

DEBATE DICTIONARY

A GUIDE TO DEBATE TERMINOLOGY

BY TRIUMPH DEBATE

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EVENTS

CONGRESSIONAL DEBATE

Congressional Debate, otherwise known as “Congress,” is a mock legislative assembly, wherein students act as Congress Members. Prior to the tournament, debaters draft bills and resolutions that they will write speeches on in support or opposition for. At the tournament, students are put into “chambers” with other Congressional Debaters where they each give their speeches and be subject to a questioning period.

LINCOLN DOUGLAS DEBATE

Lincoln Douglas Debate, otherwise known as “LD,” is a one-on-one debate format. It is characterized by its emphasis on philosophy and typically takes two forms: [traditional](#) and [progressive](#). Topics in LD address whether a policy, action and/or concept is ethical/just/good/moral. A topic is debated for a two-month period.

POLICY DEBATE

Policy Debate, otherwise known as “CX” or “Cross-Ex,” is a two vs two debate format. It is characterized by its longer speech times, quick speaking, and emphasis on evidence. Topics in Policy address a specific area, such as criminal justice reform, immigration or education. A topic is debated for the entire year.

PUBLIC FORUM DEBATE

Public Forum Debate, otherwise known as "PF," is a two vs two debate format. It is characterized by its shorter speech times and emphasis on evidence. Topics in PF address current events. A topic is debated for a one-month period. Public Forum Debate has also received the nicknames of "Pufo" or "Pofo".

WORLD SCHOOLS DEBATE

World Schools Debate, otherwise known as "Worlds," is a three vs three style of debate. World Schools Debaters will debate either the proposition or opposition side of a proposed topic. It is characterized by its longer speech times and students are ranked based on content, style, and strategy. Topics in Worlds can address current events, policy issues, issues of values and more. Some topics are prepared, others are "impromptu" meaning debaters have an hour to write and develop their thesis.

MAJOR TOURNAMENTS & LEAGUES

NATIONAL CATHOLIC FORENSIC LEAGUE (NCFL) TOURNAMENT

The National Catholic Forensic League (NCFL) hosts the “Grand National Tournament” on Memorial Day weekend each year. They offer six speech events and four debate events. Each region has their own qualifying system – some are tournaments others are applications. Stylistically, the NCFL tournament tends to be a more traditional tournament. You can learn more about the [NCFL National Tournament here!](#)

NATIONAL DEBATE COACHES ASSOCIATION (NDCA)

An organization with a goal of providing coaches with avenues for professional development. The NDCA is aimed at assisting coaches’ ability to teach their students, including offering materials such as textbooks, curriculum, lessons and evidence packets.

NATIONAL SPEECH AND DEBATE TOURNAMENT (NSDA NATIONALS)

The National Speech and Debate Association hosts the “National Tournament” each year in June, for a week. Each district hosts their own qualifying tournament. Stylistically, the NSDA National Tournament tends to be a more traditional tournament. You can learn more about the [NSDA National Tournament here!](#)

STATE TOURNAMENT

Each state association hosts their own state tournament as a conclusion to their regular season. Typically, it is held in the months of March to May. Each state will also host their own state tournament qualifier or have their own qualification method.

TOURNAMENT OF CHAMPIONS

The Tournament of Champions, otherwise known as the TOC, is a national tournament held at The University of Kentucky. Throughout the debate season, certain tournaments will give out “bids” to the top placers at that tournament. You can learn more about the [TOC bid tournaments here!](#)

GENERAL TERMS: STRUCTURE OF DEBATE

NOVICE

Refers to a competitor who is in their first year of competition. Tournaments also may have a division for only first year competitors.

JUNIOR VARSITY

Refers to a competitor who has some experience in Speech and Debate but is still relatively new and/or is still in the process of learning the foundational skills of debate. Tournaments also may have a division for junior varsity competitors.

VARSITY

Refers to a competitor who has experience in Speech and Debate. Tournaments also may have a division for varsity competitors.

