

First Affirmative has failed to prove her case so it would be better to do nothing about the problem. The danger of defending the status quo is that, where there is manifestly a problem, the Negative can end up having to defend the indefensible. Acknowledging that problems exist and setting out how Affirmative's proposed course of action will make things worse is often a safer course.

Of all the positions in the debate, First Negative is the one most likely to be tempted to deliver a speech on the debate he was hoping would take place, rather than the one he is actually in. It's worth being aware of this vice as it's easy to slip into, especially for inexperienced debaters who may be casting around for something to fill out the time.

A good First Negative speech goes straight into what the First Affirmative has just said. Spending a couple of minutes discussing what the debate might have been about may be tempting, but usually achieves nothing and is worth doing only in the face of a truly terrible definition. In that event, First Negative is in a strong position to reshape the debate to the advantage of his side. If the definition is full of holes, fill them in ways that benefit the Negative. If the definition proposes an expensive government program with no suggestion of how it is to be paid for, raise the specter of all of the most unpleasant possibilities. By contrast, don't waste time arguing with what is obviously true. First Negative does not have to disagree with everything. If First Affirmative has said that crime is a problem for society, First Negative's job is to prove that the Affirmative's solution wouldn't do anything to reduce crime rates, not to argue that crime doesn't really bother people all that much.

The First Negative speaker is perfectly placed to define the terms on which clash is likely to take place. Focus on the important areas of disagreement. It's easy to nitpick at the definition. If it's genuinely weak, point that fact out, but don't get bogged down in legalistic detail or semantic squabbling. Quickly move to the major areas of disagreement that you believe should frame the debate as a whole.

Case Division

In addition to setting out the cases for their respective sides, the first two speakers should give a clear indication of how the arguments will progress in terms of personnel. In Karl Popper debate, the first speakers set out the case as a whole and leave rebuttal to the second speakers (who also will do some development of the case as they defend it). In other formats, the first speaker should explain the case as a whole and identify which parts she will detail herself and which will be left to the second speaker. Making a point of saying explicitly who will be dealing with what allows both the adjudicator and the