

## Points of Information in World Schools Debate Activity

First, begin with a discussion of how Points of Information (POIs) are used in World Schools Debate. Follow along with the USA Development Team's discussion [at this link](#).

Topics to cover:

1. There are two types of POIs
  - a. Clarification
  - b. Strategic questions meant to be argumentative
2. POIs should be concise
  - a. You have a 15 second limit to ask your question
  - b. Asking concise questions also gives you a strategic advantage. A concise POI can catch them off-guard and not give them a long period of time to think about a good answer.
3. Ask meaningful questions
  - a. Can this POI be used to set your team up for an argument later?
  - b. What specific wording should you use to make sure the answer is what you want?
4. Strategies for responding
  - a. Don't be defensive or attack the legitimacy of their question. Answer it as directly as possible.
  - b. Use body language to remain poised. Do not cross your arms or roll your eyes.
  - c. Remember that you are not communicating with the person who asks the question; you are communicating with the judge.
  - d. If you get a POI that's off base:
    - i. You can tell them their question is irrelevant; however, there is always a risk that their question IS relevant, and you are not understanding.
    - ii. You may signal to the judge that you do not believe the question is relevant, but still take time to answer in case you are wrong. Try the phrase, "if you take them at their highest ground", and then answer the best version of what their question could have been.
  - e. Statements can be more difficult to answer than a question; be prepared to think on your feet.
  - f. Think about a verbal transition into a POI from your speech and then back into your speech after you have answered the POI.
5. When people rise for a POI, you have three choices.
  - a. Wave them down
  - b. Take the POI at that moment
  - c. Signal to them that you will take their POI in a few seconds.
    - i. You want to be in control – take things on your own time table.
    - ii. Don't make them wait very long. Finish your thought or sentence.

6. Aim to take 2 POIs in each speech
  - a. Do one late and do one early
  - b. Try to control where you want to stop and answer a question. Ask yourself: where is a good stopping point in my speech?
  - c. Do not stop and ask the team if they have a POI unless they are not rising to ask them (this shows the judge you would like engagement!) or if you have forgotten to take one until the end.

Activity:

After questions are answered, split students into groups of two or three. One student should read a substantive of their choice, while another rises for as many quality POIs as they can come up with. Then, they will switch roles. The third student or a coach may look for the following things:

- Does the student taking POIs lose their speaking flow when a POI is offered? Could they improve by telling the opponent to wait until they reach a point in the speech that is natural for them to pause? Remind them to finish their sentence before answering.
- Does the student taking POIs respond by speaking directly to the judge? Make sure their body language and eye contact is not directed toward the speaking offering the POI.
- Does the student taking POIs reply efficiently and effectively? Should their answer be more direct? Could they shorten the length of time they take to respond?
- Are the POIs being offered setting the student up for an argument effectively? Do they need to change the wording to be more specific?
- Are the POIs being offered less than 15 seconds? Could they be more concise or rhetorically powerful?

Remember to view the example rounds on the resource table at [speechanddebate.org/resources](http://speechanddebate.org/resources) to see POIs put in action!