

Most tournament rules allow debaters to switch positions in rebuttals (in other words, the debater who spoke first in the constructive speeches speaks second in the rebuttals). This latter strategy does, however, confuse judges. Teams wanting to use this strategy should ask the judge's permission before the beginning of the debate round to "switch positions" in rebuttals. In the overwhelming majority of debate rounds, debaters keep the same positions in rebuttals as in constructive speeches.

- *Experience*: The more experienced and more persuasive debater should generally be the second speaker. This is true because the persuasive quality of the final rebuttal speech for each team often determines the outcome of the debate.
- *Rate of speech (speed)*: The first affirmative rebuttal (1AR) is the most difficult one in the debate. This speaker is called upon to answer thirteen minutes worth of negative attacks (the eight minutes of the 2NR and the five minutes of the 1NR) all in one five-minute speech. If key arguments are left unanswered in the 1AR, it might be almost impossible for the affirmative team to win the debate. Accordingly, the faster of the two speakers might need to go first when the team is affirmative. The same criterion holds true for the negative team. The first negative speaker is expected to place arguments into the debate; the second negative speaker tries to gain maximum persuasive impact for these arguments as the debate progresses.

WHAT IS PREPARATION TIME?

Each team in a round of policy debate has a set amount of preparation time. For National Forensic League (NFL) tournaments, the preparation time is five minutes per team. Many state and local tournaments specify smaller amounts of preparation time, so be sure to check the tournament invitation.

If the preparation time is five minutes, this does not mean the speaker receives five minutes before each speech; it means the team has five minutes of total preparation time. If all five minutes are used before the first speech, no preparation time is left for any of the remaining speeches. In that case, you will be expected to rise to speak immediately after the previous speaker takes his seat. If you are not ready, your speech time still begins immediately.

The strategy in the proper use of preparation time is simple—save as much time as possible for the period just before the team's final rebuttal. As you become more experienced in debate, you will discover that you are able to save most of your preparation time for the crucial last rebuttal.