

## Debate: Refutation, Rebuttal, and Summary

When the public envisions a high school debate, they imagine students arguing against the claims made by their opponents. This clash is what separates debate from dueling oratories, where students speak on opposite sides of an issue but do not engage one another at all. In both Congressional and Public Forum debate, competitors are expected to engage with their opponents' arguments, responding to them as need be. This chapter describes the appropriate response mechanisms that competitors should use in debate rounds.

### **Flowing**

Clash begins with the flow. The flow is the totality of notes that a competitor has taken in a given debate round. Without the flow, debaters would be unable to locate or remember the arguments made by their opponents or even those made by their teammates. Consequently, individual flows must remain organized and understandable, otherwise, a debater may respond to an argument that was not

made or he may forget to respond to one that was made. Neither of these options makes for particularly compelling debate.

Congressional and Public Forum debates have very different flows as the structures of these two events are extremely dissimilar. Congressional Debate involves dozens of speakers and a wide range of arguments, while Public Forum only involves four speakers and the range of arguments tends to be narrower. This creates different requirements for the flow in each event. Three elements of flowing remain consistent regardless of the event:

1. **The content that must be flowed.** Many debaters choose to flow only their opponents' claims. This is easy to do; a claim is typically an overarching description of the argument being made, so taking this down seems natural. That said, flowing only the claim is not enough because the claim will not capture the nuance of the argument. For example, if the claim is that a resolution will decrease unemployment, there could be dozens of reasons why that is true. Responding to a claim would be difficult if a debater does not understand the reason why his opponent is making it. Hence, the most important part of the argument to record is the warrant. Flowing the warrant ensures that a debater understands the explicit nuances and caveats of the argument being made. While many similar arguments may be made, flowing the particular iteration of the argument that is being made in the current debate round is important. Such flowing enables competitors to respond to that argument most effectively.
2. **Use of different colored pens.** One color should be used to designate affirmative arguments, while another

should be used to indicate negative arguments. This helps debaters understand what is going on in a debate and allows them to most effectively recall what arguments have and have not already been responded to in the round. If the same color pen were used for each side, differentiating between arguments made by each side would be extremely difficult and confuse the debater about what needs to be done in the next speech.

3. **Use of a shorthand.** Especially in Public Forum Debates, which are often fast-paced, writing down every word an opponent says is impossible. Consequently, debaters use shorthand. No one system is ideal; each debater needs to develop a shorthand with which she is comfortable. That said, debaters can take some steps to develop a system. First, be sure to use acronyms and abbreviations. Consider a bill or resolution on micro-lending. The term “micro-lending” will be used repeatedly, and so writing out the full word each time makes no sense. It takes time that competitors don’t have as they need to be paying attention to the speaker and writing down other parts of his argument. Essentially, debaters can’t focus on the arguments being made if they take a lot of time to write out one word. In this case, a debater could shorten micro-lending to “ML.” Symbols can also be used. If a debater makes an argument about money, she can use a dollar sign (\$) to signify money instead of writing out the full word.

Following the three basic elements outlined above will help competitors in any debate event ensure that their flow is as complete and clear as possible.

## Flowing in Congressional Debate

Debaters and coaches have developed many systems over the years to flow a Congressional Debate round. Competitors can flow the round on either one page or two pages and either vertically (up and down their legal pad) or horizontally (from side to side on their legal pad). Despite the lack of one overarching flowing mechanism, every Congressional Debate flow must have the following elements (in addition to the three listed above):

- **Every flow must have the name of the debater making the argument and whether that debater is an affirmative or negative speaker.** Debaters can organize their flow by the argument or by the speaker; either method is acceptable. If they choose to section off their flow by argument, they must add the name of each debater who makes that argument to that section of the flow. For example, if a section of a flow of the negative side reads “Bill increases unemployment,” and this argument was initially made by Senator Smith, then the flow would read, “Smith—bill increases unemployment.” If another debater then makes the same argument, her name would be added (Jones, Smith—bill increases unemployment). Debaters should be sure to leave room on their flow to add the names of additional speakers who make the same argument. Alternatively, if a debater is flowing by speaker (if the flow for a speaker looks something like, “Smith—increases unemployment, contributes to debt, leads to health care system failure”), then he must be aware of the fact that many speakers may make the same argument. In this type of flow, a student writes down the name of each speaker and then lists the argument made by that speaker. This

makes it easy to determine what a particular competitor argued in his speech. It differs from organizing by the argument, where the overarching organizational factor is the particular claim made by the competitor. If you flow by the speaker, then you might flow the exact same argument multiple times, as many speakers may make the same argument. Taking note of the fact that multiple debaters have made the same argument allows competitors to form more complete refutations, as they will be able to cite the names of multiple students in doing so. This demonstrates awareness of the chamber to the judge.

