

### III. RULES OF POLICY (TEAM) DEBATE

#### A. General

1. All debates must be based on the current National High School Debate resolution chosen under the auspices of the National Topic Selection Committee of the National Federation of State High School Associations. The Topic Areas selected by the National Topic Selection Committee shall define the context of all policy debates.

2. Each speaker shall have eight minutes for constructive argument, alternating affirmative to negative. Immediately following each constructive speech, one of the opponents shall question the speaker for three minutes. Each debater shall take one turn at questioning. Each speaker shall have one four-minute rebuttal, alternating negative to affirmative.

3. A judge's decision should be based upon:

a. **Skill in analysis.** This includes not only the analysis of the resolution but also analysis of the debate argumentation as it progresses. The analytical debater is able to get quickly to the essence of the question.

b. **Use of evidence.** This includes the use of sufficient evidence and usage according to the set principles of ethics, which include: 1) full source citation must be available; 2) credentials of author(s) must be available; and 3) information in all internal ellipses must be available.

c. **Validity of evidence.** If a team falsifies evidence in support of a point it shall lose the point. If the falsification is obviously deliberate, the judge shall impose an additional penalty according to the seriousness of the falsification.

d. **Validity of argument.** This includes reasoning and conclusions drawn from the evidence presented.

e. **Clarity of organization.** This includes clear outlining of constructive arguments and easily followed handling of refutation.

f. **Effectiveness of delivery.** This includes all matters pertaining to oral presentation with special emphasis upon ability to speak extemporaneously.

4. A judge's decision should not be based upon:

a. **The merits of the debate resolution.** The judge should not be influenced by prejudices in favor of or against the resolution.

b. **Partiality.** The judge should not be influenced by the reputation of either team, its school or coach.

c. **Preconceived notions or arguments.** The judge should not allow an idea of what the best affirmative or negative arguments or cases may be to influence the decision.

d. **Personal preferences on debating style.** A judge should not penalize a team if its style, either in delivery or case construction, differs from that which the judge personally prefers. All styles should be evaluated on the basis of effectiveness in winning conviction.

5. In addition to weighing the above debate skills, the judge should place the most weight upon the strength and convincingness of a team's argumentation.

6. Once a team has stated a basic position, it should not change its position during the debate. This is not meant to preclude hypothesis testing or conditional counterplans.

7. Any restatement or quotation of an opponent's argument should be accurate. A speaker who misconstrues an argument unintentionally should not be penalized more than the time wasted. If it is intentional, the team should, in addition, forfeit the argument.

8. Teams should debate the basic principles underlying the resolution. Too much emphasis should not be placed upon a technicality or minor aspect of the resolution. Teams should stay within the context of the Topic Area.

9. A judge should not discredit an argument as fallacious unless the fallacy is exposed by the opposition or the argument contradicts common sense or generally accepted knowledge, except in the last affirmative rebuttal, when the judge should discredit upon discovering the fallacy.

10. All debaters should be courteous to the opponents and the judge(s). Discourtesy should be penalized according to the seriousness of the offense.
11. Visual aids are permissible in a debate. Once introduced, they become available for the opponent's use.
12. A team is entitled to see a copy of the opposition's case, plan or counterplan and any evidence read in the round. However, judges are prohibited from reading evidence unless falsification is suspected and raised by the opposition and the original source in question is available in the round.
13. Each team shall be entitled to eight minutes of preparation time during each debate.
14. When a speaker's time has expired, the judge should disregard anything beyond a closing statement.
15. In the absence of a timekeeper, the judge shall keep speaking times. The judge shall keep all preparation time.
16. The judge should not give oral critique during the tournament nor reveal any debate decisions. After the tournament, a judge may give oral critique to any debaters.

## **B. Constructive Speeches**

1. The affirmative may define the terms of the resolution in any reasonable manner. The negative may dispute the affirmative definitions. In case of dispute, the affirmative definitions should be accepted if they are supported by recognized authorities or logical argumentation.
2. Both the affirmative and the negative must explain, upon demand of the opposition, the essential features and policies of a proposed plan or counterplan. Neither team may leave its plan so vague as to prevent a reasonable attack by the opposition on grounds of workability or feasibility. Neither team, however, is obligated to explain minor details of its plan.
3. The affirmative team carries the burden of proof for the proposition. The negative team carries the burden of proof for the counterplan. Both teams carry the burden of refutation.

