A Guide to Debating

AHHS AP US Government and Politics

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"It is better to debate a question without settling it than to settle a question without debating it."

Joseph Joubert

What is debate?

Debate is a structured way for adversaries to intellectually engage each other, for the benefit of an audience.

You may have in your mind an idea that debate is just arguing, or even yelling. This is incorrect. Debate is not "just" arguing in the sense that you probably know it, because usually the purpose of arguing is usually either to

a) convince your adversary that you are correct, or
b) make sure that your adversary knows your point of view.

About point a): In a debate, your adversary is not your audience, and you should not care if you convince your adversary. You should care about persuading your audience. Regarding point b): debate is also not just about speaking your mind, for two reasons.

a) Your adversary also probably doesn't care what you think, and
b) You are likely to lose the thread of what matters because you are too focused on saying something specific.

Did you see what just happened there? In a debate, having multiple responses to an opposing argument and providing a structure to your arguments is good. Audience members (remember, they matter) can keep track of what's going on more effectively if they get cues about structure.

A debate is about a resolution

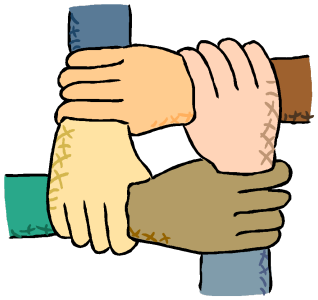
A resolution (sometimes called a "proposition") is a sentence that takes a clear stand on an issue. In our debates, this resolution will often be a change in policy using the word "should."

Every debate has two sides

We will call these sides Affirmative and Negative. The Affirmative side defends and supports the resolution, the Negative side attacks the resolution. You may have heard other terms like "pro and con," "agree and disagree," "for and against," and even more. We will stick to Affirmative and Negative because it helps to distance you a bit from your own emotions, which gets us to…

You WILL learn BOTH sides

In a debate that you participate in, you will NOT get to choose which side you defend. Competitively, I want you to think of a debate as a game. Intellectually, you will learn more about the topic if you are forced to understand both sides. If you really strenuously object to being on a certain side of a topic, don't choose that topic because there is a 50% chance that you will be very upset.



Each side is a small team

Our debates will have three people on each side. These three people must coordinate with each other before and during the debate, because otherwise the arguments will be all over the place and the audience will not be impressed. In case one person from a side is absent on debate day, the team may ask for an audience member to step in or one person may give an extra speech.

All debaters will speak

Yup. No way around it. Debate is adrenaline mixed with intellect mixed with oratory. If extemporaneous speaking intimidates you, consider this to be an opportunity for growth. (self-talk moment: "growth mindset!")

Everyone will do research

Everyone in class must turn in research about every debate, whether or not they participate in the debate itself. More on this later, but it includes the debaters AND the audience members. That way, every week everyone knows something about the debate. Also, the research submitted by audience members is critical to the preparation of the debaters. ***Everyone must submit one definition, one fact and one opinion on each week's topic.*** Points for evidence are about how good your source is, how well you cite that source and how relevant the quotation is.

Everyone will take notes

Both the debaters and the audience members will "flow," or take notes on, the debate. Later pages in this manual cover that process.

Winning a debate requires convincing the audience

The audience in every debate will vote twice: once before the debate begins, and again afterwards. The winner of the debate will be the side that can CHANGE the most audience members to their side. If your side loses votes at the end of the debate, you will not win unless the other side loses even more votes. This is actually possible because audience members may also choose "undecided" as their position BEFORE, but not AFTER the debate.

Everyone must debate every six weeks

Sign up for the topics that interest you, in advance. Every Friday is a new topic. If you debate more than once per six weeks (this will happen in the smaller periods), each extra time is worth up to 10 extra credit points depending on your performance (and is still a lot of fun). You can also create a written constructive, on the side of your choice.

