

Cross-Examination Format

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The **Cross-Examination Debate Format** is used in the **Pro-Con Debate League**, which is a separate organization from the Ontario Student Debating Union (OSDU). Although OSDU does not organize Cross-Examination tournaments, we are including the format here because it provides information for teachers who are interested in participating in the Pro-Con Debate League or who are interested in using this format in the classroom because it offers a variety of speaking opportunities for each debater. In this format, there are two teams of two debaters. Each debater delivers a 5-minute speech, each speaker offers questioning for 3 minutes and each speaker offers a 2-minute Rebuttal speech. The structure of each speech depends on the position of the speech. What follows is the structure of the debate at a glance and the structure of each speech.

OPENING SPEECHES and CROSS EXAMINATION

1st Affirmative constructive speech	5 min.	
Cross-examined by 2nd Negative		3 min.
1st Negative constructive speech	5 min.	
Cross-examined by 1st Affirmative		3 min.
2nd Affirmative constructive speech	5 min.	
Cross-examined by 1st Negative		3 min.
2nd Negative constructive speech	5 min.	
Cross-examined by 2nd Affirmative		3 min.

REBUTTAL SPEECHES

1st Negative rebuttal	2 min.
1st Affirmative rebuttal	2 min.
2nd Negative rebuttal	2 min.
2nd Affirmative rebuttal	2 min.

PART 1: OPENING SPEECHES and QUESTIONING

Proposition 1: Prime Minister (PM)

5 min.

- a) **Anecdote:** It is very good practice to open your speech with a short anecdote, which relates to the dichotomy within the resolution. However, it is optional.
- b) **Salutation:** After the anecdote, you begin your speech by acknowledging the Speaker of the House, who is the judge of the round, your fellow debaters and by stating the Resolution.
- c) **Model:** The PM then ‘models’ the resolution, which means defining ambiguous words or phrases in the resolution; it also means stating the context, about which arguments should be made, such as Canada only or the world. More on how to Model is given below.
- d) **Arguments:** You then present your arguments, usually two, which are intended to prove why the resolution should be accepted.

Opposition 2 cross-examines Proposition 1

3 min.

You should plan to ask 3 or 4 questions, each of which should be no more than 15 seconds long, and each of which should focus on a weakness in the argument of the opposing side. If the response is inadequate, it is good practice to create a line of questioning that leads the speaker to see his (her) own flaws in reasoning. Once you are satisfied with the response, or once you have exposed the inability of the speaker to give a convincing reply, you can then question a weakness in another argument.

Opposition 1: Leader of the Opposition (LO)

5 min.

- a) **Anecdote:** It is very good practice to open your speech with a short anecdote, which relates to the dichotomy within the resolution. However, it is optional.
- b) **Salutation:** After the anecdote, you begin your speech by acknowledging the Speaker of the House, who is the judge of the round, and your fellow debaters.
- c) **Refutation:** Although Opposition 2 criticized Proposition 1 during the cross examination, it is also necessary for Opposition 1 to offer a refutation of Proposition 1. For more detail on Refutation, please see the post entitled *POIs and Refutation*.
- d) **Arguments:** These are reasons, usually two, which are intended to prove why the Resolution should NOT be accepted.

Proposition 1 cross-examines Opposition 1

3 min.

You should plan to ask 3 or 4 questions, each of which should be no more than 15 seconds long, and each of which should focus on a weakness in the argument of the opposing side. If the response is inadequate, it is good practice to create a line of questioning that leads the speaker to see his (her) own flaws in reasoning. Once you are satisfied with the response, or once you have exposed the inability of the speaker to give a convincing reply, you can then question a weakness in another argument.

Proposition 2: Deputy Prime Minister (DPM)

5 min.

- a) **Anecdote:** It is very good practice to open your speech with a short anecdote, which relates to the dichotomy within the resolution. However, it is optional.
- b) **Salutation:** After the anecdote, you begin your speech by acknowledging the Speaker of the House, who is the judge of the round, and your fellow debaters.
- c) **Refutation:** Although Proposition 1 criticized Opposition 1 during the cross-examination, it is also necessary for Proposition 2 to offer a refutation of Opposition 1. For more detail on Refutation, please see the post entitled *POIs and Refutation*.
- d) **Restatement:** This is a brief restatement of the arguments of the PM.
- e) **Arguments:** These are reasons, usually one or two, which are intended to prove why the Resolution SHOULD be accepted.

Opposition 1 cross-examines Proposition 2

3 min.

You should plan to ask 3 or 4 questions, each of which should be no more than 15 seconds long, and each of which should focus on a weakness in the argument of the opposing side. If the response is inadequate, it is good practice to create a line of questioning that leads the speaker to see his (her) own flaws in reasoning. Once you are satisfied with the response, or once you have exposed the inability of the speaker to give a convincing reply, you can then question a weakness in another argument.

Opposition 2: Deputy Leader of the Opposition (DLO)

5 min.

