

Public Speaking and Debate 2



Flowing

Flowing

“Flowing” is simply **taking notes** in debates. The paper you use to make the notes on is typically referred to as a “flowsheet”.

In this lesson, we will have a look at the **most efficient way** to make notes while the opposing house makes their speeches.

We will cover the following:

- Coloured pens
- Shorthand
- Flowsheets layout
- Listening
- Keywords
- Connections

Introduction

BP-style debates are complex and progress at a very fast pace. Taking notes, usually referred to as “flowing”, is essential to **keep track of the discussions and any opportunities for attacking your opponents**; Debate coaches who check flowsheets have frequently ascertained that the quality of the flowsheets made by losing debaters is poor.

Full debates commonly treat several **separate arguments** along with slews of technical add-ons. Debaters state their arguments, the opponent rebuts it, and the debaters rebut the rebuttal—without a doubt, academic debates are non-linear and complex.

If you don't understand this complexity, you'll lose the debate. Flowsheets can help you to **organise arguments into flows**, which helps to **map out** the main topics, evidence and claims and the **relationships** between them.

Coloured pens

To make it easier to keep track of your notes, it is recommended to use **two pens of a different colour** (for example black and blue), and make notes that **support your position in one colour** (say black) and notes that **oppose your position in the other colour** (say blue). You can even contemplate a third colour (say red) for annotations.

That way, you can distinguish the two flows in one glance without having to read the headings, which is much faster and less sensitive to making mistakes.

Before the debate, **make sure your pens actually work** or use new pens!!



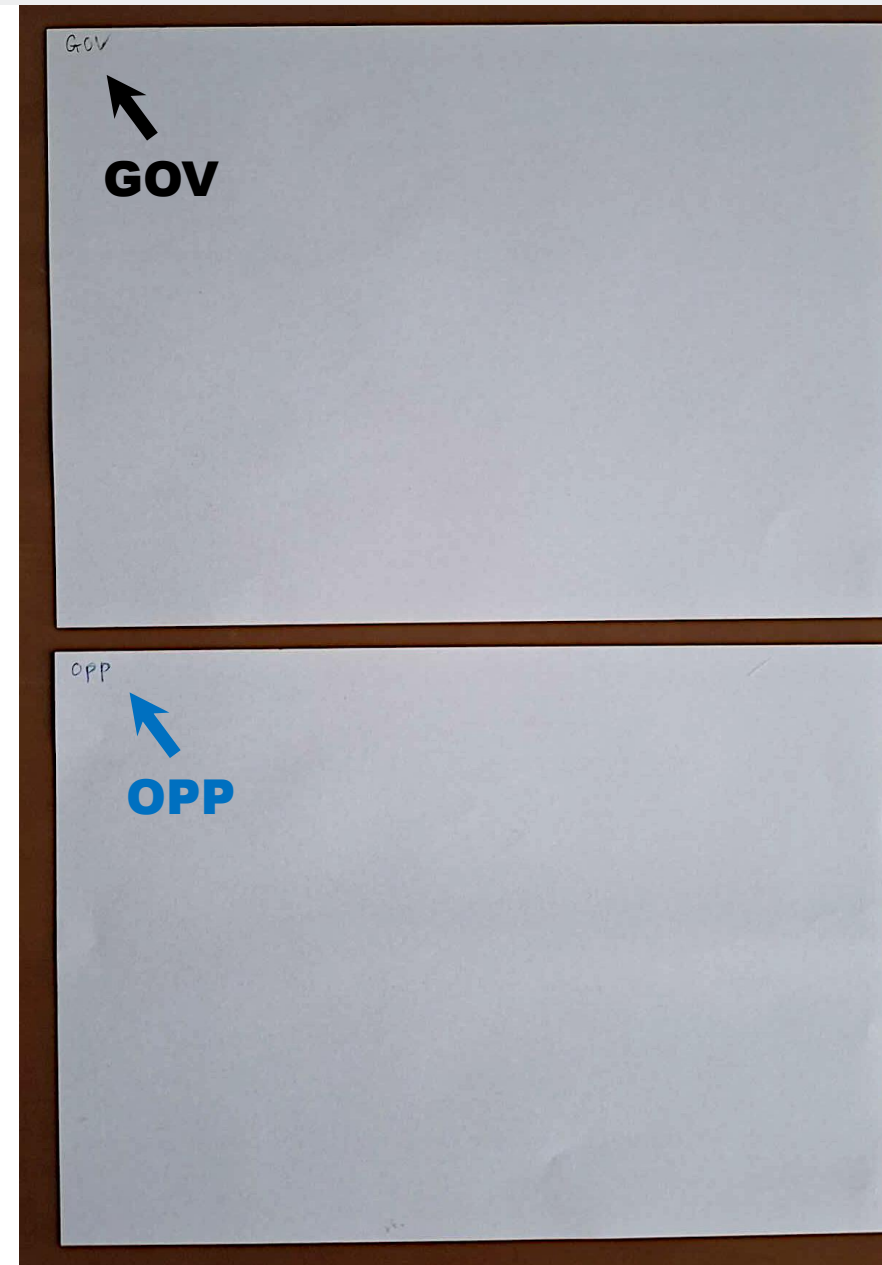
Shorthand

To be able to write more quickly, it is advisable to use shorthand for terms used most commonly in the discussion.