Debate is a part of your grade

Debates fall into the major grades category. When you participate in a debate, it is worth 50 points (half a test). Different speakers within the debate have some different tasks to get their points. Each week that you do not debate, you will still do research for 15 points and take notes for another 10 points. Here's the breakdown:

Weeks that you only do research	
Fact evidence: relevant, well explained	5 points
Opinion evidence: relevant, well qualified	5 points
Definition evidence: relevant, well explained	5 points
Flow: take good notes during the debate	10 points
Total	25 points

Extra Credit, or Alternate if >6 signed up	
Written constructive: argues using four pieces of evidence	25 points (alt) 10 points (ExCr)

Weeks that you debate	
Fact evidence: relevant, well explained	5 points
Opinion evidence: relevant, well qualified	5 points
Definition evidence: relevant, well explained	5 points
(Constructive speaker) **Use of evidence**: at least four pieces	20 points
(Rebuttal speaker) **Refutation**: made at least three refuting arguments	20 points
(Summary speaker) **Bring it home**: at least one comparison and one appeal	20 points
(All speakers) **Style**: speech is clear and extemporaneous	5 points
Winning bonus: extra credit for team members	(+5 bonus)
Flow: take good notes during the debate	10 points
Total	50 points (+5 bonus)

Basic parts of debate: speeches

In debate, we use speeches to communicate our thoughts and arguments. Though you may have seen debates where the participants were free to speak up at any time, this is not what our debates are about. In AP Government debates only one person speaks at a time, and that person speaks for only a certain amount of time until s/he must stop. In this way, our style of debate is similar to the political debates that you may have seen on TV such as the US Presidential debates. Like most Presidential debates, there are two sides, called the Affirmative and the Negative. These two sides mostly alternate with each other until the last speech.

While we're on the subject of the speech order in debate, here's one last distinction to keep in mind. There are six speeches in our debates, and two cross-examinations. The first two speeches are called "constructives" and last 4 minutes each, the second two speeches are called "rebuttals" and last 4 minutes each, and the last two speeches are called "summaries" and last 3 minutes apiece. The two cross-examinations will last 2 minutes each. Here's a chart laying this all out in sequence.

SPEECH	TIME	DESCRIPTION
Affirmative Constructive	4 min	Lays out the initial arguments for the resolution. **Burden**: must include **thesis statement** & use at least four pieces of evidence. **Style points**: should sound rehearsed.
Negative Cross-Examination	2 min	Negative team members question the Affirmative team members, especially the Affirmative Constructive speaker.
Negative Constructive	4 min	Lays out the initial arguments against the resolution. May also begin answering the Affirmative arguments, but this is not part of the burden of the speech. **Burden**: must include **thesis statement** & use at least four pieces of evidence. **Style points**: should sound rehearsed, answer some Affirmative arguments, or both.
Affirmative Cross-Examination	2 min	Affirmative team members question the Negative team members, especially the Negative Constructive speaker.
Affirmative Rebuttal	4 min	Answers arguments laid out in the Negative Constructive. **Burden**: must include **thesis statement** & make at least three arguments which answer opposing arguments. **Style points**: be extemporaneous, introduce new evidence, or make additional arguments.
Negative Rebuttal	4 min	Answers arguments laid out in the Affirmative Constructive and the Affirmative Rebuttal. **Burden**: must include **thesis statement** & make at least three arguments which answer opposing arguments. **Style points**: be extemporaneous, introduce new evidence, or make additional arguments.
Affirmative Summary	3 min	Compares arguments made by both sides, and makes a final appeal. **Burden**: must include **thesis statement** & make at least one comparison and one appeal. **Style points**: be strategic, focusing on the most important arguments that change big parts of the debate. Appeals should sound well-integrated into the other parts of the speech.
Negative Summary	3 min	Compares arguments made by both sides, and makes a final appeal. **Burden**: must include **thesis statement** & make at least one comparison and one appeal. **Style points**: be strategic, focusing on the most important arguments that change big parts of the debate. Appeals should sound well-integrated into the other parts of the speech.

Throughout the debate, each side will also get **five minutes of preparation time** to be spread out whenever they want to use it. For example, the Affirmative team might use one minute of this prep time before their Rebuttal and the other four before their Summary, while the Negatives might use a minute before their Constructive, two before their Rebuttal and the remaining two before their Summary. You do not have to use all your preparation time.