- a) **Anecdote:** It is very good practice to open your speech with a short anecdote, which relates to the dichotomy within the resolution. However, it is optional.
- b) **Salutation:** After the anecdote, you begin your speech by acknowledging the Speaker of the House, who is the judge of the round, and your fellow debaters.
- c) **Refutation:** Although Opposition 1 criticized Proposition 2 during the cross examination, it is also necessary for Opposition 2 to offer a refutation of Proposition 2. For more detail on Refutation, please see the post entitled *POIs and Refutation*.
- d) **Restatement:** This is a brief restatement of the arguments of the LO.
- e) **Arguments:** These are reasons, usually one, which is intended to prove why the Resolution should NOT be accepted.

Proposition 2 cross-examines Opposition 2

3 min.

You should plan to ask 3 or 4 questions, each of which should be no more than 15 seconds long, and each of which should focus on a weakness in the argument of the opposing side. If the response is inadequate, it is good practice to create a line of questioning that leads the speaker to see his (her) own flaws in reasoning. Once you are satisfied with the response, or once you have exposed the inability of the speaker to give a convincing reply, you can then question a weakness in another argument.

PART 2: REBUTTALS

Opposition 1

2 min.

The Rebuttal is like the Refutation because both focus on criticizing errors in the reasoning. However, whereas the Refutation focuses on the previous speaker, the Rebuttal speech focuses on both speakers on the opposing side. When doing so, it is best practice to highlight an error in reasoning and then immediately state how your side has corrected for this error. Although both speeches focus on errors in the reasoning of the opposing side, the LO Rebuttal speech must focus on how the Proposition side has not met the Burden of Proof, which are sufficient arguments that support the resolution. (For more information, please see the entry entitled the Rebuttal Speech.)

Proposition 1

2 min.

The Rebuttal is like the Refutation because both focus on criticizing errors in the reasoning. However, whereas the Refutation focuses on the previous speaker, the Rebuttal speech focuses on both speakers on the opposing side. When doing so, it is best practice to highlight an error in reasoning and then immediately state how your side has corrected for this error. Although both speeches focus on errors in the reasoning of the opposing side, the PM Rebuttal speech must focus on how the Opposition side has not met the Burden of Rejoinder, which are criticisms of the arguments of the Proposition side. (For more information, please see the entry entitled the Rebuttal Speech.)

Opposition 2

2 min.

The Rebuttal is like the Refutation because both focus on criticizing errors in the reasoning. However, whereas the Refutation focuses on the previous speaker, the Rebuttal speech focuses on both speakers on the opposing side. When doing so, it is best practice to highlight an error in reasoning and then immediately state how your side has corrected for this error. Although both speeches focus on errors in the reasoning of the opposing side, the DLO Rebuttal speech must focus on how the Proposition side has not met the Burden of Proof, which are sufficient arguments that support the resolution. Although DLO should offer at least one new criticism of the content of the Proposition speeches, most of the content will be a repetition of criticisms offered by the LO, which should be understood favorably because it serves to emphasize the flaws in the reasoning of the Proposition side. (For more information, please see the entry entitled the Rebuttal Speech.)

Proposition 2

2 min.

The Rebuttal is like the Refutation because both focus on criticizing errors in the reasoning. However, whereas the Refutation focuses on the previous speaker, the

Rebuttal speech focuses on both speakers on the opposing side. When doing so, it is best practice to highlight an error in reasoning and then immediately state how your side has corrected for this error. Although both speeches focus on errors in the reasoning of the opposing side, the PM Rebuttal speech must focus on how the Opposition side has not met the Burden of Rejoinder, which are criticisms of the arguments of the Proposition side. Although DPM should offer at least one new criticism of the content of the Opposition speeches, most of the content will be a repetition of criticisms offered by the PM, which should be understood favorably because it serves to emphasize the flaws in the reasoning of the Opposition side. (For more information, please see the entry entitled the Rebuttal Speech.)

What is unique about this format?

The process of asking a series of questions is unique to the Cross-examination format. To assist you to do this well, consider the following guidelines:

- a) **No POIs.** There are no POIs during the constructive speeches. Instead, three minutes is set aside after each speech for a member of the opposing side to ask questions.
- b) **Focusing your Question.** When asking a question--*which should not exceed 15 seconds*--you need to focus on a flaw in the argument of the opposing side. Your questions should never simply expect a 'yes' or 'no' answer.
- c) **Listening for Errors in Reasoning.** While preparing your questions, it is helpful to listen to the quality of the evidence because it is often is not well related to the claim. (See the Refutation post for more suggestions)
- d) **Follow-up Questioning.** This format allows you to ask follow-up questions when you are unsatisfied with the reply to your original question, which is very helpful because you can persist in disclosing the root of the problem.
- e) **You Must Answer the Question.** If you evade the question by stating that you will answer it later, you will be penalized by the judge.
- f) **Your Answer Must be Brief.** Your answer to a question should not exceed 30 seconds. If you go beyond, the questioner is allowed to interrupt you by saying 'thank you' and by asking the next question.
- g) **Unclear Questions.** If the question is unclear, the respondent can ask for clarification, but the respondent cannot ask the questioner a new question.

