

stage. In either case, you must have a specific goal in mind before asking a question. Even when the purpose of your question is simply to gain clarification, you should have a better reason than idle curiosity for doing so. Is that information likely to be useful to your case? Or damaging to theirs? If you are pushing your opponent to develop a point further, make sure you're not offering him the opportunity to strengthen his case by going into greater detail. Likewise, always be alert for the reason a question is being asked. Your opponent may ask for a seemingly harmless piece of information to lay the groundwork for a later attack.

Tying Questions to Arguments

For any Point of Information to be effective, it should be relevant to the arguments at hand, both yours and your opponent's. Asking questions about points that have long since passed is unlikely to strengthen your case or demonstrate your skill as a debater. However brilliant the question, if the speaker has moved on to a new topic, then so should the questions. You can always bring up your point later in your speech.

CX is markedly different because the questioner has the opportunity to work through her opponent's speech as a whole and set it within the framework of what she knows her teammate is about to say. Thus, the questioner can ask for apparently innocuous pieces of information or clarification that leave the respondent open to particular lines of rebuttal. An approach such as this serves a further function in addition to drawing out exactly the information the questioner's teammate needs and flagging the issue for the adjudicator. It leaves later speakers on the opposing side nowhere to go. Once the information has been conceded in this explicit manner, later speakers will have no opportunity to back-track or renege on their teammate's words.

Teamwork and timing are important when offering POIs and during CX. Brilliant questions asked too late in the debate will likely achieve little except to leave an adjudicator contemplating what might have been. Try to bring in strong questions early and then follow them up in a speech at the next available opportunity.

Types of Questions

The questions used in hard interaction can fulfill a range of functions. The list below is by no means exhaustive but serves to give a flavor of the sort of goals a questioner might