Creating a case for change: the Affirmative Constructive

What follows are not requirements, they are tips. Your burden in the Affirmative Constructive, remember, is simply to advance arguments in favor of the resolution and use at least four pieces of evidence when you do so. Everything else on this page is a way to respond to a potential panic attack that you may have when you do not know where to begin.

As you have read, we debate about a particular Resolution. The Resolution always provides a suggestion of change by saying that something "should" be done. The Affirmative team is so named because they affirm the Resolution: they present a defense for change within this topic. One strategy that the Affirmatives can use is called a "case," and structures the Affirmative's argument into specific components.

Remember, to affirm the Resolution means you are supporting change. If you were to ask one of your friends to change one of her behaviors, how would you do it? Different people answer this in different ways, but a very common answer is that you might start by pointing out a problem with the way things are. In debate, the term we use for "the way things are" or "the current system" is the "status quo," a Latin phrase. The statement of the problem with the Status Quo and its effects is called **Harm.**

Harm

The Status Quo has a problem.

Example: Your friend Jenny is addicted to peanut butter and will now no longer eat anything else. Peanut butter as a sole source of nutrition is sorely lacking, and Jenny has actually started to resemble peanut butter. You suspect that if things continue, Jenny will either become unrecognizable as a human being or she will use up all of her money and wind up on the streets of Fort Worth begging strangers for PB&Js.

When defending the suggestion that the Status Quo has a problem, something that people don't as often talk about in casual conversation is the idea that the problem isn't going to go away any time soon. If the Resolution were to help someone across a river by building a bridge, the river itself might be considered a *barrier* to the person getting to the destination without help. This idea of a barrier to the Status Quo dealing with the Harm is called **Inherency**, meaning the reason the problem of the Harm is inherent (necessary) in the Status Quo.

Inherency

The Status Quo cannot solve the Harm on its own.

Example: Jenny, who is addicted to peanut butter, has tried to stop before. She's tried to quit cold turkey, she's tried chewing peanut butter-flavored gum, she even found someone who sold her a peanut butter patch to put on her shoulder. All of this has not helped her however – she is still very addicted, and really needs some professional help. Plus the patch on her shoulder is starting to smell funny and it gets strange looks. It's time for an intervention.

If you support change then it would be nice if your change works, right? The idea that the Resolution would make the Harm go away in debate is called **Solvency**. These arguments can be very straightforward, like "this change removes the only cause of the Harm," or more complicated, like "the change sets in motion a chain of events that eventually results in the reduction of the Harm to nothing."

Solvency

Adopting the Resolution can solve the Harm(s) of the Status Quo.

Example: Jenny's friends decide on a Plan to abduct her from her permanent place in line at the grocery store and drive her out to the Epi-Penitentiary Home for Delinquent Food Addicts, where she will spend a blissful 3 months resting amongst friends who share her circumstances. The healing, peanut and butter free environs will eventually return her to a state of readiness to enter normal society. For her final test, Jenny will be asked to wade through a kiddie-pool full of creamy Jif; if she passes she will once again be called just Jenny and not "PB&Jenny."

The case against change: the Negative Constructive

Again, like the advice for the Affirmative Constructive, the advice here is optional. Your burden in the Negative Constructive is to lay out initial reasons the audience should not vote for the Resolution. Your Negative Constructive speech needs to use at least four pieces of evidence. You may use multiple pieces of evidence to support the same argument, if you wish. Thus, you should consider this page to be a menu of options that you can pick and choose among. The best Negative Constructives also have elements of Rebuttal speeches, because the Affirmatives have already made one speech and the audience will perceive your speech as a response. Even if everything you do is planned in advance, a few verbal tweaks here and there will impress your audience into thinking you came up with some of it on the spot.

Strategy moment: if you come up with something innovative, start it here so that the audience has time to understand and appreciate it. Rebuttal and Summary speeches are not the time to be introducing a lot of new arguments.

