

Practice Rounds

Goal of Exercise: To give students a chance to practice the speeches and arguments they will be executing at competitive tournaments. Great for new and experienced students both.

Description: A practice round is just that: a debate round for practicing. While debaters can and should practice at home, it is invaluable that they be able to run through a debate round with a coach observing and critiquing. Practice rounds can be held during your actual class time or scheduled for a time after school. Students who are not debating can still benefit, as they can flow and will have the opportunity to learn by observing.

When it comes to giving constructive criticism, there are three ways to provide coaching during a practice round.

Tournament Style:

A tournament style practice round is where you run through the entire debate round exactly like the tournament -- prep time and all. You would then give a critique and analysis of the round at the very end. This allows you to watch the entire round as a judge would and give them feedback on their entire handling of the debate. This method helps debaters prepare for the tournament as well.

Critique After Every Speech:

Another way to handle a practice round is to give coaching advice after each speech. This method works well when there are multiple things each individual speaker needs to work on. It also helps you as the coach gives more helpful tips as you will remember more things about the 2AC speech right after the 2AC, than if you waited till the end of the round. This method does, however, take more time.



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Description Continued:

Start-and-Stop:

The last way to run a practice round is the most time consuming and intensive. This is where you stop any speech at any time when you want to debater to fix or correct something. They will then redo that argument and continue to proceed with the speech. This method works well with either very inexperienced debaters or very experienced debaters. It helps the inexperienced as you will be able to fix incorrect habits or problems immediately, as well as help them along with thinking of good arguments. For the more experienced debaters, this is an excellent way to refine their skills. They are likely already good at many of the general things, so this gives you a chance to be a little nit-pickier about things they should work on.

Teacher's Note:

If your time is limited, you may want to choose a way to cut down the debate round so it doesn't run full length. There are two ways of doing a shorter debate round:

Constructive Only:

In this case, the debaters would only debate the Constructive speeches and the Cross-examination speeches following each Constructive. This allows every student to have a turn at speaking and still get several valuable arguments practiced.

Condensed Round:

Another way is to simply make each speech shorter than competition length. This can really be done any way you like, but we recommend 5-6 minute Constructives, 2 minute Cross- examinations, and 3-4 minute Rebuttals.



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Other Benefits:

As noted before, one of the greatest benefits of practice rounds is that it helps debaters prepare for the tournament. Practice rounds, therefore, are especially helpful to debaters who have never been to a tournament before, as it enables students to get a feel for how the real tournament is going to work. However, there are also a few other benefits to regular practice rounds.

Immediate Guidance & Critique:

Running through frequent practice rounds allows you as the coach to see how the students are applying what you taught them, how they view the topic, and if they understand what they are supposed to do. You can then immediately catch any problems or misconceptions and correct them before sending the students off to the tournament.

Improved Speaking:

The more speaking any student does, the better they will become at it. Practice rounds allow the students a chance to practice their speaking skills.

Explaining Arguments:

There is a vast difference between understanding a concept mentally and explaining it verbally. The more a student can explain something out loud, the better they will get at it and understand the argument better themselves.

Flowing:

It is almost impossible to practice flowing unless you are debating/ observing a debate. Practice rounds give students a chance to practice their note-taking skills in a relaxed environment.

