

DEBATE GUIDE: RESOURCE 9

Tips for Anticipating and Responding to Arguments

Being able to respond to arguments in a skillful and organized manner is core to any debate.

When you have to respond on the spot, keep your cool and do not panic. It helps to go into a debate round familiar with likely areas of clash and then logically spell out your reasoning as you argue each of their points one by one. Even if you don't know exactly what to say next, starting off by summarizing what the other side said can give you a jumping-off point while also helping you be clear and well-organized.

Skill and Technique	Guidance
1. Anticipate Potential Clash	<p>When you prepare, anticipate what central issues or interpretations will be most important in the debate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Write a list of potential clash areas (_____ vs _____), such as long-term benefits vs short-term harms, or individual needs vs. community welfare).• Write key questions that will likely drive the debate. For instance: Which side proves that they solve global warming? Which side shows the biggest benefit to the most number of people?
2. Organize Line-By-Line	<p>Organization is key to help your listeners follow your train of thought. Taking complete notes is essential to organization.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• When you respond to arguments, always “signpost”, meaning that you tell us what issue you are arguing and preview what you are going to say. It helps to say something like, “They say _____, we say _____.”
3. Vary Your Responses	<p>A few options for responses include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Say why their point isn't true• Point out how they didn't prove their point• Say why their point doesn't matter to the debate
4. Use Link Chains	<p>Link chains are a way of leading us along the stepping stones of your argument and avoiding “logic leaps” that lack reasoning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• For instance, practice making arguments that state, “When this happens, it leads to _____, which leads means that _____, which results in _____, which is good/bad because....”
5. Highlight Actual Clash	<p>Do not get overly bogged down in technical details. Highlight the big picture issues and what major arguments or philosophies directly clash with one another.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• State why your side wins each area of clash.• Cover your bases by stating how you still win, even if the judge doesn't believe your initial argument.

