

Round structure:

- 6 1AC--six minutes
- 3 Neg. Cross-X--three minutes
Neg. prep time--4 minutes (to be distributed between NC and NR)
- 7 NC--seven minutes
- 3 Aff Cross-X--three minutes
Aff prep--4 minutes (between 1AR and 2AR)
- 4 1AR--four minutes
- 6 NR--six minutes
- 3 2AR--three minutes

Speech structure:

1AC

--Quick opening quote to get audience's attention and crystallize your position/rationale

--Definitions. Aff is responsible for defining all the key terms in the round, and doing so fairly. Use definitions you wouldn't mind debating if you were negative. The purpose here is fairness!

--Value premise (core value, central value, value criteria, whatever). This establishes some framework by which the judge can decide between two opposing positions. Generally, you want to say that it is or ought to be the value by which society makes decisions concerning what is important, or that it is implicit in the resolution (for example, many people run the value of justice in resolutions that read X is justified, claiming that the test of whether something is justified is whether or not it is just). Ultimately you will compare your case to your opponent's in terms of who best upholds this central value, unless you are debating about the most appropriate or important value.

-Criteria/on. This serves both to clarify the resolution and to link the value to the case. For example, let's say you are running justice. There are so many different definitions of justice that the word alone is next to meaningless; you have to explain what you mean by justice, and how we'll be able to figure out who best upholds it. You could say, for example, that the criteria for justice are that, to be just, a position must a) provide an equal distribution of goods to everyone in society and b) respect the natural rights of all individuals. Setting these criteria up helps you in two ways. First, the judge knows what it means to be just; in other words, the judge has some clue what you are talking about. Secondly, these criteria give you something to talk about in your case. One popular way to use criteria is to build a contention out of each point. Whether or not you do this, your case must prove that your side of the resolution best upholds the standard you establish.

--Contentions. These are the heart of your case. Everything up to this point (except the opening quotation) should be neutral, in the sense that theoretically it should be acceptable to both sides. In the contentions you prove that your side of the resolution best meets the tests you established earlier. As a rule, you should stick to between two and four contentions; the vast majority of debaters use three. Limiting your contentions to just a few allows you to have some fall-back position (hopefully you can lose one and still win the round) but also allows you to give a fairly detailed explanation of the argument, which, of course, is critical.

NC

--Half of this speech is dedicated to building the negative position; the other half is used to attack the Affirmative. Most people prefer to present their own case and then respond to the Aff.

--You really should open with what I call a round-specific introduction, in which you show right away that you will be in control of the round. You could challenge your opponent's opening quote, show his/her fallacious reasoning, or indict the sources that were used. You can also reveal his/her unsupported assumptions.

--The constructive part of the case is the same as the 1AC (in terms of what you have to do) except that you won't have to present definitions (unless counter-definitions are needed for fairness) and that, obviously, everything must be shorter. We aim for the prepared speech to be no more than 4 minutes long and as close to 3:30 as possible.

The refutation is self-explanatory--respond to weaknesses in the Aff case. A couple of points to remember in all refutations-- a) respond to the value. Theoretically, this is the most important issue in the round; obviously, then, you should deal with it. If the Aff is running the same value as you, chances are they aren't defining it the same way; explain why your definition is better. If they do offer the same criteria, briefly explain why you best uphold them. b) respond to all the critical issues. Certain issues in any round are pretty much irrelevant; others are incredibly important. Learn to tell the difference, and always respond to the important stuff. Obviously, this is easier said than done. c) use different responses. Even if you have one argument that you think kicks your opponent's butt all over the flow, use it sparingly. Judges hate to hear the same line over and over again; besides, if your opponent can beat your stellar argument you have others to fall back on.

1AR

Straight refutation and rebuttal, except that you only have four minutes to cover everything said by both the you and your opponent. This speech is the most difficult in L-D and determines who will, most often, win the round. I prefer that you go to neg., give 2-2:30, and then return home to your case with 2-1:30 remaining. This speech needs word economy and consolidation of underlying assumptions in the negative approach.

NR

This is the last neg. speech, so it has two duties. First, it must refute everything said in the 1AR. As a rule, you want to spend about 4:30 on this section of the speech. Secondly, you must spend about 1:30 explaining why you actually win the round. Instead of looking at all the details in the round, look at the big issues. Explain why your value is the best way to decide who wins the round. Explain why you win your value. Explain why your opponent's value is essentially meaningless, and do the same for their arguments. Above all, be persuasive.

2AR

This is a three minute speech; most debaters have found it impossible to do any significant point-by-point analysis. Instead, the entire speech is usually dedicated to crystallization of why you are winning the round. This is the last speech of the round, which gives a persuasive affirmative a tremendous advantage, since the judge will be thinking of your logic as she makes her decision. Therefore, you should strive to be extremely clear, concise, and logical in this speech.