COACH

Refers to a person who is in charge of teaching and directing a group of students, typically based on events. There are two types of coaches: those employed by the school and those employed by the student. The first type is called a High School Speech and Debate Coach; this means that they have typically undergone a background check, received approval from the school administration, and are contractually a staff member at the school. The second type is a Private Speech/Debate Coach. This type of coach is hired on by the student to teach them individually.

JUDGE

The term Judge in debate refers to a person or persons who select the winner in a debate round. Judges typically have different ways they analyze the round (also known as paradigms). Judges also can have preferred styles, such as traditional or progressive.

“TRADITIONAL”

In debate, the term traditional refers to a style of debate. Traditional debate has different connotations per event, but typically means a slower speed and a higher emphasis on presentation. Traditional debate utilizes a [framework-contention](#) level structure. Finally, traditional debates typically focus on stock issues that are strongly linked to the proposed resolution. It is important to note that traditional debate is not the same as [“lay”](#) debate.

“LAY” (DEBATE / JUDGES)

The term lay in debate is short for the phrase lay person. It is a style of debate targeted at folks who have little to no experience in debate (hence the phrase lay judges). Lay debate typically includes a slower speaking with a heavy emphasis on explaining concepts. It also features simpler argumentation.

“PROGRESSIVE”

In debate, the term progressive refers to a broad style of debate, where there are degrees on how progressive a circuit/tournament is. Though it has different connotations per event, it typically means a faster speed that includes different types of arguments such as [kritiks](#), plans, [counterplans](#), [theory](#), [topicality](#) and more. Progressive debate is a very inclusive style of debate that allows for a wide variety of different types of arguments.

LOCAL CIRCUIT VS NATIONAL CIRCUIT

In debate, there are two main types of circuits: local and national circuits. Local circuits, also called “locals,” are regional. These are a collection of tournaments where people in nearby regions all compete together. The national circuit refers to a collection of major tournaments (most overlap with the aforementioned [TOC](#) bid tournament list) that students from all over the nation compete at. Typically, local circuits tend to be more [traditional](#), while the national circuit tends to be [progressive](#).

RESOLUTION / TOPIC

The subject of the debate. Example resolutions include:

Congress - Bill to Update the Clean Air Act or Bill to Increase Development in Space

Lincoln Douglas - Resolved: States ought to eliminate their nuclear arsenals.

Policy (CX) - The United States federal government should substantially reduce its restrictions on legal immigration to the United States.

Public Forum - The United States should end its economic sanctions against Venezuela.

DEBATE SEASON

The length of debate competition. This typically runs from around September to March for a “normal” debate season, with national tournaments (such as the [TOC](#), [NCFL](#), and [NSDA National Tournament](#)) occurring from around April-June.

LEAGUE

In debate, leagues refer to the specific area a student competes in. There are different kinds of leagues, but each has their own defining characteristics: some are based on region, such as the University Interscholastic Leagues (UIL’s) – these are the most common, and are also sometimes known as “districts” – others are based on specific objectives, like Urban Debate Leagues (UDL’s) or specific mechanics of how students in that league compete (i.e. homeschooling leagues). Leagues also determine the norms for debaters competing in the league, the events that are offered, and the topics that are used.

DEBATE TOURNAMENT RELATED TERMS

A ROUND / PAIRING

Refers to when debaters actually compete against one another. Student(s) will debate against a team from another school and be reviewed by a [judge](#), who will determine a winner.

SCHEMATICS / POSTINGS

Refers to a general list of information regarding a specific debate round. Typically, this includes sides, room numbers, opponents, and who the judge(s) are.

TAB

The term tab is short for “tabulation” which refers to a group of folks, typically coaches, who are directors and organizers of the tournaments. They are in charge of releasing results, pairing rounds, and handling any issues that may arise.

BALLOT

A place (either a sheet of paper for paper ballots or a website link for online balloting) for judges to mark who won the debate and give feedback to each debater on how to improve. Judges also assign speaker points on ballots.

FLIGHTS / FLIGHTED

Refers to when tournaments are short on judges and stagger rounds to have enough judges. For example, Round 1 of Tournament ABC has two flights, Flight A and Flight B. The debaters are all divided into Flights equal. So, half the debaters will compete in Flight A at 9:00am. After that round has concluded, the judge will stay in the room and judge the second set of debaters (Flight B) at 10:00am – all still Round 1.

