

- *Relevant.* Stick to the point. It can be tempting to get ahead of your audience because you've thought through the implications of your case. But remember that they haven't heard it yet. The evidence you select should self-evidently speak to the subject under debate or, where it does not, you'll need to demonstrate its relevance. An audience can be expected to know that there is a link between smoking and cancer, so arguments that use cancer rates as evidence for banning smoking in public will strike a chord with listeners. However, if you start talking about losses in economic productivity (a significant but frequently overlooked result of smoking), you'll need to explain the link when setting out the argument.
- *Defensible.* Other speakers are going to try to tear apart any claim you have made, so do not leave lines of argument that you think "speak for themselves." If you can't back it up, don't put it in. Some points may appear self-evident, but it is still worth supplying some evidence for good measure and tying up as many loose ends as possible. Opposing speakers will be able to make use of the one example of where your argument doesn't apply and thus question the entire case you have put forward. If you have already acknowledged the limits of your case and presented evidence that takes it that far and no further, opposing speakers will have a much harder time of parodying or undermining your arguments.
- *Comprehensible.* Assume that your audience is intelligent, but don't assume that they have specialized knowledge of the subject under discussion. If you get bogged down in details that they can't understand, or don't find interesting, they can't appreciate your argument. Even when a judge does have specialized knowledge, she has been enjoined to avoid using it. So it's important to avoid jargon and esoteric acronyms and to explain, quickly and clearly, any technical terms that you use.

Consistency and Triangulation

We've looked at building an individual argument, but bear in mind that each argument you introduce should fit with the others you are presenting. The basic reason for keeping your arguments complementary is that if you propose diverse solutions, you tend to sound as though you haven't really made up your mind and thus you are unlikely to inspire confidence in your audience. There's also a tactical reason for complementary arguments—as we shall see in Chapter 4, one of the most effective forms of rebuttal is that a proposed course of action may be legal, it may be ethical, but it won't work. The more types of action you propose, the more of them you have to defend as being practical. By