

contrast, the more complementary reasons you can present for one course of action, the easier it is for the audience to follow and for you to defend.

Although each argument should work in the same direction, each should also be distinct so that if the other side destroys one, they don't take out your whole case. For example, if your claim from one argument is for a precision strike under UN supervision, you can't allow the claim in another to leave the door open for carpet bombing the entire country. By contrast, if your claim in one argument is that sanctions are the recognized diplomatic tool for the issue you're addressing, there's no point in presenting another argument whose claim is that the UN Security Council should pass a resolution that allows for the use of military force.

Conclusion

Argumentation is a key skill for a debater, but it's unreasonable to expect that you will provide masterful arguments the first time and every time thereafter. Instead, you should come to appreciate that the structure of argumentation is, predominantly, an analysis that tends to be imposed retrospectively—you start with the claim and then look for ways to support it. Developing the habit of providing evidence for all of your claims and helping the audience see the route for getting from the evidence to the conclusion is part of building your skills as a debater.

Finally, trust your judgment. Just because an argument is well-evidenced, has a logical warrant, and provides a reasonable claim does not automatically make it believable. Before you announce a particular course of action or piece of analysis to the world, do a final mental check of whether or not you find it credible. It's entirely possible that you've made an assumption or overlooked an exception that isn't immediately apparent. Applying a simple "Do I find this convincing?" test frequently prevents you from saying something you hadn't thought through as much as you might. As we'll see in Chapter 16, even if you're convinced, try your idea out on your teammates—if they're not convinced, there's not much chance that it will persuade an adjudicator. Where time allows, consider how you would oppose your arguments, find the holes in your reasoning and either fill them or discard the argument.