

Novice Guide to Debate

OVERALL

[Basics of a debate tournament](#)

[APDA](#)

- Cases
- Motions

[Argument Strategy](#)

[Helpful Resources](#)

[APDA Videos](#)

[BP](#)

[Argument Generation](#)

[Sounding like a Debater](#)

BASICS OF A DEBATE TOURNAMENT

- Tournaments are usually Friday - Saturday or Saturday - Sunday
- There are 5 “in rounds,” which are the rounds everyone participates in. After the in-rounds, there is “the break,” where the top teams continue into “out rounds,” consisting of semifinals and finals for novices (varsity usually have octas- and quarters- as well).
- Dress is super casual. You should wear what you would wear to class.
- In APDA, people use “picked up” to mean won a round and “dropped” to mean lost. In BP, people just list the rank that they got.
- When referring to the position you are speaking in, people say “we are gov-ing” if they are the government team and “we are opp-ing” if they are the opposition team in APDA. In BP, people say “we were OG” (or OO, CG, or CO) based on the position they were speaking in (more details on this below).
- In each round, speakers are assigned speaker points based on how good their speech was. In APDA, the average is 25, ranging from 15 -35 (although the average has been trending upwards in recent years to 26/27). In BP, the average is 75, ranging from 65-85. At most tournaments, they are “closed speaks,” meaning you don’t find out your speaker points until after the tournament. Your “speaks” and your win-loss record will be on a “tab card” that is posted after the tournament for APDA and on the “tab” at BP, which is hosted on the website you will have been using throughout the tournament.

APDA

Cases

Cases debate is where the government team chooses the topic and has already prepared their side. Opposition team does not get any preparation, except when asking clarifying questions to the other team and while the Prime Minister is giving their speech. While this may seem a bit unfair, for in-rounds sides are fairly balanced, mainly because the opposition gets to speak for 13 minutes straight, which gives them a lot of time to swing the judge to their side, after which the government only gets to speak for 5 minutes. It also can make for really interesting rounds, either because you are opp-ing a little random or because you get to choose what you talk about for half the rounds. You can also write fun cases as well!

| Government | Opposition |
|--|--|
| Reading of case statement - 10 seconds - 1 minute | |
| Points of clarifications (POCs) - up to 15 minutes | Points of clarifications (POCs) - up to 15 minutes |
| Prime Minister Constructive (PMC) - 7 minutes (30 seconds grace) | |
| | Leader of the Opposition Constructive (LOC) - 8 minutes (30 seconds grace) |
| Member of Government (MG) - 8 minutes (30 seconds grace) | |
| | Member of Opposition (MO) - 8 minutes (30 seconds grace) |
| | Leader of the Opposition Rebuttal (LOR) - 4 minutes (30 seconds grace) |
| Prime Minister Rebuttal (PMR) - 5 minutes (30 seconds grace) | |

Government's constructive material = "On Case"

Opposition's constructive material = "Off Case"

What to do if you are the government team

Points of Clarification (POCs)

- Answer questions about your case and further explain what you are putting in place
- You don't have to commit to everything- you can simply say "that's up for debate"
- Try to set up a good debate and answer the questions the other team has
 - Don't try to make the case stronger or weaker in the POCs. By stronger or weaker, I mean don't caveat things out that you weren't planning to so that it is easier to win or give opposition a bunch of material. Pre-planning answers to the basic questions can help with this.
- You are allowed to cut off POCs whenever you want but I would suggest just letting the other team ask all their questions.

