

SPAR (SPontaneous ARgumentation) Debate Exercise

Overview

SPAR Debating is an excellent exercise for introducing students to academic debate and for maintaining and cultivating students' interest in academic debate. It gets students doing what they joined the debate team to do – argue and express themselves about issues that interest them. SPAR Debating is a little less academically rigorous than Policy Debate, but it is a useful complement to Policy Debate and can both develop academic debate skills and heighten student motivation to debate.

Methodology

- * Pair students into two-person partnerships

- * Brainstorm and draft a list of resolutions (see examples below)

- * Assign each team a resolution and a side (Aff. or Neg.)

- * Tell each team to divide the speeches this way:
 - 1A -- Affirmative Case and Affirmative Closing Statement
 - 2A -- Affirmative Rebuttal
 - 1N -- Negative Case and Negative Closing Statement
 - 2N -- Negative Rebuttal

- * Tell each team that the Case should consist of three main arguments, distinct from each other, that are supported by whatever reasoning (or "warrants"), evidence, data, and analysis that they can devise.

- * Tell each team that the Rebuttal should be a refutation of the other team's Case, a point-by-point refutation of their three arguments.

- * Tell each team that the Closing Statement should be an extension of the one or two strongest arguments from their Constructive, with a final rebuttal of their opponent's arguments, concise and synthesized.

* Tell each team to take careful notes of all the speeches so that they can be specific in their rebuttal and extension.

* The speech format:

Affirmative Constructive -- 2.5 minutes

Negative Constructive -- 2.5 minutes

Negative Rebuttal – 2.5 minutes

Affirmative Rebuttal – 2.5 minutes

Negative Closing Statement – 2 minutes

Affirmative Closing Statement – 2 minutes

* The students vote for the winner after each debate. They should be told to vote exclusively on the arguments and evidence presented in the debate round.

Sample Resolutions

Resolved: That Kanye West is a better rapper than Eminem

Resolved: That professional football is a better sport than professional basketball

Resolved: That the West Side is better than the South Side

Resolved: That school uniforms should be required in all CPS High Schools

Resolved: That Pizza Hut is a better restaurant chain than Domino's

Resolved: That the President's Chief of Staff Rahm Emmanuel should be the next
Mayor of the City of Chicago

Resolved: That "America's Got Talent" is a better TV show than "American Idol"

Additional Considerations

This activity can be used both to engage students and to introduce them to the fundamentals of beginning competitive academic debate.

We recommend that you analyze and critique speeches with competitive academic debate goals in mind. For example, you can isolate the responsiveness and clash of each team in the Rebuttal and Closing Statements. Or you can isolate the use of evidence and argument organization in the Cases.