

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING EFFECTIVE EXTEMP QUESTIONS

- I. Focus on significance (analysis) over occurrence (event)
Bad Question: Did the president meet with Kim Jong-un?
Better Question: Should the president meet with Kim Jong-un?
- II. Establish a goal for use of open or closed questions. For example:
 - a. Only use closed-ended questions, or
 - b. Use one open-ended question per speaker.
 - c. Focus on equitable distribution of types and topics. Speaker two, for example, ought to have the same opportunity as speaker eight to receive a well-structured question.
- III. Never repeat a question within a tournament.
- IV. Decide on a strategy prior to writing questions. For example:
 - a. Domestic Round
 - i. Mid-term Elections
 - ii. Washington (swamp) or Budget questions
 - iii. State or Local topics
 - b. Economic Round
 - i. Unemployment and the Economy
 - ii. Business and Industry
 - iii. Currency and Markets
 - c. International Round
 - i. Euro-zone
 - ii. Asia and the Middle East
 - iii. Africa and the Americas (non-US)
- V. Ask one question. Narrow the field to offer better analysis.
Bad Question: Should democrats be focused on immigration or the president's character while campaigning for the mid-term elections?
Better Question: Has the blue wave crested?
- VI. Consider the students: Avoid writing at the last minute, for your sake and the students. Questions ought to offer broad analysis. Questions need to be fairly worded. Questions should be recent but clearly understood. Here are some example of poor or unfair questions:
 - a. Was the Pope's visit to New York a success? (He landed six hours before the round in which this was asked.)
 - b. Was OAS wrong to suspend Honduras? (Concerns a coup from 2009. OAS should probably be explained.)
 - c. Will the Tigers make a final stand? (Tamil Tigers – terrorist group not a high school football team.)