

CONNECTICUT
DEMOCRACY CENTER



DEBATE TOURNAMENT

Handbook
2024-2025

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What is the Tournament?

Description

The Connecticut Democracy Center Debate Tournament hosts competitive interscholastic team policy debate tournaments for middle and high school students focused on a Connecticut topic. There are two days of competition. The first day entails two preliminary rounds for all teams, then the top 8 advance to a second day of elimination rounds. At both the middle and high school levels, students form two person teams to debate both sides of a current topic. While participants receive preliminary resources, they are encouraged to conduct additional research. Participants use their research to develop both negative and affirmative arguments, learn to cross examine their opposition, and listen attentively in order to rebut their opponent's arguments. Students are scored in several areas, including delivery and analysis. Participation in CTDC Debate improves students' public speaking skills, ability to analyze issues and resources, and expertise in using evidence to support arguments.

This handbook is not meant to be a one-stop debate preparation guide. This is specifically meant to offer some basic answers to questions, and offer debaters, their coaches, and their families information relevant to the CTDC Debate Tournament specifically. We have links to some materials such as guides and textbooks teaching debate to students, at the end of this handbook. None of these materials are required to participate in the CTDC Debate Tournament, though they may prove helpful, particularly to novice teams!

What Is Policy Debate?

According to Merriam Webster Dictionary, the word debate means "a regulated discussion of a proposition between two matched sides." In other words, a debate is a form of interaction between two or more positions on a given issue. There are certain components we have come to expect from a debate in the academic competition setting: two sides in opposition to one another, at least one judge adjudicating the debate, time limitations, the use of evidence to craft persuasive arguments, and the topic of debate being predetermined.

Policy debate is, in the most basic sense, a debate format where students argue on teams of two whether the policy plan presented by one side should be implemented or not. Each team of two debaters prepares arguments for both the Affirmative (support the resolution) side and the Negative (do not support the policy put forth by the Affirmative) side.

Tools for Debate

What does a round look like?

When you find out your assigned room and side of the debate, head to the room so that you can get settled before the round begins.

The judge will come in, likely ask you, your teammate, and the opposing team your names. The judge will make sure everyone is ready, and start the round. The First Affirmative speaker will approach the place from which all speakers will present. Some debaters decide to bring a phone or other timer device with them to the front of the room, and begin speaking by saying something along the lines of “My time will begin in 3, 2, 1” and start their personal timer. This is allowed, but not required of debaters. Whether a debater is timing themselves or not, there will be a non-debating person in the room keeping track of the time. This may be the judge, or it could be another volunteer present specifically to time.

There are four minutes of prep time available to both teams to use in one minute increments throughout the round.

Each member of your two-person team is going to be considered a 1st or 2nd when looking at the schedule of a round. This idea of being the 1st or 2nd Affirmative or Negative is going to factor into when you conduct a cross-examination as well as presenting your speech. Below is an outline of the order in which each speaker presents their arguments.

1st Affirmative Constructive Speech	5 minutes
1st Affirmative is questioned by 2nd Negative (Cross Examination)	2 minutes
1st Negative Constructive Speech	5 minutes
1st Negative is questioned by 1st Affirmative (Cross Examination)	2 minutes
2nd Affirmative Constructive Speech	5 minutes
2nd Affirmative is questioned by 1st Negative (Cross Examination)	2 minutes
2nd Negative Constructive Speech	5 minutes
2nd Negative is questioned by 2nd Affirmative (Cross Examination)	2 minutes
1st Negative Rebuttal	3 minutes
1st Affirmative Rebuttal	3 minutes
2nd Negative Rebuttal	3 minutes
2nd Affirmative Rebuttal	3 minutes

Here's an example of a round with names.

Affirmative Team

Negative Team

1st Affirmative: Marian A..

1st Negative: James M.

2nd Affirmative: Jonathan T.

2nd Negative: Prudence C.

Marian A. Constructive Speech

Marian A. cross-examined by Prudence C.

James M. Constructive Speech

James M. cross-examined by Marian A.

