

A white rectangular box with rounded corners and a black border, containing the lesson title. The background is light blue with decorative elements: an orange pencil tip at the top left, a teal pen at the bottom right, and a yellow envelope at the bottom left. A document with horizontal lines is partially visible in the top right corner.

Lesson 3:
Refutation

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$$a^2 + b^2 = c^2$$





01

Introduction to
Refutation



What is Refutation?

- **Defeating** or taking down arguments from the other side
 - Showing that they are incorrect or unimportant
- Also known as clash or rebuttal

★ This is just as important as making your own arguments!



Debate is like a **snowball fight**

What do you do to win?

- 1) Build a better base (Defense)
- 2) Attack the opposing base with snowballs
- 3) Rebuilding your base after it has been destroyed by the other team's snowballs.

We have learned already step 1: how to build a strong snow fortress (Argumentation)

Today we will learn the 2 other important skills to win your snowball fight

- 1) Rebuttal (Attack)
- 2) Rebuilding (Rebuilding your fort after being attacked)



Two Levels Of Refutation

1. Their argument is false
2. Their argument is unimportant



Level 1: “Their argument is false because...”

Question if their argument is true and **identify gaps**

- Are the premises factually wrong?
- Does the conclusion make sense?
- Are they missing any logical links?
- Do the premises suddenly jump to the conclusion?
- Is it based on any assumptions?



Look at their **PREMISES + LOGIC + CONCLUSION**

Example Types of Level 1 Clash

Logical Fallacies

Ineffective claims that appear logical. They are arguments that do not have a lot of substance and should be called out.

Strawman: attacking a misrepresentation of an argument

Slippery Slope: claiming a small logical step leads to an extreme effect/conclusion

Ad hominem: attack on the speaker instead of the argument

★ Don't be afraid to call your opponents out!



Implicit

Our arguments implicitly respond to the opposition's arguments → weaponizing your argumentation to also fulfill clash

Hanging

Their argument is dependent/hung on another reason, claim, or fact that they have left unproven

Example



For the topic: “**Should we ban video games?**”

Your opponent’s argument: Video games are bad for your mental health

Reasons why it is **untrue** (Level 1):

1. Video games aren’t bad for mental health because video game communities aren’t toxic (explain why)
2. In fact they actually reduce stress levels by spending time with friends and engaging in communities

Your turn!

For the topic: Should we ban school uniforms?

Your opponents' argument was:

1. School uniforms are always made out of polyester
2. Polyester is uncomfortable for students
3. Uncomfortable things should always be banned

Therefore, school uniforms should be banned

What are some reasons why this might be **untrue**? Which parts?



Level 2: Their argument is unimportant because...

Even if their argument is true...their argument doesn't matter

“Even if”: adds a layer

- Reinforcement to your attack on their snow fort
- More effective refutation!

Questions to ask:

- How important is their impact/conclusion?
- How relevant is their argument?
- How many people does their argument affect?
- How much change does their argument create?

Example Types of Level 2 Clash

Outweigh

Show that their point:

- does not affect a lot of people
- does not have a large impact
- Is not likely

Show why your side:

- affects more people
- Helps more vulnerable people
- has a much bigger impact
- Is more likely

Exclusivity

Their argument is not exclusive on their side.

Their good impacts can happen on our side as well

OR

the harms they point out still exist on their side.

Relevance

Their points are not relevant to the topic or are not altered/affected by the topic.

Example

For the topic: "Should we ban video games?"

Your opponent's argument: Video games are bad for your mental health

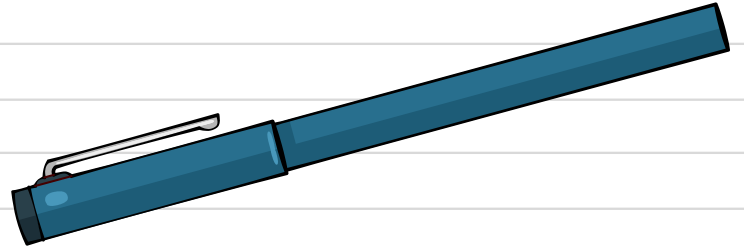
Reasons why it is false (Level 1):

1. Video games aren't bad for mental health because video game communities aren't toxic (explain why)
2. In fact they actually reduce stress levels by spending time with friends and engaging in communities

Reasons why it is **unimportant** (Level 2): **NEW LAYER**

3. The impact of this is very marginal, because children can just opt out if they are not enjoying the video game
4. Not a reason to ban all video games, there is regulation from parents already and societal pressures to not spend your entire life in front of a screen
5. The benefits of gaming (community) far outweigh all possible harms
6. Video games are not the most important cause of the terrible mental health for students. There are often external reasons.