PRELIMINARY ROUNDS (PRELIMS)

A set, guaranteed round – typically 4 to 6. Debaters who register for a tournament will compete in all preliminary rounds. The preliminary rounds are then used to determine who advances to [elimination rounds](#).

BREAKING / CLEARING

Advancing past [preliminary rounds](#) into elimination rounds (also called “out rounds”). Breaking / clearing almost always requires a positive record.

RECORD

The number of rounds a debater has won or lost. For example, a 3-1 record means that the debater has won 3 rounds and lost 1. Debaters can have positive, even or negative records. Positive records mean you won more rounds than you lost (ex: 3-1, 4-2, etc.). An even record means you won and lost an equal number of rounds (ex: 2-2, 3-3, etc.). A negative record means you lost more rounds than you won (ex: 1-4, 1-3, etc.). Winning rounds always come first, such as: wins-loss.

POWER PAIRINGS / POWER MATCHING

Refers to when teams with equal records are paired to debate each other in order to determine which teams advance. Typically, tournaments will begin power pairing/matching after round 2.

“HITTING”

Refers to when teams are paired to compete against one another. For example, a debater may say “Hey James, I’m hitting Imani from Roosevelt HS”.

BYE

When there are an unequal number of debaters, tournaments will have a “bye” which is an auto-win given to a debater to account for the uneven number. Typically, byes given for the first and second round are random and all byes after round 2 are given to the debater with the lowest record.

BID

A bid is an abstract concept that refers to an award of sorts – debaters who place high enough (depending on the tournament) may receive a bid which is a multi-step qualification to an important tournament, such as to a state tournament or the TOC. Debaters typically need multiple bids to qualify – for example, the Tournament of Champions requires debaters receive 2 bids to qualify, whereas some states require 4 bids to prequalify to their state tournament.

PLACINGS / AWARD CEREMONY

A formal ceremony where the tournament hosts will announce the top placers in each event. Typically, tournaments will award the top 6-8 debaters.

SPEAKER POINTS

Points awarded to a debater on the ballot by the judge, in addition to who won the round. Also known as "speaks". Most speaker point systems range from 0-30. Every debater will receive speaker points in every single round, whether they have won or lost. Some judges assign speaker points based on how good of a speaker a debater was, other assign speaker points based on the quality of argumentation – this really depends on the judge and judge instructions for that tournament.

TIE BREAKERS

When two debaters receive the same record (i.e. same number of wins and losses, for example, debater A won 3 rounds and lost 2 and debater B also won 3 rounds and lost 2), tab will use tie breakers to determine who is placed in what order.

OPPONENT WINS

A specific tie breaker that looks at the strength of a debater's opponents and ranks debaters with equal records based on who had the higher amount of opponent wins. For example, if both Debater A and B have a record of 4-2, but Debater A had opponents who collectively won 20 rounds, while Debater B's opponents collectively won 12 rounds, then, under this tie breaker, Debater A would be ranked higher. The idea is that the debater with the "harder" opponents should receive the higher placement.

LOW POINT WINS

Occurs when the debater who won the round receives lower speaker points than the debater who lost the round.

TIME SIGNALS

Hand gestures used by judges to indicate to the competitors how much time they have left.

PREP TIME

A specific amount of time each debater is allowed to use in between speeches to write down notes or gather their thoughts. For example, in [Lincoln Douglas Debate](#), debaters have 4 minutes of prep time. They are allowed to take it at any point in the round.

FLEX PREP

Refers to when debaters use their prep time to ask additional questions, as a sort of extension of [cross-examination](#). Depends highly on the tournament and judge as to whether this is acceptable.

PRE-ROUND DISCLOSURE

This is a norm on some circuits and in some events where, prior to the start of the round, debaters will disclose the arguments they are running. This typically entails uploading their docs to the Wiki and sending docs via email.