- Use **abbreviations for houses and speakers**. (“GOV” for government, “OPP” for opposition, “Dep” for deputy, and so on.)
- Use **abbreviations for common terms** used in the discussions. (“env” for environment, “mgmt” for management, “E” for evidence, and so on.)
- Use **symbols** where appropriate. (“+” for ‘in favour’, “-” for ‘against’, “:” for ‘means’, “>” for ‘leads to the conclusion that’, “↑” for ‘increases’, “↓” for ‘reduces’, and so on.)
- Use **arrows to identify connections**. 
- Use a big **question mark**  for a POI and a big **exclamation mark**  for an attack.

Flowsheets layout

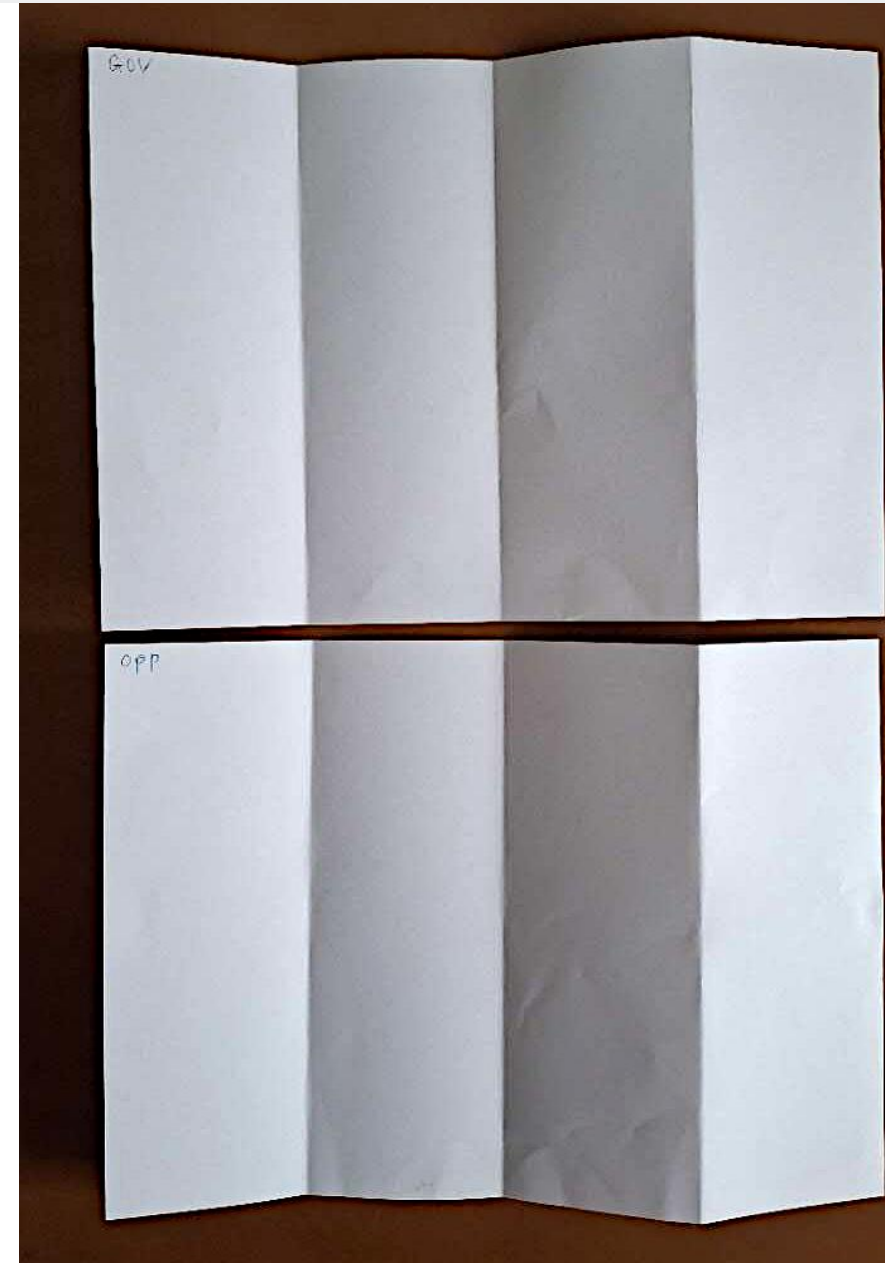
Use **one flowsheet** for the flow associated with the position of **each house**. In **landscape** orientation, mark the houses on them. So you end up having one sheet of paper marked Government (*GOV*) and one sheet of paper marked Opposition (*OPP*) in the appropriate colours.



Flowsheets layout

Fold each sheet **twice**, so it has four 'columns'.

