

104 London Debaters



Effective Rebuttal

summary of
theory from
workshop

What it is?
The 3 Techniques
The 3 Questions





"No plan survives contact with the enemy"
Military concept

"Plans are nothing; planning is everything"
Dwight D. Eisenhower

"I'm just preparing my impromptu remarks."
Winston Churchill

There is no substitute for preparation.
There is no substitute for preparation.

Through planning you prepare for the UNexpected as well as
Through planning you prepare for the UNexpected as well as
for the expected.
for the expected.

There is no substitute for preparation and research - no magic
There is no substitute for preparation and research - no magic
formula or clever technique will enable you to waltz
formula or clever technique will enable you to waltz
unprepared into a debate and win it.
unprepared into a debate and win it.

For the most part, the debater or team who is best prepared,
For the most part, the debater or team who is best prepared,
wins.
wins.

What is rebuttal?

The interaction that makes a debate a debate, rather than just a series of lectures



The process through which
the arguments develop

It guides the audience as to
HOW to assess the
arguments heard



Approaches to rebuttal

3 Techniques:



The Even If-argument

*The Flipping of the
Warrant*

The Alternative Scheme

The
Even if
argument



*Even if everything
the **other side**
said is **true**
you should **still vote** for
our side*

TH Regrets Elon Musk's Purchase of Twitter



Proposition:

After Musk's purchase, the value of Twitter has gone down, advertisers have left the platform and many users have left the platform

Opposition:

Even if that is true, unless you are a shareholder, or the owner of Twitter, why should you regret that the value of the company has gone down or that users are leaving it?

Arguing on the truth value is very difficult, so the great thing about the even if approach is that it allows you to side-step the truth value and say "even if we accept that everything the other side is true, that still does not mean that the audience should support the conclusion they have drawn".

THB The US Supreme Court Was Right About Roe v. Wade



Opposition:

Women's right to legal abortion must be protected, it is being undermined by this ruling

Proposition (rebutting):

Even if you agree with that, this debate is about whether the Supreme Court's decision was **legally** correct

The Proposition said that EVEN IF that is true and you agree with that, you should still vote for the motion, because firstly this debate is about whether the ruling was legally correct, and secondly because the it will mean that debates will have to be had and so abortion rights will be built on the more solid ground of broad popular support in the various constituent states of the US

