**Brief Comments**

1. Many of your briefs lacked focus. You need to make one or two points and then back them up with data using figures, tables, appendices.

2. Stay on subject. Some of you strayed from your topic, or worse, it was not clear from reading your brief what the topic was!

3. **Make a policy recommendation and/or state a conclusion, and back it up with well-supported reasons/data.** You might try writing down your recommendation/conclusion first, and then think about what you need to say in your brief to back it up.

4. You need to cite ideas and data that are not your own. A reference list at the end of your brief is **not** sufficient. See my example I handed out in class.

5. Avoid introductory sentences that use sweeping generalizations. e.g. "The control of nuclear weapons is an important international issue." This adds nothing to your argument.

6. Avoid passive voice when you write.

7. Avoid contractions.

**Brief Comments II**

8. **More Analysis.** Don't just copy and paste ideas from the web into your brief. You need to take what you read from a number of different sources and synthesize your position. Think about how you are going to construct your argument using the information you have. Also, be sure to present a balanced argument. It's fine to have a position, but if you ignore arguments from the other side, you will sound uninformed, and will be ignored!

9. **Be your toughest critic!** Read and re-read your briefs, and **edit** your work carefully. Learn to **craft** your sentences, rather than just pound them out. **Spelling and grammatical errors stick out like sore thumbs in short pieces like these.**
10. **Avoid empty filler statements** like these:

"There has been a lot of research on the problem of radioactive waste disposal."
"There are various methods for generating electricity."
"Many technical questions remain, but there are lots of smart people working on it."

These types of sentences add absolutely nothing to your argument. They might help you get started on a new concept, but then go back and delete them! Here are some better sentences:

The DOE and USGS have spent $4.5 billion over the past fifteen years on research and development toward the completion of a permanent high-level radioactive waste disposal site.

In 1999, nuclear power plants provided 20% of the United States electricity needs.

11. **Avoid inflammatory language and exaggerated claims** like "dumping ground", "world's largest toxic waste dump", or "oil drilling causes total destruction of the environment." You will be quickly dismissed as naïve and people will stop reading.

12. Get rid of "either". Typically don't need to use this word.

Bad: The United States can choose to either be a good neighbor and give popcorn to Canada, or turn its back on Ottawa and make them pay for it.

Better: The United States can choose to be a good neighbor and give popcorn to Canada, or turn its back on Ottawa and make them pay for it.

**Editorial Marks**

13. AWK = awkward sentence or sentences. Need to rewrite.


15. Refs = references. You need to cite something here.

16. ˇ = insert here