



We thank **Caitlin Miller** of **Chicago Debates**, who developed the content of this lesson.

Standard 1NC Block for Topicality

(Treat this like a fill-in-the-blank for your 1NC blocks.)

**Remember that most of these are analytical arguments, meaning that they do not require research/evidence.*

Only Definition/Interpretation needs a citation.

A. Definition/Interpretation: This is always presented first. The interpretation is used to explain the negative's vision of the ideal scope of the resolution. Definitions should be carefully chosen as there are multiple definitions floating around.

B. Violation: This explains how the affirmative's plan is outside the scope of the negative's interpretation. Essentially, the affirmative does not comply with a specific word/words from the resolution.

C. Standards (or Reasons to Prefer): Describes why the negative's interpretation is the best way to understand and debate the resolution. Here are a few common reasons to prefer; however, at this point, it's probably safest to stick with ground and limits.

⇒ **Ground** - Debate arguments should be fairly divided, with each side having an effective set of available positions (e.g. the resolution "slavery should be abolished, would not have a fair division of ground because the negative wouldn't have much to say).

⇒ **Grammar** - The best interpretations are grammatical. Distorting the meaning of words and phrases makes the resolitional meaning difficult to determine. Allowing ungrammatical interpretations is bad education.

⇒ **Topic Education** - The best interpretations encourage students to research the specifics of the topic and learn in depth about that year's area of concern (transportation infrastructure or space policy).

⇒ **Limits & Predictability** - The best interpretations are those that have a smaller number of possible affirmatives. Large topics are hard to research and reduce chances that the negative can be prepared to debate and learn about the topic.

D. Voting Issue: This explains why the affirmative should lose because they are not topical. This often describes topicality as a rule of the game that the affirmative has not followed.

Extending Topicality in the 2NC/1NR

⇒ **Summarize** - Clearly explain the negative interpretation and the way in which the affirmative violates the interpretation.

⇒ **Make a List** - Demonstrate the difference between the negative interpretation and the affirmative interpretation by proposing a hypothetical case list for each side. Don't be afraid to use outlandish examples for possible affirmative cases allowed by their interpretation.

⇒ **Being Topical isn't hard...** - Give an example of how the affirmative *could* have been topical. Explain that their mistake can be explained as either laziness or an attempt to cheat and avoid debating your awesome negative positions.

⇒ **Answer Reasonability** - Say that the affirmative's interpretation is not reasonable!

⇒ **Deter future violations** - Explain why the judge should vote on topicality, even if it is a minor infraction. For instance, to make sure that other teams know not to read affs like this one...