

Approaches to rebuttal



When preparing to be in the Opposition team (the "negative" side, as it's also called) or when you are in a debate and need to respond to an argument put forward by the Proposition, it is useful to have a framework to organise your thoughts.

Especially for policy debates (usually where the motion says "This House Would [do something/ban something/abolish something/legalise something, etc.] the burden of proof is on the Proposition to demonstrate their case.

The proposition in a policy debate usually presents their case with the following process, and below you can see the corresponding critical questions to ask:

Problem (the Prop wants to solve)



Policy (the Prop proposes)



Outcome (the positive results)

really harming anyone? How many?

Does the problem **need** solving? **Can** it be solved?

Will that policy work? Is the cost of it worth it? Is it ethical?

Will the policy really lead to the desired outcomes?

Can the policy have other unintended consequences?
Could it be harmful?



PETAL framework



This approach helps you to identify the weaknesses in the Proposition's argument:

ractical - is the policy practical?

thical - is the policy ethical?

ried before? – has the policy been tried before or elsewhere?

A lternatives – are there any alternatives?

logical consistency – are there contradictions or fallacies in the reasoning?

Fill in your thoughts on a Proposition motion

Motion:

P Why it's not practical

E Why it's not ethical

If tried before, is it comparable?

A Is there better, more cost-effective alternative?

Potential logical inconsistencies, fallacies, etc.