

it and point out that omission in your speech. If an opposing speaker's case demands certain answers that she ignored—how will it be paid for? who will implement it? is there a mandate for their policy? jot it down and raise the concern in your speech.

- *Use lots of space.* Leave room to jot down what is said about an argument later in the debate. A few speakers seem happy to cram vast quantities of information into tiny sections on the page, but most appreciate space not only to leave room for later ideas or jotting down points of rebuttal but also because it makes reading notes easier.
- *Refer back as you write.* Look for contradictions, disagreements, and inconsistencies. Do this for both the other side so you can highlight weaknesses and for your own side so you can address them. Some speakers use different color ink to indicate different types of points—a green pen for contradictions in the other side's case, blue for strong evidence made on the same side—but others find that confusing and stick to arrows and abbreviations.
- *Do not get so engrossed in what you are writing that you stop listening.* Your notes should help you listen actively, not prevent it. This is the main reason for not using full sentences: it's very hard to concentrate on what somebody is saying while also searching for the perfect word to sum up your thoughts on the subject.
- *Don't doodle.* Although it's fine to note anything, in any form, that you will find useful during the debate, cluttering the page with pictures of cats, or games of tic-tac-toe will just be distracting. Added to which, were you really listening actively while you were doing that?
- *Find the approach to note-taking that is best for you.* Don't assume that starting at the top of a sheet of paper and recording everything in order is the best approach. Some debaters find keeping all of their notes on a single, horizontal sheet divided into columns for each speaker useful. This allows them to follow each argument as it progresses across the page, much as one might read a chart. Others prefer a mind-map spreading out from the motion or definition in the middle. Still others prefer to write chronologically over several pages. The only right way to take notes is the one that feels comfortable and natural for you and that is ultimately most useful. There's one caveat, however; remember that notes are a working document and you must be able to use them. Watching somebody rummage through a dozen pages of disjointed scrawl is not fun for even the most patient audience.

Your approach to note-taking will change over time, but the twin principles of speed in getting information down and clarity for you to understand what you wrote should be uppermost in your mind.