

to what has actually been said and, just as important, to be alert for what's not said. Then analyze what you've heard and question the intentions and assumptions that lie behind your opponent's arguments.

Before running through some common forms of proactive rebuttal, let's be quite clear on what the goals are. In proactive rebuttal, you are aiming to alert the adjudicator of one of two things: 1) an opponent's mistake that the judge has likely noticed and you want her to know that you heard it, too, or 2) an oversight on the part of the previous speaker that the adjudicator may have missed and you want to draw to her attention. To do this, you have five tools at your disposal:

1. *Precision.* Completely refute one point. This will do far more to raise a question about the validity of your opponent's entire case than will launching into a rambling rhetorical broadside at everything they have said. If you can point out one glaring and significant factual inaccuracy, it will raise questions about their research as a whole. If you can point to one logical failure, however small, you can leave it to the adjudicator's imagination to unravel the rest of their case. Similarly, identifying one overblown claim will suggest that the entire case is fanciful. By contrast, emotional appeals to some sense of innate "wrongness" of their case will fall on deaf ears. Everyone knows the two sides disagree, that's why they're on different sides.
2. *Clarity.* Explain exactly what you are refuting. If possible, quote the preceding speaker and attack that statement or, at the very least, identify a particular point by using the same name of that argument he used. Don't exaggerate your opponent's point or take it out of context. Identify exactly what you maintain is wrong and then explain in a simple and straightforward manner why you think so. Quoting somebody out of context is not only unethical, it's also self-defeating. The adjudicator heard the original statement, knows whether your portrayal of it is fair, and is likely to ignore your rebuttal if you're attacking something that didn't happen. All you'll end up doing is wasting everyone's time.
3. *Brevity.* Do not belabor the point. Say what you are refuting, why it is wrong, and move on with your speech. Even if the speaker has made a huge error, have a little fun with it but get on to your own case. It's up to the adjudicator to determine the validity of a particular point, and you don't want to spend two or three minutes hammering away at a point only to discover that the previous speaker was right and you're the one who has made the mistake.
4. *Relevance.* Wherever possible, pick weaknesses in the speaker's argument that actually help your case or damage his. If he's made a casual remark in his introduction that was wrong, let it go or, at the very most, just mention it in passing. You are trying to