

2025-2026 Team Policy Debate Rules



I. Statement of Purpose

A Team Policy debate asks competitors to develop and defend competing policy options to address contemporary problems. The purpose of Team Policy debate is to instill in Christian home school students the skills of presentation, critical thinking, research, and policy analysis. That endeavor is accomplished in an environment of honorable competition that cultivates maturity, wisdom, grace, poise, and brings glory to our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. Policy Debate Teams

A Team Policy debate round consists of two teams—an Affirmative team and a Negative team. A policy debate team consists of two competitors. A team may not switch partners within a single tournament.

- A. It is the job of the affirmative team to uphold the resolution. If the affirmative is successful, they win, and the judge should vote for the resolution.
- B. If the affirmative fails to do so, the negative team wins, and the judge should vote accordingly.

III. The Team Policy Debate Round

A. Speech Order

Each debate round will consist of the following speeches & time limits, in order:

1st Affirmative Constructive (1AC)	8 minutes
Cross-Examination of 1st Affirmative	3 minutes
1st Negative Constructive (1NC)	8 minutes
Cross-Examination of 1st Negative	3 minutes
2nd Affirmative Constructive (2AC)	8 minutes
Cross-Examination of 2nd Affirmative	3 minutes
2nd Negative Constructive (2NC)	8 minutes
Cross-Examination of 2nd Negative	3 minutes
1st Negative Rebuttal (1NR)	5 minutes
1st Affirmative Rebuttal (1AR)	5 minutes
2nd Negative Rebuttal (2NR)	5 minutes
2nd Affirmative Rebuttal (2AR)	5 minutes

B. Speaker Position

Speaker position must be maintained throughout the round by all four debaters on both teams.

- 1) The 1AC speaker must deliver the 1AR.
- 2) The 2AC speaker must deliver the 2AR.

- 3) The 1NC speaker must deliver the 1NR.
- 4) The 2NC speaker must deliver the 2NR.

C. Speech Purpose

- 1) Constructive speeches may be used to introduce, build, and respond to arguments.
- 2) Rebuttal speeches are used to respond to and extend existing lines of argumentation and to emphasize the most important issues in the round.
 - a) No new lines of argumentation may be presented in rebuttal speeches. Rebuttal speeches may include new evidence, examples, analysis, and analogies offered to support previously introduced lines of argumentation.
 - b) If a team introduces a new line of argumentation into the round during the rebuttals, the judge should disregard these arguments when evaluating the round.

C. Time Limits

- 1) Time begins when the debater begins speaking, both for speeches and cross-examination.
- 2) If a debater fails to use all their time, the remaining time is discarded and cannot be converted into extra time for some other component of the round.
- 3) Once time is expired at the end of a speech or cross-examination, a speaker may be allowed to complete a sentence, but should not start a new thought.
- 4) Once time has expired, judges are free to disregard additional comments or speech content when evaluating the round.
- 5) In the event that debaters are required to self-time, the speaker must set the timer to countdown and to provide an audible alarm when time is expired. The speaker may not turn off the alarm and continue talking.
- 6) During the debate, electronic devices may only be used for timing. They may not be used to send or receive information from any source. A stand-alone calculator is allowed.

D. Cross-Examination

- 1) The cross-examination starts after the completion of each constructive speech.
- 2) Each debater will interrogate once and respond once in the course of the round as follows.
 - a) The 1AC is questioned by the 2nd Negative Speaker.
 - b) The 1NC is questioned by the 1st Affirmative Speaker
 - c) The 2AC is questioned by the 1st Negative Speaker
 - d) The 2NC is questioned by the 2nd Affirmative Speaker

E. Preparation Time

- 1) Each team has a total budget of 5 minutes of preparation time that can be used or discarded as desired by the teams.
- 2) If preparation time is to be taken, it begins after the completion of a speech or cross-examination.
- 3) The budget of the team giving the next speech is charged.
- 4) Preparation time between a constructive speech and cross-examination is not allowed.

