

Constitutional Debate Speech Writing 101

How to write your speech.

Voice

- ▶ Don't forget: The voice needs to be appropriate for the topic and audience.
- ▶ The speech needs a persuasive effect.
- ▶ How do we do that?
 - That means formal writing style
 - No "I think" or "I feel" statements
 - Always support ideas with evidence
 - Do not use I, you, me, we, us (except in quotes or at the call to action)

Hook

- ▶ See page 43 of the Writer's Guide for attention getters.
- ▶ Sarah Brady, chairwoman of the Brady Campaign stated "Something is wrong when a child born in the United States is 12 times more likely to die from guns than one born in 26 other major industrialized nations."

Background Info

- ▶ Does your section on background information cover the following:
 - What is the issue?
 - Who is involved in the issue (stakeholders)?
 - Why is this issue important?

Background Info

- ▶ There has been a dispute over the meaning of the 2nd Amendment for years. Advocates like victims of gun violence and the Center of Gun Violence Prevention demand government enforced gun control, claiming these laws protect human life. Some of these restrictions include background checks, waiting periods on gun purchases, restrictions on ammunition sales, and banning assault weapons. Opponents like the National Rifle Association and sportsmen nationwide say individual citizens have the right to own guns to use for recreation and self-defense. The outcome of this debate impacts every man, woman, and child in the US.

Thesis and Subtopics

- ▶ This is the focus of you paper, the main idea that you are trying to persuade!
- ▶ See Position Statements (Pg. 3 of Debate Guidelines)
- ▶ Your subtopics are #2 – 4 on your Research Web

Subtopics and Thesis

Yes

No

- ▶ Option 1: It is necessary for the government to make laws on gun ownership because it is supported by the Second Amendment of the Constitution, America's democratic ideals, and stakeholder interests.
 - ▶ Should the government have the ability to control who owns a gun?
 - ▶ Gun control is good.
 - ▶ Option 2: Gun control is supported by the Constitution. Democratic ideals are upheld by these laws. Also, stakeholders value gun regulation. Gun control restrictions are constitutional and protect the safety of this country.
- Remember your two options:
- combining your subtopics into the thesis
 - stating the subtopics individually and then ending with a concise position statement on the issue.

Conclusion Restatement of Thesis

Yes

No

- ▶ Restated Thesis: It is essential and beneficial for the government to make laws on gun ownership because it is bolstered by the Second Amendment of the Constitution, America's democratic ideals, and stakeholder interests.
 - ▶ Should the government be able to decide who owns a gun?
 - ▶ Individual gun ownership is bad.
 - ▶ Original: It is necessary for the government to make laws on gun ownership because it is supported by the Second Amendment of the Constitution, America's democratic ideals, and stakeholder interests.
- Remember that the ideas need to be the same but the way you say them different.

Purpose of the Call to Action

- ▶ Step 1: Decide if this needs to change or stay the same (status quo)
- ▶ Change: Laws need to be more strict on who can own guns.
 - Action step that the audience can take to make this happen.
- ▶ Status Quo: The laws are good the way they are.
 - Action step that the audience can take to make the laws are protected and don't get changed.

Call to Action

Yes

No

- ▶ As citizens, we have a right to feel safe in our communities knowing that laws keep guns out of the hands of dangerous people. You can protect these gun control laws by writing your congressmen to show your support for his work in keeping laws like mandatory background checks.
 - ▶ Vote to keep gun control.
 - ▶ Tell your friends the benefits of gun control.
- Do you call people to act by demanding change of the law or do you encourage authorities to maintain status quo?
- Does this "call to action" give specific action steps the audience can do for change or maintaining status quo?

Check the type of quotes

- ▶ Look at your quotes throughout your notes sheets, because in your speech you will need:
 - At least one court case (you'll need to identify the title of the court case)
 - At least one statistic (a number based quote)
 - At least one example (a situation that identifies the impact/benefit of gun control laws or whatever you're persuading)
- ▶ Mark each box as CC, S, or E for the type of info you have.

The purpose of Constitutions Citations

- ▶ The whole point of this paragraph is to prove that experts (judges, lawyers, scholars, published authors) believe your position on the issue. Possible evidence:
 - Quotes from published articles
 - Quotes from a judge from majority or dissent statement
 - Court decision in favor of your position

A. Constitution Topic Sentence

Yes

▶ To begin, the Second Amendment of the Constitution supports the right of government to place restrictions on gun ownership in the United States.

