**Content**

Content is what you actually say in the debate. The arguments used to develop your own side’s case and rebut the opposite side’s.

**Case (argument)**

Introduction - The case your group is making must be outlined in the introduction.  This involves stating your main arguments and explaining the general thrust of your case.  This must be done briefly since the most important thing is to get on and actually argue it. It is also a good idea to indicate the aspects of the subject to be discussed by each of the team members.

Conclusion - At the end, once everyone has spoken, it is useful to briefly summarize what your group has said and why.

Body **-** Having outlined the whole of your argument, you must then begin to build a case (the parts).  The best way to do this is to divide your case into between two and four arguments (or divide your case based on the number of people in your group).  **You must justify your arguments with basic logic, worked examples, statistics, and quotes**.  Debating is all about the strategy of “proof”. **Proof, or evidence, supporting your assertion is what makes it an argument.** There are a number of ways of dividing up cases according to groups of arguments (eg political/economic/social or moral/practical or international/regional etc.) or just according to individual arguments if you can’t group any together.  Under each of these basic headings you should then explain the reasoning behind the argument and justify it using the methods outlined above.  It is usually best to put the most important arguments first.  Here is an example of a case outline:

   “The media exert more influence over what people think than the government does.  This is true for three reasons.  Firstly, most people base their votes on what they see and hear in the media. Secondly, the media can set the political agenda between elections by deciding what issues to report and in how much detail. Thirdly, the media have successfully demonized politicians over the last ten years so that now people are more likely to believe journalists than politicians.”

All of topics I give out will be debatable (almost immediately you can see the counter-arguments), but they give the case a wide range which cover all kinds of issues.  The trick is not to come up with a watertight case, but a well-argued one. **Think: “Can I argue that?”**

**Rebuttal**

Arguments can be factually, morally or logically flawed. They may be misinterpretations or they may also be unimportant or irrelevant.  A team may also contradict one another or fail to complete the tasks they set themselves.  These are the basics of rebuttal and almost every argument can be found wanting in at least one of these respects.  Here are a few examples:

1.   “Compulsory euthanasia at age 70 would save the country money in pensions and healthcare.”  This is true, but is **morally flawed.**

2.  “Banning cigarette product placement in films will cause more young people to smoke because it will make smoking more mysterious and taboo.”  This is **logically flawed***,* the ban would be more likely to stop the steady stream of images which make smoking seem attractive and glamorous and actually reduce the number of young people smoking.

3.   “My partner will then look at the economic issues...”  “Blah..blah..blah...(5 minutes later and still no mention of the economic issues)”  This is a clear **failure to explain a major part of the case** and attention should be drawn to it.  Even better is when a speaker starts with, “to win this debate there are three things I must do…”.  If the speaker fails to do any of those things you can then hang her or him by the noose by repeating their exact words – by his or her own admission he or she cannot have won the debate.

It is very important to have a good perspective of the debate and to identify what the key arguments are.  It isn’t enough to rebut a few random arguments here and there.  Of course the techniques used above are invaluable but they must be used appropriately.  There are a number of things you should do to systematically break down a team’s case:

1.  Ask yourself how the other side has approached the case. Is their methodology flawed?

2.  Consider what tasks the other side set out for themselves (if any) and whether they have in fact addressed these.

3.  Consider what the general emphasis of the case is and what assumptions it makes. Try to refute these.

4.  Take the main arguments and do the same thing.  It is not worth repeating a point of rebuttal that has been used by someone else already, but you can refer to it to show that the argument has not stood up.  **It is not necessary to correct every example used**.  You won’t have time and your aim is to show the other side’s case to be flawed in the key areas.