

Delivering Questions

How you deliver your question is an important part of CX or offering a POI. Standing confidently will send a good message to the judges but will also put your opponent on guard. When offering a POI, don't leap to your feet, straining at the bit to be asked to speak; it's too obvious that you have a humdinger. Likewise in cross-examination, if you appear unsure, you may encourage the respondent to speak less cautiously. Body language and facial expressions can give people a good idea of what to expect, so if you can affect a tone or a stance that may leave the respondent uncertain of where your questioning is going, do it.

Responding to Questions

By now it should be obvious that your response to a question would not be a full and frank extrapolation on the subject of inquiry. The fact that you are not just exchanging opinions should always be uppermost in your mind. The questioner wants something, she is trying to force you to make an error or offer up a piece of information that can be used to undermine your case at a later stage. There are a few basic rules to follow in terms of answering questions:

- *Be brief.* Give the questioner as much as you need to but nothing more. This is particularly true if you are uncertain where a particular line of investigation might be leading. Your questioner is clearly after something, the least you can do is make her work for it. The more you say, the more likely you are to make a comment that is ill-considered.
- *Be honest.* Be honest, even when that means admitting that you don't know something. Being caught in a lie is strategically much worse than admitting ignorance, and lying also contravenes the spirit, and often the rules, of debating. Admitting that you simply didn't know something or that you made a mistake can be galling, but it's vastly preferable to being shown to have just made something up. There is no need to showcase your lack of knowledge, however. Concede that you didn't know something and move on to more certain ground.
- *Retain control.* Where possible try to retain control of the debate. Don't be bullied into answering ridiculous questions or addressing improbable hypothetical situations. Where the questioner is trying to set up a false dichotomy to compel you to portray your position as the lesser of two evils, you can say as much and offer alternative explanations that portray your case more positively: "I don't accept that this is a case