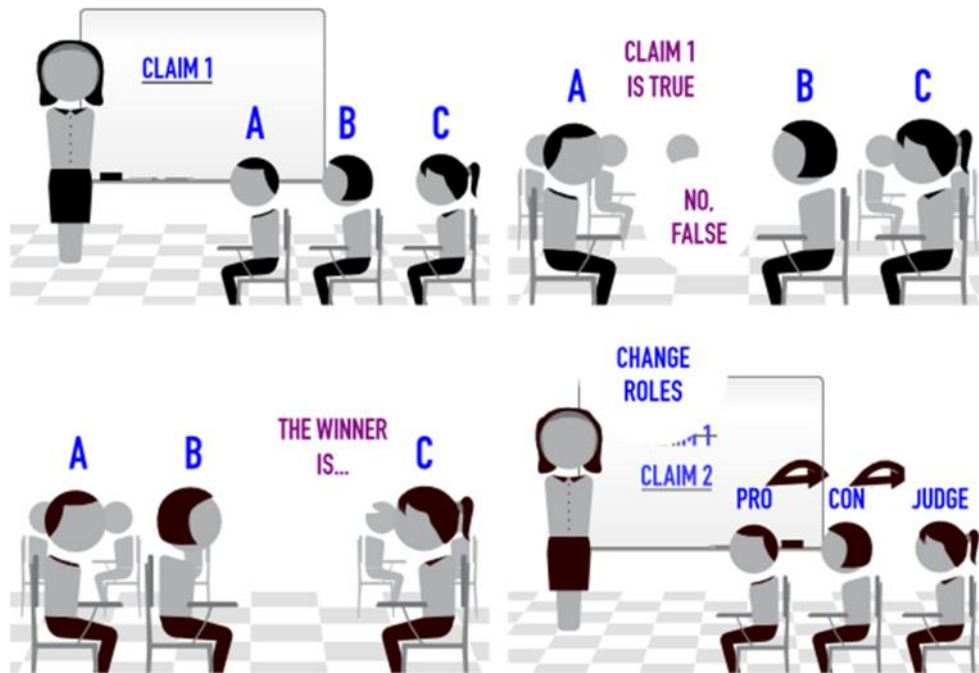


## Round Robin Debates



The name of this activity refers to the fact that students take turns being advocates and judges, switching roles after each round of debating. They work in groups of three, with each person in a group designated “A” or “B” or “C.” The teacher supplies a prompt, and everyone assigned to be person A in their group stands simultaneously to deliver a short speech in defense of that prompt. Then person B in each group stands to refute the prompt while person C decides who wins (based on criteria provided by the teacher). Persons A and B may give a round of rebuttal speeches if desired, but when the debate is over and C has named a winner it is time to change both the prompt and the roles: for the next debate, B and C will argue while A judges. Throughout the activity, multiple students will be speaking simultaneously, so keeping voices to an appropriate level so that only the other two students in the group can hear is paramount.

The criteria for judging in these debates will vary. Some teachers might have students judge holistically or generate their own criteria for picking a winner within each group. Others might implement a point system in which the judge awards one point each time a speaker cites evidence from a text, two points each time someone directly refutes an opponent’s argument, and so on. In this way teachers can ensure that the Round Robin debates directly fulfill their specific skill objectives for each day, week, or unit. For purposes of scaffolding and accountability, judges can also be provided with worksheets that will help them make their decisions (and be graded as classwork at the end of the day).

Round Robin Debates allow all students in a class to debate simultaneously in small-group, low-stakes situations. They also place the burden of choosing a winner on the students, who must

understand and articulate what exactly constitutes a winning argument. Finally, this activity forces students to argue for positions they do not choose themselves--a valuable exercise in critiquing their own assumptions.

Round Robins help students gain in-depth understanding of specific issues. They might develop original arguments on a single text or topic: for example, argue that a asexual reproduction is a better evolutionary strategy than sexual reproduction. Or they might take a broader look at a topic, for example comparing the chemical properties of different elements to determine which chemical would make the most impressive addition to a fireworks display.

Step	Teacher Move	Student Move
1	Place students in groups of three and designate each group member "A," "B," or "C."	
2	Provide a prompt: a controversial statement.	
3	Explain the judging criteria and how to record points in the debate (whether for using textual evidence, responding to an argument, or something else).	
4	Optionally, set a timer for 30 seconds of "prep time" to ensure that every student has a chance to process the task at hand before beginning it.	All, if prep time is given: make sure you understand the prompt and can anticipate the types of arguments people might make about it. A, if prep time is given: prepare to defend the prompt in a 30-second speech.
5	Set a timer for 30 seconds. While it runs, monitor the class to make sure each group is on task.	A: stand and defend the prompt in a 30-second speech. B: listen and prepare to refute the statement. C: listen, take notes, and award points as appropriate. All persons assigned "A" will be speaking simultaneously.
6	Set a timer for 30 seconds. While it runs, monitor the class to make sure each group is on task.	B: stand and refute the prompt in a 30-second speech. A: listen and prepare to rebut B's opening arguments. C: listen, take notes, and award points as

		appropriate. All persons assigned “B” will be speaking simultaneously.
7	Set a timer for 30 seconds. While it runs, monitor the class to make sure each group is on task.	A: stand and rebut B’s opening arguments in a 30-second speech. B: listen and prepare to rebut A's opening arguments. C: listen, take notes, and award points as appropriate.
8	Set a timer for 30 seconds. While it runs, monitor the class to make sure each group is on task.	B: stand and rebut A’s opening arguments in a 30-second speech. A: listen. C: listen, take notes, and award points as appropriate.
9	Invite or call on a judge (“C”) to share.	C: explain which side won in your group and why. Talk about arguments rather than about the people who made them.
10	Repeat step 9 as desired.	Repeat step 9 as required.
11	Repeat steps 2–9 with another prompt if desired.	Repeat steps 2–9 as required with person A judging, person B defending the prompt, and person C refuting it.
12	Repeat steps 2–9 with yet another prompt if desired.	Repeat steps 2–9 as required with person B judging, person C defending the prompt, and person A refuting it.