

steer it in a way that favours your side. Big Ideas are concerned with two opposite values, at opposite ends of a line. Think of them as being like two people at different ends of a tug of war. Sometimes the rope pulls one way; sometimes it pulls the other. Your job as a debater is to decide which end of the rope your side of the motion lies on, and to keep pulling in that direction.

The Big Ideas we're going to be looking at are:

- Freedom to vs Freedom from
- Social liberalism vs social conservatism
- Neo-liberalism vs social democracy

1 Freedom to vs Freedom from

What is the difference between **Freedom to** and **Freedom from**?

If you value **freedom to** above all, you think people should be allowed to make their own choices, but should also accept the consequences of those choices. You accept that there is a risk in this approach. People might make bad choices, which might damage them, and might also damage others, but you believe that this is a risk worth taking, because it is more important to be **free to** do what you choose than to be **free from** the consequences of your choices. You might also argue that **freedom to** works better than **freedom from**, because people tend to make better choices when they have ownership of those choices and the consequences.

If you value **freedom from** above all, you think people's choices should be regulated to protect them and others. You accept that this means sacrificing some liberty, but you believe that this is a worthwhile sacrifice in order to protect individuals and society at large. You are likely to believe that **freedom from** works better than liberty, because too much freedom to tends to lead to chaos and injustice, with the strong ruling over the weak.

How can you apply this Big Idea to analysing a motion?

Not all Big Ideas apply to all motions. The **Freedom to vs Freedom from** Big Idea applies best to motions which are about whether people's behaviour should be controlled or not.

Here are some motions it works well with, and how to apply it:

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1. This house would legalise drugs

Freedom to sides with the proposition; **freedom from** sides with the opposition.

Freedom to says:

- People should decide whether to harm themselves with drugs or not; it is a private decision, and not the business of the government. (**Freedom to** is a higher value than **freedom from**).
- People are going to take drugs anyway. By making it illegal, you create crime and criminal gangs. (**Freedom to** works better than **freedom from**).

Freedom from says:

- People are likely to take drugs, but at least making them illegal makes it less likely and thus minimises the harm. (**Freedom from** protects people; the law keeps them free from the danger of drugs).
- The free taking of drugs will be disastrous for health and productivity. (**Freedom from** works better than **freedom to**).

2. This house would ban hate speech

Freedom to sides with the proposition; **freedom from** sides with the opposition.

Freedom to says:

- Free and open debate is an essential part of a healthy society. The risk of someone being offended is the price we pay for an open society. (The **freedom to** say what you think is a higher good than **freedom from** offence.)
- Hate is better challenged in open debate than by being driven underground, which allows haters to present themselves as martyrs. (**Freedom to** works better than **freedom from**).

Freedom from says:

- A healthy society is one where mutual respect is practised. This requires some censorship of unacceptable views. (**Freedom from** disrespect and offence is a higher good than **freedom to** say what you like.)
- By enshrining mutually respectful speech in the law, you will make people behave more respectfully. (**Freedom from** works better than **freedom to**).

Which
works
better?
Freedom
To or
Freedom
From?