

Structuring Arguments - Advanced Training Debate Workshop: Week 2

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SUMMARY

The workshop focuses on the concept of "linear flow" in argumentation, which enhances the clarity and persuasiveness of debates. The speaker emphasizes the importance of a structured approach to presenting arguments, identifying common pitfalls that debaters encounter, and providing strategies to improve argument quality through tiering and comprehensive analysis.

- Linear flow refers to a clear, logical progression in argumentation, ensuring each point builds on the previous one.*
- Common issues in argumentation include missing significant points, unclear direction, unnecessary details, and hard-to-follow structures.*
- A well-structured argument should start with a problem, explain its roots, show how a proposed solution addresses the problem, and conclude with the impact of that solution.*
- Tiering analysis involves providing multiple levels of arguments to make cases more robust and harder for opponents to rebut.*
- Debaters should identify different actors and contexts to comprehensively address problems and demonstrate the motion's effects.*
- Secondary impacts and short-term vs. long-term effects can further enhance the depth of arguments.*
- Practice and gradual implementation of these strategies are essential for developing strong argumentation skills in debates.*

Awesome. Hi everyone. Uh welcome to the second week of advanced trading. So I'll be running this workshop and then but Lucy will be around in case you have any questions or in case uh we have a second room that needs a judge uh for this bar. So um this week we're going to be covering something called linear flow. Um, and it's something that I recently discovered um that made me quite good at the things that I'm I think I'm quite good at, which are matter jumping and having really strong robust internal argument structure. So, loads of people, even those who are experienced with debating, do not know what linear flow is. Um, and it's something quite unnoticed when we make arguments, but it makes a world of difference when the judge is crediting your analysis or when you're trying to find out what's missing for making really, really persuasive argumentation. Um, so I think that I discovered uh a new way of phrasing what linear flow is or internal argument structure. So hopefully a lot of you even if you've been debating for years will benefit from it. So if I can click to the next slide. Ah, here it is. So a lot of you are able to make really basic arguments. Uh but lots of you are also similarly when I was first starting out missing a lot of uh a lot of things in when trying to hit the higher brackets of speaker points. So like um here are a couple reasons why people often suck at making arguments. Number one, lots of significant portions are missing. So maybe it looks like impact.

Sometimes people miss framing. Sometimes people miss really crucial logical links that they didn't know they needed to prove. Um, and this is always really difficult to try to get people to fix because you just don't know what you're missing until after the fact when the judge tells you that's why you took the third or the fourth. Um, so I'm going to like internal argument structure is not only good for identifying like or like it's not only good for a judge trying to follow your arguments, but it's really good at internally checking what parts you're missing before you even speak.

So, we'll see that later on. Second part of why people suck at making arguments. um it's sometimes really unclear where a point is going. So loads of people um will sometimes say really smart things or they'll say like really true things but I'm like as a judge when I'm listening I just don't know where the point is going. I have no idea whether or not it links to the emotion. I don't know what the impact of the point is going to be. So basically like I just like I just tune out when someone is making a point but I do not know the direction that this point is going to go and so they end up wasting a lot of time because they don't signal to me why this point like why the statement they're making is even important in the context of the debate. Third reason why people suck at making arguments lots like similarly lots of time is wasted talking about meaningless details. So a lot of the times it's unclear where a point is going. Maybe it's because it's actually not going anywhere. So a lot of time people add details that are just not necessary to making a point persuasive or strategic in the the context of the debate. So loads of people just like for example give me pieces of framing that just don't go towards making their point impactful or making their point more persuasive. Sometime people give me logical links that are completely not crucial to making to proving that point is true. Fourthly, sometimes a argument is super hard to follow. So sometimes like they're jumping from all over the place. First like they tell me maybe like they tell me like the impact, then they tell me like the the analysis that leads to that impact, but then they tell me the problem after they've like the problem they're trying to solve after they've told me the solution to that problem. So it's really hard for a judge to follow your argumentation if it doesn't have a natural flow to it. So all of this can be really avoided by becoming disciplined in how your argument is presented or internally structured. Um, and I'm going to call this having a clear, clean linear flow.

