

*(updated April 2024)*

**Dylan Sutton** (he/him/his)

[dylan.sutton@gmail.com](mailto:dylan.sutton@gmail.com) go ahead and include me on email chains please, but I try not to read evidence to make decisions unless it is unavoidable.

**Background:**

Debated national circuit policy for Fremont (NE) 2000-2004

Debated at UMKC for a hot second in 2004-2005

Assistant policy coach various schools in NE from 2005-2019

Head Coach & English teacher, Millard North (Omaha, NE) 2021-present

**General judging philosophy (all events):**

Underlines are key phrases/ideas.

I'm an educator first. This means I view debate rounds as extensions of the classroom and believe the primary value of debate is education. That perspective causes me to value the truth of your argument over your argumentative technique and also informs a number of my argument preferences. It also means if you do things in debate that create a hostile environment I will intervene against you. This primarily means no violent actions or hate speech, but it is not strictly limited to those things. Basically, behave as you would in school. Violations of this sort will be brought to the tabroom's attention as well.

More generally, kindness/positivity is encouraged and will help your speaker points. Nothing will cause me to have a stronger bias against you than if I perceive that you are being needlessly negative/rude/mean/etc. There's enough negativity in the world.

I try to be objective in the sense that I try not to let my preferences influence my decisions. This is why I try not to read cards after debates, as I believe part of being objective is evaluating the words spoken in the debate rather than literature that is vaguely referenced. If you want credit for a warrant, state the warrant out loud rather than repeating an author's last name or a tagline (a claim). That said, I am not perfectly objective. My social location influences how I understand the world, including debate rounds. The preferences for certain arguments over others that I will express in other places in this paradigm also evidence a lack of total objectivity.

I generally prefer depth of analysis over breadth. What that means is I would prefer you spend your time debating a small number of things very well, rather than a larger number of things at a lower quality. Specific practices that line up with this preference: Know the warrants for the evidence you read and be able to explain them. Read your opponents cards, read the underlined portion of them even and use those lines to make arguments. Make arguments about the quality of their sources. Debate the case.

I'm fine with speed reading (I have a background in national circuit policy). That said, debate is a communicative activity. This means 1. I flow what you say out loud. For example, if you say

“the Smith evidence proves this” you get credit for those 5 words, which don’t contain the warrant for the Smith evidence. If I need to read cards to pick a winner I will, but I will actively resist doing so until it is absolutely necessary. 2. I can’t vote for arguments I can’t hear/understand. I don’t think it’s my job to say things like “clear” to tell you you are giving an unintelligible speech, so watch for nonverbals and err on the side of caution. This is especially true for analytical arguments (arguments that aren’t direct quotes from research/evidence). If you’re reading theory or an overview or that sort of thing, slow down a bit. Cross-x is both important and binding. I don’t flow it but I listen and often do take notes, and it does influence my decision.

I think disclosure is good because it fosters higher quality, more educational debates. I’m aware disclosure isn’t the norm in every region or activity, but my general preference is for disclosure when reasonable. That said, I’m not interested in listening to debates about the minutiae of how teams ought to disclose. If they don’t disclose at all, read the theory and have a debate about disclosure in general. If they disclose something, it’s probably good enough. I would encourage full source/round reports, but the distinction isn’t significant enough for me to want to listen to a whole round about that.

The more you can do to write my ballot for me, the more likely you are to win. While I’m here as an educator, I’m also not trying to work harder than is necessary. Do things like compare warrants for competing claims, weigh impacts, create layers of ways you win (“even if” statements), and when appropriate engage in ‘meta weighing’ or ‘framework’ debates about which kinds of arguments I should prefer as a judge/critic. In the absence of these framing devices I generally default to a cost benefit analysis, usually pretty utilitarian. I’m not particularly beholden to that though. Defense wins champions. I believe offense is necessary but defense can result in zero risk of an argument, so it is also a good idea. Good defense beats mediocre offense.

Online debate - The biggest concern here is audio/technology. I will try to be as lenient and understanding as possible, but also understand that the tournament is on a schedule and ultimately if I can’t hear you I can’t vote for you. I will follow tournament instructions on this issue, but my patience for tech issues is going to be fairly low given that we’ve been at this remote stuff for two years now and most tournaments have ample opportunities for you to test equipment before the rounds begin.

