

PDP Tryout Guide

Tryout Structure:

Please arrive 5 minutes before your start time. A team member will present you with three motion statements on varying subjects. You will choose one and get 10 minutes to prepare a 5-minute speech **supporting the position articulated in the motion statement**. You will then present that 5-minute speech in front of the judges. After your speech, the judges will likely ask you 2 or 3 questions about your speech or yourself.

- I. What to do in the ten minutes before your speech.
 - A. **As soon as you pick your topic, stop, and take a minute or two to think things through.**
Do not write the first thing that comes to mind. You might find that your instinct led you astray. If so, this period checks against that. If not, keep going. This is always a useful tactic to really think “What is this motion really *about*? What is at the core of this issue? Am I on the periphery of the issue or am I really talking about what is relevant to it?”
 - B. Then, come up with your arguments.
 1. How to come up with arguments if you have none. Ask the following questions:
 - a) **Who are the relevant actors in the motion?** Who is *This House*? Is it the UN? The US? The EU? Or someone else? Additionally, who are the groups affected by this policy? The poor? Insular minorities? The middle class? Are particular countries affected? Particular institutions (like the military)? And once you identify how they are affected, which could be an argument in itself about the *direct impacts* of the policy:
 - b) **What are the incentives of the relevant actors and what actions do those incentives lead them to?** For example, if the government decides to legalize cocaine, what are the incentives of drug cartels and gangs? Perhaps to attack legal dispensaries and maintain a monopoly on their product? This lets you flesh out the interactions between actors and uncover the *indirect*, but equally important, impacts of a policy.
 - c) **Are there principled claims in the debate?** Not all arguments have to be consequence based. For example, on the motion “This house would kill the families of terrorists as a measure for counterterrorism” could include a myriad of reasons as to why this increases recruitment for these groups and is bad optically, but there may be a claim about how it is principally wrong to kill innocents. These arguments must be warranted though. Why is it wrong to kill innocents? This is typically tied to a particular conception of morality, responsibility, etc. Should you be punished for an act you didn’t commit? No? Explain.
 - d) **What arguments might the other side say?** Sometimes, thinking about what the other side might say can be very useful because you look at the

motion statement in a new light. However, it's important to be careful, don't waste your time giving a rebuttal to the other side's arguments in your speech. Instead, use those arguments as a launching off point to come up with independent arguments of your own. In the "US should legalize cocaine" debate, you might immediately think, "This doesn't make sense, cocaine is really bad for you!" And then you might think about how the people who do cocaine might consume it no matter what (even if it's illegal...). So what could the benefits be for legalization, given that? People might feel more comfortable reporting health issues to the cops, it might be easier to regulate, etc.

C. Structuring your speech.

1. ***Two to three main arguments over the course of five minutes.*** "My first argument is X" They should be independent of one another, which means the claims they make about the world should be distinct.
2. Arguments should be subdivided, with clear delineation of claims, warrants, and impacts. In fact, Claim-Warrant-Impact structure is a fantastic way of thinking about arguments.
 - a) ***Claim -*** What you think the implication of a policy is. For example, on the motion "This house would legalize hard drugs," a claim could be made that "Legalizing hard drugs leads to more drug users" The claim is the "what" of your argument.
 - b) ***Warrant -*** The warrants are the particular reasons for why your claim is true. For example, the previous claim could be substantiated by saying "Legalization allows for the establishment of dispensaries, drastically increasing availability of these drugs for the general populace" and "Legalization reduces the stigma around using these drugs and means more people will try them and therefore get hooked." Multiple warrants for a claim are particularly important and should be explicitly delineated, e.g. "Legalization of hard drugs leads to more drug users. There are three reasons for this. One:" Warrants are the "why" of your argument.
 - c) ***Impact -*** Impacts are why the argument matters. So, saying that there are more drug users is an argument, but there it doesn't matter in itself. Impacts say why arguments matter. For example, drug use can lead to more hospitalization, greater costs to healthcare infrastructure, productivity costs in the economy, overdose potential, spillover violence. Each of these is an impact, or a reason to care, about the fact that you've proven with your warrants. Impacts should also be delineated. "There are X impacts to this policy. One. Two. Three."

FAQs:

Can I use the Internet during the 10-minute preparatory period? No.

Will we know the topics ahead of time? No.

Are the topics different for each person? Generally, around 100 people tryout and we don't have 300 topics so many people will end up doing the same topic. In the interest of fairness (for your sake and everyone else's), don't share the motions you get.

Do we have to fill the 5-minutes? No. Do the best you can but don't waste time if it's obviously filler. Most people do not fill their five minutes.

What happens if you go over 5 minutes? At the 5-minute mark, you can finish your sentence but then you'll get cut off.

Can I use notes during my speech? Yes. However, as a tip, don't try to write out your full speech during your preparatory period – your time would be much better spent thinking of good arguments and organizing them into a nice outline.

How many arguments should I have in my speech? Generally, people like to do 2 or 3 arguments but this is not a hard-and-fast rule. Ideally however, you should probably have more than one argument. Also, don't just present a laundry list of arguments – spend the time to develop your best arguments and present them well.

What type of things are judges looking for in each speech? The main thing we're looking for is whether your arguments are well-organized and of high quality. Eloquence is good but not an emphasis. If you happen to know some debate terminology, using it is not important – we're looking for people who can come up with high quality arguments regardless of their background in high school.

Sample Economics Motion:

This House would eliminate tariff and non tariff barriers to trade

Potential arguments:

- Economic efficiency because countries to specialize and greater competition mean cheaper consumer goods
- Jobs will move to countries with lower costs of labor. This means the poorest individuals get access to jobs and are better off.
- More trade relations between countries means better relations and greater interdependency, lowering the risk of conflict
- Governments will implement these barriers poorly
 - Quota systems often times favor those with close relationships to the government
 - This leads to massive lobbying by businesses to not be included in certain categories or have weird exceptions made for them

Sample Social Justice Motion:

In countries with few female politicians, this House believes it is good to have a politically active 'first lady'

Potential arguments:

- First Lady becomes a “role model” or “icon” as a woman in politics
- Countries with fewer female politicians to begin with are more likely to not have recognizable female icons—makes the role of the First Lady more important
- “Politically active” means occupying positions which are normally for male technocrats--females are just as able to fill the role of the state
 - What the female can represent in politics has an optical impact
 - Good for feminist movement

Sample Foreign Policy Motion:

This House believes that the US should eliminate the blanket ban on negotiating with terrorist groups.

Potential arguments:

- Tool in the Toolbox: Blanket policies limit choices; its good to have flexibility and more options
- Principled Argument: Obligations to citizens and soldier should be reciprocal
 - If soldiers and citizens protect the US in every circumstance, the soldiers should also be protected in every circumstance
- Good morale for soldiers and Americans if they know the government will always protect them
 - Good for recruitment—people will want to join the military

Premise: Terrorist groups are goals-oriented, not random actors just looking to kill people

- Recruitment Down: They demonize the West in order to get people to join. When negotiation with the West is possible, the West is harder to demonize
 - US negotiations recognize that terrorist group members have legitimate grievances
- Inconsistent ideology/Trap of hypocrisy: By both calling the west the devil and also negotiating with the west they are inconsistent with their ideology so one of two things happens:
 - Either they continue to kidnap and undermine effort by not making deals with USA
 - Or they don't kidnap because they don't want to undermine their efforts and look bad