

Building a Case

A. Goal of the lesson

Debaters will understand basic structure of policy motion case.

B. Activities

Discussion (10min.)

Start with summary of different types of motions. Let the debaters tell you the difference between principle and policy motions. Ask them how what effect will different character of the policy motion have for their case?

Lecture (15min.)

Lecture based on discussions with debaters. Starting point is the question „what are policies introduced for ...?“ Then follow according to lecture material below. Show all steps on the beforehand chosen motion (e.g. THW pay fathers more to stay home on parental leave). Make sure students understand that strength of the policy case comes from logical connections between all four steps.

Exercise (20min.)

Divide debaters into small groups of three to four. Give every group four policy motions. Each groups should define problem and cause which the motion solves, and explanation how policy works towards it. Groups are comparing their explanations and trainer is making sure defined problems, causes and policies are properly and logically connected.

C. Preparation

It is helpful to include motions with which debaters are familiar in exercises , for example from the most recent tournaments and debates.

Also motion chosen for illustration of the policy case structure during the lecture should be chosen in a way that policy is not simply prohibition of the problematic practice (e.g. Problem is hate speech and policy is hate speech prohibition), but rather leads to eradication of the problematic phenomena (e.g. Problem is gender inequality at workplace and policy is higher parental leave benefits for fathers).

D. Hints

When picking the motion for exercises, try to think of possible explanations concerning different parts of the structure yourself. That will help in possible case of your debaters not having responses during exercises, and also during explanation of the structure.

E. Verification

When recapping, give debaters a chance to repeat the parts of policy case structure with brief explanations. Try to ask them why the structure and each part of it helps them to develop strong case.

F. Theory

Sometimes debaters come up with several arguments which are supporting their side of the debate, but still have problem either to structure them in a way that arguments support one another, or most of the arguments are consequences of the debated policy. Both situations are not optimal. In the first situation, debaters are not employing potential of the arguments in the most effective way. In the second situation, they are omitting important dimension of the debate which can prove to be crucial or decisive (depending on the debate itself). What they lack is strategic approach.

One of the basic strategies to organize case is to follow the fourfold structure of: problem (1), cause (2), plan (3) and benefits (4).

This strategy is suitable mainly for beginners. It helps them in three aspects:

First, it helps them to mould their ideas about the motion into coherent structure, to put certain supporting arguments to their proper place in the case. Second, by following this structure debaters are more aware of the logical connections between different parts of their case and therefore more prepared to develop arguments to defend those logical connections. Third, debaters will be easily alerted to the fact that they are missing an important part of the case and that they need to come up with it to strengthen their position in debate.

So let us now take a closer look at four steps on the way to put together sound case.

When you are beginner debating policy motion, you are often tempted to start with writing down positive consequences of the policy, and then later develop them into arguments. It makes sense, because you are trying to prove that the application of the policy will bring positive effects to the society. But similar approach is often utilized also by opposing teams – they are also trying to come up with negative consequences of your policy.

But to compare both cases (yours and that of the opposing team) you don't need just to measure consequences, but also reasons why one type of the consequence is more important for the debate than the other. You should present a reasoning by providing judges with problem your policy is aiming at. Such a **problem** is ideally commonly recognized as something that worries society and audience can relate to it. It will prepare room for your arguments as it will provide you reason why you are proposing to change the status-quo.

However, the problem can be approached from many sides and your opposition definitely will respond with claims that the problem can be solved in different ways. That is why you need the second step of policy case structure - the **cause of the problem**. Cause of the problem is crucial in connecting problem to the policy itself. It has to explain the root of the problem and make it clear that problem is mostly caused by it.

Since the policy is supposed to be designed to solve the problem, in the next step of policy case you should clearly draw a connection to the cause of the problem and

explain the mechanism /model – in other words a **plan**. It should also explain ways that could be used to deliver expected consequences.

After connecting the problem you are solving, cause of the problem and policy you are proposing, it is time to assure the audience about **benefits** that should be delivered. Do remember that you should first point out benefits which counter the problem you introduced, as this is the main issue you want to be considered in the debate. That being said, it doesn't mean you are not supposed to support your case with other benefits your policy will bring even if those are not directly connected to the problem you are concerned with.