

other speakers to understand that more is to come and that you shouldn't be criticized for issues that you accept as important but haven't yet had time to address.

Laying Solid Foundations

The job of the first speakers is to lay a solid foundation for the debate. If the second speakers are still arguing about, or are required to clarify, what the debate is about, at least one of the opening speakers hasn't done her job properly. In the case of a debate surrounding a particular policy proposal, by the time the first two speakers have finished, everyone in the room should know:

- Exactly what problem is being addressed.
- Exactly what solution is being proposed, including how it will work to address the problem.
- Why the Affirmative team considers the proposal to be an effective solution.
- Why the Negative team has a problem with that, and whether they are proposing an alternative solution (and what it is) or challenging that Affirmative's proposal would work better than the status quo.
- What later speakers are planning to say.
- Key areas of disagreement between the two sides or, at least, between the first two teams in a four-team debate.

The adjudicator should also have heard either one or two arguments in detail on either side of the debate. In short, the debate should have started in earnest.

In the case of a debate over a moral consideration—euthanasia, abortion, assisted suicide, vegetarianism, for example—the two first speakers should have made clear that there are two consistent interpretations of what constitutes a moral position and by what standards the two sides are determining morality. In addition, the speakers should have laid out some substantive arguments.

If both of the opening speakers can pass on to the next speakers concrete cases that are internally consistent and allow for the development of new arguments on the basis of a solid foundation, they have done their jobs well.