

Micro/Macro Argumentation FORMAT

The format for Micro/Macro Argumentation has two parts: Micro-Argumentation Rounds and a Macro-Argumentation Round. The Micro-Argumentation Rounds each take 6 minutes, and there are typically 4 – 10 Micro-Argumentation Rounds. The Macro-Argumentation Round is typically timed at 20 minutes.

Micro-Argumentation Rounds

Each side of a Micro-Argumentation Round consists of 1 – 3 students. If there is 1 student, she performs both speaking roles; if there are 2 students, each performs one of them. Three students means that one student researches and prompts his partners with ideas during the round.

Each speech segment in a Micro-Argumentation Round is 90 seconds, though if there are a smaller number of rounds (4 – 6), then each speech can extend to 2 minutes.

The speeches are:

Argument

In the argument, the side initiating the round states their argumentative claim and supports it with 2 – 3 pieces of strong evidence, where each piece of evidence is accompanied by reasoning that explains how the evidence proves the claim.

Rebuttal

The other side – ‘against,’ if the ‘for’ side initiated the argumentation; ‘for’ if the ‘against’ side initiated it – makes 2 – 5 counter-arguments (or rebuttal arguments) to undermine or contradict the Opening Argument. Good rebuttal arguments are like all arguments: they are strengthened with credible and aligned evidence and with strong analytic reasoning.



Refutation

The side that initiated the argumentation with the argument comes back and tries to refute the rebuttal arguments. The best refutation is point-by-point, addressing each of the rebuttal arguments and stating why it is disproven by the evidence raised in the Opening Argument, has a logical or some other flaw, or is contradicted by additional reasoning or analysis.

Evaluation

The 'rebuttal' side then comes back to try to evaluate the competing and clashing argumentation in such a way that favors its side. In particular this often means that the 'evaluation' speech focuses on one or two of the rebuttal arguments that was not sufficiently refuted (or even that was missed entirely – remember, in academic argumentation and debate, silence = assent or concession).

Each Micro-Argumentation Round should be tracked on a tracking form (or 'flow sheet') by the instructor/moderator, and that tracking form should be screened by a projector so that everyone can see it. The students performing the Micro-Argumentation Round should be tracking the round themselves by hand on the tracking forms that they use to prepare their first speeches on. And all students can be required to track the rounds too, as an engagement and accountability mechanism.

Macro-Argumentation Round

When the Micro-Argumentation Rounds have been completed, the full class comes together for the Macro-Argumentation Round. In this round, the instructor/moderator calls on volunteering student speakers from each side, alternating sides ('for' – 'against' – 'for' – 'against'), for 90 second speeches that are to evaluate and synthesize the preceding argumentation so that their side is shown to prevail in the debate overall.

This round is generally not tracked on a tracking form, so can be a little less formally structured than the Micro-Argumentation Rounds are. It should demonstrate strong comprehension of and ability in the key argumentation components, though: summary, content knowledge, argumentative claims, evidence, refutation, evaluation.



Determining a Winning Side

The instructor/moderator should determine the winner of each Micro-Argumentation Round and announce it immediately following each round. She should keep a tabulation of which side has how many of these 1-point round wins.

The Macro-Argumentation Round is worth a total of 5 points, though these can be divided between the sides. So a very close Macro-Argumentation Round can go 3 – 2 for one of the sides. A less close round goes 4 -1 for one of the sides. And a resounding and definitive debate victory in the Macro-Argumentation Round would be scored 5 – 0. The instructor/moderator announces her verdict immediately after the Macro-Argumentation Round for that round, then announces the very final tally and overall winning side.