

Debaters must be polite and respectful in word and in manner. Judges and audience members listen and take notes, but they do not participate in the cross-examination process.

PURPOSES OF CROSS-EXAMINATION

Cross-examination serves 10 important purposes that all participants must understand because they are at the heart of every debate.³

1. To Obtain Information⁴

The questioner simply seeks information that might be useful later in the debate.

2. To Clarify an Argument for the Debater

The debater asks questions to clarify arguments that she does not understand or to verify her understanding of the argument. She may also ask a question to make the understanding of the argument obvious to the audience.

3. To Clarify an Argument for the Judge

Judges naturally send nonverbal messages that inform debaters if a particular argument is compelling or not. When an argument appears to be less than persuasive, a debater may want to clarify his position so that the judge can better understand it. Conversely, a debater may take advantage of a judge's frustration by using cross-examination to further undermine her opponent's argument.

4. To Commit a Debater to a Position

Debaters try to remain ambiguous to avoid committing to a position that ultimately may damage their case. Cross-examination can force an opponent to commit. For example, if a negative team wishes to argue that the affirmative's plan will damage the economy, then the team must show how the affirmative plan is causally related to economic damage—how it causes deficit spending, market panic, etc. If, for example, a negative speaker asks if the affirmative plan will cost the government money to implement, and the opposing debater responds, "We're not sure of any fiscal expenditures; we don't take a position on that," then the questioner needs to pursue this line of questioning.

5. To Elicit Information Useful in Building an Argument⁵

During cross-examination an opponent may concede information that a debater, or her team, can use to build arguments in later speeches. For example, when asked if the case dealt with an important issue, one affirmative debater was eager to declare that the effects of depleted-uranium bullets (DUBs) were enormous during the Persian Gulf War.⁶ The questioner then asked if the effect of DUBs was in relation to their use. The affirmative responded positively, stating that DUBs were used widely and across the Iraqi countryside. The opposing team, then, without any other evidence, was able to argue effectively that DUBs must have been impor-