

Glossary

You were promised a book light on technical jargon. Hopefully, this promise has been fulfilled. The book did, however, present a number of uncomplicated and easy to learn terms that are part of the speech and debate lexicon. This glossary is designed to give you a quick reference and a short refresher on many of these expressions.

Academic debate: The most basic form of debate. There are normally four constructive speeches between the two teams, as well as two rebuttal speeches. In this style, there are no opportunities for debaters to ask critical questions to one another.

Affirmative: The team that argues for the resolution in academic, discussion, and cross-examination styles of debate. Opens and usually closes the debate. Sometimes called the Proposition team.

Argument: A single, specific idea presented to build a team's case, generally possible to summarize in one sentence. Each team should have between four and six individual arguments in its case. May also be called a contention or a point.

Bill: An alternative name for the resolution in a parliamentary debate. Parliaments pass laws called Bills, and the use of this term is intended to match this practice.

BIRT: Short for the phrase, "Be it resolved that." Often placed before the resolution in academic, discussion, and cross-examination debates.

Body language: The way that a speaker uses posture, movement, gestures, and expression to project a strong visual impression.

Burden: The extent to which each team has to prove its case for or against the resolution. Usually, the Affirmative team has a slightly

greater burden, because it defines the terms. The degree of burden may also depend on the relative difficulty of each side.

Case: The set of arguments, explanations, and evidence presented for or against a resolution. Usually consists of one or two central themes, each supported by multiple points.

Clash: Countering the opponent's case point by point. This type of specific, targeted refutation takes place mostly in the constructive speeches, leaving the rebuttal speeches for more general criticism of the other team's arguments.

Constructive speech: A speech that involves new constructive arguments, defense of previous constructive arguments, and refutation of the opponent's case. Normally, the first four speeches of a debate, or two by each team, are the constructive speeches.

Counter plan: A Negative team case strategy that involves agreeing with the needs for change, but proposing a substantially different plan to solve the problem.

Criteria: A set of objectives that a system must meet in order to be judged effective or appropriate. Criteria are sometimes used by the Affirmative team to frame the debate in a way it considers favorable.

Cross-examination debate: A style of debate that involves questioning of a speaker by someone from the opposing team to highlight weaknesses or to attain admissions. A cross-examination, usually three to four minutes long, takes place following each constructive speech.

Definition: Clarification and interpretation of the resolution's terms by the first speaker of the Affirmative team. Definitions may be used to narrow a broad debate to a more focused subject. Both teams must abide by the definitions throughout the round.

Discussion debate: A debate style that includes a discussion period, up to 10 minutes long, between the constructive part of the debate and the beginning of the rebuttal speeches. Teams take turns asking critical questions to each other.

Flow sheet: A columned sheet used to keep track of each speaker's arguments and refutation. Arrows are often drawn between each argument and the matching clash to help visualize the back and forth flow of the debate. Used by both judges and competitors.

Government: The team arguing for the Bill in a parliamentary debate. The Prime Minister (P.M.) opens the debate with a constructive speech and ends the debate with a rebuttal speech. The Minister of the Crown (M.C.) speaks in between the Prime Minister's speeches.

Heckle: A short, witty, and to the point interjection in parliamentary debate. Heckles, which are usually humorous, should be not be questions or arguments. They are best restricted to no more than five words, and then so only used occasionally, if at all.

House: The chamber or room where a parliamentary debate takes place. There are specific rules and traditions of the House that the debaters must follow.

Impromptu speaking: Communicating with limited or no notes, either spontaneously or with minimal preparation. Impromptu speaking is used in a variety of situations, such as debate rounds, questions after a speech, and class or committee discussions.

Informative speech: A speech to explain or clarify an issue or to provide instruction on a process. An informative speech is based heavily on factual information and requires, in particular, clear descriptions.

Leading questions: Questions that imply or push for the desired answer. This is the most effective type of question to ask in a cross-examination. Usually starts with phrases like "Would you acknowledge that ..." or "Isn't it true that ..."

Memorized speaking: Presenting a speech word for word without any notes. While this method can be very time-consuming and, for most people, makes it tough to seem natural, it may be useful to memorize key parts of a speech.

Model Parliament: A simulation of a political debate in which participants represent different political parties in a legislature. The members

debate and vote on Bills to be passed into law. In the United States, this type of forum is generally known as Student Congress.

Model United Nations: A type of forum debate in which participants each represent countries on a United Nations committee, such as the Security Council or a General Assembly. The debates take place on resolutions that are put forth by member states.

Needs-plan-benefits: A type of Affirmative team case in a policy debate involving reasons to change the present system, plans for implementing the stated changes, and anticipated benefits of the proposed reforms. Tells the judges “why, what, and so what” in support of the resolution.