PARADIGM

A judge's philosophy on how they analyze or evaluate rounds. Typically, paradigms will include judges experience in debate (i.e. coach for 5 years, competed in HS, etc.) that offers debaters guidance on their preferences and how they are likely to judge the round.

PREFS

For many tournaments, students are allowed to "pref" judges, which simply means that prior to the tournament they rank which judges they'd like to judge them.

STRIKES

For many tournaments, students are allowed to "strike" judges, which simply means that prior to the tournament they inform tab that they do not want this person judging them. In general, strike refers to blocking a judge from judging you.

POST-ROUNDING

After the round, once a judge has disclosed, students will typically ask questions and for direct feedback from the judge. For example, a debater may ask “What did you think about X argument...” – essentially, post-rounding refers to after round dialogue between the judge and debater.

ORAL CRITIQUES

Oral critiques are similar to post-rounding, but do not involve dialogue. Instead, oral critiques are when judges give direct feedback on how to improve to debaters after the round is over.

AFTER-ROUND DISCLOSURE

Refers to when once the round is complete, the decision has been made and the judge opts to inform the students who won and lost immediately after the round.

ARGUMENT RELATED TERMS

AFFIRMING (AFF/AFFIRMATIVE/PRO)

The debater or team proposing and defending the resolution/plan.

NEGATING (NEG/NEGATIVE/CON)

The debater or team opposing and critiquing the resolution/plan.

CLAIM

The statement a debater is trying to improve.

WARRANT

A reason why a claim is true. Can be analytical or evidence based.

IMPACT

The reason why the argument matters/is important. Explains why the judge should be concerned with an issue. Ex: affirming leads to lives being lost, negating harms the economy, etc.

FRAMING

Analysis that directs the judge in how they consider arguments in a debate round.

When people refer to a “framing issue” in a debate round, they mean an argument that the judge should use to shape the way they look at the other arguments in the debate.

Sometimes people will read a framing contention, which is a contention in their initial case that contains arguments for how the judge should view consequential or deontological impacts, Kritiks, or other issues.

FRAMEWORK

A structured and formalized argument with rationale, analysis and evidence explaining how the judge should weigh various arguments.

VALUE

An abstract philosophical concept that each debater is attempting to achieve or protect. Regarded as the “end goal” and are considered intrinsically good. Usually, values are concepts such as morality, justice, or democracy. Values are typically used in local and/or [traditional](#) LD circuits.

VALUE CRITERION/STANDARD

How the “value” is achieved; a metric by which impacts in the round are viewed and analyzed. Most often, standards or criteria are rooted in philosophy and explains how a government or person should act, and why.

CASE/CONSTRUCTIVE

A formalized prewritten speech with arguments in favor of affirming or negating the resolution. This is where debaters introduce their positions and advocacies.

CROSS-EXAMINATION

A time period, in between speeches, where one side asks the other questions about their advocacy. These questions can be to receive clarification, explanation, concessions, dismantle their argument and more. The defining feature of cross-ex is that one side always asks the questions and the other side always answers the questions.

CROSSFIRE

A time period, in between speeches, where both sides ask each other questions about their advocacy and arguments. These questions can be to receive clarification, explanation, concessions, dismantle their argument and more. The defining feature of crossfire is that both sides are asking and answering questions.

SUBPOINT

An argument, within a [contention](#), that relates to the contention in a more specific way. Each subpoint undergoes the same claim-warrant-impact structure of any argument. For an example, if a debater were to argue that affirming the resolution would harm the economy, their "Contention 1" could be titled "Economic Harms" and their subpoints could be "Subpoint A: Jobs" and "Subpoint B: GDP". The point is that the subpoint relates to the argument of the contention, in a narrower way.

TAGLINE

A one sentence summary of the argument being made.

REBUTTAL

A specific time in each debate designated for either side (aff/neg, pro/con, prop/opp) to refute the arguments made by their opponent.

FALLACY

A logical fallacy is a mistake in argumentation. Either the premise or the conclusion is based on faulty reasoning. In a debate round, logical fallacies can be accidental or intentional. There are dozens of different types of logical fallacies.

