

- answer those questions that an Ordinary Reasonable Person might have—and do so more precisely than other speeches
- easy to follow both within itself and as part of the wider case put forward by the team
- not ask the listener to take anything on trust but lead him to conclusions in easy steps made easier still by the provision of reasonable evidence

Shifting mental gears to see your own speech and arguments from the perspective of the objective observer is difficult but is worthwhile both for the immediate result of being more persuasive in the eyes of the adjudicator and also for a longer-term, more ephemeral benefit. The capacity to consider our own views from the perspective of others, and to treat their views with the same value and respect we accord our own, helps us to live in the real world of many viewpoints and opinions. “Whatever happens to be coming out of my own mouth at the moment” is a pretty lousy definition of truth and one that should be treated with disdain by any reasonably critical thinker. The process of considering what we are saying from the perspective of a neutral party, in this case the adjudicator, encourages precision and consideration in the process of presenting those ideas but, more important, in constructing them.

Conclusion

A case that holds together, in which all speakers are demonstrating the links between their arguments and the reasons why they are preferable to those being put forward on the other side of the debate, will hold the attention of the adjudicator far more certainly than a mass of unrelated information and a torrent of argumentation, however interesting. Of course, there are moments when an entire debate turns on one point, one blinding flash of insight or killer fact used in rebuttal, but they’re pretty rare. A more reliable strategy is to set out clearly what the case will be, demonstrate that it has internal cohesion and validity through clear and compelling evidence-based arguments, and then sum up the case so cogently that the adjudicator does not have to spend time trying to work out what the contents of one speech had to do with another.

Remember, the adjudicator is hearing all of the tunes being played, and the best way to ensure that she follows yours is to make sure that it is the most striking melody, one that encapsulates all of the others in a memorable strain. A clear case in which speakers reinforce what other team members have said and guide the adjudicator through it is the easiest way of ensuring that the melody she hears is yours.