

# Judging Manual for the Baltimore Urban Debate League

## What is Team Policy Debate?

Team policy debate is an activity in which students try to persuade a judge that their arguments should win them the debate. This debate format has evolved over many years in the U.S. and has resulted in specialized concepts and jargon. High school students from around the country debate a single topic (called **resolution**) for the entire year. Policy debate is focused on the content of arguments made by the debaters rather than on presentation or delivery. Arguments are supported with published quotations researched by the debaters (called **evidence** or **cards**).

A team of debaters is composed of two students (usually from the same school). In one **round** of debate, there are two teams: the **affirmative** and the **negative**. The affirmative will begin by presenting an eight-minute speech that identifies a problem that exists now and offering a policy to solve the problem. This policy is called the affirmative **plan**. After the affirmative has presented their case, the negative team gives a speech against it, then the affirmative will argue against the negative and so on, back and forth, until the debate ends with the affirmative giving the final speech. All together, there are 8 major speeches in a debate. There are also four cross-examination speeches so that each debater gets to ask questions once and answer questions once. There are usually several (in Baltimore Urban Debate League tournaments—3) rounds at a tournament. Debaters must debate both sides of the question in alternate rounds.

## The Speeches in a Debate

<u>Speech</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>General Purpose</u>
First Affirmative Constructive (1AC)	8	Present affirmative case (harms, inherency, plan, solvency)
Cross-examination by Second Negative	3	Ask questions, clarify affirmative's arguments
First Negative Constructive (1NC)	8	Present negative off-case and attack affirmative case
Cross-examination by First Affirmative	3	Ask questions, clarify negative's arguments
Second Affirmative Constructive (2AC)	8	Attack negative off-case arguments, rebuild affirmative case
Cross-examination by First Negative	3	Ask questions, clarify affirmative's arguments
*Second Negative Constructive (2NC)	8	Respond to some of 2AC arguments, rebuild negative arguments
Cross-examination by Second Affirmative	3	Ask questions, clarify negative's arguments
*First Negative Rebuttal (1NR)	5	Respond to rest of 2AC arguments, rebuild negative arguments
First Affirmative Rebuttal (1AR)	5	Rebuild affirmative arguments, respond to both 2NC and 1NR
Second Negative Rebuttal (2NR)	5	Explain why the negative team should win
Second Affirmative Rebuttal (2AR)	5	Explain why the affirmative team should win

Preparation (per team for the whole round) 10      Talk with partner, find evidence, write arguments, etc.

\*These two speeches, 2NC and 1NR, are called the "negative block" and are treated as one long speech (with a cross-ex in between). The negative speakers should divide the important issues in the debate between them so that they each handle separate arguments rather than having the 1NR merely repeat the same ones the 2NC made.

Debate is a game of persuasion in which students try to convince the judge that their policy option is best. The "rules" of this game are themselves debatable, making it an exciting and dynamic activity. Nevertheless, several tools have been employed for much of debate's history. There are two burdens to consider in most debate rounds: burden of proof and burden of rebuttal. First, the Affirmative team must meet the **burden of proof**. To advance a compelling case for change from the **status quo** (debate resolutions are all worded so that the affirmative advocates a change from the current system), the affirmative must overcome **presumption**. Presumption is the idea that a judge would presume the current system to be functioning properly until a case proves otherwise (meeting the burden of proof).

The affirmative team can meet the burden of proof by addressing what are termed **stock issues**. These are the issues the affirmative needs to win to argue a new policy should be adopted. There are basically five stock issues. First, the issue of **topicality** is the question of whether the affirmative plan meets the words in the resolution. If the affirmative presents a strong case but does not meet the words in the resolution, the judge cannot endorse their plan. They are outside of the judge's jurisdiction. Debates on topicality are sometimes technical and are debates about debating. For example, the negative says the affirmative is not a significant increase, and defines significance as 5%. The affirmative argues that this interpretation is bad for debate, and that significantly should mean "large in scope." The judge must decide whose interpretation is better.

The second stock issue is **harms** (sometimes also described as "significance"). The affirmative must be able to show that a harm is occurring that requires action. They must show a felt difficulty—people must be suffering, the environment is being damaged, rights are violated, etc. If the negative is able to show that there is no harm or that the harm is inconsequential, there is no need for a plan.

The third stock issue is **inherency**. The Affirmative must show that the current system is not addressing the harm. If there is a harm but it is being adequately addressed, there is once again no need for action. For example, people may be victims of racism due to racial profiling, but *if* the negative could show that national legislation has just been passed, there would be no need pass it again.

