

Opposition Tactics

A. Goal of the lesson

Debaters will be able to build a opposition case during preparation.

They will also understand how opposition cases are advanced and challenged during the debates

B. Activities

Lecture (10-20 min)

Prepare a lecture offering the basic facets of the content. Use one of three approaches:

- A. Follow the theory pointers in this lesson plan in „F. Theory“ part;
- B. Follow pre-existing theories from theory books. Suggestions are given in this lesson plan in „C. Preparation“ part;
- C. Base your lecture on observed student performance and student questions.

This approach can be synthesised with the two approaches above.

The core aim of the lecture is to provide students with models of thinking they can use to make strategies for preparing and executing a *debate case*, a set of arguments that forms a convincing whole for their side of the motion. The secondary aim is to choose strategies during the debate to advance their side of the motion.

Case Prep (30 min)

- a. Divide the students on groups of 2-4 participants
- b. Give the groups a motion and 15 minutes to prepare their side of the case.
- c. After preparation each group needs to present their case in 3 minutes.
- d. Discuss the presented cases. Participants choose which case they find more compelling. They discuss possible challenges from proposition and how their cases can deal with these challenges.
- e. Debrief: did the theory help them building the opposition case? What challenges did students experience in applying the theories?

SPAR Debate (20 min) (*Spontaneous Argumentation Debate)

- a. Divide the students in 2 groups. One group is in favour, one group is against a motion. Each person is paired to another student The motion is the same as in the Case Prep exercise.
- b. Give groups 5 minutes to prepare statements proposing and opposing the motion.
- c. The opposition member gives 2-minute opening statements.
- d. Students prepare counter-responses for 30 seconds.
- e. Students engage in a 3-minute discussion on proposition responses and opposition counters.
- f. Student get 30 seconds to prepare closing statements, where they prepare their main take-away on the quality of the other sides' case.
- g. Public debrief. Students give their main takeaways to the class. The class discusses the strengths and weaknesses of the case, and checks whether the case fits all the tips and tricks given by the theoretical model.

C. Preparation

Read, if desired, debate guide books on tactics. We would recommend the [MAD Guide to Debating](#) by Tim Sonnreich (page 39 – „Part B...“), but Steven L. Johnson’s [Winning Debates](#) and Neill Harvey-Smith’s [Introduction to British Parliamentary debate](#) (all available from IDEA Press) provide good introductions as well.

Alternatively, read the theory section given to this lesson plan or build your own.

Pick one motion that is deep, accessible, and interesting. A former impromptu round at World Schools is a perfect candidate.

D. Hints

- This exercise requires a lot of moving parts and concepts. Be wary that students may not pick up all information perfectly, and keep referring to these concepts in future sessions.
- Always ask for a lot of verifications during theory lectures to ensure students get familiar with the introduced concepts.

E. Verification

For trainer:

- What activity/example/discussion produced best results at this lesson?

- What was the biggest problem during the lesson? How can I avoid/prevent it in future?

- Did I avoid/prevent the biggest problem which occurred the last time? If no, why?

F. Theory

Opposition Overview

Opposition is a game of chess. The first thing to note about Opposition is that you will need to guess your Proposition case, as arguments may become effective or ineffective contingent on what exact case Proposition decides to run. The second thing to note is that Opposition can strategically choose which parts of a case they can respond to. The third thing to note is that Opposition can balance between suggesting why the other side is ineffective or harmful, and why their own world (often the Status Quo) is better. We will go to each of these three parts step-by-step.

What is your Proposition?

One way to do this theory session is to refer to the discussion on soft versus hard model in Proposition Tactics, which is why I’d recommend running Proposition Tactics before Opposition Tactics.

What do you Oppose?

Opposition can run two variations.

Standard Conflict Model – Negative Variety

☺ -> ☹

☺ = the Status Quo according to Opposition. A world wherein more is good than wrong.

-> = the Mechanism/Policy. Opposition will argue it is ineffective at solving the

problem proposition seeks to tackle.

☹ = the World after the Mechanism. Opposition will argue this world has been given problems more severe than the solutions Proposition has argued for.

What do you Defend?

The second variation:

Comparative drawbacks

a. Step 1: what does the world you defend look like? Is it the Status Quo, or do you want to come up with a mutually exclusive solution to that of proposition? (For instance: if proposition wants a carbon tax to combat climate change, do you support on opposition large subsidies for renewable energy?)

(a good trick to create a world you wish to defend is to try a „filter“. Check the MAD guide to debating for a longer discussion on „filters“).

b. Do you want to say that proposition is ineffective, or actually causing harms? An ineffective proposition necessitates your world to provide large benefits! Otherwise you have marginalised, but not negated the other side.

