



14.6 Advantage Comparison

This activity develops rebuttal and argumentation skills. Students practice persuasively weighing disadvantages against affirmative advantages.

Time Allotment

The time allotment will vary depending on how long you give students to prepare their speeches and what format you ask students to deliver speeches within. If this activity is used in an after school setting, it is possible for the entire activity to take 15 minutes. If you are going to have 4-5 pairs of students present in a classroom setting, it may take closer to 30 minutes. It doesn't necessarily make sense to have every student in the class present, because after a while the speeches will begin to get repetitive.

Objectives

By the end of this activity, students will:

- learn comparative argumentation through the practice of weighing the impacts of advantages against disadvantages.
- hone their ability to deliver effective rebuttal speech in which they compare the impacts of affirmative advantages with a disadvantages.
- improve persuasiveness, argumentation skill and word economy.

Materials and Preparation

To complete this activity, students will need the following materials and preparation:

- Paper, pens, and a timer.
- Basic familiarity with the affirmative case and the disadvantage being debated.
- Photocopies of evidence for an affirmative case advantage and a negative disadvantage shell.

Method

Before the activity begins, brainstorm with the whole class about the kinds of arguments you can use to compare advantages and disadvantages. Push the class to articulate how a judge should assess student efforts to weigh the impacts of advantages against the impacts of disadvantages. For instance, it might make sense to talk about the items in the box at right.

Break the students into pairs. Assign one student to debate affirmative and the other student negative. Tell the students that they need to prepare to present short speeches comparing an affirmative case advantage to a negative disadvantage. Give them 5-10 minutes to prepare this speech.

Affirmative speakers will speak from the affirmative perspective, arguing that the affirmative case outweighs the disadvantage. Negative speakers will speak from the negative perspective. Tell the students to assume that each side is winning their position to a significant degree, and to argue assuming that the opposing side's position is strong.



Have the negative speaker deliver a short 30 second – 2 minute speech. Then have the affirmative deliver a speech of comparable length.

You will want to consider what format of presentations will work best for your class. With a motivated class comprised of students with some tournament experience, this activity can work by just having students deliver the speeches to each other and having them each flow the other's speech. In other situations, it may make sense to have the students prepare in pairs, and then to randomly select several pairs to come up to the front of the class and present their speeches. If a student delivers a speech in front of the entire class, have the whole class flow and /or evaluate her speech. You might ask each student to submit the outline of her speech.

Follow Up:

Once students have completed one debate comparing an advantage with a disadvantage, have students to switch sides. If a student was affirmative, she would become negative on the same issue. This variation allows students to focus on mastering clash on specific issues and emphasizes depth and analysis-heavy debate. It helps them learn to see multiple sides of an issue.

Variation:

You can conduct the entire activity the same as above, only assuming that one or another team is only winning a small risk of their position. For instance, assume that the negative team is only winning a small risk of the disadvantage or that the affirmative team only has 30% chance of solvency. This will give debaters the ability to practice comparing scenarios when they are only winning a risk of an argument, rather than winning the entire scenario.

Variation:

This activity can be used to practice comparing any of the following situations:

- A Critique vs. an affirmative case.
- A Counterplan and a Net Benefit vs. an affirmative case.
- Solvency turns vs. an affirmative solvency story.
- Impact Turns on a Disadvantage vs the Impact Scenario of the Disadvantage.

Or, you can use this activity to give students a chance to hone their story telling ability in other areas (for instance, link stories vs. link turns and take outs, uniqueness for a disadvantage vs. uniqueness for impact turns, etc.)

Speech Prompts

- Time Frame (when will the scenario occur, given that nearer term risks tend to be more significant than longer term risks).
- Probability (the ultimate impact of a scenario can be thought of a function of probability times harm).
- Moral considerations (some advantages and disadvantages raise moral considerations that students may argue are more significant than utilitarian considerations).
- Quantification (students should make every effort to pinpoint a specific number of lives that the opposing team helps and then work to decrease that number with analytical arguments).
- Severity (the impacts should be evaluated in terms of seriousness – sickness is less severe than death, etc.)
- Reversibility (hurting a relationship with a foreign country is not irreversible – in many cases negative occurrences are reversible).
- Historicity (a sense of the historical context within which negative events are occurring, for instance, while hunger may look bad today, a smaller percentage of people might be hungry in the United today than at any point in history).