Prime Minister's Constructive (PMC)

- 7 minutes with 30 seconds grace
- Just read the case
- Don't be too fancy -- you can read directly from a computer but don't go too fast. Have a straightforward tone

Member of Government (MG)

- 8 minutes with 30 seconds grace
- Begins by responding to the "off-case"
 - Response to opposition's constructive materials
 - You NEED to respond to everything opposition put in their constructive because can't bring up new information after this
- Defend your cases against the opposition responses
- Can add new material but don't go overboard
- Time allocation depends on LOC speech

Prime Minister Rebuttal (PMR)

- 5 minutes with 30 seconds grace
- No new material except weighing and to defend against new material in the MO
Synthesize the round in the most favorable light for your side

What to do if you are the opposition team

Points of clarifications

- Time for opposition to ask questions of the government team
- Also it's nice and chill and polite – people are trying to be helpful, want to set up a nice round
- Take up to 15 minutes but don't waste time or stall -- it's really obvious
- Do not tell the other team your arguments or ask if you can make arguments.

Leader of Opposition Constructive (LOC)

- 8 minutes with 30 seconds grace

- Begins by presenting 2-4 arguments in opposition (should take roughly 5 minutes)
 - Independent reasons why your side is correct
- Finishes by responding to the government case
- No time to prepare -- you come up with your arguments during POCs and PMC

Member of Opposition (MO)

- Begin by defending your case against government responses
- Then defend your responses to your case against government defense
- Can add new responses and new arguments -- but don't go overboard
 - But you really should add new material
- You need to finish responding here — because you can't bring up new things in final speech

Leader of Opposition Rebuttal (LOR)

- 4 minutes with 30 seconds grace
- [Two opposition speeches in a row]
- NO new material except weighing
 - Impact – why argument matters
 - Compare impacts
- Synthesize the round in the most favorable light for your side
- Be as charitable to your opponent as possible
 - "Even if ___" — do as many times as possible
 - Have to be charitable in this speech because there's one speech afterwards
- Be generous and use “best case,” (How can you win the round even if what your opponent said is 100% true?).

Points in a round

Points of Clarification

- Questions you ask the team during the 15 minute time period to better understand their case
- See earlier descriptions

Points of Information

- Quick questions or comments offered during an opponent's speech
 - Can either say "no thank you" or "sure"
- Can be offered during any of the non-rebuttal speeches (except during the first and last minutes)
- Should be brief (under 15 seconds)
 - Should be used to DEVASTATE the opponent
- One strategy can be to wait to accept questions until a bit later after they've asked question — judge won't remember, it's out of place

- You can also wait until a natural break in your speech, not just whenever they raise their hand

Points of Order

- Offered during the rebuttal speeches if you think the other team illegally brought up new information
- Just interrupt the other team -- they don't need to acknowledge you
- Quickly explain what you thought was new. The speaker then gives an opportunity to explain why they thought what they said was legal
- Don't get into a side-debate
 - The only exception is if it is the PMR and they claim something was brought up in the MO and they are responding but you said it in the LOC. Point this out but don't argue any further.
- [If you could have responded to it earlier, it's not new]
- Call point of order pretty quickly after they brought up the information

Types of Opps (arguments opposition can bring up)

- Straight opp = defend the opposite of case statement
- Counter-case = propose an alternative to the case
 - If you do this, pause time and let the other team as Points of Clarification about your case.
 - You cannot do this if they say "preferable to status quo" in their case or they specifically tell you what you are supposed to defend (e.g if they say "x is better than y", you need to defend y).
- Tight call = claim that the case was impossible to beat
 - This basically changes the debate into one where you are debating whether or not the case was possible to beat
 - These rounds are not fun
 - Don't do this because you can't think of counter arguments, do this because you've thought of the counter arguments and they can't beat the case or any argument would be horribly offensive
 - Tight case examples- Legalize marijuana, sexism is bad, etc
 - The leader of opposition needs to tight call in the first 15 seconds
- Spec call
 - Do this IN ADDITION to other arguments
 - If there is no way you could have known something, use this to explain why the argument should not be considered
 - You can also use this to help justify a tight call if the only arguments the opposition could have given relied on super specific information
 - *Other option- just claim that the opposite is true. If you don't know it, judges don't either*
- Sqa call (Status quo call)

- Do this IN ADDITION to other arguments
- The government's case must not be the status quo. It is not allowed in APDA.
 - The justification is that it is an unfair burden for opposition to come up with a counterfactual, whereas government has infinite prep time, so they should have to do it
- Note: it is not sqo just because it is true in America, unless the case is specifically about America.

