

1. What is the debate about?

This question is asking you to cut through all the practicalities and focus on the essential point of principle. Here, the debate is about whether the state has the right to intervene in the market for the benefit of society as a whole. It's about which is more important: the individual or the collective.

2. What do we have to prove?

You are proposing a change to the status quo. First you have to prove there is a problem with the status quo; then you have to prove that your proposed change will solve the problem. There will always be both costs and benefits associated with any change, and you have to prove that the benefits of your proposed change will outweigh the benefits. So, you have to prove that: consumption of meat has bad consequences; taxing it is an effective way to lessen those consequences; the benefits of taxing meat will be greater than the costs.

3. What do they have to prove?

As they're defending the status quo, they have to prove either that the status quo works and does not need changing, or that it does need changing but that your way of changing it will either not work or that its costs will be greater than its benefits. (They may also choose to propose a better way of dealing with the problem presented by the motion.) So, they have to prove either that the consumption of meat is not a bad thing (or is even a good thing), or that it is a bad thing but that taxing meat is not the way to deal with it, either because it will not work, or because the costs will be greater than the benefits.

4. What will be changed if the motion is passed?

Most debate motions say, 'The world will be a better place if we take this action.' So, what will the world look like if your proposed action happens? It's worth considering both short and long (and sometimes medium) term impacts. In the short term, everyone will eat less meat, and the government will have more money. In the long term, climate change will be greatly slowed down now that thousands of acres of land are filled with health giving plants rather than farting cows, and everyone will be slimmer and healthier thanks to their vegetable rich diet; those few who persist in eating meat will be treated for the diseases brought on by their diet in shining new hospitals paid for by the tax on their addiction.

What will
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5. Who are the actors?

This means who is going to make the change happen. Here, it is the government, as they are the ones who are going to be setting and collecting the tax.

6. Who are the stakeholders and what will be the impact on them?

This means, as we learned above, the people who are affected by the change. Here, it is the government, livestock farmers, retailers, consumers and the population in general. The impacts are that the government will have more tax income; livestock farmers and retailers will lose income; consumers will have to pay more for meat; and the population in general will benefit from the environmental and health benefits of a tax on meat. How you rank the importance of these stakeholders will determine how you approach the debate.

7. What is the mechanism?

The mechanism is about how will you make the change happen. Here, you get into the nitty gritty. How much tax? 5% of the price? 10%? 25%? Will you add it to the price in shops, or to the price retailers pay to farmers? Which is most likely to achieve the benefits you seek while minimising the costs? Having a high tax rate would be more likely to put people off buying meat; having a low tax rate would make it easier to get popular support for the measure, and would make black market evasion of the tax less likely. As we learnt in the section above about the mechanism, you need to find the sweet spot that maximises impact and minimises costs.

Now let's look at how to propose an ideas motion: 'This house believes that money does not bring happiness.'

1. What is the debate about?

The key word is 'happiness'. Once you know what that is, it is much easier to make your arguments. As the proposition, you need to focus on non-material aspects of happiness, things that can not be bought, such as love, friendship and emotional well-being.

2. What do the words in the motion mean?

'Happiness' we have already dealt with. 'Money' looks quite easy to

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