

Going for the Double Turn

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Abstract: One of the biggest mistakes that debaters make, often unknowingly, is double turning themselves. However, despite the devastating nature of this mistake, debaters are unable to capitalize on this because they do not understand how to exploit the double turn in a game ending way. The purpose of this article is to teach you to identify a double-turn, communicate exactly what it is, and explain to the judge why it's a reason to vote for you.

What is a Double Turn?

A double turn occurs whenever someone makes a link turn and an impact turn on the same link chain. Another way that a double turn can occur, which is often much less obvious, is when someone makes a link turn and an internal link turn on the same argument. The final form double turns can come in to play is when people say that your standard is bad, and then they make link turns on your contention.

When people do not label how their turns function, you need to be able to understand for yourself what the function of their argument is, because this is how you will identify whether or not they're double turning themselves. It's much more important that you understand the function of the argument than it is to write down every single word in your opponent's card.

Going for the Double Turn

The first step in going for a double turn is giving an overview regarding what is about to take place. You should never just start your speech by extending arguments because you will lose the judge, and the significance of what you're doing will be lost on them. Instead, you should start off with an overview explaining that your opponent has made a round ending mistake; then, proceed to explain what that mistake was. This is where you explain the specifics of the double turn.

The biggest mistake that debaters make is that they ruin the advantage they have by calling the double turn a contradiction. It is much more than a contradiction; it is a huge error your opponent has made that should be an offensive reason to vote for you. After you've given the overview, concede both the link turn and the impact turn so that these arguments have full weight. Then you should explain to the judge why you are able to concede these arguments, and win the debate.

Once you've done this, you should weigh the terminal impact of the argument that was double turned against every other single piece of offense in the round. If the terminal impact of that argument is the biggest impact in the debate, then there is no reason why you should lose because you control the sole, and strongest, link into the biggest impact in the debate.

After you've explained all of this to the judge and weighed the argument, there are a few arguments you have to preempt. The first argument your opponents might make is that they did not label the arguments as turns. This is easy to address. Even if your opponents labeled the argument incorrectly, that doesn't mean that the function of their argument is the exact same, in which case they are still responsible for double turning themselves. They might also say that they didn't read a card, so it doesn't count. But this argument doesn't seem to make any sense because as long as there was a warrant for their argument, you've conceded the full weight of it, so it's accepted as true. Finally, they may claim that was not what they meant when they made that argument. To this, you can respond that it's what they said and if we judged arguments based on what people meant to say, then it would be impossible to adjudicate debates since we can never truly know what people meant to say; we only have what they did say.

General Tips

First, don't be focused solely on the flow. Don't get sucked into the minutia of the debate immediately and just start writing answers to turns the moment someone makes one. Have an efficient use of prep time, and, in your speech, you shouldn't ever always go top down because that's not how arguments work. Most people think that arguments work in a linear fashion, but in debate rounds that's often not true.

Second, to improve your efficiency in prep time, for every argument you should be identifying whether or not it's prescriptive or descriptive. If it's prescriptive, figure out if it's a link or an impact. You may need to oversimplify the argument a little bit. Don't destroy the nuances of it, but summarize it a bit so it's easier for you to classify what function it serves.

Conclusion

If you can master the art of going for the double turn, you will have added another weapon to your arsenal that you can use in debates where people are focused on making the most arguments that they can, and not concerned with the function of those arguments. You should never, ever, just say that they made contradicting arguments so the judge should ignore them because then you are sacrificing your ability to win the debate immediately. Double turns, when correctly exploited, should be a round ending argument.