How rounds are judged

- Judges evaluate only arguments -- don't judge based on personal opinion or who sounds prettier
- Judges are reasonable -- if you claim something that's obviously untrue, it won't get credit
- You will get feedback about who won and why (called a reason for decision/ RFD)
- APDA is mostly* tabula rasa
 - *There will be some amount of intervention if either either A) the round does not weighing or B) your argument is incredibly stupid (e.g. "... and this leads to nuclear war" on a motion about the Harry Potter series)

Ways to raise speaker points and advice for delivery

- Delivery matters a lot for speaker points, not necessarily for stylistic reasons, but if you form shorthand, it creates communicative efficiency for the judge
 - Claim, warrant, impact
 - Warranting - why is this true?
 - Signposting - our next independent argument is
 - *Goal in delivery: how can you make sure that the judge internalizes the points that you are making?
- Things that influence judges:
 - How they expect the round will go vs. how it actually goes
 - Simple and stock pieces of analysis can go far. Sometimes, it doesn't necessarily hurt you and it's fine to say boring, regular arguments.
 - Their expectations about speak distribution
 - How much they enjoyed the round
 - Try not to make rounds messy, simplify things whenever you can
 - If you can, avoid getting super flustered and angry. Don't be aggressive or rude. If it's a tight call round, try to make it simple.
- Strategies for getting good speaks (break barrier of 28):
 - **Having good flow coverage**
 - Even if you don't have a great response to everything on the flow, try to at least give a response to everything even if it's just a weighing response
 - Multilayered responses
 - Give multiple responses for a good time
 - Address the impacts
 - **Weighing between impacts**

- One way to ensure weighing in rounds, is, don't allow yourself to say this is bad and this is good. Force yourself to only think about comparative language and this is better and this is worse.
 - Comparative activity - not about proving that one side in a vacuum has some good or bad consequences, it's that one side produces a state of affairs that is better or worse than the other
 - **Don't assume the worst case of the other team's case or the best case of your own case.** Use "Even ifs" and "best case" for the other team's arguments .
 - **Have multiple reasons for why something is true.** This means even if the judge doesn't buy argument A or the other team rebuts it well, you still have arguments B and C.
 - **Do picture painting.** Give concrete examples or characterize the way people behave
- **Signposting** is essential
 - Indicate the function of the content you are saying - mechanisms, why, impacts, this is important because, we care about this since, here's what this looks like
 - Taglines: what is the takeaway?
 - Immediately tells the judge what you are saying, which makes it easier for them to flow. Judge has already written it down and can now just listen to you.
 - Indicate independence when things are not related and number points
 - Flag technical details with "recognize"
 - Use very specific phrases. You will start to pick up on this as you debate
- Debaters can use questions to guide their arguments and help judges track
 - Say questions out loud. It's the natural train of thought of a judge and the natural formulation of an argument. Naturally tells the judge what you will do next.
- Other things about delivery:
 - Enunciate
 - Stay calm
 - Being super calm and blasé about things makes it look like easier to get things under control
 - Do not **overpromise**
 - For example, don't say you are going to completely destroy an argument if your responses are only mitigatory
 - Explicitly say things to get credit for them.
 - On the flip side, keep in mind what assumptions the other team has
 - For example, if underlying their argument is an assumption that people will react in one way, whereas your arguments say that people react a different way, specifically point out to the judge that their assumption underlies their arguments even if not explicitly stated by the other team.

