



## 4.2 Flowing the News

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*This activity introduces basic listening and note-taking skills. Students practice flowing while they listen to reports on current events. For optimal success, students should have enough familiarity with the process of flowing to create a flow independently. This activity is best completed as a homework assignment.*

### **Time Allotment**

Students should complete this assignment at home. Depending on the motivation of the student, it might make sense to flow the news for a full half an hour a night. In a classroom setting, having students flow the news for 15-30 minutes one evening and then turn in their flows might make the most sense.

### **Objectives**

By the end of this activity, students will:

- practice identifying and recording critical information from an oral presentation in a systematic way.
- gain better flowing skills.
- practice critically analyzing current events as they are presented in the media.

### **Materials and Preparation**

- A segment of a television or radio news program.
- Students should have received an introductory lesson on flowing in preparation for this activity.

### **Method**

Ask students to take notes on the news program in the same format as they would flow speeches in a debate. Students should number each story, and include on their flow:

- A short header for each story (like a tag in a debate)
- A few key facts and people referenced in the story (like flowing the content of cards)

Students should turn in their flowsheets to you along with the station, time, and date of the news program.

**Variation:** You can also do this as an in-class exercise. Videotape a segment (10-15 minutes) from the evening news and play the videotape in class the next day. You can also use an audiotape of a radio news show. Shows with controversy and multiple sides of a position (like Crossfire) sometimes also work well. Students should flow as described above. This could be used as a warm-up activity at the beginning of class.

**Extension:** Before they turn in their flowsheets, ask a few students to give short (1-2 minute) speeches to present their opinion on one of the news stories they recorded on their flow.

This activity can be used for extra-credit in a debate course. Assign students to watch 30 minutes of news. Have them turn in a flow, and emphasize the importance of current events to successful policy debating.

Finally, this activity can also be used as an evaluative tool with your debaters. You can look at their flow of the news and talk with them about issues like shorthand, spacing, numbering, etc.