I’ll have my camera on, I would ask that you do as well because I believe your nonverbal communication is part of debate and is important. That said, I understand there may be equity related reasons you’d prefer not to have your camera on so it is not something I require. You don’t have to explain yourself if that is your situation.

Speaker points - On a 30 points scale, I tend to give a 26 if your speech contained numerous egregious speaking errors. Anything below that is reserved for things like hate speech. You get more points as you speak better moving up to 30. I very rarely give a 30. Since it is the top of the scale, I interpret that to me there couldn’t be a better speech. So if I can think of ways the

speech could have been better, it's not a 30. If the tournament has a different scale I will comply with tournament instructions.

### Lincoln Douglas:

Everything from the policy section of my paradigm also applies to LD. The things in this section are things that are unique to LD.

My big thing about LD is that the round/speech time is significantly shorter than policy so it can't just be a one person policy event, in particular with regard to theory. I would also suggest that this means that speed probably isn't as desirable in LD, again particularly in regard to theory. I think these are factors that make the 1AR harder, not easier. I'm new enough to judging LD though that I'm still developing my belief system about the best pedagogical practices here, so nothing is set in stone. Except tricks. Those will always be bad.

### Theory/Topicality - 3 or 4.

I'm not your guy for this debate in LD. I've only really gotten into judging LD since 2019, but in my experience there is FAR too much theory debate happening in LD and much of the debate that is happening is very shallow. I think the AR in LD is very hard and am willing to make appropriate accommodations, and the neg gets some reasonable amount of flexibility, but I would strongly prefer to hear debates about the topic and not about theory.

That being said, if you insist on going for theory you need to actually develop and warrant it, and respond to all the opposing arguments. This is what you would do when going for any other position, but for some reason in theory students seem to believe they can successfully go for theory in like 30 seconds. To "go for" any position in your last rebuttal should probably take at least 2 minutes, theory included.

I strongly prefer examples of in round abuse to potential for abuse arguments. I default to competing interpretations but can be easily persuaded to adopt a reasonability framework.

RVIs are way less popular in policy so if you want me to vote there I need more work than most. I find the arguments that are specific to the format of LD to be most persuasive on this question.

### "Tricks" - worse than a 4

To my understanding, these are arguments that attempt to avoid clash and are primarily anti-intellectual. As such, I hate them and am very unlikely to be persuaded that they are a reason to vote for you. I'm fine with y'all having fun, but not at the expense of the value of the activity.

### LARP - 1.

I approach this as I would a policy round. I was primarily a K debater in my time in policy but we did a ton of DA/CP/Case debate as well.

### K/Phil - 1.

Again, policy paradigm. I have experience with most areas of critical scholarship with the exception of psychoanalysis. I don't have a problem with psych, I'm just not as well versed in the literature. In K v LARP or framework debates, I generally dislike framing arguments that are just "this type of impact shouldn't be allowed" ie "no Ks" etc. On the other side, I strongly encourage K teams to have a defense of your preferred impact framing and your solvency method/mechanism (ie, I'm fine with you singing a song to create change, but you need to explicitly defend that as a method that is successful and not just do it to do it).

### Policy :

In my general info section I talk about how I try not to read cards to evaluate debates because I feel like that is me judging more than the words spoken in the debate. That means that my absolute favorite thing for you to do is to directly quote from your evidence. You explaining specific warrants from your evidence or re-reading parts of your opponents evidence to make a counter-argument are perhaps the best way in general to increase your chances of success in front of me.

### CP/DA/Case 1

If this type of debate is your thing, go for it. I read a politics DA almost every round and have coached teams on these strategies many times.

I strongly prefer specificity over breadth. This means things like:

- As I said in the general advice section, debate the case. The more specific to the aff, the better.
- DA links should be specific to the action/advocacy of the affirmative
- CP text and solvency should be very closely related. The CP solvency evidence should say the text of the CP solves.
- Permutations are more persuasive and harder to answer when you explain the combination, how it works/what it looks like rather than just saying "do both".

### T (v "traditional" affs) 3

I'm an English major, so I find debates about words interesting. The best version of T debates are robust considerations of what the word/phrase means in the topic lit, what would be best for debate as an educational endeavor, and how individual rounds shape community norms.

