

## COACHING THE AFFIRMATIVE CASE

When you are the affirmative team, you have the responsibility to present a Case and Plan in your first speech. The Affirmative Case must establish that there is a significant problem in the current system (Harm), that the current system cannot or will not correct the problem (Inherency), and that you have a plan that will solve or improve the condition (Solvency).

### **Harm**

When you are affirmative you have the responsibility of showing there is a significant problem in the status quo. This is called the burden of **Harm**. To meet this burden the affirmative documents the extent and the importance of their Harm area.

For instance, your Affirmative Case might claim the Harm area of failing schools. There would be several possible ways to demonstrate the extent of the problem through the use of evidence – the percentage of schools that are in need of repair, the percentage of students who are not learning, the number of dropouts, declining test scores and more.

The second aspect of the Harm claim is showing the importance of these statistics. In the example of failing schools the affirmative could argue that academic achievement is crucial for employment opportunity, going to college, or achieving social progress.

Some Harm claims emphasize the quantity of its extent – such as millions of people starving to death, or thousands of people dying in a war. Other Harm claims might emphasize the quality or value – the intrinsic value of biodiversity, the unfairness of discrimination, the immorality of violating fundamental rights, are examples. The best affirmative Harm claims have strong quantitative and value components.

### **Inherency**

As part of building the Case, the affirmative must prove that the current system – often referred to as the “status quo” – is incapable and unlikely to solve the Harm area. Part of this is documenting that the Harm will continue without the proposed solution of the Affirmative Plan.

This burden is referred to as “Inherency.” If the affirmative fails to prove their Harm area is Inherent, there is no reason to vote for the Affirmative Plan since it is not necessary. If the current system is working to solve the problem, there is no case for changing the system.

Inherency claims include descriptions of the attitudes or structures that demonstrate the present system is insufficient. If a problem is getting worse that is evidence the current system is not addressing the Harm area.

In our example of failing schools the affirmative might offer evidence of a lack of adequate funding for school construction and repairs. They might argue that because teacher salaries are so low there are not enough qualified people interested in that job.

## COACHING SOLVENCY AND THE AFFIRMATIVE PLAN

### Solvency

It is not enough for the affirmative team to show there is a problem that is not being addressed in the status quo. They must also prove that they have a solution that can work. The proposed solution, called the Affirmative Plan, must be proven to be comparatively better than the current system.

That is the third component of the Affirmative Case – called “Solvency” – proof that their proposal can solve or reduce the Harm area they have identified in their Case. In policy debates the affirmative must present a proposed action by leaders – i.e. Congress passing a law, the Supreme Court making a decision, the President taking action.

The Affirmative Case must include a Solvency point that contains evidence that demonstrates the Affirmative Plan will solve or improve the Harm area.

For example, if a certain State (say, Ohio) has successfully used higher teacher salaries to improve schools, the affirmative team might propose to have the Federal Government copy that state. The affirmative would present evidence about how higher teacher salaries in the State of Ohio have increased academic achievement there.

### The Affirmative Plan

The affirmative should present in their first speech a specific proposal for a course of action to be taken. They advocate that the judge endorse or vote for this proposal. This proposal is referred to as the “Affirmative Plan.”

The Affirmative Plan must be an example of – or come from – the resolution. That is referred to as the burden of “Topicality” (page 15).

There are two basic considerations for the Affirmative Plan: the agent of action and the actions themselves.

The agent of action is where the affirmative team specifies who will be implementing their plan. The resolution may indicate the “Federal Government” should be the agent. Some resolutions specify the “United States” or the “United States Federal Government.” The affirmative may want to go into more detail and specify the part of the Federal Government they imagine should implement the affirmative Plan, such as the Congress, President, the Supreme Court or possibly a government department like the Department of Defense.

In our example of school reform the logical agents would be the Congress and President.

The second consideration for the affirmative plan is the actions that they propose are taken. These actions are typically tied pretty closely to the evidence presented in the affirmative’s Solvency point. In our example of school reform the Affirmative Plan would state that the Federal Government should copy the system of higher teacher pay used by the State of Ohio throughout the entire United States.

## **COACHING: SAMPLE OUTLINE - AFFIRMATIVE CASE AND PLAN**

This outline is an example of a structure for an Affirmative Case and Plan that they would present in their First Affirmative Constructive. It consists of three main “contentions” and the affirmative Plan. Each contention represents one of the three burdens the affirmative must demonstrate for a complete Case: Harm, Inherency and Solvency. Under each major contention there might be sub-points, although there is no set number for that. For each contention and sub-point there would be evidence supporting those claims.

