

**Midwest Middle School Debate League
Reference Guide (Page 1)**

Debate Speeches

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| 1. 1st Affirmative Constructive 5 Minutes | 9. 1st Negative Rebuttal 3.5 Minutes |
| 2. Cross-Examination by 2Neg 1.5 Minutes | 10. 1st Affirmative Rebuttal 3.5 Minutes |
| 3. 1st Negative Constructive 5 Minutes | 11. 2nd Negative Rebuttal 3.5 Minutes |
| 4. Cross-Examination by 1Aff 1.5 Minutes | 12. 2nd Affirmative Rebuttal 3.5 Minutes |
| 5. 2nd Affirmative Constructive 5 Minutes | **TOTAL** 40 Minutes |
| 6. Cross-Examination by 1Neg 1.5 Minutes | |
| 7. 2nd Negative Constructive 5 Minutes | Prep Time Allowed – Aff 5 Minutes |
| 8. Cross-Examination by 2Aff 1.5 Minutes | Prep Time Allowed – Neg 5 Minutes |

SY2020 National Middle School Debate Resolution: Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially increase its security cooperation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in one or more of the following areas: artificial intelligence, biotechnology, cybersecurity.

Special Rules/Customary Practices

Judging Instructions

1. Starting Time. The judge announces the start of the debate. Both teams must be ready to begin upon the judge's announcement. (Judges may deduct speaker points for violations.)
2. Prep Time. Each team can use a cumulative total of 5 minutes for preparation time ("prep time"), at any time during the debate and in any number of individual periods. Judges traditionally announce "prep time remaining" after each usage. When a team's prep time has elapsed, their speakers must begin speaking as soon as it is their turn.
3. Cross-Examination. Judges should listen attentively to cross-examinations, but do not credit arguments or evidence presented during cross-examination speeches. These arguments must be raised during one of the regular speeches to be considerable by the judge.
4. Rebuttal Arguments. Debaters may not introduce new Affirmative arguments or new Negative attacks. Debaters can offer new analysis or evidence on issues already raised in the Constructives. Debaters are trained to point out new arguments and how they should be regarded or justified, so judges need not treat this as a rules/ethics violation, but should rather discount new arguments in their final decision about the debate.
5. Rudeness. Debaters may not interrupt, distract, or act impolitely to judges or opponents. (Judges may deduct speaker points for violations.)
6. Observers. Guest observers are permitted in the debate room, but must keep a distance from the debaters and remain silent during speeches. (Judges may eject violators from the debate room.)
7. Coaching period. Coaches, teammates, and observers may not talk to or signal debaters after the debate round starts, inside or outside the room or via electronic communication – this

will be investigated as cheating if it is determined to be an attempt to aid the debaters unfairly during the course of a debate after the first speech has begun.

Parts of Debate:

Affirmative Case Stock Issues (Affirmative must answer these questions to win.)

1. **Harms.** What actual damage is occurring/will occur that requires action to change?
2. **Solvency.** How will the Affirmative plan directly reduce, eliminate, or offset the Harms?
3. **Desirability.** Do the benefits of the plan outweigh the unintended negative consequences (i.e., disadvantages)?
4. **Topicality.** Does the Affirmative plan actually support the debate resolution – i.e., does the plan fit within the boundaries created by the resolution?

Components of a Well-Argued Disadvantage (“Disad” or “DA”) or Turnaround (“T/A”)

1. **Uniqueness:** Is the Disad a direct result of implementing the Affirmative plan (or will the “Impact” occur in the Status Quo, even absent adoption of the Plan)?
2. **Plan Link or “Link”:** How does the plan directly cause negative side effects (aka “Impacts”)?
3. **Internal Link:** How do the side effects of the plan lead to other negative results (“Impacts”)?
4. **Impact:** What is the eventual harm caused by the plan, based on the links presented?