Things I would encourage:

- I strongly prefer examples of in round abuse to potential for abuse arguments.
- I default to competing interpretations but can be easily persuaded to adopt a reasonability framework.
- Case lists. What is topical under your definition?

- No RVIs. I can be persuaded otherwise but in general not my preference.

That being said, I would expect you to develop T or any theory with the same level of rigor you would a DA or CP if you want me to vote on them. Nobody extends a DA for 30 seconds and seriously expects a win, but it happens all the time on theory. If you insist on going for theory you need to actually develop and warrant it, and respond to all the opposing arguments.

#### Theory: 4

Please slow down when reading/going for theory. It's all analytics, there's no breaks. So unless you want to risk me missing arguments/warrants, slow down.

I'm going to say this again because it applies more to theory arguments than it does T: I would expect you to develop any theory with the same level of rigor you would a DA or CP if you want me to vote on them. Nobody extends a DA for 30 seconds and seriously expects a win, but it happens all the time on theory. If you insist on going for theory you need to actually develop and warrant it, and respond to all the opposing arguments.

I don't have particularly strong opinions about specific theory arguments, but in general I would prefer that theory debates be a defense against practice that materially harmed/alterd the debate for one team and not just a way to win. IE if the neg reads 5 contradictory timeframe CPs, sure. If it's one conditional CP, not so much.

#### K (general) - 1

I ran Ks, I coached Ks, I'm fine with the K in general. As a debater ran pretty generic K positions - cap bad, etc. When I was the assistant coach at Millard South our teams ran some more performative things. I've read at least some of many fields of critical scholarship and feel very comfortable judging debates about those issues. My biggest weakness is psychoanalytical theories; I just haven't read much of that field so I'm less familiar with jargon and the relationships between scholars and ideas. I would encourage you to simplify psychoanalytic ideas as much as possible, or perhaps over explain them.

My biggest advice for the K is make it as specific as possible. The more specific the link is to the affirmative (whether that be the action of the plan, the words they said, the philosophies they advocate) the better. Same with the Alt. The more specific the description of what the action of the alt is and how it resolves the impacts, the more persuasive. The less specific the link & alt, the more leeway the aff gets on the permutation. On that note, have a defense of your methodology - however you are trying to create change, read some evidence or make some arguments about its effectiveness.

One important note for K debaters - I'm fine with multiple worlds/condo in general, but if one of your other off case positions links to your K, you are going to have a hard time overcoming

arguments about how your advocacy as a team links just as much as your opponents, that if you get to kick things that link so do they, that it justifies the perm, etc.

### K affs - 1

Conceptually fine. I ran critical affs as a debater and most of the team's I've coached have done so at least once. I strongly encourage K aff teams to have a defense of your preferred impact framing and your solvency method/mechanism (ie, I'm fine with you singing a song to create change, but you need to explicitly defend that as a method that is successful and not just do it to do it).

### Framework v K - 4

I generally dislike framing arguments that are just "this type of impact shouldn't be allowed" ie "no Ks" etc. If you've read my old paradigm, it called these kinds of frameworks "violent", amongst other things. That should give you a sense of my opinion. Just because the ground you came prepared to debate (like a politics DA) doesn't link to this aff doesn't mean the aff is conceptually bad, it just means you have to have been prepared for different ground. This isn't different than traditional affirmatives that don't link to your generic positions.

While I am sympathetic to the reality that you can't prep a specific strat to every possible K aff, and that sympathy causes me to be more understanding of FW in rounds where the K is obscure or opaque, in general I think the arguments about how you couldn't predict a relatively known K (for instance cap bad) and don't have any ground are silly. Especially when part of a framework that attempts to entirely exclude a particular genre of argument, like the K, I think that's pretty bad pedagogically. Better version of that would be less exclusive (ie, still allowing all types of arguments to be read) and used against less generic/stock K positions.

### Public Forum:

This isn't an event I judge very often, so I'm not very familiar with community standard practices and norms. I would strongly encourage you to read the "general judging philosophy (all events)" section to get a sense of how I think about judging.

More specifically, I try to approach PF as I would a traditional policy debate round. So if you also look at the "CP/DA/Case" section of the policy part of my paradigm that might also give you some insight.

