

So, for 'This house believes that money does not bring happiness', you need to explain:

- **What do you mean by 'happiness'?** (Emotional well-being? A sense of purpose? Feeling loved? Having a good relationship with God?)
- **What do you mean by 'money'?** (Everyone needs some money to survive - do you mean having more than this does not bring happiness? Do you mean having too much gets in the way of happiness? How much is too much?)

In the case of 'This house believes that Britain is still a sexist society', you need to explain:

- **What do you mean by 'society'?** (Formal institutions such as the media? The justice system? Education? The world of work? Or the way that people interact with each other in everyday life?)
- **What do you mean by 'sexist'?** (Discrimination with a practical impact, e.g. unequal pay, women being denied promotion etc.? Attitudes expressed in speech, writing and the media which demean women? Or institutional structures, e.g. laws about parental leave?)

Again, 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.

So, when you're defining:

- **Be specific and precise**
- **Pay attention to detail; anticipate problems**
- **Be clear about what you think words mean**

And one last thing ... once you've defined your motion, make sure you and your partner stick consistently to that definition all through the debate.

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The mechanism

When you debate a policy motion (one that begins 'This house would ...') you are trying to persuade your listeners to take action in the real world.

The 'would' implies a 'how'. How exactly would you do what your motion is proposing you should do? This is what is known as the **mechanism**. It only applies to policy motions.

The mechanism is owned by the proposition, specifically the first speaker for the proposition. It is an important part of defining the motion (see above).

Let's take an example: the motion 'This house would tax meat'. This is an excellent example of a policy motion which needs a strong mechanism, because it is very broad and general. So, if you're proposing it, how do you go about constructing the mechanism?

It's a good idea to start by defining the long term goal which is implicit in the motion. Here it is twofold: a healthier environment (fewer farting cows) and healthier diets (more vegetable based meals). The greater the impact the mechanism has, the closer you'll get to the goals.

All right then, let's propose a 1,000% tax on the sale of all meat products. That will turn everyone vegetarian overnight, apart from a few super rich people. Cows get made redundant, no one has heart disease any more. Big impact. Job done.

The 1,000% tax would certainly produce a massive impact. Unfortunately, it would also incur considerable costs:

- Massive unemployment in industries related to producing and distributing meat.
- Massive resentment, alienating all but the most fanatical from your well-intentioned policy.
- Massive evasion of the tax, and quite possibly a criminal black market in meat.

So, go too far with your impacts and you can end up creating much bigger costs which outweigh the beneficial impacts, leaving you open to attack from the opposition. A historical example of

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