Harm attacks

There is no problem in the status quo. Remember, Affirmatives need to win that there is a problem in order to win that change is necessary. If you can win this point, you have taken away the reason to have a debate! Many authors will start here, by arguing that people are not negatively impacted in the way that the Affirmatives' authors claim. You may think that saying "there are worse problems out there" is the same as this kind of argument, but you are actually talking about a Disadvantage – read on a bit.

Inherency attacks

The status quo will solve the problem on its own. This is tricky to support with evidence, but is a very unexpected direction to argue from and will often catch Affirmatives off guard. Be ready to answer the most obvious counter-argument later, that Inherency attacks prove that the Resolution is a good idea.

Solvency attacks

The Resolution does not solve the problem. One way to make this argument work is to argue from past example: "it was tried before in _____, and nothing changed." You can also find evidence and make arguments about hypothetical changes, but that's harder.

Disadvantages

Adopting the Resolution creates new problems. The easiest way to talk about this is about diversion of resources: every government action can be said to either take resources away from the people (taxes), or from other government initiatives (tradeoffs). Sometimes, the taxes themselves are the problem if you want to advance arguments about socialism, wealth redistribution or the unpopularity of taxation. Thus, you can talk about how either existing problems will be made worse, or how entirely new and unexpected issues will be revealed. For some good research on this issue look up economists talking about "unintended consequences," a favorite topic among those who do not like a lot of government intervention.

Definitions

The Resolution does not mean what the Affirmatives think it does. Have you ever argued with a teacher about the meaning of the words in an assignment? Yes, of course you have. Lawyers know very well the importance of the meaning of words. Arguments using definitions demonstrate out-of-the-box thinking patterns. This can be very powerful, and if left unanswered can cause the Affirmatives to lose in a very frustrating manner by making many of their arguments irrelevant. But, it is a can of worms that not every Negative wants to open because it can lead the debate into minutiae that the audience is not excited to hear about. Read the next page for more advice on this.

The importance of definitions

AP Government debates focus on the Resolution, that sentence that has to do with the change that should be instigated by the government. But does that Resolution always mean the same things to all people? Are all of the arguments of the other team even relevant to the debate at hand? To help settle this dispute, we can have arguments over the meanings of words in the Resolution. Debating about word meanings is, at its core, debating about which definition is appropriate in a given circumstance, and how using one definition over another affects the rest of the debate.

Warning! Debating about definitions is a very technical area, and while strategically it can get you very far it is hard to make this area as exciting as other kinds of argument. Also, depending on what definitions you use you may face an uphill battle convincing your audience that you are right, even if you are technically more proficient than your opponent. The people in the audience are the people that matter.

So, how does this work? Well, have you ever tried to disprove someone's crazy claim of one concept being equivalent to or falling within another? What if we are talking and I point to a chair and say to you, "this is a fruit." Besides laughing at me, how would you actually prove me wrong?

Start with a Definition

Fruit: (n) a succulent plant part (as the petioles of a rhubarb plant) used chiefly in a dessert or sweet course[1]

You will need to find meaning in words to understand their relationships to other ideas. Dictionaries are great sources for definitions, but they're not actually the only source: you can also look to literature that defines something *in context.*

Connect your definition to the discussion

That chair is not a fruit. If anything can be a fruit, then we are probably going to hurt our teeth eating nails and carpet fibers. It's a good idea that "fruit" be narrowly defined.

It may seem obvious, but it's important to be clear on which arguments you think your definition makes irrelevant (or relevant). Audience members may otherwise have trouble understanding why you are defining words in the first place.

