



# 10.1 I Have Another Idea ...

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*This activity introduces the use of counterplans in debate. It can be used to reinforce an introductory lesson on counterplans. In this activity, students are given a mock affirmative case and asked to draft a counterplan in response to the case. Once they have written a shell for their counterplan, the small group should write affirmative answers against their own counterplan.*

## **Time Allotment**

One class period

## **Objectives**

By the end of this activity, students will:

- hone critical thinking and argument analysis skills.
- practice constructing and considering the strategic implications of counterplans.

## **Materials and Preparation**

Create a handout for each student. The handout should have a mock resolution that is relatively easy for the students to discuss (for example, "Resolved: The class should go out to see a movie.") at the top. Under the mock resolution, write out a 1AC, including inherency, a plan, advantages, and solvency. Given the above example, the plan might propose that the class go out to see a specific movie, talk about how good the movie is, and how it will fill a specific need. The 1AC does not need to be long or detailed, but should clearly address solvency and potential advantages of the plan. This mock case should be easy to understand and not especially difficult to create arguments for or against.

## **Method**

Distribute the handout to each student, then divide the class up into small groups of 4 or 5 students.

Each group should generate the idea for and then create a counterplan to the 1AC that the handout presents. They may propose to go to a play, to go to the mall, or to go take a field trip to the zoo. The counterplan should be written out just as it would be before a debate. The students should write out counterplan text and a coherent description of competition and solvency.

You should type up and distribute or write a model counterplan shell on the board. Depending on the skill level of the students, you will want to adjust the thoroughness of the model shell. Potential counterplan shell structures include:

- A counterplan text
- An observation about the counterplans' non-topicality
- An observation about the counterplan's mutual exclusivity
- An observation about the counterplan's competitiveness
- An observation about the counterplan's advantages
- An observation about the counterplan's solvency of the 1AC advantages



As the students write up a counterplan text and fill in these structures, walk around and check each counterplan to make sure that it responds to the affirmative plan.

Keep in mind that this activity is only designed to give students practice with counterplans. If they cannot remember what a permutation is or whether it is legitimate to run a topical counterplan, do not worry about it now. In fact, this activity can produce concrete examples that can be used later when you introduce concepts like permutations and topical counterplans.

Once each group has written a counterplan, they should “flip sides” and create five affirmative answers to their counterplan. A student frequently will think of permutations or solvency deficit arguments on her own. For example, she might propose to go to the mall because the mall is relaxing and some students can choose to go the movies at the mall, but not everyone has to do the same thing.

In fact, a student may develop this type of argument without knowing that she has, for instance, developed a permutation. If she does, this is a chance to teach her (and the other students) new terms, praise her intelligence, and show your students that much of debate is made up of simple, intuitive concepts that have multi-syllabic, fancy-sounding names.

Students will finish the exercise at different paces – some might take a bit longer to grasp the concepts. If a group finishes early, have them repeat with a different counterplan.

Optionally, you may have each group present its counterplan and affirmative arguments to the rest of the class, fielding cross-examination questions after presenting.

### Variation:

Writing counterplans against their own 1AC. Rather than having students write a counterplan against a hypothetical case, have each student develop a counterplan against the affirmative case that she runs in tournaments. Each student should know the plan text and advantages of her own case well and should be able to generate an effective counterplan. Have each student list disadvantages that her affirmative plan might cause but that the counterplan avoids. If you have time, have students brainstorm a set of affirmative responses to that counterplan

### Variation:

Writing 2AC blocks against counterplans. If you have a class that has some tournament experience and your students are encountering counterplans this is the right activity for your class. Divide the students into groups according to what 1AC they run. In an ideal situation, your entire class of first year debaters will only be running between 1 and 3 cases. So there will not be that many groups. Have each group develop a list of all of the counterplans against which they have debated.

Once they have this list, ensure that all of the students understand what each of the counterplans does and how each one works. It may make sense to model this kind of conversation by asking a group to explain name a counterplan and then explain its text, nontopicality, competitiveness, advantages and solvency. Once the students in each group understand these features of the counterplans that can be run against their case, it is time to begin writing 2AC blocks. Have students write 2AC blocks against counterplans that they have debated, if possible. Otherwise, have students write 2AC blocks against counterplans that apply to their case and which they may encounter.