Types of Case Statements

- THBT- This house believes that (normative statement, gov’s prerogative to set up world and explain why it is good or bad, opp’s job to defend status quo)
- THW- This house would (neutral, third party observer)
- THW as an actor- why the actor would do this, what are burdens and obligations as actor
- THS/O- This house supports/ opposes (neutral, third party observer, good or bad for the world)
- THR- This house regrets (regret something that happened, and construct **counterfactual**, explain why counterfactual is likely, alternative style of thought is just say it did more harm than good, without counterfactual)
- THP- this house prefers (thinks something is better than something else, if it’s a “THP a world in which” motion, you need to compare the two worlds that could exist but with one small change)

Tight Call Theory For Government Teams

This is for responding to tight calls as the Government team (not tight calling other teams). The opposition team will usually claim you need to “beat case twice,” meaning providing two arguments that are sufficient to beat the case. You should directly respond to their theory, run your own theory, and then just run arguments that beat your case (which should be prepped for each case).

TIGHT BLOCK

First, some brief theory. You should adjudicate based on path to victory.

Why?

1. There is a major time skew. They get to co opt the PMC, so they end up with $7+8+8+4= 27$ minutes, whereas we only have $8+5= 13$ minutes. They have double the time!
 - a. I literally cannot speak fast enough to beat the case
2. Infinite prep time is ridiculous. I’m a college student. I write half my cases on the train ride up. Plus, even if that is true, they just co-opted my PMC, which was prepped way more heavily than my tight block. This means they also benefit from infinite prep time.
 - a. This also sets bad norms for the league if you expect teams to spend so long on their cases. It makes debate super inaccessible.
3. Showing a path to victory is enough to show the case isn’t actually tight. The point of tight calls is to keep people from writing tight cases. If there is a way to win, the case isn’t tight and the incentive not to write tight cases remains

Motions

Motions are similar to cases and follow the same structure, but instead of the government team coming in with the case, the people running the tournament give you the topic and you have 15 minutes to prepare.

| | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| Government | Opposition |
|-------------------|-------------------|

| | |
|---|--|
| Prep time - 15 minutes | Prep time - 15 minutes |
| Prime Minister Constructive (PMC) - 7 minutes (30 seconds grace) | |
| Note: Once you say your model, pause time and let the other team ask questions. | |
| | Leader of the Opposition Constructive (LOC) - 8 minutes (30 seconds grace) |
| Member of Government (MG) - 8 minutes (30 seconds grace) | |
| | Member of Opposition (MO) - 8 minutes (30 seconds grace) |
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The structure and roles for each person is very similar to APDA cases. However, the Prime Minister also has to model the motion.

Modelling the motion

- If you are the prime minister, describe how the policy will be implemented
- Don't be abusive (aka model really unfairly)
 - You can't caveat that for example the debate is only taking place in the US or that a policy will be implemented perfectly
 - You can say things such as "this policy will be phased in over 5 years" or, if the motion is about trying to do something more abstract, "We would do this by doing A, B and C things." If the motion is about a norm, it can be helpful to explain specifically what you think the norm is talking about or give examples of what type of things you're going to defend.
- After you describe the model, pause time for questions. This operates the same as points of clarification in cases.

How to Structure Prep Time

- **Timing/ Order**
 - First, take 30 seconds to a minute to make sure you understand what the case statement is asking
 - Second, take a few minutes to think silently without talking
 - Third, talk with your partner about what arguments you are going to make
 - If you are going to model, make sure that is decided now

- Fourth, have the partner that is speaking first write down the arguments and have the partner speaking second either flesh out arguments for the first speaker or figure out responses to what the other team is going to say

ARGUMENT STRATEGY

The hierarchy of how to win a debate round

- Frameworks - how should you think about the debate as a whole?
- Burdens - what does your side actually have to prove in order to win?
- Weighing - why are your arguments more important?
- Arguments - why is something that will happen good or bad?
- Warrants - why will the thing happen?

The most important argument is the one you are winning

- When weighing arguments, don't try to spend a lot of time resolving a clash that still hasn't been resolved
- Instead, pick the argument you have most cleanly won and explain why it matters the most. The argument that you are winning second-most is the second most important in the round, and so on.

