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The following lesson plan is the result of the joined effort of an international team of trainers. Their focus is to improve quality of debate training. Therefore, an important part of this endeavour is the feedback users provide.

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## Lesson plan – Strength of Arguments

### A. Goal of the lesson

At the end of the lecture, debaters will be able to identify criteria, which are helping to identify weak spots in arguments. They will also be able to use this criteria when building their own cases for debates.

### B. Activities

#### Discussion (10 min)

Discuss debaters' experience with arguments. Collect qualities arguments should have so they have a chance to be persuasive. Do not stop with obvious ones (good explanation, relevant evidence, ...) – search for more specific qualities (i.e. argument should be consistent with other arguments).

When presented with ideas, write them on the blackboard so everyone can see them together. You may (but do not have to) refer to them later on. Try to set an ambitious goal – for example 15 qualities.

#### Lecture (20-30 min)

Use chapter called „Testing Your Arguments“ in Simon Quinn's „*World Schools Debate Textbook*“ (p 107-113).

Focus on clear explanations of particular weaknesses Quinn mentions. In every one of 5 weaknesses, you can find explanation and also example of this „soft spot“. These weaknesses could be presented as criteria which measure the strength of arguments. If you do not feel comfortable with examples, try to come up with your own ones. But definitely, have some prepared. Basically, try to answer three questions during explanation of every weakness/criteria:

- What is the logic behind the criteria?
- Why is it important to recognize this criteria?
- How to apply the criteria? – rather by presenting at least one bad argument

You can also try to ask your debaters to come up with their own examples which could be related to the criteria you are explaining.

Do not forget to mention all the criteria are helpful, but not rules-like. Criteria about dependency of argument is a good example – It is risky to have argument dependent on another argument for some reasons, but when executed



successfully, it could be useful to connect arguments this way. But highlight the need for strong argument which other arguments are dependent on.

### **Exercise (20-30 min)**

#### **Option 1**

Have some of the debaters to present first affirmative speech. Ask debaters to write the speech down and concentrate on fulfilling the criteria in every argument. After the speech, ask debaters to evaluate the speech in terms of the criteria you they just learned. They should describe both where criteria were fulfilled and also where not. Discuss how the arguments could be presented so they could be stronger.

For this option, it is good to have one debater who will prepare the speech before the lesson. Speech should be 5 minutes long and consist of at least 4 arguments. It is important to prepare chosen debater for the moment when other debaters will critically analyze his/her speech. It is, at the end of the day, purpose of the exercise.

In this case, it is even more simple to use video with pre-taped speech, if you have access to any.

#### **Option 2**

Ask debaters to read an article. They should search for weaknesses in particular arguments on the article\*. Discuss how the arguments could be presented so they could be stronger.

*[The article\* should be from your country. It is ideal to search for opinion-oriented articles, commentary or blog (for clear goal of the arguments and good amount of different points to examine). Try to find an article which is not the worst you've read, but also has some visible fallacies and mistakes in terms of arguments.]*

### **C. Preparation**

Read chapter called „Testing Your Arguments“ in Simon Quinn's „World Schools Debate Textbook“ (p 107-113). If you want to be even better prepared, you can read whole big chapter „The Arguments“, startin on page 87.

If you are using videos or articles for your exercise, read them before the meeting, so you have enough time to come up with ideas on weaknesses and strong parts of arguments yourself. It is useful if debaters are shy or less construcite during exercise.

For lecture part, think about some examples of bad arguments. If you have time, try to come up with more than one for case when one is not understandable for some debaters. You never know ☺.

### **D. Hints**

Do not forget to make sure people understand the content after every part of it. Same goes for the exercise – make sure people understand what they should be doing and what is the final goal of the exercise.

It is possible there will be questions from experience where it is hard to apply the structure mentioned. It is understandable, since this is just one of many possible categorizations. Make sure debaters know they can use the advices any way they



want, you are giving them so they can choose from them, not because it is mandatory to use them.

Do not be afraid to say you are not sure about some answers if you truly aren't. Firstly, you do not have to be seen as perfect debate encyclopedia. Also, promise debaters you will look the answer up and provide them with it next time.

### **E. Verification**

As always, spend at least 5 minutes concluding the lecture. You can use different questions for debaters, such as:

- What is a new thing you have learned today? What information did you find interesting/useful?
- What questions can you ask yourselves when analyzing my arguments?
- How can you measure strength of your arguments.

What should every trainer do to learn from the lesson for the future:

- What activity/example/discussion produce best results at this lesson?
- What was the biggest problem during the lesson? How can I avoid/prevent it in future?
- Did I avoid/prevent the biggest problem which occurred the last time? If no, why?

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### **F. \*The article!**