

# Understanding the Outline of a Constructive

The cases are also the first opportunity for the judge to determine which team may have the advantage. Accordingly, solid case construction is a fundamental element of successful debate. Cases are composed of the following general parts.

## Introduction

- Opening Line
- Resolution
- Framework

## Contention 1

- Subpoint
- Subpoint

## Contention 2

- Subpoint
- Subpoint

## Contention 3

- Subpoint
- Subpoint

## Conclusion

### Introduction

**Opening Line (optional):** A quote from a well-known figure that someone relates to your side of the resolution or a preview of one or more reasons why your side affirms or negates. This should not be a full piece of evidence. Rather, it's a sentence or two designed to catch the audience's attention and introduce the team's stance on the resolution. If a student uses an opening quote, they should include a small transitional phrase before they introduce the resolution. "Because we agree with whoever, my partner and I affirm/negate the resolution, Resolved:..."

**Resolution:** If no opening quote is used, students can simply begin their case with, "My partner and I affirm/negate the resolution, Resolved:..."

**Framework/Resolutioal Analysis/ Definitions:** This may or may not be necessary depending on the resolution. Some teams may have contentious terms that will significantly alter the debate, while others will be more straightforward. It is a good idea for students to have definitions available for all the key terms in the resolution, whether from a dictionary, scholarly article, or simply analytical. They can decide if they think it is necessary to read those definitions in every round, or if they will only read them if they find their opponents definitions problematic.

**Contentions:** Students simply need to write “Contention one:” and begin with the claim, warrant, and impact of their first question. If desired, contentions can also have sub-points. In this case, it may read something like:

Contention one: a sentence describing the general point of both arguments together.

Sub-point a: the student dives into the claim, warrant, and impact of the first argument.

Sub-point b: the student develops the claim, warrant, and impact of the second.”

Students should probably limit themselves to three contentions at most, to ensure that they have enough time in the four minute speech to develop each of their arguments fully.

**Conclusion:** Public Forum cases should have very brief conclusions, typically lasting between 10 and 20 seconds. Debaters should summarize the main arguments of their cases and link back to the opening statement used in the introduction.