

want proof of this, take any one of the great speeches of history, put it through a computer's voice synthesizer, and see how long you pay attention. We also tend to trust deeper voices and those that have an accent similar to our own—or one of a quite small range of accents we have been trained to respect as authoritative. When we hear the voice of a friend—or just someone we know well—we are less likely to approach what is being said critically. If it's a friend, we assume he is right; if it's someone we dislike, we assume he is wrong—what is said is rarely an issue in making that decision.

A speaker's style is usually apparent within the first 30 seconds or so of his speech, and it's worth making a conscious decision about whether you will need to concentrate extra hard to follow what is being said. Brilliant style gets in the way of active listening just as much as bad style, and both require added concentration.

One other quick note on times when added concentration is required: immediately before and after your own speech, it's very difficult to concentrate on what others are saying. It's important to be aware of this, but it's more important to be aware that this applies to your teammate(s) as well. In the minute on either side of their speech(es), you should be listening for both of you rather than frantically giving advice or offering congratulations on a job well done.

Speakers also frequently cease listening once they've given their speech and think that their involvement in the debate is over. This is most true of First Affirmative speakers and with the least justification. You should actively listen throughout the debate for four reasons:

1. An extraordinary degree of self-importance is required to believe that once your speech is out of the way, the highlight of the debate has passed and you can now sit back while others digest your brilliance.
2. It's bad tactics, especially in formats with Points of Information. When the judges come to make their decision, it may be nearly an hour since they heard First Affirmative speak— anything you can do to remind them that you were part of the debate should be seized with both hands. Most adjudicators will note who offered points of information during a debate or will check to see if your subsequent involvement has actually taken account of what has been said since you spoke. In addition, if the format you're using relies on Points of Information or cross-examination, you will be hard-pressed to do either if you haven't listened to the other debaters since you spoke. Alternatively, if the format uses reply speeches, it's important to incorporate what is said throughout the debate rather than just regurgitate an earlier speech.
3. Not listening is bad strategy. You will learn much more about your case by paying attention to how it fares as the debate progresses than you ever did in delivering your speech. And, since it's likely that you'll be speaking on the same or a similar subject at