

# Judge “Cheat Sheet” for Policy Debate

Based on a guide from Truman High School, presented by Council Rock North Speech & Debate <crnspeechdebate.org>

Policy debate is a **structured** format for **fairly** arguing a resolution that typically calls for policy change by the United States federal government. One resolution is used for the entire school year. The 2023-2024 topic is **Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially increase fiscal redistribution in the United States by adopting a federal jobs guarantee, expanding Social Security, and/or providing a basic income.**

Each round features two teams of two students each.

## DEBATE STRUCTURE / TIMING AND SUMMARY:

### \*Constructive Speeches

- 1<sup>st</sup> Affirmative Constructive: 8 Minutes (Identifies problems with the status quo, introduces the plan)
  - o Cross-Examined by 2<sup>nd</sup> Negative speaker: 3 Minutes
- 1<sup>st</sup> Negative Constructive: 8 Minutes (Presents arguments against the Affirmative case)
  - o Cross-Examined by 1<sup>st</sup> Affirmative speaker: 3 Minutes
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Affirmative Constructive: 8 Minutes (Answers the 1<sup>st</sup> Negative’s attacks, extends Affirmative case)
  - o Cross-Examined by 1<sup>st</sup> Negative speaker: 3 Minutes
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Negative Constructive: 8 Minutes (Answers the Affirmative’s arguments and extends Negative case)
  - o Cross-Examined by 2<sup>nd</sup> Affirmative speaker: 3 Minutes

### \*Rebuttal Speeches (No new *arguments* allowed, but new evidence may be introduced.)

- 1<sup>st</sup> Negative Rebuttal: 5 Minutes (Answers the Affirmative’s arguments and builds up Negative attacks)
- 1<sup>st</sup> Affirmative Rebuttal: 5 Minutes (Answers the Negative’s arguments and rebuilds the Affirmative case)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Negative Rebuttal: 5 Minutes (Answers the Affirmative and explains why the Negative should win)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Affirmative Rebuttal: 5 Minutes (Answers the Negative and explains why the Affirmative should win)

Each time is allocated 8 minutes of prep time. They may use any portion of it at any time except during a speech or a cross-examination period.

### \*Note:

- Constructives:
  - o “Build” the argument.
  - o Present **evidence**.
  - o Establish clash (what are the points of contention for the round?).
- Rebuttals:
  - o Shrink the round (focus on what’s important).
  - o Rely more heavily on **analysis** and **comparison**.
  - o Tell the story of why your team wins.
- Cross-Examination:
  - o Clarify arguments or evidence.
  - o Force opponents to defend the merits of their cases.
  - o Any points made in Cross-Examination must be restated in a speech to be considered.

## **TIPS / “THINGS” TO DO:**

1. Verify that the students in the room are the correct students and that they are debating the assigned side of the resolution.
2. Bring an open mind to the debate. The students did not write the resolution, they just have to debate it.
3. Take notes during the debate (“flowing”).
4. Put speaker points on the ballot and write a reason for decision.

## **“THINGS” TO LOOK FOR:**

The Affirmative team should advocate for some form of call to action. This doesn't necessitate a “traditional” policy option but should identify a problem in the status quo and how they alleviate said problem. They take upon themselves the Burden of Proof to prove that their plan should be adopted. They must prove that their plan is an example of the resolution, and they must prove that the plan is a good idea. The Affirmative traditionally must uphold this burden using evidence from published sources.

The negative team should look to do defend the status quo (by offering potential consequences to the affirmative plan) and/or introduce a competitive policy option (via a counter plan/kritik alternative). Lastly, the negative can look to win through “debating the rules” of policy debate. In this instance, the negative could say the position the affirmative takes is abusive (i.e. their plan isn't an example of the resolution and should lose because of it), these arguments are called procedurals.

An important thing to note is that the only “set rules” in policy debate is speaking times and their must be a winner/loser. This means if a team defends a non-traditional stand point (i.e. an affirmative team isn't an example of the resolution) and successfully defends that standpoint. That should hold as much weight as an affirmative in a traditional round (again as long as they justify it).

## **“THINGS” NOT TO DO:**

1. Do not impose upon the debate your particular preferences for how a given side of the resolution should be debated. A resolution that for instance talks about reducing restrictions on immigration does not require the Affirmative team to tackle H1-B Visas. Just because your team is arguing a certain vantage point does not in any way justify stifling the creativity of debaters in interpreting the resolution using perfectly legitimate definitions of words and phrases;
2. Do not interact with the students during the debate. Take notes and write your comments on the ballot;
3. FGCCFL is **NOT** a place for oral critiques or disclosure in the round. This is truly a teaching league and the students' coaches need to see your feedback on the ballot.

## **LANGUAGE TO USE ON BALLOT:**

1. Every ballot should have an “RFD” or “Reason for Decision.” The RFD should at its essence say something like “I vote [affirmative or negative] because of [key issue #1], [key issue #2], and [key issue #3];
2. Great ballots will recognize something good that each debater did, as well as something each debater could do to improve upon their performance.

## **LANGUAGE NOT TO USE ON BALLOT:**

1. All comments should pertain to the debate at hand. Nothing more.

## **OVERALL:**

Policy debate is a form of debate competition in which teams of two advocate for and against a resolution that typically calls for policy change by the United States federal government. The affirmative team should implement some form of plan of action and the negative team should defend inaction and/or introduce a net-better plan of action. Everything is up for debate, there isn't a set rule or guideline on how to debate. This means pretty much anything is acceptable as long as the team justifies it.