- **A Congressional Debate flow must be directional.** A competitor must flow either horizontally on the legal pad or vertically. The arguments should not be flowed in random places, and they must be flowed in the order that they were delivered. Thus, debaters flowing from left to right must have the arguments or members who spoke most recently on the right/bottom of their pad, with those who spoke first on the left/top. This ensures that the debater is aware of the arguments that are most relevant at the time she chooses to speak.

The flow should indicate the direction in which the debate is going. If the flow is not sequential based on time, it does not indicate the arguments that have become central to the debate, and the competitor risks giving a tangential or irrelevant speech. Additionally, locating what arguments each side has made may be difficult if the notes are positioned randomly on the pad; hence, organized flows are key to a truly responsive speech.

- **A Congressional Debate flow must contain room for the competitor to write a response.** Leaving room helps the competitor as he gives his speech. If a speaker has taken notes on one part of the pad but has written his responses to those notes on another part or on a separate sheet, he could become confused while speaking. He may not be able to locate his responses, resulting in an awkward moment as he tries to find his place. Additionally, if he cannot locate the response in time, he inevitably will be less responsive than he had hoped. Leaving room to respond to opposing arguments next to the place you flowed them is therefore key to an effective speech.
- **The flow of a debate should be kept close to the constructive arguments the competitor has prepared.** It is distracting to the audience for a speaker to be flipping through pages when she is speaking; also, flipping often takes time away from the speech or causes the speaker to lose her place. All information required for the speech, including the flow, should be on one sheet of paper, or, if two sheets are required, the two sheets should be next to each other. The goal is to minimize confusion and time lost to flipping between papers.

Again, multiple formats are available for flowing Congressional Debate that incorporate the various elements listed above; the two formats the authors recommend are described below.

## **FLOWING A CONGRESSIONAL DEBATE WITH TWO SHEETS**

One effective flowing mechanism requires two sheets of paper and flows by argument. The first paper is used to deliver an affirmative speech, the second to deliver a negative speech. The top one-third to one-half of each sheet is used to write down constructive arguments. The remainder of the paper is used for the flow and is divided into three columns: speaker name, argument, and response. Affirmative speakers are flowed on the sheet where the competitor has written down negative constructive arguments; negative speakers are flowed on the sheet where the competitor has written down affirmative constructive arguments (see table below). This allows competitors to have a clear idea of opposing arguments on the same sheet of paper that they are using to deliver their speech.

This flowing mechanism requires the competitor to flow vertically, by argument. Each argument a different speaker makes is listed in the “argument” column of the flow. The name of the opposing speaker is listed in the “speaker name” area of the flow; as more speakers continue to make the same argument, their names get added to the speaker name section next to that argument. In the response column, the competitor writes her response to the argument. This system allows the debater easy access to the arguments made in the round, along with the names of all opposing speakers who have made those arguments—all on the same sheet of paper as his constructive speech. Here is an example of such a flow.

### Negative Flow for a Bill to Legalize Marijuana

Affirmative Arguments	Speaker Name	Response
Decriminalizing marijuana would lessen the burden on the prison system	Smith, Johnson, Berkman	It would increase the burden on the health care system, which is worse
Legal marijuana could generate tax revenue	Johnson, Hannan	People could still buy marijuana informally and so avoid paying taxes
Legal marijuana could be regulated and made safer	Berkman	The FDA is already overworked

#### FLOWING CONGRESSIONAL DEBATE BY SPEECH

Another method organizes the flow by speech. Using this method, debaters record each speech as it is delivered, moving from left to right across the legal pad in a checkerboard pattern. Let's examine the sample flow below. The first affirmative speech (Smith) is recorded in the top-left corner of the page; the first negative speech (Berkman) is recorded to the right and below the first affirmative speech; the second affirmative (Miller) to the right and above the first negative, and so forth. Each speaker's name is recorded as the first item for each speech and then the arguments below. The resulting checkerboard pattern leaves ample

room for a debater to record her own arguments and responses; it also allows the debater to draw connections between ideas (by literally drawing connecting lines) and track the progress of the debate. This style of flowing can be somewhat more complicated than the first but allows for greater sophistication in terms of connecting and contrasting arguments. Here is an example of such a flow, with the debater's own thoughts and arguments in bold.

