

# Direct Questioning in a Nutshell

NSDA now requires **direct questioning** to be used in all sessions of the District Congress. In direct questioning, questioners cross-examine speakers in 30 second blocks. It is a process that requires the Presiding Officer (PO) to keep accurate records and time. The following guidelines should help POs maintain control of direct questioning periods.

## Length of Questioning Periods

Following the authorship/sponsorship and first negative speech, the questioning period is **2 minutes**. Following all other speeches, the questioning period is **1 minute**. Each questioner is recognized for a maximum of **30 seconds**. No extensions or alterations are permitted.

Time starts when the PO recognizes a questioner and runs continuously. This means that the last questioner recognized may end up with less than 30 seconds available for cross-examination. POs should make an effort to recognize questioners as quickly as possible to maximize time for questioning.

## Questioning Recency

In direct questioning, the PO must maintain and follow a separate recency chart for questioners. Questioning recency follows a similar system as speaking recency:

- The questioner recognized the fewest times, or not at all, must be chosen first.
- If there is a tie in number of recognitions, the questioner whose last questioning period was longest ago must be chosen.
- If multiple questioners rise who have not been recognized, use the recency list, *bottom to top*.

However, questioning recency and speaking recency are to be kept **totally separate**. Priority resets (and the recency list is replaced) at the start of each session.

## Conduct During Cross-Examination

The PO selects questioners; the chamber may not suspend the rules on this point. Once recognized, the questioner has 30 seconds to ask questions and receive responses from the speaker. Cross-debate and multiple-part questions are permitted.

The questioner may cut off the speaker to ask their next question if the speaker is engaging in excessive oration. However, the speaker should not be limited to a “yes” or “no” answer, especially to potentially loaded questions. A speaker may identify a question as loaded or otherwise inappropriate and refuse to answer it, in which case the questioner may ask another question if there is time remaining.

If the questioner engages in extended oration or prefacing, the PO should suggest that a question be asked. If the questioner engages in any form of abusive conduct, the PO should cut them off, direct them to sit down, and select a new questioner.

When the questioner’s 30 seconds have elapsed, the questioner has no further questions, or the full questioning time has expired, **whichever comes first**, the PO should gavel to signal the end of cross-examination.