

The field context standard argues that we should prefer those interpretations of the topic that come from the real-world public policy contexts rather than from dictionary definitions.

The intent to define standard says that definitions are better when they are written for the specific purpose of defining a term. This standard is exactly the opposite of the field context standard; it offers reasons dictionary definitions should be preferred over chance occurrences of words in the field context. Scholars who prepare definitions of words in *Webster's Dictionary* or other dictionaries are writing their definitions after giving careful thought to the question of what should be included and excluded. Efforts to define from the field context are defective because the authors might be using terms in an imprecise manner.

The grammatical context standard argues that a definition is better to the extent that it accounts for the full context of the resolutional sentence. The affirmative team often tries to present definitions for each separate word in the resolution and then add up those meanings using its own creative interpretations. To prevent this sort of creative addition, the negative team suggests the superiority of a definition that places all the words of the resolution in proper grammatical context.

Given the many options, how does the negative team select a standard? Three principles should govern the application of a standard: (1) clarity, (2) correspondence, and (3) simplicity.

The *clarity principle* means the negative debater should be very clear about the standard to be applied to the definitions. This principle is violated when the debater presents two or more standards. What is a judge to do when a debater defends both the intent to define and the field context standards? The first standard says that dictionary definitions should be preferred over natural occurrences in the literature; the second standard claims precisely the opposite. Even when the standards are not contradictory, the presence of multiple standards is confusing, so the judge is left to wonder which of the standards should be given priority over the other.

The *correspondence principle* means the standard should bear a clear relationship to the violation. Negative debaters commonly present topicality standards and defend them to the end of the round but then never apply the standard to the violation to explain why the negative definition is superior to the affirmative definition. The best way to select a standard is to think backward from the violation. If the negative evidence on the violation comes from a dictionary source, the preferred standards would be each word has meaning or intent to define. If the negative evidence on the violation comes from a military expert, the preferred standard would be field context. The debatability standard is applicable at any time the affirmative plan seems especially abusive.