

a later date, it's a good idea to know which ideas floated, which were torpedoed, and which simply sank without a trace.

4. Not listening is just plain rude. You expected other debaters to listen to you, it's only good manners to return the favor.

Conclusion

It would be reckless to suggest that listening is more important than speaking as a skill in debate. You could have a sublime analysis of the cut and thrust of what is going on, meticulous notes, and a precise, analytical assessment of what others have said; however, if you then stand up and grunt inaudibly for a few minutes, it's not going to matter much. That said, good listening skills will not only turn a good performance into a great one, they can also save what could otherwise have been a bad one.

If nothing else, however long your debate career, you will spend considerably more of it listening than speaking. Without effective listening skills, you will devote many, many hours to aimlessly staring out of windows or composing shopping lists. Active listening, by contrast, will ensure not only that your speech is better in any given debate but that you also acquire skills and knowledge from others to help you improve in future debates.

There is one, final, reminder of the benefit to working on listening skills—they are the ones most frequently ignored by other speakers. Even if you're not convinced by anything else in this chapter, a healthy focus on listening provides any debater with a competitive advantage. It also provides a competitive advantage as a voter, a consumer, a student, and a citizen.

EXERCISE

Identify a speech made by a politician, or similar leadership figure with whom you usually agree, but pick a subject with which you are not particularly familiar.

1. Without going into detail, discuss in pairs whether you agree or disagree with the general conclusion the speaker reached.
2. Research a speech in opposition to the general conclusion the speaker reached. Use as much time as is available and whatever resources you feel may be useful. Don't feel constrained simply