



## 6.4 Categorizing Evidence

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*This activity introduces brief writing skills. Students will work as a class to group cards by argument. This activity is an intermediary step between collecting and cards in articles and writing briefs; at the end of the activity you will have folders of similar cards that can be divided up among the students and compiled into usable debate briefs.*

### **Time Allotment**

20-50 minutes (or more, depending on the number of cards to be sorted.)

### **Objectives**

By the end of this activity, students will:

- practice identifying similarities between arguments made by different authors.
- create a file of evidence that can be used in future brief-writing assignments.
- develop an understanding of the arguments surrounding a particular position.

### **Materials and Preparation**

A large number of cards (with citations) that pertain to the current debate topic. These cards may come from an activity in which the class cut evidence on a variety of topics. Students will, in this activity divide them into categories so they can be combined into useful debate files. One file folder for each category of cards. For example, if you are working with cards for a Spending disadvantage file, you should have folders for: uniqueness, links, impacts, non-uniqueness, link turns, no impact, etc. As the instructor, read through the cards to be sorted before the activity. You should have an idea of what cards will go into which folder so that you can answer student questions and check over each folder at the end.

### **Method**

Be sure at the beginning of the activity that students understand the argument(s) supported by the evidence. You may wish to review before you begin. Show students the folders and categories into which the evidence will be sorted. You may want the students to generate these categories as a class before the activity begins. Be sure the folders are clearly marked and place them in different locations around the room.

Divide the evidence randomly among the class so that each small group or individual gets the same number of cards to read through. Students should read each card silently. Students should write an abbreviated tag (3-6 words) on the back of each card to indicate the main argument in the card. Then, each student should put each card in the appropriate folder. Create a "miscellaneous" pile where students can put cards they think are irrelevant or useless.

Once all the cards have been sorted, take the folders home and make sure that students sorted the evidence correctly. Go through the miscellaneous stack and make sure that there is nothing useful there.

The next day in class, pass out the folders to small groups of students. You could give the "uniqueness" folder to one group, the "no-link" folder to another, etc. Groups of students should work together to turn the sorted evidence into usable briefs.