



4.9 Personal Shorthand

This activity develops efficient note-taking skills. Abbreviations and symbols are an essential element to efficient flowing. This activity is designed to help students develop individualized systems of note-taking. It is also a good way to engage the class during an in-class debate.

Time Allotment

15-30 minutes, depending on the length of the debate that students flow.

Objectives

By the end of this activity, students will:

- develop a set of personalized symbols that will make flowing more efficient.

Materials and Preparation

A list of suggested abbreviations for flowing (optional). Lists of flowing symbols are available in several handbooks and textbooks. Adjust previous resolutions' symbol lists for this year's resolution.

Method

For this activity, the class will need a speech or debate to flow. The topic of the speech should be related to the current debate resolution so students can learn to abbreviate topic-specific words. This activity can be done in conjunction with an in-class mini-debate or as students flow a practice debate held by varsity debaters. If you want the activity to take less time and to lead into class discussion about the use of symbols in flowing, you can simply ask a student to read a 1AC, a disadvantage shell, or series of cards.

Students could also complete this activity working in pairs. You could assign students to have one on one mini-debates about a particular topic (for instance, a solvency debate for an affirmative case, a disadvantage, etc.). In this scenario, have the first student deliver a speech for a specified amount of time while the other student flows. Then have the second student respond directly to the first student's speech. If one student read a disadvantage shell, the other should give analytical arguments against the disadvantage. Time constraints and student skill level will determine how many speeches it makes sense for students to complete.

After the speech or debate is over, students should make a list of all the abbreviations that they used intuitively in their flow. Then students should read through their flow a second time and find words that could have abbreviated to make their flow more efficient. If there is time, have a whole class brainstorm about abbreviations. Ask students to list the abbreviations they use while you write them on the board.

From lists generated up to this point, students should create a key (a guide) for their personal shorthand. Each student should list all the words they will abbreviate in her flows along with the abbreviation or symbol she will use to represent each word.

Variation: You may wish to provide students with a list of abbreviations used in flowing to guide their personal list. However, it is important that students understand their abbreviations. Shorthand is a question of what makes sense to an individual student, not a question of memorizing a prefabricated list of abbreviations.