Winning without covering the entire flow

- If you are opposition, there is a risk of what is called a "PMR Pull through" where in the last speech, government massively blows up some point you missed and you have no time to respond. To avoid this, make sure you are winning even if you haven't hit every point
- Respond to the whole argument as well as the warrants
 - This means the main point has at least gotten some coverage even if they blow up a warrant you haven't responded to.
- Weigh and outweigh
 - You should make sure your points are heavily weighed in the round and you have explained what makes them important. You should also explain why this is more important than anything else, so they can't win on weighing a tiny point
- Even if
 - Make sure to "even if," which basically means saying "even if they win this argument, we still win because"

APDA VIDEOS

Shreyas's Recommendations for good APDA rounds

- Nationals 2016 Finals (password: SwipeRightOnLotteryVoting) - Princeton had both teams in Nationals finals in 2016 and you can see a relatively open case being debated at a relatively high level (feat. Anirudh Dasarathy '16, Nathan Raab '17, Bharath Srivatsan '18, and Sinan Ozbay '19)
 - <https://vimeo.com/166282147>
- Nationals 2017 Finals - a round about philosophy that's pretty interesting; might be useful not for the content of the arguments, but just to get a different sense of stylistic approaches to debate
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3MbgNPNzbXo&feature=youtu.be>

Amna's Recommendations for good APDA Rounds

- <https://vimeo.com/64964137>
 - Password: aBAVQNCG
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zH0jLUFcU7g>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hBYmdSxJ64k&feature=youtu.be>

An Lanh's Recommendations for good APDA Rounds

- To watch these cases, you need an account on the APDA forum
 - Sign up for an account on the forum: <http://apda.online/forum>
 - Go to General Discussion > Need Permission to Access Forum and post your name/Princeton. Someone should approve and give you private access shortly.
- Most of these represent women or underrepresented minorities or are social justice cases
- AU (Isaac and Zoe) vs W&M (Jerusalem and Jack), Wisconsin religious parents case.
 - <https://vimeo.com/151623966>
- Brandeis (Danny and Tim) vs W&M/F&M (Jerusalem and Matt), Harvard 2015 octos, prosecute executives rather than company.
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i-pE0bSwxf4>
- Brandeis (Michael and Tim) vs Brown (Jonah and Malik), Dartmouth 2016 finals, feminists shouldn't say "consent is sexy".
 - <https://vimeo.com/164355189> (pw: Allstatementsarebidirectional)
- Yale (Miles and Marina) vs Brown (Jonah and Malik), Brandeis 2017 semifinals, complex Christian Evil case statement.
 - <https://youtu.be/7rwkzYc5zj0>
- Yale (Kyle and Marina) vs Brown (Caleb and Yidi), Nats 2017 quarters, don't ask imams to condemn terrorists.
 - <https://vimeo.com/219303836>
- Rutgers (Sean and Quinn) vs Yale (Zach and Michael), Nats 2014 finals, Milk should've portrayed Harvey as polygamous.
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=25Utl1BcOm0>

BP

| | Government Bench | Opposition Bench |
|---------------------|---|---|
| | Motion Prep (15 minutes) | Motion Prep (15 minutes) |
| Opening Half | <i>Opening Government</i> Prime Minister (7 minutes, 15 seconds grace) | |
| | | <i>Opening Opposition</i> Leader of Opposition (7 minutes, 15 seconds grace) |
| | <i>Opening Government</i> Deputy Prime Minister (7 minutes, 15 seconds grace) | |
| | | <i>Opening Opposition</i> Deputy Leader of Opposition (7 minutes, 15 seconds grace) |
| Closing Half | <i>Closing Government</i> Member of Government (7 minutes, 15 seconds grace) | |
| | | <i>Closing Opposition</i> Member of Opposition (7 minutes, 15 seconds grace) |
| | <i>Closing Government</i> Government Whip (7 minutes, 15 seconds grace) | |
| | | <i>Closing Opposition</i> Opposition Whip (7 minutes, 15 seconds grace) |

