

**2005-2006 ATLANTA MIDDLE SCHOOL DEBATE LEAGUE  
TIPS FOR FLOWING**

**Why is there a new emphasis in flowing for the middle school league?**

Debate requires refutation. Refutation requires detailed knowledge of arguments made by the opposing team as well as a detailed account of arguments made by your own side in the debate. Our hope is that the middle school league will make a big step up in flowing skills that will help the quality of the middle school debates and better prepare students for high school debate.

**Flowing Tips**

- 1) **Don't fool yourself! You need to learn how to flow!** In very early stages, debaters will claim that they can remember all of the arguments or that they have discovered a new method of taking notes that is better. However, as debaters who resist flowing discover, their old methods no longer work in more advanced debates and they end up losing to teams that can flow. Any advanced debater can tell you that flowing is an absolutely critical skill. Do not try to fake it because there is no substitute!
- 2) **Don't ever give up and stop writing.** When flowing a fast debater do not stop and listen. If you miss a response, go on to the next response. You can always ask the debater in cross-examination for your missed responses. Remember, the more you practice, the easier flowing gets.
- 3) **Use your partner.** If you cannot flow all of your arguments before you speak, hand your flow to your partner during cross-examination and have them fill in your flow for you. Use the other team's prep time to talk to your partner about arguments you might have missed.
- 4) **Use symbols and abbreviations.** It is impossible to get down every little thing in a debate, so you will have to come up with abbreviations and symbols for common words.
- 5) **Do not rely on pre-scripted speeches.** The 1AC is pre-prepared and to some extent, so is the 1NC. The 2AC may also have some pre-prepared answers to disadvantages. Otherwise, debate is about refutation and original critical thinking. Some novice debates can be won with pre-scripted rebuttals because the other team is also confused about flowing, but that strategy will backfire at higher levels. Pre-scripted speeches also short-change students because they will not learn some of the critical thinking skills that are unique to debate. Instead, brainstorm possible answers as a team and prepare flexible briefs that can be used in different ways, depending on the arguments made by the other team.
- 6) **Practice!** There are lots of exercises that you can do to improve flowing skills (which will also translate into excellent note taking skills in your academic classes):
  - a. **Brainstorm symbols and abbreviations for common theory and topic terms.**
  - b. **"Flow" music.** Start out with slower songs and work up to songs with faster lyrics. Rap is an especially good way to practice flowing.
  - c. **Watch others speak.** If you have a round off, go and flow a varsity debate. If there is a practice debate after school, go to watch and flow. If your team has a videotape of a debate, watch it and flow.
  - d. **Practice with your partner.** One of you can practice reading the 1AC or the DA shells while the other flows.
  - e. **Practice with a friend or family member.** Even if they do not read cards for you, a friend can read a list of things out of a textbook or something like the grocery list and see how many you can get down.