

Answering and Extending Disadvantages

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Abstract: One of the biggest problems debaters have is that they are unable to effectively answer disadvantages. On the flip side, debaters running disadvantages have a hard time of effectively extending disadvantages, undermining their effectiveness in the first place. This article will help you learn the skills to answer disadvantages, and then help you understand what you need to do to extend your disadvantage.

How to Answer a Disadvantage

Every disadvantage has the potential to be a gift for the affirmative. If you are well researched and prepared, it gives you a great chance to generate offense on an argument with a large impact. That should give you a hint as to one of the best ways to answer disadvantages: research. You should constantly be researching and staying up to date on what arguments people are making so that you will have arguments prepared when people read disadvantages against you.

How to Research Against Disadvantages

Your mindset should be preempt and react. You should cut the link turn to a disadvantage before you cut the actual disadvantage itself. If you're at a tournament and you hear someone is reading a disadvantage, you should cut answers to that.

Every disadvantage is its own topic area. Research these topic areas and cut different strategies for answering them. Some of these strategies are discussed below.

Strategies for Answering Disadvantages

More specifically, there are different kinds of answers that you can make against disadvantages. These are:

1. *Link Turns:* These are the most effective way to destroy the position because you can concede everything, and just debate the uniqueness and the link. To correctly implement and win a link turn, you have to make sure that you are controlling the uniqueness and then reversing the link. All controlling uniqueness requires is that you win a non-unique. If the affirmatives argument is that two countries are on the brink of war in the status quo, to control the uniqueness you just have to win that those two countries are on the brink of war in the world of the negative as well, which shouldn't be too hard to win. Then, after you have made the link turn, you have exclusive access to the impact in the disadvantage.

2. *Impact Turns*: Except for rare circumstances, this is not the optimal strategy because most debaters will have really good impact analysis. However, there are a few instances where going for an impact turn is the optimal strategy. The first instance is if the judge is receptive to it. Some judges love to see great debates on the impact level, so it may be strategic to make these kinds of arguments in front of them. Second, if the negative is too presumptuous about their impact, you can challenge it. Some debaters will take their impact for granted, in which case it's strategic to turn it.

Defense Against Disadvantages

Defensive arguments against disadvantages will never function as terminal defense. Regardless of what your argument is, there is always a risk that the link in the disadvantage may cause the impact. When debaters talk about disadvantages, they are talking about events, and there is almost always a probability of those things occurring.

When it comes to making defensive arguments against disadvantages, aim for the top of the link chain. Conceding the link is suicide. You can't just concede links, and beat back a disadvantage because conceding a link means that they have the strongest possible link into their impact, increasing the weight of that impact. One argument that you can make against the uniqueness is that the uniqueness overwhelms the link. This just means that the uniqueness is so strong that regardless of the link, the impact won't happen. For example, if two countries are on the brink of war but are afraid of actually firing weapons, if they're so afraid of firing those weapons that even if something upsets them they won't go to war, then the uniqueness overwhelms the link.

You can also answer the uniqueness by saying that their link is inevitable. Following the same example about countries on the brink of war, if that's going to happen regardless of what the affirmative does, then their impact is inevitable and it doesn't matter if you trigger the link because it was going to be triggered anyways.

Extending a Disadvantage

When you are extending a disadvantage, you want to read extension evidence in your 2NR. You don't just want to wax poetic in the negative rebuttal. If the disadvantage is a core part of your strategy, don't waste an opportunity to read more cards in the rebuttal because that will build the potency of your argument.

You want to first begin with a voting issue tagline. Briefly explain to the judge why the disadvantage is a reason to vote for you. Then you want to give a link story overview. Talk about the arguments you're making in relation to the arguments that your opponent is making so that you are being comparative on these issues. As you're going down the line-by-line, constantly give your judge status updates so that they know exactly where you are and what you're thinking. And finally, end with a dominant underview that summarizes everything you've just done.

It all starts with the link. If the affirmative wins significant mitigation on your link, then they've significantly undermined your impact. This means that when you're extending the link in your disadvantage, you want to make sure that you have answered every single affirmative argument, compared the strength of your argument to theirs, and cleanly extended the warrants in your argument.

Finally, you want to point out the lack of strategy by the 1AR. If the affirmative didn't have any evidence to read as an answer to your disadvantage, point this out. If all the affirmative does is make defensive responses against the disadvantage, point out that this means it's a round winning issue for you because there is no way that the affirmative could win on the disadvantage.

Conclusion

Being able to answer disadvantages is an art, and requires a solid strategy. When you're engaging a disadvantage, you're committing a serious amount of time to ensuring that not only can your opponent not win on that argument, but that you can win on it and rely on it as a voting issue in the 2AR. On the other hand, when you're reading a disadvantage, you want to make sure that you are able to capitalize on the mistakes the affirmative will inevitably make due to poor strategy or a lack of research.

