



GLOSSARY OF POLICY DEBATE TERMS

A

1AC - First affirmative constructive speech given by the first affirmative speaker that outlines a Plan to change the world through a federal policy action, often consisting of Contentions like the Harms/Advantages, Solvency, and Inherency.

1NC - First negative constructive speech given by the first negative speaker, often consisting of On-case attacks on the first affirmative speech (1AC) and Off-case strategies like Disadvantages

Adapting to Judges - Adapting debating and speaking style and speed to suit the tastes and comprehension of different judges.

Advantage - Benefits which will result from adoption of the affirmative plan. This is usually shown by proving solvency and harm.

Aff, Affirmative Team - Debaters who are arguing in favor of the resolution. They do this by advocating a change from the present system (status quo). This change is called the plan.

B

Backing - Statements that prove the warrants are true (think of them like sub warrants).

Blocks - A set of prepared prewritten arguments and evidence against a specific argument. A well-prepared team has blocks against all DAs, affirmatives, counterplans, topicality and any other argument they have ever heard before.

Brink - The point of no return where the impact is inevitable.

Burden of Rejoinder - Teams must adequately respond to the arguments of the other side.

Bye - A debate (each debate is called a “round”) in which a two-person team does not debate but is still in competition for tournament, usually where one two-person team per debate round will not be paired up with an opponent due to an odd number of teams in a division. In byes, students get an automatic Win and their speaker points are averaged for all the rest of the debates during the tournament.

C

Card - A single quote from a source which serves to support an argument. The way debate evidence is organized. Cards are segments of larger pieces of text that have been selected to prove parts of our case. We underline and highlight the parts of the card we are going to read in the round but we always leave all of the text so our opponents can see the surrounding context and know it supports our broader point

Case or 1AC - The first speech in a debate round that presents the plan for change and reasons and evidence for making this change.

Case Takeouts - Arguments usually made in 1NC that try to disprove Affirmative case arguments such as inherency, harm and solvency. Usually, these simply diminish the scope of the Affirmative case, they are not winning arguments like a DA or T.

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Case Turns - Arguments usually made in 1NC which try to turn an affirmative advantage into a disadvantage. This consists of either 1) a harm turn i.e. proving that the harm occurring in the present system is actually a good thing or 2) a solvency turn. i.e. proving the affirmative will actually increase the harm.

Citation or Cite - The source of the quotation or card. The full cite includes the following information, Author (e.g. Ehrlich), qualifications (e.g. Prof. of Biology at Stanford), publication (i.e. Time or Journal of Foreign Affairs), date (May 1997), and page number.

Claim - Statement we are trying to prove.

Competing Interpretations - A frame for how the judge should evaluate topicality preferred by the negative. It argues that topicality should be treated like any other argument and if the negative wins that their interpretation is even slightly better and the affirmative doesn't meet it, they should win the round.

Conceded/Drop/Dropped - Debaters use this to refer to when their opponents have failed to address ("dropped") one of their arguments and will argue that their opponents have conceded this point.

Constructive - An 8-minute-long speech where we build our arguments and possible strategies for the round. All new arguments must be introduced in the constructives. Each debater will deliver one constructive speech.

Contention/Observation - These are the subdivisions of the Affirmative case (1AC - 1st Affirmative Constructive), usually Harms/Advantages, Solvency, the Plan, and Inherency.

Counter-Interpretation (CI) - An alternative way to define a word or term in the resolution that the affirmative definitely meets.

Counterplan - A negative tactic stating that the present system is flawed, but there is a better non-topical solution superior to the affirmative plan and the status quo. The negative team becomes in effect another affirmative team with a case and plan and the obligation to prove certain burdens.

Cross-Apply - Using an argument that was made in one part of the flow in a different way in another part of the flow.

Cross Examination - A 3-minute period where debaters ask questions of their opponent to clarify arguments and set up future arguments.

D

Data - Facts and other evidence being used to prove an argument.

Debate Round - One complete debate. This consists of two teams of two debaters. One called the affirmative team. The other called the negative team. A judge decides the winner of the round. Each debater on each team is identified by the speech that he or she gives. For example, the affirmative debaters are the first affirmative (1A) and the second affirmative (2A). The negative debaters are the first negative (1N) and the second negative (2N).