- Does this clearly connect the subtopic (constitutional citations) to the thesis/position of the paper (government right to control who owns a gun)?

- Transitional phrase?

No

▶ The nation was founded on the Constitution and it should be followed today.

A. Constitution Quote

Yes

▶ The language of the Second Amendment says "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."

▶ Nothing between topic sentence and the quote.

- Do I identify the specific part of the constitution that my expert will reference in the quote?

No

Set-Up

B. Constitution Quote

Yes

▶ As stated by Sarah Brady, "The intent was to prevent the federal government from passing laws that would disarm the state militia. Today the "well-regulated Militia" is the National Guard, a state-organized force of ordinary citizens serving as part-time soldiers under the command of each state's governor."

▶ A direct quote of the 2nd Amendment won't work because you need an expert saying what the 2nd Amendment means.

- Is my quote from an expert (judge, lawmaker, or lawyer, or scholar) who is interpreting the meaning of the amendment?
- Did I use a quote verb phrase?

No

C. Constitution Analysis

Yes

▶ This proves that the founding fathers intended for the 2nd Amendment to allow gun ownership in the context of protecting the state as a militia, not as a private individual. If it was intended to be a right of individual gun ownership, they would not include language of "militia" or "security of a free state" in the 2nd Amendment.

▶ Firearms need to be controlled.

- Does this explain the connection between my quote and thesis and more specifically, the meaning of the constitution?
- Did I use an analysis verb phrase?

No

D. Constitution Quote

Yes

▶ Additionally, the "well regulated Militia" interpretation has been used by courts since 1939.

▶ Nothing between topic sentence and the quote.

- Do I identify the specific part of the constitution that my expert will reference in the quote?

No

Constitution Quote

Yes

▶ As declared by Linda Greenhouse, "The ruling [of the 1939 Supreme Court Case *United States v. Miller*] suggested, without explicitly deciding, that the Second Amendment right should be understood in connection with service in a militia. That ruling helped support a scholarly and judicial consensus that the second Amendment protects only the right of the states to maintain militias—and served as the legal basis for federal, state, and local gun-control laws regulating individual ownership of guns."

▶ "Gun Laws Work. The legal and historical record is clear: gun laws are constitutional."

- Is my quote from an expert (judge, lawmaker, or lawyer, or scholar) who is interpreting the meaning of the amendment?
- Did I use a quote verb phrase?

No

Constitution Analysis

Yes
No

- ▶ This confirms that the 2nd Amendment is not being violated in any way because courts are making decisions based on the use of guns in the context of state organized militias.
- ▶ Firearms need to be controlled.
 - Does this explain the connection between my quote and thesis and more specifically, the constitutional citation?
 - Did I use an analysis verb phrase?

Constitution Conclusion

Yes
No

- ▶ In summary, the Second Amendment supports government imposed restrictions on gun ownership.
- ▶ We should have gun ownership.
 - Does this conclusion clearly bring it back to the generic topic sentence at the start of the paragraph?
 - Did I use a summarizing transition?

Democratic Ideal Topic Sentence

Yes
No

- ▶ Equally important are the numerous democratic ideals that support gun control.
- ▶ How would life be if every corner you turned you would find a world full of people who are dangerous people with guns?
- ▶ You will now learn why our democratic ideals support gun control.

- Does this tell you about democratic ideals that support individual gun ownership?
- Does this establish a position (restate your thesis)?
- Transitional phrase to emphasize new point?

Democratic Ideal Quote Set-Up

Yes
No

- ▶ The democratic ideal of life strengthens the argument for gun control laws. When dangerous people are allowed to possess guns, innocent lives are at risk.
- ▶ Nothing between topic sentence and the quote.
- ▶ Democratic ideals are important and I'm going to tell you why they support gun control.

- Note: 2nd quote set-up needs a transitional phrase
- Do I identify a democratic ideal?
- Do I define the meaning/value of the democratic ideal in the context of the topic?

