

Answering Disads:

The primary function of a disadvantage is to prove that the plan causes an undesirable impact that is auxiliary to what it actually does, i.e. the plan spends more than the budget can tolerate, breaking the budget causes economic decline. Think of them as anti-advantages, something the plan causes is bad. With that in mind, answering a disadvantage relies on your ability to prove that the consequences of not enacting the plan are worse than anything the plan could cause. Debaters have to weigh the risk, and magnitude of the plan's effects to determine whether or not it is a good idea.

A crucial component in this weighing is the concept of offense and defense. The distinction is critical, more rounds are lost because of a misunderstanding of the difference. Defense is like a "nuh-uh" argument, one that denies the claim being made by the opposing team. Here are a couple of defensive arguments that might be made by a team answering a spending disadvantage: the plan does not spend money, the economy is headed downwards now, the economy will not crash. Offensive arguments do not deny the claim being made, instead they flip the negative's claims around. The two most common are impact turns and link turns. These types of arguments agree with the thesis of the position but take the opposite stance on a particular part of the argument. A couple of examples for the spending DA are: plan helps the economy recover, plan saves money, or that increased governmental spending is good. Answering disadvantages mainly entails using defensive arguments to prove that your plan does not carry negative side effects, in conjunction with a few offensive arguments to bolster why your plan is a good idea.

There are two kinds of offensive arguments you can use to respond to a disadvantage, link turns and impact turns. As their names imply these arguments reverse part of the negative's disadvantage, and say that the thesis of the argument actually concludes affirmative. Link turns deny that plan causes the negative impact and instead argues that it makes the impact less likely. To continue the example from above, a link turn on an economy disadvantage would be that the plan saves money, or that it leads to a strengthening of the economy. In this way the affirmative can admit that it interacts with the negative's impact, but rather than triggering, the plan prevents it from happening. An impact turn, on the other hand, admits that the plan causes the event the negative isolates, but argues that the impact

is actually good. This allows the affirmative to concede the entire link debate if necessary and instead argue that what the plan causes would be better for the world. A common example occurs on arguments about nuclear proliferation. If the negative ran a disadvantage saying the affirmative's plan would encourage countries to develop nuclear weapons the affirmative could impact turn by saying the proliferation of nuclear technology is good.

It is important to underline that you should never read a link turn and an impact turn in the same debate. Doing so means you have functionally read a disadvantage to yourself. If you were debating a proliferation disadvantage and you read a link turn saying your plan curbed nuclear development, then impact turned saying nuclear development is good then you have a new disadvantage against yourself, and the negative could easily capitalize on this by conceding your turns.

To hedge against mistakes and scenarios in which your arguments may have you trapped it is a good idea to read both defensive and offensive arguments when answering a disadvantage. Having a diverse array of defensive arguments helps you hedge against surprising arguments from the negative and can be highly effective in punching holes in the negative's position. Additionally, a wide array of defensive arguments is strategic because the negative is able to kick out of positions by conceding a defensive argument made by the affirmative. This shrinks the debate, making it more manageable. You still have the option of extending your offensive arguments, if you are able to explain why your defense does not cancel your offense.

How to Answer Disadvantages

Disadvantages are positions used in policy debate by the negative team to attack the affirmative teams' case. In this section, we will run down the parts to disadvantages, and how to answer them back.

Link/ No Link

1) On the negative team, one of the first parts of your disadvantage should be a "link." This evidence card says that the affirmative action will result in the disadvantage that you have placed out there. For example, a spending disad. On the link level, your first argument would be link because plan spends money that is earmarked for something else. One thing to keep in mind; the more specific your link level is to their affirmative case, the stronger your disad will be. Generic links are easy to beat back because they don't convince the judge that the disadvantage actually links to the affirmative and because affirmatives can sometimes show that your link to something else (not their plan) shows that the disadvantage is not-unique since something else is already going to cause the disadvantage.

2) On the affirmative team, one of the first answers that you make back to a disadvantage is a "no link" answer. It basically says that your case will not cause the negative teams' disadvantage to happen. 99% of the time you should make a no link answer. If you don't, you concede that your plan causes whatever impact the negative team brings up, and it will be hard to win that debate after it has happened.

Unique/ Non Unique

1) As the negative team, one of your arguments should be a uniqueness argument. Similar to the link, a uniqueness argument basically says that the affirmative team uniquely causes the disadvantage; the status quo will not cause the disadvantage. For example, a movements disad. You may say that movements are mobilizing right now in the status quo, and the affirmative plan uniquely hurts this.

2) On the affirmative team, your first answer to a uniqueness answer would be "non-unique." Your burden is to prove that the disadvantage is already going to happen in the status quo. For example, show that other actions similar to the plan are going to be enacted and that means that the disadvantage will occur anyway.

Impact/ No Impact

1) The last key part of the disad is usually the impact. It is basically the end result of what happens if the link to the affirmative case is true. For

example, the impact to a spending disad could be an economic downturn leading to nuclear war. Usually the bigger the impact, the better the disad.

2) On the affirmative, you should argue that your case advantage outweighs the disadvantage and that the impact is overclaimed/is not harmful. You can also say that the impact is non-unique, which means that it is going to happen regardless of your plan.

Comparison

On the affirmative team, you can also compare the impacts of the negative disad to the impact of your case. For example, if the negative team claims that their impact is nuclear war, and the affirmative impact is extinction of the universe, you can probably win that passing your plan is much more important than not passing it because of a disad.

Link Turn/ Impact Turn

On the Affirmative, when it is possible, it would work in your favor to turn the negatives' argument back on themselves. A turn basically says that instead of a bad thing happening, a good thing will happen. It could happen on two levels: the link level, which means that the negative link will result in something positive, and at the impact level, which says that the impact will spur something positive. The important thing to remember is that you cannot say these two things at the same time, only one or the other. For example if you link turn, you can't say that you impact turn because then you concede that there is a link. That will hurt the affirmative credibility.

With disadvantages, it is key to remember on the negative that the more specific you are, the better. On the affirmative, it is important that you at the very least you answer the link back, otherwise, the negative has a big "disadvantage" over you.