

them by opposing speakers and also to suggest that any recommendations put forward by your opponents are inferior to your own. Rebuttal reiterates the strengths of your case and questions the validity of the other side's.

What Does Rebuttal Look Like?

Rebuttal should be present to a greater or lesser extent in all speeches, except that of the First Affirmative, who obviously has nothing to rebut. Most commonly, rebuttal takes place after the introduction to a speech but before the speaker presents her own arguments. There's no hard and fast rule about this timing, and some speakers will interweave rebuttal with their own arguments as they work through their speeches, particularly where there has been lots of clash between the two sides and contrasting the two point by point will clarify the advantages of the speaker's case. Neither approach offers a guaranteed benefit, and, over time, you will find you are comfortable, in different circumstances, with one or the other. However, interweaving rebuttal with arguments frequently leads to the speaker forgetting to offer rebuttal or the audience disregarding it. So, in your first few debates at least, give rebuttal a designated section in your speech.

Usually a speaker will just tackle the ideas put forward by the previous debater. For example, the Second Affirmative's rebuttal would relate directly to the arguments put forward by the First Negative speaker. Occasionally, a flaw, or an apparent flaw, will be running throughout the speeches of the opposing team; then a speaker may encompass the remarks of more than one of her opponents to point this out in her rebuttal.

Rebuttal is always focused on the adjudicator and addressed to the chair of the debate, who may sometimes be the adjudicator. The reason is fairly straightforward: it is highly unlikely that you will convince the opposing side that you're right. Even if you were to do so, it's even more unlikely that they will publicly acknowledge the fact that you're entirely vindicated and that their case is now lying in smoking ruins at their feet. Fortunately, you don't need to persuade them; you need to persuade the adjudicator. Like everyone, adjudicators prefer to be addressed in person rather than being treated as bystanders to the main event, so do so. Address him or her as Mister or Madam Adjudicator or Mister or Madam Chair. Remember to maintain eye-contact so you make it clear you're talking to him or her. Not only is this more likely to be persuasive, it also avoids the possibility of getting into an exchange with the opposing speakers and leaving everyone else in the room feeling excluded.