Flipping the warrant



Reasons given

WARRANT = CONNECTION

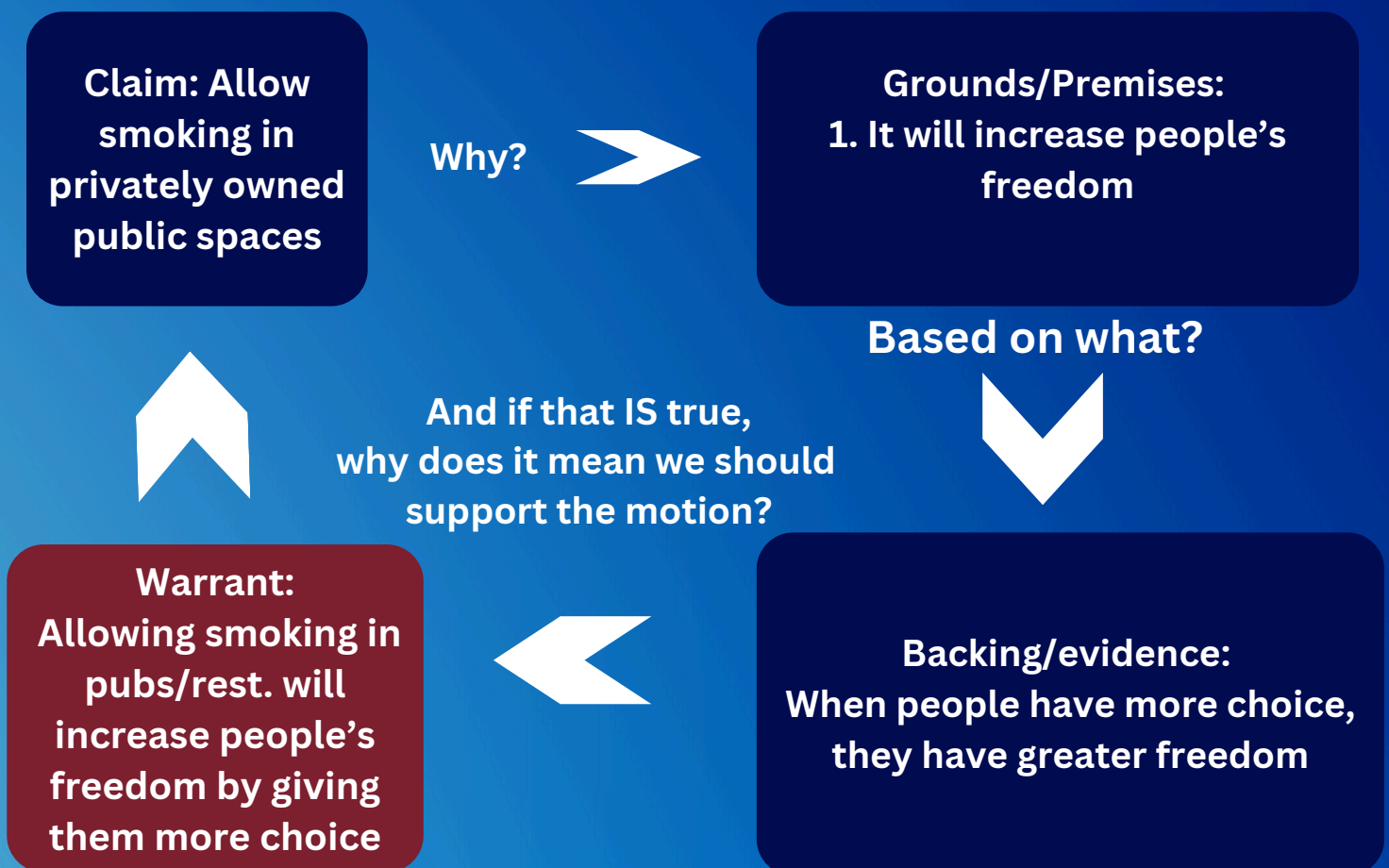


**Support
motion**

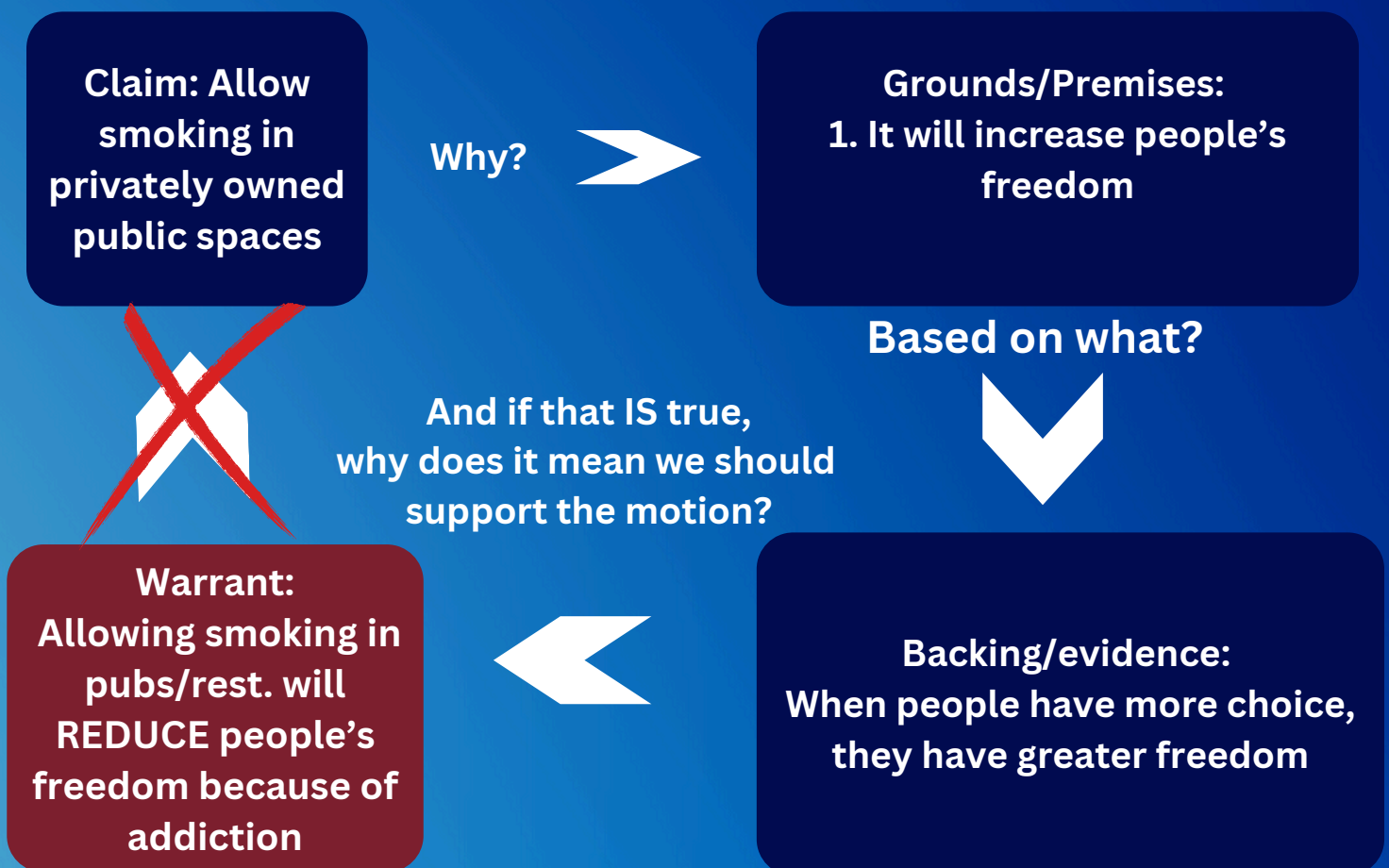


**NOT Support
motion**

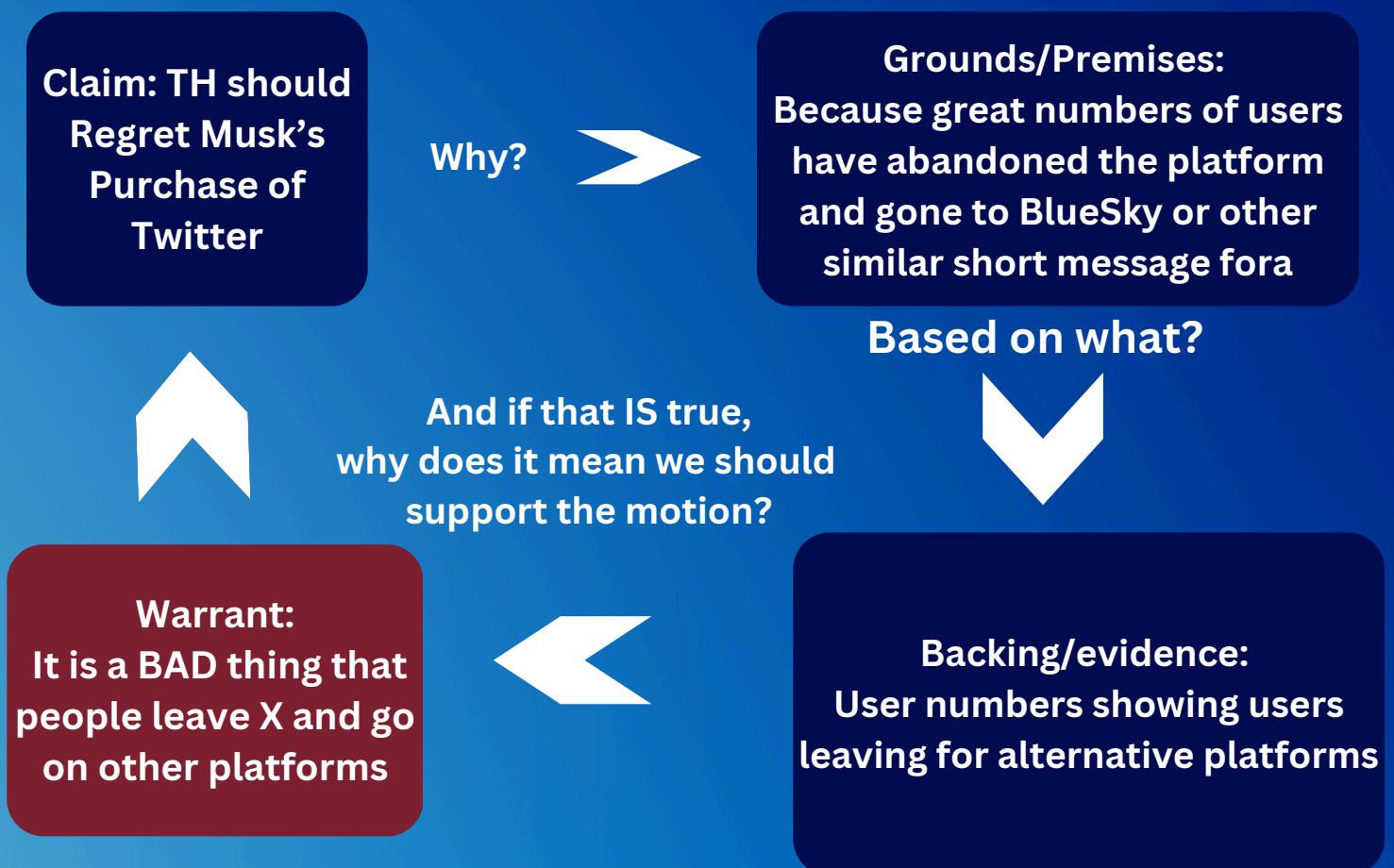
Toulmin Model



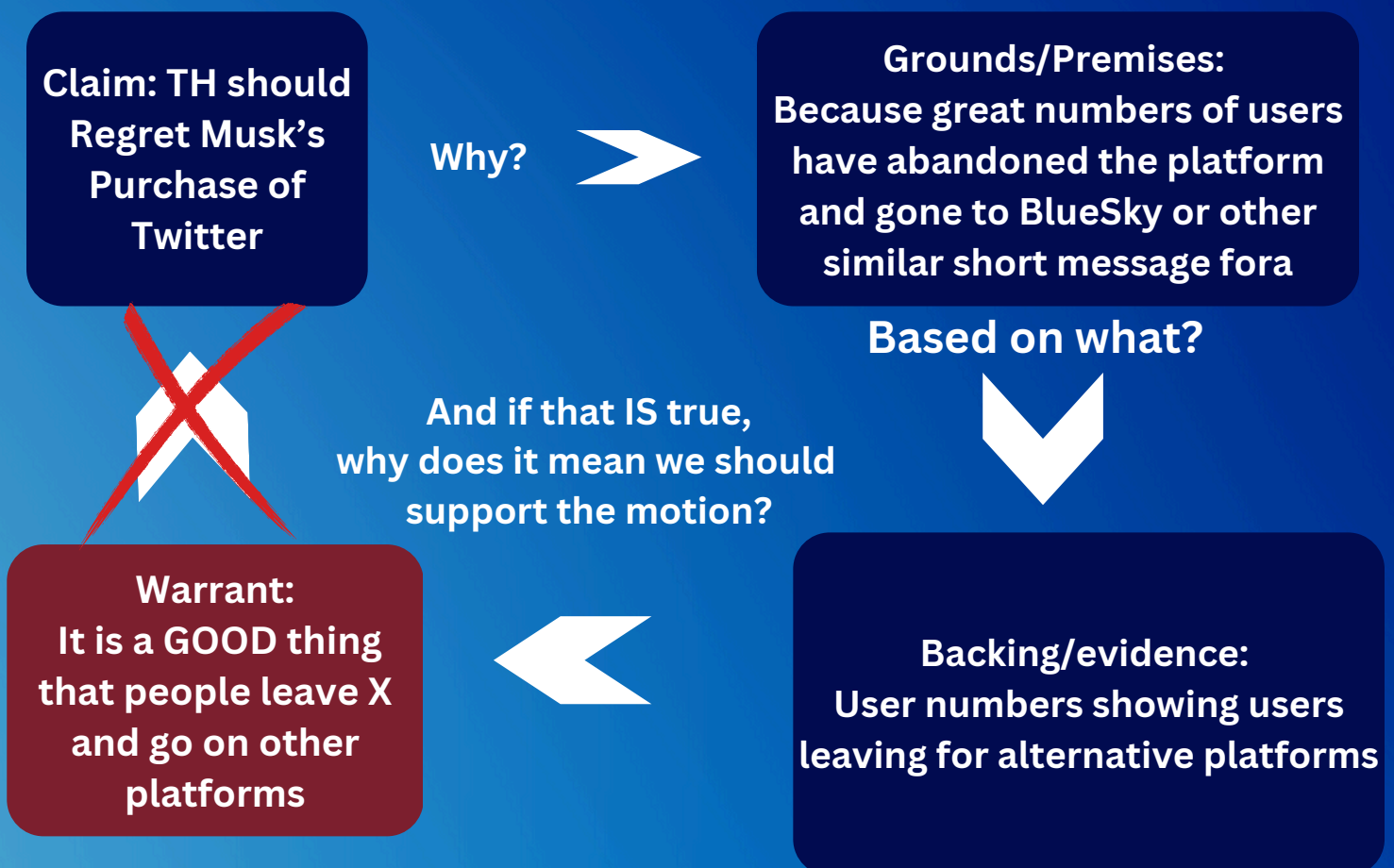
Toulmin Model



Toulmin Model



Toulmin Model



The Alternative Scheme strategy



This is ONLY open to be used by the Opposition, but Proposition must also think about how to defend against it, in case the Opp use it

THW Ban Privately Owned Schools



Proposition

Policy will produce
fairness

Opposition

Fairness is important, we
agree, but there is a better
way to achieve that:
The Alternative Scheme

Remember: If VALUES (the right thing to do) and PRACTICALITY (it is difficult/expensive to do) compete, VALUES almost always wins.

