



Chunking

a.k.a. Characterisation

Lesson Type

Skill Work. (This lesson builds on the 'why true' aspect of "Argument Structure.")

Explanatory Note

A lot of arguments in debating come down to how people will react to a change. If we ban something, how will people react? If we introduce this law, how will people respond? To win that argument, you often need to convince a judge or an audience of the mindset and motivations of a group. In senior school debating this is called 'characterisation.' We 'characterise' a group (women, young people, politicians, immigrants) by describing them in a way that will make our arguments more believable. For example, describing young people as very opinionated means that it's more likely you can convince an audience that they would vote if they had the choice.

Characterisation is challenging, so chunking is a much easier scaffold for primary school students, and one we use in our senior school programmes for beginners. In chunking, rather than attempting to describe the group as a whole, we create an imaginary person, who is a typical member of a group- a typical father, a typical teacher, a typical year 5. Then we describe how this one person would react to the motion, or how they feel about the topic, then remind the judges this is typical for lots of people in this group.

Our experience has shown us that students find it much easier to imagine an example person and how they will feel rather than trying to conceptualise a group of people. In senior school, most students will move from chunking to characterisation.

Chunking is NOT stereotyping though they can seem similar at first glance. Chunking does not reduce a person or group to one aspect of their personality, but highlights things that might be important to that person, or describes their lives in a realistic and helpful way.





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Main Task

- Give students a motion or several motions
- Ask them to come up with 3 arguments for and against
- Ask students to circle any arguments that involve people acting, thinking or feeling a certain way.
- Then practise making those arguments with chunking characters!

- ***Banning religious schools will lead to adults being more tolerant of different religions***
- ***Banning exams will lead to more intelligent students***
- ***Banning private cars in city centres would make people healthier***

Steps to great chunking.

- ***What group are we discussing?***
- ***How will they feel or act?***

- 1) ***Meet my character. (This is bob, he is a typical year 5...)***
- 2) ***Describe him (He smells terrible and loves chocolate)***
- 3) ***How will he feel when this motion happens (great)***
- 4) ***How will he act***
- 5) ***Now remember, there are lots of year 5s who will feel and act just like Bob!***

