

Rewarding Rebuttals

Once both teams have finished their constructive speeches it is time for the rebuttal or reply speech. This speech is your last chance to fully explain your team's stance on the debate as well as deconstruct the other team's stance on the case.

There are two main types of rebuttals; the chronological rebuttal and the theme rebuttal. The chronological rebuttal is a rebuttal that systematically goes through the debate and breaks it down for the judges. It is the most common type of rebuttal for many novice debaters because it is the easiest to do. It looks at each separate argument and shows how they were able to deconstruct it and then goes through and rebuilds their own case.

The second type is the theme rebuttal. It is much harder to execute, but when done well it is extremely effective. These styles of rebuttal breaks down the debate into themes, or the main ideas of the debate and deconstructs it further from there. The themes are usually those found in SPLEEEEMM.

Getting to the theme of the debate is much than just explaining arguments. It takes a lot of practice to do this style of rebuttal so don't worry if you don't get it right away. Themes in the debate are big ideas, usually ideas that both teams have spoken about and proving why your side has better explained the theme and has better used arguments and evidence to back up this theme. A good example of this is economics. It is a commonly used theme in debate and can be used on both sides of the house.

The first step to creating a themed rebuttal is to find the theme. Did both teams talk about economics? Did both teams touch on the legal aspects? If they have, those are both themes that have been brought up in the debate and you can talk about the arguments that fell under those specific themes. Once you have that figured out, you look at how your side supports the theme better than their side.

The idea of a rebuttal is not to TELL the judges that you won the debate, but SHOW them how you won the debate. Your rebuttal is two (or four) minutes of recap and is quite possibly the most important part of a debate. It gives you a chance to clarify the main ideas of the debate and solidify your stance. It is NOT a chance to bring up new arguments to build your case.