OBSERVATIONS

Observations are analysis, typically at the top of a case or speech, that give context to the round. Observations are used to frame the round in some way. They can set [burdens](#) in the round, explain what the resolution means, or offer other types of analysis that has implications for the round.

UNDERVIEW

A summary of the arguments on a specific [flow](#), argument or the round as a whole made at the end of your speech or when you are moving on from addressing that flow/argument.

OVERVIEW

A summary of the arguments on a specific [flow](#), argument or the round as a whole made at the beginning of your speech or when you first address that flow/argument.

CONTENTION

A pre-written argument that supports the debaters' side of the [resolution](#). Contentions are a part of the case.

PLAN

The affirmatives pre-written argument for their advocacy; a specific mechanism for implementation.

ADVANTAGE

A portion of the first [constructive](#) speech that outlines an argument or multiple arguments for why the plan is a good idea. It will usually address a scenario that the plan helps to resolve.

DISADVANTAGE (DA)

An [offcase](#) offensive argument for why the plan causes a negative result.

PROCEDURAL ARGUMENTS

Arguments about the "procedures" or rules of debate. Judges evaluate these arguments before the content of the debate, or "substance".

STANDARDS (IN PROCEDURALS)

Reasons why a debaters' [interpretation](#) should be preferred. They are usually internal links to common [voters](#), or ways in which the interpretation can lead to better fairness, more education, etc.

VOTERS (IN PROCEDURALS)

In [progressive](#) debate, voters are impacts to [procedural arguments](#). Fairness and Education are the most common voters.

STOCK ISSUES

A debate theory that an affirmative plan should meet the 5 “stock issues”: [Significance](#), [Harms](#), [Inherency](#), [Topicality](#), and [Solvency](#). Most debate circuits do not debate using this style anymore, and topicality and solvency are the only stock issues that are typically seen in all circuits.

NET BENEFITS

An [offensive argument](#) that the [counterplan](#) resolves that the plan does not. Net benefits are either “internal”, meaning contained on the flow of the counterplan or tied closely to it, or “external”, meaning flowed separately and able to be a standalone argument. Usually, external net benefits are [disadvantages](#).

UNIQUENESS

A portion of an [advantage](#) or [disadvantage](#) that describe the status quo. Usually at the beginning of the advantage or disadvantage. Uniqueness is very identifiable because it will describe how something is “now”, “currently”, or in the “[status quo](#)”.

SOLVENCY

A [stock issue](#) that states the plan must solve for the harms it claims to solve for. Solvency is less of a “yes or no” question and can be more about the degree to which the risk is mitigated.

HARMS

A [stock issue](#) that claims the plan should solve existing issues in the [status quo](#), the same as advantages to the plan.

INHERENCY

A [stock issue](#) that states the plan could not have been implemented before; the affirmative has to propose a plan that has not happened yet.

SIGNIFIGANCE

A [stock issue](#) that claims the affirmative’s case is not important enough, or other issues are more pressing, like a disadvantage.

SOLVENCY ADVOCATE

A piece of evidence advocating for your plan or counterplan and explaining what it would do.

KRITIK (K)

An [offcase argument](#) about the assumptions made by the affirmative plan and how an alternative can resolve the implications of those assumptions.

TOPICALITY (T)

A [procedural argument](#) and stock issue that claims that the affirmative doesn't fit under the resolution, and therefore, shouldn't even be debated. Topicality has 4 main parts: an interpretation, a violation, standard, and voters.

THEORY

A [procedural argument](#) that claims a team performed an action or ran an argument that is illegitimate/harmful in some way, and they should either lose or the argument should be thrown out of the judge's decision.

COUNTERPLAN (CP)

An [offcase argument](#) that argues the plan creates an [opportunity cost](#), or that doing the plan foregoes another option that is more beneficial. Counterplans have a plan text, similar to an affirmative plan. They also usually have a solvency advocate, or a piece of evidence that advocates for the counterplan and explains how it will work. Counterplans must be net beneficial or resolve an issue that the affirmative plan cannot.

