

Computers in Debate

Rich Edwards
Baylor University



The New UIL Computer Rule

What is Allowed?

Computer use for flowing & evidence retrieval

Use of a printer

What is Prohibited?

No Internet wired or wireless connection; no emails or instant messaging

Enforcement

Failure to disable a wireless connection: Forfeit round

Receiving information during the round via a wired or wireless connection:
Disqualification & forfeiture of all rounds

Reminders:

Debaters are responsible for all equipment and arrangements: The tournament is not responsible to furnish outlets, extension cords, paper, batteries, or any other equipment to facilitate computer use.

Prep time rules remain in effect: A mechanical malfunction with the laptop does not provide a basis for suspending or extending prep time.

Debaters must be able to produce a copy of any evidence read in a round.

Why Allow Computers?



Debate on the cutting edge

Superior Storage

Superior Retrieval

Save Copy Costs

Presentation Skills

Tubs Are the Worst

Travel Nightmare
Dread Room Moves
Hand Truck Too
Where's the Brief
Refiling Time



Digital Storage Is the Future

One tub = 2500 pages max
(16 megabytes in MS Word)



One CD = 50 Tubs



One DVD = 288 Tubs

Copy Cost

One tub = 2500 pages



Cost to Copy (at 5 cents) =
\$125.00

4 Tubs = \$500.00



Cost to Copy = 10 ¢

Where Can I Get a Timer?

Debate Countdown Timer

<http://pbest.multics.org/timer/>



How Do Debaters Flow on Computers?

Excel Spreadsheet

Enable Text Wrap:

- (1) Select whole worksheet (Control-A);
- (2) Select "Format" Menu: Cells;
- (3) Click the tab for "Alignment";
- (4) Under "Text Control" check the item labeled "Text Wrap"

Create a New Bottom Tab for Each Argument:

- (1) Use the "Edit" menu to select "Move or Copy Sheet"
- (2) Click the option to "Create a Copy";
- (3) Right click the tab name at the bottom of the screen";
- (4) Select the option to "Re-name"

How Do Debaters Flow on Computers?

Excel Spreadsheet

How Do You Carrier-Return Within the Same Cell?:

Hold down the “Alt” when you hit the “Enter” or “Return” key

How Do You Create A Different Color for a Column?

- (1) Select the whole column by click on the Column Letter at Top
- (2) Select the “Format” menu option, then “Cells”
- (3) Select the “Font” tab and choose the color you desire

Should I Teach Students to Flow on the Computer?



First, all debaters must know how to flow the old fashioned way

Computer flowing is optimal if the following conditions are met:

- a. The student owns a laptop
- b. The student types faster than he/she writes

Smoothing the Transition to Computer Evidence Retrieval



A smooth transition requires more than one year.

Computer backfiles can't be scanned/digitized all at once.

Start now with encouraging debaters to turn in their assignments in digital (word processing) format.

Appropriate Goals for Computer Evidence Retrieval



All teams need paper copies of the most used files (their own affirmative case, commonly used topicality arguments & case response briefs, and the 2 or 3 most commonly used disadvantages).

The goal should be a one-tub limit for each team. Everything else can be made available on CD or DVD.

Learning the Difference Between Image Files and OCR (Optical Character Recognition)



When preparing digital copies of backfiles, the easiest is to use a scanner to create image files (pdf or jpg).

This, however, has two big disadvantages: (a) lots of memory; and (b) inability to fully search the documents

OCR scanning software (OmniPage Pro 15 is my favorite) is by far the best option.

Delivery Recommendations



The computer should be at the podium only if used for flowing

In that event, debaters must be taught to maintain a significant amount of eye contact in proper UIL delivery style

If the computer is used for evidence retrieval, briefs should be printed before they are utilized