



2.4 Issue Briefing

This activity introduces affirmative and negative positions on the current debate topic. By asking each student to present a 2-4 minute "briefing" on a particular position, you can familiarize the class with many different positions. Students conduct basic research on a given topic, present both sides of the issue, and then present their own informed conclusions about it. This activity gives students the opportunity to practice public speaking and to teach their peers about a topic they have become an "expert" about.

Objectives

By the end of this activity, each student will:

- have researched one issue relating to the current resolution in-depth and have learned about many others from listening to presentations by their classmates.
- have practiced debate library and electronic research methods.
- have delivered one prepared, oral presentation.

Time Allotment

Take-home assignment. Depending on the amount of research you wish students to complete, you may give them 4-10 days to research their topic. You may wish to allow some in-class time for research and preparation, especially if this is your class's first researched speaking assignment. Allow 2-3 full class periods for in-class presentations. You may also choose to ask 2-3 students to speak each day for several days.

Materials and Preparation

You may wish to provide students with a list of potentially useful sources (newspapers, scholarly journals, magazines, and electronic resources) to search.

If necessary, introduce students to basic electronic and library research before assigning this activity.

Method

Brainstorm as a class a list of cases, disadvantages, counterplans, etc. that you expect to encounter on the current debate resolution. If you already have such a list, you can instead briefly go over the list to familiarize students with each position.

Each student should prepare a short (3-4 minute) oral presentation, an "issue briefing" on a topic related to the current debate resolution. Assign, or allow students to choose, a single affirmative case or negative position to research and present to the class.

Student issue briefings should seek to introduce the class to the debates surrounding a particular issue. For example, if a student is presenting on a possible affirmative case, the student should describe the case, explain some major reasons why advocates support the policy, explain the reasons why detractors oppose the policy. Students should conclude their presentation by drawing their own conclusions about the plan.

Student issue briefings should draw primarily on recent evidence in order to familiarize students with the types



of sources they will use in competitive debate. Students may use newspaper sources, periodicals, journals, credible internet sources, and other electronic media accessible at your school.

For some debate resolutions, it may be appropriate and useful to assign one or two students to deliver historically oriented presentation to give the class background on the issue at hand. For example, for a resolution on US foreign policy toward Russia, a student presentation on the collapse of the Soviet Union would be useful to classmates as they research the resolution.

Each student should deliver their prepared presentation, and every member of the class should take notes on the main ideas of each speech. Encourage the students to take notes on all of the presentations in the same notebook so that they can refer to their notes throughout the course. At the conclusion of each presentation, you may choose to allow a few minutes for the class to question the speaker.

Follow-up:

You may ask each presenter to turn in an outline and bibliography from her presentation at the conclusion of the activity. Keep the outlines on file for members of the class to reference during future research assignments.

Variations:

If there are varsity debaters on your squad who have written files on particular issues at institute or on their own, you can give novice debaters copies of files to read and ask them to synthesize the information into a presentation for the class. This does not encourage original research, but it does help novice debaters learn about particular arguments and familiarize themselves with useful evidence files.

If you want this activity to help students to feel more engaged by the current resolution and find in it areas of personal interest, offer them significant flexibility in selecting a topic. You might encourage students to approach the topic creatively, using literature or other types of sources in their presentation.