Debating Policies

The skills and theories of
Cross-Examination and Public Forum debate

T. Russell Hanes

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About the Author

T. Russell Hanes was an eight-year policy debater: high school CX at University School (TN) and CEDA at Columbia (NY). To debate, he attributes his sanity of education.

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Skills

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Welcome

Welcome to the world of debate! You probably have a lot of questions about debate, such as:

What do we debate about?
Why debate policies?
What kinds of policies do we debate?
What if I have nothing to say?
What happens if my mind blanks when I stand up to speak?
What kind of help will I receive from my teacher or coach?
Is debate something you can learn to do better?

Will I have a partner or will I be by myself?
What are the rules in debate?
What is a debate competition like?
How many competitions will I have in a year?

This book will try to answer these questions for you. But I would also like you to consider my questions to you:

Is it possible that nearly everyone in the world is wrong?
Can an idea be dangerous?
Can good policies make the world a better place?
Can we ever really predict what will result from a policy?
Where does morality enter public policy?
Does humanity have a bright or dark future?

Maybe these questions make you curious. If they do, then debate might be right for you. Debate is about investigating these kinds of questions. We take a topic from current events and argue about it—and connect it to these important issues and more. Presidential elections, international news, the economy and businesses, Supreme Court decisions, and even school or university policies are all examples of current events topics about which we might debate. Through debating current events, you might start to find your own educated answers to these questions.

Whether you debate once in your class, or you debate competitively for years, I guarantee that debate will be the most fun and most intellectually stimulating activity that you ever do. Debate is verbal judo: a

martial art for your mind. Debate will expose you to new ideas, give you the confidence to speak publicly, and teach you how to be quick on your feet.

I wrote this book as a simple guide, something that covers the basic ideas—a "How To" book. But please *don't quote me!* In fact, to prevent you from quoting me, I want you to know that:

> Everything I wrote in *Debating Policies* is 100% wrong.
> Everything I wrote in *Debating Policies* is 100% right.

When it comes to debate, please don't ask yourself: "Is this the correct answer?" Instead ask: "Does this idea make sense?" No one's word, including my own, is final on the matter. Debate is about reasonable answers in the face of uncertainty.

If you are ever confused or overwhelmed, breathe deeply and take a break. Above all, *relax*. You will understand everything in your own time. If you don't understand something in this book, ask your coach or a more experienced debater. If something is confusing or unclear, ask. Debate is an intellectual game, but no one will ever make you feel embarrassed if you ask a thoughtful question. Even complicated ideas are built out of many simple ideas—you just need to take the time to pull them all together.

1.2 What are the rules of debate?

This book will describe two U.S. debate formats, Cross-Examination (CX) and Public Forum (PF) debate. These

formats both focus on debating policies, and so they have the same underlying concepts and use the same skills. The rules are slightly different, and this book will highlight these differences when they crop up. (Parliamentary debaters often debate policies, too, but also have other kinds of debate. Likewise for other international formats.) Every concept and skill described in this book applies to any format of policy debate. This book will only indirectly help in a value, metaphorical, or factual debate.

Fortunately, there aren't many rules to remember in debate. One debate is called a **round**. In a round, two teams compete over an agreed-upon topic. One team affirms, or upholds the topic. The other team negates, that is, it tries to show that the team affirming is failing. A judge listens to the debate and decides which side made the best arguments—and judges can't assign ties. The judge decides whether the topic was effectively or ineffectively supported. Each team has two partners.

The most important rule is that there are three types of speech in debate. **Constructive** speeches introduce *new* issues. **Rebuttal** speeches refine and explain previously introduced issues (no new issues allowed). For this reason, constructive speeches are longer and are at the beginning of the debate round, and rebuttal speeches are shorter and are at the end of the round. Of course, it is impossible to give a rebuttal without saying anything new. The real test is whether the speaker is merely advancing and refining a previously made point or starting on an entirely new direction. It's a question of degree, not a simple black and white line. The third type of speech is the **cross-examination**, which is a question-and-answer period *of* a speaker *by* an

opponent speaker. In PF debate, the cross-examination is called **cross-fire** because both speakers can ask and can answer questions.

The second most important set of rules concerns giving speeches. You must deliver your speech within the time limit, or you will be cut off. During your opponents' speeches, you must be quiet and not interrupt. You need to be respectful of your partner's speeches as well, and not interrupt him or her. Finally, speeches must be given in the proper order. You can't speak out of turn. On the next pages, you will see charts with the speech times and orders.

In the CX and PF debate format, notes and quotations are *very* welcome. Constructive speeches in debate usually rely heavily on pre-round preparation. Only during the rebuttals do debaters begin to speak extemporaneously. In CX debate, each topic lasts an entire academic year, so thorough pre-round preparation is easy. In PF debate, each topic lasts one month, so preparation tends to be less extensive for each topic but cumulatively greater over the school year. For both formats, every topic is a policy-based, current events topic, chosen by a national committee. For high schools, this committee is part of the national high school activities organization. For colleges, this committee is called the NDT/CEDA, the National Debate Tournament/Cross-Examination Debate Association. (High schools and colleges use different topics in the same year.) Those are the most basic rules of debate: topics, notes and quotations, and speech times and order. Other than that, everything else is open to debate.

CX time limits

The following chart illustrates the order of the speeches (first speech at the top, last speech at the bottom) and the speakers who give them (in each column). When you add up all the times, one CX round takes about 90 minutes.

AFFIRMATIVE		TIME	NEGATIVE	
1st SPKR	2nd SPKR		1st SPKR	2nd SPKR
1AC		8 mins		
CXee		3 mins		CXer
		8 mins	1NC	
CXer		3 mins	CXee	
	2AC	8 mins		
	CXee	3 mins	CXer	
		8 mins		2NC
	CXer	3 mins		CXee
		5 mins	1NR	
1AR		5 mins		
		5 mins		2NR
	2AR	5 mins		

For college CX debate, constructive speeches are lengthened to 9 minutes; rebuttals are 6.

Before the debate, debaters sometimes discuss arguments, or ask judges for their preferences. *During* the debate, each team has preparation time to use before

its speeches, with 8 minutes being the most typical. (More on prep time in Ch. 3.) *After* the debate, the judge makes and records his or her decisions, and teams may or may not be allowed to ask questions about the judge's decision about the debate. As you can see, each speaker gives two speeches—a constructive and a rebuttal—as well as two cross-examinations—one asking the questions and the other answering them.

PF time limits

1st TEAM		TIME	2nd TEAM	
1st SPKR	2nd SPKR		1st SPKR	2nd SPKR
1 - C		4 mins		
		4 mins	1 - C	
CF		3 mins	CF	
	2 - C	4 mins		
		4 mins		2 - C
	CF	3 mins		CF
1 - R		2 mins		
		2 mins	1 - R	
GCF		3 mins	GCF	
	2 - R	1 min		
		1 min		2 - R

PF debate rounds work slightly differently. Before a round begins, the teams flip a coin to determine which team speaks first, so the affirmative team might precede or follow the negative team. That's why every speech

has a blank in its title, because it could be affirmative or negative. The first rebuttals are known as summary rebuttals; the second rebuttals are known as final focus rebuttals. Please also note that the third cross-fire, sometimes called the grand cross-fire, involves all four debaters asking and answering questions. When you add up all the speech times, a PF debate round takes about 45 minutes.

1.3 What do I do to be good at debate?

This book will cover the six most important basic skills in debate: flowing (taking notes), speaking, strategizing, proving your arguments, competing at tournaments, and preparing your arguments in advance. The first five skills (flowing, speaking, strategizing, proving, and competing) will form the first half of this book. The second half of this book will cover preparation. But before we move on to these six skills, it's important that we briefly discuss the attitudes that are part of being a debater. Debate isn't just something you do. Debate is a special way of looking at the world.

Debate attitudes

It's important that you know the difference between opinions and arguments. Debate is not an opportunity to stand up and just spout off without any consistent advocacy. That practice isn't good, and it's known as sophistry. You need to able to back up your opinions with credible ideas, facts, and analysis—in short, you

need to make arguments and advocate consistently. Opinions without arguments are political theater and devolve quickly into incoherent yelling; argument without personal advocacy is called a con job. You have to know something, and that means you'll need to do some research. The confidence of your delivery doesn't improve the intellectual quality of your arguments.

Furthermore, please realize that you'll have to debate both sides of the topic regularly. Debaters don't choose whether they will affirm (support) and negate (attack) the topic in any given debate round. Even if you agree with the topic, you'll need to find reasons why you might disagree, or vice versa. Debate is about experimenting and about seeing *both* sides of an issue. So, at one end of the attitude spectrum is speaking without any real belief or knowledge; at the other end is close-mindedness. Between these two extremes, the good debater *advocates—with an open mind.* Being a good public speaker and a good debater confers great power in life. Please use it wisely.

CHAPTER 2

Flowing

2.1 Why flow?

Debaters use a specialized kind of note-taking called flowing. It is by far the most important skill in debate. Debates are just too complicated to remember. Just think of how many arguments you and your opponents will make in one debate! Even when you aren't debating, you can listen to debate rounds and improve your flowing skills, and this is exactly what you must do. Without a good flow, you can't possibly understand a debate.

A good flow is important for two other reasons. First, with a good flow, there will be good **clash**: your arguments will clearly and directly refute your

opponents' arguments, and vice versa. The opposite situation—where your arguments and your opponents' arguments pass like ships in the night—is unpleasant to watch and to participate in. Second, if your opponent makes an argument and you fail to answer it (also called **dropping** an argument), then that argument is considered conceded. That is, you are tacitly admitting that it's true. In a debate round, you *must* answer everything—even with a quick answer—or else you will forfeit that argument. You can only afford to ignore unimportant arguments that you don't mind conceding. To sum, the organization that you get from flowing makes you sound good and is necessary to prove your arguments.

Flowing is a skill that needs to be constantly practiced. Even expert debaters and coaches still need to practice. Please don't think that you have write out a perfect flow on your first try—keep practicing!

2.2 How does flowing work?

During a debate, you and your opponents will raise several **positions** (also sometimes called contentions, observations, or issues). A position is a main idea that relates to the topic of the debate. For example, for a topic about fighting terrorism, the notion that fighting terrorism is expensive could be a position in that debate round. In one debate round, there may be a half-dozen to a dozen position. We categorize positions into five basic types: cases, disadvantages, counterplans,

topicality, and critiques. (We'll talk more about each type in Chs. 7-12.)

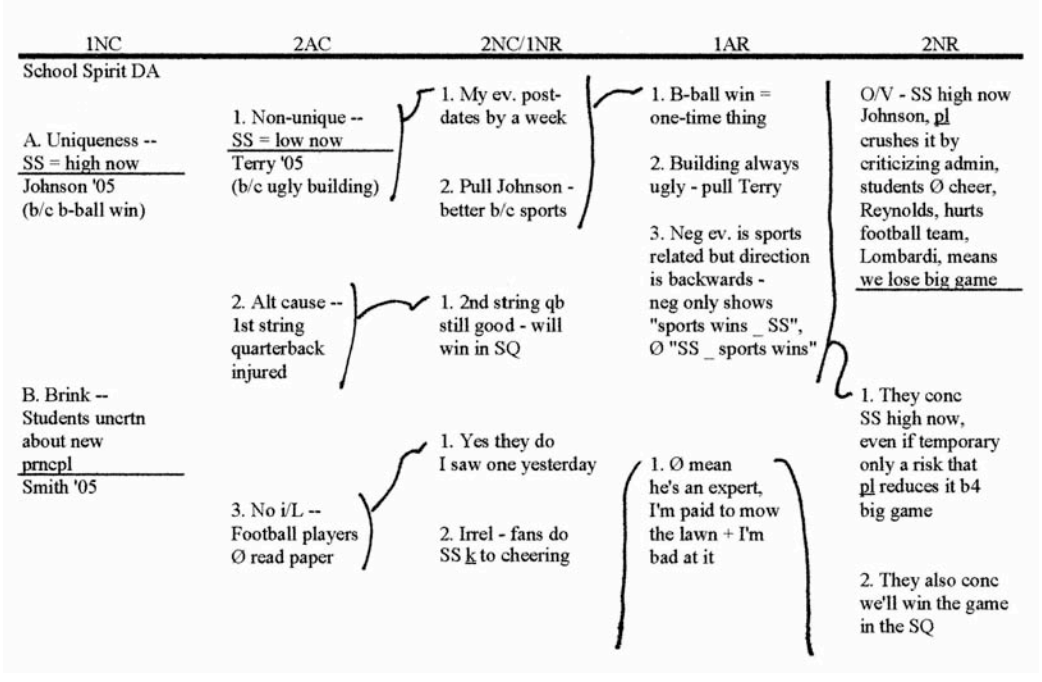
When flowing, you should use a new piece of paper for each position, so for one debate round, your flow will be spread out over up to twelve pieces of paper. Each position will be composed of several arguments that support the overall position. For each position, the columns represent speeches and the rows represent arguments, like so:

Position "A"

1AC	1NC	2AC	2NC
Argument 1	Responses to argument 1	Rebuttals to responses	Etc.
Argument 2	Responses to argument 2	Rebuttals to responses	Etc.

(Note: you do not flow cross-examination or cross-fire.) If at all possible, you should flow your team's arguments in one color of ink, and your opponents' arguments in another color. It is also possible to flow on a computer using Word or Excel, making the appropriate speech columns and argument rows. However, I recommend learning to flow on paper first. Once you get the hang of flowing with low-tech paper and pen, then, if you wish, you can try flowing with a computer. For your novice year, practice paper flowing.

The judge will flow the debate the same way and will use his or her flow to decide the outcome of the round. On the next two pages, there's a sample flow from one position in a debate round, and after that, we'll discuss what the flow means.


1NC
2AC
2NC/1NR
1AR
2NR
School Spirit DA
A. Uniqueness --
SS = high now
Johnson '05
(b/c b-ball win)
1. Non-unique --
SS = low now
Terry '05
(b/c ugly building)
1. My ev. post-dates by a week
2. Pull Johnson - better b/c sports
1. B-ball win = one-time thing
2. Building always ugly - pull Terry
3. Neg ev. is sports related but direction is backwards - neg only shows "sports wins _ SS", Ø "SS _ sports wins"
O/V - SS high now Johnson, pl crushes it by criticizing admin, students Ø cheer, Reynolds, hurts football team, Lombardi, means we lose big game
2. Alt cause -- 1st string quarterback injured
1. 2nd string qb still good - will win in SQ
B. Brink --
Students uncrtn about new prncpl
Smith '05
1. Yes they do I saw one yesterday
2. Irrel - fans do SS k to cheering
3. No i/L -- Football players Ø read paper
1. Ø mean he's an expert, I'm paid to mow the lawn + I'm bad at it
1. They conc SS high now, even if temporary only a risk that pl reduces it b4 big game
2. They also conc we'll win the game in the SQ

C. Link --
Critical articles
_ confidence
in admin + _SS
Reynolds '03
(auth = principal)
4. No link --
Neg's link author
= principal,
unreliable source
b/c self-interested
3. Cheering
decides games
Lombardi '67
1. Principals know
best -- monitor
SS for a living
2. Auth Ø credible
"Don't make fun
of me" = whining
3. Arg =silly
Football fans Ø
care about admin
1. Link story does
make sense - anti-
admin articles
only promote
_SS
D. Impact --
_SS_ lose
homecoming game
George '04
5. Link turn --
Critical articles
_ happiness w/
cynical teenagers
Roberts '97
1. Ev. = old
2. Happiness ≠
confidence,
only card is
spec. to admin-
confidence
1. Teenagers
still cynical,
annoying
2. Psychology
Ø changed
in 8 years -
pull Roberts
1. Even if critical
articles make
kids smirk, ≠ _SS
2. PI can only
_introspection
about school
quality - only a
risk of _SS
6. Case o/w --
Academic freedom
more impt than
football
1. Homecoming
game super impt
1. That card is
bad - XA from
above

2.3 Can you explain the flow?

This is a very neat flow, an ideal. Obviously, it has been typed and scripted—real flows seldom look as clean. As you're learning how to flow, try your best to write down all the arguments you can catch; worry about neatness when you have a little experience. Let's go through what this flow means.