The fourth stock issue is **solvency**. The affirmative plan must solve the harm they have outlined. If they can show a need for action but present a solution that will not address the need, action is futile. Negatives may attack the feasibility or workability of the plan, or may argue that the harm has alternate causes that make it difficult or impossible for the affirmative to solve.

The last stock issue is **disadvantage**. Here the question is: do the drawbacks to action outweigh the advantages. There are three main parts to a disadvantage. The **link** is the connection between the affirmative plan and the disadvantage. The **uniqueness** is the part where the negative shows that the disadvantage is not happening. The **impact** is the portion of the disadvantage where the negative demonstrates the consequence of acting. More than one link may be needed to get from "point A" (the affirmative plan) to "point B" (the impact). For example, a negative might argue a disadvantage called federalism, where they take the position that the federal government should leave state issues to the states. An outline might look like this:

Disadvantage Spending:

A. Uniqueness: Although they have not been cut yet, disaster relief aid is vulnerable to budget cuts.

B. Link: the affirmative forces a trade off with disaster relief aid.

1. The affirmative plan is costly.

2. New federal spending will force cuts in other areas.

C. Impact: Lack of disaster relief will cause massive deaths from natural disasters.

Remember that all takes for the negative to win is to win one stock issue. If they only attack the affirmative on topicality, for example, they will still win if they win their topicality argument. They may also win on a combination of issues. One of the most common negative strategies, for example, is to minimize the affirmative solvency and outweigh what the affirmative has left with a disadvantage.

The second important burden to be aware of is the **burden of rebuttal** (also called the burden of rejoinder). This burden states that a speaker (any speaker, on either side) has the burden to refute the arguments made by the

**In debate, silence means consent.**

other side, or else concede the arguments. Stated another way, in debate—silence means consent. This burden has several important implications. First, it means that debaters can use what is previous speakers have said or not said to their strategic advantage. They may capitalize on arguments that their opponents ignored, pointing out that these concessions should cost them the debate. They may employ a "spread" strategy of presenting a large array of arguments in hopes that one will get past their opponents. The other important implication of the burden of rebuttal is that the judge must carefully track arguments to be able to identify dropped positions. If a speaker claims a position was conceded, the judge must be able to verify this claim. The only way to do so is to take notes on all arguments made in the debate, to know what speech they were made in, and to be able to identify point of clash (so that it is clear which arguments answer other arguments).

The 5 stock issues:  
DisAdvantages  
Solvency  
Harms  
Inherency  
Topicality

It is said that the negative has issue choice, while the affirmative has argument choice. This is because issues (that the affirmative must meet to meet their burden of proof) are made up of arguments (individual units of proof). In other words, if the negative wins one issue, they win. They may make strategic choices about which one they are ahead on over the course of the round. The affirmative can counter this by having an array of answers to each issue raised by the negative and focus on the strongest answer in rebuttal. They might make three different types of answers to topicality, for instance, arguing that they meet the negative’s interpretation of the topic, that the negative interpretation is not a good one, and that they have a better interpretation of the words in the resolution.

Notes in debate are taken on what is called a flowsheet (more frequently abbreviated a **flow**). Judges “flow” the arguments by writing each claim in the debate down in the column in which the speaker makes the argument. Abbreviations, shorthand, and small handwriting are suggested. Because many arguments are made in a debate, and cramped flows can become messy, judges tend to use at least one sheet of paper for each stock issue presented in the first speech (usually labeled as “observations” “contentions” or “advantages”), as well as one sheet for each major negative position (disadvantages, topicality and similar important arguments are often labeled “off case” arguments). Debaters will sometimes present **roadmaps** before they begin their speeches to help the judge organize their flowsheets.

1AC	1NC	2AC	2NC/1NR	1AR	2NR	2AR

## What is the Role of the Judge?

Judges in debate must fulfill a number of important roles. First, the judge is a **decision-maker**. They must ultimately vote for the team that presented the better arguments. This decision is usually best understood as the judge imagining that they were in a position to put the affirmative plan into effect (as the Congress, the Supreme Court, etc.), and needed to weigh the merits of the plan *based on the arguments made in the debate*. The judge must set aside their own personal opinions about the topic and evaluate the positions made by the debaters as they were argued. An argument the judge sees as particularly strong may not factor into the decision if made only briefly in a constructive speech and not referenced later in the debate.

The judge in the debate is also an **educator**. Judge feedback after the debate helps students to advance their knowledge about their arguments, about debate, and about how to become more persuasive. The discussion after the debate can help debaters win subsequent rounds, sometimes even later the same day. Comments made on the ballot allow debaters to understand the judge’s decision making process and improve their skills and strategies.

