

## Making the most of judging comments

After you have finished your rebuttal, the debate is in the hands of the judges. Once they have made their decision it is time for them to make comments about the debate. The judges aren't only there just to give you a win, or in some cases a loss, but they're also there to help improve your debate career. Judges come from all walks of society, but all of them are there because they love debate and public speech. Just because they're not a debater does not mean that they do not have suggestions to improve your debate style/content.

- 1) Listen to your judges. It is natural for debaters, once they are finished, to just sit back and tune out whatever the judges have to say. This is a big no-no. They could be pointing out something that you've never even thought of.
- 2) Write down what they have to say. Smart and serious debaters write down the suggestions the judges have and examine them after a tournament. You usually do three rounds of debate, and even if you only have one judge per room...that's still three different viewpoints.
- 3) Treat your judges with respect. They're volunteers and could have better things to do than helping you get better.
- 4) Talk to your judges again after the formal comments are concluded. If you have a few extra seconds, ASK them how you can improve. Sometimes the judges do not have enough time to tell you everything they have thought of and if you give them time, they will tell you.
- 5) Weed through the comments. Sometimes there are judges who you will disagree with, usually one or two at every tournament. If their comments are way off base, just smile and nod and thank them for their time.
- 6) Keep a journal of all the comments you receive, through out your debate career and refer back to them often. Are judges making the same comments over and over - good or bad? Do you notice an improvement from event to event?
- 7) Finally, never argue with a judge's decision or their comments. Talk to your coach or SEDA right after the round if the judges said something very discouraging.

