

of panic in the inexperienced debater, with practice, they become powerful tools, allowing the listener time to catch up with the speaker.

Attitude

How the speaker feels about being in the debate comes across all too obviously in any speech. Speakers who simply don't want to be there, who have decided that they have already lost, or that they are speaking on the side that's doomed to fail communicate that sensation in a thousand little ways, and audiences pick up on them. However, a healthy dose of self-confidence that she is comfortable with what needs to be said and how her position in the debate should work goes a long way toward helping the speaker build that aura of control.

Effective manner is not based on following hard-and-fast rules. A good debater's most effective manner will come from within far more frequently than being imposed from without. Taking this attitude will make you sound far more natural and, as a direct result, more authoritative. Some people have a good sense of comic timing; if that's you—great, use it. Some people are blessed with a natural sense of presence or a voice that exudes authority and control; if you are fortunate enough to be one of those lucky few, use it. Some of us speak in slow ponderous statements, grave of purpose and heavy with consideration—if you've got it, flaunt it. Others have a manner suggestive of a mind that scuttles into the deepest recesses of an idea, ferreting out every detail and hoarding every consideration; if that's you, don't be afraid to show it.

Don't pretend to be something you're not. You might think that copying the style of a successful debater is a good way to develop as an effective speaker. Don't. It is a virtual certainty that if you speak to that person outside the debate room, she speaks in much the same way. Her manner in a debate may be an exaggerated or refined version of how she speaks in conversation, but it's unlikely to be completely fabricated. It's that natural approach to speaking with your own, unique voice that is worth developing, not the particular set of results that work for another. To take an extreme example: many hesitant speakers worry that they may be conveying a sense of indecision to their audience. However, such a manner, if acknowledged and accepted, can also suggest thoughtfulness, care, and precision, while an apparently more confident speaker comes over as being bellicose and slapdash.