INTERPRETATION (INTERP)

On [procedural arguments](#) (topicality and theory), one team's view of what falls under the resolution or what arguments should be allowed in a debate round. In topicality, the interpretation is based off of definitions of words from the resolution.

COUNTER-INTERPRETATION

For topicality, an interpretation read by the team answering topicality that says that the team's plan, arguments, or actions should be included in the debate. For topicality, counter-interpretations "counter-define" the same word to mean a different meaning that includes the affirmative plan.

For theory, counter-interpretations can directly refute that a practice is wrong (for example, if one team says conditionality is bad, the other team can say conditionality is good), or they can slightly raise the cap on the amount of theoretically questionable arguments that can exist in the round - for example, if one team says no conditional arguments are allowed, a counter-interpretation can say that one conditional argument is okay.

COMPETING INTERPRETATIONS

A method of evaluating [procedural arguments](#) that states that the best interpretation of the topic should win, and the other interpretation should lose. This argument is usually made by the team that introduced the procedural argument.

ALTERNATIVE (ALT)

A part of a [Kritik](#); an action that should be taken instead of the affirmative plan to resolve the negative implications of the affirmative. Alternatives can be [permuted](#), just like counterplans.

VIOLATION

A part of [procedural arguments](#), the reason why the affirmative plan or a certain argument doesn't fit under the interpretation of the topicality or theory argument.

STATUS

The status of a counterplan refers to the ability of the negative to [kick](#) the counterplan during the course of the debate.

CONDITINAL (CONDO)

The negative can [kick](#) the counterplan at any time during the debate.

UNCONDITIONAL

When the negative outlines that the counterplan will definitively be in their last rebuttal. The negative cannot [kick](#) the counterplan.

DISPOSITIONAL (DISPO)

The negative can [kick](#) the counterplan if a perm is introduced on that counterplan.

COMPETITION

Arguments about the counterplan being a true [opportunity cost](#) to the affirmative. A counterplan or alternative is “not competitive” with the affirmative when it is not a real opportunity cost, or that doing the affirmative doesn’t foreclose on the option of doing the counterplan. Counterplans can compete through being [mutually exclusive](#) with the plan or if doing both at the same time has a consequence, i.e. the permutation has a disadvantage.

TEXTUAL COMPETITION

A type of [counterplan competition](#) that states that a counterplan competes if it doesn’t include all of the words found in the affirmative’s plan text. Textual competition gives no regard to the definitions of these words, and instead looks at them as symbols on a page. If the counterplan doesn’t include all of the plan text’s words, it can also be called “Textually Plan-Minus”.

FUNCTIONAL COMPETITION

A type of [counterplan competition](#) that states that a counterplan competes if it doesn’t include all of the functions of the affirmative plan. Also called “Functionally Plan-Minus”.

“PLAN-PLUS”

A phrase used in [competition debates](#) that holds the counterplan as including the entire affirmative either textually or functionally, meaning that it is not competitive with the affirmative.

PRESUMPTION

The idea that, when all things are equal in a debate, the judge should presume for a certain side and vote for them. In debate, that is usually presuming for the option that is closest to the [status quo](#).

PERMUTATION (PERM)

An argument that the counterplan is not a real [opportunity cost](#), that the plan and some or all of the counterplan can be completed at the same time. A permutation is like a “no link” argument against a counterplan, because it claims there are no trade-offs created when the plan is done.

SEVERANCE PERMS

Perms that are considered theoretically illegitimate because they remove a portion of the affirmative plan. Objections to severance include the notion that the affirmative should have to defend the entire plan, and that severance perms prove that the best policy option in the round does not include all of the affirmative plan.

INTRINSIC PERMS

Perms that are considered theoretically illegitimate because they add an action to the perm that is not included in the counterplan or the affirmative; it is completely new. Objections to intrinsic perms include that they justify infinite new, unpredictable additions to permutations, and that adding a separate action to the permutation proves that the affirmative can't be the best policy option because it needs another, extraneous portion added to create the best policy option.

