

rushed into taking one when you're just getting under way or when you're on shaky intellectual ground. Take them when you're dealing with material about which you feel comfortable. Allow 10 seconds for the point to be made and, ideally, about twice that time to deal with it. Sometimes your answer will take longer, but avoid being led down obscure rhetorical cul-de-sacs to address points that have little to do with the thread of your arguments.

6. *Clash*. Clash is the point of conflict in the debate, the material over which you and the other side genuinely disagree. It is the focus of the debate—the reason for the arguments, the evidence and the structure. Your arguments should relate to it, your rebuttal should respond to it. Resist the temptation to wax lyrical on fascinating details that nobody disputes. Keep the focus on the areas of dispute. If you are the first speaker on either side, you should have a clear idea of what you want these areas to be and steer the debate in that direction. If you're speaking later, these areas should be apparent to you, and you should focus your attention on these rather than what you thought or hoped might be up for debate.

Conclusion

This chapter has given you some insight into the basic building blocks of a speech and some sense of how they fit together. In reality, a speech is not mechanical, and many of these blocks come into play intuitively. You should be able to see from this chapter that there is a very real difference between “speaking” for a set amount of time and “talking” for that period. You're not like the radio DJ whose job is to fill space with his general views on whatever subject pops into his head until it's time for the next track. Instead, you are a speaker with something to prove and an array of tools at your disposal to help you.

In any given debate, you are likely to use those tools slightly differently—a greater emphasis on evidence here, more time for rebuttal there. Your general task remains the same; to prove your part of your team's case in the allotted time and within the format of the debate. You cannot do this just by chatting about some of the more interesting points and suggesting that the adjudicator should agree with you because you think you're right. What you do is work through a speech that guides the adjudicator to the conclusion that your analysis is correct because it is reasonable and logical to reach that conclusion. An important part of that process is having a structure for your speech and, as a result, a route to guide both you and your audience.