

# Lesson 5: Final Focus

By the time you reach the Final Focus speech (2 mins), a lot will have been said in the round, and both you and your opponent's arguments will have been attacked and defended numerous times. The Final Focus speech is your last opportunity to cut through the overlapping layers of the debate and explain to your judge why you've won the round.

## **Crystallizing the Round**

“Crystalizing” means separating the round into key areas and highlighting reasons why you win each place of contention. At this point in the round both you and your opponent should each only be extending one contention (this is called collapsing) which should make it easy to organize the speech. The point of crystallizing is to clearly communicate to the judge what points of clash the round boils down too. Then you need to say why you win your most important argument and why you make it impossible for your opponents to win their most important argument. For example, let's say the topic is “Resolved: dogs are better than cats,” and you are on the negative side. Your opponent's most important contention is “dogs are more ferocious than cats and can therefore protect you,” and your most important contention is “cats require less expensive food.” When crystalizing you would make it clear to the judge that these are the only two arguments they need to evaluate to pick the winner of the round. So for example “There are two key areas of contention in this round. First, let's start my opponent's contention that dogs are better protectors. We clearly win this point because of x. Second, let's go to our contention on food (extend contention). We also clearly win this argument because of y.” By framing the round you make it easier for the judge to evaluate because they only need to look at a small fraction of the arguments originally introduced into the round. In other words, “Crystalizing the Round” is distilling the round to only the bigger picture ideas of the round and clarifying why you win each point.

## **3 Tips for the best Final Focus**

- A. **Signposting** - Explaining what section of their case you are attacking/talking about to make sure that your judge can easily flow the round (if a judge doesn't understand or can't write down a point, it doesn't matter how brilliant it is because it won't help you in round)
  - a. Moving on to their second contention...
  - b. Now, go to our case...
  - c. We give three responses...
- B. **Implicating responses** - Explain what your response does, WHY is it important in the context of their argument?
  - a. This (response) takes out their first contention because...
  - b. This means you cannot vote for this contention because...
- C. **Ballot directive language** - Ballot Directive Language is when you directly address your judge to tell them how they should view and judge the round. This is strategic because instead of hoping that the judge sees the round the way you see the round, you can specifically tell them what you want them to do.
  - a. We win the round because... (similar to Crystallizing the Round)
  - b. The most important part of this round is...
  - c. ... is the most important impact in the round...

- d. This is the best place to vote...
- e. You should feel super uncomfortable voting for this argument.....
- f. Check your flow, they have absolutely no responses to this argument....

### **Recipe for the Winning Final**

1. Extend - Remind the judge of the argument you collapsed on by quickly summarizing it (make sure you extend both the warrant and the impact). It's way easier to vote for an argument when you are constantly reminded of it.
2. Frontlining - Respond to any remaining responses on your arguments - it will be way easier for the judge to vote for your arguments if your opponents have no remaining responses to it.
3. Weigh - Say why your contention is the most important contention in the round by comparing the importance and impact of the remaining two arguments. REMEMBER: to win a debate you do not need to win every single argument, you just need to win your contention and the weighing that your contention is the most important argument in the round.
4. Extending Responses - Remember to remind your judge of the key responses that you made on their case. It will be way harder for the judge to vote for your opponent's arguments when you still have a bunch of unanswered critiques on their case.