What's this debate about? The topic is, "Resolved: Highland High School should substantially increase academic freedom." The specific affirmative proposal is, "Highland High School should permit articles critical of its administration to be published in its school newspaper."

Aren't there more speeches than just five? The 2AR isn't included in this example due to space constraints. Of course, in a real round, you would flow the 2AR arguments. The 1AC isn't included either, but for a different reason. This is a flow of a disadvantage, a negative position. So this position is first argued in the 1NC. This is how you would flow it in a real round. The 2NC and 1NR are in the same column because—in a CX round—they are back-to-back negative speeches that really function as one long speech called the **negative block**. In a real CX round, you would flow these together in one column, just like in the example.

How do the lines work? The lines keep track of which arguments respond to which. They are the cornerstone of flowing, the means by which we can

efficiently use the space on the paper to follow the development of arguments.

Don't the abbreviations make it hard to understand? As long as you and your partner are familiar with your abbreviations, then they'll help you get the arguments down more quickly. In this example, some use initials (SS for school spirit, pl for plan, i/L for internal link), some eliminate vowels (like the 1NC B card), some use symbols (Ø for not, → for leads to, ↑ for increases, etc.), some foreshorten (admin, irrel, b/c, o/w, etc.) There is a list of common abbreviations in Appendix B.

What is the underlining about, and what are "Johnson '05" and "George '04"? These represent pieces of **evidence**, which are the primary means of proving an argument in policy debate. They are quoted excerpts from newspapers, journals, or books used to support an argument. Usually, a debater will make an argument, read an oral citation (the last name of the author and the year it was written) for the quotation, and then read the quotation. When you are flowing, you do not need to write the whole quotation on your flow (which would be impossible). You only to need to flow the gist of the author's argument and the citation. Under the oral citation is commentary you make when you're listening to the card itself—its reasoning, peculiarities, potential cross-ex or cross-fire questions, etc. Evidence will be discussed more thoroughly in Ch. 5.

Why do the later speeches keep referring to these quotations? That's the hallmark of good debating. Why should your opponents' expert quotations stand unchallenged? Unchallenged evidence is very persuasive to a judge, so you should knock holes wherever possible, and at the same time, advance your own supporting evidence. The most important skill in debate is to practice **line-by-line** debating: answering your opponents' arguments, in an organized, clear, systematic way. You don't have to answer each argument, but you do need to answer every important argument. This is called covering the arguments. When you speak, make sure you make it clear which argument you are talking about. That is, always number your arguments or refer to your opponents' argument by name or number.

What about the circles around the 2AC arguments? That's something that 1ARs sometimes do to remind themselves which of their partner's arguments they are choosing to defend. It's smart for the 1AR to only go for a few of the 2AC arguments and build them up; the circles are quick visual clues the 1AR makes for him- or herself to help when speaking.

What's going on with the box in the top right corner? That's a way of flowing the 2NR **overview**, in which the speaker recaps the argument and how the negative has developed it. It doesn't respond to any particular affirmative argument. The line below it denotes when the 2NR switches back to the line-by-line.

How does the flow track the debate arguments?

If we had a transcript of this section of the debate, it might look like this. These are very advanced debaters, using a lot of debate terminology. Try to focus on how the way that they speak mirrors the flow. The flow is not just the way we take notes; the flow is the very superstructure underneath an organized debate speech.

1NC: *"… next position is the School Spirit Disadvantage. A. Uniqueness – School Spirit is high in the status quo, from Johnson in 2005."* [reads the card, the warrants are about a recent basketball victory] *"B. Brink – Students at Highland are uncertain about whether the new principal is competent, from Smith in 2005."* [reads the card] *"C. Link – Critical newspaper articles about the administration make students lose confidence in their school and decreases school spirit, from Reynolds in '03."* [reads the card, it's clear that the author of the evidence is a high school principal] *"D. Impact – We lost the homecoming game last year because school spirit was low, the same might happen this year, from George '04."* [reads the card] *"Next off case is …"*

2AC: *"… now go to the School Spirit Disad. My first answer is non-unique – school spirit is low now, from Terry '05."* [reads the card, the warrants are about Highland having an ugly building] *"Second, alternate causality – our first string quarterback got injured, that's a bigger factor in losing the homecoming game than school spirit. Third, no internal link – football players*

don't read the newspaper, so their school spirit won't drop, and they're the only ones that matter. Four, no link – their link author is a principal who's basically saying that we shouldn't make fun of principals – there's no reason we should take such a self-interested argument seriously. Five, link turn – teenagers are cynical and therefore enjoy reading critical articles about people in power, from Roberts '97." [reads the card] *"Six, our case outweighs – the academic freedom ensured by allowing critical newspaper articles is far more important than winning a football game. That's enough answers, now go to the …"*

2NC: *"… now for the School Spirit Disad. Off the 2AC number one, that school spirit is low, my first response is that my evidence is from this week and theirs is from last week – that means my card is a better assessment of the current situation. And two, extend the Johnson evidence my partner read in the 1NC, it's better than theirs because it's sports-related. Off the 2AC number 2, they say the QB is injured, but the second string QB is still a great player; that means we'll win the homecoming game in the status quo. Off the 2AC number 3, they say football players don't read the paper, but they sure do, in fact I saw one doing so yesterday. Next, it's irrelevant if they do or not, since the fans read the paper and they won't cheer as well if their school spirit is poor. And, cheering decides football games, from Lombardi in '67."* [reads the card] *"Off the 2AC number four, they indict our author, but principals understand this issue best, since they monitor school spirit for a living, so extend the Reynolds card from the 1NC. Off the 2AC number five, that teenagers*

like critical articles, my first argument is that their evidence is from '97, that means it's far too old and doesn't reflect current thinking, and second, happiness isn't the same thing as confidence. The only evidence in the round is specific to the importance of confidence in the administration to students' school spirit. Off the 2AC number six, they say that academic freedom is better than a football game, but this is homecoming so it's far more important than any given newspaper article. That's all the arguments they make here, now…"

1AR: *"… School Spirit. Pull the 2AC number one. Group their answers. First, the basketball win was a one-time thing – the school spirit it created won't last. Second, the building is always going to be ugly – our non-unique is the regular situation. Third, it's true that their card is sports-related, but they get the direction backwards – they can only show that a sports win increased school spirit, but they can't show that school spirit translates into more wins. Drop down to the 2AC number four, extend it across. They say that principals are paid to monitor school spirit, but that doesn't mean their author is an expert – heck, I'm paid to mow the lawn and I'm pretty bad at it. Two, their author just isn't credible; he's whining 'don't make fun of me!' Three, their argument is silly, football fans don't care about the administration. Now pull my partner's fifth argument from the 2AC, the turn. They say it's an old card, but teenagers are as cynical and annoying as ever. And psychology hasn't changed in eight years, so pull the Roberts evidence. They also say that happiness doesn't mean confidence, but I answered that evidence*

earlier, cross-apply my responses from above. Next sheet of paper …"

2NR: *"… go to the School Spirit Disad. An overview on top; our story is that school spirit is high now, that's the Johnson evidence. Plan will crush it by criticizing the administration, meaning that students won't cheer at the homecoming game, that's the Reynolds card. A lack of cheering hurts the football team, that's the Lombardi evidence. That means plan results in us losing the big game. Now for the line-by-line. Group their arguments on the 2AC number one; ultimately they concede that school spirit is high now, even if it's temporary. That means there's only a risk that plan reduces it before the big game. They also concede that we'll win the game in the status quo – that means our story is unique to the aff plan. They go for the 2AC number four, group their arguments. Look, the link story does make sense – anti-administration articles only promote a decrease in school spirit in the fans. Now for the 2AC number five. Group their answers to my first response in the 2NC; even if students still have the same psychology as in '97 and plan makes them a little happier, they have no evidence that says students smirking at a newspaper article makes them cheer harder. Second, plan can only cause introspection about the quality of the school; that only increases the risk that school spirit drops. So vote negative to prevent losing the homecoming game."*

CHAPTER 3

Speaking

3.1 What are the goals of each speech?

In the last chapter, we already discussed the most important characteristic of a good speech: The speech should cover all the important arguments on the line-by-line. A speech needs to address the opponents' arguments in an organized, clear, systematic way. Furthermore, we also already discussed the importance of backing up your arguments with good quotations from expert sources. In this chapter, we'll discuss the goals of each speech, including cross-examination.

1AC The 1AC is a unique speech in a round. It is the only entirely scripted speech, in that it is

composed almost entirely of expert quotations, clearly organized into solid positions. When you prepare for affirming the topic, you write a full draft of the 1AC, word-for-word. In the speech, the affirmative team sets forth a **case**. A case defends a new policy, called a **plan**. This is how the affirmative stakes out how it will choose to defend the topic.

1NC In the 1NC, the negative team lays out its choices for how it will attack the affirmative. It is important to remember that the negative team attacks the affirmative plan, not the topic. For this reason, the 1NC can never be completely scripted. The 1NC must adapt to each and every plan differently. However, the negative can prepare in advance many different positions, and wait to see which positions will apply. (In PF debate, remember that the negative will precede the affirmative about 50% of the time. When this happens, the negative should present general arguments against the topic, wait for the plan, and then use the 2NC to deliver specific attacks against the affirmative plan. This adds a new twist to the strategy, but doesn't alter the basic equation: the negative must attack the plan, not merely the topic. A debate round is always a debate about the plan.)

2AC The 2AC is the opportunity for the affirmative to respond to the negative positions and advance the affirmative case. A good 2AC will usually be 60% quotations and 40% explanation. The

affirmative needs to be prepared to respond to many different negative positions. In other words, the affirmative needs to not only write its own arguments before the round, but also consider all the possible negative objections and prepare against those, too.

2NC through 1AR

In these speeches, the argumentation continues to be advanced. Each speaker should have narrowed down the number of arguments, focusing on the most important. These speeches are about solid line-by-line debating and excellent argumentation. These speeches you should use a declining amount of quotations.

2NR The 2NR sums up all the reason to vote against the plan, and provides clear summaries and plenty of comparisons. The line-by-line is less important than clear ideas. The negative should have narrowed down to one or two key positions. No new quotations may be read.

2AR The 2AR sums up all the reason to vote for the plan, and provides clear summaries and plenty of comparisons. The line-by-line is less important than clear ideas. The affirmative should have narrowed down to one or two key positions. No new quotations may be read.

CX It's important to try to achieve three basic goals when you're asking questions. First, you need to get information about your opponents'

arguments. What exactly are they saying? Second, cross-ex gives you an opportunity to study your opponents' evidence. What do their quotations support, and what do they *not* support? A good question to ask is, "What would I need to do to disprove your argument?", but not because you are trying to trip them up. An honest debater will explain strategies that you might want to consider. Finally, cross-ex gives you an opportunity to set up your own positions and establish the issues in the judge's mind. When you're the one being cross-examined, be honest and provide the most thorough answers that you can. Feigning ignorance looks bad. However, if you genuinely don't know, then don't be afraid to admit it—maybe the question makes no sense. In PF cross-fire, there's one additional consideration. Because you may both ask and answer questions, it's important to strike a balance: you need to jump in with questions as well as answer them.

Now that you know the goals of each speech, we'll turn to the speaking skills you'll need to accomplish these goals.

3.2 Word economy

The key speaking skill is **word economy**: say what you need to say in the fewest words necessary for clarity. There are five sub-skills of speaking that you'll need to

acquire to give a word economical speech. There's also a sixth sub-skill to speaking economically: using your in-round prep time wisely. These six tips will help you speak efficiently and clearly and maximize the arguments you can make in your brief speech.

1. *Roadmapping:*

    a. Roadmapping: Before you begin your speech, you'll need to give the judge a brief roadmap. When flowing, the judge puts each position on a different piece of paper. The judge needs to know in what order you plan to talk about these issues. The judge isn't interested in a preview of your arguments, merely their order. Providing the judge a roadmap does not count against your speech time. You should roadmap before every speech except the 1AC.

    a. Signposting: Signposting is roadmapping —during your speech. You should tell the judge when you've moved from one position to another: "Now I'm finished talking about position A, and I'm moving on to position B."

1. *Line-by-line refuting:* Line-by-line debating is systematically refuting your opponents' arguments. This means that you need to proceed through all the important arguments point by

point. The best way to do this is through a four-step refutation process:

Step 1 Their claim: (A **claim** is the idea of an argument without the meat to support it.) Give the number and the "name" of your opponents' argument that you will be addressing (you don't have to *make* their argument, just state it). Its name should be condensed to two or three words.

Step 2 My refutation: State your counter-claim. What is your basic argument?

Step 3 My warrant: Explain why the judge should believe your counter-claim over your opponents'. Are there data that support your view? If your opponents made a decent argument, you'll want to repeat steps 2-3 several times and come up with several decent refutations. The gold standard is six-pointing.

Step 4 Impact: Finally, explain why the argument matters. How does it tie in to the whole debate? (There will be more about claims and warrants in Ch. 5.)

1. *Grouping:*

    a. Grouping: If your opponents repeat the same argument two or more times in a

row, you need to group them together to save time answering them. Use the standard line-by-line model above. For step 1, you would say, "Group my opponents' 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th arguments. They are all the same," before proceeding to steps 2, 3, and 4.

a. Cross-applying: If your opponents repeat the same argument two or more times non-consecutively or even on another position, you can cross-apply your refutations. You answer the argument for the first time in the normal way. When you get to the argument the second time, you simply say, "Cross-apply my answers from their 3rd argument here."

1. *Kicking and extending:*

a. Kicking out of a position: For strategic reasons, you will often need to forgo defending a position that you had earlier advanced. This is called kicking out of a position, or punting. However, you shouldn't kick out of a position just by ignoring it. You need to talk about the position briefly and answer any arguments that might be used against you. A position that has been properly kicked will be harmless to you. It is my experience that young debaters are rarely willing to kick out of a position. Perhaps

this is because you think you can win every position in a round. It is an understandable reaction. However, the expert debaters do not win every position —they win the *one* position that matters most by the end of the round.

a. Extending arguments: If your opponent drops your argument, you need to make sure that you extend, or pull, the argument. You go to it on the line-by-line, then say, "Extend my 3rd argument. They dropped it, and therefore conceded it." Then proceed to explain the importance of the argument.

1. *Overviewing:* You need to provide summaries periodically throughout the round. You can do this by providing an overview at the top or bottom of each position, before you begin the line-by-line. These overviews should be very brief, and should explain how the position relates to the overall round. The overview should not be a substitute for a good line-by-line. You can also provide an overview for the entire round, at the very beginning or end of your speech. These round overviews should only be used in the 2NR and the 2AR, but regular position overviews can be used in any speech.

Prep time

Each team has a fixed amount of time during the round that they use at their discretion in between speeches. The total amount is determined by the tournament (typically 8 minutes for CX, but occasionally 5 or 10; and typically 2 minutes for PF), but how you allocate it is up to you. The only stipulation is that you can't use your prep time during the middle of your speeches or during your opponents' speeches. Managing your prep time, or down time, well is crucial to winning close debates, and it is a difficult skill to master.

There are three basic considerations. First, you should take prep time if you need it—a debate round can become complex quickly, and taking a moment to ensure that you aren't painting yourself into a corner is often critical.