Jonathan T. Constructive Speech

Jonathan T. cross-examined by James M.

Prudence C. Constructive Speech

Prudence C. cross-examined by Jonathan T.

James M. Rebuttal

Marian A. Rebuttal

Prudence C. Rebuttal

Jonathan T. Rebuttal

After all the Constructive speeches, Cross-Examinations, and Rebuttals have been heard, the judge may finish making a note or two (after having taken notes throughout the round), and will then offer feedback to both debate teams. The judge will not tell the room which side won the round, rather offer comments on the round overall, before returning to the judges' room to complete their evaluation and enter their Ballot.

Explanation of Constructive

Your Constructive speech is the first time you present your arguments to support your position. At the Connecticut Democracy Center Debate Tournament, the Constructive speech is five minutes long.

Each speaker participating in the round will give a Constructive speech. This is where the Affirmative side will set the stakes of the issue, explain why the resolution will affect positive change, and what their plan is to implement the policy presented in the resolution. The Negative will use this speech to lay out their arguments opposing the Affirmative side. These speeches are the time during which new arguments and evidence are introduced by the speakers.

One technique used by debaters is to respond to some of their opponent's arguments in the Constructive speech, while leveraging their evidence and arguments to support their refutation of the other team.

Explanation of Cross-Examination

Cross examination is an incredibly important aspect of Policy Debate; this is the only opportunity for opposing debaters to directly interact with one another. At the Connecticut Democracy Center Debate Tournament, cross-examinations are two minutes long, and the speaker who just completed their Constructive argument is the one to be cross-examined.

The cross-examination (or CX, cross-x, x, cross) is where the opposing side is able to ask questions directly of the other team. Many different types of questions are permissible: questions about evidence, requests for further explanation, or questions to demonstrate the disadvantages of speech just presented, among others, are all valid types of questions.

Debaters conducting a cross-examination must ask questions in the allotted time. The cross is not extra speech time!

Explanation of Rebuttal

The Rebuttals happen after all Constructive and Cross-Examinations have been conducted. These are the four "closing arguments" of the round. Each speaker presents a Rebuttal. At the Connecticut Democracy Center Debate Tournament, the Rebuttal is three minutes long.

One of the most important points to remember is that you are **not** allowed to introduce new arguments or evidence during your Rebuttal speech. The Rebuttal is your time to respond to your opponent's attacks on your arguments, as well as your chance to articulate why your side won the round through your evidence and the strength of your arguments.

How to compile evidence and argument for the round.

Preparing strong arguments in Policy Debate requires the use of evidence to support your claims. Within a debate round, you'll utilize your evidence in a different way than you might when writing a paper or giving a presentation to your class. The evidence you use to make claims may be adjusted throughout the round in order to respond to your opponent's claims. In that case, having your evidence accessible in a manner that allows for you to reorganize, include, and exclude pieces of evidence based on their relevance to the argument at hand will help you throughout the round.

Debaters frequently organize their evidence as "cards" - quotations from their research they read or refer to within their argument. Some may print them on sheets of paper, transcribe them onto index cards, or keep them accessible digitally for the round. (The Connecticut Democracy Center Debate Tournament **does** allow debaters to use devices during the round.)

You will want to have evidence that supports your argument, even if you don't mention it in the first speaker's constructive speech. With more evidence, you have new material the second speaker can introduce in their constructive speech as a response to an argument your opponent makes.

Affirmative Arguments

As the Affirmative (or Aff.) side of a policy debate, you will need to do several things

- Articulate why the current situation is bad/causing problems
- Explain what those problems are
- Propose a plan to enact the policy resolution that addresses the problems present in the status quo

This sounds simple, though it is not easy. Through research, you will find a variety of potential plans, and pieces of evidence that may support or refute your overall argument. A compelling overall argument includes multiple smaller arguments that you support through your use of evidence. If you have multiple ways in which your plan will solve the problem at hand, and have positive outcomes, that creates multiple points the Negative side has to successfully refute. You don't want to make your opponent's job easy, so having multiple smaller arguments in support of your plan gives them a more difficult job.

