

6.5 Writing Tags

This activity introduces basic briefing skills. In the activity, students write the tags for a several pieces of evidence. This activity can also serve to introduce students to a particular argument (such as a disadvantage, 1AC contention, or critique) depending on which cards you choose to have students tag. The cards students tag can be simply for practice or can contribute to a broader brief-writing project in which the class can engage.

Time Allotment

This activity can be a 30 minutes in-class exercise or a take-home assignment.

Objectives

By the end of this activity, students will:

- be able to identify the main argument in a piece of evidence and write a useful tag for the card.
- develop skills in critical reading.

Materials and Preparation

This activity requires several (3-10) untagged pieces of evidence for each student. The following are some ideas about selecting and presenting the cards:

- Give each student (or small group) the same set of cards if you want to talk about how each group tagged the cards afterwards. Give each student/group a different set if you want this activity to contribute to the production of a broader evidence production project or if you want it to simultaneously introduce students to argument positions.
- Make a worksheet for each student by copying the cards onto a page with a blank above each for the tag. This makes for an easy take-home assignment.
- Take a photocopy of a disadvantage, counterplan or critique shell, or a portion of a 1AC and white out the tags. These can also function as worksheets if you pass them out and have students write the tags for these cards. Depending on the skill level of your students, you may not want to tell them what the argument is in advance – have them decide and write up a brief summary of the position after they have written tags for all of the cards.

Method

Introduce the activity by taking a sample piece of evidence and writing a tag for it as a class. This activity will work best if students already understand the process of tagging well enough to write the tags for cards independently.

This activity can be completed as an individual take-home assignment, or an in-class small group activity.



Pass out the cards to students and instruct them to write tags for each card they receive. A good tag:

- Should capture the main argument of the card.
- Should be in the form of a complete, concise sentence (between 5 and 15 words).
- Should contain an argument marker (like "LINK" "UNIQUENESS" "TURN") if appropriate.
- Should NOT be a sentence fragment or contain symbols or abbreviations.
- Should NOT exaggerate or misrepresent the evidence in the card.
- Should be printed legibly and neatly above the card.

Wrap-up:

If students all tagged the same pieces of evidence, follow-up with a comparison of different tags individuals or groups generated. Have a class discussion about the strengths and weaknesses of different tags.

If students tagged different pieces of evidence, have a few volunteers read their tag and their evidence to the class. The rest of the class should discuss whether the tag is accurate and effective. If the students will be completing future briefing activities, have them save the tagged pieces of evidence in their portfolio to be sorted and briefed later.