Compare your definition to that of your opponent

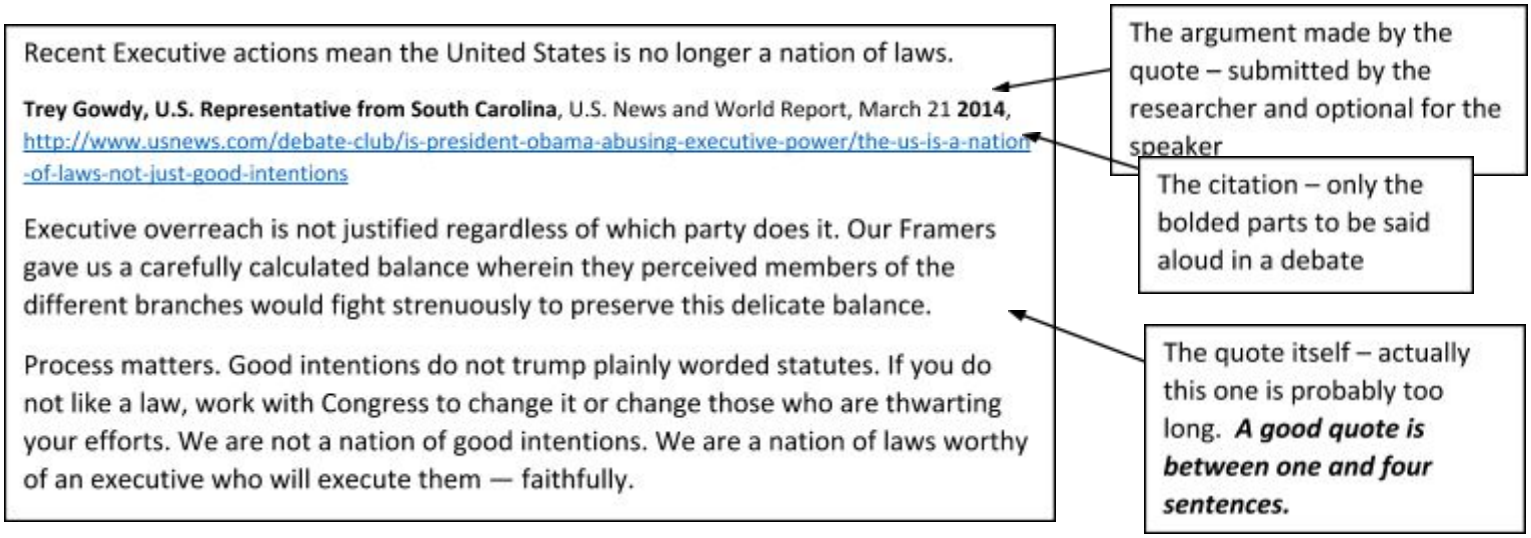
Their definition of "fruit" is "something you can taste with your tongue," and is from a Wikipedia entry suspiciously edited just yesterday before the research deadline. That definition is not only too broad, they probably wrote it themselves. Our definition is from a dictionary, and most people would say they accept it.

This is often the work of the Rebuttal or Summary speakers, and will give your audience something to keep from throwing their hands up in the air because they don't know whose side to take. In general it is about the topic of clash in debate, which has its own page in this manual.

[1] Merriam-Webster online collegiate dictionary, 2004 http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fruit

Evidence in debate

You might use quotes in papers that you write for other classes, and your teachers have you put them in using a very specific format. In debate we use a pretty specific format too, but we are not a written activity. Because you have to say everything in a debate that you want to be important, you have to actually say a citation for your evidence right when you introduce it. There are squabbles about how much of this "cite" you have to deliver in the speech, but at the very least you should say a source name, and oftentimes you will want to include a date. I'll jump right in and show you a piece of evidence, and then show you what inside that you would say aloud during a debate speech.



Each week, you need to submit three kinds of evidence: **one fact, one opinion, and one definition**.

Why is evidence in debate important? Well, first of all it's helpful to have an authoritative source for factual claims about the world outside. For example, suppose the other team stands up in a speech and says "The President of the United States declared yesterday that he has always wanted to be a circus performer. He is no longer going to carry out the duties of being President, and will instead spend his days jumping through small doggie-hoops on the White House lawn." You have a strong feeling that this is incorrect, but it's your word against theirs, right? Well, if they had evidence on the subject it is much more likely to be true, or at least contain some semblance of truth. Even if their evidence is a quote from the National Enquirer claiming that the President's recent appearances with a dog on the lawn of the White House indicate that he should become a circus performer, it's easier to get to the truth of the matter when you have a source to rely on.

