

ADVANCED TOPIC: Voting Issues

NOTE: This article is an extra resource for intermediate/advanced debaters who are looking for advice as to how to run voting issues. If you're a novice debater or don't know what "voting issue" means, don't worry about this right now.

The point of voting issues, at least in my mind, is to make the decision easier for the judge by boiling/simplifying the round down into the main, primary reasons why you believe your side should win/why your arguments have trumped your opponents. Personally, I would say you should aim for 3 or 4 voting issues at max; any more and it gets too overwhelming.

A helpful way I found to think about voting issues is ask the question, "If I could only make 3 arguments to the judge as to why I should win based on the round, what would they be?" or "If I only had 10 seconds to argue to the judge why I should win the round, what are the points I would make?" (and then those become your taglines).

How do you structure your voting issues? There are a few different tips that can be employed. One strategy that I really liked was to just lay out all of the arguments during the rebuttal, then quickly present 3 voting issues during the last 60 seconds or so of the speech that summed the reasons I thought I should win into 3 main voting issues, kind of like a tl;dr for the judge I guess.

It's also very important to prioritize your arguments; during a round, you will often have a bunch of arguments that, when you look at the big picture, don't actually matter that much, and some arguments that are super fundamental to your position or to destroying your opponent's arguments. The voting issues should focus on the latter category; the former group actually isn't that important to winning the round and can often even be dropped.

One format that I often found useful was to follow some kind of syllogism pattern for my voting issues. For instance, I would often use this pattern:

1. Purpose of government is the highest value of the round
2. Nationalism upholds the purpose of government
3. Globalism does not uphold the purpose of government.

If you find that you cannot simplify things down into 3 or 4 issues, then it's not the end of the world; you can absolutely win the round with no voting issues at all.