

A common mistake is to get distracted from the point of clash by marginal issues, often practical ones, e.g. how much more complicated it is for parents who have a son and daughter at single sex schools to have to interact with two different schools, or how students in mixed schools are constantly being distracted from their lessons by attractive boys / girls. (Students at mixed schools tend to find that this is rarely an issue first lesson on a wet Wednesday in November when half the class got up too late to have a shower.)

A successful debater, though, will focus all her arguments behind either the social or the academic benefits, ensuring that her arguments for the greater importance of the social / academic are stronger, and that the weaknesses in the arguments for the greater importance of the other side are exposed. She will also make sure that, in her summary, she reminds the judges what the point of clash is, and shows them how she has won the clash, saying: 'They said this ... we said that ... we won because...'.

Bear in mind, too, that the same motion may generate different points of clash in different debates. To take the co-educational schools example, the two sides might instead disagree over whether the government has the right to tell people what sort of schools their children should go to. Those for the motion would say that the benefit to society of co-education is more important; those against it would say that the right of parents to make their own choices for their children is more important. The point of clash would then become quite different: **collective benefit vs individual freedom**. Usually what the point of clash is will become clear when the motion is defined by the first speaker, who should be setting the terms of the debate, if they do what we advised above when defining the motion.

So, to make the point of clash work for you:

- If you are the proposition, identify the point of clash clearly in your definition of the motion.
- If you are the opposition, analyse the proposition's definition in order to identify where the point of clash will fall in this debate.
- Keep ruthlessly focused on it; don't waste time on marginal issues.
- Refer to it in your summary, and show how your side has won the clash.

Show how
your side
has won
the clash

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Stakeholder impact analysis

We said in the section above on the **mechanism** that policy debates are about making things happen in the real world. Those things happen to people.

The people are called **stakeholders**.

What happens to them is called impact.

Understanding the impact that the action proposed by the motion will have on various groups of people will help you to define and defend your case more effectively if you are the proposition, and to attack it more successfully if you are the opposition.

This process is called **stakeholder impact analysis**.

How does stakeholder impact analysis work?

Let's go back to 'This house would make all schools co-educational.' The first question to consider is: whose lives would be changed if this motion was enacted? In other words, who are the stakeholders?

Here's a list:

- School students
- Parents
- Teachers
- Employers
- The government

The next task is to work out what impact the proposed change would have on each of these groups. In other words, what **impact** would the change have?

A good approach is to draw up a table like this:

STAKEHOLDERS	IMPACT
School students	They would all have to attend co-educational schools.
Parents	They would no longer have the choice of sending their children to single-sex schools.
Teachers	Those who had only worked in single-sex schools (or preferred working in single-sex schools) would have to learn the different skills required for teaching both boys and girls.
The government	Changing single-sex schools to mixed schools would take up a great deal of the Department for Education's time and money.
Employers	Eventually, everyone in the country would have attended a co-educational school. Would this make them better or worse at their jobs?

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