Sometimes though, what you are disputing is not a clear fact. Suppose for example that one team introduces evidence saying "the United States is no longer a nation of laws," as in the example above. Then the other team answers it with evidence saying that "the United States is still a nation of laws." What is to be done? To resolve these claims, it's important to compare one quotation to another. If you are in this debate you should explicitly talk about why your evidence is better. Often, you will use criteria like these to do this.

Author qualification – "my author is a professor in the subject we are debating about, whereas your author is an unnamed citizen of Springfield Ohio who wrote to the editor of the local paper."

Date – "my evidence was written three days ago and clearly states the law has changed. Your evidence on the other hand is ten years old and isn't even about this particular dispute."

Better analysis – "my evidence gives multiple reasons for the argument it supports, all of which logically follow from each other. Your evidence has a statement with no supporting reasoning."

Stronger wording – "your evidence says that maybe, someday, it's sort of possible that the economy will crash. My evidence says there is zero risk of a decline for the next decade."

Doing Research: a Weekly Task

Every week you must do online debate research. This research is due on Thursday morning at 8:30 AM, when school starts. Trust me, this deadline is enforced. The reason it is due at the beginning of school on Thursday is so it can be used by people who are debating that topic.

Every week you must submit **one fact, one opinion and one definition** that is relevant to the week's debate topic. That is 3 quotations, per person, per week. You may submit more if you like, but only one of each type will be graded. Everyone must do their research each week, whether or not they are debating that topic. Not doing your debate research is something that can really mess with your grade, so please don't forget.

What is evidence?

Evidence is quotations from reputable media sources. Evidence is NOT your own writings (that is not what is meant by opinions!), and it is must be from a source that you can identify. Thus, despite how useful Wikipedia is, you cannot get debate evidence for AP Government from Wikipedia. Nor from a Google search, a forum post, or an online debate website where random people submit their opinions. Qualifications of the author matter, whether that means a person or an organization.

Where do I submit it?

Online, of course. Here are the steps:

1) Go to http://www.mrsmithsclass.info
2) Click on **Submit Debate Evidence**, in the **Government** area
3) Login with the same login PIN you use for the Classroom Economy. *Pro tip*: you are still on mrsmithsclass.info, meaning **your debate evidence can be submitted even when you are not at school**.
4) Click on a debate topic to submit evidence for it. Note the deadline.
5) Click on the links to submit different types of evidence when you have the quotation ready. *Pro tip*: the debate evidence area of the website has about a 30 minute timeout, so it's a good idea to hold off on getting to the submission page until you have the quotation ready in another browser tab.
6) As you are filling in the form, note that some fields are required and are outlined in red. There are a lot of helpful tips which guide you to what you're looking for in each field. The Author Name and Author Qualifications fields are optional because sometimes you don't know a specific person who wrote the quotation you are using. In these cases, the qualifications that will be used to judge how good your evidence is are the reputation of the organization publishing the content. For example, omitting author information when the Publication Name is New York Times is probably not a problem, if the article was news content written by someone who works at the New York Times. If on the other hand the article was an editorial written by someone who does not work at the Times, the author information is critically important.
7) Once your evidence has been submitted it will show up beneath the submission links for the topic, underneath a heading called My Submitted Evidence.
8) After I have reviewed your evidence, you can return to the topic page and see my commentary and how many points each quotation earned.

What if I am debating a topic?

When you login to the debate evidence site and you are debating a topic, you will see a box called **I am debating this topic!** Inside that box, after the deadline passes you will see two new links. The **Pick evidence to use** link takes you to a page where you can read all the submissions from all students, and click on ones that you think are useful. To save your selections on that page, scroll to the top or bottom of the page and click the Save Selections button. Then, to see just the evidence you picked out, click the **View selected evidence** link. This evidence may be formatted easily enough for you to use on your device as such, or you may want to copy and paste it into something else like a Word document for your speech.

