

Introduction



What is an argument? We know that arguments form the backbone of a Debater's stand on a particular motion. We also know that the arguments are directed to the judges with the intent of making them agree with a particular stance on the motion. Thus, arguments are communications directed at judges with the intent of influencing them. An argument is best opened with a label, which highlights what the argument is about. After that, the speakers will have to give an explanation, using logical links, as to why their position is correct. Next, they will have to use examples to prove that their explanation and links apply to real life. Finally, they will link the argument back to the motion. The flow of the arguments should look like this:

Label of Argument



Explanation and logic



Primary Example

(This is the most salient or obvious example to support your argument.)



Link example to logic



Secondary Example

(This is intended as a follow up to the primary example to show a trend or pattern developing. This is also to avoid allowing the other team to say that you are using an isolated example.)



Link to the Motion

The Label



The label should immediately identify what the argument is and how it relates to the motion. It should encapsulate the argument to follow within a single sentence and make it clear at the start of the argument what the speaker will elaborate on.

To ensure that a label is representative of the argument and addresses the motion, a good tip is to connect the label to the motion using the word “because” and see if the sentence still makes sense. For example, a speaker wishes to argue in favour of the death penalty based on its value to the justice system in deterring crime and considers the following three labels:

- a. Justice
- b. Value to Justice system
- c. Deters crime.

An application of the test above readily shows which label is the best. “THW support the death penalty because of justice” does not make too much sense. “THW support the death penalty because of its value to the justice system” makes more sense. However, it remains vague. “THW support the death penalty because it deters crime” will be the best approach, since it clearly signals that the ensuring argument will be.

Tip on Pre-labels

Some debaters use “pre-labels” for stylistic purposes. This will involve the use of quotes or phrases with a flourish to introduce the argument. For instance, an argument on the dangers of technology may be pre-labelled as the “Rage against the Machine” point and an argument on nuclear disarmament could be pre-labelled as “Turning Swords into Plowshares.” This technique is perfectly acceptable as long as the speakers

- a. do not waste time doing so, and
- b. remember to use an actual label immediately after the pre-label.

The Explanation and Links:



The Examples

Arguments are only theories until they can be supported by examples. Examples show that the

argumentation applies to the real world and that there is precedence for the case being made by the debaters. Without examples within a debate, it will be very difficult for a Debater to score high on content.

Types of Examples

Prominent Case

This is the most common type of example used in debate and makes use of a famous incident or case to support the argument. For instance, in arguing about the dangers of nuclear power due to the high risks of meltdowns, the debaters will cite the case of Chernobyl. These examples are easily recognized by the judges and audience and readily help to make the argument appear more real and vivid.



Trends & Statistics

This technique involves the use of a series of cases or statistics to showcase a trend. For instance, to showcase the dangers of nuclear power, debaters can cite how many nuclear accidents had taken place over the last two decades. Debaters will have to be precise with the

statistics used here, as judges and opponents are well aware of the possibility that the statistics may have been made up.



Proof by authority

This method resorts to the use of authority figures within a related field to support the argument. For instance, to show that nuclear power is dangerous, debaters may cite studies conducted by the Nuclear Energy Institute or the International Atomic Energy Agency. Using such examples could be problematic if the opponents are able to cast doubt on the credibility of the “experts.” Furthermore, in most cases, only the opinions and findings of these experts are reflected, and they may not be historically verifiable facts.



Proof by analogy

This technique makes reference to another subject with similar traits in order to support the argument. For instance, nuclear power could be compared to crude oil in that both will damage the environment if released into the open. This approach is useful when trying to explain a

particularly difficult argument and a simplification will help to get the idea across better. However, this approach can always be attacked by an opponent showing that these two examples are not the same and are not related. Thus, this technique should only be used as a last resort.



Hypothetical examples

These refers to the use of possible scenarios to try to support the arguments. For instance, the speaker outlines the dangers of nuclear technology by stating that it could destroy all of humanity. However, since this is only a hypothesis, it is difficult to use it to support an argument.



Do's and Don'ts of Examples



Do Have Variety

Many debaters stick to a certain region or timeframe for examples during a debate. They should avoid doing this. For instance, a team should not only cite examples from the United States. They should give examples from various countries to show that their argument is universal.

Do Use New Examples

Many debaters re-use examples that were already used by their teammates. This should be avoided as they will not get high enough content scores based on their inability to produce new examples.

Don't Use Examples as Logic

Some speakers go directly to the example when arguing without having the principal logic point articulated first. This allows the opponents to just attack the example easily in order to defeat the argument.

Don't Lead with Examples

Some speakers begin the argument with examples and then try to follow them up with the logic links. This method tends to be problematic as the lack of time at the end sometimes forces the

argumentative points to be dropped.

Do Explain Examples

Some debaters merely name the examples and then move on, assuming that the judges will automatically know what the example refers to. This again will lead to a lack of content scores because the Debaters have yet to demonstrate how the examples actually work and if they actually support the argument.

Link to Motion



At the conclusion of each argument, Debaters should link the point back to the motion. This will allow the Debaters to establish the relevance of the argument to the motion and demonstrate that these are not being raised in a vacuum. Judges will thus see that the speakers are able to show not only that the points raised are valid on their own but that they support or oppose the motion as well.

For instance, in a debate about the censorship of the arts, a speaker cannot just deliver an argument on the importance of free speech and leave it hanging. There is a need to show that free speech is important and that censorship of the arts will lead to the violation of this particular right. In debates where the link back to the motion had been absent, it is often not surprising to find that the debaters are unable even to recall the exact words of the motion.