- I. Harm – Schools in the United States are Bad Shape**
  - A. Schools All Through the U.S. are Falling Apart**
  - B. Test Scores are Declining for Millions of Students**
  - C. Academic Achievement is Crucial**
    - 1. Success in College**
    - 2. Employment Opportunities**
    - 3. There is a “Right” to Adequate Education**
  
- II. Inherency – The Status Quo Fails to Improve Schools**
  - A. Insufficient Resources Being Spent on Schools**
    - 1. Federal Government**
    - 2. State Governments**
  - B. Teacher Salaries Are Way Too Low**

**Affirmative Plan: The United States Federal Government should adopt a policy of raising teacher salaries, modeled after the program in the State of Ohio.**

- III. Solvency – Our Plan Will Improve Schools**
  - A. Higher Teacher Salaries will Attract More Qualified People**
  - B. Teachers are the Key to Better Schools**
  - C. This Proposal is working in the State of Ohio**

## COACHING THE SPEECH: FIRST AFFIRMATIVE CONSTRUCTIVE

In any debate it is a strong advantage to go first. Many judges or audiences have short attention spans and will only pay attention at the beginning. After that their interest may fade. Further, the judge and audience tends to make quick judgments about the debaters based on their early impressions.

The First Affirmative Constructive (1AC) is always the first speech in the debate. It is the initial opportunity for the affirmative team to present and defend their Case and Plan. It is a way for the affirmative team to stake their own ground, and choose any area of the topic they want to talk about. The 1AC should be designed strategically to emphasize the affirmative's strongest arguments.

### Substance

The 1AC is generally **completely written out ahead of time**. The entire outline of the Case and Plan (see sample on page 11) should be presented at this time. Typically the affirmative should place their best evidence in their 1AC. "Best" in this case might mean the longest, most qualified, and most recent evidence with the strongest warrants.

Your 1AC **evidence should have qualifications**, and those should be read in the speech itself. Not only does this help establish the credibility for your Case and Plan, but it also sets up possible comparisons with evidence the negative might read. Typically the affirmative has better research on their own Case than the negative does, so they usually have better qualified evidence.

After you have selected the evidence that forms your basic case sub-points think defensively and include cards that **anticipate common negative arguments**. Where you think there might be a weak spot, find some back-up evidence.

Adjustments to your 1AC are crucial as the year goes on. After you have been to a tournament or two, **evaluate your evidence selection** in your 1AC. Are there cards in your current 1AC that you seldom use in the rounds? If so, consider taking them out of your speech. Are there cards that you find you are always reading in the 2AC? If so, consider adding those cards.

### Style

Not only is it important to make a good initial impression on the judge, the 1AC literally lays the foundation for the entire rest of the debate for the affirmative team. Both affirmative debaters in later speeches will want to frequently refer back to their 1AC, so it is crucial for the judge to understand and absorb it right away. In particular, read the Plan a little more slowly and clearly so the judge understands what you are proposing right away.

Because the 1AC is completely scripted before the debate, it is easy to practice so that it sounds very professional and polished. The First Affirmative debater should present all the headings, tag lines, and evidence very clearly and persuasively. The evidence should be read with strong internal emphasis.

## COACHING THE SPEECH: SECOND AFFIRMATIVE CONSTRUCTIVE

The two main jobs for the Second Affirmative Speech (2AC) are first, to rebuild the affirmative Case, and second, to respond to the Off-Case arguments presented by the 1NC. The 2AC is the affirmative's last constructive speech so it is their final chance to make the arguments they need to win the debate.

### Preparing at Home

The 2AC is a speech where time allocation is especially important so preparation is a crucial asset. Most of the arguments the negative will make against your Case and Plan can be anticipated, and therefore can be prepared for at home before the tournament.

The affirmative should **write sets of answers** to every topicality argument, every disadvantage, every counterplan and every Critique they think of. This is referred to as "writing front-lines." After each tournament you should review your flows and update your answer files where necessary. This kind of detailed preparation can make a crucial difference in winning and losing on the affirmative.

### Responding to Off-Case Arguments

The 2AC must **respond to each Off-Case argument presented in the 1NC**. Generally you want to "group" each Off-Case argument and respond to it with one block of numbered arguments. Front-lines they should be quickly pulled and made ready to read.

The 2AC should **allocate time according to how much time the negative spends** Off-case for each argument. For example, if the negative spends 4 minutes Off-case and 4 minutes on the Case in the 1NC, the 2AC should roughly do the same allocation. Most likely the 2AC can afford to spend a bit more time on the Off-case arguments since they can rely on the 1AC evidence to help answer the Case arguments.

The 2AC should **diversify the types of answers** that are made against each Off-case argument. Do not focus on just one or two specific types of arguments, but instead present a wide variety. This diversity should include "turn" strategies on disadvantages, counterplans and critiques. Designing strong response strategies is equally important as your affirmative Case construction.

### Re-Building Your Case

The 1NC will usually make many arguments against your affirmative Case, including attacks on Harm, Inherency and Solvency. It is the job of the 2AC to **rebuild the Case back to its original strength**. You will have to answer those arguments on an efficient, line-by-line basis. It is very important that the 2A debater be an expert on their Case, inside and out.

**Use the 1AC evidence generously.** The 1AC evidence is the strongest in the affirmative file. The 2AC should refer back to the evidence, both the substance of the reasoning in the evidence, as well as the quality of the sources. If the affirmative has written a strong case the 2AC should have to read very little new evidence on the Case side of the debate.