Taking Notes ("flowing") in debate

You will need to take notes about every debate you are present for in class, whether or not you are debating. The technical term for taking notes in debate is flowing, taken from the word "flowchart" which is a diagram of a sequence. If you like, you can also think of flowing in debate as analogous to diagrams that rappers create (they also use this term, and for the same reason) wherein they mark up lyrics with indicators of the beats in the music.

This is going to feel unnatural at first. Imagine that you are in a conversation with a friend and your friend insists on writing down every detail of the conversation. But **you will get better at it with practice**. And, flowing will make you pay attention to a lot more detail. Plus, these debates are academic experiences and deserve proof of your attention. Even better, practicing this skill may aid you in taking notes from other classes. Trust me, I have taught many students to do this for many years and no one ever wins the argument that taking notes is an irrelevant skill.

Because a debate occurs as a series of speeches, that is how you will take notes – as a series of columns on paper. Each column represents one speech, and by putting them side-by-side you can track arguments as they are made and answered by each team.

Here, then, is an example. Imagine the Resolution is "the federal government should require all students to wear school uniforms." Try to comprehend all of what's going on before you go to the next page: could you reconstruct this debate?

AC	NC	AR	NR	AS	NS
-harm: gangs use colors ev: fact, 2005					
-solv: unif are safer ev: study, 2010	-gangs still beat people up ev: opin, 2012	-Study beats opinion	-d/n mean worth the downsides	-Prefer science over scare tactics -Appeal: story of girl, 13, bad neighborhood, wants uniforms	-Hall quote: defend free speech to death -Expression is best way to combat bad social problems
-harm: girls feel pressured ev: opin, 2008	-Pressure is part of life	-Ev is better than Neg arg			
-solv: unif remove pressure ev: opin, 2002					
	-Def: student = anyone getting instruction ev: dict				
	-Aff only focuses on urban schools	-So what?	-Only focus on urban schools = bad policy		
	-DA: unif hurt expression ev: survey, 2009	-Other outlets available			
	-Expression is fundamental ev: opin, 2014	-Safety is a prerequisite	-First Amend key to demo	-John Adams quote: security first priority	-Appeal: story of clothes = story of us

Abbreviations and flowing

In the example you noticed a lot of abbreviations. Here are some standard ones that you might use because they will make your life easier. If you don't use them, I understand (that's a lot to remember) but I am trying to help you with notetaking skills in other classes. Shorthand saves your hand muscles! In a college lecture you will not be able to write down every word, so focus on the important parts. And much of what is important is said, not shown. Some people think they need to write down every word in the debate. That is wrong – you should think of your flow as a short key that activates your memory of the debate when you look at it.

→	Connects one argument to another in a later speech; within one argument means "leads to" or "causes"		
ev	Evidence	DA	Disadvantage (see p. 5)
opin	Opinion	s/n	Should not (or, s/ meaning "should")
def	Definition	d/n	Does not (or, d/ meaning "does")
aff	Affirmative	c/n	Can not (or, c/ meaning "can")
neg	Negative	w/n	Will not (or, w/ meaning "will")
arg	Argument	=	Is, means
solv	Solvency (see p. 4)	mng	Meaning
inh	Inherency (see p. 4)	ans	Answer
Pres	President	Amend	Amendment
exec	Executive branch	Const	Constitution
Cong	Congress/legislative branch	demo	Democracy
S. Ct	Supreme Court	edu	Education
SOP	Separation of powers	C&B	Checks and Balances

In the debate I flowed on the previous page, it was also pretty convenient to use the abbreviation "unif" to represent "uniform" or "uniforms." You can come up with some good abbreviations too, in the moment. One last tip about abbreviations: don't worry about finding perfect shorthand. If you do not remember every abbreviation you used a month later that's OK: you need to remember every abbreviation a few minutes later, and then they have done their job for this purpose.

Clash – answering arguments effectively (a guide for rebuttals)

One of the most difficult tasks in debate is also one of the most basic. When we debate against each other, we are asked to come up with arguments that respond to those of our opponents. This happens in everyday life: your mother might say that you should clean your room to be a better person, and you might respond that cleaning would trade off with more valuable activities like homework and television watching. Unlike in everyday life however, in debate rounds we are expected to not only state our initial arguments but refine and compare them to those of our opponents. When debaters continue to find ways that their arguments relate to and counter the arguments of their opponents, we call it **clash** – and clash is definitely good.

Let's try an example to demonstrate. Suppose that you are out with a group of friends, trying to figure out where to go for lunch. You spot a Chinese buffet and suggest it as a destination, then one of your friends sees a deli (a sandwich shop) and wants to go there. The conversation goes like this.

> You say: "We should go to the buffet because it's got more food value for the money."
>
> Your friend says: "We should go to the deli because the food there is healthier."

What do you say next? Do you hit your friend on the head? Can you continue the conversation and still be friends?

The first rule for creating clash (responding to an argument) is to **start with what you know**. Usually that means you should start by re-explaining your own arguments. Maybe you say "food value is great – I'm really hungry and there's a lot of different food at the buffet. " Often, this will help you to do the second step, which is to **make a connection between your argument and your opponent's argument**. So you are suddenly inspired to also say "with all the different choices at the buffet people can pick what they want, even healthy food. That way, everyone wins!" Your friend, who has been on the debate team for awhile now, says "that depends on how you define a win. I think everyone should be healthier than they are now, and if we all eat at the deli we'll promote that goal. Better to not be tempted by deep-fried food and MSG." Both of you were creating clash by finding ways that your arguments interacted with each other, and (the third, important step in effective clash) **drawing comparisons between arguments based on ideas both sides hold in common**. Both of you agree that "winning" is good, though your friend's last comment reveals that what you thought you had in common might not be as comprehensive as you assumed. This argument could go on for awhile, it seems! In a debate round the steps usually work just as well, even if the subject matter changes. Creating clash helps you win, and helps you to sound good in the process.

Wrap it up – the summary speech

So your teammates have done their thing, and it's time to put it all together. But you only have three minutes, how will this work? Don't worry – your job in the summary speech is to step back a bit, and try to figure out what is important. **During the summary speech, time is not as important as perspective**.

Comparisons – everything you can do I can do better

One of your burdens is to make at least one comparison in the summary speech. You should focus on an area of the debate where your side and their side have gone "back and forth," meaning that both sides have directly refuted opposing arguments. Explain a reason why your argument is more persuasive than your opponent's. Maybe you have better evidence. Maybe they never introduced any evidence and your team did. Maybe they just repeated themselves even when your team asked for a clarification. Maybe your whole side coordinated a theme together, and your arguments fit that theme really well whereas their arguments are disconnected.

Appeal – real talk

The other burden in the summary speech is to make an appeal. You must do something that reaches your audience personally, and this could take many different forms. An appeal should take up anywhere from 30 seconds to a couple of minutes of your speech. **Your goal is to make your audience care about the debate, and about your side in particular**. You should probably have an appeal ready before the debate starts, but you can customize it to sound like it fits what else has happened. Below are some examples:

1) **Tell a short story about real people**. Oftentimes you will come across a touching narrative that supports your cause. Someone whose life was affected by, or threatened by, or uplifted by a change can be a powerful way to humanize an otherwise abstract issue. This could even be about yourself!
2) **Use a famous quote in the context of the debate**. The quote doesn't have to be specifically about the debate, but could be something you were saving because it helped your side. For example, in a debate about school uniforms the side arguing for the use of school uniforms might quote John Adams who said, "I must study politics and war that my sons may have liberty to study mathematics and philosophy." This quote could be used to support the idea that safety and practicality are a prerequisite to the freedoms that we sometimes take for granted. The use of a famous quote gets peoples' attention and brings the emotional connection they have with the famous person into the debate at hand.
3) **Re-explain why the debate matters**. Sometimes, we get so caught up in the arguments that the audience loses sight of the resolution. So, bring that home to people. Talk about who would be affected, or how fundamental the issue is to us.