

# **Cross-Examination**

5.1 Today we will learn all about Cross-Examination! This is where you get to talk directly to your opponent. It happens after each constructive speech, so there are 2 Cxes in LD.

## **What is CX?**

3 minutes long. 1 person asks questions for the other ( who just spoke) to answer. It's the only time in the round where the judge is able to see both of you speak freely back and forth. The only opportunity you have to directly question your opponent. The only opportunity you have to answer questions well and show that your side can withstand scrutiny.

## **Why do we cross-ex? Goals:**

1. To clarify things - if you don't understand something, now is the time to clear it up. have the opponent repeat a definition or piece of information you might have missed
2. To find flaws - is something wrong with your opponent's arguments? To find out more from the opponent/ possibly expose their case to some inconsistencies
3. \*\* To set up your next argument—get them to agree with your points
4. To place doubt in the judge's mind and to expose weak areas
5. To have them destroy their own argument or contradict themselves - get them to say the opposite of what they said in their case.

## **General Rules:**

- Be polite and respectful at all times.
  - Don't face your opponent! If you face your opponent, both of you will feel like you are arguing against one another. You want CX to remain impersonal - this is an argument against nationalism and globalism, not against Jack and Bob. Instead, face the judge.
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## **Asking Questions:**

When you're the asker, you're the one in control, and you also decide how long their answer is—sometimes the answer leads that opponent to keep talking. Don't let them go on and on and on - some people try to use CX as another opportunity to state their position! You have to maintain control, So you can (and should) stop them graciously. Err on the side of being more courteous. To stop them, say, "Thank you." If they keep on talking, say "name, thank you" (when they hear their name, they stop). The main thing is remain in control - don't let the opponent control the CX. The judge will notice.

*Warning:* Don't ask too far. Leave the impacts for your rebuttal speech. If you're trying to show that their value is circular and you ask, "Is your value of freedom the same as free trade?" And they answer yes, stop right there. You have enough. If you take things too far, you will destroy yourself. Stop here; don't ask, "so your value is circular and mine is better, right?" Because obviously they will say No at that point and explain why it isn't circular, and your entire line of questioning is wasted.

You are not trying to make the actual argument in CX; just place doubt and questions in the judge's mind about opponent, and lay the groundwork for the arguments you are **going** to make.

*How to ask Questions:* Do a mix of open-ended and close-ended questions

1. Chain of questioning- lead them down a trail. Use If... then questions.

Say you are debating a resolution about the Criminal Justice System, and you are trying to get your opponent to admit that we can't know for sure if a criminal is truly reformed after being rehabilitated:

Start with a really obvious question that has a universally agreed to answer, like "Do people lie?" Your opponent will obviously agree with you - they begin to follow you down your trail of questioning. Then, gradually lead them on to other, harder, questions, but use their answer to the obvious questions to trap them! "So if people lie, then we can't know if a criminal is really reformed as you are saying, right?" Because they answered "yes" earlier to the obvious question, they are now forced to give the answer you want them to give.

Ex.- Would you agree that all people are equal in value? Yes.

Then would you think it unfair if 1 person were paid differently from another by the same boss for the same work and position at a company? Yes.

Then wouldn't you think....

Another example: Say your value is "societal well-being":

How does your value affect society?

→ It has \_\_\_\_\_ positive effects on society.

→ So those positive effects are basically what justifies your value as being the highest in the round, correct?

→ Yes

So you believe your value is the highest in the round because it would provide this benefit to society?

→ Yes

Stop here. In your rebuttal, point out that their value is a means to your value! Means to end.

2. Question designed to make your opponent agree with you—a Yes-No question.

Ex.- Would you agree that absolute power is detrimental to society?

[Then use that answer later to make a point "And my opponent even agreed that...."]

**For example, if you are debating about criminal justice systems and they use an example of a North Korean criminal justice system, and you want to prove that their example shouldn't apply:**

Does a criminal justice system have to be just? Yes.

Is North Korea just? No.

Then in your rebuttal, say that it follows that NK isn't a CJS, so it doesn't apply to the round. I once won a round using this exact line of questioning.

3. Clarifying questions (you can bring your notepad/flowpad to cross-x.,)

-You talked a lot about "justice," but I'm not sure I understand what you mean. What IS just? If opponent doesn't give good answer to your question, that can hurt opponent's credibility, which is good for you.

\*\* Always connect cross-ex. questions and your opponent's answers to your speech!!

For LDers, you can try to poke holes in:

- The value
  - Is it possible to have life without liberty? (if your value is liberty and theirs is life. Then in your rebuttal you can run "foundational")
- The value-criterion link
  - Did your criterion lead to your value in this instance?
- The examples
  - Do you have evidence for this?
  - How did they calculate those statistics?
- The definitions
  - These are good filler questions. If you have absolutely nothing to ask, just ask them what their definitions are and it will look like you sort of know what you are doing, even if you don't.
  - However, don't ask them information about their definition if their definition is the same as yours.

If you don't know what to ask, just start probing what they said in their case. In the process of asking without even knowing what you are looking for, you might inadvertently discover a flaw that you never thought of, or they might happen to give a weird answer somewhere you weren't expecting, and you can use that to your advantage. This way, you're tapping on their case with your finger and figuring out what components are loose.

## **5.2 Answering Questions:**

1. Look confident, even if you aren't
2. Act like you are the teacher and your opponent is the student asking questions for clarification
3. Be honest, but don't give everything away.
4. Don't disagree with absolutely everything your opponent says though - you don't want to appear unreasonable, or like you are afraid of getting trapped (that shows a lack of confidence in your position). You should be concerned about getting trapped, but don't show it. So, only disagree with stuff that you think could hurt you. If the question appears harmless, answer it like you normally would.
5. However, if there is a chain of questions, and you feel like they are pulling you into some sort of trap even though the questions haven't become harmful to you yet, you should try to get out of it because they are leading you into a trap. (They will try to get you to say yes or no to trap you.) You don't always have to answer yes or no. You can say "sometimes " or "it depends on the situation..." or "in most cases..." Don't give yes or no answers; explain your answers. If the answer to their question was given in your case, give the same answer that was in your case. Stand firm.

6. Use the words "But..." "in general..." "in most cases..." so that you leave yourself a way out in case they are trying to trap you with your answer.
7. If you don't know the answer to a question, there are a few strategies you can use:
  1. Say "The answer to that question depends on...." But don't just say "it depends," or they will ask "it depends on what??"
  2. Alternatively, say "the answer to that question depends on the situation - Could you give me a specific example?" This way they are forced to get more specific instead of asking broad/vague questions, and it will be easier to see what the answer will be.
  3. If time is about to run out - say there are 5 or 10 seconds left - ask them to rephrase the question. Maybe they will drop it!
8. No matter how hard you try, you will inevitably get trapped at some point and say something that goes completely against your position. Don't get flustered. Remain calm, maintain your countenance, confidence, act as if nothing is wrong and that your opponents questions are not harming your case at all, even if they are. Don't cringe. After CX is over and you turn around with your back to the judge to go back to the table, you can cringe if you want to - that's what I always do - but don't let the judge see.