Decision Rules - Criteria which clarify and assist a judge in weighting certain issues in the round. For example, one could read a decision rule that human rights outweigh the loss of life.

Defense - Reasons not to vote for them (either side).

Defense vs. Offense/Offensive vs. Defensive Arguments - Debaters will say that defensive arguments are those that say an argument raised by their opponents is not true, (e.g., “Our Plan does not spend a lot of new money on education funding”) vs. saying the opposite of something raised by their opponents is true, such as a Turn (e.g., “Our opponents say that our Plan spends too much on education funding and hurts the economy, but in fact, spending on bilingual education helps us to grow our economy and workforce capacity.”)

Definition - What a word in the resolution means. This is usually taken from a dictionary like Webster’s or Black’s Law

Dictionary - The evidence presented by the negative to back up their interpretation.

Disadvantage (DA) - An off-case position that argues that the Affirmative sets in motion a chain of events that causes bad things to happen and that those things are more important than the Affirmative harms. Often abbreviated as DA or Disad. Disads are made up of four parts: Uniqueness, Links, Internal Links, and Impacts.

Double Turn - Turning both the impact and the link, contradicting yourself and accidentally making an argument for the other team.

Drop/Dropped/Conceded - Debaters use this to refer to when their opponents have failed to address (“dropped”) one of their arguments and will argue that their opponents have conceded this point.

E

Evidence - All published material such as books, newspapers and magazines, used as reference and support in a debate. This includes statistics, quotes, facts and examples.

Extend - Continuing an argument from a previous speech in the next speech. Arguments must be extended from speech to speech to stay active in the debate round and be evaluated by the judge at the end.

F

Fiat - The affirmative right to state that the machinery and personnel will be made available for plan to come into existence. It stems from the fact that we are debating whether the resolution should be adopted, not whether it would be.

Flow - A system of notetaking to keep track of arguments in a debate round. These notes also provide the debater with an outline of his or her own speeches. The flow is taken on a flow pad which may be a legal pad. Every competitor and the judge should keep their own flow.

Front Lines - A block which is read in the first negative speech against a specific affirmative. A front line typically has a number of different initial arguments and supporting evidence. Later in the round, further blocks may be read supporting each argument in the front line.

G

Ground - Both the affirmative and the negative need adequate ground for a good debate topic, the affirmative interpretation either skews the current division of ground or takes ground that should be negative ground.



Grouping - Answering several arguments together instead of separately.

H

Harm - A problem in the status quo that justifies the need for the affirmative plan. Harms can be quantitative (expressible as a number) or qualitative.

Hegemony/hegemon - (*pronounced “Hedge-EH-moh-nee”*) in policy debate, this term is usually referenced when speaking about a country’s [often the United States’] overall international dominance through economic, military, and cultural influence.

Highlighting or Underlining - A tactic to cut down the amount of text which must be read in a card. Certain parts of the card are highlighted or underlined, and those parts are actually read.

I

Impact - The bad thing we are trying to avoid with the DA.

Impact/Impact Calculus/Outweigh/”Impact Calc” - Worst case scenarios or consequences of action or inaction that debate teams weigh against each other to decide the debate. In Impact Calculus debaters often talk about Probability (how likely these consequences are), Magnitude (how large these consequences could be), Timeframe (how soon would these consequences happen), and Reversibility (how permanent are these consequences and can we recover). A “terminal” impact just means the last, biggest step in that cause-and-effect sequence chain, such as mass extinction due to global nuclear war. These arguments can get a bit dramatic, but it is up to debaters to challenge the leaps of logic in these cause-and-effect chains.

Impact Turn - The thing that you think is bad is actually good.

Implication - Reason we should care about the claim. In debate it’s much more common for us to use the term “impact” here.

Inherency - A barrier preventing the adoption of the plan in the present system.

Internal Link – The components of the causal chains to which debaters attest. The logical steps connecting the link to the impact. *Note, the more internal links there are, the less likely the DA as a whole is, because each step has to happen to reach the impact.

Interpretation - The negative argument for the ideal way to define a word or term in the topic.

J K

Kritik (Critique) - An argument that takes the position that the fundamental assumptions of the ideas advocated by the other team are significantly flawed and must be rejected.

L

Limits - The topic should be limited to encourage more in-depth debates and better research.