G. Individual Presentation and Team Preparation

- 1) A debater may not accept verbal prompting or written materials from their partner when at the lectern.
- 2) Debaters may freely communicate and pass notes when at the prep table together.
- 3) During an opponent's speech, interaction with one's partner should be discreet and avoid disrupting the speaker's ability to communicate with the judge.

F. Support

- 1) Team Policy Debate makes use of a wide variety of support to defend and clarify arguments, which may include (but is not limited to) logic, definitions, quotations, facts, examples, applications, analogies, cited material and other relevant information.
- 2) Debaters are responsible for all information presented in the round. Misrepresentation or fabrication of articles, authors, sources or any other information in the round is strictly prohibited.
- 3) Evidence (a subset of support) is the oral verbatim reading of quoted text as well as an accompanying citation from a particular source that is publicly available
 - a) Evidence must be physically present, on paper, in the debate room.
 - b) The written source citation must include:
 - i) All authors (if available).
 - ii) Publication name.
 - iii) Complete date (if an internet source does not include a publication date, then the date of the last website update and the date accessed should be included).
 - iv) URL (if available).
 - v) Page number, if from a printed source.
 - vi) The citation is located directly above or below the quoted text. (If quoting from a book, a bookmark, notecard, or other notation should be used to place the full citation next to the quoted text.)
 - c) Evidence must be read verbatim from the first word of the sentence to the ending punctuation without redaction or addition.
 - i) Information in parentheses may only be orally omitted when it does not change the meaning of the quotation. Information in parentheses must remain within the printed quotation.
 - ii) When citing information from a dictionary or legal statute (e.g. U.S. Code, the Constitution) a single clause may be considered a complete sentence.
 - iii) Charts and graphs may be explained in the debater's own words, but not displayed.
 - d) Evidence may not be pieced together from non-contiguous sentences of an article. Non-contiguous sentences from the same article need to either be cited as separate pieces of evidence, or identified orally that sentences or sections were skipped (e.g. "later in the article").
 - e) Ellipses may not be added by the debater, but may be included if part of the original material.
 - f) Evidence presented by a debater must be consistent with the intent of the source piece.
 - g) Evidence must be made available if requested by the other team or the judge, as the team presenting the evidence has the burden of validating that evidence if challenged.
 - h) When evaluating the round, the judge is free to disregard any evidence presented which is found to be deficient in any aspect described above.
- 4) Summarization of written materials is not, in and of itself, evidence.
- 5) Judicial Review—if the judge desires to review any evidence or other written materials presented in the round, this request must wait until the round is over, and must be at the initiative and direction of the judge.
 - a) Review may only include evidence or other written materials that were orally presented by the debaters during the round.
 - b) Debaters may not extend or explain arguments during the review.
- 6) Debaters may not attempt to provide the judge with evidence or other written materials before, during, or after the round. Debaters are free to refer orally to the judge's right to review evidence or other written materials, both in speeches and in cross-examination.

- 7) Debaters may not display “props” to the judge at any point in the round. A “prop” is defined as an object that substitutes an oral communication with a visual depiction.

G. The Judge

- 1) Stoa acknowledges the judge as the “first line of defense” for all rule infractions, ethical questions, irregularities, and disciplinary issues.
- 2) The judge is at liberty to use all aspects of the round to reach a conclusion regarding the ballot.
- 3) In confusing or flagrant situations, the judge should seek guidance from the judge orientation staff or tournament leadership.
- 4) If manipulation, misrepresentation, fabrication of evidence, or gross negligence under evidence rules is suspected, it should be brought to the attention of tournament leadership once the round is completed.
- 5) Ignorance of the rules does not constitute a valid excuse.
- 6) In the unlikely event that the conduct of both teams requires disciplinary action, the ballot can be cast for a double loss and tournament leadership should be consulted once the round is completed.

H. Enforcement

For a rule violation, tournament leadership or an adjudication committee as appointed by tournament leadership has overall discretion in all disciplinary matters. Such discretion may include: education of the debaters, the request of behavioral or material changes, reduction of speaker points, overturn of a round decision, or disqualification from the tournament.

I. The Audience

Audience members may not give verbal, non-verbal or written communication to the debaters at any time during the debate round.