

To begin the Rebuttal speech, it is good practice to state the fundamental conflict in the resolution, which takes the form of one or more of the following dichotomies:

1) Excellence vs Equity

2) Principle vs Pragmatic

3) Individual Freedom vs Social Responsibility

4) Personal vs Social Identity

Although these dichotomies underlie many debate topics, one could also consider the following more abstract ones:

5) Rationalism vs Empiricism

(Does knowledge come from reason or sensory experience?)

6) Universalism vs Particularism

(Do moral laws and truths apply universally to all humans, or are they bound to specific cultures, contexts and eras?)

7) Determinism vs Free Will

(Does your environment and genetics predetermine your destiny or does your free will allow you to go beyond your limitations?)

By referring to one of these dichotomies, and sometimes more than one, in the opening of your Rebuttal speech, **you focus the debate**, which is VERY IMPORTANT because it enables you to evaluate the perspectives of the arguments in the debate.

For example, consider the following resolution: *Entrance into university should be only based on grades.* The **Proposition** side will offer arguments that support the perspective of **Excellence** whereas the **Opposition** side will offer arguments that support the perspective of **Equity**.

After briefly discussing the fundamental conflict (dichotomy) of the resolution, you should structure your rebuttal speech by **Weighing** the most important arguments, which means *summarizing an argument that was given by the other side and immediately offering a reason for why the argument is unconvincing*. Then you should do the same for a second argument, a third argument and a fourth argument. You should not feel obliged to do this for all the arguments because some of the arguments may be insignificant; however, you must do this for the main arguments.

Although the Proposition and Opposition rebuttal speeches should follow the same 'weighing' structure, it is important to note the following distinction between the speeches. The **Opposition** rebuttal speech needs to focus on why several Proposition arguments did not convincingly support the resolution. The **Proposition** rebuttal speech needs to focus on why the Opposition arguments, including the refutations and rebuttals, do not prove why the Proposition arguments were lacking.*

*In other words, if you are the **Proposition**, you are stating that the opposing criticism has NOT convincingly diminished your *Burden of Proof*. If you are the **Opposition**, you are stating that the criticism of the **Proposition** has NOT sufficiently criticized your *Burden of Rejoinder*, which is the obligation of the **Opposition** side to show how the simple arguments of the Proposition do not sufficiently prove the truth of the resolution.

Sample Rebuttal Speeches

To clarify the theory above, the following rebuttal speeches are based on the resolution, **Cell phones should be banned in school**. Also, please note that in the British Parliament style, the rebuttal speech, which is the Whip speech, is 5 minutes long, and in the Cross-Examination style, each rebuttal speech is 3 minutes long. However, in the Canadian Parliament style, each rebuttal speech is 4 minutes long; also, the Leader of the Opposition speaks first, so the Prime Minister has the final word in the debate.

Opposition Rebuttal Speech

Mr. Speaker, this debate is fundamentally about *Personal Freedom versus Social Responsibility*. In other words, is it the responsibility of the social institution, which is here represented by the School Board, to monitor the behaviour of

students, or is it the responsibility of a student to monitor his own behaviour? We on side Opposition believe that it is the responsibility of the student.

First, side Proposition claims that cell phones should be banned because the cell phone creates fragmented concentration, which has led to falling grades in Canada within recent years. However, we on side Opposition question their evidence because it is not clear whether cell phones are the reason for the falling grades. It could be other factors, such as the lack of skill development during COVID or the lack of support by parents at home because parents are working extra hours to pay their bills in this very expensive economy. Because all these factors are influencing the problem of falling grades, the solution is not simply to ban cell phones in schools.

Second, side Proposition also claims that Cell phones should be banned because it leads to bullying in the school. To support this Claim, they stated that about 23% of high school students have been bullied during their high school years. To be sure, bullying is a serious issue, but bullying has been rising since the 1990s, which is long before the use of cell phones in school. Therefore, the real issue is not the cell phone; it is rather the need for better education that teaches students not to feel threatened by the differences of others. The education also needs to teach bullies, who are feeling insecure, not to make themselves feel stronger by making another feel weaker.

Third, side Proposition stated that cell phones should be banned in school because they contribute to the rise of mental illness among teenagers. To support this claim, they stated that there has recently been a 20% rise in hospital admissions, especially among female teenagers, due to mental illness. Although this statistic is sadly true, on this side of the house, we do not think that this problem is due to cell phones in school. It is rather due to parents not effectively teaching their children self-control. We know this because most students, the other 80%, do not suffer from mental illness, which means that most students are not adversely affected by having a cell phone in school. For this reason, it is not the social responsibility of the school board to restrict the freedom of every student with the intention of helping the 20% who are suffering from mental illness.