### Flowing by Speech

<p>Smith (AFF)</p> <p>1—Legal marijuana would decrease crime</p> <p>2—Legal marijuana would generate tax revenue</p> <p>3—Legal marijuana would lessen prison crowding</p>	<p>←————→</p> <p><b>Both Smith and Miller focus on crime, and neither neg has answered this</b></p>	<p>Miller (AFF)</p> <p>1—Legal marijuana would decrease crime</p> <p>2—Legal marijuana would undermine cartels</p> <p>Berkman wrong about gateway drug, it's not causation</p>	<p>←— <b>How does this affect American citizens?</b></p>
<p><b>So does alcohol</b> —————→</p>	<p>Berkman (NEG)</p> <p>1—Marijuana causes accidents</p> <p>2—Marijuana could serve as a gateway drug</p> <p>3—Smith ignores the black market's effects on taxes</p>	<p><b>The slippery slope wouldn't happen; alcohol is already legal</b></p> <p>—————→</p>	<p>Johnson (NEG)</p> <p>1—Legal marijuana would send the wrong message</p> <p>2—Legalizing marijuana a slippery slope to legalizing other drugs</p>

Note that, in this example, the debater who is keeping the flow may use it to develop either an affirmative or a negative speech; she is recording her thoughts and arguments for both sides of the debate.

Again, the exact method of flowing is not important, as long as it includes the names of speakers, captures the directional nature of the debate, allows the student room to write her own responses, and keeps all potential arguments to be made in a speech close at hand.

### **Flowing in Public Forum Debate**

Unlike Congressional Debate, Public Forum Debate has a much clearer consensus about the ideal form of flowing. It requires two sheets of paper, one for the affirmative flow and one for the negative. The affirmative flow should contain the affirmative case, and all subsequent responses made on the affirmative case. The negative flow should contain the negative case and all related responses. Both flows should always be vertical, starting at the top of a page and moving to the bottom (to allow maximum space to capture all arguments). Each flow should have the case aligned on the left side of the page, with room for multiple columns to the right of the case (ideally the debater's writing should be small enough to accommodate seven columns of notes).

Both sheets should have a column for each speech in the round. For example, an affirmative team that is speaking second would have an affirmative flow with seven columns, from left to right: the affirmative case, the negative rebuttal, the affirmative rebuttal, the negative summary, the affirmative summary, the negative

final focus, and the affirmative final focus. An affirmative team that speaks first would have fewer columns because the negative constructive and the first affirmative rebuttal would not be flowed on the affirmative side, since they would not contain responses to the affirmative case. Hence, an affirmative team that speaks first would have six columns, from left to right: the affirmative case, the negative rebuttal, the affirmative summary, the negative summary, the affirmative final focus, and the negative final focus. Because a Public Forum flow requires six or seven columns, each of the columns should be narrow; usually, each column is not wider than 1 or 1.5 inches.

Arguments should be flowed next to the argument to which they are responding. For example, if an affirmative team is arguing that the resolution would decrease unemployment, and the negative team responds with a statistic indicating unemployment would actually increase, then that argument should be flowed on the affirmative flow in the column directly to the right of the affirmative case on the same vertical level.

Responses are flowed next to the original argument that was made—not in the order that they were delivered in the rebuttal. If the first argument made in the negative rebuttal addresses an argument that is two-thirds of the way down the affirmative flow, then that response is flowed in the next column over, two-thirds of the way down the page, even though it was the first argument made in the rebuttal. This process continues throughout the debate, with responses to responses being flowed on the same vertical level as the original constructive argument. Here is a portion of a flow that shows the debate that occurs about the first argument in an affirmative constructive.