The Negative side will also be working to make your job of convincing the judge difficult, by highlighting potential issues with your plan, and arguing that the manner in which you propose addressing a perceived problem will not work. You must be prepared to hear the Negative side's

multiple arguments and refute them, both in the second Aff. constructive speech, and in both speaker's rebuttals.

Negative Arguments

As the Negative (or Neg.) side of a policy debate, your main job is to outline why Aff.'s arguments should not be accepted or supported by the judge of the debate round. There are multiple approaches to crafting Neg. arguments, meaning it is wise to have many smaller arguments ready to use, depending on Aff.'s first constructive argument. Your principal job is to:

- Articulate why Aff.'s plan is not something which ought to be enacted

You may decide to argue that the problem at hand is not actually a problem, is caused by factors not identified (and thereby not addressed by) Aff., or that the suggested plan will not address the problem or that the negative outcomes of Aff.'s plan outweigh the benefits of it. As you can see, there are multiple directions you could go with your Negative arguments, just as there are many ways Aff. can go with their arguments. This is where the fact that you've prepared to argue both sides comes in: you can look at your own Aff. arguments to identify Neg. counter arguments.

Neg. side requires more flexibility at the outset of the round, but a good debate round requires both sides to think on their feet and adapt to the specific arguments presented by the opposing side.

Glossary of Terms

There are a whole host of terms used in the debate world to talk about different components of arguments. We have identified some here we think would be helpful for participants in the CT Democracy Center Debate Tournament to know. At the end of this section, we provide links to some larger glossaries, if that is of interest to you.

HARMS- the problems caused by either the status quo (from the perspective of the Aff.) or the problems caused by Aff.'s plan (from the perspective of Neg.)

INHERENCY - why the problem exists

PLAN - the solution Affirmative offers to address the problem

DISADVANTAGES - disputes about whether the plan creates any new problems

CLAIM - your contention, the specific point you are trying to make

WARRANT - the reason(s) for the claim

PROOF/EVIDENCE - the materials used to support your claim or warrant. Typically structured in debate as CARDS or quotations from experts qualified to offer opinion or analysis on the subject of your claim or warrant.

ANALYTICS - term for when you use logical reasoning to provide your proof rather than quotes or "cards"

CLASH - argument you make in direct response to your opponent's argument

SOLVENCY - how the Affirmative plan solves for the problem

STOCK ISSUES - the set of concepts that help determine whether the Affirmative plan addresses the issue of the Resolution

SIGNIFICANCE - the idea that the problem the Affirmative plan addresses is something that requires solving

INHERENCY - the idea that the status quo is not addressing, or is causing, harm(s)

SOLVENCY - the idea that the Affirmative plan solves or prevents the major problem

TOPICALITY - whether the plan presented does not address the resolution

DISADVANTAGES (DISADS) - reasons why the plan should not be adopted

COUNTERPLAN - a plan proposed by the Negative side, who admits that there is an issue which requires a plan, but provides one which is different from the Affirmative

ON-BALANCE - after weighing all the facts presented, the benefits and pitfalls. A term frequently used to argue that on-balance, one side is preferable to the other

TURN - one side taking the argument of the opposing side and flipping it to their advantage

CARDS - quotations, pieces of evidence used by a debater in the round

REFUTATION - proving that the opposing side's argument is not relevant/applicable

The following are links to larger glossaries available from national level debate associations. It is not required that debaters utilize these terms in their rounds. This information is provided solely in case debaters are interested in learning more.

National Speech and Debate Association Glossary:

https://www.speechanddebate.org/wp-content/uploads/NSDALearn_SpeechandDebateGlossary.pdf

National Association of Urban Debate Leagues Glossary of Policy Debate Terms:

<https://urbandebate.org/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fassets.urbandebate.org%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F20190916152745%2FGlossary-of-Debate-Terms.pdf&index=6&pdfID=0>

Suggested note taking techniques - flow

One of the most common ways for debaters and judges to take notes throughout a round is a style known as *flow*. This method of notetaking allows a person to follow the flow of a particular argument throughout the round, hence the name. This is useful for judges because they can then trace the introduction of a specific argument, response from the opposing side, and the refutation of the counterargument in one place. Debaters using a flow note taking style can keep track of which arguments they have made, as well as their opponent, and keep a record of how each argument has been responded to within the round.