With the alternative scheme you can agree with the values (we want to achieve the same goal) but propose a better way of getting there.

THW Ban Privately Owned Schools



What the Proposition will have to do to rebut an alternative scheme argument, is to be ready with an explanation as to why ONLY their scheme/policy will produce the necessary and desired outcomes.
The Unique Selling Points, if you like, of their policy.

The Alternative Scheme **MUST** be mutually exclusive

Permutation:

We should ban privately owned schools **AND** spend more money on state schools

Non-exclusive alternative scheme

Rather than banning private schools, we should **spend more money** on state schools

For the Alternative Scheme to work well, it **MUST** be one that totally excludes the Proposition's scheme.

Otherwise, what the Proposition can do to rebut it, is what in the jargon is called a *permutation*, just a fancy word for saying "can they both be done?"



Approaches to rebuttal

3 Questions:



Is it TRUE?

Is it RELEVANT?

Is it IMPORTANT?

THW Allow Smoking In Privately Owned Public Spaces

Prop: We should **amend** the 2007 smoking law, so that owners of pubs, rest. etc. are allowed to offer **separated** and **closed-off** smoking areas if they so wish

Opp: Before the Smoking Law of 2007, there was smoking everywhere, and it was unpleasant for non-smokers, unhealthy for the staff and we don't want to go back to those bad old days

True? Yes, more or less - most people would agree

Relevant? No, we are not proposing to do away with the 2007 law, only amend it

Important? Yes, the points are important, but only if they had been relevant, which they are not

THW Allow Smoking In Privately Owned Public Spaces

Prop: We should **amend** the 2007 smoking law, so that owners of pubs, rest. etc. are allowed to offer separated and closed-off smoking areas if they so wish

Opp: Smoking costs society enormous amounts of money due to health problems being treated on the NHS, and this change would encourage more smoking rather than help reduce smoking

True? No, direct cost of smoking-related illnesses to the NHS is £2 bn, but the state collects around £10 bn in tobacco taxes, which means a net contribution from smokers of £8 bn to the Government's budget

Relevant? Yes, allowing smoking, even in a regulated way, would not discourage smoking

Important? No, only 10-14% of people smoke, and it's a downward trajectory over time, so is it really a big deal?