Finally, side Proposition stated that cell phones should be banned in school because it diminishes the development of social skills among students. However, they provide no real evidence for this claim. Instead, they cite students focusing on their cell phone screens instead of having face to face

conversations. To be sure, many students are interacting with their phones, but most often they are sitting beside someone and sharing their content with that person, which is a form of socializing. It is also a form of learning because they are discussing what they are viewing. Moreover, it is socializing because you can connect with loved ones who are not with you. On this side of the house, it is not our responsibility to limit the freedom of students to connect with those people who are important in their lives.

In closing, because side Proposition has falsely linked the problem of falling grades with cell phones and because side Proposition has not understood why bullying has increased in schools, we strongly oppose the resolution. Furthermore, because side Proposition has not understood that the increase in mental illness is due to a lack of self-control, and because side Proposition has not understood how cell phone usage develops new forms of social skills, we on side Opposition cannot accept the resolution.

Proposition Rebuttal Speech

Mr. Speaker, this debate is indeed about *Personal Freedom versus Social Responsibility*, but side Opposition have failed to recognize that one cannot have personal freedom without social responsibility. For example, the ministry of transportation insists that you stop at stop lights, and the ministry of finance insists that you pay your property taxes because you are supporting schools, road maintenance, sanitation infrastructure, hospitals, and so on. Likewise, the ministry of education makes decisions to restrict the personal freedom of students whose behaviour compromises the social responsibility of the ministry of education, which is to optimize the educational experience of all students. In our view, because the use of cell phones compromises the performance of students in school, we strongly believe that they should be banned in school. Although side Opposition has made some insightful observations, we on side Proposition believe that they have not put forward convincing criticisms of our position.

First, side Opposition claims that cell phones should be allowed in schools because other factors, such as COVID and the expensive cost of living, are the reasons for falling grades over the past six years. However, we on side Proposition are not convinced that COVID and especially the cost of living are

the reasons for falling grades because other countries, as we mentioned in our opening arguments, have experienced the same problems, but the grades of their students have not fallen over the past six years. What is the difference? As we mentioned previously, cell phones have been banned in Singapore schools since 2015, and the test scores of their students, according to international testing, have not fallen. It is clear to side Proposition that the falling grades of students in Canadian high schools is primarily caused by cell phones in schools.

Second, side Opposition also claims that cell phones should not be banned because bullying in high schools has been going up since the early 1990s. Although this is true, side Proposition believes that cell phones have seriously amplified the problem because cyberbullying is the primary way today in which students intimidate and assert dominance over another. Although schools cannot control cyberbullying outside of school, they can control it within schools by banning cell phones, which would create a safe space for students to focus on their academics and social relationships.

Third, side Opposition stated that cell phones should not be banned in school because only 20% of students have been admitted to hospitals due to mental illness. Mr. Speaker, 20% is a national emergency! If 20% of the population contracted measles, it would be considered a health epidemic. What is also important to emphasize is the recent rise of the problem; those 20% of students were not suffering from mental illness 5 years ago. It is a recent phenomenon, which corresponds roughly with the wide usage of Instagram and Tik Tok. As I mentioned in the previous point, schools cannot control the behavior of students outside of school, but they must create a learning environment where students can experience what it feels like to be disconnected from social media. By doing so, the Ministry of Education is being socially responsible by restricting the personal freedom of students, so students can have uninterrupted learning and better mental health.

Finally, side Opposition stated that cell phones should not be banned in school because it enhances the development of new forms of social skills among students. To be sure, socializing online is a new form of social skill, but it does not replace or even enhance what most people call social skills, which is looking someone in the eyes and sharing a conversation with that person, during which you develop a growing sensitivity to various facial inflections and the tone of voice that are being expressed by the other. To be sure, these types of social skills are learned within one's family, but they need to be enhanced and

expanded during the adolescent years. By banning cell phones, students will interact face to face during which they can refine their social skills. They will also need to think about topics to discuss rather than simply reacting to messages and images found on social media.

In closing, because cell phones in the school, and not COVID or the cost of living, is the primary reason for falling grades and because cyberbullying has enormously amplified the ongoing problem of bullying in schools, we strongly support the resolution. Furthermore, because schools can offer a mental break from the ubiquitous usage of cell phones among young people, and because cell phone socializing is not the same as face-to-face socializing, we on side Proposition strongly support the resolution.