of verbal feedback is for debaters to learn a few key ideas that they can immediately apply to their debate rounds for the rest of the day. Aim to give one complement and one suggestion to each debater. Feedback should be both positive and constructive, telling debaters what they did well in the round and what they can improve. Feedback should be as specific as possible and should focus on the content of the arguments.

When giving feedback, please do not make comments about debaters' physical appearance, culture, reading ability, or accent. We also suggest avoiding feedback on pronunciations, except for key terms related to debate or the topic.

Examples of Strong, Celebratory Feedback

- I found your argument about _____ persuasive because...
- You did a good job in cross-ex by (clarifying / illustrating deficiencies / entrapping opponents).
- Your cross-ex 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-ex after the (name of speech) did a great job of clarifying some difficult points.

Examples of Strong, Constructive Feedback

- I didn't understand your argument 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) (organization) (presentation) by ...

Examples of Incomplete or Hurtful Feedback

These examples could be helpful in combination with additional comments that are directly related to the arguments.

- Be louder.
- Good eye contact.
- You were clear.
- You were very convincing.
- Great speech.

These examples are not constructive and should be avoided:

- Don't stutter.
- Try to improve your accent/pronunciation.
- Your argument was too ____.



BALLOTS

A **ballot** is a written record that shows who won the round and why, and contains feedback from a judge to show how they came to that decision. Ballots help debaters and coaches understand why they won or lost, and what they can do to improve. Ballots will be shared with debaters and coaches, so **please write legibly and be respectful**.

1. Make sure that the correct teams (A) and debaters (B) are in the room, and that both teams are aware of which side they are debating.
2. Confirm the speaking order (1A, 2A, 1N, 2N) for debaters and write it next to their name - who speaks first? (C)
3. Write the name of the team that won (D) and whether they were Affirmative or Negative (E). (See "Determining a Winner," p. 7)
4. Assign speaker points for each student in the debate round (F). (See "Speaker Points," p. 9)
5. Rank the speakers 1-4 (G). (See "Speaker Rank," p. 9)
6. Write your Reason for Decision and any additional comments (H). (See "Writing a Reason for Decision, p. 8)
7. Sign the ballot (I).
8. Return your completed ballot to the Ballot Table.
If you need more than 5-10 minutes to complete your ballot, please check in with the Ballot Table.

Room: 103
Start: 4:15 PM
Junior Varsity

1

Tsao, Lin

BDL HS SEPTEMBER TOURNAMENT
Sep 14 - 15, 2018

- If you have any other questions about your round, please text a query to 617.863.BDL1 (617.863.2351). We will respond as quickly as possible.
- Half points are permitted, but quarters and tenths are not. Please rank students in order, 1 being best, 4 being worst. Ranks must agree with points. You may tie points but not ranks.
- Please return ballot within 15 minutes after round ends.

AFF				NEG			
Spkr	Team	Points (24-30)	Rank	Spkr	Team	Points (24-30)	Rank
2A	Idelina Jaimes	27	3	1N	Shams Kattan	27	2
1A	Gladys Ryckman	27.5	1	2N	Paolo Villareal	26	4

Comments & Reason for Decision:

H *I decided the negative argument wins because they were able to prove that the affirmative team's plan was not going to improve the economy or make lives better for undocumented immigrants.*

The affirmative team did show evidence of a need to improve the system, but they could have better clarified how their plan would solve these problems. For instance, they mentioned one problem is the time that processing visas takes, but the negative argued increasing the number of visas would actually create a larger backlog, which the affirmative did not answer. The negative provided evidence to show that the affirmative plan would not end abuse of immigrants unless government oversight is increased, and the affirmative failed to respond.

NAVIGATING TOURNAMENTS

Tournaments are an essential part of debate and the debate community. They are where debaters test out what they have learned, compete against debaters from other schools for team and individual awards, and receive feedback from judges. They are also where our entire community comes together to celebrate debate and support students. The BDL hosts one tournament per month for middle and high school debaters from October to March. Students in our Varsity divisions may also have the opportunity to travel to attend regional and national tournaments.

We hope that you'll attend several tournaments each season to learn more about debate and stay connected with our community. At the beginning of each tournament, you'll check in at the Ballot Table, usually located in the Judge Lounge. In the Judge Lounge, you'll also attend Judge Training and receive, complete, and submit your ballots. There is often downtime before and during rounds, as your assigned rounds may end sooner than others. Please feel welcome to reach out and connect with other members of our volunteer community during this time.

Judge Responsibilities, Summarized

Judges have specific and important responsibilities each round. Please make sure that you are completing each task in a timely manner to keep the tournament running on time. If you have any questions about any of these tasks, please speak with a tournament staff member.

