

Policy motions are usually concerned with the *status quo*. This is a Latin term meaning 'the situation at the moment'. They want to either:

A. Introduce a new situation which does not currently exist in the status quo: 'This house would give every citizen a universal basic income' is an example of this. At the time I'm writing, no country in the world has a universal basic income, so this would be an **innovation**, something which does not exist in the status quo.

or

B. Adapt the status quo: 'This house would introduce a 20 mph speed limit in all built up areas' is an example of this. Speed limits already exist, and are part of the status quo; the proposal is to **adapt** the status quo by making them stricter.

In other words, policy motions are about either **innovating** or **adapting**.

If you're proposing an **innovation**, you need in your definition to answer these questions:

1. **What form would your innovation take?**
2. **How would it be brought into being?**
3. **What would its scope be?**

So, if the motion is 'This house would give every citizen a universal basic income', you need to explain:

1. **How much would the universal basic income be?** (The minimum wage at 40 hours a week? The living wage at 40 hours a week? Current Universal Credit?)
2. **How would it be funded?** (Taxes? National Insurance? Abolishing all benefit payments and replacing them with universal basic income?)
3. **Who would count as a citizen?** (Everyone with citizenship rights over the age of 18? Or over 25? Or over 30? Or people who have already paid a certain amount of tax?)

Policy motions are about either innovating or adapting

If you're proposing **adapting** the status quo, you need in your definition to answer these questions:

1. **What will be changed?**
2. **What will be the scope of the change?**
3. **How will this change be implemented?**

So, if the motion is 'This house would reduce speed limits to 20 mph in built up areas', you need to explain:

1. **What counts as a built up area?** (All cities? Where are the boundaries? Residential areas? What do you mean by residential?)
2. **Who will it apply to?** (Cars? Motorbikes? Superfit cyclists? Will emergency services be exempt?)
3. **How will the new law be enforced?** (Speed cameras? Will offenders be fined? How much? Will they have endorsements on their licence?)

In both cases, the more questions (and answers) you (and your debating partner) can think of in the preparation stage, the more precisely defined your motion will be, the easier it will be to propose, and the easier it will be to defend against attack.

Alternatively, it might be an **ideas** motion, i.e. one concerned with changing what people think.

Ideas motions, remember, begin with: 'This house believes ...'

Two examples of ideas motions are:

- This house believes that money does not bring happiness.
- This house believes that Britain is still a sexist society.

For **motions of ideas**, you do not need to explain what action you would take.

Instead, you need to define how you understand the meaning of the words.

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