## Flowing an Argument in an Affirmative Constructive

Pro Case	Con Rebuttal	Pro Rebuttal	Con Summary	Pro Summary
<p>1. Legalizing marijuana would decrease burden on prison system</p> <p>a. Prisons are overcrowded</p> <p>NYTimes, 5/09 Prisons at 120% capacity</p> <p>b. Drug crimes responsible for this</p> <p>Economist, 12/11 80% of felons in prison for drugs</p> <p>c. Legal marijuana would free up space for violent felons</p> <p>Some felons are released early b/c no space</p> <p>d. Impact is less crime b/c fewer violent criminals released</p>	<p><i>So would legalizing murder, but we don't do that</i></p> <p><i>Only applies to public prisons</i></p> <p><i>But some commit other crimes, too</i></p> <p><i>No evidence for this, how many are released?</i></p>	<p>Not the same thing; marijuana isn't violent crime</p> <p>Still serious problem</p>	<p>↑</p> <p><i>How serious? Private prisons actually more common</i></p> <p><i>They ignore this; it means that legalizing marijuana wouldn't really create much space in prisons b/c the criminals are there for other reasons</i></p> <p>↑</p> <p><i>Reducing crime would be good, but the pro team doesn't do it</i></p>	<p>They acknowledge that marijuana is a nonviolent offense</p> <p>They don't provide evidence for this</p> <p>If we prove that even one violent criminal is released early b/c of overcrowding, that means marijuana should be legalized to help our prison system do its job</p>

This system of flowing ensures that debaters are able to follow the flow of the round and easily recognize when arguments have or have not been responded to.

### **Responding: Refutation and Rebuttal**

Flowing is an essential skill for the successful debater but ultimately is only a means to an end: generating clash by responding to one's opponent. Responding to arguments is the core element of debate and is broadly divided into two categories: refutation and rebuttal. *Refutation* is the process of answering an opponent's argument. *Rebuttal* is the process of defending one's arguments against an opponent's attacks. Debaters will find themselves doing both refutation and rebuttal in every debate round, and the line between the two will often blur. Additionally, both refutation and rebuttal share the same basic goal: to respond to arguments.

Responsive debaters do four things:

1. Locate the argument they wish to answer.
2. Summarize the argument to which they are responding
3. Respond to the argument.
4. Explain the impact.

### **Locating the Argument**

This does not simply mean that a debater must find the argument for himself; the debater must locate the argument on the flow for his judge. In Public Forum, the debater will typically signpost, or refer to the portion of the case in which the argument is found. For example, a

debater may say, “Look at our opponent’s third contention.” This enables the judge to go to that place on his flow, locate the argument, and flow the debater’s response. Without such clear signposting, judges will inevitably be confused about what the speaker is responding to. Clarity about location is key to the judge’s understanding of an argument and to the debaters crafting a clear round.

In Congressional Debate, locating an argument means knowing which speakers have made or responded to a particular argument. If three debaters have made an argument that the bill will increase unemployment, then a speaker wishing to refute them should know and mention the names of each of those debaters. This demonstrates awareness to the judge, who is now more likely to reward the speaker for being engaged in the debate.

### **Summarizing the Argument**

Simply saying “Go to my opponent’s third contention. They are wrong because . . . ” is not enough. A debater must tell the judge what argument he is answering so that the judge understands the argument that the debater is making in response. This summary should be no longer than 5–10 seconds and should include the claim and a brief description of the warrant of the argument being answered. This makes the premise the debater is challenging extremely clear to the judge.

### **Responding to the Argument**

A response can challenge any part of the argument: the claim, the warrant, or the impact. Claim- and impact-level challenges typically do not respond to the reasoning provided by the opposing side; rather, they provide alternate reasons why the claim is ultimately untrue or why the

argument is less important than the opposing side wants the judge to believe. For example: “My opponent argues that this resolution will increase unemployment by stifling private sector growth. This is not true because the resolution will increase public spending on infrastructure, thus creating more jobs.” This statement does not challenge the explicit reasoning behind the opposing argument: the bill will stifle private sector growth. Rather, it challenges the claim that unemployment will go up by providing an alternate means of increasing jobs.

