So, I am your judge, and you want to win the round. What should you do? My approach to each debate is fairly simple. I believe that my job is to determine which policy option is the most preferable. If you are affirmative, you need to prove that the plan is the best option. On the negative, you need to prove either that the plan is a bad idea, or offer a better option. Now, is this what the debate MUST look like? No. I am reasonable and flexible. If you want the debate to move in a different direction, feel free. I don’t mean to constrain your choice of advocacy. Obviously, each debate is different, and your main objective should be strategically selecting arguments which increase your chance of winning. You should maximize your chance of winning, regardless of my preference. The following is just an abbreviated form of my preferences to help you determine what might be most likely to succeed. In no particular order:

Evidence: you should have some. You probably will need a bunch of it. However, teams often miss an opportunity to make a good argument simply because they don’t have a card to prove it. Truth is powerful. If you think truth is on your side, say so. I am willing to listen to arguments without evidence. Also, having three or four bad pieces of evidence is not as good as having one great piece of evidence. If you have good evidence, be sure to talk about why it’s so good. Don’t just say “their cards aren’t good.” Provide reasons why some pieces of evidence are better than others. I almost always will defer to the team providing reasons when the other team offers none.

Cross Examination: the worst time of the debate. Try to make this time useful. Don’t just fix your flow and get evidence. Go after the other team’s arguments. Ask tough, challenging and difficult questions. Try to get answers which can be used in the debate. Show off your intelligence!

Topicality & Kritiks: I usually make some statement in my philosophy about how I would rather not vote on these arguments. Generally, I still don’t like either of them. Make your argument, and I will evaluate it, even if it has one of these labels attached to it. Be sure to clarify why a kritik is a prefiait arguments and not just a non-unique disad or solvency argument. If you are going for Topicality, you should probably be able to articulate clear ground and/or abuse arguments. In general, I am becoming much more flexible on these issues. A few years ago I would have said that I hated to hear either of these arguments. These days, these arguments are unavoidable. In fact, I have heard several compelling topicality positions and kritikal positions.

Counterplans: A good negative strategy. My presumption is that permutations must include the entire plan and some or all of the counterplan to be legitimate. I’m not a big fan of theory arguments on plan-inclusive CP, dispositionality, and fiat. Each of these arguments has merit, and can be won by the affirmative, but you should invest serious time into them if you expect to win them. I’m not likely to vote against a negative team just because they may have run a counterplan that you didn’t like. In fact, I have been on the bottom of several decisions because my threshold for voting on these arguments is incredibly high. I am much more sympathetic, though, if the argument is conditionality bad.

Cheap shots: Former coaches were much more likely to vote on them than me. In fact, I don’t believe that I would be willing to vote for one at all. If you miss answering “must define all words” in the 2ac, just answer it in the 1ar—even the 2ar. I doubt I would even vote on it then. Just not answering clearly flagged and explained arguments, though, is a problem. You should answer all of the arguments.
As I said before, these are just my predispositions. Everything is up to you. Enjoy the debate. Make the arguments that normally win you debates. I am much more likely to vote for you if you argue positions that you are good with—so don’t let me stand in your way.