

The Take A Stand Exercise

DUE: Will be performed in class

First try—Friday of 2nd week, 31 August

Second try—Monday of 4th week, 10 Sep

Goal: To help you *feel* what the "burden of proof" is like

Basic idea: Your group will take a stand on some important, debatable issue, and answer all the questions the audience puts to you.

Details:

1. Your group needs to agree upon an issue people are debating about.
 - The issue should be important. Otherwise you won't have anything to say about it.
 - The issue should be a real issue. If it's too one-sided, then there really isn't anything to argue.
 - The issue should be one you find at least a little interesting, since you have to talk on it.
 - If the issue is about agricultural or food policy—great! If not, no problem!
2. Your group needs to take a stand on the issue. It really doesn't matter which side—just pick one. You should not expect everyone in your group to agree (if everyone agrees, it's probably not a real issue). Remember, it's very good practice to argue something you don't really believe in.
3. Your group should brainstorm some arguments, and then assign them to individual members. Each person should have at least one or two arguments to go home, research a bit, and plan.
4. In class, your group will stand up in front. You'll state your position on the issue. For example, you'll say "The federal government should guarantee health insurance for every child in the United States!" Then the audience will ask you questions. They cannot make objections or statements—just questions. Each member of your group should have responsibility for about a minute to answer those questions. Other members can back him/her up, but can't speak for him/her.
5. How can you prepare for this? You can prepare by figuring out what questions you'll be asked, and making sure in advance that you can answer them. What questions will you be asked? We'll be going over the basic questions in class over the next two weeks. Right now, I can promise you that the biggest question you'll be asked is:
"HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT?"

Assessment: A good performance will demonstrate:

1. Strong group spirit: you work together to make sure everyone succeeds; no one dominates and no one is left out.
2. Good issue: You've selected a good, debatable issue.
3. Good preparation: You've thought through in advance the questions you'll be asked, and make a good showing in answering them.
4. Good organization and delivery: You pretty much keep your cool and stick to your points. You're not confused, and you don't confuse your audience.