Second, prep time does not exist for you to write out all your arguments word-for-word. There is not enough time to do that. Instead, prep time allows you to collect your thoughts and plan your overall strategy. It is a time to confer with your partner or think quietly by yourself. When making notes during prep time for your speech, I recommend the one-word mnemonic device: on your flow, write down one word in the appropriate place to remind you of the argument you want to make. For example, an opponent says that the economy is performing poorly. You write down: "house", "dollar", and "stocks". "House" reminds you to argue that the housing market is doing well; "dollar" reminds you to argue that the dollar is strong; and "stocks" reminds you to argue that the stock market has slowed but has

not stopped growing. One-word mnemonics are incredibly effective in triggering your memory. In this way, you can plan out your entire speech writing only 50 or 60 or 100 words.

Third, you must consider your prep time strategically. You can gain "virtual" prep time by flowing your opponent's speech while simultaneously prepping. Sometimes, your opponent may be easy enough to flow that you have an extra second here and there to use the one-word mnemonic device. Of course, be careful! The highest priority is to have a good flow: virtual prep time is meaningless if you miss an opponent's argument!

You need to consider your prep time allocation. If you are extremely well prepared before the round begins, your team can minimize your down time before your constructive speeches and first rebuttal, and reserve almost all of it for your final rebuttal. If properly executed, this can lead to devastatingly clear final rebuttals, allowing you time to clarify the round in your mind before speaking. However, this technique is very risky, and you should only attempt it if you are confident in your prepared arguments. I mention this advanced technique only as a means to illustrate how important pre-round preparation is. One final, crucial note on prep time for CX debaters: under no circumstances should the 1AC or 1NR use prep time. The 1AC should be written beforehand. The 1NR should ignore the 2NC and use that time to write his or her speech.

3.3 Speaking Drills

The best way to practice your speaking is in the most realistic situation possible. That is, try to go to as many competitions as possible. Failing that, please try to have as many practice debate rounds as you can. (Appendix A has some tips for having good practice rounds.) If you can't do practice rounds, then there are speaking drills you can do to improve your clarity. Debaters have a lot to say, and not much time to say it in. For strategic purposes, and assuming your judge can handle you doing so, it behooves debaters to learn to speak quickly and clearly. If your judge is unable or unwilling to handle quick speeches, you must obviously slow down. Making the right arguments is meaningless unless the judge can flow them.

The purpose of clarity drills is to be clear when you're speaking, not to increase your speed. Your speed will, without worry or practice, improve as you continue debating. If you watch advanced debaters, they will read their evidence much faster than a normal conversational speed. The first time a new debater sees an advanced debater speaking quickly, it can be quite intimidating, but I assure you that, in time, you will be able to speak quickly and to understand others speaking quickly. These two abilities develop naturally, hand-in-hand. However, if the debater hasn't made an effort to improve his or her clarity, all that speed is wasted.

The best way to improve your clarity is to do about five minutes of clarity drills per night, each and every night. Five minutes is plenty of time, and what is crucial is your consistency in doing them. The best way to approach your clarity drills is to simply cycle through

and do a different drill each night. The ones you don't like doing will be those drills that will help you the most. One important recommendation is that you use or make a podium for yourself that is chest-high. This will enable you to have maximum speaking clarity.

There's one paradox about speed so important that it will go in a box:

YOU ARE OFTEN FASTER WHEN YOU GO SLOWER.

If you try to go too fast, you will stumble, stutter, become exhausted, and be unclear. The first three will actually eat up time. If you try to go 110% of your top speed, it will end up actually being slower than if you "settle" for going 90% of your top speed. I've timed it for many debaters. Believe me or not, but it's true. With those warnings said, here are the eleven best clarity drills I have run across. If you think of other drills, please feel free to add them to your own personal repertoire.

1. *Backwards drill:* Read evidence word-for-word backwards. Strange, but true, this is one of the most effective things you can do. Do can you things effective most the of one is this, true but, strange. Backwards word-for-word evidence read.

1. *Vowel drill:* Read evidence and insert a vowel in between every word. Usually, we use "a". Read "a" evidence "a" and "a" insert "a" a "a" vowel "a" in "a" between "a" every "a" word.

This also known as the Taking-the-A-train drill. Other vowels like "o" also work well.

1. *Speed drill:* Begin reading very slowly, at a normal speaking speed. Very gradually, increase the speed until your going at a reasonable maximum. Then, slow down. Then, speed up again, and continue to repeat this cycle.

1. *Read-a-line-and-breathe drill:* Try to read one full line of text from the left column to the right column without stopping. Then, when you get to the end of the line, pause and take a nice, deep breath. Repeat until you pass out.

1. *Pen drill:* Read with a pen in your mouth and make yourself intelligible. This always produces lots of spit, so wear a bib.

1. *Enunciation drill:* Read while over-enunciating every word. O-ver pro-nou-nce e-ver-y sin-gle syl-la-ble.

1. *Emphasis drill:* Read while emphasizing particular words. It doesn't matter which words, but don't sound monotone. Vary your pitch and inflection absurdly.

1. *Volume drill:* Begin reading at a low volume, then gradually increase your volume until you're nearly shouting. Slowly bring the volume back down. Continue this cycle while reading.

1. *Diaphragm drill:* Read while holding a chair up —hold it with your arms as horizontal as you can get them!

1. *Tongue twister drill:* Do tongue twisters as fast as you can. "Red leather, yellow leather" is particularly challenging, or try "Toy boat". I recommend, "Rubber baby buggy bumpers" and also, "I am the very model of a modern major general; I'm information, animal, vegetable, and mineral." (From *The Mikado.*)

1. *Rapping drill:* Speak in rhythm to music. This is surprisingly effective as well as lots of fun.

CHAPTER 4

Strategizing

4.1 How do I analyze the topic?

Defining the topic

The first thing you need to ask yourself is, "What does the topic actually mean?" It's never as simple as it looks. Take this reckless, dangerous topic:

> We should include the assassination of disagreeable leaders in our foreign policy.

What does this topic mean? It seems simple on its face, but what does "include…in our foreign policy"

mean? As regularly or irregularly used? What does "disagreeable" mean? How would you define it—and do you think your opponent would agree to it? I'll give you a big hint: the dictionary's definition won't be the final answer. The real question is what definitions you *and* your opponent agree to. The most important issue is, "What's a fair interpretation?" Regardless of where you stand on the topic, you first need to understand what the topic means. You can look in a dictionary and search the Internet for definitions. You should also brainstorm: you can write your own definitions as long as they are fair and reasonable.

So, you now have a rough idea of what you think the topic should mean. The temptation for you now will probably be to move directly to a solution and to provide reasons for or against the topic. Please resist this temptation. The next step in preparing for your topic is not to find a solution but to analyze the problem. What problem does the topic seek to redress? Take our assassination topic. What is the problem with *not* assassinating foreign leaders?

Status quo

The current situation, the problem that the topic is seeking to repair, is called the **status quo**. The status quo is the way things are now. The status quo is that disagreeable foreign leaders go around being un-assassinated. Very disagreeable indeed! The status quo should be how you begin your research. This is how you should begin brainstorming on a topic. The key question you need to ask yourself is: "What are the facts about the status quo?"

For example, how many disagreeable leaders are there? Are there currently international laws about assassination as a foreign policy? Who has been assassinated—if anyone—in the past? Once you have a firm grasp of the current facts and relevant history, you may want to go back and refine your definitions. Perhaps your interpretation of the topic's words doesn't quite accord with today's reality. So, we've gone through two steps: (1) writing an interpretation of the topic, and (2) finding facts about the status quo.

As you already know, the affirmative will agree with and uphold the topic. For example, in the above example, you would argue that we should assassinate as part of our foreign policy. The affirmative presents a plan, a new policy that departs from the status quo, and defends the benefits of implementing the plan. The plan is an example of the topic; by upholding the plan, the affirmative upholds the topic. Since the affirmative staunchly defends the topic, topics are usually known as **resolutions**. If you are on the other side, the negative, you will disagree, and you will try to disprove the affirmative's argument that the plan should be implemented. In our example, you'd only have to demonstrate that the affirmative did a poor job arguing for its pro-assassination plan.

4.2 What does the affirmative do?

As the negative, your only job is to invalidate, however possible, that the affirmative plan should be done. This is because the burden of proof rests on the affirmative

team; **presumption** goes to the negative. This means that if there is doubt that the plan would create a better world than the status quo, then we presume that the topic is a bad idea. This is why the negative generally plays offense. For this reason, there is a negative strategy, a line of attack. The affirmative generally has no strategy except defending the plan.

There is a reason for the negative presumption. Every debate topic always involves some change from the status quo. Every topic is against the status quo. With change comes risk; we presume the unchanged course to be safest unless proven otherwise. As an affirmative, your job is to downplay the risks and to prove that a change is worth the risk. As a negative, you will highlight the risks of the policy change and the affirmative's failures.

Clearly, the affirmative and negative sides have different jobs to do in a debate. The affirmative side has the key choice in a debate, since the affirmative proposes the plan about which the debate revolves. This is a choice of the **ground** for the debate. Some topics are very broad and encompass lots of details. While the affirmative might be tempted to support the whole topic, almost every time you should choose a small part of the whole to defend as your main argument, your ground. Your ground is the arguments on which you are most comfortable and well prepared.

Typically, the affirmative team will present a case that defends the plan. It isn't necessary—in fact, it's quite silly—to try to defend the whole topic. You don't have enough time to defend that much ground. Does this mean it's easier to be negative?

The short answer is, "No." The long answer is, "It depends." The affirmative wins no more or less often than the negative. However, win-loss record isn't the only important factor to consider. You need to consider how many arguments you'll need to prepare for each side. Let's look at a few example topics, and you'll see what I mean:

1. Resolved: That the United States government should substantially change its foreign policy toward the People's Republic of China. (This was the 1995-1996 U.S. high school CX topic.)

1. Resolved: That the federal government should guarantee comprehensive national health insurance to all United States citizens. (The 1993-1994 U.S. high school CX topic.)

Cases

Please ask yourself what policies the affirmative might be able to present for each topic. If you try drawing up a list of as many ideas as you possibly can for each topic, the results will be stark. For topic 1, you should have a long list of possible plans around which cases could be built. Indeed, on this topic, when it was debated in 1995-1996, about 35-40 plans were commonly presented by affirmatives. These include such plans as "issuing visas" and "signing treaties" and "military action against China". Defended with a strong case, each plan would be a sufficient defense of the topic by itself. The affirmative only has to win *one* case per round, and therefore, because of the broad array of

choices, I would say that the affirmative has the easier job on the first topic. Negatives have to be prepared to hear many cases. Even though there's one CX topic per year, there are many policies within it.

For topic 2, there aren't many ways to guarantee everyone in the U.S. health insurance, and thus, not as many potential plans. Some of the topic's words—"guarantee", "comprehensive", and "all"—are very limiting to plans. In fact, there were only about five or six really distinct cases on that topic. In other words, in 1995-1996, it probably took 70-75% of one's preparation time to get ready for the negative; in 1993-1994, it took about 50-55% of one's preparation time to get ready for the negative. Please make sure that when you're strategizing and preparing, you give enough time to negative preparation as well as to affirmative preparation.

4.3 So what are the negative strategy options?

As we already discussed, the only strategy option that the affirmative has is in choosing its plan and writing its case. This is why the 1AC is such a crucial speech. The affirmative has made the choice, and is stuck with it. The negative has more options. There are four types of position that the negative team can present:

1. **Topicality** – Is the affirmative plan a fair interpretation of the topic? (Ch. 9)

1. **Disadvantages** – Do the risks/downsides outweigh the plan's benefits? (Ch. 10)

1. **Counterplan** – Is there a better option than the plan? (Ch. 11)

1. **Critiques** – What moral considerations does the plan raise? (Ch. 12)

A negative team can present any combination of positions, and more than one of each kind. The exception is the counterplan: a negative can usually only offer one alternative to the plan.

An important strategy tip is to focus on only the important positions and arguments. It doesn't matter that you refute every single point that the affirmative makes. You don't have enough time to do it. Refuting every little point isn't good line-by-line, either. It's overkill. If there are 50 million malnourished people or if it's only 35 million, it probably doesn't change the strategic layout of the round. Both are very bad. It is a common mistake for beginning debaters to be sucked into arguments just because they can refute them, rather than because the arguments are important.

Instead, you need to have double vision: keep an eye on the whole round, while making enough refutations on the line-by-line you need to win these arguments. It's like having a mix of overviews and line-by-line. A good test is to ask yourself whether the words "and therefore we win the round" make sense after each argument you make (it's a *test*, so don't say it 50 times in a round and blame it on me). If the words seem like a non sequitur, then you either need to focus on more important

arguments or better explain the importance of your arguments.

Choosing 1NC positions

This advice holds when planning your 1NC. Why waste your precious time in the 1NC presenting a terrible counterplan that you know has no hope of ever winning? Instead, you should give yourself a few viable options. For example, perhaps you could run a topicality that you know can win, a disadvantage that could win, and a good counterplan that could win. This does not mean you need to keep all three until the 2NR, but it gives you three viable options for the 2NR. Furthermore, it is usually good strategy to try to have a mix. Three topicality arguments are not the strongest strategy.

It is also possible to directly attack the case, but such arguments are usually defensive. The negative should try to shift the debate to its ground. After all, the affirmative knows its case very well, and so they would like to spend their time defending the case. The negative needs to address the case, of course, and show how the case is overblown, but it should focus its time on providing offensive arguments against the plan (topicality, disadvantages, counterplans, and critiques). Arguments directly against the case are called **on-case**; other negative positions are called **off-case**, or rarely, plan-side.

For its part, the affirmative should try to bring the debate back to affirmative ground. There's a constant tug-of-war in a debate over whether the affirmative or the negative positions are more important. Winning this

tug-of-war, on the line-by-line and in the overviews, is usually the key to winning the debate round.

Finally, you need to be aware that arguments and positions may interact. If you run three disadvantages, there's a strong possibility of overlap. Perhaps the affirmative team is able to make the same argument and use it against all three disadvantages, saving precious time. Or worse, the affirmative may be able to point out that your positions are contradictory. When strategizing, please make sure that all your positions can happily co-exist.

CHAPTER 5

Proving

5.1 How do I prove an argument?

To prove an argument, you need to consider its basic structure. According to the philosopher Toulmin, an argument has three basic and necessary parts: claim, data, and warrant. Let's go through each. The claim is the main point that you're making. For example, you could make the claim, "50 million people are malnourished in the U.S.", or you could make the claim, "Smoking causes lung cancer." The first claim is a factual claim. The second claim is a causal claim. (Causal claims can be rephrased as "If, then" statements. For example, "*If* you smoke, *then* you will be more likely to get cancer.")

Now, you need data—information—to support these claims. Let's say that the U.S. Census Bureau did research and came to the conclusion that about 50 million people are malnourished. Or let's say that some Harvard doctors have done research and found that smoking causes cancer. These are both examples of data. The final part of an argument is a warrant. A warrant explains the data and shows how it links to the claim.

DATA	→	WARRANT	→	CLAIM
information	→	*how the information supports the claim*	→	*idea being advanced*
U.S. Census Bureau research	→	The researchers investigated 500 families, an adequate sample size.	→	50 million people are malnourished in the U.S.
Medical research of Harvard doctors	→	The research ruled out other factors, such as lifestyle and socio-economic status.	→	Smoking causes cancer.

Any factual claim or causal claim worth proving will not have 100% clear data. (One grammatical note: data is a plural noun. For example, "These are good data" is correct while, "The data indicates my point" is incorrect.) If you wanted to prove that there were two fish sticks in the freezer, data collection would only require opening the freezer door. But having two fish sticks is pretty meaningless. Meaningful claims will have

data that *indicate*, not guarantee, that the claim is true. Someone—maybe your opponents—will look at the same data and come to a different conclusion. In fact, in most debate rounds both sides will agree on almost all of the data and will spend their time disagreeing on the interpretations and implications of the data. Your warrant defends the idea that your conclusion (claim) is the best interpretation of the data.