Before the Round	During the Round	After the Round
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Pick up your ballot at the Ballot Table● Go to the room indicated on your ballot● Confirm the teams in the room● Introduce yourself and facilitate introductions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Keep time● Give warning of remaining time● Listen actively● Take notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Share verbal feedback● Determine a winner● Write a reason for your decision● Assign speaker points and rank● Return your ballot to the Ballot Table

Common Issues & Asking for Help

Tournaments are large events with many moving parts, and it's not uncommon for some judges to encounter minor issues with their rooms or assigned rounds. For example, you might find that the door to your debate room is locked, that a team is late or doesn't arrive to your assigned round, or that a team or debater is present in the debate room who isn't listed on your ballot.

If these or any other non-emergency issues arise during your round, please text or call the BDL Help Line, which will be written at the top of your ballot. Please include your last name and room number, and allow up to 10 minutes for a tournament staff member to come help. **In case of a medical or other emergency, please call 911.**

If you have any other questions or issues throughout the day, please feel welcome to ask a tournament staff member. You can usually locate a staff member in the Judge Lounge or near the Ballot Table.

DOs AND DON'Ts FOR JUDGES

DO

- Listen attentively and with an open mind. Take notes.
- Keep track of time and give warning when there is one minute of speech time left.
- Leave biases and personal opinions out of your decision.
- Write legibly on the ballot.
- Offer encouragement during verbal feedback.
- Come back! Debate is an activity that takes time and practice to learn, and it's okay to not understand everything right away. With time and experience, you will become a more confident judge.

"This activity and this league are meant to uplift youth thinking and youth voice. At the end of the day, debaters are walking away with a better understanding of what is going on in the world and a better understanding of how they can express themselves, using their voices."

- Davian, Boston Latin Academy Class of 2017

DON'T

- Say who won
- Interrupt a speech or cross-ex (except to ask debaters to speak louder or more slowly)
- Use your phone except as a timer
- Vote or give feedback based on appearance, pronunciation, accent, or reading fluency
- Feel pressure to make the "right choice." Students benefit from a diverse judge pool, and we value different decisions from different judges. Relax and try your best!

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

See our website for more judge resources: www.bostondebate.org/volunteer.

Thank you for your service!

Debate is not possible without volunteers like you.



DEBATE GLOSSARY

Debate Structure

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.

Card (evidence card): A quotation from an expert that supports an argument. A card is also referred to as a “piece of evidence.”

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.

Closed Cross-Examination: A period in which only the most recent speaker is questioned by only one member of the opposing team.

Open Cross-Examination: A period in which both members of the team that most recently spoke are questioned by both members of the opposing team.

Low-point win: A win that occurs when the winning team has fewer overall speaking points.

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

Plan: The Affirmative team’s specific proposal to create the change called for by the resolution.

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.

Role of the judge: An argument about what the judge’s vote means and how they should decide the round.

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.

Maverick: A debater who is the only speaker for their team and who plays both speaking roles.

Debate Techniques & Strategies

Clash: Direct response to arguments made by the opposition.

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.

Roadmap: A short overview of arguments that a debater will make in their upcoming speech, this happens before the speech time begins.

Signposting: A clear indication of the argument that is immediately going to follow; this occurs during the speech itself.

Spreading: A debate strategy in which a speaker argues many points about a large number of arguments or topics at one time. Spreading is often confused with **speed-reading**, which is a technique that many debaters use in order to spread.

DEBATE GLOSSARY

Types of Arguments

Counterplan (CP): An alternative plan proposed by the Negative team that would solve the problem identified by the Affirmative in a different or more effective way.

Disadvantage (DA): An undesirable effect of a plan. A DA must explain how the plan is related to the undesirable effect (**link**), that the plan is key to the undesirable effect (**uniqueness**), and that the plan will ultimately make the world worse than before (**impact**).

Harms: Specific problems that are caused by and inherent to the status quo (see “Stock Issues”)

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 (see “Disadvantage”)

Inherency: The reason that the status quo is unable to solve the harms (see “Stock Issues”)

Link: A logical connection from one concept or event to another (see “Disadvantage”).

On-Case: Arguments that directly respond to the Affirmative’s case. These usually include harms, inherency, and solvency.

Off-Case: Arguments that are brought up by the Negative that identify problems associated with the Affirmative’s plan, but aren’t mentioned by the Affirmative. These usually include disadvantages, counterplans, topicality,

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.

Solvency: How the Affirmative solves the central dilemma (see “Stock Issues”)

Stock Issues: The key issues that usually make up the Affirmative’s main argument. These usually include harms, inherency, solvency, and topicality.

Topicality: Whether or not the Plan addresses the resolution as worded (see “Stock Issues”)

Uniqueness: An argument that explains how a plan is directly and significantly related to an undesirable effect (**disadvantage**).