Line by Line - Answering the specific argumentation. In debates most arguments are numbered and labeled, and a debater goes down the line of their opponent’s arguments to answer each one.

Link - A logical connection between two events i.e. affirmative does A and A causes B. As it is applied to DAs, it is a statement of how the affirmative plan will lead to a disadvantage.

Link Turn - We agree that your impact is bad, but we think the action you took makes it worse, not better.

Low point win - Winning team has more convincing and consistent facts and evidence but has lower speaker points than the opposing team.

M

Magnitude - How big an impact is. This can be calculated in different ways. It could be size (global warming, for example, affects the entire planet, a war might affect the countries involved and spillover) or it could be the morality of an issue (racism must be rejected).

N

Neg, Negative Team - The pair of debaters arguing against the adoption of the resolution. The Negative team usually wins by proving that the affirmative plan is not desirable.

Neg block (2NC/1NR) - Refers to the block of time in the debate round where the negative team gives two consecutive speeches in a row before the next Affirmative speech, the 2nd Negative Constructive (2NC) speech, followed by the 1st Negative Rebuttal (1NR).

Net benefit - The reason that the Negative's Counterplan (proposing a different Plan than that proposed by the Affirmative) is a better idea for solving the problems of the world (Harms), usually by avoiding Disadvantages to the Affirmative Plan for change.

Non-Uniqueness - An affirmative argument against a DA, claiming either the impact will occur regardless of whether plan is implemented or because the impact will occur for other reasons. If this is proven, the DA is rendered impotent.

O

Off case - Negative arguments that are not directly refuting the Affirmative case, such as Disadvantages, Kritiks, or Counter Plans).

Offense - Reasons to vote for us (either side).

On-Case: Refers to arguments that the Affirmative team has introduced for the first time to start the debate in their first speech, the 1AC (1st Affirmative Constructive), such as Harms, Solvency, the Plan, and Inherency.

Opportunity Cost - There is a forced choice between two options, we cannot have both of them at the same time without a negative side effect.

Overview - A summation given at the beginning of the 2NR and the 2AR speech which is 30 second - 1-minute long which tells the judge why the team is winning the round and what issues are important.



P

Pairing/Schematic - Schedule released before each debate that lists which two-person teams are debating each other (and from which schools), the classroom numbers for each debate round, the name of the judge for each debate round, and the start time for the debate round

Permutation - A test of the competition of the counterplan. This argument hypothesizes that all of the plan and all or part of the counterplan could exist at the same time, thereby making the counterplan not competitive. *Note—This is a test. It does not change the affirmative plan and if the affirmative wins the permutation, it's only a reason the counterplan loses.

Plan - the Affirmative's federal policy for change, meant to address the problems (Harms) of the world now. This is presented in the 1AC, the 1st Affirmative Constructive, and will often sound like the text of a bill in Congress that's read aloud in the first speech as the focus of the rest of the debate.

Pre-Flow - A Post-It note which has a flow of evidence or arguments which saves a debater the time it takes to write the argument or evidence on the flow.

Prep / Preparation Time - Set amount of time given to each team to prepare their speeches, usually 5-10 minutes. A team may split this time for preparing for any speeches. Usually it is 8 minutes (although 5 & 10 are also rarely used).

Presumption - It is riskier to change things than to stick with the status quo. So, if the Affirmative doesn't meet their Burden of Proof we should stick with the Status Quo and the Negative wins.

Probability - The likelihood that an impact will occur. In the case of systemic/structural impacts that are happening now that is 100% (think racism, sexism, poverty) in the case of something like a war it is dependent on the internal links and other conditions that influence whether we will reach the brink (tipping point).

Q

Qualifications/quals - supporting information detailing the qualifications of an individual author of a piece of evidence (card) and its citation (cite). This becomes a factor later in debates when students compare the quality of competing sources.

R

Reasonability - A frame for how the judge should evaluate topicality preferred by the affirmative. It argues that since Topicality is an all or nothing issue for the affirmative the standard for voting against the affirmative on T should be very high and as long as the affirmative proves they are a reasonable interpretation of the topic they should not lose, even if the negative interpretation is slightly better.

Reasons to prefer - The standards and impacts (i.e., reasons we care) about the topicality violation. Sample standards and impacts include: Limits, Ground, Education.

