

Debate: Challenges and Strategic Considerations

Flipping the script: Turning Lemons into Lemonade

Debate teams face a variety of challenging situations in each round which can throw a team off balance and keep them exhibiting all their prowess and preparation. Below are several scenarios; with your teammates, come up with some strategic suggestions for turning these difficult situations to a team's advantage. (*Hint: Don't depend on the judge to notice all the issues, think of ways to highlight them and call them out with debate decorum).

- 1. The opposing team behaves in an aggressive or rude way.**
- 2. During the Cross Examination phase for the debate, the opposing team:**
 - a. asks very few questions**
 - b. does not ask questions related to your team's opening statement.**
 - c. Asks questions that are confusing or poorly stated**
- 3. During the Response phase of the debate, the opposing team does not directly address the questions asked**
- 4. Rebuttal phase: The opposing team does not make relevant comments, the comments do not address the responses your team provided**
- 5. Closing Statement: No impromptu comments added which address issues raised during the debate not included in the prepared closing statement**

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Debate teams face a variety of challenging situations in each round which can throw a team off balance and keep them exhibiting all their prowess and preparation. Below are several scenarios and some strategic suggestions for turning difficult situations to a team's advantage.

1. The opposing team behaves in an aggressive or rude way.

- **Call out the behavior:**

- *"While we agree that this is a very important and emotional topic, we would ask that our opponents maintain a more professional demeanor."*
- *"Our opponents seem to be using an aggressive performance to distract us from the weakness of their arguments"*
- *"Although our opponents speak forcefully, their evidence they offer is weak....."*

2. During the Cross Examination phase for the debate, the opposing team:

- **asks very few questions: Call out the observation**

- *"It seems that our opponents have very few questions for us. Let me address the first of their 2 questions....."*
- *"Since we have already thoroughly addressed the only 2 questions raised by our opponents, we'd like to take the opportunity to...."*

- **does not ask questions related to your team's opening statement.**

- *"We will thoroughly address our opponent's questions, however we'd like to highlight the fact that they have not directly challenged any of the evidence or issues raised in our opening statement...."*

- **Asks questions that are confusing or poorly stated**

- Ask the opposing team to restate their questions. If the questions is still unclear, repeat the question before answering to highlight

the confusing nature of the question and they articulate what you understand the question to be before answering it. This will highlight the problem for the judge and allow your answer to be heard in the context of what you understand the question to be.

“When you ask _____ we understand you to be saying _____ and our response is _____”

3. During the Response phase of the debate, the opposing team does not directly address the questions asked:

- Use the same strategy as above: Call it out during the rebuttal phase. *“During your team's response you did not directly address the questions we raised. We asked _____ but your response all you did was _____.”*

4. Rebuttal phase: The opposing team does not make relevant comments, the comments do not address the responses your team provided

- Make sure to address that fact using some impromptu or extemporaneous comments before beginning to read the closing statement. *“Before reviewing our extensive evidence let it be noted that our opponents once again were unable to address our challenges, we asked them _____, and they could not answer, they only repeated (or talked about).....”*

5. Closing Statement: No impromptu comments added which address issues raised during the debate not included in the prepared closing statement.

- (Only relevant if you are on the Con side and go last) Note that the opposing team did not follow up on any of the issues raised during the debate, not included in their pre-prepared closing statement).