As you'll recall, you need quotations from experts to help support your arguments. These quotations, or evidence, should provide you with useful data. You also want your evidence to provide you with analysis of the data. This analysis will help you build proper warrants. It's possible to prove a claim without evidence, but it's very difficult, especially if your opponents have evidence.

4.2 What makes for good evidence?

Characteristics

There are three main characteristics of good evidence: source credibility, timeliness, and writing quality. The timeliness is the most straightforward characteristic. Generally, evidence should be from the last 2-3 years. Of course, for some things such as philosophical ideas and dictionary definitions, almost any age is acceptable. For most things, especially economic and political data and current events, evidence needs to be from this month. What the stock market is doing today is likely to be very different from how it was doing a year ago.

The source credibility is also a simple to understand characteristic. Evidence must come from a published source, which can include the Internet. (Published sources are available to everyone, so they can be verified. Other sources, such as conversations and correspondence, are not available to everyone and not verifiable.) A printed source is probably better than a website, although professional websites are acceptable. Newspapers, journals, books, and government documents are all credible sources, but some are more reputable than others. Newspapers and newsmagazines like the *New York Times*, *Economist*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post*, *Time*, and *Newsweek* are good. They have research departments to do fact checking before publication. Academic journals, books, and government documents are all excellent sources. Please use your common sense. Is it more persuasive to quote a doctor at Harvard or the *Wall Street Journal* about smoking causing cancer? Which is the better source for information on the U.S. economic health?

The most important characteristic is evidence quality. A quotation could be written in a rhetorical, analytical, or prescriptive style. Rhetorical evidence is the weakest type. Instead of offering any good reasons to believe its claim, it merely gives a well-worded, slick answer. It's dramatic without substance. Evidence written in an analytical style provides lots of data and then provides plenty of analysis of the data. This style is often characterized by long laundry lists of data and analysis. This is often extremely helpful when making your arguments—you can begin going through the lists. Here's a good (but fake) example of analytical evidence

from the mental health care topic (the 2002-2003 high school CX debate topic):

> Former patients, now doctors and assistants, provide good mental health care
> - **Hanes 2002** (Russell & Erin, profs. at Portland State University, *Exciting Sociology*, Jan., p. 832)
>
> > Many social scientists now recognize that former patients/users of psychological services make the best providers, for several reasons. These reasons include: former patients tend to empathize with their patients, giving them more emotional support than doctors and assistants who treat mental illnesses from a more clinical perspective; former patients can act as role models; former patients do not stigmatize their patients as other providers are shown to do; and most important, former patients tend provide their patients with a variety of choices and options, which allows these patient to exercise control and self-determination. All of these factors can contribute to the speed and thoroughness of recovery.

The final style of writing is the prescriptive style, which is often similar to the analytical style. Rather than simply providing the data and analysis, the quotation *will* have a general conclusion, will make the author's assumptions and values clear, and can even call for an action or policy. There's a good (but fake) example on the next page.

Mental illness is biological to a large degree
- **Hanes 2002** (Russell & Erin, profs. at Portland State University, *Exciting Sociology*, Jan., p. 1)

> We begin our analysis with the recognition that mental illness is, to a large extent, must be understood biologically. Chemical imbalances in the brain are as physical an illness as a broken leg. The consensus view of the medical community is that mental illnesses are caused by physical predispositions, triggered by environmental causes (such as personal trauma), resulting in physical changes in neuro-chemistry. These facts are even recognized by the American publics: One poll found that only 13% of respondents believed that mental illness had "no physical causes," 52% believed that mental illnesses resulted from "some combination of physical and environmental causes," while 31% believed that mental illness had "only physical causes." This last number is astounding, since it is not strictly true: many mental illnesses have environmental triggers.

Here, the authors provide not only the studies with their numbers, but also explain why these studies are to be believed, and then make a general conclusion. Eventually, the authors may make a prescription of what policy we should enact. A prescriptive piece of evidence draws a claim and may even prescribe a plan.

Which type of evidence is strongest? Consider evidence on this scale:

RHETORICAL	ANALYTICAL	PRESCRIPTIVE
weakest		strongest

You should have noticed that the both quotations look the same. These are called **cards**. Card is the name for a single piece of evidence. It should have each of the following four components:

(a) **tag**: the claim, in your own words, that the card supports or advocates
(b) oral citation: what's spoken during rounds, typically the author and year of publication
(c) written citation: all the source and publication information in parentheses
(d) text of the card

Furthermore, a card is not complete until you've highlighted or underlined it. That way, you will know instantly what to read during a debate. The author that you will be quoting will often give information that's extraneous to your claim, write in a verbose or repetitive manner, or use extra words to guarantee smooth reading that we can do without. You usually won't have the time to read the whole quotation, but the highlighted portion is the key part, and you can read that. It is important when highlighting or underlining that you are merely shortening the quotation and not changing the meaning or misrepresenting the author in any way.

Mistakes

There are a few common mistakes to avoid when using evidence. The first mistake to avoid is that cards should *never* be shorter than a paragraph. At the other extreme,

a card should always fit on a page. Furthermore, cards must be quotations that can be spoken aloud: charts, graphs, and so forth are also not acceptable. Headlines, advertisements, and so forth are doubly unacceptable. The second mistake to avoid is thinking that your cards will do the work for you. Cards don't win debates. *You* win debates, using cards as your tools. Your explanation of the data and warrants are crucial. A third mistake to avoid is claiming that the expertise of your sources is warrant enough. For example, you might say, "A doctor at Harvard knows what causes cancer, and we should believe him because of his expertise." This is an incorrect, false warrant know as an **appeal to authority**. Even with an authority—an expert—you need to provide a good warrant that explains the data.

The fourth mistake to avoid is using quotations without any understanding. For example, you might read a card that contains complicated technical terms. If you can't explain the terms and give rough definitions, then you shouldn't be reading that card. Or as another example, you might read a card that uses numerical data or statistics. You need to make sure that the data make sense to you and that you can explain what they mean properly. You need to be careful. Statistics make good data, but you still need to be able to provide warrants, and that means knowing something about how the information was gathered and who calculated the statistics. The bottom line is that even seemingly trustworthy sources and credible data may be confusing, incorrect, or even deceptive. The best defense is to use your common sense, double-check your facts, and know your information thoroughly.

5.3 Refuting

There are three basic techniques of refuting arguments that I would like to recommend. The first technique is quite blunt: directly attack the data upon which your opponents' claim rest. An example would be arguing that the data for global warming are faulty.

The second technique is **subsuming** their argument. Rather than disagree with the data behind their argument, you provide an alternate interpretation of the data that accords with your overall arguments. In other words, concede the data and refute the claim. For example, you might say, "Yes, it is historically true that we have never used our nuclear arsenal; however, that example merely proves my point that stockpiling these weapons has been an effective deterrent because…" Of course, you'll need to have a good warrant as to why it proves your point.

A third powerful technique is the strategic concession. Rather than disagree with either the data or warrants of your opponents, explain to the judge why their arguments are irrelevant. For example, you might say, "Even if our opponents win that our plan will cost several billion dollars, we still win the debate because plan's benefits outweigh its costs, since…"

These last two techniques allow you to defend your strongest ground rather than get sucked into argumentative quagmires that you have no chance of winning. If the data are good and credible, then start looking for ways to spin it to your advantage.

CHAPTER 6
Competing

6.1 What is a competition like?

Whether you debate in a classroom or pursue interscholastic competition (against other schools), the ideas, concepts, and skills are exactly the same. However, I should give you a brief explanation about what interscholastic competitions—**tournaments**—look like. Before we discuss tournament logistics, it's important to note that since schools sponsor you to go to a tournament, it's considered a school event, and therefore all the usual school rules apply. What may not be so obvious is that most debaters are very cool people, and that debate tournaments end up being a lot of fun.

If you enjoy your debate class or club, then you ought to consider trying a novice tournament.

A tournament consists of teams from several schools that travel to the host school for the competition, which usually occurs on a weekend. Typically 30-40 teams from 10-15 schools attend, but there is considerable variation in tournament size. Students are divided into three divisions by their experience level: **novice** (beginners in their first year of debate), **junior varsity** (intermediates with 4 or fewer semesters of experience, sometimes called junior), and **varsity** (sometimes called champion, open, or senior). The coaches who attend form the judging pool and judge the debates, but coaches never judge their own students.

Often, there are four or five debate rounds on Day 1, then one or two rounds on Day 2, for a total of six preliminary rounds, but every tournament follows its own schedule. Every team will switch sides several times: you'll be on each side for about 50% of your rounds. After the preliminary rounds, the teams with the best records in preliminary rounds advance to the elimination rounds. In the elimination phase, the losing team in each debate round is "eliminated" from the tournament, until there are only two teams left in each division. The winner of the final round in each division is considered the tournament champion for that division. During preliminary rounds, the only people there will be you, your opponents, and the judge. However, people do watch elimination rounds.

How many tournaments you compete at per year is up to you. Some very motivated debaters go to six to eight per semester. Some debaters go to one or two. What you do is up to you. However, your school may

have limited money, so you may find that you want to go to more tournaments than are available. Every coach knows that you are a student first, and a debater second. If you are having trouble balancing schoolwork with debate work, please talk to your coach. He or she wants to help you succeed at both.

6.2 Cooperating during competition

Debating is fun, challenging, and sometimes stressful. It is important to behave considerately to fellow competitors and to judges. Debates may be argumentative and competitive, but we generally want to avoid being over-competitive and aggressive. There is a fine line between competitive and aggressive. The best policy is to disagree with the arguments of your opponents, rather than to attack your opponents personally. The bottom line is that you should be courteous to your opponents and to your judge during a round.

Many judges will tell you their decision, explain it, and even answer questions, after the debate is over. (Some judges do not want or like to do this.) You should always be polite during this, even if you disagree with the judge. If you disagree, ask questions, and who knows, you might even learn you were wrong. What happens if the judge is wrong? Well, you still lose. No judge will ever change his or her decision because you disagree with him or her. Sometimes, there's just a disagreement between you and the judge that will never be bridged. Sometimes, people make mistakes. A judge

is a human being—prone to make mistakes—who nevertheless is probably trying very hard not to make mistakes. Too many debaters forget and become arrogant. Debate is about asking questions and learning, not arguing without reflection. And if you win, be a gracious winner.

Partners and teammates

Interacting with your partner can be difficult. Sometimes, you may fight. Underneath it all, I bet your partner is a reasonable human being. Try to be open, honest, and fair to your partner, don't blame him or her for every mistake, and you will have a loyal, successful partnership. If you just can't seem to work together, talk to your coach. One last note: What happens if your partner forgets something during his or her speech? Can you interrupt and say it for them? No. No one wants *you* to give your partner's speech. For some judges, it is acceptable to **prompt** your partner, that is, to jog his or her memory, but for others it is not. In any event, only the words said by the designated speaker will be flowed; the judge ignores anything anyone else says. Here's the best technique to prompt your partner: ask your partner a relevant question. For example, if your partner is about to forget to answer the opponents' argument Z, ask, "What do you say about Z?" This way, you don't give your partner the argument, but you do remind him or her what to talk about. It also works well because your partner will have an easier time formulating an argument. The worst way to prompt is to write your answer to argument Z on paper and give it to your partner. Your partner won't be able to understand your

argument quickly. We answer *questions* very quickly, much quicker than we can understand someone else's *answer*.

Preparing for debates will require that you cooperate with your team. No one can do all the preparation on his or her own. It's important that you share ideas, strategies, and cards with your teammates. Right now, you're inexperienced, so you'll be relying on the more experienced debaters as a source of knowledge. When you have experience, you need to pay it back and help out the new novices on your team.

6.3 Adapting

Judges

We usually want to know the preferences of our judges before a debate round: "Does my judge prefer arguments about economics and politics?" or "Does my judge prefer philosophical arguments?" However, asking too many questions is poor manners. After all, every judge wants to see good arguments about whatever you want to argue, so every judge tries to be open-minded. And no judge wants to debate for you—which is what too many pre-debate questions can feel like. So, it might be OK to ask a few questions, but be cautious and restrained. Here's a good technique: Ask the judge if there's anything you can do to give her or him a more pleasurable round to watch. It's a good, subtle way to ask. However, I can give you tips about

adapting to the two types of judges you are likely to encounter:

1. Communications judge
2. Tabula rasa judge

The first type of judge has a *communications* paradigm. (A **paradigm** is the framework through which a judge evaluates a debate.) A communications judge is less interested in the flow and more interested in persuasion. For this judge, it is important to bring up fewer issues, to speak more slowly and clearly, and to focus on the overall presentation of the round. Your overviews will be far more important than the line-by-line; in fact, you can probably make a few mistakes on the line-by-line and still make a more persuasive presentation overall. While this type of judge makes decisions holistically, you can't ignore the line-by-line. You need to make overview and line-by-line argumentation, but the emphasis should be on the overviews.

The second type of judge has a *tabula rasa* paradigm. This judge tends to be younger and less traditional than the communications judge. A tabula rasa judge describes him- or herself as a blank slate, waiting to be inscribed by your arguments. The emphasis here is on the line-by-line. For this type of judge, you can usually go very fast, bring up many different issues, and try ideas that are new and experimental. Of course, you'll need to present overviews that explain the whole round, but the judge's focus will be on your line-by-line skills. There are other types of judges, but they fall between these two

extremes. Adapting to your judge requires knowing something about the judge beforehand or asking the judge questions about his or her paradigm before the round begins, and then adjusting your delivery style and your argument riskiness accordingly. Adapting is part of the competitive element of debate and is an acceptable practice, as long as you continue to make ethical arguments.

Debaters

Adapting to your opponents can be a bit trickier. There are four basic types of opponents you'll face. Each one requires special considerations.

1. Spreaders
2. Issue experts
3. Entrappers
4. Persuaders

The first type of opponents you'll face are *spreaders:* they are fast and not afraid to use it. They will likely bring up many, many positions, and then kick out of most of them. You're likely to have the time to put only one or two refutations on each position after their first speech, and then they will kick down to one position and spend all their time, with considerable speed, on those one or two refutations you managed to get out. In other words, they're trying to squeeze your time and make you drop arguments. For this reason, it is vital that you cover. The best way to do this is to make sure that the one or two refutations you get out on each position are the best answers you have. In fact, you can

sometimes reverse the time pressure and put it back on them, if your arguments make it difficult for them to narrow down. They can be intimidating when they first stand up to speak and start by putting out a dozen positions. Just keep your cool, prioritize, stay organized, and cover!

The second type of opponents you'll likely face are the *issue experts:* they know one thing and know it well. They are likely to bring up only this one position in their first speech, and they will spend nearly all their time developing it. They'll be able to predict your answers before you even make them. The issue experts attain their expertise on this one position by knowing little about anything else. Try making as many connections between their position and your favorite positions. The key is to push them away from their position onto ground you choose. You will have a tough time outsmarting them on their ground; your best chance is to bring them to yours.

The third type of opponents you'll encounter are the *entrappers:* they will set you up to make one ghastly strategic mistake. For example, they will often make an argument that invites a certain logical response from you. Be careful! If the answer seems very obvious, ask yourself, will this argument get me into trouble in the whole debate? The entrappers rely upon you being focused too much on the line-by-line and not enough on the whole round. The best way to beat entrappers is by not walking into the trap! A sub-type you might encounter are the *theorizers:* they are willing to have extensive arguments about debate theory, about what kinds of arguments are acceptable, and are waiting for

you to make "unfair" arguments. Again, don't fall into their trap.

The fourth type of opponents you'll face are the *persuaders:* they will often completely ignore the line-by-line—sometimes even lie—and instead give the judge persuasive overviews. The worst mistake here is for you to ignore the line-by-line and go only to their overviews. Persuaders have practiced using clever turns of phrase and powerful rhetoric to make their arguments seem more powerful. You need to be disciplined. Stick to the line-by-line, go through and extend every argument you're winning, and *then* sum it all up with good overviews. If you lack personal discipline, then you'll let the debate be entirely about rhetorical persuasion, and the persuaders are prepared to beat you in that game.

