

4.4 The Grid Drill

This activity introduces structured note-taking skills. The grid sheet will help students visualize the way they should organize arguments on the page when flowing a debate. This activity also emphasizes direct, line-by-line refutation.

Time Allotment

15-25 minutes

Objectives

By the end of this activity, students will:

- be introduced to recording ideas to be presented in a speech in a systematic, usable way.
- be introduced to the importance of line-by-line refutation in a debate.

Materials and Preparation

One grid sheet for each student. The grid should be as large as a normal sheet of paper and have 3 rows and 4 columns. See the example on the right.

A list of possible debate topics that students can discuss off the top of their heads in a mini-debate without evidence. The topics can be related to the current debate resolution, or simply topics of interest to the class. You may want to prepare an overhead transparency with a mini-debate flowed in a grid sheet. You can introduce the activity by showing the students a properly completed grid sheet. Make sure that your grid sheet uses numbers.

A Sample Flow Grid

Method

Students should work in pairs for this activity. Assign each pair a topic for their mini-debate. The pairs of students should sit facing one another. Each student should have a grid sheet. Throughout the activity each student will give two speeches and their partner will flow these speeches.

The first student in each pair should come up with three simple arguments in favor of their assigned topic. The first student should then deliver a first affirmative speech while the second student flows. At the end of this speech, both partners should have three arguments written in the left column, with one argument in each box.

The second student should be giving a minute of preparation time to develop one direct response to each one of his partner's arguments. The second speaker, using signposts and numbering, should give a first negative speech, respond to each affirmative argument with one answer. The first student should flow this speech. At the end of the speech, both partners have the negative responses written in the second column on the grid, with each response in the box immediately to the right of the original argument it counters.



The last two speeches should proceed in similar fashion. The first student should take a minute or two of preparation time. In the second affirmative speech, the first student should rebuild her original arguments, one by one, in light of the second student's responses. The second student should flow this affirmative speech. At the end of the speech, both partners should have a solid flow of the affirmative responses in the 3rd column. Finally, the second student should take some preparation time and then give a speech that rebuilds her original arguments, one by one. Both partners should write these responses in the 4th and final column.

At the end of the activity, both students in each pair should have a 4-speech debate completely written out on the grid sheet. At this point, you can either have all students turn in their completed grid / flow sheet or make time for a couple pairs of volunteers to present their debates to the class.

Wrap-up:

Be sure that students understand that this is how they should flow, even when there are no boxes on the flow sheet. Each argument should be individually listed on the page and the responses to each argument should be recorded next to the original argument.

Variation:

You can do this exercise with a specific aspect of the resolution, such as a disadvantage or the solvency of an affirmative case. Students can use both evidence and analysis to deliver mini-constructives and mini-rebuttals. You can also adjust the number of rows on the grid to change the number of arguments per speech.

Once the students understand the concept of a grid sheet, you may want to have several model grid sheets made into overheads. You could have model sheets that exemplify typical flowing mistakes. For instance, use model grid sheets to explain dropped arguments and pulling across arguments that go unanswered. Or, use grid sheets to demonstrate grouping arguments and cross-applications. The grid sheet can be an important tool to teach the significance of line-by-line debating.