



1.5 Demonstration Debate

This activity introduces competitive policy debate to students through demonstration. Students watch more experienced debaters or a videotape of a debate. To facilitate active observation, ask students to take notes (free-form or flowing format) and follow-up with discussion.

Objectives

By the end of this activity, each student will:

- be familiarized with the structure of a competitive debate round.
- begin to critically interact with the debate.

Time Allotment

One class period. It can take longer, depending on format.

Materials and Preparation

Invite four varsity debaters from your school to stage a demonstration debate for your novice debaters. The demonstration debaters should discuss with you their argument strategy in advance. You should encourage them to speak slowly and clearly and to emphasize good argument organization and structure. You may ask the demonstration debaters to shorten their speeches to fit the debate within one class period.

Alternatively, you may choose to use a videotape of a debate for your demonstration. Videotapes may be less engaging for student observers and most videotaped debates will be longer than your class period. Videotapes have several advantages. You can find videotapes from championship rounds that demonstrate a very high caliber of debate. Videotapes can be paused and re-wound to facilitate discussion, and you can prepare a complete and accurate flow of the debate in advance for use in evaluating student flowsheets.

Method

Begin by making sure that students have a basic understanding of the resolution and affirmative and negative positions they are about to observe. You may instruct student to focus on particular debate techniques, like line-by-line refutation or time allocation.

During the demonstration debate, there are several tasks you can assign to students to keep them actively listening and evaluating the debate:

Flowing. Each student should flow the debate. You may also wish to flow the debate on the board to model proper flowing technique. Before the debate begins, make sure that every student has enough sheets of paper to flow each contention of the case and each off-case negative argument on a different sheet of paper. You may also wish to collect student flows at the end of the activity to evaluate and offer feedback on their flowing technique, or ask students to trade flows and work with their partners to fill in arguments that they missed.

Cross-examination from the floor. Extend the cross examination period to allow for members of the class to cross examine the speakers.



You can also make use of several follow-up activities to improve flowing:

- Work with a partner to fill in any arguments that they missed.
- Hand out copies of a flow you completed of a single issue in the debate (like a disadvantage) and ask students to compare their flow to yours. Ask students to evaluate their own flow against yours, and write 4-5 things they will focus on the next time they flow a debate. For example, a students could focus on using more abbreviations, recording more of the author's names, or organizing the arguments on the page more neatly and clearly.
- Ask students to identify particular types of arguments, like a solvency turn or a non-uniqueness argument, and write 3-4 sentences about the importance of this argument to the debate round. You can also ask students to identify examples of good debate technique; for example, you might ask students to find an example of good clash and circle it in red. Students should write 3-4 sentences explaining the clash that happened and why the circled example was good.