One thing I'm annoyed by - no more one word tags (or tags that don't summarize the card). The whole purpose of a tagline is to summarize the card so that I can flow the summary and then listen to the warranting in the card. Using a tag like "therefore" is meaningless, you might as well just read the citation and then the body of the card. The system I'm asking you to use is WAY EASIER than trying to flow every single word you read in the entire speech, which is the only way the one word tag makes sense. Even in a world with speech docs, I'd have to copy

the body of the card into my flow for the flow to make sense. **You may lose speaks for this** since it makes your speech harder to flow, seemingly by design.

In general in PF, here's my advice:

- Even though I'm policy, don't try to do policy in PF. Just do your thing. I'd rather see you be a really awesome PF debater than try to do something you're not familiar with just to accommodate me. Doing a bad version of something I love is not going to endear you to me.
- More specificity is better. I'd rather you be very detailed and nuanced in winning one impact than be shallow in winning 4 impacts. Same thing applies to your attacks on your opponent's cases. The more specifically your attack applies to what the other side is defending, the more likely I am to vote for you.
- That specificity also extends to evidence. I hate the practice of summarizing/indirect quoting of evidence. I hate it because it makes it much less likely that there is debate about specific lines/quotes/warrants from evidence, which is basically my favorite part of debate. So direct quote your evidence, and read your opponent's evidence to find things you can use against them.
- Impact analysis/weighting is vital. There aren't very many rounds where you just win 100% of the contention level, so impact weighing becomes an essential way for the judge to resolve two competing contentions that are both mitigated. If you don't weigh your impact compared to your opponent's, you probably won't win.

## **OLD PARADIGM**

dylan.sutton@gmail.com is my email but I don't need your speech docs. If I need to read evidence I'll call for it after the round. I try very hard **not** to call for evidence though, so you should do your best to extend specific warrants on the flow.

He/Him

### **Background:**

My job is teaching. As such, I approach debate from the perspective of an educator. This isn't itself super relevant but it does inform how I approach debate. So I'm going to default to an educational paradigm absent any other given to me by the debaters in round - this means things like truth over tech, quality over quantity, and most importantly be respectful of one another and the spaces in which we compete.

I'm from Nebraska and have coached in some capacity since 2005.

I am primarily a policy trained debater and judge, but I have been coaching and judging LD and PF over the last couple years as well. Because of my background, most of the assumptions you would make about a "policy judge" likely apply to me, for better or worse.

**In general:**

I won't tolerate violence or discrimination in round. You will lose my ballot immediately and I will talk to your coach and the tab room.

Speak from where you are comfortable. Tag team CX is fine. Please time yourselves (I will too but more is better). I will allow for a reasonable period of time to exchange speech docs, but don't abuse that privilege or we'll run prep time.

I try to be very flow centric and not impose my beliefs about particular arguments or styles onto the round, but that being said I am human so I am susceptible to bias just like anyone else. What that means for you is I will take every effort to resolve the round using only the words spoken by the debaters on the line-by-line. If I find that not to be possible, that is where I'll start to resolve issues based on my preferences.

My overwhelming preference is for specificity. Specific warrants are better than generic claims, specific links are better than generic ones, etc.

It is my belief that a well executed "defensive" argument can still win you a round.

Don't contradict yourself.

I'm not a fan of theory/"tricks".

Otherwise, I'm down for whatever you can defend. As long as you can make well warranted arguments for a given subject or method, I'll vote for it if you win the line-by-line. I've coached students who read very complicated K arguments, others who were very traditional in their style, others who sang songs, painted, re-enacted famous protests, read poetry, narratives, anything and everything so long as you can make a good argument. That said, I am still an educator so messing around just for the sake of messing around is not a path to my ballot.



Everything below the line is my old paradigm, which I wrote when I was only judging policy. It still has good insight into what I believe about debate, but it is mostly relevant to policy arguments.

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**the least i'd hope you'll read:**

This is written assuming policy debate. If I'm judging you in another event, I apologize. I'm just getting back to judging after taking about 5 years off, so I may be a bit out of date on topic knowledge and specific literature. I try to keep a very open mind about how I should evaluate rounds, and as such am willing to listen to most any role for myself as a judge or my ballot you wish to defend. That being said, I'd very much rather not judge anymore framework debates, I would much rather you engage the content of that which you would seek to frame out of the round. I've done the DA/CP/T thing extensively in the past and have no problem with it, but am at this point more grounded in critical literature and will be more entertained by a more creative round.

