

Research

Guide for Penn for Youth Debate Lesson Plan 6

Researching a topic does not end after finishing the cases. It is also important to prepare evidence against arguments that you expect to encounter. This will make rebuttals and summary speeches significantly easier because you will already have answers prepared for many of the contentions or rebuttals you may face. These prepared responses and evidence are called **blocks**.

This lesson plan will focus on:

1. Organizing blocks
2. Brainstorming arguments

Organizing blocks

There are two main types of arguments you should construct blocks for. First, you should construct blocks for contentions you believe your opponent may have. Second, you should construct blocks for responses you believe your opponent may have to your contentions. It is best to have your blocks divided into Pro and Con.

How blocks are formatted are ultimately up to the debaters' discretion. Since blocks are used almost solely for your own reference, write them in a way that you can quickly and easily access during round and use in speeches on the fly. Just remember to cut cards for any evidence you use in your blocks, just like you did for your case! You can also use evidence or arguments from your own case in your blocks, in which case you can simply reference the card used.

Tips:

1. Sometimes you may decide to remove a certain argument or piece of evidence from your case for any variety of reasons – rather than hitting delete, simply add it to your blocks!
2. Consolidating the source into the author, their qualification, and the year published can also facilitate ease of use in round. *Note: This does NOT replace including the full source citation – it is simply a helpful addition.*
3. Try to prepare blocks with different types of argumentation for a certain topic. This can facilitate a semi-structured rebuttal: “My opponent brings up [Argument 1]. But in fact, [Block A]. And even if you don't buy this, [Block B].”

Brainstorming arguments

It can be difficult to figure out which arguments you should prepare blocks for. This process ultimately requires practice and experience to learn, but there are some tips that may help when you're first starting out.

1. Prepare blocks against your own contentions and points!
 - a. For example, take a look at your Pro case contentions. Pretend that you are on Con and are facing your own case. What would you say against those contentions? Prepare blocks against them because if you wrote a certain contention, it's likely that someone else did too!
 - b. This not only generates arguments to use against opponents but helps you identify holes and weaknesses in your own reasoning and evidence.
2. When you're researching for your cases, take note of any arguments that you see, even if you have no interest in including them in the cases themselves.
 - a. One helpful thing to do is to create a document with links to sources that you have skimmed while researching. Under each link, you can include brief (less than one sentence long) summaries of arguments found in the link. This will help you later on when you are writing blocks because you will not have to go looking for as many sources!
 - b. If you see a certain argument or piece of evidence very frequently while researching, *be prepared to see it in a round*. Any evidence that you can easily find is likely something that your opponents will have found as well.
3. Ask your partner, someone else on your team, or even a teacher or parent to look over your case. What would they say if they had to refute your contentions? Prepare blocks against the arguments that they use.
 - a. This is helpful *even if the person looking over your case is not well informed about the topic*. Many judges will not be either, and it is good to have an idea of what doubts or misconceptions they may have.
 - b. If you have the opportunity to participate in practice rounds, take note of what arguments your opponents use and prepare blocks for them before the tournament.

Blocks example

Antitrust Enforcement is Feasible

The FTC Has Created a Task Force for Enforcement

Devin Coldewey, 2-26-2019, "FTC creates antitrust task force to monitor tech industry – TechCrunch," TechCrunch,

<https://techcrunch.com/2019/02/26/ftc-createsantitrust-task-force-to-monitor-tech-industry/>

The field of technology and the business practices within it tend to advance faster than regulators can keep up. **But the FTC is making a concerted effort with a new 17-lawyer tech task force dedicated to ensuring “free and fair competition” and watching for anticompetitive conduct among technology companies.** This isn't necessarily a precursor to some big action like breaking up a big company or imposing rules or anything like that. **It seems to be more a recognition that the FTC needs to be ready to ascertain quickly and move decisively in tech matters, and a crack team of tech-savvy staff attorneys is the way to do it. [...]** Essentially it's an indication that the FTC will be taking tech antitrust more seriously going forward, and dedicating more and better-organized resources to the task of monitoring the sector. That's probably not the kind of thing big tech companies like to hear.

Europe Has Already Begun Enforcement on the Basis of Data Abuse

Kelsey Sutton, 3-20-2019, "Google Fined \$1.7 Billion for Violating EU Antitrust Laws," No Publication,

<https://www.adweek.com/programmatic/google-fined-1-7-billionfor-violating-eu-antitrust-laws/>

The European Commission's top competition regulators this morning fined Google nearly \$1.7 billion, saying that Google abused its position in the market when third-party websites used its AdSense for Search product. The fine, equaling 1.49 billion euros, is only the latest that European regulators have brought against the tech giant over antitrust violations. **The search giant has already faced \$7.7 billion, or 6.76 billion euros, in fines related to antitrust violations. Last year, regulators levied a record \$5.1 billion fine on Google for its Android operating system, on which regulators said Google favored its own products like search maps.** In 2017, regulators brought down a \$2.7 billion fine after finding that Google favored its own shopping platform in search results. In 2018, Google generated nearly \$20 billion in revenues from advertising programs on Google properties, which includes AdSense.