



# Chunking

a.k.a. Characterisation

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## 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 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 at first, and so we often use chunking as a scaffold 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 representative 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.

***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 and describes their lives in a realistic and helpful way.***

When students have had practice of chunking for a few months and are getting good, ask them to deliver the same point in the same way but instead of describing a character, do the same description for the group the character represents. This is all that's needed to turn Chunking into Characterisation.





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## Main Task

- Give students a motion or several motions
- Ask them to come up with three to five arguments for and against
- Ask students to circle any arguments that involve people acting, thinking, or feeling a certain way.
- Give students five to ten minutes to prepare and then to deliver that point to their group or class, using the P.E.E. structure covered last week, but also using chunking as a tool to strengthen the explanation.
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## Some examples

- 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

All the above points involve people changing, which requires they have reacted in a certain way to the motion. The psychology of that (why is it true they will react that way) is what chunking helps us with.

***A lot of debating comes down to persuading a judge how a group of people will react to a change in their circumstances.***

***A difficult stretch is to give students a motion and ask them to give a full three to five minute speech with 2 or 3 points, at least one of which uses chunking but all of which use the P.E.E. structure with why true and why important.***

