

Now, once you've decided stakeholders and impact, place the stakeholders in rank order as to how important you consider their interests to be. There isn't a right answer to this exercise, but how your ranking comes out reveals how you will approach the debate.

**Suppose you choose this rank order:**

1. **Students**
2. **Parents**
3. **Government**
4. **Teachers**
5. **Employers**

The assumption this ranking reveals is that schools are there to meet the needs of the children who attend them. If you are the proposition, this will lead you to argue for the benefits co-education will bring to school students, e.g. the greater ease they will feel with the opposite sex. If you are the opposition, it will lead you to argue for the costs it will bring to school students, e.g. worse grades for girls. The point of clash will then be **social benefits vs academic benefits**, but it will be focused around how those benefits impact students personally.

**What, though, if you came up with this order?**

1. **Employers**
2. **The government**
3. **Teachers**
4. **Parents**
5. **School students**

This would imply a very different approach to education. This suggests a world in which children's needs are seen as less important than the needs of society as a whole. The purpose of education in this order of priorities is to fit children for the world of work. So, the proposition might argue that co-educational schools prepare children better for the world of work because they teach them to collaborate better with the opposite sex as they will have to in the workplace; the opposition might argue that single-sex schools are more likely to produce women engineers and scientists, and that this is what the economy needs. The point of clash will still be **social benefits vs academic benefits**, but those benefits will be entirely from the point of view of employers, and to a lesser extent the government. The question the debate will have to answer is: which type of schools will bring more benefit to the national economy?

**Place the  
stakeholders  
in rank  
order**

**Or suppose another rank order:**

1. **Parents**
2. **Teachers**
3. **School students**
4. **Employers**
5. **The government**

This ranking implies a **libertarian** approach. Libertarianism means maximising people's freedom of choice. If parents are the most important people when it comes to their children's education, they should be allowed to choose how their children are educated; it is not the government's business to tell them what to do. Similarly, teachers should be able to choose what sort of school they want to work in, and students should be able to choose what sort of school they attend. If employers or the government don't like those choices, bad luck. This approach only really works for the proposition for this motion. The point of clash will be **individual freedom vs. collective benefit**. If you are the opposition facing this kind of proposition, you have to try to move, in your arguments, the rank order so that employers and government go further up, thus tilting the debate away from freedom and back towards collective benefit.

**To sum up:**

**When preparing for a debate:**

- Work out who will be affected by the proposed change.
- Work out what impact it will have on them.
- Decide which group of people you think is most important.
- Frame your argument accordingly.

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