And what do I mean by linear flow? So, what is linear flow? Linear flow basically is how your argument gets from the beginning to the end. So, it seems a little bit like tongue and cheek when I say this. Uh, and I'll try to explain a little bit more further on and use analogy so all of you can understand what I mean. Um, linear for linear flow to work, every step along the way from getting from point A to point B is necessary. every step is getting you closer to the end point of that argument and you don't make any unnecessary detours or diversions. So typic like even though the flow will look different for any for each debate in each case, typically it resembles this. First you tell me the problem that you're trying to solve or you show me the framing of what the court looks like. So for example, if it's something like this house uh this house uh wants to implement gender quotas for corporate boards, you tell me the framing or the problem that you face in status quo. So just like look, right now a lot of women face a glass ceiling on trying to go up into the upper stratas or the upper echelons of corporations. Because of this, they're underrepresented in the most powerful positions in many of these businesses and remain a socioeconomic underclass. So that's a problem in the framing that we see in the world today.

Then you show me why the problem arises. So you identify like why does why is it that the problem is there? So

you can say just like I people have internal biases about what you know powerful business people look like and these tend to not be women for example or you say like ah lots of um you know like lots of you know these networks and promotions are based on old boys clubs that women just aren't privy to. So you identify why that problem arises. Then you show me how this motion makes that problem better or worse. Um then you show me why it matters that this change has occurred. So for example like if you're showing to me like ah now like women will be super empowered in the workplace. They now raise that glass ceiling. And this means the impact of that is that women maybe achieve higher incomes. Maybe these women in these corporate boards will start making policies that are more favorable to women in the workplace. Empowering other women lower down the corporate ladder.

And then you show me the weighing at the end. you show me like this is the most important impact that in the debate because of XY Z reasons. Um so many of you especially if you like movies or especially if you like TV series understand that this actually really follows um what our brains naturally tend towards. So typically in a movie really good pacing is really necessary. So what you need is a setup and then you need a conflict and then you need a resolution and then you need an ending.

Right? So this is the same thing. So the problem in framing is the setup and the conflict that you aim to solve and then the rest of your speech is about how you resolve that conflict or you just think maybe that conflict gets even worse, right? And then you show me the conclusion which is like the impact in a way. So note just like in a movie bad pacing can ruin everything and maybe not leave enough time for a resol a good resolution or a good ending. The same thing is true for an argument. So spending way too much time in the setup or in the in characterizing conflict means that you have no time trying to resolve that conflict or trying to conclude it to a satisfactory end. So all of you need to be really careful in how you internally allocate time to each of these points. So going further, I try to uh explain why it is that this nar this flow is the flow that most people follow. So you can't just like rearrange things and have it be just as persuasive a lot of the times. So first you need to tell me um so like often you cannot make an argument unless like a judge knows why you're making it right. So just a lot of times when you're trying to fix a problem you need to first tell me what that problem is. So an and then next when you're analyzing why that problem arises it helps you set up the next stage. to un like telling me like, oh, the reason why women are often underrepresented in the most powerful economic positions is through like internal soft sexism or soft sexist culture in workplaces or just like old boys networks. That sets you up really cleanly for the next stage, which is to show me why the problem changes to be better or worse. So all your analysis can be targeted at those at those root issues that you just identified in the prior part. to showing me like, okay, this motion solves the old boys network.

So, this motion solves like the the internal soft sexist culture in corporations. And so, it makes it seem like your argumentation is all really targeted to the roots of the problem that you just characterized. And so, it by by doing that, your analysis seems super watertight to the judge and it seems also super unique and like the definitive delta in the debate. So it's not like it's the necessary thing in order to solve the problem and no other solution is going to be satisfactory because you show how that motion targets the very root problems of that motion.

Um and so uh then like of course like the ending like your argument doesn't mean anything unless you tell me what the changes result in and why that matters. Um so for example like this house would institute syntaxes. Um so your the problem that you set up is just like look loads of syntaxes ex like loads of people are smoking and drinking alcohol um to the extent that it's detrimental for their health and lots of these people tend to be like soioeconomically vulnerable people. Um and then you can say like the problem the reason why the problem arises is because of state failure. Um the state has failed these people in terms of like they tend to face a lot of economic pressure that gives them a lot of stress in their lives and the only means through which they can cope with it is through like things like like addictive like like addictive substances like alcohol or other unhealthy life practices and the state has disallowed them from accessing any other stress relieving mechanism like for example disallowed them for maybe going to the gym having access to therapy etc. And so that's the problem that we have. And then the reason why this motion now solves that is that we as the government we nudge them in the more correct direction. So a lot of these people go for these solutions because they're comparatively cheaper than going to things like therapy go like like eating healthy food etc. By making these like smoking and drinking alcohol more expensive, we target that economic incentive to indulge in like harmful things like alcohol and cigarettes. the impact is like they get better health outcomes and then you can do the weighing afterwards. Does that make sense to people? Please pipe up if you have no idea what I'm talking about or if you want me to re-emphasize the point. So this leads me on to the next part of matter dumping. So um loads of people who have who have seen me speak kind of like I guess like I I think that I can get through lots of material pretty efficiently. And one of the reasons why I can do that is because I do something called taring my analysis.

