

## Philosophy of Judging Norms

**Note:** Below is the statement of philosophical norms that was established and used through the 2019-2020 debate season. It is a living document that should be constantly revisited and reflected upon as the activity and its participants develop. It is also worth noting that the norms described are not intended as a set of exhaustive rules that speak to what students may or may not do, but rather a set of aspirational norms that reflect the goals of the activity.

### **The format aims to provide an enriching educational experience above all else.**

The highest priority among debaters and judges is to maintain an educational and welcoming space that respects each person. Debate, by definition, requires disagreement and criticism, two things we are notoriously bad at expressing. To foster a robust community of arguers, all should commit to learning from one another by practicing respectful engagement and listening as if the debate round is an extension of the college classroom (which it is). Just like the college classroom, debate is a laboratory for testing ideas, perspectives, and commitments through argumentation. All participants should promote a collegial environment where individuals are not demeaned or attacked in the process of debating or discussion after the round. Judges play the challenging dual role of audience and educator; their job is to simultaneously inform competitors about the soundness of their debating and arguments and provide instruction on how the student can improve in the future.

### **The debate format uses an “article packet” as the sole source of directly quotable evidence in the debate, but students can bring in knowledge and ideas beyond the packet.**

When evidence is used during a speech, students should clearly signal their source with an oral citation. Ideas, concepts, and examples that do not come directly from packet articles may be used throughout the debate, but debaters accept responsibility for communicating those things to the judge without authoritative evidence, including the risk that the judge may not understand or believe complicated ideas or obscure examples.

### **The primary question in the debate is whether the affirmative has successfully discharged their burden of proof through an advocacy in favor of the proposition.**

The “burden of proof” refers to the obligation to prove with clear and convincing arguments that an advocacy is a necessary and sufficient response to the problems outlined by those advocating for change. Given the uncertainties and risks inherent to change, affirmative team’s are assigned the burden of proof. Negative teams are assigned the “burden of rejoinder”; their primary responsibility is to refute and undermine the specific case and rationale offered by the affirmative. Negative teams may also introduce their own arguments into the debate and in doing so accept the burden of proof for demonstrating the relevance and significance of their argument as a test of the affirmative advocacy.

**The primary task of the affirmative team is to present and defend a comprehensive advocacy in support of the proposition.**

Affirmative teams will state an opening case in the first constructive that outlines the nature of the problem, the significance of that problem, a clear statement of the specific course of action they advocate in response, and an explanation for the desirability and appropriateness of their solution. Although affirmatives may offer a diversity of criteria by which a judge could evaluate their advocacy, they are responsible for offering an advocacy that fits clearly within the parameters of the topic controversy. In other words, the judge should ask themselves if the opening case is clearly in support of the "advertised" topic, rather than tangentially connected back to the topic.

**The primary task of the negative team is to refute the specific case and advocacy of the affirmative.**

Negative teams are tasked with engaging the specific case and advocacy presented by the affirmative. There is no singular way to engage, but common options include attacking the reasoning or quality of evidence that supports the case, demonstrating negative consequences to the action proposed by the affirmative, proposing an alternative course of action that represents a meaningful "opportunity cost" with the affirmative advocacy, or pointing out critical inadequacies in the advocacy offered.

**Arguments should be evaluated according to how well they are communicated and executed by the competitors.**

The debate round is a laboratory for students interested in the art of argumentation, wherein logic, rhetoric, and character are inseparable. Laboratories are spaces for experimentation with different arguments and communication strategies to identify those which might empower democratic citizenship. Debate is not a game, whose rules are to be mindlessly followed by debaters and judges, nor solely "owned" by the debaters. The judge's role is to critique the debaters' skills and provide feedback regarding how well they used arguments, strategies and communicative behaviors in light of how those things were communicated to the judge. Thus, while it is important to provide debaters ample flexibility, the ultimate goal for students is to convince the judge about the desirability and merit of their arguments.

While only the affirmative has the burden of proof, all debaters have the obligation to communicate their ideas to the judge. Additionally, arguments should not be taken as true simply because they are conceded by the other team. Poorly understood arguments can be dismissed by a judge regardless of whether it has been effectively refuted by the opposing team and it is the debaters' job to critically assess whether their arguments are registering with the judge. For arguments that cross the threshold of understanding, judges should endeavor to limit their evaluation to the performance and explanations of the debaters during the round as much as possible. Finally, burdens in the debate round are not equivalent; the affirmative has the advantage of preparing their case ahead of time and speaking last, while direct negative refutation in the moment is more difficult. Thus the primary burden of proof always rests with the affirmative.

**Speeches are organized around the following principles:**

First Affirmative Constructive (6 minutes): Establishes the case in favor of the topic.

Cross-examination (2 minutes): The second negative asks questions of the first affirmative. Questions can either seek explanation or challenge the speaker's arguments.

First Negative Constructive (6 minutes): Establishes initial lines of refutation against the affirmative case.

Cross-examination (2 minutes): The first affirmative asks questions of the first negative. Questions can either seek explanation or challenge the speaker's arguments.

Second Affirmative Constructive (6 minutes): Responds to initial negative arguments and reinforces the affirmative case.

Cross-examination (2 minutes): The first negative asks questions of the second affirmative. Questions can either seek explanation or challenge the speaker's arguments.

Second Negative Constructive (6 minutes): First half of "negative block," or two consecutive negative speeches, wherein the negative team divides up arguments established in the first negative constructive in order to expand and elaborate on those arguments. For example, if the first negative established 3 major arguments against the affirmative, the second negative will speak about 2 of those arguments while their partner will cover the third in the first negative rebuttal.

Cross-examination (2 minutes): The second affirmative asks questions of the second negative. Questions can either seek explanation or challenge the speaker's arguments.

First Negative Rebuttal (4 minutes): Second half of the "negative block." Expands and elaborates on those arguments not covered by the second negative constructive. Arguments at this stage should not be "new," but clearly linked back to issues established in the first negative constructive.

First Affirmative Rebuttal (4 minutes): Reinforces the affirmative case through refutation of arguments raised in the negative block. "New" arguments should not appear unless they are in response to new issues raised during the negative block.

Second Negative Rebuttal (4 minutes): Crystallizes the debate into the most significant issues and provides the final appeal to the judge for a negative ballot. "New" arguments should be disregarded by the judge.

Second Affirmative Rebuttal (4 minutes): Crystallizes the debate into the most significant issues and provides the final appeal to the judge for an affirmative ballot. "New" arguments should be disregarded by the judge.