An impact-level challenge also does not address the explicit reasoning behind an argument; rather, it explains why the argument is fundamentally less important than the opposing side wants the judge to believe. For example: “My opponent says millions of jobs would be lost because private sector expansion will be stifled. These lost jobs, though unfortunate, are a necessary step to restructuring our economy for the twenty-first century.” Again, the debater is not disputing the claim that jobs will be lost; he simply claims that the impact is a necessary evil.

Thus, claim- and impact-level responses do not disprove the argument being answered; they merely provide alternative reasons to disregard the argument or reasons that carry greater weight than the original argument. While claim and impact challenges are perfectly acceptable, challenges to warrants are usually the most compelling form of refutation. Challenges to warrants explain why an opponent’s explicit reasoning is incorrect; challenges to data demonstrate that the opposing debater is simply making assertions unsupported by fact. For example: “My opponent argues that the resolution would increase unemployment by stifling private sector growth. This is

not true because the resolution actually increases private sector expansion by funneling money through the federal government into the hands of private contractors.” This directly challenges the opponent’s warrant by explaining why the opposite effect will take place. These arguments are typically the most engaging because they target the explicit reasoning of the opposing debater. Warrant-level challenges demonstrate strong critical thinking skills to the judge—more so than claim-level responses, which do not necessarily engage with the line of reasoning used by the other side, or impact-level responses, which typically are not as strong as warrant-level responses.

Another way to think about the various types of responses is to use some rudimentary logic. A *claim-level* response follows this model:

Debater 1—A, because B  
Debater 2—C, because D

This exchange offers two noncompeting arguments (“A” and “C”) with noncompeting warrants (“B” and “D”). A judge could evaluate each argument separately with little interaction between them. Both arguments could be true or both false; this does not produce clash.

A warrant-level response follows this model:

Debater 1—A, because B  
Debater 2—Not A, because Not B

In this exchange, two competing arguments (“A” and “Not A”) are presented in direct opposition to each other, with competing warrants (“B” and “Not B”). A judge is forced to evaluate these claims in competition with each other because only one of the arguments can be true. This produces clash and healthy debate.

### **Explaining the Impact**

After the debater has responded, she needs to explain the impact of her response. She can choose between two separate kinds of impacts: impacts on the real world and impacts in the debate. An impact on the real world details the effect the response will have on some element of society. It should explain in detail what will happen, good or bad, as a result of the argument (for further explanation, see Chapter 3: Argument Construction). An impact on the debate details the effect the response has on the opponent's argument. It connects the argument that is being made to the ballot and decision that the judge ultimately must make. A good response will contain both a real-world impact and an impact on the debate round. For example:

Because the resolution will not stifle, but rather will stimulate, the private sector, millions of jobs will be created and millions of families will be better off. This argument is central to the affirmative's position, and now that it has been turned against them, it should be clear that a negative ballot is justified.

This impact begins with a real-world explanation of the argument's effect and ends with an explanation of the argument's weight and importance in the debate.

### **Offense and Defense in Debate**

An important distinction exists between offensive arguments and defensive arguments. "Offense" refers to a proactive reason to vote for one side of the debate; "defense" refers to a reason to disregard or discredit an

argument made by an opposing debater. For example, an argument that claims a resolution will increase employment is offense because it gives the judge a reason to endorse the resolution. An argument that says the resolution will not increase employment by as much as has been claimed is defense because it provides no proactive reason to vote against the resolution but, rather, attempts to mitigate, or lessen, the affirmative impact. It defends against a claim made by the other side; it does not compel the judge to vote one way or another. Typically, offensive responses are more persuasive because the debater can derive tangible impacts from them and explain them to the judge. Hearing that jobs will be created is much more meaningful to the judge than hearing that “only” 10,000 jobs will be lost (instead of 20,000).

That said, some defensive responses can impress judges. The most notable of these is a methodological indictment of data. This is when a debater analyzes and explains the flaws in an opponent’s evidence. For example, if a team presents a study and the opposing team explains why the study’s methodology was flawed, they are using a defensive response that demonstrates a deep understanding of evidence and related issues. Hence, while offensive responses are preferable, good defensive responses can be made.

