

Disadvantages

The first and simplest type of **off-case argument** is the disadvantage (also known as the “DisAd” or “DA”). The idea of a DA is fairly simple: the affirmative plan causes something bad to happen. It could be thought of as the law of unintended consequences, and is something the affirmative did not consider in their 1AC.

Regardless of what exactly it says, the DA is always some chain of reasoning for how the affirmative plan causes something bad to happen. The first part of a disadvantage, then, will normally talk about how in the status quo, the DA will NOT happen, which is also known as **uniqueness**. Next, the negative normally demonstrate that the plan will cause something to happen, which is the **link**. Sometimes, if it is unclear how the plan causes something to happen, the negative will also describe a **brink**, in which they talk about how the disadvantage is likely to. Very often, the negative will then describe how the thing which the plan caused to happen causes other things to happen. These parts of the argument are the **internal links**. Finally, at some point the negative will describe how what is happening is bad, which is known as the **impact**. If there were nothing else in the debate, the judge’s decision would come down to a consideration of whether the case advantages **outweigh** the disadvantages, or vice-versa.

I’m sure putting it in all these technical terms is confusing, so consider an example which we debated this year (note, the following DA is known as an economics disadvantage, and occurs in many forms very often in debate):

[Affirmative plan is for the US to give control of Iraq to NATO].

Uniqueness: US control of Iraqi oil is critical to the US economy

Brink: The US economy is teetering on the edge of collapse

Link: Enacting plan means that the US is no longer in control of Iraqi Oil

Internal Link: This means that the US economy collapses

IL(2): US economic collapse will lead to global economic collapse

Impact: Global economic collapse will lead to World War III

Notice that the last 3 points could all be seen as “impacts,” however, many times the question will be asked “why is US economic collapse bad”? The final chain of reasoning is intended to reach a **terminal impact**, that is, something which everyone agrees is bad (though, as I’m sure you could guess, there is no universal agreement on this and many times requires you to debate it out).

Suggestions for Reading/Viewing: (esp. vets)

Code of the Debater, Part 2, Section 3, “The Disadvantage”

Novice Policy Debate Videos: Part 7, “Disadvantages”

Key terms from this training are in bold; you should strive to know what all of them mean before the next training session.