

nothing to do with your substantive arguments, then a very real problem is present in the debate as a whole—the teams have failed to clash with each other.

Process of Rebuttal

Broadly, we can divide rebuttal into two steps. The first should see you respond directly to criticisms made in the previous speaker's speech and explain why his analysis of your team's case is wrong. The second step is where you criticize his arguments. There are two good reasons for handling rebuttal in this order. First, it sandwiches the discussion of his speech between a defense of your colleague's case and the development of your own. This order makes following your ideas easier since they are presented in the same order as the speeches occur in the debate. The result is that the process tends to be quicker as the audience requires less direction to follow the more natural sequence. Second, this approach gives the impression that your opponent's material is subordinate to your own.

Thus, we can consider rebuttal to have two components: reactive rebuttal and proactive rebuttal. Before we address these two directly, it is worth reiterating that, as much as possible, these should be treated as two sides of the same coin. Although you may have to use material unrelated to your own arguments to rebut the claims of the opposing side, try to demonstrate that this material is also germane to your case. It is both neater and more persuasive if the reasons you are right are the same as the reasons they are wrong—it is also likely to take considerably less time to explain.

REACTIVE REBUTTAL

Reactive rebuttal is the process of defending your arguments against the criticisms made by the immediately preceding speaker. Let's say that you're the Second Affirmative speaker. Your colleague, First Affirmative, has set out a case that requires government expenditure, and First Negative has criticized the case for not addressing how government will pay for such expenditure. You could take four possible approaches for rebutting First Negative, and it is worth consciously selecting one of these approaches rather than just noting down the general need for rebuttal.