Opening Government = "OG"

Opening Opposition = "OO"

Closing Government = "CG"

Closing Opposition = "CO"

OG + OO → Opening Half

CG + CO → Closing Half

OG + CG → Government Bench

OO + CO → Opposition Bench

OO + CG → Short Diagonal

OG + CO → Long Diagonal

What to do if you are the opening government team

Prime Minister

- Establish what government team(s) defend
- Model/characterization if needed
- Give arguments in favour of government

Deputy Prime Minister

- Bolster your own team's arguments
- Respond to other team's arguments
- Add new arguments, if appropriate
- Often: more thematic/varied structure than "on case", "off case"
- Much more impacting/characterization needed

What to do if you are the opening opposition team

Leader of Opposition

- Establish what opposition team(s) defend
- Counterprop/characterization if needed
- Respond to PM arguments (briefly)
- Give arguments in favour of opposition

Deputy Leader of Opposition

- Bolster your own team's arguments
- Respond to other team's arguments
- Add new arguments, if appropriate
- Often: more thematic/varied structure than "on case", "off case"
- Much more impacting/characterization needed

What to do if you are the closing government team

Government Member

- You MUST have new material
 - Completely new arguments
 - New impacts
 - New rebuttal
 - New characterization
 - New mechanisms
- Deliver your "extension(s)"
- Weigh against your opening team if necessary

- If needed, do rebuttal

Government Whip

- Do *some* rebuttal to CO
- Can't give new material
- Can "re-explain" extension
- Can deliver rebuttal
- Can explain significance of extension
- Do more impacting
- Do weighing against other teams (especially your opening team)
- Do rebuttal!

What to do if you are the closing opposition team

Opposition Member

- You MUST have new material
 - Completely new arguments
 - New impacts
 - New rebuttal
 - New characterization
 - New mechanisms
- Deliver your "extension(s)"
- Weigh against your opening team if necessary
- Do *some* rebuttal to CG

Opposition Whip

- Can't give new material
- Can "re-explain" extension
- Can deliver rebuttal
- Can explain significance of extension
- Do more impacting
- Do weighing against other teams (especially your opening team)
- Do rebuttal!
 - Shouldn't be bulk of rebuttal to CG (some should be in member)

How rounds are judged

- Judging is a bit more impressionistic, and a bit less flow-based than APDA
- Average, quite smart, informed, (liberal) voter
- Comparing Team on different benches
 - Who gave bigger impacts/better reasons to believe their side of the motion?
 - Note: obligation to rebut arguments of that team dependent on the extent to which they've already been defeated

- Comparing Team on same benches
 - Who gave a better reason to believe their side of the motion?

General advice

- Focus more on plausible characterization, than spreading 12 warrants
- You don't have to respond to every part of an argument, as long as you give a "convincing" refutation of it
- Take ONE POI
 - Usually from closing if you're from opening, and from vice versa
 - Need credit for "engagement"

For Opening:

- Need to seem plausible in general, and not just relative to other opening team
- Good impacting
- Plausible and broad characterization
- Take LOTS of content
- During Prep
 - Like APDA!
 - Spend a bit more time considering different contexts

For Closing:

- Say something new
- Be very explicit what it's function is
- During Prep
 - Figure out the "top half"
 - Be imaginative!
 - Don't write out your arguments

ARGUMENT GENERATION

- Your first instincts are often right- go with them. Obvious arguments are often good and easy to make
- What is this motion trying to get at? Is there a problem the policy is attempting to solve? Is there this situation playing out in the real world now? Are there competing norms in the world that this motion is trying to resolve?
- Think about actors in the motion
 - Who are the actors in this motion or which groups of people are involved/affected by the motion?
 - What are these actors incentives or what do they primarily want?
 - How does the motion affect them? Would an actor change their actions as a result of the motion?

