

CONSTRUCTING AN ARGUMENT (FOR ALL SPEAKERS)



Three of the most common approaches to preparing and presenting any single argument within a case is:

OPTION A:

WHAT is the point?

WHY is it true?

WHEN has it happened before?

WHO cares? (*/Why is it important!*)

OPTION B:

Problem/Frame

What is the cause/ root of the problem?

How can the situation be changed for the better?

What would the result/goal be?

Weigh up how important this example is in the debate (i.e. is it your main argument, a supporting point, an aside?).

OPTION C:

Classic Essay Style ("REAL"):

Reason (What is the reason behind the argument/point?)

Evidence (What evidence supports your reasoning?)

Analysis (Why is this a strong/useful argument compared to the opposition's?)

Link (How can this be connected to your next point or concluding summary?)

REMEMBER:

Whatever you say, your opponents will be trying to challenge you on:

1. Why is it true?

2. Why is it important?

APPROACHES TO REBUTTAL (FOR ALL SPEAKERS)



LEVELS OF REBUTTAL:

1. It's not true.
2. Even if it were true, it would not be important.
3. Despite everything, it's still outweighed by other arguments/considerations presented.

TACTICS:

Counterframing:

During constructive arguments, PREEMPT OPPONENTS' POINTS by including phrasing in your own arguments that shifts meaning and understanding to cover yourself from potential attacks.

Disproving assumptions:

During a rebuttal section, you can CHALLENGE THE ASSUMPTIONS that an argument (or entire case!) is based on (e.g. the goodness/badness of something, the freedom of something, the right of something, the nature of something).

Critiquing solutions:

You can HIGHLIGHT TECHNICAL FLAWS in suggested processes, mechanisms etc.. Equally, you can FIND LOGICAL FLAWS in the chain of evidence, analysis and solutions pursued by your opponents.

Questioning impact:

Shine a light on the suggested impact and REVEAL THE EFFECT AS LESSER than expected. Also, pointing out potential unwanted or surprising NEGATIVE IMPACTS of the point.

Co-opting arguments:

Piggyback on/HIJACK AN ARGUMENT made by your opponents and demonstrate how it, in fact, supports *your* case, not your opponents'.

REMEMBER :

The point you are challenging must meet the burden of truth in two regards:

1. Why is it true?
2. Why is it important?

THE GOLDEN RULE:

THE CHARITABLE READING PRINCIPLE dictates that you must always understand opponents' points in the fairest way possible, in the way they clearly want them to be understood. Intentional misreading or mean-spirited characterisation will be punished in grading.