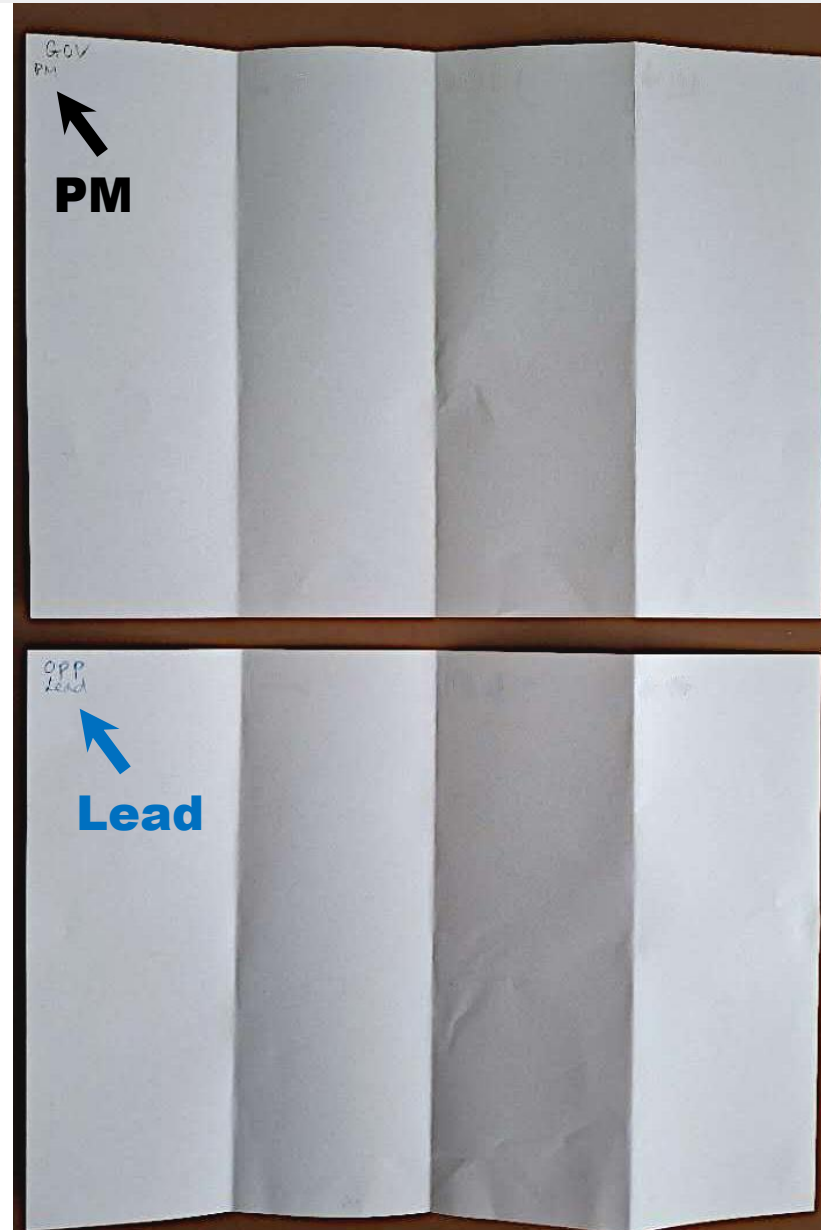
Note: Folding is better than drawing a line: without a line, you don't have to cram in the words so much and any lines you use for connections will stand out better.



Flowsheets layout

Fold each sheet **twice**, so it has four 'columns'.

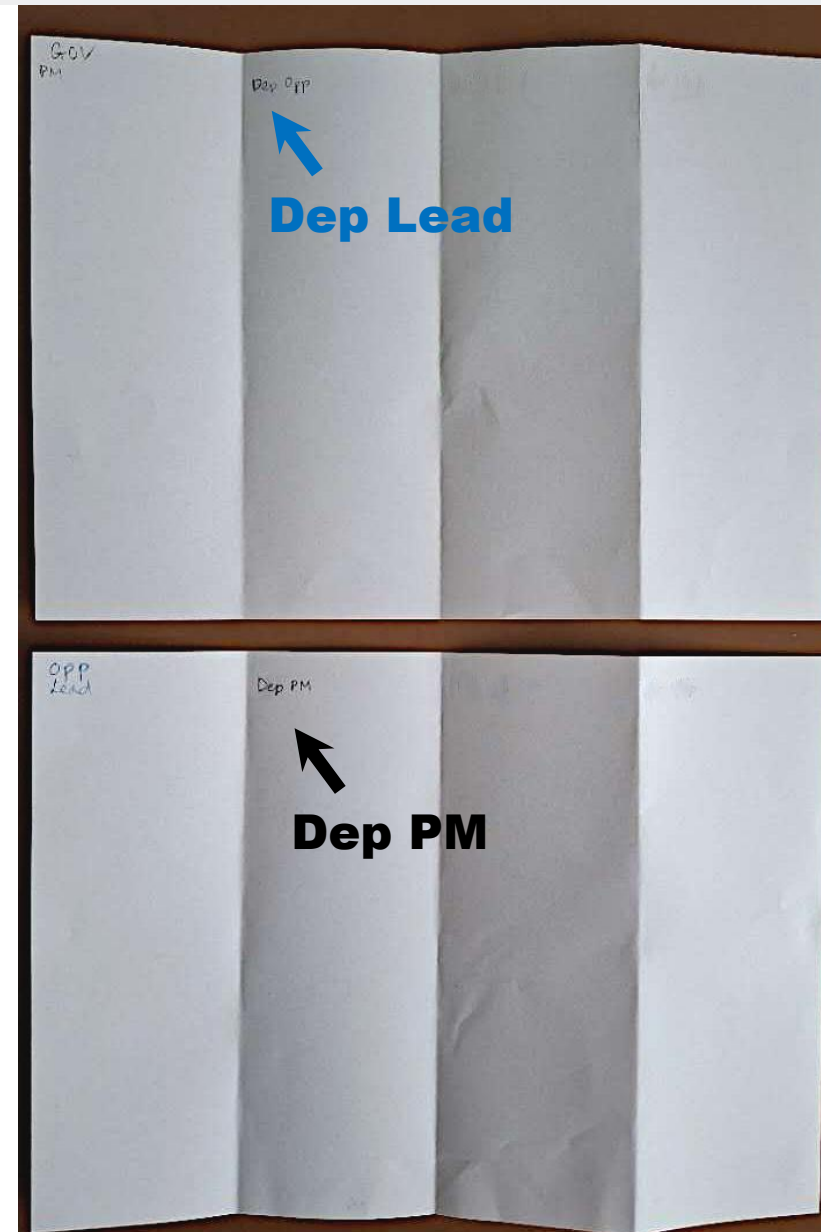
The **first column** corresponds to the leader of the house; so the first column on the Government flowsheet represents the speech of the **Prime Minister** (PM) and the first column on the Opposition flowsheet represents **Leader of the Opposition** (Lead).