Negative: The team that argues against the resolution in academic, discussion, and cross-examination styles of debate. Although the Negative team has some flexibility in how it makes its case, its arguments must fit with the definitions presented by the Affirmative team.

Opposition: The team opposing the Bill in a parliamentary debate. The Member of the Opposition (M.O.) begins the Opposition’s case. The Leader of the Opposition (L.O.) speaks second and divides his or her speech into constructive time and rebuttal time.

Outline speaking: Speech delivery using a short list of ideas, allowing for maximum engagement with the audience. The most basic form of outline speaking is a list of the speech’s main points, but some speakers prefer to include sub-points as well.

Parliamentary debate: A style based in part on the traditions of legislatures around the world. In addition to formal terms and rules, it features different types of interjections, such as Points of Information, Points of Order, Points of Personal Privilege, and heckles.

Persuasive speech: A speech intended to convince the audience of a perspective or of the need to take action on an issue. Although it’s supported by factual information, persuading the audience members with sound logic and both rational and emotional appeals is central to the speaker’s approach.

Plan: A set of policy proposals brought forth by the Affirmative team to meet its stated needs for change. A plan outlines the numerous steps that the agents of change must take in order to address the present system's shortcomings in an effective and feasible way.

Point of Information: A brief, challenging question during an opponent's constructive speech in parliamentary debate. The person who has the floor may decide either to accept or reject a Point of Information request as the opposing debater rises.

Point of Order: An accusation that a debater has broken a rule of parliamentary debate, judged by the Speaker as "well taken" or "not well taken." Not recommended for exposing frivolous violations, such as placing hands in one's pockets or holding a pen.

Policy debate: A debate involving a plan that addresses the Affirmative's stated needs for change. The debate usually focuses on two dimensions, namely whether change is necessary and, if so, whether the Affirmative's plan is desirable.

Qualification: Providing an explanation when answering the cross-examiner's "yes or no" question. Qualifying an answer allows the speaker to defend his or her case more effectively. However, the qualification should not be so lengthy that it seems like a speech.

Rebuttal: The final speech of the debate by each team. Each rebuttal speaker aims to bring the debate down to key themes and underlying principles, and to suggest to the judges what the deciding issues are. Both refutation of the opposing team's overall case and summary of one's own case are important.

Refutation: The process of explaining why an opponent's arguments are incorrect. Involves point by point clash in the constructive speeches and overall refutation in the rebuttals. A debater may refute an opponent's points on a variety of grounds, such as irrelevant information, contradictory statements, or faulty logic.

Resolution: The topic of the debate, generally presented as a statement and preceded by a phrase such as "Be it resolved that" (BIRT) or "This House believes that" (THBT). Its terms need to be interpreted

and clarified by the Affirmative team. The resolution is supported by the Affirmative team and opposed by the Negative team.

Script speaking: Delivery using a word for word text. This method is commonly used by beginners who aren't yet comfortable with having only an outline. It's also used by speakers who need to present precise thoughts and words, such as scientists and politicians.

Speaker: The moderator of a parliamentary debate. The Speaker introduces each debater and rules on Points of Order and Points of Personal Privilege. Debaters address their arguments through the Speaker, as is the case in functioning legislatures.

Specific knowledge: An impromptu debate situation in which the Affirmative team presents a case that relies on facts not commonly known, often of a scientific or historical nature. A specific knowledge case may place the Negative team at an unfair disadvantage.

Status quo: How the current system operates. The Affirmative team in a policy debate will propose changing the status quo, whereas the Negative team will usually defend the present system.

SWOT analysis: The process of looking closely at the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats of a debate case. This method can be used to evaluate and make improvements to a case before presenting it in a debate round.

THBT: An abbreviation for "This House believes that" placed before a resolution in parliamentary debate, generally of a values nature.

Theme: A general idea that's supported by several points. In a team's case, there are typically one or two central themes. Debaters commonly talk about their themes as a way of tying together and providing context to different arguments.

THW: An abbreviation for "This House would" placed before a parliamentary debate resolution, usually of a policy nature.

Time-place-set: A type of definition in which the Affirmative team lays out a situation for debate, either a fictional or real scenario or a point

in history. Each team must debate within these parameters, without bringing in details that wouldn't be known at the time or place.

Transition: Moving from one point to another such that the speech flows smoothly. Usually tells the audience what has just been accomplished and what can be expected next.

Truism: A definition of a resolution that's always true, making it virtually impossible to debate. Truisms are not allowed, as they place the Negative team in an unfair position.

Values debate: A debate focusing on competing principles, rather than on a plan of action. The teams argue whether a particular circumstance or idea is right or wrong.