

Round Breakdown

Guide for Penn for Youth Debate Lesson Plan 5

The lessons thus far have focused primarily on the case, which is the first speech of the round for both teams. However, it is important to be prepared for the remainder of the round as well.

This lesson plan will focus on:

- Flowing
- Crossfire
- Speech breakdowns

Flowing

Flowing is what debaters call note-taking. Each debater has their own unique way of flowing. One common way of flowing involves having one piece of paper for each side, so one “flow” for the Pro side and one “flow” for the Con side. This way, debaters can keep track of both teams’ cases and the different attacks on each case. On their flows, debaters should be sure to write down definitions, framework, contentions, and evidence.

Each speech is usually given its own column on the paper, moving left to right. This makes it easy to see what responses have been said to different arguments. Usually, debaters will write their opponents’ cases and their own on the left side of their flows, in a 1-2 inch column.

There are example flows that are provided with this lesson plan that might be helpful to show students. A flow outline is also provided for novice debaters to use if they feel it would be helpful.

Crossfire

The three-minute crossfire times are the only times when the debaters will directly interact with each other. Usually, the first speaking team gets the first question during each crossfire period. This can usually go unsaid, but debaters also often confirm by asking before the time begins.

During crossfire, the debaters from each team will take turns asking questions. If debaters want to ask an additional question right after they just asked one, they can ask for a follow-up question. The first and second crossfires should only have two debaters asking questions, one from each team. Grand crossfire is a free-for-all, where all four debaters get to ask and answer questions.

Crossfire can serve several different purposes, where debaters can ask questions for clarification or for pointing out weaknesses in their opponents' arguments. Unlike the cross-examination questioning periods that other debates have, crossfire usually allows debaters to only get to ask one or two questions before their opponent gets a turn.

Crossfire can sometimes get very heated. Debaters should refrain from being excessively aggressive or rude, as this behavior doesn't achieve anything and may result in them losing speaker points.

Speech breakdowns

Constructive speeches: see Lesson Plan 2.

Rebuttal:

The rebuttal speech is the first opportunity each team will have to attack their opponents' case. During this four minute speech, the second speaker will need to be efficient and effective.'

The second speaker should go "down the flow," which means they attack their opponents' case point-by-point. They should also do what is called "signposting," where they explicitly tell the judge what part of their opponents' case they are attacking. They should specifically say which contention or subpoint they are attacking before they begin to address it. Debaters should use both logic and evidence to take apart the opposing team's case. Debaters should also be thorough in their case refutation - anything that is not addressed counts as being "dropped," in which case the team who "dropped" that argument is no longer able to argue against it in future speeches and must accept it as true.

The second speaking team should also use some of their rebuttal speech time to defend their own case from the attacks the other team made during their rebuttal.

Summary:

Summary speech is where the first speaker from each team will use their 2-minute speech to summarize what has happened in the round. They should crystallize the round, combining all the different arguments from the round so far into 2-3 key issues. The summary speech is different from the rebuttal speech in that it shouldn't be a detailed attack of every one of their opponents' arguments. Instead, it should start to narrow the round down to the most important points that the debaters feel they should win.

When debaters are picking key issues, they can choose to focus on common arguments, issues they felt they've done well on, or the arguments their opponents dropped earlier. It takes time and practice to get used to knowing how to pick key issues. Oftentimes, there will be very common arguments for each resolution that will end up being important in almost every round. When this happens, the debaters will gradually get familiar with recognizing these are key issues and how to address them. Doing practice rounds will help them get used to this.

With these 2-3 key issues, the debaters should explain why they are winning them and begin to weigh their impacts. They need to explain to the judge why whatever they're arguing for matters. There are five ways to weigh their impacts:

1. Magnitude - the size of an impact
2. Scope - the extent of an impact
3. Time frame - when the impact is expected to occur
4. Probability - how likely the impact is to occur
5. Framework - whether the impact fits under the framework of the round

Being able to weigh the impacts of different arguments will be a skill that debaters will get better at with time.

Summary speech is hard to explain, and even harder to do well. Watching example rounds can be helpful but doing practice rounds is the best way to get better at giving summary speeches.

Final focus:

Final focus is the last speech of the round, and it's important because it's the last chance the debaters have to convince the judge that they deserve to win. During the final focus speech, debaters should give the judge their "voting issues," or the arguments that they think they've won and are why they should win the whole round.

Debaters should have 2-3 voting issues. The voting issues may or may not be different from the first speaker's "key issues" from their summary speech, depending on what else has come up in their opponents' summary or final focus speeches. However, there should be no new arguments during the final focus speech. Everything that is said in this final speech should have been brought up in the round before and should be extended from what was said in previous speeches.

Final focus should focus heavily on the impacts of the round's most important arguments. It's useless to spend a significant amount of the two minutes the debaters are allotted on going back through contentions or specific nitty-gritty details that aren't that important. The debaters should be convincing the judge that after weighing the impacts of both sides, their team deserves to win.