

When advocating minor repairs, the negative needs to show how these are more desirable than the affirmative plan. Team members could show that minor repairs solve the problem as well as or better than the affirmative plan. Alternatively, the negative could demonstrate that although minor repairs are not as effective as the affirmative's solution, they avoid some very serious disadvantage that the affirmative plan would create.

The strategy of proposing minor repairs has the advantage of allowing the negative team to advocate improvements to the present system while simultaneously maintaining the advantage of presumption. Because the changes they are advocating are minor, they do not entail the serious risks of the affirmative's plan.

Presenting a counterplan is an alternative when the negative wants to advocate a plan that is conceptually different from both the present system and the affirmative plan. When presenting a counterplan, the negative agrees that the status quo must be changed but argues that the affirmative's plan is not the best solution. Instead, the negative presents an alternative, their counterplan. If the negative decides to present a counterplan, it must satisfy two requirements:

1. **Conform to all of the requirements of an affirmative plan** discussed earlier in the chapter. Like the affirmative plan, a counterplan to contain an actor and an action may also need to include some nonessential elements such as funding or enforcement.
2. **Be an alternative, not an addition, to the affirmative plan.** The counterplan can be advocated as a substitute for the affirmative plan in two ways. One way is to show that the counterplan and the affirmative plan are mutually exclusive—that their coexistence is logically impossible.

For example, when debating the ICC resolution, the negative might recommend abolishing the Court rather than strengthening it, arguing that the concept of an international body administering justice is a bad idea and that the ICC should be abandoned. Thus, the negative can argue that the plan to strengthen the ICC and the counterplan to abolish the ICC are mutually exclusive.

The second way to show the superiority of the counterplan is to argue that it achieves the advantages of the affirmative plan while avoiding some of the disadvantages.⁴

Using our example, a negative team might propose that sovereign nations establish courts to try war crimes rather than having the ICC hear the cases. This counterplan and the affirmative plan are not mutually exclusive because they could be enacted simultaneously. Strengthening the ICC could be done simultaneously with establishing national courts to try war crimes. However, if the negative were able to argue that their counterplan would achieve all of the affirmative advantages and avoid some of the disadvantages of interfering with national sovereignty, the negative would have established that the counterplan should be a substitute for the affirmative, not just an addition to it.

ATTACKING THE PLAN

The negative can make a variety of arguments against the affirmative plan. Three of the most common are: the plan will not work, the plan will not solve the problem, and the plan will cause disadvantages.