



St Leonard's College
Debating

Rebuttal

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What is Rebuttal

- Rebuttal is when you respond to a claim presented by the opposition. You can respond to one of their arguments OR to one of their refutations of your arguments.
- Rebuttal can do one of two things:
 - It can disprove the reasoning behind **why** an opponent says something will happen. (If they say taxes create equality you can say people avoid tax, and it doesn't make a difference)
 - It can minimise the importance of that thing happening. (Creating equality is not important)



Rebuttal Skills

1: Refute a claim

- **Rejecting the premise:** Telling the adjudicator how they're argument is irrelevant, illogical or incorrect
- **Reject the mechanism:** Telling the adjudicator why they're model won't lead to the outcomes they are suggesting
- **Rejecting the outcome:** Telling the adjudicator why their outcome is unlikely in the scenario at play
- **Rejecting the impact:** Telling the adjudicator why the impact of their outcome will be significantly smaller or different.
- This makes it significantly more difficult for the opposing team to rebut your refutation and rebuild their argument in the next speaker.



Rebuttal Skills

2: Weighing

- Weighing is showing why your material is more important than the opposing team's material. Note here that you don't necessarily need to *disprove* the opposing arguments, but instead show why they are less important than your own arguments. This is particularly useful when you cannot fully disprove an argument, but weighing should *always* be done.
 - Step 1: Mitigate
 - Explain why, *even if true*, their claims or impacts do not have as much benefit as they claim. If possible, explain why their claims or impacts do not matter at all.
 - Step 2: Compare
 - Once you have made their material less important, explain why your material is much more important.



Rebuttal Skills

3: Flip a claim

- Flipping a claim is taking the opposing team's mechanism, outcome or impact and explaining why your team can actually achieve that better.
- For example, if a team claims they improve education rates by doing "x", you can flip this by showing why their **mechanism** is worse at improving education rates and why your method, "y", actually achieves that **impact**.
- If a team claims that by doing "x", more money will be available for welfare, you can flip this by showing why their **outcome** is actually something else and the outcome of YOUR argument is more money for welfare.



Simple Rebuttal Structure

1. The opposition tried to argue that ...

Briefly restate their point...

**2. This argument is wrong/irrelevant/
should be given little weight because ...**

Tell us what you think is wrong with their argument. You must explain your reasoning...

3. It would therefore be better to...

Offer your team's alternative position, redirecting the debate towards what your team has been arguing...



Thematic Rebuttal

- The idea behind thematic rebuttal is quite straightforward: rather than simply reciting and responding to the opposition's arguments in the order they presented them (or worse, in a completely random order), you group them together in a way that is logical and deal with similar arguments at the same time. Just like in your team split, you are able to gather the opposing team's arguments (and hence your own rebuttal) under common 'themes'.
- If the other team is good, they will give you their team split. Write it down, and group together all of your points under the categories they give you. If they were too disorganised to offer a thematic team split, then group them together yourself



Thematic Rebuttal Common Structures

- Political, Economic, Social, Environmental
- Individual, National, Global
- Stakeholders
 - (*E.g. B Grade: “That the government should fund universal free childcare”, Stakeholders: Children, Parents, Government*)
- Another useful way of approaching thematic rebuttal is to try and reduce the debate down to two or three **key questions** that the debate revolved around, explaining how the oppositions answer to the question was incorrect and your team’s answer was correct.



Other Resources

- DAV Thematic Rebuttal: https://dav.com.au/resources/thematic_rebuttal.php
- Rebuttal Exercises: <https://learn.stleonards.vic.edu.au/debating/home/resources/rebuttal-exercises/>
- STL Handbook (Rebuttal): <https://learn.stleonards.vic.edu.au/debating/home/resources/handbook/rebuttal/>