

Policy Debate Judging Instructions

- 5) Taking Notes: To help you decide which team to vote for at the end of the round, take as many notes as possible during the debate. Flowing is a note-taking method that both debaters and judges have found helps them to understand and follow the debate. This process allows you to see how a debater responds to the arguments of the previous speaker. We have provided 8.5 x 14 paper with columns printed for each speech. Take notes on each speech in the column, lining up the arguments linearly across the page.

The Moment of Truth: Making A Decision

In the end, the judge must vote for the team that is most persuasive. Often however, making that decision is not as easy as it sounds. The SDIVSL, therefore, has approved two sets of guidelines to assist in the decision making process. As the judge, read both and then choose one and stick with it. Switching back and forth mixes burdens and is confusing for debaters and judges alike.

POLICY MAKER PARADIGM

Often, in this method the judge imagines herself to be a legislator trying to decide between policy options: change to a new plan (affirmative) or stay with the status quo (negative). In this method, the judge needs to answer three questions at the end of the round:

1. Does the affirmative PLAN fall within the bounds established by the resolution? (I.e. Is the PLAN topical?)
2. Does the affirmative PLAN incur the advantages and/or disadvantages?
3. Do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages, or vice versa?

Question 1: Topicality: The resolution determines the topic for this year's debates. For example, if today we are debating about actions the U.S. should take with regard to Russia. Clearly then, to propose a plan that deals directly and exclusively with Cuba is not within the bounds set by this year's resolution. If the affirmative does not present a plan that clearly falls within these boundaries, the judge must vote for the negative. In fact, topicality is an a priority voting issue -- that is, if the affirmative is nontopical the judge must vote negative and there is no need to consider any other argument. On the other hand, the plan presented by the affirmative might deal with Russia directly and might also incur some secondary benefit with regard to Cuba (i.e. the plan might be topical with some advantages outside Russia).

Question 2: The affirmative will present a plan that intends to solve some current problems and usually produces some good benefits. The affirmative must convince the judge that the plan does so to some extent (i.e. 60%, 80%, 100%) On the other side, the negative team will argue that the plan cannot or will not solve those current problems and that the plan actually results in some serious disadvantages. The negative must convince the judge that the plan cannot solve the current problems (or at least, only solves them minimally) and that the disadvantage is certain to occur to some extent (i.e. 60%, 80%, 100%). In this way, the judge essentially builds a tally sheet:

AFFIRMATIVE

Plan stops current violations(75%)
Plan saves endangered species (40%)
Plan boosts US economy (10%)

NEGATIVE

Plan decreases effectiveness of police (90%)
Plan costs U.S. lots of money (90%)
Plan increases risk of terrorist attack (80%)
Plan risk nuclear confrontation (20%)

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Question 3: Checking the “tally sheet” and the “percentages of certainty,” allows the judge to evaluate which outweighs the other: the affirmative plan and its advantages or the disadvantages (and therefore, the benefits of the status quo). In this example, the judge was far more convinced that the plan resulted in (more significant) disadvantages. Note that an unanswered argument (a dropped argument) in this model does not result in an “automatic” win for the other team (except in Topicality). That argument might not weigh significantly in the round. In the example above, the negative team may not have responded to the affirmative claim that the plan boosts the US economy, but since the affirmative could only convince the judge 10% that those effects would occur and the negative team has convinced the judge 90% that the plan will increase nationalist tension in Russia, the overwhelming negative impacts lead her to a negative vote.

STOCK ISSUES PARADIGM

In this method the judge imagines herself a trial judge deciding a courtroom case. That is, the status quo is innocent until proven guilty. The affirmative, in trying to demonstrate the status quo should be changed, carries the burden of proof. The affirmative **must** earn a **YES** vote on all of the issues below. Conversely, if the negative earns a clear **NO** to **any** one of the questions below the negative wins. Finally, if all things are equal, the status quo is presumed a workable system and the negative wins.

- A. **TOPICALITY** – Does the proposed PLAN reasonably adhere to the limitations of the resolution?
- B. **SIGNIFICANCE** – Is there a justification to change from the present system?
- C. **INHERENCY** – Presently, is there a barrier preventing the solution of the problems indicated by the Affirmative?
- D. **SOLVENCY** – Can the proposed plan solve the problems better than the current system?
- E. **DISADVANTAGES** – Do the advantages of the proposed plan outweigh the disadvantages claimed by the Negative?

Some explanation:

- A) Topicality: see Question 1 in Policy Maker Paradigm
- B) Significance: The affirmative team must demonstrate that there are significant problems or harms in the current system. The negative, on the other hand, must show that the harms introduced by the affirmative are not really significant and therefore do not warrant a change from the current system. The debaters must define what kinds of problems or harms are significant and convince the judge of their level of importance.
- C) Inherency: The affirmative team must demonstrate that these problems are inherent in the current system -- or, in other word, that there is something stopping these harms and problems from being solved in the current system (i.e. lack of funding). The negative must show that this barrier does not exist or is currently being fixed to allow the system to solve the significant problems.
- D) Solvency: The affirmative must prove that their plan will solve the problems they have identified in the current system. The negative must show that the affirmative plan does not (or cannot solve) these problems.
- E) Disadvantages/ Advantages: The negative team will attempt to demonstrate that the affirmative plan not only does not solve the problems of the current system but will create newer, bigger harms. The affirmative must show this is not true and may argue that the plan actually creates some additional benefits.

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- F) **Deciding the Stock Issues:** The stock issues provide a checklist for the judge. The judge runs down the checklist of questions above answering yes or no. The affirmative must win a yes to all five questions. If the negative clearly proves that the affirmative has violated or not proven just one of the stock issues, then the judge should vote for the negative team. Note that in every instance the negative team must argue that the affirmative team failed to prove a stock issue. If the affirmative team violates one of the stock issues but the negative team does not even mention that fact, you as the judge should not vote against the affirmative team even if you know the affirmative team failed to sufficiently prove a stock issue. The negative team must make the argument against the affirmative team in order for you to vote against the affirmative team on a stock issue.
- G) **Silence is concession:** If the negative team says nothing to refute any part of the affirmative's case, that part of the case stands without rebuttal. As the judge, you have no reason to vote against the affirmative on an issue that the negative does not try to refute. Also, if a team says nothing to respond to a previous argument that team is said to have dropped the argument and thereby conceded the argument to the other team. For example:

1AC

If we discourage U.S. businesses to invest in Russia, there will not be enough capital flowing into the Russian economy to support foreign debt reduction.

1NC

(Nothing said – argument is dropped.)

2AC

The negative team did not deny that U.S. capital flow into Russia is necessary for debt reduction.

2NC

It is important to know which arguments each team has dropped so that you can determine at the end of the debate which team won the most issues during the debate. In order to note when an argument is dropped, go back over your notes after each speech and circle any blank spots where the speaker said nothing to refute the opponents' arguments. As there are many arguments for each issue, dropping an argument does not necessarily mean that an entire stock issue goes conceded (except in Topicality), but a drop should weigh heavily in the decision.

Speaker Points

Speaker Points provide a way of evaluating the debater's abilities as a public speaker. Please assign speaker points to each of the debaters in the round by circling one through ten for each speaker. Debaters may earn the same speaker points. Do not base your decision in the round (i.e. who wins and who loses) on the speaker points.