

act to protect the public space from the toxic by-products of smoking—cancer-causing chemicals whose health dangers have been recognized by the medical community for decades [evidence].”

When thinking about the order of your argument, consider three determinants:

1. *Appeal*. Which stage in your argument is the one with which your audience is most likely to agree? In a debate, it’s unlikely to be the claim because adjudicators are aware that they are looking for a proven argument. However, where the issue the debate is addressing is particularly heinous, starting out with a solution will grab everyone’s attention. If you can find an analogy that is current in the news and will serve as a warrant, you would start there because it’s the easiest part of your argument for your audience to appreciate. There is no hard and fast guide about which element to present first, but you should start with the part of your argument that you think the listener will find easiest to grasp.
2. *Audience*. This is the other side of appeal. Although an adjudicator represents an ordinary, intelligent audience, she is still an individual with specific interests and concerns. A student judge is likely to have different interests than a judge who is a teacher or other professional. Lead with the part of your argument you think will “hook” your listener. Usually, this would be the most current or eye-grabbing element as outlined above, but don’t be afraid of speaking to the specific concerns of your adjudicator.
3. *Clarity*. Whatever element you start with should lead clearly into the rest of the argument. Your starting point may need a little explanation but, once that is done, the other two components should tie to it as simply as possible without the need for extensive elaboration or retrospective clarification. For example, once an audience has accepted that average citizens can expect the government to protect them from the harmful by-products of the actions of others, the fact that passive smoking is a risk and that a ban on public smoking would reduce such risk slots quickly into place.

What Makes People Believe an Argument?

Even where an argument is logically coherent and well-evidenced, it’s not necessarily a surefire winner. A listener needs to be convinced that the argument a debater is making speaks to the particular issue the debate is trying to address. In addition to logical consistency, a convincing argument should be: