

**Topic Primer**

Our resolution asks debaters to examine the differences between humans and animals, as well as the importance of those differences. The way debaters define and support terms will be the key argument of many rounds, such as the term “fundamentally” (and its application to “different”). Understanding the difference between *differences in degree* and *differences in kind* is important. A *difference in kind* may be that humans have a spine and jellyfish do not. A *difference in degree* is that elephants have a longer gestational period than humans. The affirmative will likely argue about human’s spoken language, culture, and the effect our social environment has in shaping who we become through language. These positions will attempt to differentiate humans from other species through language abilities, social interaction, symbolic behavior, and cultural variation. A second common argument will be about morality. They will argue that humans’ ability to appreciate fairness, justice, and rights is not only above and beyond anything else in the animal kingdom, but it is an essential part of what makes us human. A third common affirmative argument is about humanity’s capability for rationality and higher cognitive functions; the way we rationalize our actions and contemplate our choices is fundamentally different than the way other animals do. The negative will likely have a heavier focus on defining “fundamentally different”. A large part of the negative position is proving that the differences between humans and other animals are not attributable to differences that are foundational. The negative will likely reference the importance of genetics in understanding the differences and similarities of species. With that, they may point out we share almost all genetic material with other animals, including >99% with other apes. They may argue that evolutionary biology is the basis for determining what is fundamental to a species. The negative may also make the argument that all all living organisms function to survive in a competitive world, and that human characteristics, like all other animals, are just consequences of this fundamental process. Please keep an open mind and enjoy the rich experience of Big Questions Debate!

**The Debate**

Each round features 2-4 students: one side representing the affirmative and one representing the negative. Each side gives four speeches, and there are two periods of questions. If students are competing in pairs they will alternate speeches. Students will attempt to prove or disprove the statement: “Resolved: Humans are fundamentally different from other animals.”

***Affirmative Constructive – 5 minutes***

***Negative Constructive – 5 minutes***

***Question Segment – 3 minutes***

***Affirmative Rebuttal – 4 minutes***

***Negative Rebuttal – 4 minutes***

***Question Segment – 3 minutes***

***Affirmative Consolidation – 3 minutes***

***Negative Consolidation – 3 minutes***

***Affirmative Rationale – 3 minutes***

***Negative Rationale – 3 minutes***

Each student has 3 minutes of preparation time during the debate, to be used in increments of their choice. For example, a student may elect to prepare for 1 minute for their rebuttal speech, 1 minute for their consolidation speech, and 1 minute for their final speech. Students may also prepare “for free” during each other’s preparation time.

**Your Role**

Your most important responsibility is to fill out the ballot. There are six things to fill in on the ballot: 1) The logistical tournament info at the top, including the Aff and Neg codes provided by the debaters (note: this is the only information you should fill out prior to the end of the round), 2) The best case you could make for why the aff wins the debate you heard and any comments. 3) The best case you could make for why the neg won the debate you heard and any comments. 4) The reason the debater you chose to win did the better debating, 5) the side that contestant represented and their code (at the top), and 6) Your name, verifying that the debaters ran arguments about the topic.

Another task as a judge is to take the online post-tournament survey.

During the debate, a judge should keep track of the arguments being made. Organized notes of the important points you thought were raised during the round will help you complete you ballot and may help you make a decision about who was better at debating.

Students are allowed and encouraged to time themselves, but you may also choose to time various parts of the debate, particularly the Question Segments and each student’s preparation time.

Prior to hearing these debates, I side with the (Aff/Neg).

Make sure to recognize your personal bias and remove it from the evaluation of the round.