

*Speak up
Scotland*

**Intuitions,
Examples
and
Analogies**

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Introduction

This resource will explain how to use intuitions and examples in debating.

The first section will cover what intuitions are, and how to manipulate them to get a judge on your side.

The second section will explain more general tactics for using examples in debating.

Both sections are largely accessible but the second section on examples would be more relevant for newer or younger debaters. You do not have to read the first section to understand the second.

Intuitions

An "intuition" is something a person naturally believes without thinking about why. You might call this a "gut feeling". We all like to think that we're smart people who come to all our opinions logically but this is far from the case. Our thoughts and beliefs are all built on intuitions that we almost never challenge. For example, people generally have an intuition in favour of private property. It is very hard to convince someone that it is justified to take or destroy something that belongs to someone else.

Learning how to use intuitions strategically is a crucial tool in debating. If you can show that what you're trying to convince a judge of is similar to or backed up by an intuition they already hold, your argument becomes a lot more persuasive and you're a step closer to getting the judge on your side. But this requires understanding which intuitions are more commonly held than others, and how to convince a judge to side with an intuition they may not hold.

Intuitions still need to be justified in a debate like any other argument! However, knowing where people's natural intuitions lie makes you a lot more persuasive.

Exercise: What are my intuitions?

The easiest way to get closer to the intuitions underpinning an argument is to ask "why" repeatedly. Come up with an example of an opinion you hold about the way society should function, big or small, e.g.: school uniforms should be banned, borders should be abolished, parents should let their children use social media without supervision, taxes shouldn't exist etc.

Now, working from that opinion, ask "why" until you reach an incredibly general opinion. That's the intuition!

Example:

School uniforms should be banned. Why? Children should be able to express themselves at school. Why? School should be place for learning about who you are. Why? Schools should prepare you for the real world.

You've reached a general intuition! I suspect very few people would disagree with the general idea that "schools should prepare you for the real world". The trick in the debate is making your argument- that school uniforms should be banned- fit this intuition as neatly as possible. The other side in this debate could argue that, actually, the discipline and order of school uniforms best prepare pupils for the real world. Or they could propose a different intuition for the judge to think about.

Intuition examples

If this is still unclear to you, here are some additional intuitions, and debates they could be relevant in. Discuss these with other debaters: do you all agree on the intuition? If you don't- why? Can you think of other situations where these intuitions apply? Pay particular attention to whether you can think of *some* situations where you agree with an intuition and other situations where you disagree with it- we'll be discussing this under "competing intuitions" on the next page.

Countries should prioritise looking after their own citizens

This house believes that the developed world should pay reparations for slavery/colonialism

This house would open all borders

This house would make development aid contingent on having progressive women's rights

People should have a say over the laws that govern them

This house prefers a strong dictatorship to a weak democracy

This house believes that judges should be democratically elected

Killing is justified if it is in self defence

This house would legalise abortion

We should treat animals with compassion

This house would go vegetarian

This house would ban zoos

This house would ban the ownership of pets

Dealing with competing intuitions

People often hold competing intuitions at the same time. We are messy- our views can be contradictory.

Think about the intuition that "people should/should not be allowed to cause themselves harm". You may want to use this intuition to prove an argument in a debate. However, people generally do not have a clear position on it. You need to show that your interpretation is the correct one.

A useful way to do this is to tie your interpretation of the intuition to an example of something in the real world that people overwhelmingly agree on. For example, to show that people *should* be allowed to cause themselves harm you could use the examples of:

- smoking
- doing a dangerous job like mining
- studying a useless university degree that will limit your job prospects

To show that people *shouldn't* be allowed to cause themselves harm you could use the examples of:

- being forced by law to wear a seatbelt
- harmful drugs like crystal meth being illegal

Thus, the way you would introduce the intuition in the debate would go something along the lines of:

My next argument is based on the idea that people should be allowed to cause themselves harm, and that the state has no place stopping them. We allow people to cause themselves harm all the time- we let them smoke despite the health risks, we let them undertake dangerous work like mining, we let them study useless degrees at university that will harm their future job prospects. This is no different...

Dealing with competing intuitions cont.

Thought experiments

Another way to get judges on your side of a competing intuition is to use thought experiments. A thought experiment is a way of thinking about a theory (or intuition) by applying it to a practical example. There are many useful and famous philosophical thought experiments- researching them can be very helpful to you in debating!

One of the most famous thought experiments is the "trolley problem", invented by Philippa Foot in 1967. This thought experiment can be used to analyse the intuition that it is justified to harm one person to save many others.

In the trolley problem, you are asked to consider a "trolley" (or train) going down a track on which five people are tied. In front of you there is a lever that you can pull to divert the trolley to another track on which only one person is tied. You can choose to either pull the lever, sacrificing one life to save five, or to do nothing. Audiences tend to be conflicted as to what the right thing to do is in this situation.

The fun thing about this, and many other, thought experiments is that you can tweak it to get people to reach different conclusions about the intuition at play.