## **Responding in Congressional Debate**

In Congressional Debate, every speaker except for the author or sponsor must respond to opposing debaters. If competitors choose not to do so, Congressional Debate ceases to be debate and turns into competing oratories. Each speaker, therefore, must respond to at least one key

argument made prior to her speech. This demonstrates engagement in the debate to the judge and keeps debate fresh. That said, a speaker is not expected to respond to everything that previous speakers have said; rather, debaters must make choices about which arguments they will answer.

Unlike most other forms of debate, in Congressional Debate judges are not rendering an affirmative or negative ballot at the end of the session; which side “wins” the debate is somewhat beside the point. Rather, judges score and rank competitors based on the overall quality of argumentation. Thus, Congressional debaters need not worry too much about making “strategic” choices for their side of the argument. They are not primarily trying to win the debate; rather, they are attempting to deliver the most compelling speech possible.

Members speaking very early in a debate are free to pick from almost all of the arguments that have been made by the opposing side; which arguments are central to the debate and which are tangential has not yet become clear. Ideally, early speakers will attempt to answer the opposing arguments that are most compelling. Judges will generally recognize if a competitor is answering bad arguments or responding to arguments that are easy to refute. Refuting strong arguments is more impressive, so competitors speaking early in the debate should seek meaningful clash and avoid “straw man strategies” (strategies in which one speaker misstates the argument of an opposing speaker to make it weaker and then refutes that weaker argument).

Students who speak in the middle or at the end of a debate have different burdens. First, speeches toward the middle or end of a debate need to be more responsive to previous arguments than speeches made earlier in the

debate. While all speakers (except the first affirmative) must refute, the obligation to refute becomes greater as the debate progresses. As each speaker adds to the debate, the next speaker must respond more and more to the debate as it is occurring. Constructive speeches late in the debate are more likely to be ignored or rated poorly by the judge because they tend to disregard what has already transpired.

In fact, the debate may proceed to the point where making constructive arguments is no longer advisable. Competitors can then give one of two types of speeches: a refutation speech or a crystallization speech. Crystallization involves a summary and clarification of arguments made in the debate round, with the impact of those arguments being weighed against one another to come to a conclusion about the validity of the legislation. (The “crystallization speech,” a term of art in the debate community, will be discussed in the next chapter.) To give a refutation speech, the speaker should preface her arguments by indicating that she will be responding to the arguments in the round rather than offering her own constructive analysis. The speaker can then give a speech that is entirely focused on answering the opposition’s arguments. This tactic, which is underutilized in Congressional Debate, is an excellent way to demonstrate awareness, engagement, and critical thinking.

The arguments made in a refutation speech, as with all refutation in Congressional Debate, should have the same claim/warrant/impact structure used in constructive speeches. A refutation is a complete argument; it needs a label, an explanation, and a reason why it matters. Debaters too often make the mistake of assuming that refutations can be underdeveloped—this is not the case. Many speakers lack warrants for refutation; they will often dismiss

something as incorrect without giving an explanation or will give a one-sentence explanation that doesn't make clear why the original argument is false. For a refutation to truly be compelling, it needs to be as well-developed and as well-explained as any constructive argument.

Incorporating refutation into a Congress speech can be difficult. Debaters should avoid merely giving a laundry list of refutations ("Senator Smith said this, he's wrong because . . ., then Senator Johnson said this, she's wrong because . . .," etc.). One way to add refutation to a speech is by simply setting it apart from constructive arguments; after delivering a prepared argument, a speaker could indicate to the judge that he will now answer some arguments made by the opposition. This approach is still somewhat simplistic though; refutations should, ideally, be a part of a broader argument. Additionally, this kind of speech is not advisable late in a round, when a constructive speech would be ill-timed. While this structure is certainly preferable to not engaging in refutation at all, it is one of the least effective means of responding to opposing arguments.

