

- b. Never leave out words or sentences in the middle of a quotation. If you were doing research for a term paper, you could leave out words—using an ellipsis (...) to indicate the place where the words were omitted. Yet competitive debate standards forbid an internal ellipsis. National Forensic League (NFL) evidence rules state that the evidence must be taken continuously from the beginning of one sentence to the end of another. The only time you can have an ellipsis is if it already exists in the source you are quoting.
- c. NFL evidence rules do not allow you to start a quotation in the middle of a sentence or to stop before the end of a sentence.
- d. NFL evidence rules do not allow you to add words to a quotation; if you need to explain a reference, insert the explanation in brackets. Suppose, for example, the quotation uses the acronym UDF and you know from reading the rest of the article that the reference is to United Dairy Farmers. Simply insert in brackets [United Dairy Farmers] after the UDF. Never use a bracket insertion to change or add to the meaning of a quotation.

Cutting Rule 2: Every piece of evidence must have a source. This source must include an author (which could be an organization), a qualification for the author (professor of engineering at MIT, staff writer, and so on), a publication source, a date, and a page number. If the evidence is from an online source, it is acceptable to omit the page number but online access information must be listed in its place (accessed at www.annrand.org on July 31, 2007).

Cutting Suggestion 1: You should have a purpose in mind for each piece of evidence. Don't just collect evidence at random. What argument would the evidence support? If you don't have an answer to that question, there is little point in collecting the quotation.

Cutting Suggestion 2: Make the quotation long enough so that it gives reasons for a conclusion, but not so long that it would take several minutes to read in a debate round. Sometimes debaters take a single sentence out of an article, presenting only the author's conclusion: "Adopting the Kyoto Protocol would be ruinously expensive for the American economy." A good piece of evidence would provide reasons in support of a conclusion. Don't make the mistake of cutting the evidence down to the point that you are eliminating those reasons while only stating a conclusion. Five to six sentences is a good default standard for card length, although there are often good reasons for shorter or longer quotations.

So, what happens when competitive debaters violate evidence rules (making up evidence, distorting evidence, using evidence with improper citations, and so on)? Most tournament rules impose stiff penalties for evidence violations. Success in debate relies so heavily on having supporting evidence that the activity becomes somewhat meaningless when evidence rules are ignored. Penalties range from losing the debate