



8.4 Cross-Ex Preparation

This activity builds advanced skills in cross-examination. Students will collaboratively generate a list of strategic cross-examination questions in response to a particular affirmative case in order to set up a negative strategy. This activity will also encourage students to think critically about affirmative cases they might encounter in debates and develop negative strategies.

Time Allotment

One class period

Objectives

By the end of this activity, students will:

- practice using cross-examination questions to forward an argument strategy.
- practice critically analyzing evidence and arguments.

Method

Begin this activity by having one student read the 1AC to an affirmative case that the students are likely to encounter in a competitive debate round. Each member of the class should flow the case. You may use an abbreviated version of the case. As a class, select a particular a 1NC strategy against this case. You can focus on one element of the case to attack (like solvency) or choose a short list of arguments that could be presented in a 1NC (for example, a strategy consisting of a disadvantage, topicality, and a counterplan).

Divide the class into small groups of 5-6. Instruct each group to generate a list of questions designed to “set up” the negative strategy. Give the groups 7-8 minutes to generate this list, and to discuss the intent of each question and how they think the affirmative might respond.

Each member of each group should present one question from the list and explain the intent of the question to the class. You or a student volunteer should write the questions on the board. As a class, go through the questions on the board, and select the questions that are most effective in advancing the negative strategy.

Students should keep their notes from this exercise for future reference, in case they ever oppose this case in a round. If there are students that run the case you discussed, then they should independently use the list of questions to prepare for cross-examination.

Follow-up or Variation:

After completing the activity above, choose a disadvantage and/or counter plan from the negative strategy and ask a student to read the argument aloud for the class, linking it to the affirmative case that was originally presented. Do the activity again, only this time students will generate questions to ask the negative speaker about the negative argument. If you use multiple arguments (i.e. a disadvantage and a counterplan, or solvency attacks and a counterplan) you can use this as an opportunity to help students learn to think critically about the interaction between negative arguments. For example, they can practice grilling a negative speaker about contradictions between a solvency attack and a counterplan, or on a disadvantage that links to both the affirmative case and the counterplan.