Special Section on Different Analysis Paradigms in Constructive



William Fernandez, Co-Founder, Apple, Singaporean, College Debate Team 2014, Argued in the 2014 Singaporean National Debate Competition, Singaporean Regional Finals

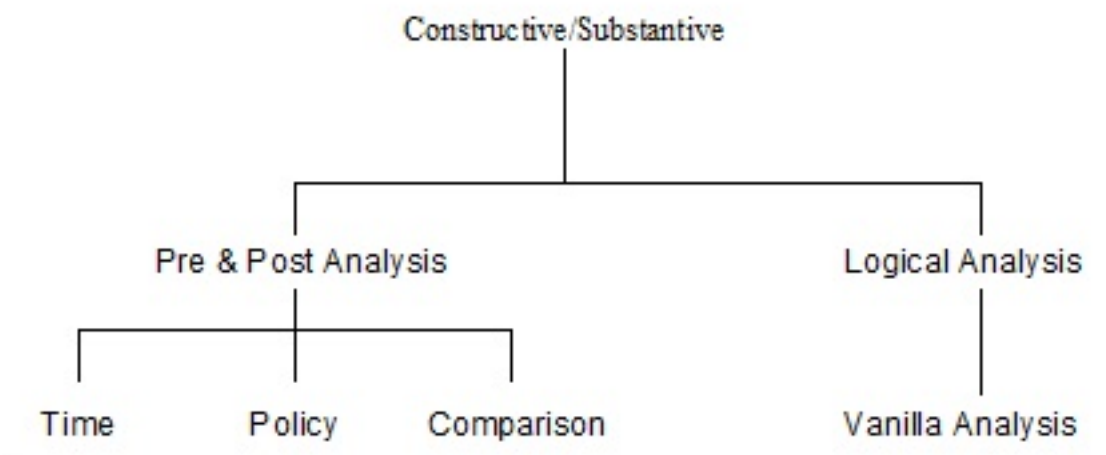
How to come up with a constructive/substantive?

1. Think about the issues related to the motion
2. Think about the individuals/societies/groups related to the motion
3. Think about the ramifications of the motion to individuals/societies/groups
4. Put your mind through the processes the motions entails
1. E.g. THBT terrorism is justified, put yourselves in the processes of terrorism.
2. Why are you doing it?
3. Why is it necessary?
4. Why is it justifiable to you (you = a personification of the motion)?

5. Consider the possible impact in the following spheres: **S**ocial, **P**olitical, **E**conomics, **E**nvironment,
Regional,
Medical, etc.

DISCLAIMER: This is not the **only** way to categorise substantives. It shouldn't be a textbook from which you memorise and apply to all situations. Rather use it as a way to understand the basics so that more advance methods of analysis will come to you quicker by means of experience and practise.

Types of Constructive/Substantive



Logical analysis

Logical analysis

Motion: THW ban smoking

Label: Health risks to the public

Thesis: Society suffers from a variety of medical ailments attributed to smoking

Cigarettes contain harmful chemicals & aerosols



These substances are inhaled by the smoker & released into the general surroundings



Individuals in close proximity to the smoker also inhale these substances



The inhalation of these substances is correlated to the formation of tumors or Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Diseases



Hence, both the smokers and those around them are likely to be affected by these diseases



The emergence of these diseases has a net negative effect on the health of society



This harm is too great not to be mitigated



Hence, the government should ban cigarettes so as to prevent the propagation of these diseases

Policy analysis

Policy analysis

Motion: THW legalise prostitution

Label: Maintaining the safety of the John's*

(*Note: John's is the collective name given to the people who visit prostitutes)

Thesis: Legalisation allows for a framework to test for STDs among prostitutes

Prostitutes will have multiple clients



These prostitutes usually engage in unprotected sex with their clients



The addition of these two occupational hazards increases the likelihood for the spread of STDs



Furthermore, any infected prostitute is likely to pass the infection to any further clients through subsequent visits



This results in an STD chain reaction, spreading the disease exponentially from a single person



Under the status quo prostitution is illegal



As a result prostitutes will be unlikely to go for STD screenings due to the stigma of being a criminal



With the policy, legalisation brings prostitution into the open



No more fear of arrest or criminality



The government can now institute compulsory STD screenings



This stops the spread of STDs, preventing its exponential spread

Comparison analysis

Comparison analysis

Motion: TH prefers Android phones to the iPhones

Label: Variety of platforms

Thesis: Android gives the user a choice of phone models whereas the iPhone has none

Android is merely an Operating System



Can be adopted & modified by various phone manufacturers



Hence, can be used on multiple phone platforms
e.g. Samsung, HTC, LG & Motorola etc.



Thus, this allows for a great variety of phone systems & commercial adaptability



This gives the consumer more choice



Thus the consumer can select the model most suited to them



This is in comparison to the iPhone



It has one OS, one model & one manufacturer



This results in absolutely no variety



Thus, the consumer has to adapt to the phone instead of the other way around



This lack of variety harms consumer choice and thus Android is preferable

Time analysis

Time analysis

Motion: TH regrets the invasion of Iraq

Label: Civil Society in Iraq has degenerated

Thesis: The invasion of Iraq has caused sectarian violence - destabilising society

Iraq has had a history of sectarian violence



This was also the case under Saddam Hussein's rule



Sunni and Shia Muslims were at loggerheads during this time as well



However, peace was generally well maintained during Saddam's rule



Although it wasn't a happy coexistence, both sides tolerated each other



However, from 2003 onwards post US-led invasion, sectarian violence was rife



The American's removed the strong executive branch of Saddam's government



As a result there was no state organ who could respond strongly to any disorder



Thus sectarian violence boiled over without control



This meant that executions in the street and bombings in crowded areas are commonplace



Hence, society has become more unstable as a result of unrestrained sectarian violence