These behaviors can seem irritating—but they feel that way because each type is an extreme example of certain valuable skills. The best debaters have mastered all of the skills, and so are balanced: persuasive, clever, well prepared, and efficient on the line-by-line, all in one round.

At tournaments

There's one last thing that's important to say about tournaments. Don't stop preparing! If you find out that an opponent school has a new argument, then start brainstorming your answers. Tournaments have a lot of down time, so you can get a lot done in between rounds. Furthermore, if you've been eliminated, watch and flow elimination debates. If you're out, then you've got something to learn from the people that are still in it.

Theories

CHAPTER 7
Researching

7.1 Researching

I have a few tips and key guidelines for doing good research.

(a) You need to be patient. Good research takes time.

(b) You need to be honest with yourself about the quality of evidence you are finding. Is this a credible source? Have I looked to see if this a widely held opinion? Is it recent? Is this evidence prescriptive, analytical, or merely rhetorical? If you must honestly answer that the evidence is

not good, then you need to keep looking. If you don't do it in the library, your opponents will do it in the round.

(c) You need to understand the arguments that you are looking for and the opponents' arguments that you are looking to answer. Of course, as you start researching, you'll learn quite a bit more: more data, more about the claims that you can make. However, this doesn't mean that you should start from zero knowledge. Ask someone experienced on the team for ideas to get you started.

(d) The key to research is to start broad and then narrow down. Your first searches should be broad; as you keep researching, you should narrow down. For the first stage, finding articles, please keep any articles that seem useful—even if you don't quite know how they might be useful at first.

Finding articles

Google and other search engines have made it incredibly easy to surf the enormous and growing amounts of information on the Web. Specialized forums, such as Google News, Politics, and Scholar, are even more useful. All in all, the Internet is an excellent place to start your research. Of course, you know that you can't trust everything on the Internet. Anything you do use from the Internet should have a credible author or source behind it. Furthermore, although the Internet is

an excellent place to start, it can't be the only research you do. You need to hit several of the other sources that follow. A good researcher uses a mix of resources and tools. There are three places other than the Internet to look: (1) electronic databases, (2) books and journals, and (3) government documents.

Electronic databases are specialized collections of articles. These usually focus on academic journals and harder-to-find sources. For example, Ethnicnewswatch is an electronic database devoted to news about different cultures and ethnicities. Someone has already pulled together many unique resources that might be unavailable to you otherwise. Because of this, databases are quite expensive. Usually, they can only be found at good, academic libraries (such as a college or university library). Some libraries have 50 or more different databases.

The most famous database is LexisNexis, which covers legal news, law reviews, and general newspapers and newsmagazines. The most important two are WorldCat and ArticleFirst, which do not have articles for download but are completely comprehensive reference listings, for books and articles, respectively. If there's a book you want, WorldCat will tell you which libraries—worldwide—have it. I won't tell you how to use each database because searching and downloading procedures vary. Ask the librarians to show you how to use them. You may think that the librarians don't want to be bothered with helping you research. Nothing could be further from the truth. Librarians are positively giddy when asked for help.

Books—yes, use them! In this day of electronic databases and easy Internet searching, books can seem

slow, clunky, and inefficient. Failing to research in books is to cut yourself off from a wealth of information that isn't available in other formats. Good academic libraries are the place to go. Here's the best kept secret of researching in books: they're placed in order on the shelves by topic. Whenever you find a good book, look at its neighbors. The chances are there will be another useful book right beside it. In the Library of Congress catalog system, which most academic libraries use, the most useful call numbers begin with H (social sciences), J (political sciences), or K (law). In addition to books, it's also important to look at the library's journal collection. Often, a library may carry a print version of a journal but not an electronic version.

Our government produces reams of documents, on all different kinds of topics. The government's research is often loaded with statistics and data that the government collected. Government documents have their own special research system. The library will have a computer that will allow you to search the titles and general descriptions of the government documents. It will give you a SuDoc number, which will lead you to a separate depository within the library to find the article. For these reasons, government documents can be a bit of a pain to research, but it is well worth it. A balanced research strategy should include all four kinds of research: Internet, databases, books and journals, and government documents.

Advanced research techniques

When you leave a round, you should copy from the other team the citations for any particularly useful

pieces of evidence. (In case you were worried, this tactic is directly in keeping with the spirit of evidence—verification—and not just completely legal but to be commended. It is not at all considered "cheating".) Armed with these opponent citations, you can produce quality evidence more easily when you return from the tournament. Utilize the research of other teams to aid yours. Even the name of the author is often enough to track down the original article. Most indices have author searches. This is one excellent reason to always save your flows.

When you have found a useful article, you should check to see if the article could lead you to other sources. If the article is extremely new, check its bibliography, endnotes, or footnotes. This is called rabbit trailing. Often, authors cite extremely interesting things. If the article is older, you should check the SSCI (Social Sciences Citation Index—it's almost always available as an electronic database), which lists every academic article that made a citation of the original article. That way you can find additional sources from your in-hand article. Rabbit trailing looks backwards from the useful, in-hand article; the SSCI works forward.

Rabbit trailing and the SSCI turn up the most amazing things. I've often sworn that there is nothing in the library at all (from catalog and database searches), found one semi-useful source, hit the SSCI or the rabbit trails and discovered that the library was jammed full of materials that I could use. Once you have the key, you can open the door.

The important thing to remember in researching is triangulating: read articles from different political

perspectives, and from different kinds of sources. That is the best way to verify that you have the most dependable information possible. Speaking of political perspectives, there are more than just two. As you research an issue, you will discover that there are opinions about it that defy easy categorization. You can only lose insight when you try to pigeon-hole an idea.

7.2 Blocking and briefing

So now you've found several useful articles. What do you do with them? The first thing you do is called **carding**: you go through and select the excerpts from the article that make arguments you want. An article may have only one useful card, or it may have twenty. Carding requires reading the article carefully and applying a critical eye. When you found articles, you should have kept all the articles that seemed useful. When carding, the question is whether the article is useful and has valuable excerpts. If you found your article on the Internet or in a database, you can either print out the article and physically snip out your excerpt, or you can copy the relevant excerpt and paste it into a Word file without ever printing the full article.

Please remember from the discussion of evidence that a card should be no shorter than one paragraph and no longer than will fit on a page. Once you've cut the excerpt, please attach a proper citation. An oral citation should include only the primary author's last name and the year of publication. (The primary author is always the first listed.) Newspapers and websites often do not

list an author, so just list the source instead. The written citation should include all the authors' full names, the month and day of publication, page number, source name, URL, and any other information needed to find the article. The card also needs a good tag. A tag should be no more than one sentence, and should have rhetorical strength. Use actions verbs and simple syntax to make the tag clear and powerful. Without proper citations and tag, the card is useless.

Once you have a lot of cards, you're ready to start writing blocks and briefs. A **brief** is a collection of cards that make the same or similar arguments. A brief might be two cards long, or it might be twenty cards long. A brief might have three cards that prove the economy is doing poorly (e.g., 1. unemployment high, 2. inflation high, 3. trade deficit high). A **block**, also called a frontline, is a collection of cards and arguments that all refute an opponents' argument, using any combinations of the techniques discussed in Ch. 5.3. Blocks are the bread and butter of the second constructives (2ACs and 2NCs). A block might have six completely distinct refutations to your opponents' argument. Blocks are primarily offensive—enabling you to tackle opponent positions—while briefs are primarily defensive—allowing you to defend your position. This is where the rubber meets the road, and you decide what a card can actually do for you. (You'll probably cut evidence that you never brief or block. Hang on to these, just in case.) Here are a few tips for writing blocks and briefs:

Tip 1: Number your arguments! That makes them easy to refer to when you do the line-by-line.

Tip 2: No matter how good your block or brief might be, you might not get to finish all of it during a debate round. You very often run out of time. The best card should always, *always* be first. The second-best card should be the second, and so on. That way, you can always be sure that you get your best cards out, even if you don't finish. Don't get ridiculous. How often are you going to have the time to read a fifty-point block? Almost never. A half-dozen arguments is a respectable-sized brief or block.

Tip 3: Mix in **analytics**. Analytics are arguments that you make without cards. This will enable you to make several more arguments than you could with only cards. The best way to do this is to mix them in like so: card-analytic-card, and so on. You might make an analytic because you lack a card for the argument, or because it's a strategically weaker argument. You can win with an analytic, but it's not your best bet. Analytics can also be observations about a logical fallacy that your opponents have committed. No author is going to write an article about what Central High School did to its plan—it's your job to point it out.

Tip 4: Blocks and briefs are easier to write than they are to adapt during a debate. Sure, you could write one general, all-purpose block. But then, every round you'll end up marking it up—crossing out some answers, re-ordering, etc., until there just isn't any way to read it anymore.

You should write blocks to specific arguments. Sometimes, you will need to write several different versions of the same block.

Tip 5: The same name can mean different things! Always make sure that your block applies.

Tip 6: Even if you don't have a block already prepared, you should still be able to make good arguments, mixing and matching cards from different briefs with off-the-cuff analytics. Afterwards, take these arguments and refine them to make a block for next time.

Once your done writing your blocks and briefs, group them together into positions. (Sometimes, you'll need to copy a block or brief because it will be useful in proving two or more positions.) Once you've written your blocks and briefs and grouped them into positions, now you're ready to file those positions.

7.3 Filing

Aside from flowing, the second most important thing we do in debate is keeping organized. I hope that I'll impress upon you the importance of keeping organized. Keeping organized isn't sexy, but it's vital. If you don't have a good system, you will never find anything. If your system is too complicated or too intricate, you will never be able to finish organizing it! You want to strive towards the middle and make a simple, flexible system. Most importantly, you and your partner need to

completely understand your own system: all that research and evidence is useless if you can't access it.

Here's what I use:

Several accordion files (either alphabetical [1-21] or daily [1-31] files) and many manila folders
One monthly [1-12] accordion file
One tub (I recommend Rubbermaid 14 gallon tubs.)
One luggage cart (optional, but really recommended)

The following are my tips for keeping organized. You need to get everything organized *before* a tournament. During a tournament, you need to re-file everything so that it'll stay organized. Here's how I file:

1. Every major position goes in its own, separate accordion file. Smaller positions can go inside a manila folder.

2. I put an index on the outside of every accordion that lists the contents of each pocket. I put each block or brief in its own pocket. Sometimes I put very similar blocks and briefs in the same pocket, but I always list each and every block and brief in the pocket on the index.

3. I recommend putting all the accordions and manila folders in the tub, and using the cart to move the tub around.

4. Immediately after each debate round, I recommend that you start cleaning up your things—and also, clean up everything. Putting off putting things away is a sure-fire recipe for disorganization in the next debate round.

5. The 1-12 (monthly) file is for keeping flows. I recommend keeping your flows throughout the entire year. Every tournament you go to should get its own pocket. The several pieces of flow paper for a round should be folded in half together. Write the information (opponent, judge, etc.) on the outside. Then stuff it into the pocket for that tournament.

6. This is the most important advice I could ever give you. After each and every debate, I recommend that you write down: (a) your opponents' names and school, (b) their arguments, (c) your arguments, and (d) the judge's comments. Wouldn't it be nice to have a record of every debate—in case you ever, ya know, debated the same team again?

That's it. I hope it's pretty simple.

CHAPTER 8

Debating cases

8.1 What is a case?

You've picked your affirmative ground, what plan you will defend (see Ch. 4). You've also done research on your affirmative case, gotten excellent quotations, and written solid blocks. Now, you're ready to write your 1AC. What you want is a prima facie case. The judge will know, on first look and without effort, how a prima facie case justifies implementing your plan.

A prima facie case has three main elements. First, it must have a plan that is a fair interpretation of the topic. Second, the case needs to point out the flaws in the status quo, the current situation. Third, the case needs to present why the plan is a good, workable

alternative to the status quo. These three main components are affirmative **burdens**. The affirmative must win each burden; collectively, they represent the affirmative's burden of proof. An affirmative case is like a three-legged stool: if the affirmative doesn't win all three of its burdens, the case fails.

The easiest way to meet all your affirmative burdens is by writing a **stock issues** case. Stock issues are the six basic positions that you will defend with your case. The stock issues are: harms, inherency, plan, solvency, topicality, and advantages. Here's an easy mnemonic to remember the stock issues: HIPSTA. However, the distinctions between the stock issues are not hard and fast, and they sometimes blend together. Here's how many affirmative cases are organized using stock issues:

1. Harms
2. Inherency
3. Plan
4. Advantages
5. Solvency

Topicality does not appear often in a 1AC. Topicality is usually mentioned only if the negative brings it up. The next section will show you how to write a case, and the final section will describe some common mistakes that lead to unfair cases.

8.2 Writing a case

Your first task in a 1AC will usually be to identify and explain problems with the status quo. **Harms** are the

claims about what in the status quo is bad. Sometimes, the harm is quantifiable. Perhaps 50 million people are currently malnourished. Sometimes, the harm is unquantifiable, such as loss of freedom or unethical corporate behavior. Both quantifiable and unquantifiable harms are strong. **Inherency** is the claim that the status quo will not be changed: the harm or harms identified will continue *indefinitely*. It's irrelevant if the status quo is bad if someone's going to repair it in two weeks. As one politician pointed out, the status quo is the status quo because no one can veto it. Identifying why people are vetoing change is to argue the inherency. In a sense, inherency identifies a long-term, structural problem, while harms explains the moral or practical problems that result from the structural problem. The affirmative case should present these two claims together to fulfill its burden of finding flaws in the status quo.

Let's look at a sample case from the health care topic (Resolved: That the federal government should guarantee comprehensive national health insurance to all United States citizens.). The case might start out its argument for a national health care system by pointing out the problems in the status quo as listed here:

(a) Many people lack health insurance now. [harm]

(b) Lack of insurance causes 10 thousand unnecessary deaths per year. [harm]

(c) Congress won't make laws anytime soon to aid people without insurance. [inherency]

These are clear arguments about the problems with the status quo, from a quantifiable standpoint. Each of these points should be made with a strong piece of evidence.

Finding a problem in the status quo is the easiest burden of your case to meet. You'll have the most information about all sorts of problems, their causes and their effects. It's hard to lose the harms argument on the affirmative; it's even harder to lose an inherency argument. Cases either are or aren't inherent. As long as you choose an inherent case, you shouldn't worry much about having to prove your case's inherency. Please resist the temptation to spend a lot of time on this burden. You should spend no more than $^1/_3$ of your 1AC developing these arguments.

Usually in an affirmative case, the plan immediately follows harms and inherency. The plan is your proposed course of action to improve the current, bad situation. Let's look at a sample plan from the health care topic:

> In defense of this year's topic, we offer the following plan: The federal government should create a national health care system based on the Canadian model. Funding should be through a 100% increase in sin taxes (taxes on alcohol and tobacco), with states required to pay the remainder of costs. Enforcement should be through the federal Department of Health and Human Services.

This is a fair and reasonable plan—just look back at the topic. The plan "uses" the actor that the topic mandates —the federal government—and "performs" the action required of guaranteeing national health insurance. There's room for many plans within one topic. The sample plan uses the Canadian model, but it could have

just as easily used the German model, or the British model, or some other mechanism for guaranteeing health insurance. The best idea is to find an author's proposal or idea, and closely model your plan on an author's idea. If no expert or author supports your idea, it's probably not a great idea. At the very least, it's going to be hard to support without an author-advocate. However, the plan is something that you write in your own words. Your plan should be simple and straightforward, and it should only take you 30 seconds or so of your 1AC to read. Without a plan, your affirmative advocacy is unclear and potentially problematic.

Next, an affirmative case will usually offer advantages. An advantage is any extra benefit above repairing the status quo that the plan has, a good consequence. On our health care case, here is one possible advantage:

(d) Lack of health insurance lowers worker productivity (because of lengthened sick leave).