People will take notes, or flow, in many different ways. We suggest using a legal size sheet of paper, held horizontally, and separated into 6 columns. Some people like to use one sheet of paper for each argument in the round, this can be helpful in providing space for ample note taking, particularly if you are still developing your personal shorthand/abbreviations for your notes.

Each column is labeled as a speech presented in the round. You can section off the bottom of the columns to make notes on the cross-examination of each speaker (or use another sheet of paper to keep track of the cross examinations specifically).

There are several locations where debaters can learn how to flow through videos and articles. Here are links to some examples you may find helpful:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HUTAMo9vgX0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mk4qukUgFvc>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gyzdjV43HbM>

<https://www.atlantadebate.org/coach-currlic-intro-flowing>

Fundamentals of Judging

Judges at the Connecticut Democracy Center Debate Tournament are present with one goal: help you understand the impact of your debate, and help you improve your debating skills through their evaluation of your presentation.

Before ever adjudicating a debate round, judges receive training on the criteria with which your debate performance is evaluated. All of our judges are volunteers; some are attorneys, law students, members of the CT debate community, and others with connections to the Connecticut Democracy Center and the world of debate.

We train judges on the use of the points system utilized for Speaker Awards, how to follow and analyze a debate round, and how to provide you with a Reason for Decision (RFD) and feedback that will be useful to you as you grow in your debating career.

Each team (or is it school?) is required to provide one judge for the round. These judges will not adjudicate a round in which the team (school?) they are associated with, is participating. Judges must disclose to the tournament staff any conflicts of interest if they were to adjudicate a certain round of competition.

More details about the judging process can be found in our Judging Instructions

Logistics for the Tournament

How can I participate?

Students in grades 6-12 in the state of Connecticut are eligible to participate. The tournament is held entirely in-person. An adult serves as the coach for teams participating in the CTDC Debate Tournament - frequently the coach is a teacher at the teams' school. If you do not have a debate team through your school, reach out to us at secondaryeducation@ctdemocracycenter.org and we will work with you to ensure you're able to participate in the tournament.

Registration- how and cost?

Coaches and students sign up through Tabroom one month prior to the competition. The cost to participate is \$25 per team; this fee includes food at the preliminary competition.

A link to the instructions for creating an account in Tabroom is provided here: [https://docs.tabroom.com/Sign Up](https://docs.tabroom.com/Sign_Up). More information about the functions of your Tabroom account is available on the left hand sidebar visible when you follow the above link.

We have instructions for coaches to use for registering here: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1yV2yG2Y0jNA66DjU5_cIAU-a_RWx1FGJ/view?usp=sharing

Coaches needing to request the fee be waived should contact secondaryeducation@ctdemocracycenter.org.

What is the CT Democracy Center?

Our Mission

The Connecticut Democracy Center (CTDC) provides people of all ages with a lifetime pathway to active citizenship. As a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, CTDC offers a broad range of initiatives including The Connecticut Network (CT-N), Connecticut's Old State House, Connecticut History Day, Connecticut's Kid Governor®, The Connecticut Democracy Center Debate Tournament, and We The People: The Citizen and The Constitution to provide people with the tools they need to participate in their communities. We envision a society where everyone is empowered to participate in our democracy.

Our History

Beginning with the launch of CT-N in 1999 and the start of its relationship with Connecticut's Old State House in 2008, CTDC's successful public-private partnerships with the Connecticut General Assembly provided the first critical milestones along our Lifetime Pathway. This pathway is complemented and amplified by our award-winning civic education programs, which operate independently from the state contracts associated with CT-N and CT's Old State House. These education programs include Connecticut History Day, Kid Governor®, We The People: The Citizen and the Constitution, and The Connecticut Democracy Center Debate Tournaments, along with many public programs hosted at CT's Old State House.