Flowsheets layout

Fold each sheet **twice**, so it has four 'columns'.

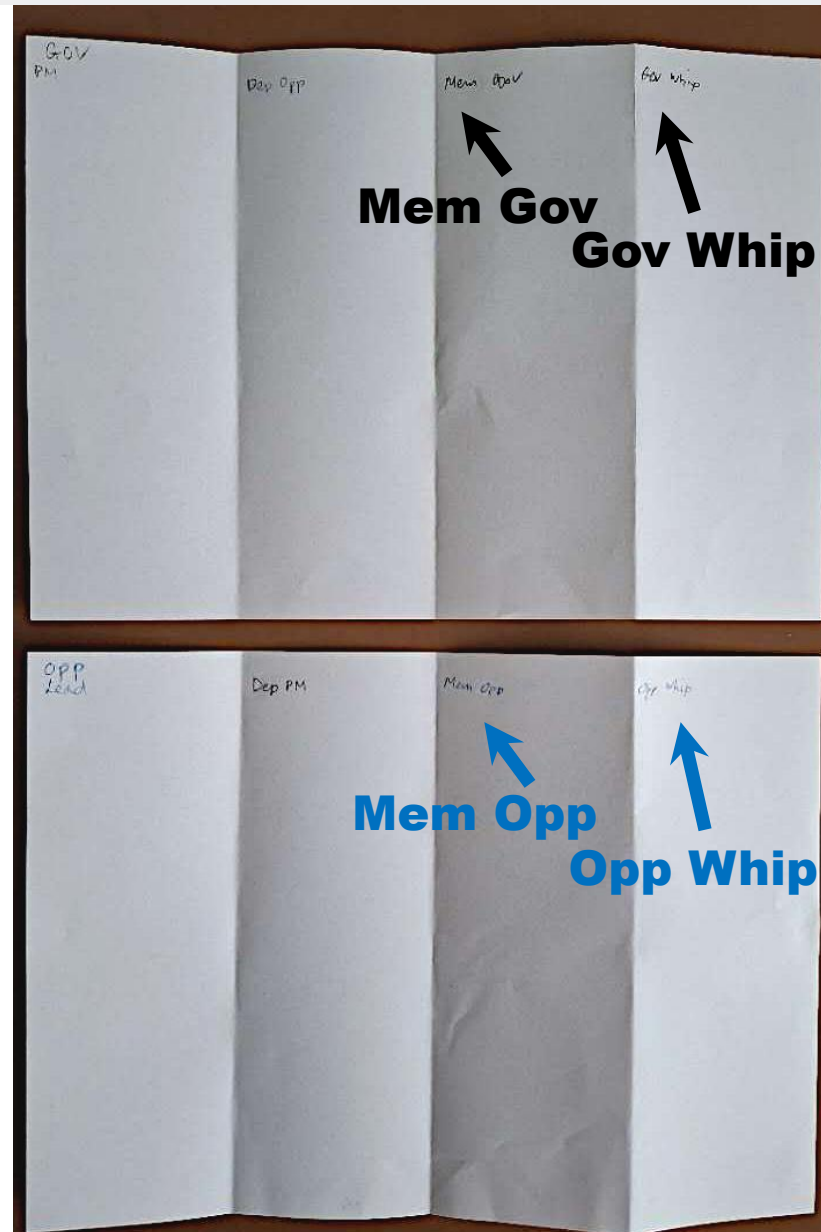
The **second column** is the rebuttal. **But** a rebuttal belongs to the flow of the **opposing house**, so the **second column** of the Government flowsheet represents the speech of the **Deputy Leader of the Opposition** (*Dep Lead*), and the second column on the opposition flowsheet represents the speech of the **Deputy PM** (*Dep PM*).



Flowsheets layout

Fold each sheet **twice**, so it has four 'columns'.

The **third** and **fourth** columns are again on the side of the house covered by the flowsheet, and represent the speeches by the Government and Opposition **Members** and **Whips** (Mem Gov, Gov Whip, Mem Opp and Opp Whip, respectively).

