



## 10.3 1NC Strategy Brainstorm

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*This activity introduces basic negative strategy-building. It can also be used to develop understanding of off-case argument strategy. In this activity, students work as a group to think through and ultimately develop negative strategies against core of the topic cases.*

### **Time Allotment**

Several days

### **Goals**

By the end of this activity, students will:

- work together to develop potential negative strategies against commonly run cases.
- hone strategic and critical thinking skills.
- increase understanding of how to use negative off-case arguments.

### **Materials and Preparation**

This activity makes most sense for students who already have a certain amount of tournament experience.

Students will need a basic understanding of the off-case positions that are being run on this topic. They should understand the structure of disadvantages, counterplans and topicality. They should also have a sense of the strengths and weaknesses of each disadvantage scenario, counterplan and topicality violation before the activity begins. They should also have a sense of the types of cases against which each shell can be run. Each of these sets of knowledge is both necessary for this activity and presents the opportunity for a potential introductory activity in the negative off-case argumentation unit.

Depending on how you structure the activity, both you and the class may need photocopies of the shells of the negative off-case positions that you will be discussing.

### **Method**

Briefly have a discussion with the class about the importance of effective negative strategy. Once you have had a general discussion about this topic, have students brainstorm some of the best, or most difficult to answer, affirmative case arguments against which they have debated. Few debaters want to be in the position of saying the problems that affirmative cases claim to ameliorate (species loss, environmental degradation, dehumanization, racism, genocide, etc.) are positive. But, negative teams cannot simply throw up their hands every time an affirmative team accurately identifies a social issue of pressing social concern and import.

You should have the class create a list of affirmative cases and arguments that they do not feel adequately prepared to answer on the negative (you may list the arguments on the board as students brainstorm).



When this first section of the activity is complete, take 20 minutes with the class to brainstorm a set of criteria for a successful negative strategy. Explain what you mean by a successful negative strategy. Then ask the students to individually write up a list of 2-3 factors that they believe makes a off-case negative strategy solid. For instance, a student might say that a solid off-case strategy takes the following factors into account:

- Time constraints: The 1NC can only introduce a small set of arguments compared with the entire universe of potential positions. 1NC positions must be selected wisely.
- Strategic considerations: Ultimately, the negative needs to develop a single position or a set of positions that they can use to win the round. Topicality violations, counterplans and disadvantages should all be evaluated strategically.
- The need to press the 2AC: Sometimes it is strategic for the 1NC to present solid arguments that are difficult for the 2AC to respond to even if the 2NR has little intention of winning the round on that particular argument. You want to ensure that all of your arguments have the potential to win the round (potentially in combination with other arguments) under the right circumstances, otherwise the 2AR will be able to easily dismiss your arguments as interesting but irrelevant to the round.
- The need for positions to be complimentary: Off-case arguments should not contradict other negative on-case positions or other negative off-case positions. Although, it is often advantageous to use off-case positions to put the affirmative team in a double bind. For example, teams often use topicality arguments in an effort to force the affirmative to concede the link to a particular disadvantage.

Once you have a list of affirmative cases against which students do not feel adequately prepared and students understand some of what makes a negative strategy successful, it is time to develop negative strategies to these cases. This can be done in any of the following ways:

- Have students break into small groups and then work together develop a negative strategy to a particular case. Have the small groups report back to the class.
- Assign multiple students the same case and give them the homework assignment to develop a comprehensive negative strategy against it. Once they have completed this strategy, have all of the students who worked on a particular case meet together as small groups. Have the small groups develop a presentation outlining either several negative options (and the strengths and weaknesses of each option).
- Have students (individually, in small groups, or as a class) make a list of the disadvantage, counterplan, and topicality shells they possess. Then, have the students list all of the cases each shell should potentially be run against. Finally, hold a discussion about which off-case arguments (out of all of the options) should be run against a specific case. Develop a negative strategy for each case.

The results of any of these discussions can be posted on the classroom wall, documented on negative strategy sheets, or recorded by students as part of a strategy notebook. You want to make sure that students have the results of these discussions in a format that will be useful at the next tournament when it comes time to select negative arguments during rounds.