Components of a Well-Argued Topicality Attack (“T”)

1. **Definition.** How does the Negative define a specific word or phrase that the Affirmative plan is said to “violate” (fall outside of)?
2. **Violation.** In what way does the Affirmative plan fail to support the Resolution, assuming that the Negative definition is used?
3. **Standards.** On what basis is the Negative interpretation of the meaning of the word or phrase in the Resolution that the Affirmative is said to violate superior to any potential Affirmative interpretation of the word or phrase. A couple common Negative Standards (for interpretation) are:
 - a. **Ground.** The Affirmative plan is too broad or too narrow for the Negative to anticipate and/or to attack with specific evidence.
 - b. **Bright Line.** Only the Negative interpretation of the term in question insures that judges can draw a clean line between the cases that are Topical and those that are not; the Affirmative interpretation requires a subjective judgment on the part of the Judge about which cases meet it.
4. **Voting Issue.** The Negative is usually required to provide a justification for the judge making Topicality an issue that the Affirmative must win to win the round, such as preserving education, fairness, or competitive equity.

Some Conduct Guidelines for New Judges

1. Judge Courtesy. Judges should remain courteous and attentive to debaters, even when the outcome of the debate round seems determined. This includes taking notes or “flowing,” listening to all speeches, and refraining from engaging in outside conversation or activities during speeches.
2. Judge Intervention. Judges do not speak during speeches. A judge will usually speak only to point out basic procedural rules to the debaters (e.g., whose turn it is to speak, how much prep time remains, etc.).
3. Argument Analysis. Judges are expected to evaluate only the arguments of each debate team as presented and evidenced, and weigh them against the challenges of the other debate team. Therefore:
 - a. Any argument that is not explicitly challenged is considered to be accepted (or conceded) by the other team.
 - b. The judge must not inject her own personal beliefs into the debate in support of, or to cover omissions in, the arguments of either team. Judges should strive to be impartial and objective.
 - c. The judge must decide solely based on his or her best individual effort to resolve the substantive claims of the debate and should not, at any time, ask anyone else for help with their decision. Judges on elimination round panels should NEVER discuss how they decide or disclose their decision until all judges have independently signed their ballots without discussion.
4. Evidence Verification. The judge may ask to see any piece of evidence after (and sometimes during) the debate. This is done occasionally to assure accurate flowing or when misquoting is suspected.
5. Decisions. Judges determine the winning team on the basis of the logical arguments and their relative strength – ultimately in a comparison of the policies defended and supported by both sides. Speaker points are not considered in the team decision. There are no ties.
6. Tournament Director. The judge may seek clarification of any rules or guidelines before rendering a decision, but only from the Tournament Director.
7. Oral Critique. The judge may present constructive feedback to debaters about how to improve their capabilities. The feedback should be delivered in an encouraging way, motivating the debaters to seek improvement (as opposed to a harsh criticism of the weaknesses and faults in the students).
8. Disclosure. The judge should not disclose the identity of the winning team to anyone at any time, but should offer constructive criticism and advice to students to the best of their ability.
9. Speaker Points. Judges awards points from 0 to 30 to reflect quality of speaking for each debater. In common practice, speaker points range from 25 to 30, unless the judge is punishing a debater. Points below 26 should be given infrequently except for unusually poor performance or conduct, and points over 29 should be given sparingly, except for exceptional performances and memorable speeches.

Special Reminders – The Illinois Middle School Debate League Approach

1. The primary goal of MMSDL debates is debater education; competition is a secondary, though important, goal. The MMSDL does not require, or expect, its judges to be experts in the topic or in debating theory. The debaters are expected to speak at an understandable speed and explain their argumentation logic clearly.
2. Burden of Persuasion. MMSDL debaters bear the burden of arguing so that the judge can understand their points, adapting to the knowledge and skill level of the judge. If the judge fails to hear or understand points, the debaters (not the judge) are at fault. (This is how “real life” works.)