THW Allow Smoking In Privately Owned Public Spaces

Opp: Smoking costs society enormous amounts of money due to health problems being treated on the NHS

Prop: The direct cost of smoking-related illnesses to the NHS is £2 bn, but the state collects around £10 in tobacco taxes, which means a net contribution from smokers of £8 bn to the Government's budget

True? Yes - it is true for the **direct** cost to the NHS

Relevant? Yes, it is highly relevant to the argument about the cost of smoking

Important? No, because it is only a part of the story: it depends how you calculate it. If you include not only direct cost on NHS, but also lost productivity and service costs, smoking costs England £49.2 billion each year, plus an additional £25.9 billion lost quality adjusted life years due to premature death from smoking

THW Allow Smoking In Privately Owned Public Spaces

Prop: The direct cost of smoking-related illnesses to the NHS is only £2 bn - net benefit £8 bn

Opp: No, costs, smoking costs SOCIETY at least £49.2 billion each year everything included

True? It might be, if you accept the figures, coming from ASH the anti-smoking activist organisation

Relevant? Yes, it is highly relevant to the argument about the cost of smoking

Important? No, because if you are arguing “keep the current draconian smoking ban due to the cost to society”, then what about fast food? A recent study found that the UK’s growing addiction to unhealthy food costs £268bn a year. But freedom to choose is more important than the cost in money, and so even if we accept that smoking is a cost, so is unhealthy food, freedom is more important than the cost.

Rebuttal = assessment

Is it TRUE?

Is it RELEVANT?

Is it IMPORTANT?



What you have hopefully seen with this example, is that when you are rebutting, you are in fact assessing the arguments of both sides, and by so doing you are helping the audience assess the debate as a whole and guide them as to which side to vote for. Yours of course. The rebuttal process therefore is all about assessment.

And you see how these 3 questions;
Is it true? (has it been PROVEN to be true?)
is it relevant? (to the motion?)
is it important? (enough to care?)

are really helpful in order to formulate a quick assessment as you are listening to the other side.

Without having done your research in advance, you would not have been ready with the studies and counter-studies to use, so again, there is no substitute for preparation and thorough research.

But even thought you get an unexpected point, these questions can then help you to quickly assess whether you need to attack it and how

Structure of a rebuttal speech

DAG

1. Defend your own case
2. Attack the other side
3. Guide



We are the Proposition

**Motion: THW Increase Carbon Taxes to Meet The Net
Zero Target**

Opposition has said:

This will make people living now poorer

It will not really fix the problem

**Any consequences of climate change are 60 to a 100
years away, so we need to care more about those who
live now, not in the distant future.**

How do we rebut?

The DAG structure

Defend your
case

The Opposition said our scheme would make people poorer without solving the problem, but in fact several studies have shown that by implementing a transition to a greener economy, we may in fact see a net benefit to all income levels (Truth)

Attack the other side

The Opposition suggested we have plenty of time before the consequences of climate change is felt and that we should care more about those who are poor now. We agree we should care about them, but we can do both (permutation) It is in fact the poorest societies in the world that will suffer the most and not in the distant future - according to the IPCC they are suffering right now: if you care about the poor, you should support the motion (flipping the warrant)

Guide the audience

The Opposition have tried to tell us that the problems of Climate Change are far in the future, but we have shown that climate change has an impact right now. But **even if** we accept that the worst consequences are in the future, those consequences are so monumental that it is MORE IMPORTANT to do something now even at the cost of some jobs.

Effective Rebuttal Summary

As you are listening to the other side, keep these 3 questions in mind:

Is it TRUE?

Is it RELEVANT?

Is it IMPORTANT?

Consider these 3 approaches

The Even If-argument

Flipping the Warrant

The Alternative Scheme



Prop's USP/Permutation

The DAG Structure