LOGICAL PERMS

Perms that deconstruct the counterplan in ways that are not initially obvious, or “conceptual elements” of the counterplan. These elements are usually not contained in the initial presentation of the counterplan but are steps to do the counterplan that are essential to its completion, such as funding or enforcement mechanisms. These elements can be figured out through cross-examination questions, through background knowledge of the counterplan, or through reading the counterplan evidence.

REASONABILITY

A method of evaluating [procedural arguments](#) that states that the “worse” [interpretation](#) of the two presented should not lose the round if it is found that that interpretation is reasonable or doesn’t have any harsh negative effects on the topic.

MUTUAL EXCLUSIVITY

Two options cannot be done at the same time. Originally a term from probability theory, in debate, it is used where referring to [competition](#).

OPPORTUNITY COST

The loss of a potential benefit from an option when another option is chosen. A term taken originally from economics, in debate, it is used when referring to counterplans, or less commonly, Kritik alternatives.

BRINK

A term meaning the metaphorical point where, once crossed, the [link](#) to an argument is triggered.

TRICKS (TRIX)

A specific argument type that is less concerned with the substance of the debate or subject expertise. Tricks are instead centered around winning on a technicality. Common tricks include theory spikes, skep triggers, truth testing, and more.

A-PRIORI

A Latin term originally referring to argumentative assumptions that exist independent of experience. In debate, it usually just refers to arguments that should be considered first in the round.

NECESSARY BUT INSUFFICIENT BURDEN (NIB)

An argument that needs to be answered by a team to prevent them from losing, but they cannot garner offense from answering it. Sometimes called a “no-cost option”.

REVERSE VOTING ISSUES (RVI)

An argument that states that a team should lose for introducing a [procedural argument](#).

ARGUMENT RELATED TERMS

OFFENSE

Offensive arguments are a reason to support one sides advocacy. Offense gives the judge a reason to vote for the debater with the offensive argument.

Ex: An argument about how nuclear weapons increases the probability of war.

DEFENSE

Defensive arguments are a reason to reject one sides advocacy. Defense gives the judge a reason not to vote for your opponent.

Ex: An argument about how nuclear weapons does not increase the probability of war.

TERMINAL DEFENSE

A defensive argument that, if won, reduces the risk of that argument to 0%.

MITIGATORY DEFENSE

A defensive argument that, if won, reduces the risk of that argument but does not reduce that risk to 0%.

TURN

Taking an argument an opponent is making and explaining how that argument actually flows to your side. There are different kinds of turns, including link turns and impact turns. Turns generate [offense](#) for your side.

LINK TURN

Link turns concede that the impact(s) the opposing team presents are bad/good, but argues that they access that impact, not their opponent.

Example: The affirmative debater argues that subsidies for fossil fuels increase fossil fuel usage, leading to negative environmental and health outcomes.

The negative debater can link turn that argument by saying, yes, I agree negative environmental and health outcomes is bad, but the affirmative side is actually the one causing those issues because eliminating fossil fuel subsidies leads to a dependence on cheaper but even more harmful fossil fuels.

IMPACT TURN

Impact turns concede that the link the opposing team presents are true but argues that the impact they link to is actually good/bad.

An example: The negative debater argues that affirming will lead to an economic collapse. The affirmative debater can impact turn that argument by saying, yes, I agree that my side leads to an economic collapse, but that's actually good because collapse is inevitable, and postponing the collapse makes it way worse in the future.

LINK

The argument that the plan specifically causes something to happen. A part of Disadvantages and Kritiks.

INTERNAL LINK

A specific reason that the actions the plan sets in motion causes something to happen. In advantages, the internal link says the plan fixes a problem. In disadvantages, the internal link says the plan causes a problem. Internal links are the next step after links; links say the plan causes something to happen, internal links say that the "something" is good or bad.

RISK

A term used to frame how likely it is for a link chain to be triggered.

BURDEN

Burdens are responsibilities applied to a debater in a debate round. Typically, burdens must be fulfilled in order for that debater to win the round. Some common burdens include burden of proof and burden of rejoinder.

CLASH

A phrase often used in debate to describe direct points of disagreement.

