chicago debate league

Mini-Debate Exercise

Overview

The Mini-Debate is a compactly formatted method of "scrimmaging" or practicing in policy debate. The Mini-Debate is inherently structured around the most important academic debate mode, responsiveness or clash, but it is a flexible exercise in significant ways. Any issue can be debated in this format, so there is a capacity to teach a deeper understanding of any specific argument, though the Mini-Debate can also be relatively unconcerned about argument content and focus on one or more academic debate skills that are based in technique, process, and form.

Format

Case Issues	Off-Case Issues
1AC – 2 Minutes	1NC – 2 Minutes
1NC – 2 Minutes	2AC – 3 Minutes
2AC – 2 Minutes	2NC – 3.5 Minutes
2NC – 3 Minutes	1AR – 1.5 Minutes
1AR – 1 Minute	2NR – 2 Minutes
2NR – 2 Minutes	2AR – 2 Minutes
2AR – 2 Minutes	

Exercise

1.   Divide the squad into groups of four, with two teams in each group.

2.   Distribute 2 – 4 sets of arguments organized by "issue," depending on how many issues you want the exercise to cover and how many groups of four you have.   For this exercise, we will have Mini-Debates on four issues from the Core Files: [plug in affirmative case here] Solvency, [plug in affirmative case here] Solvency, [plug in a disad shell here], and Topicality [plug in a "T" shell here]. Each group should get one set of arguments on one issue. The set includes both negative and affirmative arguments on the issue.

3.   An "issue" makes a good focus for a Mini-Debate argument. For a Mini-Debate on the case, select the 1AC Harms or Solvency, and the 1NC front-line against that "stock issue". It is sometimes necessary not to shorten or pick and choose arguments from the entire front-line (as it won't fit in two minutes), and it is sometimes useful to include an extension block or two from the 2AC files on a key argument. For a Mini-Debate on an off-case issue, include the 1NC shell (DA, Topicality Violation, Counterplan, or Critique), the 2AC front-line, and, again, any very key extension blocks, either from the 2NC or 1AR files on the issue.

4.   Assign affirmative and negative teams by groups, so that each person is on a team. When working with Varsity team members a more challenging option is to assign teams but not designate them as affirmative or negative until they are called up to debate.

4.   Take 15 minutes to study and become familiar with the blocks.

5.   Begin the Mini-Debates themselves, getting through as many as time allows.

6.   Before each Mini-Debate specify clash and one other skill area as the primary focal points of the exercise. If applicable, set a specific goal for the debaters – e.g., each debater after the first shells and frontlines will answer more than half of their opponent's arguments.

7.   After each Mini-Debate have a brief discussion of the performance of the debaters in the skill area objectives, and a discussion of the way that the issue might have been resolved by a judge.

8.   Be sure that everyone is FLOWING the Mini-Debates. No one observes a Mini-Debate without flowing, and absolutely NO ONE debates in a Mini-Debate without flowing.