SOLUTIONS

SOLUTIONS DEBATE PRIMER FOR JUDGES

Solutions debate is a rebuttal type of debate. Each team supports an affirmative or negative side in response to a provocative statement with alternating rebuttals that explain flaws in the other team's arguments, which leads back to the strength of their own original claim.

DEFINITION OF SOLUTIONS DEBATE

Teams are provided a solution or provocative statement. They debate and rebut the proposed solution. Teams are expected to talk about the cost and feasibility of a realistic solution, and will have two opportunities to fully construct their argument in their first and second constructive speeches.

SOLUTIONS DEBATE TEAMS

There are two teams – an affirmative team and a negative team. The affirmative team's role is in support of the proposal. Team members demonstrate:

- Why it is effective;
- How the plan will work;
- That the plan will indeed work, and that it is the best option to make the status quo better or the best solution to fix the problem.

Negative team members argue against the proposal. They do this by:

- Defending the status quo (the way things currently are).
- Defending the status quo with a minor repair, that gets the problem solved more easily (more cheaply, etc.) than the proposal on the table.
- Offering a counter proposal that is better than the one offered by the affirmative.

SOLUTIONS DEBATE FORMAT

First Affirmative Constructive Speech

- States the claim and defines its key terms.
- Presents at least the bulk of the affirmative case.

First Negative Constructive Speech

- Accepts or challenges affirmative speech definitions of terms.
- Establishes a basic negative stance toward the affirmative claim - a defense of status quo, a minor repair or a counter proposal.
- Attacks affirmative case, pointing out errors in reasoning.
- May present additional arguments supporting negative stance.

SOLUTIONS DEBATE FORMAT CONT.

Second Affirmative Constructive Speech
- Presents any remaining parts of the affirmative case.
- Responds to negative arguments in ways that further support the existing affirmative arguments. These responses are called extensions.

Second Negative Constructive Speech
- Responds to affirmative arguments, including affirmative extensions in ways that further support the existing negative arguments.
- May present additional arguments supporting the negative stance.

(NOTE: No new issues may be introduced after this point, The negative rebuttal is up first in this format in order for the affirmative to go last since the affirmative has the burden of persuasion.)

First Negative Rebuttal Speech
- Responds to affirmative arguments.
- Points out negative arguments that have not been answered by affirmative.

First Affirmative Rebuttal Speech
- Responds to as many negative arguments as possible, focusing first on stock issues (fundamental questions the audience has.)
- Points out affirmative arguments that have not been answered by negative.

Second Negative Rebuttal Speech
- Responds to affirmative arguments.
- Points out negative arguments that have not been answered by affirmative.

Second Affirmative Rebuttal Speech
- Responds to as many negative arguments as possible, focusing first on stock issues.
- Points out affirmative arguments that have not been answered by negative.

The point of the argument should be present throughout the debate. Since affirmative has the burden of persuasion, they always go last. Unsupported arguments will stand as opinion and therefore have little to no weight.

QUESTIONS FOR JUDGES TO CONSIDER

1. Is the overall argument organized and easy to follow throughout the debate?
There are generally three organizational models to choose from: problem solution - the proposal will fix the problem; comparative advantage - the proposal will make things better, cheaper, easier than they currently are; or goals criteria - the proposal is the best choice to meet already agreed upon goals.

2. Are claims made clear?
The audience should not have to try and figure out what the meaning is by the claims being made.

3. Are claims supported?
The debater may make a very clear claim, understandable and even agreed with by the audience; but is this claim actually supported? What is its evidence?

4. Is the evidence credible?
   Sounding credible and actually being credible are not always the same thing. When evaluating credibility, look for the qualifications of the sources:

   - Is the source a reputable publication?
   - Is the author an expert in the field?
   - Does the source represent the most recent information we have about the topic?

5. Do emotional claims and stories relate directly to the argument without being used to obfuscate unsound reasoning?
   Appealing to emotions with stories and photos is an important part of any argument, but sometimes are used when the reasoning is weak. Look for the presence of emotional appeal, but not its saturation.

6. Is the team knowledgeable about their topic?
   Do debaters avoid reading notes, only referring to them for guidance and sources? When a speaker reads information to the audience, does the speaker appears unprepared and inexpert?

7. Does the team follow the rules of debate and the movement of stasis?
   Stasis is where the argument lies at any point in the debate. Before the debate begins, stasis is at status quo.

   - It is the job of the first affirmative speech to address status quo, and present the case by covering the stock issues of the chosen organizational model. If the first affirmative succeeds in presenting their case competently, they are said to have garnered prima facie and stasis moves away from the status quo to the case the affirmative has made.

   - The first negative speech must address stasis, which is no longer the status quo and make clear what their argument is: defending the status quo, offering a minor repair to the status quo, or providing a counter proposal entirely. By the end of the negative's presentation, stasis should have successfully moved either back to the status quo or toward the minor repair or counter proposal.

   - The purpose of each team is to move stasis clearly back to their argument or claim.

8. Finally, in a team debate, expect to see a unified team, working together and supporting the efforts of their team member.

SOLUTIONS DEBATE SCHEDULE

11:30 AM - 12:30 P.M.

Teams Argue: Two teams are debating a proposal provided to them; the affirmative supports the proposal and the negative opposes it. Teams argue and rebut affirmative or negative positions on a proposed solution. Positions are assigned at the start of the debate.

Judges: Two per room.

Facilitators: There will be one facilitator/timekeeper per room.

Proposed Solution: Provocative statement provided to participants at start of semester.

Schedule: **45 minutes**

1 min: Facilitator presents statement
7 min: First affirmative speech
7 min: First negative speech
7 min: Second affirmative speech
7 min: Second negative speech; no new issues introduced after this point
4 min: First negative rebuttal
4 min: First affirmative rebuttal
4 min: Second negative rebuttal
4 min: Second affirmative rebuttal
2 min: Facilitator wrap-up

SAMPLE SOLUTIONS SCORING SHEET

Scoring Key: 1 = ineffective; 5 = most effective/persuasive

Provocative Statements:

Judge:_____   Team: _____

Affirmative Team:_____   Negative Team: _____

Affirmative Team	Negative Team
Displays knowledge of the topic	
1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Arguments well-developed	
1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Organizational structure is strong	
1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Uses, cites and qualifies evidence well	
1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Provides emotional appeal	
1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Addresses opponents' arguments & stasis	
1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Uses opponents' argument to return to claim	
1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Model/stance is clear	
1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Displays teamwork and support of colleagues	
1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

Comments: