

Multi-Sided Debates Format

This is the format for the sequence of speeches in the Multi-Sided Debates. The debates are divided into four segments, which can create natural stopping points when the debates are conducted over more than one class period. You should build in 3 – 5 minute “prep time” pauses before the rebuttals and before the closing arguments.

1st Segment – Opening Arguments (10 minutes)

| | |
|------------|-------------|
| Position 1 | 2.5 minutes |
| Position 2 | 2.5 minutes |
| Position 3 | 2.5 minutes |
| Position 4 | 2.5 minutes |

2nd Segment – Counter-Arguments (8 minutes)

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Position 4 counter-argues against Position 1 | 2 minutes |
| Position 3 counter-argues against Position 4 | 2 minutes |
| Position 2 counter-argues against Position 3 | 2 minutes |
| Position 1 counter-argues against Position 2 | 2 minutes |

3rd Segment – Rebuttals (8 minutes)

| | |
|------------|-----------|
| Position 1 | 2 minutes |
| Position 2 | 2 minutes |
| Position 3 | 2 minutes |
| Position 4 | 2 minutes |

4th Segment – Closing Arguments (10 minutes)

| | |
|------------|-------------|
| Position 1 | 2.5 minutes |
| Position 2 | 2.5 minutes |
| Position 3 | 2.5 minutes |
| Position 4 | 2.5 minutes |



One simple way to vary the debates, if you are conducting more than one round, is to change which positions you assign to each number, so that the position that is 1 in the first round becomes position 2 in the second round, and so on. This ensures that teams will counter-argue against a different position in each debate.

Another variation is to marry Multi-Sided Debates and Table Debates, so that each student has considerably more to do during the debating portion of the activity. The way this works is to create groups of four (or whatever number of options you have), after the preparation period has concluded. At each of these tables place one student from each option. Then conduct the format for the whole class, serving as time-keeper and moderator. Each table will be having its own, simultaneously enacted debate, with one representative from each option. Each representative will of course perform all four speaking roles during the debate for their side.