So what does tiering mean? So tiering essentially means that you give multiple levels of something. Um so I'm going to show you loads of examples of how you can tear your arguments so they seem super robust. But why should you give multiple levels of arguments? So if you give multiple levels of argumentation that I'll show you later, it's much harder for the opponent to rebut everything that you say. Um, so if if you're a first speaker um and you give like a bunch of different mechanisms or a bunch of different impacts or a bunch of different actors um that all lead to some change in the status quo, like maybe your your your opponent um if they're good, maybe rebut two out of the three. Then you the then your like second speaker can come up, not only rebut the other person who just came up, but said like, "Look, they obviously didn't take down every everything." And because we still have this one mechanism standing, we obviously at least make the world a better place um etc. Um also it's much more like you make also much more comprehensive cases that seem to cover different dimensions of the problem. Um so loads of problems in status quo unsurprisingly have many different roots or many different reasons as to why they occur. Um, and so seemingly acknowledging that and showing how you change all those different dimensions makes your case seem really really comprehensive to judge and even more persuasive. Also, if you're in an opening house, so if you're in an OG O, super hard to extend off something like that um, in a meaningful way if you just give a super comprehensive case. Also like the same reason as to why loads of problems arise due to a multitude of reasons, the actors involved also respond in a multitude of ways. So, it's also important to cover as much as possible in order to be persuasive. Um, be careful. Like, I'm saying this to you now, but try not to do this immediately.

Like, try don't try to like deal with 10 actors all of a sudden just because you hear this presentation. Take it slowly. Maybe like if you've only been analyzing one actor in a debate before. Analyze two. uh don't bite off more than you can chew because often what pe I've seen people do is that they try to handle everything and

they just end up analyzing pretty superficially. So how do you do this effectively? There are loads of ways to tier your analysis. So this is one of them. Um this this means giving lots of different mechanisms uh to solve a problem. So what problems mostly look like this right? You have a problem it could arise because of a multitude of reasons. So you know you have root one of the problem you have root two of a problem you have root three. Um and the way you can show that you comprehensively solve this problem or you comprehensively show how the motion makes it worse is that you take each root of the problem and you show how that changes each route changes. So if we're going back to like um uh there'll be like examples later but I'll show you examples later but like and then the next way you can tear analysis is that maybe a problem just says one route that you can identify you show me how that one root of the problem changes in a multitude of ways. So this becomes really evident later on when I give you examples. So this one is for example multiple roots to a problem. So here's a problem that I identify in the motion this house would legalize all drugs. Uh you can say like a drug cartels are a really big problem in Mexico or like a really big problem in lots of Latin America. Um they murder people. They often funnel their drug profits into really bad things like human trafficking. They often do things like rig elections or intimidate local people. That's a really big problem. So trying to identify why this arises probably has a lot of reasons. So maybe one of them is like ah they probably can recruit a lot of really vulnerable young men to be part of their drug network and once these young men for example are drug meals they'll get they'll get caught they get put in jail um where they become more hardened criminals. Um the second reason why this is a really big problem is often these drug cartels need to be violent. They often need to do face offs with the police. They often need to murder people in order for for them not to squeal or comply with the police. Um and because of that just there's just a lot of violence involved with the drug business. And third reason as to why drug cartels are a problem.

They use that money from drugs to funnel lots of really bad things like for example they they fund things like pro forced prostitution, human trafficking, rigging elections and all these are really bad. So there's loads of reasons why drug cartels are really strong and this is how you can change each fruit. So you can tell me like uh like actually by legalizing all drugs, drug meals are never put in prison. They never become hardened criminals and they can never be recruited um to do worse things than drug me right. So you no like drug cartels can no longer recruit from prisons. So that route is solved. They can say like ah because we legalize all drugs like you just don't need to have face off with the police. You don't need to hire security to smuggle drugs anymore. And so just the violence entailed in trafficking drugs just goes way down. less people die because of the drug trade. Third reason, like people like because you legalize drugs, probably people would rather buy drugs from like the governmentrun pharmacy down the street rather than a shady drug dealer that is associated with a drug cartel. And because of this, drug cartels now get less money from drugs that they can funnel into things like human trafficking. Um, and so do you see like how I've identified different roots of the problem and the way I've made my case really comprehensive is to show how that motion changes each root of the problem to make it significantly better.

Cool. So I hope that's clear. Another way you can do this now this is like this one problem that I identified that I show changes in a multitude of ways with the motion. So I identify one problem. So too few women are represented in the upper echelons of business. This is this house would adopt gender quota policies in corporate seno management. So I identified the problem lots too few women in to that are powerful business people. Um and then I identified one group to the problem it's because like women are discriminated in hiring policies. They

often face like hostile work environments. So i.e. just like the root of the problem is sexism.

Sexism that's basically incredibly entrenched, right? Um, and now because I've identified one root of the problem, I can show how the motion can change that one root of the problem. So like maybe like because more women are just put into senior corporate corporate decision-making boards, they can now pass for example policy women in senior positions are likely going to pass policies that make workplaces less hostile to the presence of women. So this benefits women from lower down the ranks as well. So for example like you know like more women will get paid maternity leave. you know, they're more able to ascend in the workplace because there are just policies that support them. So, more women are likely going to be promoted. Second way that this solves this the root of the problem like maybe because like men and women both become more normalized working with and under women in senior positions. So, if your boss just looks like a woman or like the head honcho is a woman, over time, you just become much more used to that fact.

um and you become less hostile or resistant to for example when a woman gets promoted or maybe if you become a manager one day you just say like hey my boss when I was 20 was a woman she did a good job let me hire this woman or let me let me promote this woman since I'm now a manager right so that's another way that you can change sexism third way you can change sexism optics so like more women for example when they have a role model in a really high achieving place or they have well they're like in a really high achieving place they now have role models and they know that a place is allocated to them. Um so they're much more likely to strive for promotions, they're more likely to put themselves out there um leaning in essentially and because they're much more active in pursuing promotions, pursuing raises because they now know it's possible to actually succeed like this also changes how women actively try to pursue those opportunities making it more likely that women succeed. So do you see how like I identified one root problem but then there are loads of different ways how that root problem can be solved by the motion. So trying to identify loads of different ways how a single problem can change is really like key to making your case uh as robust as possible.

Cool. Another way you can do this is you can choose to target different actors. So this is a motion. This house would restrict EU development aid to member states with anti-democratic party practices. Um, so here's the problem. Uh, too many states in the EU like Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania are violating EU principles of political rights. You know, the rigging elections, they're stacking judiciary. This is just not good. Um, and the reason why this has happened is because populist strong men who have been elected choose to restrict political freedoms and they arrest journalists. They sack judiciary and so on. So you can choose to say like okay trying to analyze what then changes in this debate you can look at different actors involved. So we can say like okay people within those countries right people within Hungary or Poland or Bulgaria um you can say just like oh when you take away development aid from these from these places you can say just like people within those countries who no longer get as much money going towards local infrastructure or make creating jobs they just have more resentment towards these strong men for taking away their material wealth. So, if they ever have an election again, um they probably will vote this strong man out or maybe they just take to the streets and just oust this strong man, meaning that um anti-democratic practices become far less likely. Or you can look at, you know, another actor, the strong men themselves. You can say like, ah, you know, now they can like strong men themselves know that they can't just do all these terrible things without facing consequences and then eventually facing backlash from their voter base. they just are less likely going to do this in the terrible excess are doing it

now right and then finally you can just look at borderline countries countries that are kind of doing anti-democratic stuff but are not as severe so for example Greece kind of it's kind of becoming a little bit bad uh but not quite to the extent of Poland Bulgaria or Romania you can say that like oh countries like Greece they probably also get better they observe Poland and Bulgaria being punished and so local people know the consequences are swayed away from populism because this looks like that it could be their future. Um so by identifying different actors you can also see how the problem is made better. So the last one is different incentives. So this one is just like how different um like what people are motivated by. So maybe people are motivated by the policy that is around them that supports them. People are motivated by the norms that they exist in. People are motivated by the optical things they observe like for example like women in higher positions.