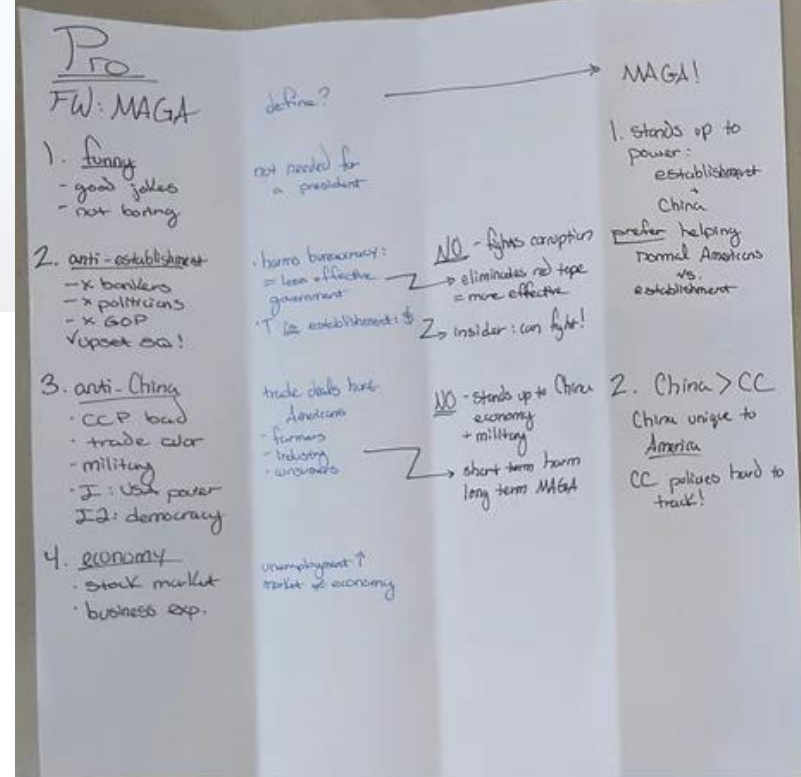
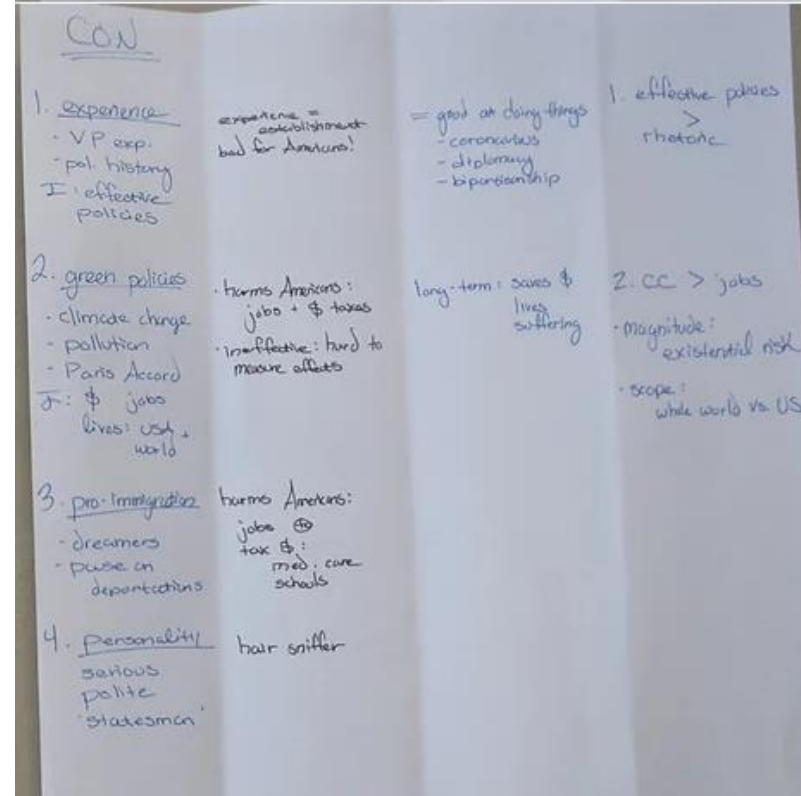


Example flowsheets using coloured pens

Note: If you are a beginner, you can mark the columns with the designation of the speakers, but as you get more experienced this will become second nature.

Note: One column represents yourself! Of course you cannot make notes while you are speaking, but it is good practice to write a few keywords in your column before or after your speech.

Note: As your flowsheets fills up with notes, the advantages of using coloured pens become very obvious! →



Listening

To understand a debate, you obviously have to **listen carefully**. This requires **practice**. If you are contemplating becoming a competitive debater, it is a good idea to practice flowing at home first: Watch videos of debates or any kind of persuasive speeches and flow them in as much detail as you can. After a week or so, read back your notes and check if you can grasp what the presentation was about from your notes: if so, your notes were obviously of a good quality.



Keywords

Of course, it's impossible to write down everything that is said in a debate verbatim. You need to **note down the salient points of arguments as keywords** that can jog your memory about the point that was made.

