



Public Forum Crossfire: 12 Drills.

Crossfire is where debaters sound sharp or lost. These drills and question types let a student and a parent, sibling or teammate practice at the kitchen table in ten-minute sessions.

Crossfire basics

Crossfire is a short period (typically 3 minutes) where debaters ask each other questions directly. Under the NSDA rules the first question in a crossfire must come from the debater who spoke first (in grand crossfire, the first summary speaker). After that, formats differ: the NSDA event page describes alternating questions, while its tournament manual lets either debater ask or answer. In grand crossfire all four debaters take part. Always confirm local conventions with the judge.

A judge may not write down everything said in crossfire, but they hear it, and strong exchanges shape how they view each side. The speeches that follow are where you cash in what you won.

- ♦ Short questions. Aim for under 15 words.
- ♦ Face the judge or the opponent, never read from notes.
- ♦ Be polite and firm. Never interrupt rudely, but do not let long answers eat the time.
- ♦ Use answers later: 'In crossfire, they said...'

Six question types

TYPE	PURPOSE	EXAMPLE STEM
Clarify	Understand their claim	Can you restate your second contention in one sentence?
Source	Check evidence	Who wrote that, and what year?
Link	Test the cause and effect	How exactly does step A lead to step B?
Scope	Find limits	Does that apply to every group or just some?
Trap	Set up a point	Do you agree X is true? Then how does that fit with your claim?
Weighing	Compare importance	Which impact is bigger, yours or ours, and why?

The 12 drills

- 1 Ten questions in sixty seconds.** Partner reads a short case. Student writes ten possible questions in one minute.
- 2 Under fifteen words.** Ask any question and count the words on fingers. Shorten until it fits.
- 3 One-sentence answers.** Partner asks anything; student answers in one sentence, then stops. Practice not rambling.
- 4 The pause.** Before answering, take a calm one-second breath. Builds confidence and prevents rushed mistakes.
- 5 Clarify, then challenge.** Ask one clarifying question, then one that tests a weak point.
- 6 Source check.** Practice asking for author and year, then asking whether the evidence says exactly what the speaker claims.

