

TYPES OF MOTIONS

INTRODUCTION

- ▣ Just like we can identify that anyone called James is a male, motions can also be known in type by how they are stated.

“This House would...”,
“This House believes that...”
“This House supports...”

POLICY MOTIONS

- Motions of the form “This House Would(will, shall) [do X]” involve Government arguing that they should be enacting policy X.

A policy is a concrete course of action that Government teams wish to convince the judges should be implemented.

- Such motions are about whether the House should do X – with Government teams arguing that they should and Opposition teams arguing that they should not. These debates are not about whether the entity the House represents (usually but not always state government)

CASE STUDY(POLICY)

- Take, for example, the motion “THW ban cigarettes”.
- The question of the debate is whether or not the policy should be enacted in the manner that the Government team has set out, not just about whether or not cigarettes are good or bad. It is perfectly possible for the Opposition team to agree that cigarettes are bad, but oppose the government policy of banning cigarettes altogether.

Approaching a policy debate as an opposition

- For Policy motions, Opposition teams may choose
 - I. To defend status quo.
 - II. Propose an alternative in the form of a counter-policy.
 - III. Refute the justification for the policy and propose new erands of justification.
 - IV. Refute the need, citing that the government teams did not cite the need for the debate.

ANALYSIS OR VALUE

MOTIONS-TYPE 2... “This House believes that [X]”

- Motions that open “This House believes that [X]” are value judgment debates.
- They require Government teams to argue for the truth of the statement represented by X, whilst Opposition teams argue that X is false.

NB: There is no need for Government teams to implement a policy

- Take, for example, the motion “THBT Donald Trump does more harm than good.”
- The debate is about whether or not the statement is true, not about whether or not the government should do anything about the statement (by, for instance, banning Trump, which is in any case implausible). Government teams need not have a policy; they should, however, still define terms within the debate.
- In this case, they should provide a metric for how “more harm than good” should be determined.

What if my opponents start asking for the policy in a value debate?

- Simply refute that question by emphasising that the debate is about something else not the policy.
- Value debates revolve around values not policies.

Analysis motions Type 2...

“This House supports/opposes [X]”

- ❑ Motions that open “This House supports/opposes [X]” also usually need not involve Government proposing a policy (though again, they may choose to do so).
- ❑ Instead, the Government teams need to argue that they would either symbolically, politically, materially or in some other manner support the person, group, institution, cause, idea, value, or statement expressed by X.
- ❑ Opposition need to argue that X should not be supported in that way.

Analysis motion Type 3... “This House prefers a world in which [X]”

- ❑ Motions that open “This House prefers a world in which [X]” are debates which require a comparison of a world containing X or demonstrating X phenomenon to status quo.
- ❑ The Government teams must argue that the statement is true, while the Opposition teams argue that the statement is false.
- ❑ Again, there is no need for Government teams to propose a policy for this kind of motion. Take, for example, the motion **“THP a world in which all people have superpowers.”**
- ❑ Government must argue in favour of the motion in comparison to status quo (i.e. a world in which no one has superpowers), while Opposition must argue in favour of status quo.
- ❑ Opposition teams cannot invent a new world as a point of comparison: that is, it would be illegitimate for Opposition to argue instead that they would prefer a world where only good people have superpowers, or a world where only politicians have superpowers. **They must defend status quo as a point of comparison.**

Analysis motions Type 4...

“This House Regrets [X]” / counterfactual motions

- Motions that open “This House Regrets [X]” ask whether the world would have been a better place without the existence of X.
- In this debate, all teams are debating with the benefit of hindsight - the harms or benefits that teams are attributing to X have already occurred.
- Teams must also **describe how an alternative world that developed without X occurring would look like**. This is also known as a “counterfactual”. For example, with the motion “This House Regrets the rise of hookup culture,” teams cannot just debate the merits or demerits of hookup culture.
- Instead, they should consider what the alternative to hookup culture developing is likely to be (for instance, Government could argue that the alternative is everyone being in long term meaningful relationships, and Opposition could dispute this alternative and forward an alternative of their own).

Analysis motions type 5...

“THBT [X] should...”

- Motions that open “THBT [X] should...” are about whether or not the statement is true from the perspective of a neutral observer.
- Even though these motions are phrased as true or false statements, Government teams are encouraged to implement a policy. Take as an example the motion “THBT the US should sanction Saudi Arabia.”
- While it is possible for teams to debate the merits and demerits of sanctions in abstract, the debate would be made much clearer if Government teams present a policy outlining what sanctions entail, what kinds of sanctions would be implemented, and so on. Similar to policy debates, Opposition may also propose an alternative.

ACTOR MOTIONS..... “This House, as [A], would do [X]”

- Motions that open “This House, as [A], would do [X]” are somewhat special.
- These motions are more specific about the entity (A) doing (X) and so invite a closer examination of the perspective of the entity about what they should do, **WITH ALL TEAMS ARGUING FROM ACTOR A’S PERSPECTIVE.**
- Teams debating these motions should therefore consider what actor A’s knowledge, values and interests are, and explain why the motion is or is not in actor A’s best interest.
- Unlike previously discussed debates, actor debates are not about whether or not X action is necessarily best for the world.

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- It is important to note at this point that prioritizing actor A's perspective is not the same as assuming that actor A only cares about their own interests.
- Most, if not all, actors hold moral beliefs and principles, and will act to actualize those beliefs.
- Thus, debaters should feel free to make principled arguments in actor debates, in addition to more practical arguments, so long as they are also able to explain why the actor in question holds those specific principled beliefs

Case study (actor motions)

- So if, for example, the motion is “TH, as a parent, would not send their child to private school,” this debate should take place from the perspective of a parent, as both the proposed agent to make a decision about the education of their child and the proposed target of argumentative appeals. (By contrast, if the motion is “This House believes that parents should not send their children to private schools”, the motion does not take place solely from the perspective of the parent– instead, the debaters are simply trying to convince the judges of the truth of the statement from a neutral perspective.

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- In such a debate, Government teams would first have to explain what the interests of a parent are, and then explain why not sending their child to a private school meets those interests. The interests of the parent can be practical (e.g. wanting their child to succeed materially in life) or principled (e.g. a broad interest in the principle of equality).
- Opposition teams can do two things: they can either agree with Government teams about the interests of the parent, and argue that the proposed course of action does not meet those interests, or they can argue that parents have different interests than the interests raised by the Government team, and that this new set of interests can be better met by sending their child to private school.

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