EXTEND

Extending refers to when a debater continues an argument from a previous speech into the next. Debaters must extend all arguments for them to be considered by the judge.

“EXTENDING THROUGH INK”

The phrase extending through ink refers to when a debater brings up an argument from a previous speech into the next, without responding to the counterarguments their opponent made to their point.

For example: The affirmative debater is arguing how they benefit the economy and the negative debater gives three reasons why the affirmative does not benefit the economy in rebuttal. The affirmative debater is extending through ink in their next speech when they reexplain how they benefit the economy, without addressing the three reasons the negative debater offered that disputes their claim.

CROSS-APPLY

When a debater applies the same analysis and/or arguments in a rebuttal speech to save time.

For example: “Cross-apply what I said on their Contention 2 about how conflict will increase...”

“DROPPED”

When a debater fails to respond to an argument in rebuttal, it is considered dropped. Dropped arguments are considered concessions.

UNDERCOVERED

When an argument isn't responded to sufficiently or substantially. For example, an argument may be under covered if the affirmative team spent two minutes explaining and justifying their point with several examples, and the negative responds with one sentence that is rushed and lacks substantial warranting.

KICKING

The term for when a team artfully gets rid of an argument from the debate by conceding a defensive argument that the other team made.

GROUPING

Responding to several arguments together instead of separately. Typically, debaters will group together similar arguments or arguments that they have the same or similar responses to.

"IT'S A WASH"

A phrase used in a debate round to indicate that the argument is not able to be resolved and/or is too confusing for the judge to vote on. Can also mean that the argument is a "tie".

STATUS QUO (SQUO)

The world/current situation as it exists while the debate is occurring.

CARD

A piece of evidence formatted in a specific way, typically with highlighting, bolding and underlining to indicate what is being read in the round.

"CUTTING A CARD"

The process of researching and formatting a piece of evidence to be used in a debate round.

FLOW

A system of notetaking to keep track of arguments in a debate round. Debaters should flow not only their opponents' arguments, but also their own, to keep an accurate and full account of all points being made in the debate.

PREFLOW

Preflowing is when a debater writes down (or flows) their own [case/constructive](#) before the round begins to save time during the debate.

"FLOW THAT THROUGH"

A phrase used in a debate round to indicate to the judge/their opponent that an argument should be extended.

OFFCASE ("OFFS")

[Procedural Arguments](#), [Counterplans](#), [Kritiks](#), and [Disadvantages](#) that are made separate, or externally, from the Affirmative's case.

ORDER / "WHATS THE ORDER"

The order is given at the beginning of all speeches except the 1AC. It outlines the arguments that the debater will cover, usually grouped by which piece of flow paper the argument is on.

SPIKES / PRE-EMPTS

Responses to arguments that have not yet been made that are contained in the affirmative or negative case. Usually, they are embedded responses to arguments that the debaters predict they will debate against in a lot of rounds.

FIAT

A Latin word meaning "let it be". This is the concept that debaters argue about the effects of a plan, and not about if the plan is likely to pass.

PRE-FIAT VS POST FIAT

Pre-fiat is an argument that a certain issue does not take place in the world of the affirmative, rather, this argument takes issue with things or implications from the debate round itself. [Kritikal arguments](#) and [procedural arguments](#) usually have pre-fiat impacts.

Post-fiat is an argument that happens in the hypothetical world of the affirmative.

“DROP THE DEBATER”

An argument for voting against a debater because they have run a theoretically illegitimate argument.

“DROP THE ARGUMENT”

An argument for the judge to not consider a theoretically illegitimate argument in their decision, but to still consider voting for the team that ran that argument.

VOTING ISSUES (KVI'S OR VOTERS)

Voting issues are core/important arguments in the round explaining why the judge should vote for the debaters' side. Debaters will typically give analysis on voting issues in their last speech.

CLARITY / “CLEAR”

Refers to the ability of your speech to be understood by those listening. If a judge shouts “clear” while you are speaking, this means they cannot understand what you are saying.

DRILLS

Specific exercises debaters can do to practice improving in particular areas. There are different kinds of drills, such as clarity drills or efficiency drills.