

Rebuttal should not take up your entire speech; you must leave time to develop your own arguments. Point out a failing in one or, at most, two of the previous speaker's points and present evidence and a logical explanation of why that flaw undermines his argument. Alternatively, if he has pointed out one benefit of his approach, respond with one negative consequence, intended or otherwise. Although you could devote an entire speech to highlighting the failings in the previous speaker's arguments, doing so isn't all that persuasive. Audiences find such a presentation tedious, and adjudicators want to hear something more substantial than a review of a speech they have just heard and on which they have probably reached their own conclusions. Finally, doing nothing but attack your opponents suggests that you have nothing to say on the subject—hardly a situation that inspires confidence.

So, having spent about a minute setting out what you will say in your speech, move on to rebuttal. For example, after setting out what your arguments will be you would say, "However, first I'd like to present two problems with what we've just heard. The Negative arguments have ignored: 1) the widespread bulk of academic research on this issue, and 2) the current framework of political discourse on the subject. To take just one example, we have been told that . . ." Then you would present strong evidence that the previous speaker ignored and demonstrate why, as a result, the audience consequently can safely ignore his conclusions.

In reality, of course, rebuttal is rarely so neat and tidy, but that's the ideal. As we shall see in the next two sections, you can approach rebuttal in various ways but what is set out above is the gold standard: quick, relevant, and destructive.

REBUTTAL AND SUBSTANTIVE ARGUMENTS

Although we separate rebuttal and substantive argument for the sake of clarity, don't think of them as unrelated or as different boxes that need to be separately checked in your speech. If your objective is to demonstrate that your analysis of, and solution to, a given problem is superior, tackling the alternatives put forward by the other team should be an integral part of developing your own case. Seen in this light, rebuttal is simply the extension of substantive argumentation by other means.

Rebuttal and substantive arguments should not be independent. You may rely on different pieces of evidence and take a different approach to rebuttal than to your own arguments, but always remember that these are different means to the same end. The objective is to show that your case is superior to your opponent's, not for the teams to present two unrelated alternatives and hope that the adjudicator prefers yours. If your rebuttal has