

BASICS OF EFFECTIVE ARGUMENTATION

winning debate strategies

A-R-E-S-R

Arguments are the building blocks of effective debating. An argument is a sophisticated idea. It is not simply the expression of an opinion.

A debate argument is an idea (assertion) that is developed using logical analysis (reasoning) and empirical proof (evidence). An

argument is amplified – made credible and convincing – by demonstrating that it matters (significance) and is better than opposing or competing arguments (result).

A well-designed debate argument should explain that it makes more sense than, is more likely to be

right than wrong than, is more urgent or important than, and is more favorably compared to the major arguments presented by the opposing side in a debate.

Effective arguments have more substance and are more persuasive.

mspdp / hspdp

The Middle School and High School Public Debate Program

CONCEPT

ASSERTION – the label for an argument

Also known as an introductory sentence, hypothesis, signpost, or claim, the assertion is a brief, as yet unsupported, statement describing an argument

REASONING – the logical analysis supporting an assertion

An analysis, explanation, and justification for an assertion; an effective prompt to produce reasoning is to add 'because' to the end of the assertion

EVIDENCE – information from experience or observation

Statistical information, historical and current examples, expert testimony, personal stories and biographies, and hypotheticals based on defensible facts (for example, IFTTT, 'if this, then that') – evidence verifies reasoning; it shows that a logical explanation also matches our understanding of the facts of the world

SIGNIFICANCE – the qualitative and quantitative importance of an argument

Qualitative significance explains the importance of an issue or degree of change in an individual case. Quantitative significance explains the number of individual cases. In other words, how much does this issue matter and to how many people?

RESULT – a proof or the comparative value of an argument

The result of an argument position is that it helps a team win a debate. For example, like an issue that cannot be refuted effectively in a court of law, an argument might establish a convincing proof in support of a case for a topic. As a comparison, result is the method of evaluating an argument against the issues introduced by the opposing side of a debate. A debate team must be able to convince a judge that their arguments are superior to the opposing team's arguments. **The best approach – prove that each major argument for your team is superior to the sum total of your opponents' arguments.**

EXAMPLE

Sample Topic – BAN UNPAID INTERNSHIPS!

A – Unpaid internships do not offer job protection

R – Despite serious work on the job performed by interns, exceptions in the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) allow employers to deny minimum wage pay, job benefits, and protection against harassment to interns. Employers take the exceptions to save money – interns do the work without any traditional job benefits.

E – The FLSA exceptions are taken by businesses in fashion, film, music, and law. To get an exception, the employer must provide an academic benefit to interns as a substitute for job benefits. Many employers do not offer any such support and schools give no course credit. Some of the leading employers in the US face lawsuits for their treatment of interns – Sony, Fox Searchlight, Warner Bros., Conde Nast.

S – Interns work without the kind of protections guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They work without pay; they are not treated equally although they do the same work as other employees; they do not receive training. According to Intern Bridge in September 2013, more than 200,000 interns worked without legal protection and without academic benefit last year.

R – It is unethical to abuse workers this way. Over the course of several years, hundreds of thousands of workers have no benefits, no protections. Unpaid work and internship status means a serious loss of income, as well as little training and protection for the most vulnerable workers – students, the unemployed. In addition, it is a clear violation of Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights' wage and equal protection rights for workers. This is a dangerous precedent. It may become an excuse for other countries and multinational corporations to convert jobs to internships in order to strip rights from workers. For ethical and practical reasons, the practice of unpaid internships must end.