One more effective way is to incorporate responses into broader arguments by delivering a refutation after the warrant of a regularly structured argument. This tactic is advisable since it turns the refutation into a full argument with a claim, a warrant, and an impact; consequently avoiding the problem of underdevelopment that so many refutations face. Incorporating refutation by making the response after the warrant will contextualize the response for the judge, while still emphasizing the speaker's own argument and viewpoint. After the response is made, the speaker would continue with her argument (providing an impact). For example, say

a negative speaker, Senator Sonnenklar, claimed that a bill to eliminate the death penalty will increase crime because we would be eliminating a deterrent. An affirmative speaker could respond with:

The first reason to affirm this bill is that it does not increase crime the way the negative claims. This is true because people who commit capital offenses rarely consider the punishment for a crime before committing those crimes. Additionally, from an individual standpoint, there is little difference between life without parole and the death penalty. Hence, eliminating the death penalty won't change the psychology of capital offenders. So Senator Sonnenklar's argument that this bill will increase crime is incorrect, since we aren't removing a meaningful deterrent. This means that all of the impacts the opposing discusses in terms of increased crime rates just are not going to happen.

This incorporation is more sophisticated and ensures that the refutation is as well-developed as a constructive argument would be.

As the debate progresses, each side will offer so many arguments that responding to all of them will be impossible. Consequently, each debater needs to decide which arguments to address. Early in the debate, speakers should prioritize refutation of whichever opposing arguments they perceive to be the strongest. This strategy is less useful later in the debate when between two and four arguments generally dominate the discussion. These arguments will be advanced or referenced in the majority of

speeches and will be the central focus of the debate. Speakers later in the debate should focus on these issues. A judge will think it odd if the fourteenth speaker on a bill discusses issues that have become irrelevant; focusing on these demonstrates a lack of engagement with the rest of the debate round. The best debaters will find new, compelling reasons why one side of a central argument is correct and the other is not.

An important concept to further this goal is “grouping,” or dealing with many similar arguments at one time. To deal with a multitude of issues when attempting to refute, debaters should group together arguments that have common threads. Several debaters in every long discussion are going to make the same or very similar arguments. Additionally, competitors will make arguments that seem different but rely on the same fundamental assumptions. For example, one speaker may argue that increased funds for businesses will lead to increased hiring, while another argues that it will lead to better technology. While these arguments are distinct, they both rely on the assumption that businesses will actually receive an increase in funds; a good debater will group these arguments and respond to them by disproving the underlying assumption. If a speaker proves that the bill will not actually lead to increased funds for businesses, then he has adequately responded to both of these very different arguments because he has responded to the fundamental assumption of both arguments. Additionally, when grouping or refuting a central idea, speakers should make clear to the judge why they have chosen to answer this concept.

## **Responding in Public Forum Debate**

In Public Forum Debate, the result of the debate is the focus of the round, thus debaters spend more of their time and energy attacking and defending the arguments made than do participants in Congressional Debate, where the entire first half of a debate can be mostly constructive. Additionally, Public Forum debaters are subject to the burden of rejoinder or the obligation to answer arguments made by the opposition. If one team advances an argument, their opponents must respond to it; if they fail to do so, the argument becomes “true” in the debate. An unanswered argument, sometimes called a “dropped argument,” is a powerful tool in the debate round; it can be used to answer other arguments and, as a “true” argument, the debaters advancing it need not worry about defending it from further attacks.

This last point is important; with the exception of the first constructive speeches, debaters in Public Forum must answer arguments as soon as they can. Arguments made in the constructive speeches must be answered in the rebuttal speeches; arguments made in the first rebuttal speech must be answered in the second rebuttal speech; arguments made in the rebuttal speeches must be answered in the summary speeches. If a team fails to answer an argument in the appropriate speech, they may not address it in a later speech. Doing so would allow teams to delay their answers until the end of a round, or, worse, offer new answers that their opponents would not have a chance to answer.

Each speech has different burdens and expectations in terms of refutation. The first speech on either side is a constructive speech, which involves no refutation. The second four-minute speech, the rebuttal speech, is the first to

require refutation. The debater from the team that speaks first has the simpler task during the rebuttal speeches: she must use her four minutes to answer the arguments presented in the opposing team's constructive speech. To do so, she may use a line-by-line approach, beginning at the top of her opponents' case and proceeding down the flow one line at a time. She may use grouping to answer multiple arguments at once. She may also employ blocks, or pre-written responses to arguments that she and her partner anticipated. Whatever her approach, her goal is to effectively cover all her opponents' arguments, leaving none unanswered. This tactic offers her and her partner the most options for future speeches, while leaving her opponents the fewest.