In a debate, you should have keywords or phrases for the following elements:

- **Topics**
- **Claims** made in relation to those topics
- **Evidence** backing up that claim
- Questions for **POI**
- Fallacies and opportunities for **attacks**

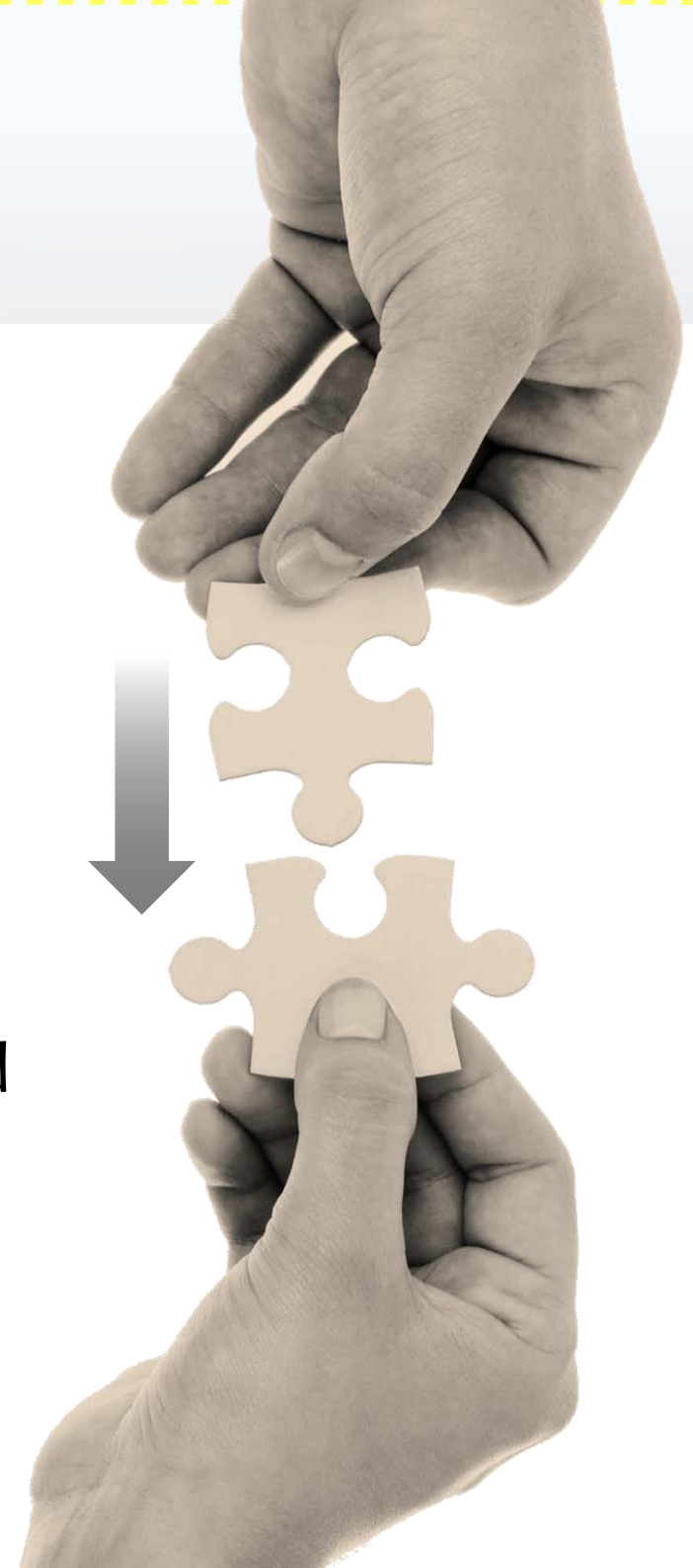
That's it. After you note down these and make the connections, your best strategy should be obvious.



Connections

Flowing requires you to understand complex **relationships between claims and evidence** immediately.

The best way to keep track of connecting claims and evidence is to use **arrows** on your flow sheets. The arrows guide you through an argument's flow like a mind map and allows you to quickly summarise it and will also help you to generate new approaches by extending the thought process.

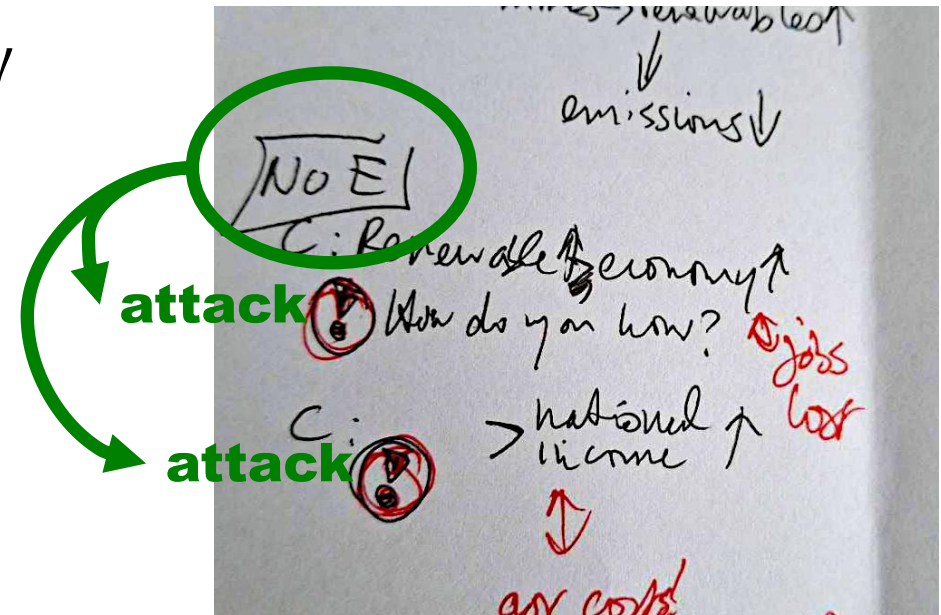


Making connections

Flowing requires you to understand complex **relationships between claims and evidence** immediately.

