

14.3 Analytical Responses

This activity develops refutation and argumentation skills. Students are presented with the shell of a negative argument, given a limited amount of time, and asked to write as many good responses to the position as possible.

Time Allotment

The time allotment will vary depending on the number of students you have responding to the negative position. It will take 3-4 minutes to read the disadvantage shell, 5 minutes for students to write responses, and approximately 2 minutes for each student to respond. If 6 students are responding to a disadvantage the activity will take 20-25 minutes.

This activity can be a regular feature of a class or of an after school practice. Or, you can set aside a class period or two and have every student read their responses whatever position to which they are responding.

Objectives

By the end of this activity, each student will:

- gain familiarity with the process and techniques involved in responding to specific negative positions.
- improve speech delivery, flowing, and critical thinking skills.

Materials and Preparation

To complete this activity you will need the following materials:

- Paper, pens, and a timer.
- Basic familiarity with the specific issue being debated.
- Basic familiarity with and photocopies of the affirmative case being defended.
- Photocopies of the shells for the specific issue that is being debated. Depending on the number of students participating in the activity, you may need multiple sets of evidence for each mini specific issue debate.

Specific issues that may be debated include:

- A specific disadvantage.
- A specific topicality violation shell.
- A specific counterplan shell.
- A specific critique shell.

Method

Decide what size of groups you would like students to be in for this activity. If you have a class with 25 students, you may want to complete this activity as a whole group, in which case all students will write responses but only a few will deliver a speech. Or, you can break the class into five groups. Each of the



small groups can conduct the activity within their group, rather than presenting to the whole class.

Break the class up into groups. You should decide in advance whether you would like every small group to receive the same negative position, or different negative positions. If each group receives different negative positions, they might develop a set of effective responses to a variety of positions, which could then be distributed.

Tell all of the students in the group but one that they will be affirmative, defending a given case against a negative position. In order to participate in this activity, all students should understand the case that they are defending.

Start with one student on the negative side who delivers a shell of a negative position (a topicality violation, a disadvantage, a critique, etc.) that applies to the affirmative case. All of the affirmative debaters should flow.

Allow each of the students who are affirmative time to examine the shell it receives and list as many answers as it can which do not require evidence to challenge the assumptions of the argument. If you would like, brainstorm with students the kinds of flaws that arguments possess. Students should concentrate on identifying holes in the position such as:

- logical fallacies in arguments.
- indictable assumptions of arguments and evidence.
- contradictions in argumentation.
- reasons why the full weight of the argument should not be considered.

Remind students to respond to each of the component parts of the position, if possible. For instance, if the students are responding to a disadvantage, have them develop arguments to support each of the following claims:

- Non-Unique:
- No Brink:
- No Link:
- No Internal Link:
- No Threshold:
- No Impact:
- Turn:

Those students who do not end up speaking should still draft answers and should be required to submit their flows. You can also ask them to participate in a post activity discussion.

Follow up:

After each student has presented her analytical responses, have each group compile the very best responses into a master list and develop an analytical 2AC block. This activity thus provides an opportunity for students to learn how to write 2AC blocks and allows you to solicit input from your students as you construct analytical 2AC answers to the Disadvantages. If you are using this activity to help students draft analytical blocks, you have two choices. Either rewrite the blocks so that the students have high quality arguments, or work to



ensure the product is largely representative of their efforts. The result of this activity will be “blocks” that can be read at tournaments. If you break the entire class into small groups, you may want to give each small group a different position. Then make them responsible for drafting a finished 2AC block against that position to share with the class.

Follow up:

Once students have completed one single issue debate, you have students to switch sides. If a student was affirmative, she would become negative on the same issue. If you have students switch sides, this variation allows students to focus on mastering clash on specific issues and emphasizes depth and analysis-heavy debate.

Variation:

Have a one on one analytical debate on a particular negative position. Pair students off, so that one is negative and one is affirmative. Have the shell be the only evidence used in the round. Have the negative debater read the shell and the affirmative debater develop and then present a 2AC. The students can continue through the entire debate round, with abbreviated speech times. Or they can have a limited number of speeches.

Variation:

If you are using this activity to practice debating the components of a disadvantage, have each group practice telling the link story of their disadvantage, in ways that alternately increase and decrease the credibility of the argument, before the activity begins. In addition, have students practice assessing the impact of the disadvantage as compared to the impact of the affirmative case.