The debater from the team that speaks second has a far more difficult task in the rebuttal speech. He must answer not only the arguments made in the constructive speech, but also the arguments made in the first rebuttal speech. He must both attack his opponents' case and defend his own case. This requires remarkable efficiency: he must answer eight minutes worth of arguments in only four minutes. To do so, he will likely also use a line-by-line approach and make extensive use of grouping. He will employ three additional strategies as well:

1. **Use a road map.** A road map is a brief explanation at the beginning of his speech that explains to the judge the order in which he will address the arguments. Often, this is as simple as "I will begin by answering our opponent's case, then defend our own."
2. **Extend arguments.** He will point out an unanswered argument and emphasize its importance in the round. To make an extension, a debater should use clear

language: “Our opponents did not answer our first argument, which maintains that affirming the resolution will improve the economy by spurring corporate growth. Extend this. The impact of this argument is that we will create hundreds of thousands of new jobs and improve GDP by billions of dollars.” These extensions will become important as the debate proceeds and arguments are challenged and mitigated; a cleanly extended argument automatically becomes true and unmitigated, so it can be made to outweigh or negate other arguments in the round.

3. **Cross-apply arguments.** The debater will use an answer made on one part of the flow to answer an argument in a different part of the debate. Cross-application allows a debater to avoid repeating a response multiple times during a speech, giving him time to make additional arguments. For example, if a Con team’s contention argues that the resolution will destroy jobs and the Pro team’s second contention dictates that the resolution will actually create jobs, the Pro team can answer the Con team by saying: “Go to the Con’s first contention, where they say the Resolution will destroy jobs. First, cross-apply our Second contention, which provides evidence that the Resolution will actually create jobs.” Ideally, the competitors will cite the particular piece of evidence they are cross-applying to answer their opponents’ case.

Ideally, a debater delivering the second rebuttal speech (the last of the four four-minute speeches) will spend about two minutes answering his opponents’ case and

two minutes defending his own. Debaters should strive for balance in this speech to avoid being “ball-parked,” or drawn into a debate dominated by their opponents’ arguments. Debaters should always be advancing their own position and attempting to frame the debate from their perspective.

After the rebuttal speeches and the second crossfire, each team will prepare summary speeches. The summary speakers must blend line-by-line debate with summary and crystallization. The summary speech has a somewhat decreased burden of coverage. Because the summary and final focus speech times are so short, expecting any debater to cover all arguments made is unreasonable.

The summary speakers must make choices about which arguments they will cover. An effective summary speech advances strong offense while reinforcing strong defense. A summary speaker should be sure to extend strong offensive and defensive arguments from the rebuttal speeches; the most effective Public Forum teams consistently demonstrate this sort of teamwork. In the same vein, a summary speaker should be sure to coordinate with her partner. A summary speaker should use a clear road map and attempt to add clarity, not confusion, to the round as a whole and the line-by-line debate. The time allocation in a summary speech may vary widely depending on the number and quality of arguments made by both sides, but the summary speaker should still be wary of being ball-parked by his opponents.

## KEY CONCEPTS

- Clash is key to debate; it is what separates debate from dueling oratories.
- Debaters should keep track of the arguments made in a round via the flow, or notes taken about the arguments made by each debater.
- While there are multiple ways to flow Congressional Debate, there is one standard way to flow Public Forum Debate.
- In Congressional Debate, all flows must contain a shorthand version of the arguments being made and the name of the competitor who made them.
- Public Forum Debate flows require two sheets of paper; responsive arguments must be flowed next to the argument that they respond to.
- A full refutation requires a competitor to locate the argument he is responding to on the flow, summarize that argument, and then respond to it.
- Refutations can challenge the claim, the warrant, or the impact of an argument, but challenges to the warrant are usually the most responsive and effective.
- Each refutation should be a full argument with an impact all its own.
- Offensive responses are typically better than defensive responses.

- In Congressional Debate, the most effective refutations are incorporated into arguments rather than listed at the end of a speech.
- Unlike Congressional Debate, Public Forum Debate has a burden of rejoinder; that is, the debaters must respond to every argument made in an opposing case.
- Public Forum debaters delivering the second rebuttal should respond both to the opposing case and to the opposing rebuttal.