For example, changing the situation to one where you must push a person onto the railway track in order to stop the trolley generally leads people to be far more against the idea of intervening. Pushing someone onto the track just feels worse than pulling a lever, even though the end result is the same: one person dying to save five.

Examples

We've already discussed some examples on the previous pages. The best debaters are able to use examples to back up their arguments and give them additional credibility. A judge is far more likely to agree with you if you give them an example to think about. Examples make you sound like an informed team- therefore if there is a factual dispute in a debate, a judge is more likely to defer to the team that has used more examples.

However, as with intuitions, there are often conflicting examples that can be used to prove different sides in a debate. Therefore, it is important not to rely *solely* on examples, and to use examples in a way that makes them sound general rather than specific.

Example structure

There are two ways you can structure examples in your speech.

- General explanation -> example -> example explanation
- Example -> example explanation -> general explanation

The choice between these two structures is largely stylistic and down to personal preference. However, make sure you always provide sufficient context for the example you are using to make it relevant.

For example, if the debate is about developing countries, the example you use should be from a developing country.

Explaining Examples

It is crucial to *explain* the examples you use in a debate. You cannot simply say “*dictatorships are good for development because General Park Chung-Hee caused development in South Korea*”. You need to go a step further and unpack *why* this was the case (he had a lot of control over the economy, he could put in place policies that would be unpopular in the short term but beneficial in the long term without worrying about dissent etc.)

This is why it is crucial that you understand the examples you use, rather than just learning them off by heart. You should also take care to point out how the example is similar to the case at hand.

Responding to examples from the other team

There are multiple ways to respond to examples from the other team.

These include:

- Saying why the example does not apply to the motion
- Disagreeing with the factual content of the example
- Presenting your own example, and backing it up with a more compelling *explanation*
- Saying why the argument the example supports is not an important example in the debate (**last resort response**)

Analogies

Analogies are similar to examples but are more useful when dealing with principled claims in debates. These are claims about the way the world ought to be, not the way the world is. Sometimes these analogies come in the form of thought experiments where we imagine weird, fictional cases to test and push a judge's gut feelings (see more discussion of thought experiments on **page 8**)

Case Study: Good Samaritan Laws

Imagine you're in a debate where you have to support Good Samaritan laws- laws that punish people for not stepping in and helping others in distress.

A contentious principled claim you could make in this debate is that actively causing harm and causing harm to happen due to failure to act should be seen as equally bad. This is contentious because a lot of people are probably going to have intuitions against this claim. To justify it, you could use the analogy of a murderer entering someone's house to kill them. When they enter the bathroom, they find that the person is drowning in the bathtub. Instead of stepping in to kill the person as previously planned, the killer decides to not intervene and let them drown. In both cases, the person dies thanks to the killers behaviour- if the killer had behaved differently the person would have survived. Shouldn't the killer be responsible in both cases? The end result is the same.

Case Study: Social Contract Theory

'Social contract theory' refers to the (very popular) idea that people should be governed by laws they consent to. If the majority of people vote and decide on a law, this law is justified.

However, some debates might require you to argue *against* social contract theory. This can be very difficult- how do you argue that laws people have agreed to shouldn't apply?

One way to make this argument is to argue that people did not make this choice freely- that the power of the state in relation to them means they could not meaningfully refuse and therefore the entire contract is flawed.

While this may convince *some* judges, it's rather abstract. One way to strengthen this argument is with an analogy:

Consider a drowning person who encounters someone in a boat. The person in a boat says "I will save you, but only if you agree to be my slave for the rest of your life". Chances are the drowning person would accept this deal- but it's far from a fair one! The power the person in the boat has, much like the power the government has, means the arrangement is not a reasonable one.

Using analogies in a speech

Some specific ways to use analogies in a speech include:

- Introducing it early in a POI to confuse your opponent ("*would you support someone killing in self defence?*") and then explaining its relevance in your speech
- Using it to rebut an argument by "reductio ad absurdum" (taking a point to its absurd extreme end point- "*if they support this, their logic requires them to also support [insert analogy here]*")

Responding to analogies from the other team

Like with examples, there are multiple ways to respond to analogies from the other team in a debate. These include:

- Explaining why the analogy does not apply in this case
- Giving your own analogy that applies to different intuitions and explaining why it's more relevant

Stylistic Devices

The goal of style when using examples and analogies is to sound *credible*. Often in cases of conflicting examples, the judge will award the debate to the team that seemed to have the most knowledge and mastery of the subject matter.

Some stylistic tactics you can use when using examples and analogies include:

- Make token concessions or point out a few kernels of truth in the examples of the other team. This makes you sound reasonable and charitable.
- Make the judge feel intelligent for agreeing with you ("*many people foolishly believe x is true but actually y*").
- Make it seem like the judge is less intelligent for agreeing with the other team ("*the opposition thinks people will fall for their description of x*")
- Avoid using buzzwords. Describe your examples and analogies in *detail*.
- If other speakers are confusing, act like you understand them completely but re-characterise what they say to suit your side. The judge will be very grateful for this because there's a strong possibility they were similarly confused!