**Prepare power-worded summaries of your case Harms.** The larger the affirmative Harm claim the more persuasive the Case is, and that leads to a greater chance of winning. You can prepare sweet, carefully worded descriptions of your Harms that you can use in your 2AC (and rebuttal speeches, too).

## COACHING THE SPEECH: FIRST AFFIRMATIVE REBUTTAL

The First Affirmative Rebuttal (1AR) must cover all of the arguments extended by the negative team in both the 2NC and the 1NR, including the off-case and on-case arguments.

The sheer timing of this is difficult considering the 1AR is only 5 minutes long and the negative block is 13 minutes. Obviously the 1AR must be selective and very efficient.

### Strategy

The 1AR should **have a strategy in mind for allocating time**. Generally the 1AR should allocate their time in proportion to the way the negative block did. For example, if one-third of the negative block was spent on extending a Topicality argument, approximately one-third of the 1AR should be spent answering it. This guideline must be adjusted based on the quality of the negative's arguments, the strengths of your earlier affirmative arguments, and the importance of each argument toward winning and losing the debate.

The 1AR should **use their partner's 2AC as a reference point** for their speech. The 1AC evidence and analysis can also be used as well. As the 1AR extends the case and off-case arguments they should make direct reference ("signpost" – see page 5) to the 2AC speech. Refer back to their tags, analysis, author of evidence and the reasoning in their evidence. This does not mean the 1AR must extend every single 2AC argument, only the most important ones.

The 1AR also needs to **think of the speech as a set-up speech for the 2AR**. The 1AR must extend a diverse array of arguments so as to provide flexibility for the 2AR. For example, when answering a disadvantage the 1AR should extend link, uniqueness and impact arguments if possible. That way the 2AR can choose among them.

### Tactics

The 1AR **concentrate on word economy**. It is vitally important that the 1AR not repeat arguments in different places on the flow. The goal of the 1AR, as with the other rebuttals, is to make 5 minutes of completely different arguments. Repeating an answer usually is a waste of your time. Word economy must start at the beginning of the speech, not just at the end.

The 1AR must **respond directly to the negative's arguments**. It is not enough to simply repeat your 2AC answers or your 1AC arguments. You must ask yourself, "What arguments did the negative make that would make the most impression on the judge?" then directly answer those arguments. Reminder: your job is to extend, not just repeat, the affirmative arguments.

The 1AR should **avoid "dropping" really important arguments**. As has already been mentioned, the 1AR is a very time-pressured speech. It may be difficult to cover every negative argument that you want to. In that case, the 1AR should be sure not to put crucial arguments at the end of their speech where they may not get to them at all. Arguments like Topicality that are "all-or-nothing" should not be saved for last.

If possible, the 1AR should try to **read some supporting evidence**. This evidence should be chosen selectively to respond to the most dangerous aspects of the negative strategy.

## COACHING THE SPEECH: SECOND AFFIRMATIVE REBUTTAL

The Second Affirmative Rebuttal (2AR) is the final speech in the debate, which gives the affirmative a huge advantage. Some judges and audiences will remember best what they hear most recently. The 2AR needs to make a strong speech to take full advantage of this lasting impression.

### Strategy

As the “closing statement” for the affirmative team 2AR must summarize and put-together the entire strategy, both Case and Off-Case. The 2AR must completely explain the affirmative Case and how they have a comparative advantage over the negative policy. Again, the 2AR should have practiced, well-worded descriptions of the affirmative Harm claims to make them seem as big and compelling as possible.

The 2AR must **assess which arguments are necessary to win** the debate, and also determine what arguments the affirmative can afford to lose. Then they should start off by setting out to win their most impressive argument decisively and early in the speech. Generally that will be a specific advantage or Harm area. It might be a comprehensive link or theory argument.

In addition to summarizing the affirmative arguments, the 2AR must also address all the arguments extended by the last negative speaker. **Adapt to their weaknesses.** If the 2NR mishandles an argument, capitalize. Be realistic that you may not win every argument in the debate, but explain to the judge how you still win overall.

**Put the debate in an overall framework** where the arguments you win seem more important than the arguments you think the negative may win. Use an overview at the beginning.

### Tactics

**Refer back to the 1AR frequently.** You cannot make up new arguments in the 2AR. Sometimes the judge will have a hard time telling whether or not your argument is new or not. The more you refer back directly to your partner’s arguments the more it sounds like your 2AR arguments are grounded there, not brand new. This is especially true in relation to evidence that was read.

**Directly clash with your opponent’s best arguments.** The 2NR will likely make some pretty persuasive sounding arguments. Figure out which ones are creating the best impression on the judge and clash with them word-for-word.

**The agenda of the 2AR should be affirmative arguments,** not negative extensions. The 2AR should be based on previous affirmative answers. Signpost back to those arguments and explain them before you address the negative points. This will make sure that you are spending your time on your ground, not on theirs.

The 2AR should **be selective and somewhat slower** than previous speeches. As the last speech, the 2AR has the freedom not to worry about what comes afterwards. Choose a few arguments and develop them thoroughly. A rushed, frantic 2AR sounds like a losing 2AR. Lowering the speed generates a sense of confidence and boosts credibility.