

Cutting Cards - Example and Activity

In debate, the term *card* refers to a piece of evidence, which may be used either in the case or in subsequent speeches. It is a simplified form of the evidence that preserves the source and original wording in order to facilitate quick access during debate rounds. *Cutting cards* refers to the actual process of simplifying and saving evidence while preparing your case and researching the topic.

This is highly recommended and often required for two reasons. First, it is critical to be able to access your own evidence quickly during a debate round to reference your source material. Second, your opponents may ask to see your evidence, and if you do not have the cards ready, this can reflect poorly on you during the round.

This activity will include an example of a card, guidelines for cutting cards, a video to demonstrate how the process works, and a practice exercise.

Below is an example of a card:

Long timescales of nuclear power plant construction translate to millions of preventable deaths

Jacobson 19 (Mark Jacobson - Stanford professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Director of Atmosphere/Energy Program. 20 Jun 2019. Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation. "The 7 reasons why nuclear energy is not the answer to solve climate change.")

<https://www.leonardodicaprio.org/the-7-reasons-why-nuclear-energy-is-not-the-answer-to-solve-climate-change/>)

One nuclear power plant takes on average about 14-1/2 years to build, from the planning phase all the way to operation. According to the World Health Organization, about 7.1 million people die from air pollution each year, with more than 90% of these deaths from energy-related combustion. So switching out our energy system to nuclear would result in about 93 million people dying, as we wait for all the new nuclear plants to be built in the all-nuclear scenario. Utility-scale wind and solar farms, on the other hand, take on average only 2 to 5 years, from the planning phase to operation. Rooftop solar PV projects are down to only a 6-month timeline. So transitioning to 100% renewables as soon as possible would result in tens of millions fewer deaths.

There is no one correct way of cutting cards. You should cut cards in whatever way works best for you. However, the example shown above is how many debaters choose to cut cards. While there is no required format, there are a couple of elements that you should make sure your card has, as well as some tips to make the process easier and more effective.

Requirements

- Make sure that you include a citation somewhere. This does not have to be a formal citation, but it should include basic elements such as the authors, their credentials, the date of publication, the publishing organization/institution, the title of the source, and any other relevant information (such as links for websites or volume and issue numbers for journal articles).
- Even if you are only using one sentence, make sure you include the entire paragraph in the card. In other words, never use only part of a paragraph. If you are using even a single word of a paragraph, the entire paragraph should be included in the card. This is an evidence rule on many circuits and is also a norm to ensure that quotes are not being taken out of the original context.

Tips

- Underline or otherwise emphasize the relevant parts of the card. During rounds, you will not have enough time to read through all of the evidence, so to make it easier for yourself, underline the parts that you may want to reference or read in a round.
- Make sure you organize your cards. This can be done by contention, by argument, by author last name, or by whatever structure helps you find evidence the quickest and easiest.
- It can help to add a one-sentence summary of the main argument at the top of the card. This makes it easier for you to find the card you are looking for in round.
- Many debaters refer to cards by the author's last name and the publication year. The example card shown above is written by Mark Jacobson and published in June of 2019. The card can be referred to as "Jacobson 19". Note that if there are multiple authors, this should also be recognized in the card. If the example card was written by Mark Jacobson but also by John Smith, it would be called "Jacobson and Smith 19". If there were three or more authors, it would be called "Jacobson et al 19", where "et al" represents there being multiple co-authors.

Below is a link to a video demonstrating the process of cutting cards, using another example card:

https://youtu.be/SxijTm_nt-E

Now that you have seen how the process plays out, try it yourself! Use the example card shown at the beginning of the activity and try cutting it yourself. The point of this activity is to develop a style for cutting cards that you are comfortable with while still making sure you have all of the necessary information, so try to avoid looking at the example card while practicing. Once you finish, feel free to check it with the example card! The evidence can be found at the link below:

<https://www.leonardodicaprio.org/the-7-reasons-why-nuclear-energy-is-not-the-answer-to-solve-climate-change/>