This one is I just identifying different actors um in the debate and seeing how they all change. Cool. Now different context. Uh this is to protect yourself from being extended upon. Uh so for example, this house believes that it is in interest of dominant organized religions for that leaders to declare more progressive interpretations of traditional dogma. So maybe like you loosen uh how how stringent you are on like dietary practices or like the acceptability of contraception or same-sex relationships.

Um and so if you're on opening government, you can say like look there are too just too many people leaving organized religion. And that's because dominant organized religions are just too strict on some of the dogma and it drives lots of moderates away. Um you can look at like religion exists all over the world. So it's probably really good to analyze how different countries or different context it exists in is affected by this motion. So you can just say like in a developed world um you're going to drive the most devoted away um because now like if you are in America or in the UK and you're super super religious when you're when the pope or when like um when when like um a really big influential Muslim figure just comes out and says like actually it's okay to do anything now. it's okay to be incredibly liberal with all of our religious practices. Now your your like religious beliefs just seem too similar to the secular context that you grew up in, right? It's too similar to the secular society that you exist in. So why are you staying this religion if has no comparative difference to the society that exists around you? So you as the most devoted person are probably going to leave or you're going to be driven away because there's just no comparative value that your religion is adding anymore. So that's a developed world, not a developing world, right? Um you can say just like look what passes as um like what passes as like really radical in in Europe or in the west actually is characterized as pretty moderate in a lot of parts of the developing world.

And so it's likely that if you accept all of these like liberalisms in in in religion, this just becomes way too progressive for even mainstream society to accept and you're just going to drive loads of moderates away because they're just put off. That's way too different from their social political beliefs. Um and then yeah, so like you seem like really comprehensive and there's no way you can be outframed if you look at different contexts. Um yep.

And there are like this is the final slide. Um so tiering analysis is you can see that's done in loads of different ways and I gave you loads of examples of how it can be done. Um this this is not like the end all be all. There's

loads of other ways you can tear analysis. For example, second order impacts. So lots of impacts have secondary impacts. Um so for example if it's something like racial quotas in universities um sure you have a very initial impact of just like hey more minorities now get into university but also just like there are secondary impacts of that which is that you know like when you have like minority minorities going to university and graduating their children statistically are shown to be more willing to go to university if their parents have. So, a lot a big problem is is just that loads of minorities or underrepresented people don't go to university because they feel like university is not for them or it's not for people like them. Um, now that when you have like more like families that are from underrepresented backgrounds going to university, you no longer have that idea that it's not for you because your parents went to university. You're just more likely going to go to university because it's what your parents did. So, it's seems like a safer option. Um, so that's a secondary impact. Um, so you can tar your analysis such that you give like one really easily provable impact that just seems so intuitive and obvious. They can just branch off into many secondary impacts and just analyze that those happen. Um, just like I did right there. Um, and then the last way that I'll tell you how to tear your tear analysis is the short-term and long term. So you can also think about how a motion operates over lots of different time scales. So for example, the motion may be about forcing media companies to have more minority representation. You can just say like yeah sure just like like surely like now like the short term is that you just have a lot more lot more minorities on television. That's really good because like you know people like to see themselves rep reflected on television but you know on the long term that's where it really matters long term you have children growing up watching these television programs and they see minorities in a diverse set of roles in all of society and because of this they feel like they could be a lawyer. They feel like they can be a doctor. They feel like they can be an actress even when um social stigma often traditionally tells them they can't be those things. Um and so any questions whatsoever? This is super complicated stuff. I don't expect you to do this perfectly straight away, but anytime you're making an argument and you find yourself only having like one mechanism, um, try to think about all the things I told you. Try to see like what people are motivated by, different incentives, different actors involved in the motion, different contexts. Um, maybe like one problem has multiple reasons as to why it arises and you can look at how you this motion addresses every one of those roots. Um, yeah. So, just like don't be completely put off by it. This is a thing that you become naturalized to as you do more and more debate. So if you're confused, don't feel put off.

It's something that comes in practice. Um but yeah, so I thought this was just a really good way of articulating how I matter dump in how I have really strong linear flow. Um and I hopefully this is useful to most of you. Um any questions? If not, um I'll be checking the chat as well. Maybe that's a good idea. Um, if not, I'm going to start stop recording and we can start the debate. Awesome.