- Think about the case on levels
 - Individual → close community (family place they live etc) → type of person (poor, rich, minority) → government (local, state, federal) → international (deving , deved)
 - Thematic levels (some overlap)
- Is this debate exclusive to a certain country or Western Liberal Democracies? If not, how would other types of governments react to this? How would developing countries react to this?
- What is the counterfactual? → what is the alternative?
 - Can almost always be more clear
 - Why is most likely? Be as charitable as possible
 - Arguments don't matter unless you have a meaningful alternative
 - Always have clear image about what is most likely (instead of hitting all outcomes)
 - Hit all plausible outcomes
 - This is more important in a norms debate and less important in a policy/ econ debate
- What is the other side going to say?
 - Intuitive first pass argument is the best argument
 - Construct your narrative to hit what you think opp will be
 - Even ifs
 - Set yourself up to run into the clash
 - You need to respond to all the opps

HELPFUL RESOURCES

PDP Training Videos

- Introduction to PDP and APDA motions debate- <https://youtu.be/iNewCNLXh5c>
- Introduction to Cases- <https://youtu.be/qLCKmnO2Ris>

Point of Clarification Facebook Group- APDA group where a moderator posts questions one a day and people respond with advice

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1168947806469658/>

Debate Seriousposting - BP group where people ask questions and commenters respond with advice

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/communistcasefile>

Things you can read to become smarter and access more arguments (from Shreyas)

- Project Syndicate (hot/warm/cold takes about pretty much everything from the world's most prominent people)

- CityLab from The Atlantic (urban policy)
- Monkey Cage from The Washington Post (political analysis)
- Upshot from The New York Times (statistics and data visualization)
- FiveThirtyEight (politics, polling, and sports)
- Money Stuff from Bloomberg (finance)

APDA schedule - see the schedule of APDA tournaments for the year

<http://results.apda.online/core/schedules/>

Global Debating spreadsheet- see the schedule of worldwide BP tournaments

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1R9s3MAh1H_7rj9NQhO18p6o7bvekrIDTk27l7emXk6o/edit?usp=sharing

Look at fun motions here

<http://hellomotions.com/>

SOUNDING LIKE A DEBATER

NOTE: A lot of advice novices get early on is that it doesn't matter how you speak, it just matters how good your arguments are. While I think this is true, I also think this tends to conceal the issue and prevent debaters from focusing on the way they present arguments. To note at the top of this, good arguments will always beat good sounding arguments that are actually bad. Prioritizing sounding good before you have good arguments will be a waste of time. However, good sounding arguments that are generally good will beat good arguments for a few reasons. First, using "debater language" helps you clearly communicate your ideas and improves word economy. Second, it signals to the judge what argument you are about to make, which makes it easier to understand. Third, it forces you to think about important concepts (e.g. if you say the word "counterfactual" during every speech, it forces you to think about the counterfactual). Fourth, it helps you understand other teams' arguments more easily. Fifth, and perhaps most cynically, it signals to the judge that you know what you are doing and will make them think a bit harder about your arguments and probably give you higher speaks. Despite all of this, many top debaters don't "sound like debaters." Nevertheless, I consider learning to sound like a debater similar to learning a five paragraph essay structure in middle school english; you don't always use them once you get more advanced, but it teaches you a lot and forces you to consider the decisions you make.

This list is adapted from Pragma's list.

