

undermine those opposing arguments that are significant and damaging to your case. Attacking statements that don't matter is simply eating up precious seconds of your allotted time. Focus your attention on points of clash and don't get caught up in uncontroversial details.

5. *Proportion.* Be realistic about the errors you've identified. Doing so in the middle of a debate can be difficult, but the more you can make yourself think like an adjudicator, the better. Getting the name of a study wrong or making an obviously verbal mistake does not undermine your opponent's case. Point out the mistake briefly. This will give the impression that you have a total mastery of the subject and are helping out in the spirit of a collaborative pursuit of truth. By contrast, if your opponent has omitted an entire strand of the debate—funding, legality, morality—deal with it in greater detail and emphasize the error's impact on his case as a whole.

In principle, you use this two-step strategy of reactive and proactive rebuttal because the cases of both sides should be running along the same track: they simply offer differing analyses of the same concepts and body of information. In practice, even the best of debates run along parallel tracks, addressing related concepts more or less in tandem. Debates become confused when the two cases veer off in wildly differing directions, with separate origins and differing destinations. In these situations, your rebuttal of the other team's case may have very little to do with the defense of your own or the elaboration of your own substantive arguments. If you find yourself in this situation, make sure your rebuttal doesn't undermine your own arguments and try to tie your rebuttal as closely to your case as you can.

Types of Rebuttal

Any schema for types of rebuttal will be limited and, largely, fabricated because the reason an argument could be rebutted depends primarily on what was said and how it ties into the debate as a whole. The list below is meant to set out some common errors in speeches and explain how best you might highlight these to the adjudicator. Some forms of rebuttal target knowledge, others reasoning; some highlight mistakes of commission, others omission. The net result is the same: you are seeking to raise doubts in the adjudicator's mind and make your case look stronger by contrast.

The list below isn't exhaustive, but it provides a sufficient range to give you a feel for how rebuttal works.