

Identifying and Analyzing Clashes

By David Africa



Caveats

- For intermediate debaters, whatever that means
- Mostly rules of thumb as opposed to hard rules (in most cases I will justify the logic behind why a certain practice is preferable). Sometimes the rules will be hard, though, and I'll point out when

Motivating the Lecture

Clashes

- If you're off-clash, you just plain lose the debate (most of the time, since judging is comparative and you might be lucky that the other team is worse)
- Clashing strategically can make debating easier and more fun
- Knowing how to predict clashes can make winning from opening a lock
- Judging

Definition

- What definition of clash will we be using?
 - Definitions will differ and people use words differently since that's just how life is. Like, what even is a frame? Nobody knows.
 - **Clash**
 - For Gov: The reason you agree or support the motion
 - For Opp: The precise disagreement you have with the motion
 - **You might use this interchangeably with stance, or burden, or issues. In some instances the definition converges and in other instances it doesn't, but I don't really care.**
 - Can usually be identified by the broad themes being discussed in the debate.
- In many cases, the clash you take on by **teams** will be used as the metric for **your** persuasiveness.
 - It may be unclear whether or not you are allowed to take a different clash from your opening. We can be precise about it.
 - From the WUDC Judging Manual: "Furthermore, proposing a different metric by which the debate should be evaluated does not usually constitute a knife."
 - It is not a knife to say that X thing is a more important clash than the Y .
 - It is a knife to say that the things a team said to prove Y thing are untrue.
 - Thus, if, in the proving of X thing, you make claims that are contradictory to claims about Y thing, then you are knifing. **Thus, only separate non-contradictory clashes are valid.**

Definition

- Illustration:
 - **THW big red ball**
 - For Gov: You have to support that it is a big red ball.
 - For Opp: You can choose not to big, not to red, or even not to ball.
 - **It is not necessarily persuasive or advantageous to say you only disagree with one part, but it is possible and in some cases preferable. My personal opinion is that in most cases it is most sensible to clash by disputing as many parts of the motion as possible, as it broadens the responsibility of the Government team to defend.**
 - **Example:**
 - **THBT X policy is illegitimate and bad for the poor**

Note

We will note here that there are instances where your disagreement with the motion rests on something you have yet to prove. While this is true to some degree for all clashes (if your clash is that a policy is unjust, then at some point you have to prove such a claim) this is true for some claim more than others. You may, for example claim that a policy is an “overreaction” in the sense that it overshoots its goal, as many adjacent policies or social forces are already in play.

It is ambiguous whether proving this is part of the “clash” or part of the “argument” (this is frankly just semantics to me and I don’t care for the nomenclature) but in instances where this happens (either on the other team or in your own case) **pay close attention**. If, as established earlier, proving that a team is off-clash can be immensely damaging to the persuasiveness of a case, then this is one of the places you should strike.

How to Identify Existing Clashes in the Round

- What teams explicitly agree on
- What teams implicitly agree on
- Personal intuition

Selecting a Clash

- Depends on the motion
- Depends on the persuasiveness of the material inside
- Depends on the clash of the other team

Motion Types

THW -> Do the thing and don't do the thing

THBT -> The statement is true or untrue

THP -> Defend status quo **UNLESS** an alternative is explicitly stated in the motion.

THR -> A retrospective on what *had* happened. Essentially, world would have been a better place without the existence of the thing being regretted

THS/THO -> *“Motions that begin with “This House supports/opposes [X]” also usually need not involve Government proposing a model. Instead, the Government teams need to argue that they would either symbolically, politically, materially or in some other manner support the person, group, institution, cause, idea, value, or statement expressed by X. Opposition need to argue that X should not be supported in that way. Take, for example, the motion “THS US involvement in the Middle East.” Government teams must argue that US involvement is positive in totality, without picking and choosing which aspects of this motion they are supporting. Similarly, Opposition teams must oppose this motion in totality, without picking and choosing what to oppose. Teams cannot support only favourable aspects of US involvement, nor can they oppose only unfavourable aspects of US involvement.”*

Picking Better Clashes

Forecasting the kind of material you can run

1. Ease of Response
2. Generality
3. Provability
4. Impact

You generally want to run material that ranks highly on all four criteria

How to Call Out a Bad Clash

- The first thing to note is that “having a bad clash” is not something that a judge can penalize you for. So, you have to use the fact that a bad clash is something that can be damaging to a caseline.
- There are three “stock” responses you can run in most cases.
 - **The truthfulness of the claim/dispute**
 - Is this concern true?
 - **The mutual exclusivity**
 - Is this concern you have with the motion something that is only present on your side,
 - **The relative importance of the claim**
 - Is it true that this concern outweighs the clash brought up by other teams

What to do if you are off-clash

1. Panic
2. Check if you really are off-clash
3. Engage with their clash

How do you know if you've won the clash?

That's not an easy question to answer...

We can generally work backwards from the core of the clash and then examine the different claims used to prove subclaims, and then examine the different subclaims to prove that, and so on. It is likely that there will be standing claims from both teams within a given clash, so you can then recurse to weighing metrics between the two claims. For example: If the motion is something like THS the creation of lethal autonomous robots, the clash is “Who saves more lives” and within this clash your standing claim is that “killing people effec

Putting Analysis to the Test

Motion: TH supports the rise of language-generating AI

Gov runs that language generating AI is very good, and the rise makes it better. There are two possible clashes:

1. Language generating AI is bad and the rise is bad
2. The rise is bad

Which clash is preferable?

Putting Analysis to the Test

Motion: THR the Industrial Revolution

Is it on-clash for Opp to run an argument that states that due to the industrial revolution, technology will get even better going into the future?

Putting Analysis to the Test

Motion: THO the secularization of philosophy

Gov runs that the secularization of philosophy is bad because there are many instances of rabid atheists acting to alienate religious people from philosophical thought. Opp's response is while this may be bad, they can choose to support the good parts of the secularization of philosophy and shouldn't be forced to defend the bad parts of it.

Is the response on-clash?