4. The affirmative case and plan may be presented in any reasonable structure. The affirmative should not be limited to one of the standard case-plan structures. Showing inherent defects in the status quo is not necessarily an affirmative burden. The affirmative does carry the burden of presenting a prima facie case, one that on its face will stand unless refuted by the negative.
5. The negative team may maintain a straight refutation, defend the status quo, present minor repairs, present a counterplan, or combine any of the previous approaches.
6. Neither team needs to destroy all the arguments presented by the opposition. To win, a team need only show that the preponderance of the argument and evidence rests on its side.
7. Arguments as to whether the propositions or plan are constitutional or whether either will be adopted are irrelevant.
8. An argument introduced in constructive speeches should be answered by the opposition in time to give the team which advanced that argument an opportunity to reply.

### **C. Cross Examination**

1. The purpose of cross examination include clarifying an obscure point in an opponent's case, exposing factual errors or unsupported assertions, and obtaining damaging admissions. It should not be used (as it is in law) to attack the personal integrity of the witness. Questions should add substance to the debate.
2. The attitudes of both the questioner and the witness should appear to be reasonable, cooperative, and eager to please. Neither one should practice unpalatable sarcasm, obvious "stalling," or brow-beating of the opponent.
3. Both questions and answers should be of a reasonable length.
4. The value of any cross examination decreases unless the results are tied to later speeches. Admissions or information gained through cross examination must be used in subsequent speeches in order to count in determining the winning team. The cross examination should be an integral part of the debate and not a "side show."

5. Both speakers must talk to the audience and/or judge(s).

6. During cross examination, the questioner:

a. Controls the time and may interrupt the witness to request shorter or more direct answers or to indicate that the answer he/she has given is sufficient.

b. Must ask fair and relevant questions. She/he should neither comment on the answers, argue with the witness, nor make speeches. He/she should use this time for questioning alone, not for either constructive argument or summary. In fact, a conclusion is all the more effective if the audience reaches it without the questioner's help.

c. Should have sufficient scope in the questions he/she asks. Since the time is her/his, he/she may waste time if she/he wishes. The witness should answer even if the significance or relevance of the question is not immediately apparent to him/her.

d. May not insist on a simple "Yes" or "No" answer unless the question is simple, direct and factual. Questions about why something is true are necessarily complicated, and the questioner cannot expect the witness to answer them briefly.

e. Should phrase questions with the verb first, then the subject, and finally the object or modifying phrases and clauses: e.g. "Do you admit that Joseph R. McCarthy was the Junior Senator from Wisconsin?" Negative questions, or any phrasing with "not," should be avoided: e.g. "Do you not know that there have been 37 violations of the Korean Truce by the Red Chinese?" The answers to such questions can only be confusing.

f. May remind the audience and the witness of a relevant fact by beginning the question "Are you aware that ..." or "Are you familiar with ..." However, the questioner's motive in putting such questions should be to put the witness on record concerning the statement involved and not to present material of his or her own.

7. During cross examination, the witness:

- a. Must answer directly and briefly any legitimate question susceptible to a simple answer.
- b. May refuse to answer any tricky, unfair or irrelevant question if the witness has a good reason for so doing. The judge will be the final determiner of whether a question is permissible.
- c. May ask questions to clarify a question or may ask the questioner to stop giving speeches and to continue the questioning.
- d. Must confine responses to answers and not make arguments or ask questions, except to clarify.
- e. Must answer questions without consulting anyone or offering the excuse that the question will be answered in a later speech or cross examination.
- f. May clarify a question if to do so is appropriate. The witness cannot be restricted to a “Yes” or “No” answer if a longer response is appropriate.
- g. Should not be penalized for ignorance of obscure information but should be expected to know the answers to questions directly related to information presented by his/her side during the debate.

8. When time expires:

- a. A question which has not been fully asked must be dropped.
- b. A question which has been fully asked must be answered.
- c. The questioner may pursue, and the witness must answer, a line of questioning that was legitimately begun prior to the expiration of time.

**D. Rebuttals**

- 1. The judge(s) shall disregard new arguments introduced in rebuttal, unless the rebuttal is the first opportunity to respond to a question or new argument.
- 2. New evidence to support old arguments may be introduced.

3. The affirmative must reply to the major negative arguments before the last rebuttal; otherwise, the negative, having no speech in which to reply, is unfairly handicapped.

#### **E. Point of Order**

1. The negative team shall not be denied the right to rise to a point of order after the second affirmative rebuttal.

2. If the negative argues the point instead of stating the point, the team shall be heavily penalized on the point. In this contingency, final disposition of the matter shall rest with the judge.

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