

Generally, reactive rebuttal will follow one of the approaches set out above. As a result, your response is likely to be along one of these lines:

- We dealt with this issue already and here's what we said.
- We dealt with this issue already but, since you've given me the opportunity, here's a better version of what we said.
- We said we would deal with this issue later and here we are dealing with it.
- We haven't got around to the issue yet but, since you ask, here's the answer.

If you and your teammates never thought to address an issue, under no circumstances admit that your case has a massive hole in it. This happens, of course, but your job is to fix the problem, not to make it worse by blaming a colleague. As you and your teammates become more experienced, this problem should become only an occasional difficulty and you should become increasingly skilled at integrating the missing issue into your case.

More commonly, your team thought to address the issue but First Affirmative forgot to do so. This problem highlights why effective teamwork is so important. Although it can feel false and formulaic in the extreme, mentioning what your teammates have said or are going to say is an important habit to acquire. In the situation set out above, you may be able to cover up the initial mistake by going through that process, but the adjudicator is still quite likely to think you had just forgotten about an important part of your case. It's much better to avoid the problem altogether by referencing the other speakers on your team. Where the first speaker has mentioned the issue but not said who will deal with it in the case-split, simply incorporate the matter into your own speech as naturally as possible. At worst, it will appear that you've divided the case slightly oddly.

Where a previous speaker has said that she will address an issue and then simply forgotten to do so—or run out of time—'fess up and move on. Debaters can waste a lot of time pretending that they didn't make mistakes that they clearly did. Protestations of innocence are unlikely to convince anyone and are also likely to lead into time-consuming arguments that achieve nothing but provide ammunition for the opposing side. Admitting to your mistakes (assuming there aren't too many) is not only quicker but helps convince your audience to accept your other statements at face value.

PROACTIVE REBUTTAL

Proactive rebuttal points out the weaknesses in your opponent's arguments. To do so, you need to listen actively and think critically. We'll discuss critical thinking and active listening in more detail in chapters 6 and 7, but for now it's important to remember to listen