By clearly marking connections, you can spot **opportunities for attacks and POI**:

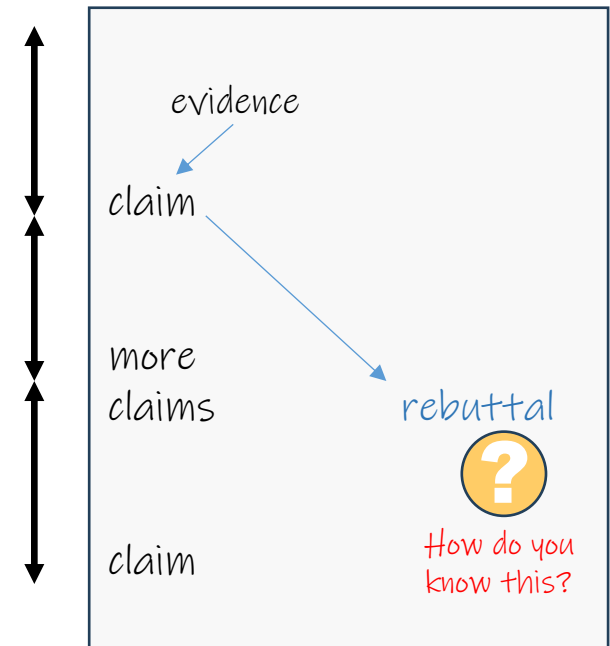
- If a claim has **no connection** to any evidence:
 - Launch an attack by questioning the **validity of the claim** in a rebuttal.
 - If you think a claim is valid but your opponent has no evidence to back it up, **raise a POI attack** to unsettle them.
- If a connection contains a **logical fallacy**, attack it in a **rebuttal** or **POI**.



Notes

Some practical tips for taking notes:

- Don't start at the very top of a column, **leave a bit of space** in case you need to insert information before it. This is typically the case when your note is a keyword representing a discussion topic and you need to note down the evidence supporting it, which is often given after the topic is mentioned.
- Don't write your notes **too close together** in case more points come up that you need to insert.
- If you think of a **POI** during the black-out time or want to ask later, write it next to the appropriate keyword with an obvious question mark.
- **Share** your flowsheets with your **team mate** while you are speaking.



Exercise: Detect keywords

The teacher will take on the role of PM and read an opening statement in favour of the following motion:

This house believes that to meet climate targets, all coal mines should be closed

The next slide has a number of keywords representing claims and evidence points. During the speech:

- **Listen for the keywords** and write down either the whole word or their label (**T1**, **E1**, **E2**, **C1** and so on).
Note: to make it harder, the keywords are **not in the order they are mentioned** in the speech, and **not all keywords** listed on the slide **are mentioned**, so only mark down those labels you actually heard!
- Mark any **connections** with **arrows**.
- If anyone has a **POI**, stand up, raise your hand and say “POI”. I will deal with your POI according to the BP rules.

Exercise: Detect keywords

Mark keywords you hear; make connections;
and check for opportunities to attack.

Topics

- T1:** Social impact of coal mine closure
- T2:** Energy sources for power generation
- T3:** Air pollution
- T4:** Country's reputation as a global citizen

Evidence

- E1:** Fine dust fell by 50% between 2013-2020
- E2:** Today, coal is no longer the largest energy source for power generation
- E3:** Coal is still the largest energy source for power generation
- E4:** Closure of coal mines has been proven to increase non-fossil fuel share
- E5:** Cost to undo damage from burning coal is similar to its market value
- E6:** New non-fossil fuels sources are cheaper than new fossil fuel sources

Claims

- C1:** Policy can reduce emissions
- C2:** Coal mine closure reduces fine dust emissions
- C3:** Fine dust causes cancer
- C4:** China usage of coal increased despite policy
- C5:** In the long run, using non-fossil energy is cheaper than keeping fossil fuel
- C6:** Switching to non-fossil fuels improves the economy
- C7:** Switching to non-fossil fuels can generate income
- C8:** Coal mine closure improves reputation

Exercise: Detect keywords

Mark keywords you hear; make connections;
and check for opportunities to attack.

Topics

~~T1: Social impact of coal
mine closure~~

T2: Energy sources for
power generation

T3: Air pollution

T4: Country's reputation
as a global citizen

Evidence

E1: Fine dust fell by 50%
between 2013-2020

~~E2: Today, coal is no longer
the largest energy
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E3: Coal is still the largest
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E4: Closure of coal mines
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E5: Cost to undo damage
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E6: New non-fossil fuels
sources are cheaper
than new fossil fuel
sources

Claims

C1: Policy can reduce
emissions

C2: Coal mine closure
reduces fine dust
emissions

C3: Fine dust causes cancer

~~C4: China usage of coal
increased despite policy~~

C5: In the long run, using
non-fossil energy is
cheaper than keeping
fossil fuel

~~C6: Switching to non-fossil
fuels improves the
economy~~

C7: Switching to non-fossil
fuels can generate
income

C8: Coal mine closure
improves reputation

Exercise: Detect keywords

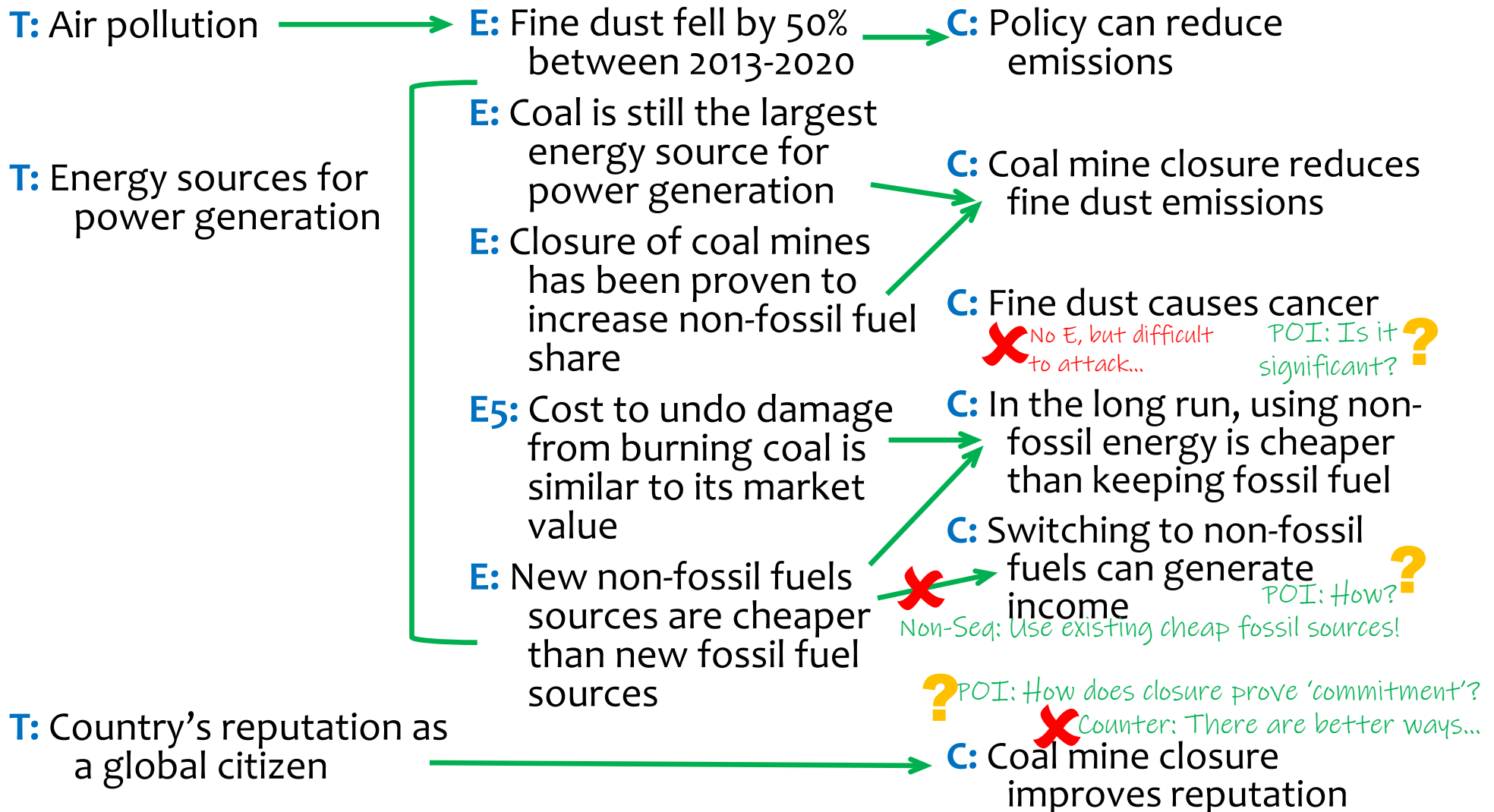
Mark keywords you hear; make connections;
and check for opportunities to attack.

 attack
 raise POI

Topics

Evidence

Claims



Exercise: Detect keywords

These are the same notes but using shorthand.

Topics

T: Air polln

T: Enrgy src (pwr gen)

T: Ctry rep as glob ctzn

Evidence

E: Fine dust: ↓50% (2013-2020) (Env Sc &Tech)

E: Coal: lgst enrgy src for pwr gen (eia.gov)

E: Closure of coal mines: ↑non-fossil (case studies)

E: Coal: Cost to undo climate dmg ~ mkt val

E: New non-fossil fuels src: cheaper than new fossil fuel src

Claims

C: Policy > ↓emsn

C: Coal mine closure > ↓fine dust emsn

C: Fine dust > cancer

C: Long run: non-fossil cheaper than fossil

C: Switching to non-fossil fuels > income

C: Coal mine closure > impr rep

Summary

Flowing is essential to **keep track** of the discussions and any opportunities for attacking your opponents.

To make your notes effective:

- Use **tools** like coloured pens and flowsheets
- Develop your own form of **shorthand**
- Clearly **mark connections** to identify possible attacks and POI
- **Practice**, practice, practice!