While there is quite a bit of jargon in policy debate, the activity is, at heart, about persuasion. Debaters have a duty to adapt to their judges. Some judges have judged many debates and are familiar enough with debate terms that use of such terms serves as a sort of oral shorthand. Newer judges less familiar with such terms should not feel that they must know all the terms that debaters use to be good judges. Intelligent, fair-minded individuals who listen carefully to the arguments made

Judges must also occasionally act as **arbitrators**. Judges must keep track of time in the debate. Occasionally, they might have to intervene during the debate if there is a serious problem. This might be anything from two partners not getting along with each other to someone’s evidence being misplaced but is most often a student who is too nervous or upset to go on debating. The judge should do his or her best to try to allow the debaters to work things out among themselves. If the debaters clearly need the judges help, try to be supportive and helpful but with the ultimate goal of continuing with the round. If this does not resolve the situation, ask one of the tournament officials for help. They’ve been where you are and they can give you a hand.

# What Does the Judge Do in a Debate?

## What to do BEFORE the debate

1. Check the pairing to see where you are judging and pick up your ballot at the ballot table.
2. Get your supplies (several sheets of paper, pens, timer). See the ballot table or a tournament official for help.
3. Go to your room and try to get the round started on time. Have the debaters put names on ballot (1N, 2N, etc.)

Some experienced debaters may ask questions before the round to try to learn about their judge. These are the questions they are most likely to ask and some possible answers.

### **What are your preferences/Do you have any paradigms/What is your philosophy?**

These are all questions about how you decide debates. You may want to indicate your experience with debate (“I am a fairly new judge,” for example) and let them know if there are things that you especially like or don’t debaters to do.

### **Do you allow tag team?**

This is a question about whether the judge will allow debaters to “tag in” to answer/ask a question for their partner. Debaters frequently use this question to fell out other attitudes of the judge (they are strict with rules, they are flexible, etc.)

### **What do you think of speed?**

Make debaters aware that you don’t evaluate unclear arguments. If they plan to speak rapidly, they should watch your facial expressions to make sure you are following.

## What to do DURING the debate

1. Listen carefully during all speeches (constructives, cross-examination, and rebuttals).
2. Take notes during all constructive and rebuttal speeches. Use flowsheets. Record all important ideas.
3. Keep time for each speech and for preparation time. Let students know how much time they have left.
4. Between speeches review notes and write comments for each student in the boxes at the bottom of the ballot.
5. Give positive and balanced non-verbal feedback to students. Do not interrupt unless there is a problem that will prevent the debate from proceeding (someone is sick or hurt, too nervous or upset to go on, etc.).

## What to do AFTER the debate

1. Make your decision. Does the affirmative or negative win the debate? The basis on which you decide depends on the arguments made in the debate. The following are not hard and fast rules but can help to guide you in deciding your debate.

Based on the arguments presented, which policy (affirmative or negative) would be the better one?

Where a point is contested, which side gave the better arguments/evidence/support?

What important points are NOT contested? Has one side failed to respond to an important argument?

If there were arguments about the rules of debate, which side won and how does that affect your decision?

If an argument was not made clearly, do not feel you need to consider it

2. Fill out your ballot. (Please Write NEATLY and in BLACK ink so we can make copies)

Record your decision: Affirmative or negative, write in team code (e.g. Central High FZ) of winner.

Rank the speakers: 1 for the best speaker, 2 for second, etc. Ties are NOT allowed in speaker ranks.

Assign speaker points: 25 to 30 points is the best possible score. Ties ARE allowed in speaker points. Students should not receive less than 25 points unless they did something truly offensive or hurtful to you or other students in the debate. 30 should be reserved for truly outstanding individuals. You may give “half points” (such as 27.5).

Finish comments: Make sure each student has at least two individualized comments. These allow the students to learn from their debates and their teachers to help them improve.

Give reasons for decision: Explain why you voted the way you did. Be as specific as possible because students will not see the ballot immediately and may have trouble remembering this particular debate.

3. Turn in your ballot.

Take it to the ballot table or give it to a tournament official so that it can be recorded and the next round prepared.

4. Give your critique. Return to the room to give comments to the debaters. Try to give each person one positive comment and one concrete suggestion for improvement. DO NOT REVEAL WHICH TEAM YOU VOTED FOR. This can discourage the students who lost and make the winners think they don’t need to pay attention to your critique. Critiques should not take more than 10 minutes.