(e) Lowered productivity damages the U.S. economy.

(f) A national health insurance plan would therefore improve the U.S. economy.

Advantages make a case much stronger by tipping the scales further in favor of the benefits of plan compared to the status quo, in favor of action. Advantages may be anything that can be linked successfully to the plan; advantages can relate to the topic, but they don't have to relate directly, as long as there is a link to the plan.

Finally, an affirmative case will present solvency. **Solvency** is simply the argument that your plan would work. Will the funding for the plan work out? Will the enforcement work out? How will the American people respond to the plan? Will it have the desired result—repairing the problems you identify in the first burden of your 1AC? Let's look at the Canadian-model case on the health care topic again. Here are some sample solvency arguments to back up this claim:

(g) Canadian-style health system would cover everyone.

(h) Plan would give everyone good coverage, with doctor's visits and all treatments.

(i) Plan would not be very expensive.

(j) Sin taxes would cover the cost.

(k) Health and Human services could administer the health care system successfully.

(l) Canadian-style system is the best option available.

These are solid arguments for solvency. Of course, you'll want to back up each argument with a solid piece of evidence. You'll want to spend a lot of time making solvency arguments. For every case, solvency is its biggest weakness. Why is solvency so vulnerable? Mostly, it's because plan is a new and untested idea. It's risky. It might fail. It's easy to establish facts, like in inherency and harms, but it's much harder to prove that a particular plan will have the consequences you intend

it to have. Please consider spending $^{2}/_{3}$ or more of your 1AC building your solvency and advantages during your first speech, and expect to have to defend it well.

8.3 Fair plans

The last burden that the affirmative has is proving that the plan falls within a fair interpretation of the topic. Usually, the affirmative does not bring this up in the 1AC, and waits to see if the negative decides to attack it. If the negative feels that the debate is on unfair ground —so unfair that they can't properly refute the case— then they can challenge the affirmative on this burden. **Topicality** is the claim that plan falls under the topic and that the affirmative has made a fair interpretation of the topic.

In addition to being topical, a plan should also be significant. Significance is the claim that the plan is a significant rupture with the status quo. It isn't acceptable for the plan to be only a tiny tweak, like a slight increase in funding. Changing too little is unfair, otherwise there's not enough ground for the negative side. Significance used to be considered a separate stock issue from topicality, but most people today lump them together. In the next chapter, we'll discuss how to argue topicality, but for now, let's talk about the most important mistakes that might lead you to write an unfair plan.

To write a good plan, you need to pretend that you have the power to put your plan into action. Of course, we know the affirmative's plan won't really happen.

Debaters aren't Senators or Congress-people (yet). But instead of debating about a vague idea like the whole topic, you can instead debate something simple and concrete: one plan. Here's a bad sample plan:

> In defense of this year's topic, we offer the following plan: The U.S. government should grant permanent Most Favored Nation trading status to the People's Republic of China, with the Republicans proposing plan in the subcommittee, with the Senate voting as soon as time can be cleared on the legislative agenda, with the measure coming to a floor vote within two months that should be tied with the Vice-President voting as a tie-breaker, and the President's vote of acceptance within three weeks. China should be kept informed of the ongoing passage of the plan during this time by the U.S. Department of State.

Do we need to go on? It's not simple. It's also starting to get unfair, and the negative team might point that out, with the judge likely to agree. Why is it unfair? Well, let's think about the China topic (Resolved: That the United States government should substantially change its foreign policy toward the People's Republic of China.). The topic asks the question "should", as does every topic. The affirmative has proposed a plan to prove that we should make some change.

Part of the negative's ground is pointing out the consequences of the change. For example, the negative might argue that Republicans like the current policy towards China and that passage of the plan would upset the balance between the parties. In the above plan, the affirmative is trying to preempt those issues of political party consequences. This tactic is called **spiking** the

plan. Spiking is the practice of focusing on the "how" questions of passing plan instead of the "what plan does" questions. In other words, plan should have the fewest details of plan enactment necessary to make sense, and should focus on the plan's actions and consequences. Your plan should use **normal means** wherever possible. The plan should happen as any similar bill, treaty, executive order, or policy would happen. This focuses the debate on whether a policy (and all its component sub-policies) would work instead of whether or how a policy would pass. The negative simply cannot argue plan could not pass—it is irrelevant to the debate. This idea is called **fiat**: we assume, for the purposes of the debate, that the affirmative plan hypothetically will pass.

Fiat, however, only extends to actions within the resolution:

> In defense of this year's topic, we offer the following plan: The federal government should create a national health care system based on the Canadian model, with funding through cutting the military budget by 50%.

Whether cutting military funding is a good or bad idea, it has absolutely no connection to this topic. The affirmative can properly claim fiat for creating a health care system. However, the affirmative cannot claim fiat for cutting the military budget. That action is **extra-topical**: outside the topic's scope. The affirmative could claim that cuts in the military budget will be a consequence of plan (as could the negative), but the affirmative cannot fiat the cuts.

CHAPTER 9

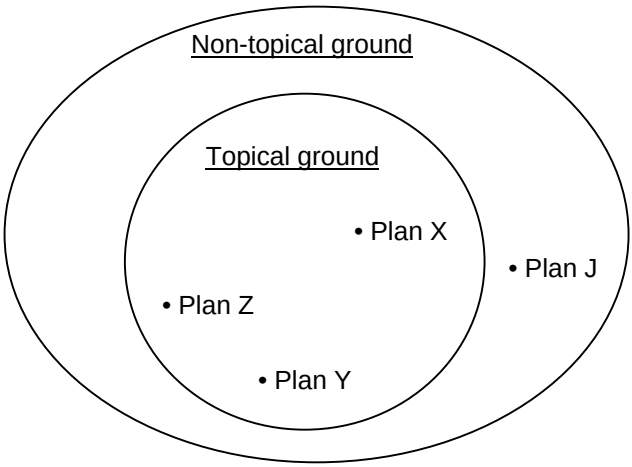
Debating topicality

9.1 Why argue topicality?

The affirmative has the choice of ground in the debate. The affirmative also has an "infinite" amount of pre-round preparation. However, sometimes the affirmative abuses its prerogative and chooses a plan that is based on a less than fair interpretation of the topic. The topicality option serves three purposes: (1) it protects the negative against unpredictable affirmative plans, (2) it protects the negative against unfair, abusive affirmative plans, and (3) it makes for a good competitive season of debate by generally discouraging affirmatives from running wacky plans.

Topicality is the affirmative stock issue that does not get mentioned at all in the 1AC. Topicality is the name we give to any argument about whether the affirmative plans falls within the resolution. It is unlike the other stock issues in a key way: it is an either/or issue. *Either* the affirmative plan is topical, *or* it is not. Solvency or harms contentions might be weakened by the negative but still won by the affirmative, but not so with topicality. Furthermore, the negative loses nothing if the affirmative wins topicality. It is, typically, a risk-less strategy for the negative—its only cost is the time to make the argument.

If the affirmative plan is an unreasonable and unfair interpretation of the topic, then the debate shouldn't even have happened—the debate should have been over before it began. The negative spent lots of time preparing for plans X, Y, and Z, and the affirmative decided to argue for plan J. The negative team has interpreted the topic in this way:



The big circle represents all possible ideas. The smaller circle demarcates what the negative thinks should be affirmative ground. The negative believes that the affirmative has the right to run plans X, Y, or Z, but not plan J.

9.2 How do I write a topicality position?

Interpretation

What makes a topicality issue? The negative will present four arguments: definition, violation, standards, and a voting issue. We'll go through the component parts in order. Let's look at an example topicality from the pollution topic (Resolved: That the United States government should reduce worldwide pollution through its trade and/or aid policies.). One plan on this topic was to fiat that the U.S. government should sign the Basel Convention, which would prohibit the trade of hazardous materials between countries, especially used nuclear fuels. (Amazingly, many poor nations accept payment from rich nations to dump toxic waste in their countries.)

The definition will be the first part of the topicality position:

A. *Definition:* from ***Russell's Dictionary***, **1929**:

> Pollution – (noun) 1. the act of emitting dangerous or noxious substances into the

> environment, ecosystem, or any area, 2. the substances so emitted

As the negative, you will choose one word from the resolution and give a definition of it. Dictionary definitions are fine; definitions from expert authors and journals are good, because they are more specific. These expert definitions are called **contextual** definitions. "Common man" definitions, such as definitions you might find in a newspaper, are good. Furthermore, you don't necessarily even need a published source. If you can write a clear, fair definition, which lucidly articulates what the topic should mean, then your definition is sufficient.

The next part of the topicality position will be the violation:

B. *Violation:*

> Basel would apply to materials that are being moved between nations for proper disposal regardless of whether they sometimes fail. Proper disposal of hazardous material isn't pollution. Therefore, the affirmative plan does not meet the word "pollution" in the topic.

This is a reasonable enough violation. The violation is simply an explanation of why you think the affirmative plan is not under (or within) the resolution, specifically, it does not meet the requirements of the word in the resolution you've defined.

The negative needs to explain and defend how it drew its "circle" of the topic. It is important to

remember that the negative's **interpretation** of the topic —the definition and the violation—must be reasonable and fair. Reasonable and fair means that the interpretation is suitable to both sides and gives neither an undue advantage. Words can mean whatever we want them to mean. The real question is not what a word "actually" means (no such thing). The real question is what interpretation of the word makes the most "sense" in the context of a round—what makes for a clear, fair debate.

The arguments in defense of the fairness of your interpretation are called **standards**, or reasons to prefer your interpretation. The standards will be the next part of your topicality position:

C. *Standards:*

1. Limits: Restricting the affirmative to plans that prohibit international pollution, not just accidental spills, is an important way to reduce our research burden and allow for more in-depth debate.

2. Mechanism: The topic intends for the affirmative to use U.S. trade and/or aid policies as the mechanism to reduce pollution. The affirmative instead treats trade itself as a form of pollution. For example, why not require more experienced ship captains to reduce oil spills, tankers to run on solar power, or ship-hull disinfections to keep species from migrating across different oceans?

3. Plans that would meet our interpretation: ban pesticide sales; require catalytic converters on cars sold to South America and Asia; give development aid to poor countries in return for protection of forests; or build nuclear reactors in China to reduce coal-powered electricity.

Here are two cogent arguments, with good examples, for why your topicality interpretation is a reasonable interpretation. The third standard, plans that would meet your interpretation, should always be included in the standards, whatever your topicality argument. Always give examples of what you would find acceptable and topical.

Your standards must adapt and change for each topicality and for each affirmative plan. Many negatives will use the same standards for every topicality and never change them. I think these multipurpose, multiuse standards are meaningless and useless. All standards boil down to why the negative has given a fair interpretation, so of course, that defense needs to be specific to each interpretation and case. Preferably the whole topicality, most especially the standards, should be specific to each plan.

Voting issue

The final argument on topicality is the voting issue. Why should the judge take this issue seriously? Again, there are lots of reasons given commonly by many negatives that are simply nonsense. It doesn't matter how a negative phrases it, because the voting issue of topicality always boils down to one of two things: (1)

fair division of ground or (2) jurisdiction. You can make one or both of these arguments. Let's talk about them in order.

Fair division of ground is the argument that the affirmative has gained an unfair advantage by being nontopical. There are a few ways to go about this. One way is by showing that the affirmative wrote their plan in a way that made the negative unable to mount a good offense. They do so by pointing to specific arguments that the affirmative made that excluded positions to which the negative feels entitled. This is called **in-round abuse**. A second way is **potential abuse**, the argument that although the affirmative has not gained an unfair advantage in this round, their interpretation could be used to gain an unfair advantage in a later round: they might even go on to run some more ridiculous plan. If we hypothetically accepted the affirmative's interpretation for all the debates this year, would we like what we would see? A slightly different tack is the premise that **education** has been hurt: the debate has drifted so far from the original topic that neither the affirmative nor negative is learning anything relevant.

Jurisdiction is a completely different approach. Instead of appealing to an abstract concept of fairness, the negative makes the argument that the affirmative has failed to uphold the topic. If your affirmative opponents run a nontopical plan, they have merely proved that plan is a good idea, but not upheld the topic's worthiness. If the affirmative plan is outside the topic, then the judge has no right to vote for the affirmative, because the affirmative role is to affirm the topic and they haven't played their part. His or her power extends only to doing or not doing topical actions.

9.3 How do affirmatives answer topicality?

Basically, the affirmative has four responses to any topicality argument, and if you are affirmative, you should always try to make all four:

1. *We meet:* Explain how your case meets their definition and interpretation of the topic.

2. *Negative interpretation is bad:* Explain why the negative interpretation is unfair to the affirmative team and would make for a bad debate. In other words, you argue that the negative has not divided the ground fairly.

3. *Counterinterpretation:* (It must have *all* three parts to make sense!)

    a. Counterdefinition: Provide a new definition of the word in question.

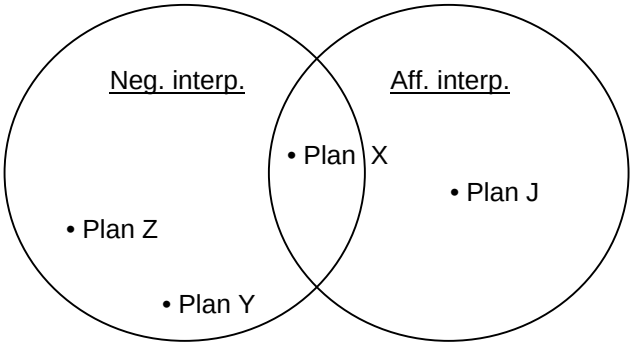
    b. We meet counterdefinition: Explain why your case meets the new definition.

    c. Counterinterpretation best: Explain why your counterinterpretation offers a better way to understand the topic than the negative interpretation does.

4. *Topicality is not a voter:* Explain why you feel that you should not lose the round, even if you are deemed non-topical.

You can, of course, make multiple arguments for each type of response. For example, you can provide three counterinterpretations if you wish.

A counterinterpretation provides an alternative to the negative interpretation. It would look like this, if we were to draw a diagram:



The negative has provided its interpretation of the topic, in which plans X, Y, and Z are topical. The affirmative interpretation agrees that plan X is topical, adds plan J, but does not agree that plan Z or Y is topical. Now we have an argument about which interpretation is fairest and makes for the best debates (not just in this round, but fairest for rounds on this topic). Would it be better to debate this set of plans {X, Y, Z} or this set of plans {J, X}? The judge will vote for the interpretation that makes for the best possible world of debate.

CHAPTER 10

Debating disadvantages

10.1 What is a disadvantage?

Your second strategy option on the negative is to present disadvantages to the affirmative plan. What are the ways in which the affirmative plan could make the world worse? Every change and alteration entails some risk; a precise scenario is of what could go wrong is a disadvantage. As a negative, you're saying that a judge should choose the status quo by default. The status quo may not be perfect, but at least, there's less danger in it. A disadvantage has three component parts: (a) uniqueness and brink, (b) link and internal links, and (c) impact. We'll tackle these in reverse order.

Impacts

Let's say we are debating China topic (Resolved: That the United States government should substantially change its foreign policy toward the People's Republic of China.). Let's say that the affirmative proposes opening up trade with China and giving China Most Favored Nation (MFN) trading status. You on the negative may point out that this may cause U.S. manufacturing jobs to move to China. So what? Why would we care that jobs left the U.S.?

The argument that answers this question is the **impact**. It is important to not confuse the "impact" of an argument (its relevance in the round) with a disadvantage impact. The disadvantage impact shows why the (potential) outcome of the plan could be bad. Impacts are the outcomes that nearly everyone agrees would be undesirable; they function in the same way that harms do for the affirmative case. Furthermore, the disadvantage impact must outweigh—that is, be more important than—any possible benefit of the plan:

Negative	Affirmative
Impact outweighs	*case harms + advantages*
500K U.S. manufacturing jobs	vs. giving China MFN

If the impact doesn't outweigh the case harms and advantages, then there's no point to running the disadvantage, unless you can whittle the case down to the point where the disadvantage does outweigh. If the case benefits outweigh the disadvantage risk, then no judge would vote for the disadvantage. Mixing case

attacks and a disadvantage is a solid strategy, a sword-and-shield approach.

