

- *Be practical.* Once the debate starts, you're going to be busy. If you need a spare pen, extra paper, a glass of water, or to go to the toilet, sort it out during prep time. Perhaps most important, don't leave finding the debate room until the exact time the debate is scheduled to start. If you get there 10 minutes late, you will have been disqualified and all of your hard work will have been for nothing.

Long-Notice Preparation

Long-notice preparation can give you more time to develop your case, but also provides more time for getting it wrong in creative and imaginative ways. Whether you have a day, a week, or a term, longer prep is not necessarily easier. Your long-prep strategy should reflect the following principles:

- *Don't invent the debate before it happens.* One of the temptations that long-prep presents is the risk of tunnel vision. It can seem so obvious that the debate should take a certain direction and, when it doesn't, the debaters can be blindsided. Here, more than in any other situation, it is worth restating the dangers of guessing how the debate will unfold. You can use additional time to research both more widely and more deeply. However, assuming that the debate will follow the exact path you predict or hope for is extremely risky.
- *Don't over-prepare.* With long prep, it's also possible to over-prepare—providing a long list of disparate arguments rather than a well-developed case and reducing evidence to a catalogue of statistics and references. Long-prep is a bit like having a digital camera—you may have the capacity to take a virtually infinite number of photos but, on its own, that doesn't make the photos any better.
- *Don't prepare your case and then sit back for a month.* Use long prep to both develop and test arguments—both your own side's and the opposition's. What arguments are they likely to use? What are the flaws in those arguments? What are your strongest arguments? Are there gaps in the logic? How can they be filled? If you have time, run trial debates against other teams using different arguments in your case and see which ones work in practice.