Rebuttal - A 5-minute-long speech where we choose our strongest arguments to make our final case to the judges. With the exception of refuting arguments that were new for the first time. Each debater will deliver one rebuttal speech.



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Reciprocity - In debate this refers to the structure of the debate round – the Affirmative gets the advantage of speaking first and last, they choose the plan and get the final word. The Negative gets a 13-minute block of time in the middle of the debate round to develop their argument and make it as strong as possible.

Resolution - The area of discussion that is subject for debate which is uniform for all high schools in the country.

Responses or Answers - An argument which addresses an opponent's argument.

Reversability - An argument made by debaters in Impact debates about how the consequences of their arguments are more permanent than that of their opponents' arguments. For example, economic recession is likely something we can recover from, but global warming or nuclear winter might not be.

Risk - Analysis: A system for comparing different impacts.

Roadmap - A statement at the beginning of a speech letting everyone know the order of a debater's speech to aid in following.

Round - One individual debate is called a "round," i.e., a "round" of debate.

S

Scope - A subset of magnitude that looks at the breadth of the issue. For example, if we compare a small regional war and a great power war the scope of the latter is larger because more people are affected, and more countries are drawn in.

Shell - The initial structure of the DA with supporting evidence run in 1NC.

Signposting - A verbal signal from a debater during their speech that they are ready to move on to the next issue.

Solvency - Proof that the Affirmative plan will solve the harm to gain an advantage over the present system.

Speaker Points - Points awarded by the judge measuring individual performances.



Speech Order - All four debaters in a round give two speeches. The order in which these speeches are given are as follows:

Speech	Abbreviation	Time
First Affirmative Constructive	1AC	8 mins.
2N cross examines 1A (cross-ex)	c-x	3 mins.
First Negative Constructive	1NC	8 mins.
1A cross examines 1N (cross-ex)	c-x	3 mins.
Second Affirmative Constructive	2AC	8 mins.
1N cross examines 2A (cross-ex)	c-x	3 mins.
Second Negative Constructive	2NC	8 mins.
2A cross examines 2N (cross-ex)	c-x	3 mins.
First Negative Rebuttal	1NR	5 mins.
First Affirmative Rebuttal	1AR	5 mins.
Second Negative Rebuttal	2NR	5 mins.
Second Affirmative Rebuttal	2AR	5 mins.

Standards - The reasons why the definition is a good way to interpret the particular word or words in the resolution. The standards are used to decide which of two definitions actually defines a word.

Status Quo - The current state of affairs. The present system of laws and attitudes, also termed the “present system.”

Structural Impacts - Impacts that are occurring now but are made worse by the action of the other side. You may also hear these referred to as linear/systemic impacts.

T

Tag or Label - A brief summary of what a card says, it's put on the top of the card.

Tag team - Whereby both members of the inquiring team ask questions in Cross-Examination, and/or either member of the responding team answers them

Threshold - Burden of the negative to show that the affirmative plan is sufficient to cause the impact. In other words, we are at a threshold point now and the plan would cause us to cross that threshold (push us over the brink), causing the impact.

Timeframe - How fast an impact will occur, this could refer to the time it will take for the impact to happen once triggered, the time it takes to reach its end point, or the fact that it's occurring now.

Topicality or T - A stock issue that argues the affirmative plan must be part of the resolution. It is the only stock issue where the negative has the burden of proof (i.e., affirmatives only have to prove they are topical if that issue is challenged by the negative):

Topicality Is a Voting Issue - The reasons the judge should vote negative if the affirmative is not topical.

Toulmin's Model of Argumentation - Theory of how we construct arguments created by a rhetoric professor. We use a modified (simplified) version of Toulmin's model in debate.



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Tournament - A large number of debaters gathered for interscholastic competition at a high school or college usually on a weekend.

Turn - An argument that reverses either the link or the impact making the original argument an advantage for the other side.

U

Uniqueness - The burden of the negative in arguing a DA to show that impacts will occur solely as a result of the affirmative plan

V

Violation - The reasons why the affirmative plan does not fall under (meet) the definition of the word.

Voting Issues - Issues in the round such as inherency, harm, solvency, DAs, or topicality that are weighed in the judge's decisions.

W X Y Z

Warrant - Reason that the claim is true.

Word Economy - Eliminating unnecessary words or phrases in order to increase the number of arguments without increasing your rate of delivery.