So, how can a disadvantage outweigh a case? Well, there are three important factors in figuring out whether the risk is too great: (a) magnitude, (b) probability, and (c) timeframe. The magnitude simply refers to the nastiness of the impact. Five hundred thousand jobs is a large magnitude impact. Destruction of the world's climate is an even larger magnitude impact. Probability refers to the riskiness of the impact. Is it a very certain risk, say, 90%? Or is it a long-shot risk like 5%? Finally, **timeframe** refers to how long it will take the impact to come to fruition. The loss of jobs is quick—a year or two. The destruction of the world's climate will take much, much longer. It is a little silly to assign numbers to consequences that are difficult to quantify, but if you could, you would simply multiply the three factors together to get the "total":

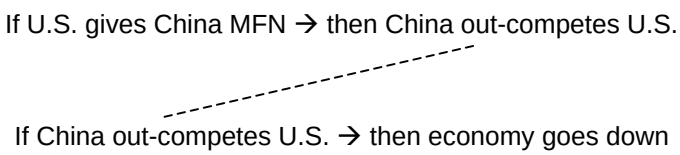
Magnitude x Probability x Timeframe = Total impact

Links and internal links

But something must get us to the impact. The impact won't just happen on its own. As the negative, you must argue for the steps from the case that would lead to the impact. These steps are called the **internal links**. What would get us to 500,000 jobs being lost? Well, the economy might go down.

If the economy goes down → then jobs will be lost

So, what would cause the economy to go down? Well, if we give China MFN, then China may out-compete the U.S.:



Etc., etc. In other words, we've constructed a causal-chain. A leads to B, B leads to C, etc., until we get to the impact. Each element in the chain is an internal link that must be proven.

All well and good, you might think, but how does this connect back to the affirmative case? The disadvantage's **link** makes this connection. The link is the argument that the plan would start us down this terrible chain of events. A link is directly related to what the plan does. In essence, the link is the first of many internal links. You should never argue a disadvantage that has no link to the plan.

Uniqueness and brink

The final part of a disadvantage is its uniqueness and brink. In order to prove that the judge should prefer the status quo to the plan, the negative must show that the status quo doesn't cause the disadvantage, whereas the plan does. Therefore, the negative must show that of the two possible worlds (status quo and plan-implemented), the undesirable consequences are unique to the plan-implemented world. Hence, **uniqueness** is the

argument that the status quo will not cause the disadvantage.

Each and every causal argument must have uniqueness. Think of our model that A causes B, B causes C, and so on. What if B just happened in the status quo? Then we still might get to the impact—even if we didn't start at the beginning of our chain. You need to be able to prove that every causal argument is unique: that it won't happen in the status quo, that it would only happen if the plan happens.

The **brink** is the argument that in the current state of affairs, the internal link is just about to happen and any small change could push us over the edge. We are right now on the edge of a cliff. For example, although the economy is OK now, it is a very dangerous time. Even a small thing—like China getting MFN status—could push the economy over the edge and therefore cause it to decline. A brink is therefore similar in some ways to the uniqueness, and the two are usually argued together. The brink is also sometimes called a **threshold**.

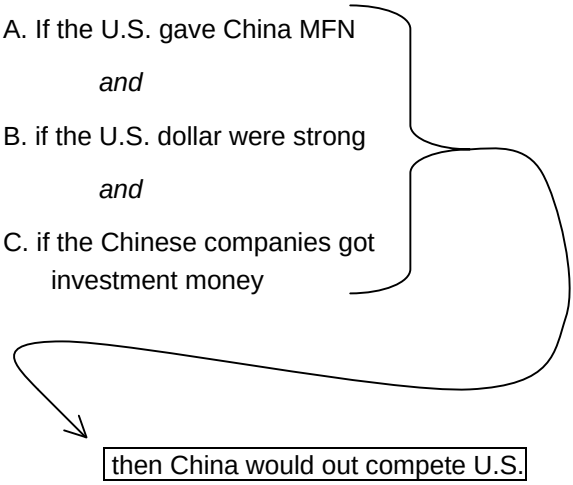
10.2 Arguments about cause-and-effect

Unfortunately, the simple picture we painted before of links and internal links is not quite accurate. The argument that

$$A \rightarrow B \rightarrow C$$

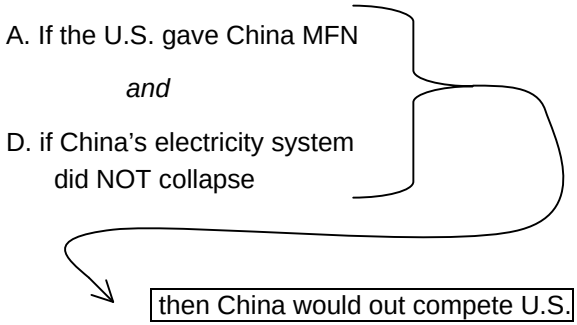
is called the slippery slope fallacy. It's not that the causal-chain wrong, but that it's too much an

oversimplification. A alone doesn't *cause* B to happen. If the U.S. were to give China MFN, that alone probably wouldn't cause China to out-compete the U.S. Several other things must be true. For example, the U.S. dollar needs to be strong. If the dollar is weak, it could make U.S. goods cheaper than Chinese goods. In addition, the companies of China would need investment money in order to capitalize on MFN. Otherwise, they couldn't out compete the U.S. companies. So, instead of A simply causing B, our diagram should look more like this:

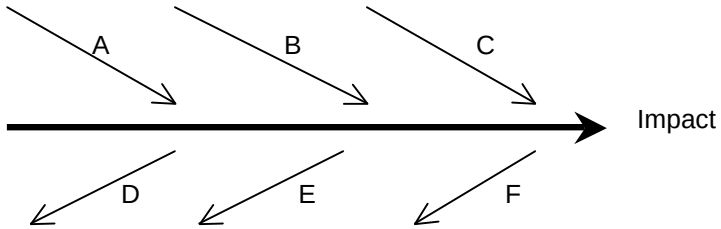


In other words, at least three factors need to be true for China to out-compete the U.S. It's not that A leads to B. It's that A is one of the conditions that make B more likely. B, in turn, is one of the conditions that make C more likely. It's not as if three worlds follow on each other's heels: world A, world B, and world C. It's

that A, B, and C are all factors in creating the impact world from the status quo world. However, we also know that for the impact to happen, certain things cannot be the case. For example, if the U.S. gives China MFN, but China's electricity system collapses, the Chinese companies would not out-compete the U.S. companies.



Causality arguments are tricky because so many factors, contributing and restraining, must be lined up properly for the internal link chain to happen. We can simplify all the above conditions into an Ishikawa diagram, with the contributing factors above, and restraining factors below:



In other words, A, B, and C are not really like steps in a chain, but more like three sequential factors which push us, successively, from the status quo all the way along to the impact. Likewise, the restraining factors must be minimized or non-existent, or they would check the impact from happening. This diagram corrects the slippery slope fallacy of A → B → C.

10.3 How do affirmatives answer disadvantages?

There are twelve different arguments that an affirmative can make against a disadvantage:

1. *No link:* Explain why plan won't start the ball (the disadvantage) rolling.

2. *Link turn:* Explain how plan would actually reverse the disadvantage. NOTE: Do not make a link turn simultaneously with an impact turn (#12). That would be a double-turn. You either want to argue that plan prevents something bad or that plan causes something good. You certainly don't want to argue that plan prevents something good.

3. *Non-unique:* Explain how the status quo is just as risky for the disadvantage as the plan. NOTE: Do not make this simultaneously with a #7. You don't want to argue that the uniqueness is too good and not good enough?

4. *Alternate causality:* Explain how factors, other than the plan, may lead to the disadvantage.

5. *Empirically denied:* Explain how a historical example should have caused the disadvantage. Since the historical example didn't cause the disadvantage, this shows that it's a false risk.

6. *No brink:* (or "no threshold") Explain why the plan is not big enough to cause the disadvantage.

7. *Uniqueness overwhelms the link:* Explain how the uniqueness is so strong—the status quo is so stable—that the risk of the disadvantage is nil. Basically, you're saying that the negative link and uniqueness evidence contradict. NOTE: Do not make this with a #3.

8. *No internal link:* Explain that even if you start the disadvantage happening, it wouldn't go all the way to the final impact (also called "no scenario").

9. *No timeframe:* Explain that the impact would be too far away in the future.

10. *No impact:* Explain why even if the disadvantage happens, the impact would be meaningless: too small in magnitude, or too little probability.

11. *Case outweighs:* Explain how case harms/advantages are bigger than the impact.

12. *Impact turn:* Explain how the disadvantage happening would actually be good, not bad. NOTE: Do not make this with a #2.

CHAPTER 11

Debating counterplans

11.1 What is a counterplan?

Counterplans are the third major negative strategy option. Unlike the disadvantage, counterplans are not defenses of the status quo. As the negative, you may choose to present a better option than the affirmative plan. With a disadvantage, you say that the judge should choose the status quo by default. With a counterplan, you say that the judge should pick your alternative. That's the gist of the counterplan. However, the counterplan is an important and subtle argument, so we need to carefully think it through. At the moment that this book is being written, counterplans are banned in PF debate. However, it is still useful to think through

how counterplans work. Counterplans are completely acceptable in CX debate. Counterplans have three main components: (a) parametrics or nontopicality, (b) competition or mutual exclusivity, and (c) net benefits. Let's go through the components in reverse order.

Net benefits

The counterplan should be superior to the affirmative plan because it is has **net benefits** compared to the plan. Net just means "on balance". As the negative, you are making some strategic concessions by running a counterplan—you are admitting that the harms and inherency of the affirmative case are true, because you are not trying to defend the status quo. You are also (tacitly) admitting that the plan may work (somewhat) to solve the problems in the status quo. However, you are presenting an alternative that is even better. The affirmative plan may be OK, but the counterplan is better and has net benefits. There are two main ways to establish the net benefits of a counterplan:

1. *Counterplan avoids a disadvantage:* Explain how the counterplan is less risky than the affirmative plan. (In this scenario, the disadvantage's uniqueness refers, not to the status quo, but to the counterplan.)

2. *Counterplan has better solvency:* Explain how the counterplan works better than the affirmative plan to solve the affirmative case harms and advantages.

Most counterplans try to do both. If a counterplan avoids a small risk, but solves better, then a judge can vote for it. If a counterplan avoids a large risk, but only solves as well as the affirmative plan, then a judge can vote for it. And if a counterplan avoids a huge risk, a judge can vote for it, even if the counterplan doesn't solve as well as the affirmative plan does. Net benefits means on balance, and so the judge will look at whether the balance of benefits and risks is better for the plan or for the counterplan. A counterplan needs to have net benefits—but these alone are not enough.

Competition and mutual exclusivity

If the affirmative were able to run any plan it desired, then it run an unpredictable, strong case every time and would win every round by capitalizing on the value of surprise. This is why the choice of affirmative plan is limited by the resolution, and this constraint is enforced through negative topicality arguments. There has to be a similar check on counterplans, otherwise the negative would always win. That check is competitiveness, and it's enforced through affirmative permutation arguments.

Please remember the basic question a judge answers in deciding a round: is the affirmative plan a good idea worth implementing? A good disadvantage shows that the plan is not worth implementing because the risks are too high. However, providing an alternative does not prove that the plan is not worth implementing. Presenting a good alternative—even an alternative that is better than the plan—is not enough. A counterplan needs to be competitive, meaning that a counterplan

must prove that we should do the counterplan and not do the plan. **Competitiveness** explains why it is impossible or undesirable to do both the plan and counterplan together; the judge must choose between the plan and counterplan.

Therefore by doing plan, we lose the opportunity of doing the counterplan. For example, if the affirmative plan were to legalize drugs, a counterplan to disarm our nuclear arsenal could never be competitive. We can legalize drugs and disarm simultaneously. A counterplan to increase penalties for drug crimes would be competitive, because it would be impossible to legalize and further criminalize drug crimes. You can see how allowing the former counterplan would make debate pointless—the negative would just pull out a bigger and more unpredictable stick every time. But the second counterplan (to increase penalties for drug crimes) heightens the contrasts between the affirmative and negative, allowing closer examination of the merits of the plan. It is an example of **mutual exclusivity**, where the counterplan and plan can't possibly happen together. Usually, however, counterplans are competitive simply because doing both the plan and counterplan together is a bad idea.

The best way for the affirmative to challenge the competitiveness of a counterplan is by making a permutation. A **permutation** is:

ALL OF THE AFFIRMATIVE PLAN PLUS PART OR ALL OF THE NEGATIVE COUNTERPLAN.

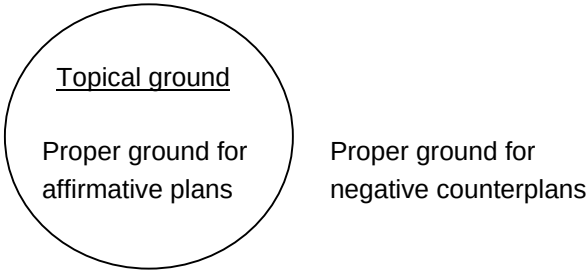
No more, no less. The affirmative cannot sever out of any part of its plan in a permutation, and it may not add

any new elements not in the counterplan (or plan) to its perm. Adding new elements is called an **instrinsicness** permuation. Subtracting plan elements is called a **severance** permutation. Both are considered unfair. In order for the negative to win the counterplan, it must prove that the counterplan alone is more net beneficial than both the plan alone, and any legitimate permutation. A tie is awarded to the affirmative.

SITUATION	WHO WINS?
CP alone is exactly as good as plan	Affirmative
CP alone is exactly as good as perm	Affirmative
CP alone is inferior to plan	Affirmative
CP alone is inferior to perm	Affirmative
CP alone is superior to both plan and perm	Negative

Nontopicality and parametrics

The final component of a counterplan is its parametrics or nontopicality argument. The **nontopicality** argument is the argument that the counterplan is outside of the resolution. The argument is very similar in concept to a topicality argument, except in reverse. Many debate judges believe that every counterplan must be nontopical. This does have much sense behind it. If we have a topical action solve the problem, then we lose the opportunity to have a conflicting nontopical action solve the problem. In other words, they would draw the diagram on the next page:



Everything within the circle is fair game for affirmative plans; everything outside, fair game for negative counterplans; and never shall the twain meet.

The other school of thought is that counterplans do not need to be nontopical. Counterplans can be topical to judges who believe in **parametrics**. These judges believe that once the affirmative team picks its plan, the rest of the resolution fades away to insignificance. All the negative team has to do is attack the plan presented to them. A topical counterplan is one that *could* be presented as a topical plan in another round. If you decide to present a topical counterplan, then you need to argue for parametrics by pointing out that the plan, and not the resolution, is the focus of your attack. Either way you decide to go, you need to provide a defense of why your counterplan is fair.

11.2 How does a negative use a counterplan?

What happens to the negative team if it loses the counterplan? Does the negative team lose the debate? The question is about whether presenting a plan (or

counterplan) entails advocacy. If you believe in advocacy, the negative is stuck defending the counterplan, a reciprocal burden to the affirmative being stuck with defending the plan. That means that if the affirmative proves that the counterplan is a bad idea, the negative loses the debate.

Most judges believe in counterplan advocacy, a belief called dispositionality. **Dispositionality** is the idea that a counterplan "goes away" only if the affirmative wins that a permutation is the best option. If the counterplan goes away, then the negative is left defending the status quo by default. However, aside from permutations, the negative is stuck with the counterplan. If the affirmative proves that the counterplan is worse than plan, the negative loses. Because the negative advocates the counterplan, they can only present one per round.