- (1) Use **specific language** to describe:
 - (a) Weighing mechanisms
 - (i) Scope

- (ii) Least well-off
- (iii) Probability / certainty of impact
- (iv) Long-term v. short-term
- (v) Prerequisite
- (b) Flaws in your opponent's arguments
 - (i) Non-unique: will happen anyway
 - (ii) Non-comparative / miss the comparative: does not actually compare the two worlds (Gov world - Opp world) properly
 - (iii) Solvency: when they identify problems with something without proving how they "solve" the problem
 - (iv) Marginal: does not lead to a substantial change (used to *mitigate* impacts)
 - (v) Not mutually exclusive: can do both things
- (c) Economic concepts
 - (i) Incentives (really an everything concept)
 - (ii) Competition
 - (iii) Innovation
 - (iv) Investment
 - (v) Productivity
 - (vi) Information asymmetry
 - (vii) Economies of scale
 - (viii) Marginal returns
- (d) Political concepts
 - (i) Accountability
 - (ii) Political capital / political will
- (e) Principled arguments
 - (i) Prerequisite
 - (ii) Constraint on action
 - (iii) Comes prior to consequentialist arguments

(2) **Signpost explicitly** to signal to the judge what you are doing (like having a common language)

- (a) Introducing claims: "My first main argument is..."; "I have several responses"
- (b) Introducing warrants: "This is true because"; "Why is this true?"; "This is true for several reasons"; "This makes sense because"
- (c) Introducing impacts: "Why does this matter?"; "Why do we care?"; "There are several impacts"
- (d) Introducing specific tasks for the judge: "Prioritize ___"; "Prefer our analysis because" (introducing weighing!); "Recognize that ___"

(3) **Structure your speeches** carefully (obviously this takes more time and practice to get used to...)

- (a) Follow a premise/conclusion structure (explain explicitly how each thing causes the next)

- (i) If there are many similar impacts, that is okay - consider where and when it makes sense to *group ideas together* for the sake of efficiency; less experienced debaters often have *a lot of repetition* within speeches
- (b) Avoid going off on tangents; be very specific and targeted about each point you bring up; *conclude* points by explaining what that means for the round
 - (i) “So we can see that backlash does not actually happen”
 - (ii) “This directly responds to any analysis my opponents give about ___”
- (c) In rebuttal/ whip speeches, be extremely explicit about how different arguments interact with each other
 - (i) What are the real impacts of your and your opponents’ arguments?
 - (ii) Can your opponents “link in” to the impact that you say matters in any way?
 - (iii) Give the RFD for the judge - make it explicit.
 - 1) In APDA, tell them explicitly if your opponents’ are missing a part of their argument (“They are missing a warrant”; “They have not given us any reason why we should care”; “They talk about why this is a bad thing, but they have not provided any solvency”)
 - 2) In BP, tell them what you brought to the debate and why it matters the most, more than anything teams either have or could bring up.

(4) Picture paint

- (a) Examples and description are not a substitute for actual analysis. They should be used to make your arguments seem realistic and impactful
 - (i) “Slower growth is bad because it means more families out of work who can’t put food on the table” is more persuasive than “Slower growth is bad for the economy”

APDA specific advice

- (5) Be clear about where you are on the flow:
 - (a) Arguments
 - (b) Sub-points
 - (c) Warrants / impacts
 - (d) Off case / on case
 - (i) Note: in member speeches, start with the “off case” (Opp’s case) and then move to the “on case” (Gov’s case)
- (6) Avoid relying heavily on cross-application of your own case
 - (a) Come up with new & independent content to address the points made by the opposition
- (7) LAYER responses
 - (a) Do not just give ONE response to a specific point - this makes you really vulnerable to the judge not buying a response or your opponents’ quickly dealing with them
 - (b) If you can, come up with multiple responses

- (i) One to address the link / warrant - what they say will happen will not happen
- (ii) Add “even if”s to create *contingencies* for yourself - talk about why even if their warrants are true, their impacts do not matter

BP Specific Advice

- (8) Offer **characterization** and **framing** to weigh/ outweigh arguments
 - (a) What does the world ACTUALLY look like?
 - (b) Is an incorrect assumption underlying the entirety of another team's case?
 - (c) Have all the other teams missed an important actor/ group?
- (9) Flag responses to opponents material in case
 - (a) “Note that this argument directly responds to what we hear from ... ”
 - (i) This is especially important if you aren't doing direct rebuttal to that team