How to Apply in Debates



Use a **flow sheet**: Them vs Us

Them	Us

Listen carefully to what your opponent is saying

Write/jot down their key ideas

Write/jot down any ideas you have in response

Respond **specifically and directly** to the statements and attacks of the opponent

Useful Acronym: FER

Flag (I am responding to their first argument)



Explain (In their first argument they tried providing to you that X)

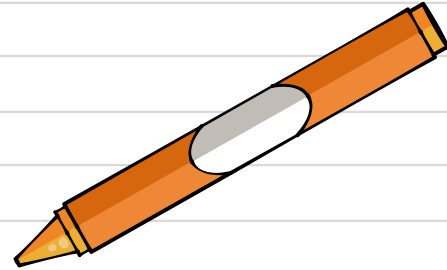
Respond (This is wrong for 3 reasons)





02

Introduction to
Rebuilding



What is Rebuilding?

Think back to the snowball example.

After the opponents refutation your fort has become weak.

The point of reconstruction is not to be on the offense but on the defense and trying to **rebuild** your fort and make it as strong as possible.

The way you respond to the opponents responses to your case are the **same** as the techniques covered in the **refutation** slides.



How to Apply: ESR

You can add a section to the Them vs Us chart

Us (Your Team's Arguments)	Them (Responses To Your Arguments)	Us (Rebuilding)
x	y	z
x	y	z

Explain Your Teams Arguments (X) add new content etc. Emphasize the important parts of your case

Summarize their attacks (don't spend too much time on this section)

Rebuild (Explain why their attacks are wrong)

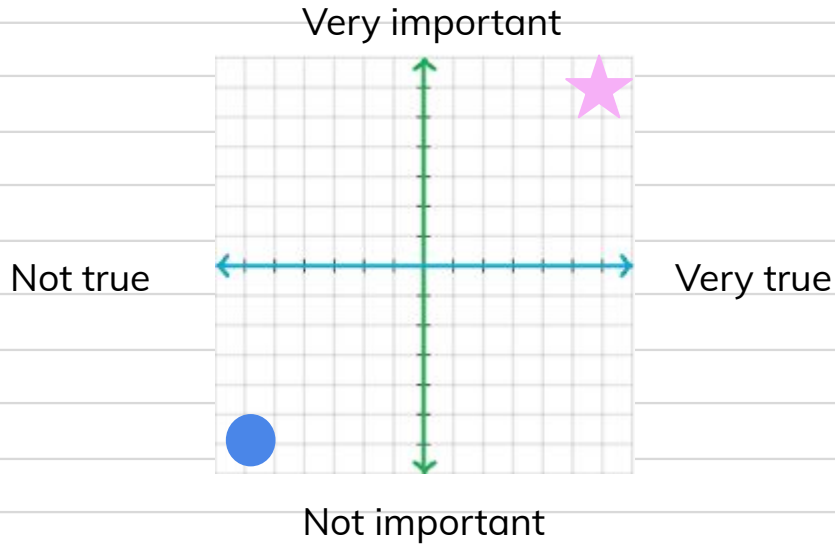
Our argument was X in which we explain X, they tried taking down our argument by stating Y, this is wrong because of Z. Therefore, our argument still stands

Rebuilding Example

Your Team's Arguments	Responses To Your Arguments	Rebuilding
Video games are bad for children's mental health.	The impact of this is very very marginal, because children can just opt out if they are not enjoying the video game	This does not take down our argument because this claim assumes that children can just opt out. But this is a false characterization, video games are extremely addicting and is designed to keep children, especially young ones, hooked for long periods of time.

Summary

Truth vs Importance graph → all arguments lie somewhere on the graph!



Try make your arguments as close to the pink star as possible through REBUILDING:

★ Very important and very true

Make your opponent's arguments seem like the blue circle through CLASH:

● Unimportant and untrue



03

Activity!

Practice and apply your learning

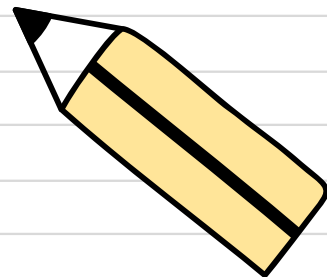
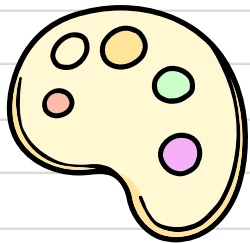


Clash Table Tennis

Topic: Homework should be banned



1. One side is **in support** of the topic (Team 1), the other side is **against** the topic (Team 2).
 - a. Know which team you are on!
2. Starting with the 1st team: present an argument that supports the topic (the serve!)
3. Team 2 then needs to think of **refutation** to the argument presented (the rally!)
 - a. Apply your skills!
4. The “ball” then returns to team 1. They have to respond to what team 2 just presented.
 - a. Either:
 - i. Rebuild what was first presented
 - ii. Refute against what team 2 presented
 - iii. Present a new argument
 - b. No repeats! Continue back and forth until one team cannot think of any new responses



THE END

