

Motions That Matter

In this chapter, we're going to be learning about how to devise successful motions, and about how different kinds of motions work in different kinds of debates.

It's easy for a debater to feel passive about motions. They're just what you get given; you have to get on with proposing or opposing them, whether you like it or not.

It's important, though, for a debater to think actively about motions. You should think about how motions are constructed; what different types of motion demand from debaters; and what challenges and opportunities different motions present.

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Drawing up your own list of motions is a very worthwhile exercise. A good stock of motions is an invaluable resource for a school debating club, providing material for practice in training sessions, and also for use in any internal competitions you run. The more motions you have, the more you understand how motions work, and also the more you understand how to analyse motions when you are preparing for a debate.

So, in this chapter we're going to be learning about:

- What makes a successful motion.
- What the different types of motion are.

What makes a successful motion?

- A successful motion must be **balanced**. That is, it must be possible to make more or less equally strong arguments on both sides of the case, without stretching either evidence, reality or morality to unacceptable limits for either side.

'This house believes that climate change is a problem' stretches the use of **evidence** to unacceptable limits for the opposition.

'This house would make the use of jet-packs compulsory for all journeys within cities' stretches **reality** to unacceptable limits for the proposition.

'This house would introduce compulsory euthanasia for disabled people' stretches **morality** to unacceptable limits for the proposition.

- A successful motion must be **narrow** enough in scope to be discussed within a five minute speech, but also **broad** enough in scope to sustain a full debate.

'This house would do more to stop climate change' is too **broad**.