

## Card cutting tips and pointers:

1. Use a pen. *Do not* use a highlighter to either highlight the quote you want to use or to make your brackets. Highlighter does not always photocopy and if someone else is processing your evidence they may not see bracketed highlights.
2. As a general rule, don't underline cards while you cut them. First, since the evidence will be reproduced for the rest of your team, everyone shouldn't be stuck with your underlining. Second, the first time you read something, you are likely to include too much context and extraneous words. A later read will allow you to highlight the evidence more precisely. If you plan to scan your cards into a digital format using an OCR program, you definitely shouldn't underline because most OCR programs interpret underlining as an additional line of text.
3. Don't cut "straw-person" cards, or even worse: cut evidence out of context. Only cut cards that the author supports. Many authors start articles by identifying and explaining the position they will refute. Even though these cards sometimes seem to be quite good, you should avoid cutting them. Quoting an author on a position which they disagree with is really cutting them out of context. If you want evidence on the other side of the issue, follow the author's footnote trail.
4. Use bracket marks at the beginning and end of the card. ( [ .... ] or < .... > )
5. Bracket only complete sentences and thoughts, not fragments. Don't put a bracket in the middle of a sentence.
6. Cards *must* contain a reason or warrant to support the claim. If your cards are too short, and only make general statements, you will not be able to provide evidentiary support in the debate to support the claim. If the claim has reasons, your argument will be stronger in the debate. Hint: If the tag will say what the evidence says, word for word, with no additional reasoning, the card is too short. As a general rule of thumb, you should avoid one sentence cards.
7. Write the page number in the margin.
8. Write a "filing note" and/or a "use note" in the margin. You will tag your evidence when writing your final briefs. Given this, it is usually a waste of time to try to write a tag next to a card at this stage of the game. Besides, there usually isn't enough space to do so. Instead, you should simply write a filing note in the margin. Broad filing categories include: status quo/inherency, impact/harm, solvency, plan/counterplan, critique, topicality, or answer to answer. Your filing note also should include the topic (i.e. MPA's) and the direction (aff or neg, good or bad).

More specific filing notes might include: sq solves, oceans impact, regulations solvency, Bush link, Biz Con linke, and "T."

Many times you will find it useful to include a use note so that you remember the context in which you cut the card. This is most easily accomplished by formulating an “Answers to...” use note. You might put “AT: New drugs solve” for evidence that says that newer drugs will avoid all of the pitfalls of existing psychotropic drugs.

A broader set of categories might include:

### AFFIRMATIVE

Inherency

Harms (delineating between advantages)

Solvency (Identify evidence that supports specific solutions to problems, particularly evidence that supports the government, hopefully the federal government, addressing the problem.

### NEGATIVE

Case arguments

Inherency attacks (status quo solves)

Harms attacks

Solvency attacks

Disadvantages

Links

Link Uniqueness

Internal Link

Internal Link Uniqueness

Impact

Impact Uniqueness

Counterplans

Solvency

Net-Benefit Evidence

Permutation Answers

Answers to disadvantages to the counterplan

Kritiks

Link

Internal Link

Impact

Alternative Evidence

Permutation Answers

9. Always ask yourself: “How could I use this evidence in a debate?” “What argument does it make?” “What argument does it answer?” As a general rule, if you aren’t sure, but think it might have value, cut the card. It is far better to end up with extra cards than to long for the card you didn’t cut and no longer have. As you learn more about the topic as the season goes along, and gain a better handle on how to conceptualize it strategically, your efficiency will improve. It is not uncommon for the best card cutters to throw away boxes of unused cards, cut early in the season.
10. Error on the side of longer cards at this stage of the game. Even if the card is really long, you can always trim and/or highlight it down later. It is much harder to piece together scraps once you have taken scissors to an article.
11. Avoid cutting irrelevant cards. If it is something you want to have for later that is a random bit of information, write FYI in the margin and process it with the rest of your cards. Don’t cut cards that are out of date. This is especially true of uniqueness cards and statistics.
12. Mark cards with the entire topic in mind. Think about the negative. Perhaps there is a really good “T” card, Bush link, or a harm takeout. Also, think about other arguments that are possible on this topic, such as the drugs, psychiatry, institutionalization arguments.
13. Diversify your sources. You don’t need 10 cards which say the same thing from the same author. Use multiple research avenues to get a robust variety of sources.
14. As a general rule, only cut cards from sources who are qualified. Before even printing or copying the article, ask yourself “is this author sufficiently qualified to speak to this issue?”
15. Exercise more quality control by avoiding over-cutting cards. As you read more and cut more cards on your topic, recognize that you have already cut two or three good cards on this issue which are better than the one before your eyes. Just ignore it—it will save you a lot of time later. But be sure that you know your other cards are better.
16. If a card contains a quote from another source, be sure to cut it long enough to include the reference to the author. If that isn’t possible (i.e. it is footnoted), you should make a margin note that identifies the source and make a note in your research notebook that reminds you to go track down the original source.
17. If there is a pronoun in your card (e.g. it, he, she) either cut it long enough to include the name, or write it in the margin so that you (and others) know exactly what or who the piece of evidence is referring to. If you are cutting the card on line, you can type the person’s name in brackets after the pronoun.
18. If you are reading an article that has different authors speaking at different places (i.e. a congressional hearing, an interview, a transcript of a news program, or a debate) be sure to write the name of the person speaking in the margin next to the card. This will help you be sure that you get the right cite on the right card when processing rolls around.