

6.10 Building A Brief

This activity develops brief writing skills. Students will practice building an argument brief from untagged pieces of evidence. Working in groups, students will read and analyze supporting evidence for a specific argument (like a disadvantage, counterplan, affirmative case, or critique) and use the evidence to write a shell. Students should be familiar with the chosen argument and the use of evidence in a round, and ready to learn to write their own briefs.

Time Allotment

40-50 minutes

Objectives

By the end of this activity, students will:

- develop skills in critical reading.
- be introduced to placing evidence in logical order to construct a complete argument.
- develop skill in identifying and applying the major arguments in a text.

Materials and Preparation

Each group of students will need a set of untagged cards. Cut the tags of the cards from the 1NC shell of a disadvantage, counterplan, or critique or from a portion of a 1AC. You may want to add some additional cards so that students must evaluate both relevant and irrelevant pieces of evidence as they reconstruct the argument. Choose an argument that members of your class are likely to encounter in a debate round. Give each group of 3-5 students the same set of evidence to use.

Method

Students should begin this activity with basic familiarity with the specific arguments with which they will be working. You may want to start the activity with an overview of the disadvantage, affirmative case, counterplan, etc. which the cards in the set support.

Break the class into groups of 3-5 students. Give each group one set of the untagged cards.

With their evidence set, each group of students should:

- Write a tag line for each card.
- Choose which cards they will use in the shell (or 1AC or 2AC block) of the argument (if there are more cards than they need).
- Organize the cards in a logical order.
- Use the cards to write a brief.
- Write a 3-4 sentence overview of the position / shell for which they construct the brief.

Wrap-up:

Discuss as a class the different solutions (order of the briefed argument) that groups have generated. If there are different orders, have groups present their rationale and come to a class consensus on an order.