



Cross-Examination: 12 Drills.

Twelve short drills for students and parents to practice at home. Each takes 5 to 10 minutes and builds one cross-examination skill.

What cross-examination is for

Cross-examination (CX) is a three-minute questioning period after each constructive speech in the standard format (check your league). It is not a second speech. Judges generally expect anything useful from CX to be used in a later speech, so use CX to **clarify, expose and set up** arguments.

ROLE	GOAL	HABIT TO BUILD
Questioner	Get short, clear answers that help you later	Ask closed questions, stay polite, keep control of time
Answerer	Defend your position without giving away more than needed	Answer directly, stay calm, say "I'll address that in my speech" when appropriate

Twelve drills

- 1 One-word answers.** A partner asks yes/no questions on any topic. Answer in one word. Builds precision.
- 2 The funnel.** Start with broad questions, narrow to one specific admission in 4 questions.
- 3 What was the card?** Practice politely asking for author, year and the main claim of a piece of evidence.
- 4 Find the gap.** Read a short case aloud. The questioner finds one thing that was not explained.
- 5 No-fishing rule.** Every question must lead to a point you will use in your speech. Say the point aloud after.
- 6 Short answers, no gifts.** Answerer gives the shortest honest answer. Questioner tracks how many extra facts were volunteered.
- 7 Polite interrupt.** Practice stopping a long answer with "Thank you, my next question..." without sounding rude.
- 8 Clarify the plan.** Ask five questions that make the plan text clear: who, what, when, how paid, how enforced.
- 9 Link questions.** Negative practice: ask questions that tie the plan to your disadvantage in three steps.
- 10 Answer the hard one.** Questioner asks the toughest question they can. Answerer practices a calm, honest reply.
- 11 Eye contact.** Questioner faces the judge, not the opponent, while asking. Builds presence.
- 12 Full mock CX.** Run a timed three-minute session. Switch roles. Debrief with the checklist below.

Sample question chain

Here is a made-up chain to show the funnel idea, using the library-hours example from our case guide.

QUESTION	POSSIBLE ANSWER	WHAT YOU LEARNED
Does your plan apply to every high school?	Yes.	Scope is broad
Who pays for the extra hours?	The district.	It costs money
Does the district have unused money now?	Not sure.	Opens a cost argument
So money would come from other programs?	Possibly.	Link to a disadvantage

Debrief checklist

- ☐ Questions were short and had one idea each
- ☐ I got at least one answer I can use in my speech
- ☐ I did not argue during CX
- ☐ I stayed polite and calm
- ☐ I used my full time
- ☐ My partner and I agreed on which answers to note

MY BEST QUESTION THIS WEEK

Want a plan built around your debater?
Scholar Coach coaches can run live cross-examination practice. Book a free consultation at the link below.

Built from public guidance: NSDA High School Unified Manual, 2021-2022 edition (speechanddebate.org) · DebateUS: The Basic Structure of Policy Debate. Rules change by league and tournament, so always confirm against your tournament invitation and current league rules.

NOTES

Want a plan built around **your** debater?
Book a free consultation. The short intake takes about a minute and opens right away.

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