## Structuring arguments

The way in which arguments are structured is important as not only does it make it clearer to the judge what you are saying, but it also makes you consider the strengths of your arguments to a greater extent.

## Basic structure

Commonly in school's debating, people make the correct claims but fail to expand on their arguments to the necessary extent. A good structure is to:

- 1. Write down all your claims (points)
- 2. Think about whether your points can be refactored to make a clearer case. Would two claims be more convincing if they were brought together as a single point? Would some claims be better incorporated as premises of other claims (more on this in a moment)?
- 3. For each claim:
  - a. Lay out your premises. For each premise, you should come up with some reasons as to why that premise is true.
  - b. Prove that the benefits that the premise brings are unique to your side and cannot be delivered on the other side of the debate.

## **Examples**

Take the motion THW ban school uniform. There could be several reasons to do this:

- 1. School uniform limits freedom of expression
- 2. School uniform inhibits creativity
- 3. School uniform is expensive
- 4. School uniform is uncomfortable
- 5. School uniform decreases gender equality

We could build the first claim something like this.



## Note

We could go further to prove these premises and in a real debate, you should definitely do this. For the purposes of clarity we don't do this here.

- 1. Lay out the premises.
  - a. The first premise could be: Clothes are linked to freedom of expression
  - b. Following on from this, the second premise is Uniforms violate freedom of expression.
  - c. The third premise is that Freedom of expression is important.
- 2. Prove that the benefits of not having school uniform are exclusive to our side.
  - a. Clothes are one of the most important forms of expression
    - i. They are highly visible
    - ii. People make their judgements of you off of them
    - iii. Clothes are a thing you are constantly exposed to
  - b. Suppose the opposition were to say "Sure, but banning school uniform isn't that important because you have other ways of expressing yourself." In that case you should point out that on our side of the house you get the benefits of those other forms of expression **plus** the benefits of school uniform whereas on their side you only get the benefits of those other types of freedom of expression.

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