A few judges do not believe in counterplan advocacy, a belief called conditionality. **Conditionality** is the idea that the negative team is merely proposing a hypothesis, merely testing the affirmative, with the counterplan. If the affirmative proves that the counterplan is bad, the negative may still win by proving that the affirmative plan is bad in some other way. Under the conditionality interpretation, the negative may run as many counterplans as it wishes in the debate round. If a counterplan is only a test, then the plan should be subjected to many tests as the negative wishes. It's important to make it clear to the judge and your opponents whether you will be arguing for dispositionality or conditionality. Conditionality is far more controversial and far more difficult to justify than dispositionality.

Examples

Remember the health care topic (Resolved: That the federal government should guarantee comprehensive national health insurance to all United States citizens.). Let's say the affirmative plan is for the federal government to provide insurance through a Canadian-style system. One possible counterplan is for the state governments to provide insurance:

> My partner and I offer the following dispositional counterplan: All 50 state governments, plus those of our territories and commonwealths, should provide comprehensive health insurance through a system based on the Canadian model.

This looks like a good counterplan text. This kind of counterplan is known as an **agent counterplan**, meaning that the counterplan and the plan would do *exactly* the same thing; the only difference is that a different government actor would do the same action. A different nation, a different agency, or a different branch of government would also be suitable for agent counterplans. Another kind of a counterplan is known as the **process counterplan**. In the process counterplan, the government actor would be exactly the same, but the action or process would be different. For example:

> My partner and I offer the following dispositional counterplan: The federal government could provide better comprehensive health insurance through a system based on the German model.

This is also a good counterplan text. You'll notice that in this example, the process counterplan is topical and parametrics-based, while the agent counterplan is non-topical. This is merely an artifact of my examples. It could easily have been reversed with other examples.

One final important note about the counterplan text you write:

> WORD YOUR COUNTERPLAN TEXT SIMILARLY TO THE PLAN TEXT.

This necessitates changing the counterplan text every time. The reason for similar wordings is that you want the important difference—such as the federal government's vs. the state governments' effectiveness—to be as clear as possible. You don't want to ignore a seemingly minor part of the plan that turns out to be very important once the debate gets going. In other words, make all other things equal except the key difference by copying your opponents' plan text as closely as possible.

11.3 How do affirmatives answer counterplans?

Responding to a counterplan requires a lot of good argumentation, but the arguments you make are all very straightforward. The trick of refuting a counterplan is remembering it interacts significantly with every other issue in the round: with disadvantages, with topicality, with case positions, and with critiques. Here are the four basic arguments against counterplans:

1. *Attack the net benefits:*
    a. Explain how plan solves better than the counterplan, *and/or:*
    b. Explain how plan avoids the risks as well or better than the counterplan.
2. *Permutation:* (requires both parts)
    a. Explain how you would combine part or all of the counterplan with the entire plan.
    b. Explain why the permutation is the best option.
3. *Attack the parametrics* or *non-topicality:* Explain why the counterplan makes the debate unfair.

You should try to make several permutations, and explain all the different ways that plan might be combined with the counterplan.

CHAPTER 12
Weighing rounds

12.1 Affirmative values

We've discussed three major negative strategies: topicality, disadvantages, and counterplans. Now, we get to the fourth and final major negative position: critiques. But before we talk about critiques, we need to discuss values. Critiques and values are interconnected arguments.

Affirmative values

What is a value? A value is the most important goal or ideal behind a policymaking decision process. How should we evaluate whether an impact or case harm is

substantial or irrelevant to our decision? Is the most important goal of the policymaker to help the economy —or is it to help the unemployed? Should the policymaker be more concerned about protecting civil rights or making the U.S. more respected abroad? Most of the time, the affirmative will make its values clear. However, sometimes the affirmative case's values are implicit and unstated. Let's look at an example from the health care topic:

Harms: 50,000 people die from lack of health insurance.
Inherency: The U.S. Congress will not pass new health care laws.
Plan: The federal government should provide a socialized health care system, based on the Canadian model.
Solvency: The Canadian model will work well for the U.S.

What is the main value of this affirmative case? You might say the value of this case is, "Allowing death from the lack of health insurance is bad." That is certainly a possibility. Or perhaps it is, "People dying because they can't afford health insurance is unfair." Both "fairness" and "preservation of life" are strong possibilities. One case can espouse several values.

Sometimes, an affirmative will claim that the case is value-neutral, that is, the case has no values. The case appears to be like a newspaper article, objective and balanced. That is <u>never</u> true. Whereas a newspaper writer may truly not care about whether a particular law or policy passes, a debater of course wants a particular

policy to pass or not pass. One cannot advocate a policy without forwarding a value that justifies it. The example above may appear to be value-neutral at first. The death of so many people seems objectively bad. Implicitly, however, the affirmative is making an implicit value argument. Despite appearing neutral, the affirmative case is defending the value that every life is worth preserving.

Generalization and utilitarianism

What makes a value a value? We all agree that life is valuable, but why? We all agree that freedom is good, but why? These questions and other questions like them are perhaps the most difficult questions ever asked. There are several different answers to the "why" questions, but we'll only discuss two: the principle of generalization and the utilitarian principle. These two principles provide alternate explanations of the roots of values.

The principle of generalization argues that values are values because we want everyone to follow the same rules. Under the generalization principle, we take a value and generalize it to determine if it's morally commendable. In one situation, you may want theft to be acceptable, but in general, you never want to see theft be an acceptable response to desperation, otherwise some day you might be mugged. To determine if a value is morally commendable, we must ask ourselves, "Do I want this to be the general value that everyone, including me, should hold and follow?" If the answer is no, the value is untenable. To compare two values, we ask which generalized value is preferable—we look

beyond the specific example to the hypothetical, faithful implementation of each value.

The utilitarian principle argues that values are based on what produces the greatest happiness (or greatest benefit) for the greatest number of people. We take a value and ask whether more people are made happier by it than people who are made unhappy. For you math types, it would look like this:

(# of people) x (degree of happiness)
vs.
(# of people) x (degree of unhappiness)

If the quantity on top is bigger, then the value is good. If the quantity on bottom is bigger, then the value is bad. Most utilitarians believe that the equation above is abstract; no one actually uses numbers. Instead, what is important is that the value analysis one can do with this equation. It makes intuitive sense: a good value produces happy people; furthermore, almost every policy will make at least a few people unhappy. Under the "regime" of any value, some people will gain happiness, while others must lose it. What is key is the net balance.

Consequentialism and deontology

Now that we have discussed the theories of the root of values, we can discuss how you might use and weigh values during a round. The negative might agree with the affirmative values and debate within that framework. For example, if the affirmative has argued that preservation of life is the key value for deciding the

round, then the negative could agree and try to prove that the status quo best preserves that value by running disadvantages that claim the affirmative plan would kill more people than it would save. Alternatively, the negative might disagree with the affirmative value and propose a countervalue, under which the affirmative would lose. The negative therefore would need to prove both that their countervalue is superior to the affirmative value, and that the affirmative plan would be bad under this countervalue. How the negative does the latter part should already be clear (see the last three chapters). But how do we compare the value and the countervalue? For example, say that the affirmative wants to preserve life, but the negative argues that we need to save money. How do we figure out who should win the debate? There are two main ways to compare value arguments: (a) consequentialism and (b) deontology.

Consequentialism is an approach in which the consequences and values intermingle. Just like the risk analysis for impacts, you multiply across to weigh a value against another. For example, preserving a little freedom may not be worth the preservation of many lives. On the other hand, a lot of freedoms may outweigh a few lives. We make judgments like this everyday in public policy. We let some criminals free if they were improperly arrested, while we may not release potential terrorists despite violating the Geneva Convention. In philosophy, this idea is called pragmatism. Frequently, those cases that claim to be value-neutral are actually espousing a consequentialist approach. It is important to note that while consequentialism and utilitarianism are two mutually

reinforcing ideas, they are quite different. Many debaters wrongly use these terms interchangeably. Utilitarianism refers to the way that we generate values; consequentialism refers to the way that we use values in actual policymaking.

Deontology is very different. The **deontology** approach argues that values cannot be weighed against one another. In deontology, we must determine which value supersedes the other, that is, which value is more important. Essentially, we create a hierarchy of values. To one deontologist, freedom (no matter how much) is always more important than national security (no matter how much); or to a different deontologist, national security is always more important than freedom. You may notice that deontologists are absolutists: what is right is always right to them. Consequentialists are frequently more flexible. Please note that just because an affirmative case argues for a particular approach to weighing values does not mean the negative is stuck. Just like the negative can propose a countervalue, the negative can always argue for a different approach.

12.2 Countervalues

Now, we can discuss how a negative team might propose a countervalue. The two main ways are to critique the affirmative or to argue a linear disadvantage. Each one provides a valuable way to move the round away from the affirmative's values.

Critiques

The **critique**, sometimes spelled kritik and abbreviated as K, attacks the affirmative values and provides a countervalue. Critiques are both the simplest of all the four major negative positions, and yet paradoxically, also the most confusing. A critique has three major components: (a) the criticism, (b) the implication, and (c) the alternative.

The **criticism** explains what are the deficiencies of the affirmative values. The criticism might be that the affirmative value is outright wrong or bad. Or, the criticism might be that the values proposed by the affirmative are advocated improperly. For example, a case might present the preservation of life as a value, yet the case could be constructed in such a way that life is only preserved for the rich. Even the language and rhetoric used by the affirmative to defend the plan may be considered in the criticism. The affirmative case's values and/or the affirmative team's advocacy are analyzed in the criticism. In this sense, the criticism is very much like a link to a disadvantage. However, negatives may argue that a criticism differs from a link, since a link only applies to the plan—to the direct actions that the affirmative fiats—while some believe that a criticism can "link" more broadly to all different parts of the affirmative case and even to the affirmative advocacy.

The **implication** explains why the deficiencies in the affirmative's values warrant a win for the negative. The implication is often quite philosophical and may be couched in complicated rhetoric, but it is always, at base, a straightforward argument. The affirmative chose

its values; the values' deficiencies are sufficiently bad to warrant uncompromised rejection. Because a critique may apply to plan actions and affirmative advocacy, it is considered a **pre-fiat** argument. "Pre" is a misnomer: It doesn't mean "prior in time", but "adjudicated first". In other words, a judge must decide all the pre-fiat issues, before he or she can determine which team won the policy-level debate. Topicality, counterplan dispositionality or conditionality, and critiques are all examples of pre-fiat arguments that must be resolved before substantive issues. A nontopical plan loses, regardless of whether it's a good policy. A successfully critiqued plan loses, regardless of whether it's an effective policy.

Finally, a critique typically presents an alternative. The **alternative** is the countervalue: what value the judge should base his or her decision upon. The alternative isn't a counterplan; it should not be a specific action, although negatives may certainly run a counterplan alongside a critique (with the critique as the counterplan's net benefit). Instead, the alternative merely shows that it is possible to make rational policy decisions without using the affirmative values. The negative envisions policymaking differently.

While the critique is primarily a negative position, the affirmative can sometimes get in on the act and **countercritique** the negative. Countercritiques attack the values and advocacy of the negative team.

Linear disadvantages

In Ch. 10, we discussed disadvantages. Well, to be more accurate, we discussed brink-based disadvantages:

the affirmative pushes us toward a catastrophic danger. Nearly all disadvantages are brink-based. The exceptions are the linear disadvantages. In a **linear disadvantage**, the plan would cause problems in a direct way. Linear disadvantages have impacts, links and internal links, but no uniqueness or brink. Instead, linear disadvantages explain how plan gradually, incrementally incurs problems. For example, each dollar that we spend on plan reduces the government's ability to pay for vital social services, harming the poorest people. If plan spends $20 million, then 900 people would be hurt. If plan spends $40 million, then 1800 people would be hurt. The brink-based disadvantage is a risk analysis; the linear disadvantage is an incremental analysis. In a brink-based disadvantage, the status quo isn't risky, thus the uniqueness. In a linear disadvantage, the status quo could be already be bad, but the argument is that plan will only make these problems worse. Thus, linear disadvantages propose an alternate framework to consider the round. Linear disadvantages and critiques serve similar functions in providing alternate frameworks, so much so that some people refer to critiques as morally-grounded, value-based linear disadvantages.

12.3 Conclusion

Now you know all four of the major negative positions. Preparation is an intense part of policy debate, and you should always prepare with an eye to future rounds. When choosing your affirmative case, you should

consider what counterplans, critiques, disadvantages, and topicality positions you are likely to hear against each possible case. Likewise, when preparing on the negative, you should consider what affirmative cases you are most likely to hear. You should choose at least a few negative positions that can be used against multiple affirmative cases. These generic negative positions may not always apply, but they will apply often enough to save you significant preparation work.

Don't think that just because you know the basics that the learning has stopped. This book has only brushed cursorily upon the tip of the theoretical iceberg. There's a lot more to learn, and the best way to learn it is to keep asking questions. Getting beaten isn't a tragedy, but considering your knowledge "complete" is. Whatever else you do, please have fun and keep at it!

If you ever see me on the circuit, please feel free to come up and say hi.

Good luck!

APPENDIX A

Practice rounds

If you have two or more teams on your school's squad, you'll want to have practice rounds from time to time. It's hard to travel to enough tournaments to get all the rounds you need per year to improve. Furthermore, practice rounds are the single best method you can use to build your skills. Nothing is more important to your continued success and improvement than taking practice rounds seriously. Your squad should schedule regular practice rounds, at least biweekly, preferably weekly. You should try to participate in practice rounds as often as possible; and when not participating, you should flow every practice round.

The problem is that CX practice rounds can, if done poorly, be quite boring. In CX debate, we use the same topic all year, and the other teams on your squad probably have the same arguments and positions as you. Therefore, the best suggestion I have is that one of the teams agrees to be the "dummy" during your practice rounds. That is, the dummy opponents should pretend to be opponents that you commonly debate or anticipate debating. If the dummy opponents are on the affirmative during the practice round, then they should argue the opponents' case. If the dummy opponents are on the negative, then they should pretend to argue the opponents' common negative strategy. The dummy opponents are half-acting, half-debating: they should make the best arguments that logically flow from the opponents' case or positions. The dummy team gets

good practice, and using a dummy team keeps practice rounds interesting, week in and week out. A few days before the practice round, it should be decided which team will be the dummy team, which side the dummy team will be on, and what opponents the dummy team will emulate.

Finally, it is best to do a shortened version of a full debate round. Here's what I suggest:

Skip *1AC*.	Just disclose the case.
1NC	8 min.
CX	3 min.
2AC	8 min.
CX	3 min.
2NC	8 min
CX	3 min.
Skip *1NR*.	Still split neg. block.
1AR	3 min.

Skip the 1NR but still split the issues in the block. Don't have any other prep. time. Just use the CX as prep. time! It'll get you in good quick-thinking habits. When you do have prep. time, it'll feel luxurious. Rebuttals you should practice separately. Think about and write your rebuttals overnight, and then deliver them the next day. A practice round done this way will take about 45 minutes. It's short enough to do during a class period, just like a PF round.

APPENDIX B

Flowing abbreviations

adv	advantage
alt	alternative
≅	approx.
b/c	because
b/fr	before
b/sd	beside
b/twn	between
	brink
→	causes, leads to
←	is caused by
↔	cause each other
c/p	counterplan
	critique (kritik)
d/a	disadvantage
↓	decreasing
↑	increasing
FG	federal government
gov	government
	harm
!	impact (or mpx)
inh	inherency

i/L	internal link
int'l	international
<	less than
>	greater than
	link
o/w	outweighs
	proves
	solvency
	topicality
	uniqueness
thx	threshold
T/F	timeframe

Use this space to add your own abbreviations: