

## Weighing

Weighing is one of the most underused yet very important parts of debate. When you weigh argument you directly compare between them. Being directly comparative with your opponent's arguments is a great way to demonstrate how you are winning the round. There are a variety of ways for you to weigh between arguments. They include:

- a. Magnitude = How severe is the impact? Size of the harm (bioterrorism, nuclear war)
- b. Scope = How broadly is the impact felt across a population or even the world?
- c. Probability - How likely is the event? huge impacts are improbable, conditional probability means that several links are required for the thing to occur step is improbable (your benefit is guaranteed whereas theirs is based on a series of tenuous links)
- d. Qualitative (extend an advantage or disadvantage). Example: every single advantage when you negate is tainted by racism.
- e. Timeframe = Is it a short-term or long-term harm? Will the harm come about now or later? Linear harms which occur all the time, preclusivity (harm I'm outlining occurs before their benefits occur)
- f. Reversibility = harm can't be undone
- g. Moral requirement = affirming or negating creates an ethical obligation to act – if you create an ethical standard of doing something good, it entrenches the benefits
- h. Voluntary risk = whether an advantage or a disadvantage actively or indirectly occurs – do you tacitly consent to a harm happening or do you actually commit the harm (worse to actively harm than passively harm)
- i. Percent of total = end is nebulous but concrete benefit if avoid harms (worse that can happen is much worse than what I'm doing)
- j. Comparison of space and time = are your opponent's benefits holistic or do they only apply to one agent
- k. Institutional obligations = some impacts are the responsibilities of a given institution – even if I commit some harms/violate some rights whatever, it's still more important to affirm the resolution because I'm at least keeping w/ the obligations of the institution in question (usually the state)

These all serve as distinct ways to gain an advantage, but the ones you will find most commonly used are probability and magnitude. If both you and your opponent are doing weighing, it may even be good to do weighing between types of weighing. There are plenty of arguments out there as to why high-probability events are worse than high-magnitude ones and vice versa, so all it takes is a little effort to come up with an effective strategy.

Portions of this handout come from The Art of Debate - An Intro to LD  
<https://sites.google.com/site/anintroductiontodebate/lectures/2-more-advanced-material/1-refutation-strategies>