Regardless of your argument, you shouldn't be worried that I will categorically refuse to listen. Pretty much only violence and hate speech are out of bounds. Don't be rude. Tag team cx is fine. Speak from where you are comfortable. Time yourselves if possible. Be reasonable about speech docs. Feel free to ask questions.

**everything i care to say:**

I debated in both high school and college, predominantly in the midwest. Specifically I debated for Fremont High in Nebraska (graduated '04) and the University of Missouri at Kansas City. I've since judged and coached for Fremont, Lincoln East, and Millard South, and Westside. So all told I've been active in the regional circuit since about 2001 until I stepped away to finish my degree. I worked at the Nebraska Debate Institute in the summers since of 2006 until recently.

Everything is pretty much a "make smart arguments" situation. **I have no aversion to any particular type of argument so long as it is sufficiently explained and justified.** That said - "the

sun's not yellow, it's chicken". That is to say, I've become relatively bored by "traditional" policy debate. I am infinitely more interested in the critical, particularly the creative. Don't get me wrong, I've read/wrote lotsa DAs and some CPs in my time and voted on them quite often. I've just come to see that whole world as at best tiresome and at worst absurd to the degree of appearing to be self-mocking parody. Word to the wise - don't read this as me trying to code in something like "I'll automatically vote on Ks". If you read something that's either nonsensical or strategically a blunder, those things probably overcome the fact that I might find what you said intellectually stimulating. **It would, however, be safe to read this as me saying "I'm down with anything" and actually meaning anything.**

I conceptualize the round in terms of what actually comes out of your mouths, especially in the rebuttals. That means if you say "The Smith '05 evidence answers this", those 6 words are pretty much all you get credit for. What I'm trying to say is, **you're better off saying the argument/warrant from the evidence as a part of the extension rather than expecting me to read your evidence after the round.** I make a conscious effort not to read evidence after rounds. That's not an absolute, but it's the way I lean in evaluation. That said, I also believe that form and content are to some degree inseparable. so if you believe the form your arguments take (whether that be poetic or lyrical or whatever) is important, or theirs is bad, make that an issue. This belief is probably also at the heart of my disdain for multiple contradictory arguments. I want to make this fairly clear because I am apparently exceptional in this way: **I will drop you because your cp/da/whatever link to the k you read, even after you've collapsed the round to one flow.** Obviously like anything that assumes the argument is made and won in the round, but i am very easily persuaded that at very least the aff gets the perm, severance, and to kill the solvency for the alt. A foolish consistency may be the hobgoblin of little minds, but a foolish inconsistency likely loses you my ballot.

Something else you'll probably wanna know is that **I don't minimize the importance of so-called 'defensive' arguments** like a lot of people do. Often you'll hear people talk about giving "risk" to an argument despite the presence of a very smart, unrefuted 'defensive' argument against it. Just know

that the risk i will give arguments that have good defensive arguments left standing against them is not very high, not high enough for the position to matter much at all.

The specific issues I tend to mention are topicality and theory. In terms of interest level, I enjoy a good topicality debate. I have been told that according to my voting record, I tend to not vote on topicality. I am one of those guys that requires an impact topicality (crazy I know). That is to say, **voters require some work** - or at least

more than simply being asserted. Perhaps keep in mind that my teams like to "impact turn" T when you're deciding how much time to devote to your voters.

Also, theory. A good general rule is to ask yourself "Am I just playing a game with this argument"? If your answer is largely "yes", you should probably reconsider. I know I don't often vote on theory. I have nothing conceptually against voting on theory, but it is rarely executed in a way I find persuasive enough to vote on. If you're wanting me to vote solely on theory you need to devote the depth to it that you would anything else you want me to vote solely upon. Noone extends a disadvantage for 45 seconds and expects a vote on it, but it happens on theory all the time. I'll need specific analysis of the round that is happening and how it has been effected by the theory issue, refutations to their arguments, and comparisons between your theoretical impacts and theirs.

things i don't like: contradictory conditional arguments, states counterplans, policy only frameworks, and mint.

Any other questions you may have you can ask me in person. I'm really laid back about judging rounds. I'd like it if you'd talk to me, because otherwise things get sort of boring.