Democratic Ideal Quote

Yes
No

- ▶ According to Jim Abrams, "Seung-Hui Cho, who in April killed 32 students and faculty at Virginia Tech before taking his own life, had been ordered to undergo outpatient mental health treatment and should have been barred from buying the two guns he used in the rampage. But the state of Virginia never forwarded this information to the national background check system."
- ▶ Jim Abrams states, "The panel also urged federal agencies to expand programs to prevent school violence and said the Health and Human Services Department should focus on college students in its mental health public education campaign."

- Will my selected quote connect the identified democratic ideal (life)?
- Did I use a quote verb phrase?

Democratic Ideal Analysis

Yes
No

- ▶ This illustrates that background checks and other regulations on gun ownership need to be effective in order to protect human life. Those 32 people would not have died if all states were in compliance with national background checks.
- ▶ Guns don't make people safe.
 - Does my analysis mention the specific democratic ideal (life) and explain the meaning of the democratic ideal in the context of the quote?
 - Did I use an analysis verb phrase?

2nd Democratic Ideal Quote Set-Up

Yes
No

- ▶ In addition to life, the democratic ideal of justice also supports the need for gun control laws. People deserve the just reward or consequence for choices they make.
- ▶ Nothing between topic sentence and the quote.
- ▶ Democratic ideals are important and I'm going to tell you why they support gun control.

▪ Note: 2nd quote set-up needs a transitional phrase

- Do I identify a democratic ideal?
- Do I define the meaning/value of the democratic ideal in the context of the topic?

Democratic Ideal Conclusion

Yes
No

- ▶ In short, the American democratic ideal of life and justice support the need for the government to strengthen gun control legislation.
- ▶ Now, don't you think people should think twice about owning guns?

- Does this conclusion clearly bring it back to the generic topic sentence?
- Does it include a summarizing transitional phrase?

Stakeholder Topic Sentence

Yes
No

- ▶ Furthermore, stakeholders value gun control because gun regulations benefit both the common good and the individual.
- ▶ Gun control is acceptable because people are safer with laws.

OR (if you only express common good)

- ▶ Furthermore, stakeholders value gun control because gun ownership protects the safety of the common community of people.

- Does this tell you that stakeholders support individual gun ownership?
- Does this establish a position/restate your thesis?
- Transitional phrase to emphasize new point?

Stakeholder Quote Set-Up

Yes
No

- ▶ After the Virginia Tech shooting of 2007, students and faculty of the Virginia Tech school community voiced concerns about the idea of students carrying guns on campus.
- ▶ Gun control helps stakeholders.

▪ Note: 2nd quote set-up needs a transitional phrase

- Do I identify a specific stakeholder group (community, parents, teachers, students, victims, etc)?
- Do I communicate the stakeholders reason (either it benefits the common good or promotes individual right)?

Stakeholder Quote

Yes
No

- ▶ The article "Should Students Be Allowed to Carry Concealed Weapons?" states, "Opponents of guns on campus argue that their presence would dramatically increase violence in a variety of ways—from accidental discharges to fights being settled with bullets instead of fists. On their site are most university presidents and many law-enforcement officials, as well as academic research."
- ▶ "an estimate of about 1.1 million violent crimes were committed with guns in 1992."

Or

- ▶ "Gun control as a whole has not worked to reduce violent crime rates in this country."

- Did I use a quote that shows the interest or benefit of the stakeholder?
- Did I use a quote verb phrase?

Stakeholder Analysis

Yes
No

- ▶ This demonstrates that the common good of the school community does not think individual gun ownership is the solution to reducing on-campus violence. In fact the students, faculty, and campus law enforcement all support restrictions on individual gun ownership and believe they would be safer without guns.
- ▶ Weapons are threatening to the stakeholders.

- Does my analysis mention the specific stakeholder and explain the benefit that is identified in the quote?
- Did I use an analysis verb phrase?

Stakeholder Conclusion

Yes

- ▶ Consequently, it is in the best interest of stakeholders the common community and individuals alike to have regulated gun ownership.

OR

- ▶ Consequently, it is in the best interest of stakeholders for the common community to have the government regulate gun ownership.

No

- ▶ Now, don't you think we should have guns laws?

- Does this conclusion clearly bring it back to the generic topic sentence?
- Does it include a summarizing transitional phrase?