

How To Win a Debate

This document is intended for teachers and coaches whose students are competing in the ACT Debating Competitions. This document provides a very brief outline of what is required to win a debate. For more detail, refer to ACTDU's other debating guides.

Most commonly, adjudicators award debates to the team that successfully demonstrates that the world in which their model/counter-model is implemented is a comparatively better world. If the affirmative team is arguing [that we would ban the production of meat for human consumption](#), the affirmative team must:

1. Demonstrate there are harms associated with the production of meat for human consumption.

For example, the affirmative team should attempt to demonstrate that the production of meat for human consumption is harmful for the environment, a violation of animal rights, and harmful for human health.

2. Prove that banning the production of meat effectively reduces these harms.

It is not enough to assert that there are problems with the status quo; teams must prove that their model effectively addresses these problems. For example, the affirmative team must demonstrate that banning the production of meat will be successful in alleviating the harms they have identified.

3. Disprove any benefits of the production of meat being legal.

The negative team may contend that meat is a crucial part of the human diet, and that supplements are expensive and thus inaccessible to poor families. They may also argue that farms provide good living conditions for animals, and that a large number of animals would be slaughtered if the production of meat became illegal. The affirmative team must demonstrate that the negative team's harms are either untrue, or are outweighed by the benefits that their model offers.

Teams often conflate steps 1 and 2. For instance, teams may recite a list of reasons why the production of meat is harmful. In order to comprehensively win the debate, a team must prove why the existence of these harms requires us to ban the production of meat.