

prevent catastrophic climate change. Simply banning single use plastic will not achieve this, so it is a pointless measure.'

The speaker here is making **the best the enemy of the good**. However admirable the 2025 goal may be, she is demanding more from the proposition than they can reasonably be expected to provide within the terms of the motion, just like the German student and her teacher.

How should the proposition respond?

'The 2025 target is an excellent one, and one we support. It is true that banning single use plastic will not achieve that target by itself, but it will greatly assist the achievement of that target. Here is how it will help ...'

To sum up:

- If you are rebutting the proposition, don't attack their action for not achieving something it cannot reasonably be expected to achieve.
- If the opposition attack you on this basis, gently but firmly lead them back to what the motion is really about.

9 False analogy

Analogy means explaining something by comparing it to something else. It can be a very helpful tool for understanding things. Teachers use it a lot. The trouble is that the thing you're explaining and the thing you're comparing it to are not the same; in some ways they will be different. When they're so different that they can't fairly be compared, the analogy becomes a false analogy.

Let's look at an example.

In a debate on the motion, 'This house would abolish exam result league tables for schools', an opposition speaker says:

'Imagine if we got rid of league tables for the Premier League, and all the teams just played for fun; who would want to watch football then?'

She is making an analogy between schools and football teams. However, schools are actually not much like football teams. All that they have in common is that they are both ranked in league

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tables. The only thing a football team does is play football, and the only purpose of playing football is to win. No one would want to watch a football team that didn't play to win. Schools, however, do many more things for students than prepare them for exams: they teach them social skills; they offer them extra-curricular activities (such as football, and debating); they teach values like respect for others; they aim to bring out the best in all their students, whatever their ability. No one would want to go to a school where the students were treated like players in a Premier League football team, rewarded when they produced results that sent the team up the league table, dropped when they didn't.

How to respond to this false analogy?

'I agree with the speaker. Football would be very boring if there were no league tables. But schools are not football teams, because ...'

To sum up:

- If you are using an analogy, make sure the two terms are similar enough for it to work.
- If your opponent uses an analogy, look for the ways in which the two terms do not connect, and try to prize them apart.

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10 Misidentified problem

This, from a speech in favour of the motion 'This house would ban single-use plastic':

'We use plastic cups for water in our school lunch room and they're really annoying because they keep tipping over and spilling. That's why reusable water bottles are better.'

What's wrong with it? It's missing the point, that's what. The central argument against single-use plastic is the damage it does to the environment by being non-biodegradable. Badly designed plastic cups that tip over have nothing to do with that. After all, it would be quite possible to design plastic cups that don't tip over. It's probably been done already, and the school just needs to buy some in. But doing that would only increase the use of single-use plastic.

If you're arguing for the proposition, you need to find the central