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SHANGHAI SCIENCE DEBATE COMPETITION

上海市高中生科普英语辩论赛

SSDOC

Lesson Objectives

In this lesson, you will learn:

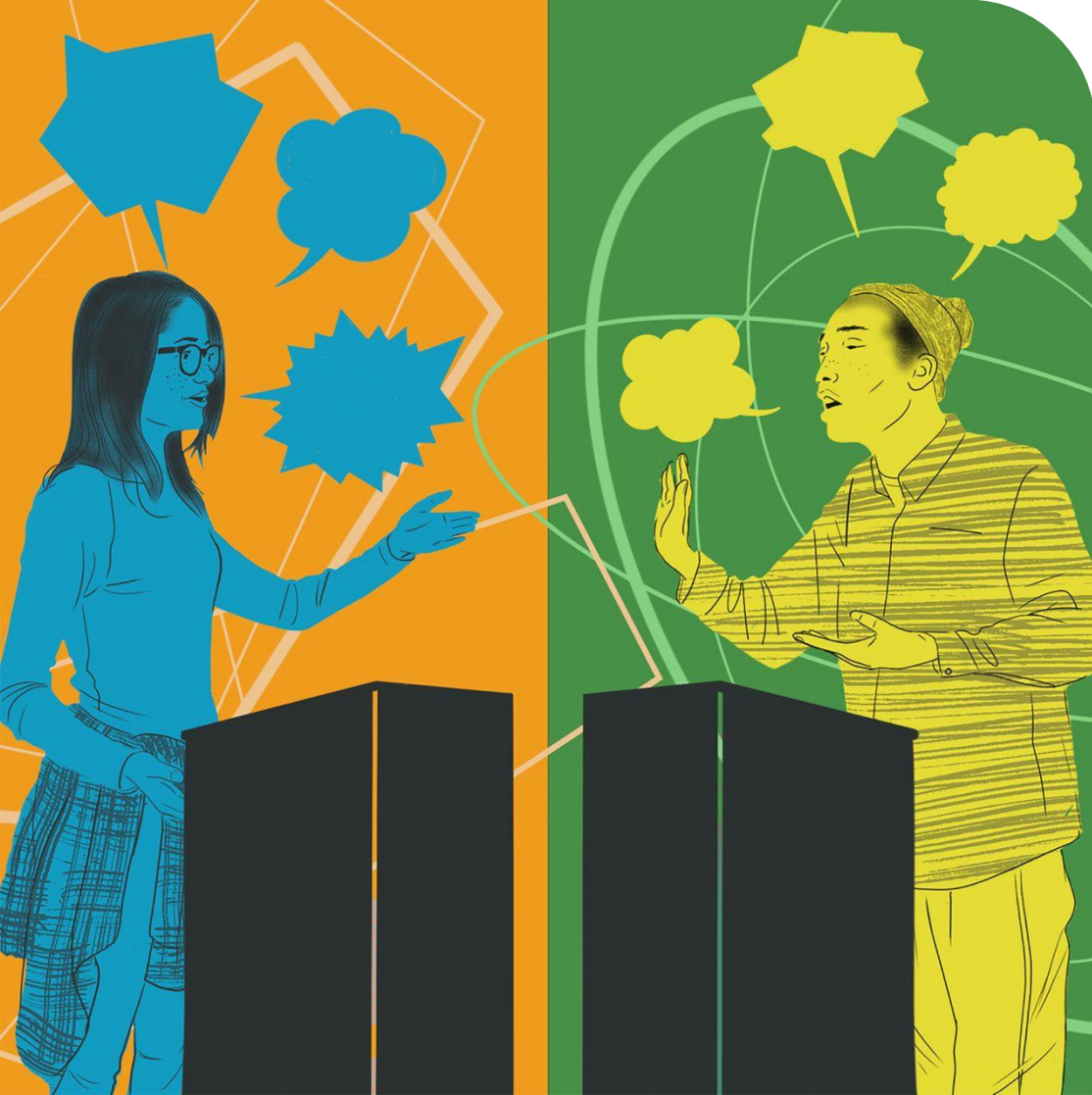
- *How to engage with your opponent's case using rebuttals and questions.*



Rebuttal

Teams in debates engage with each other in a few ways:

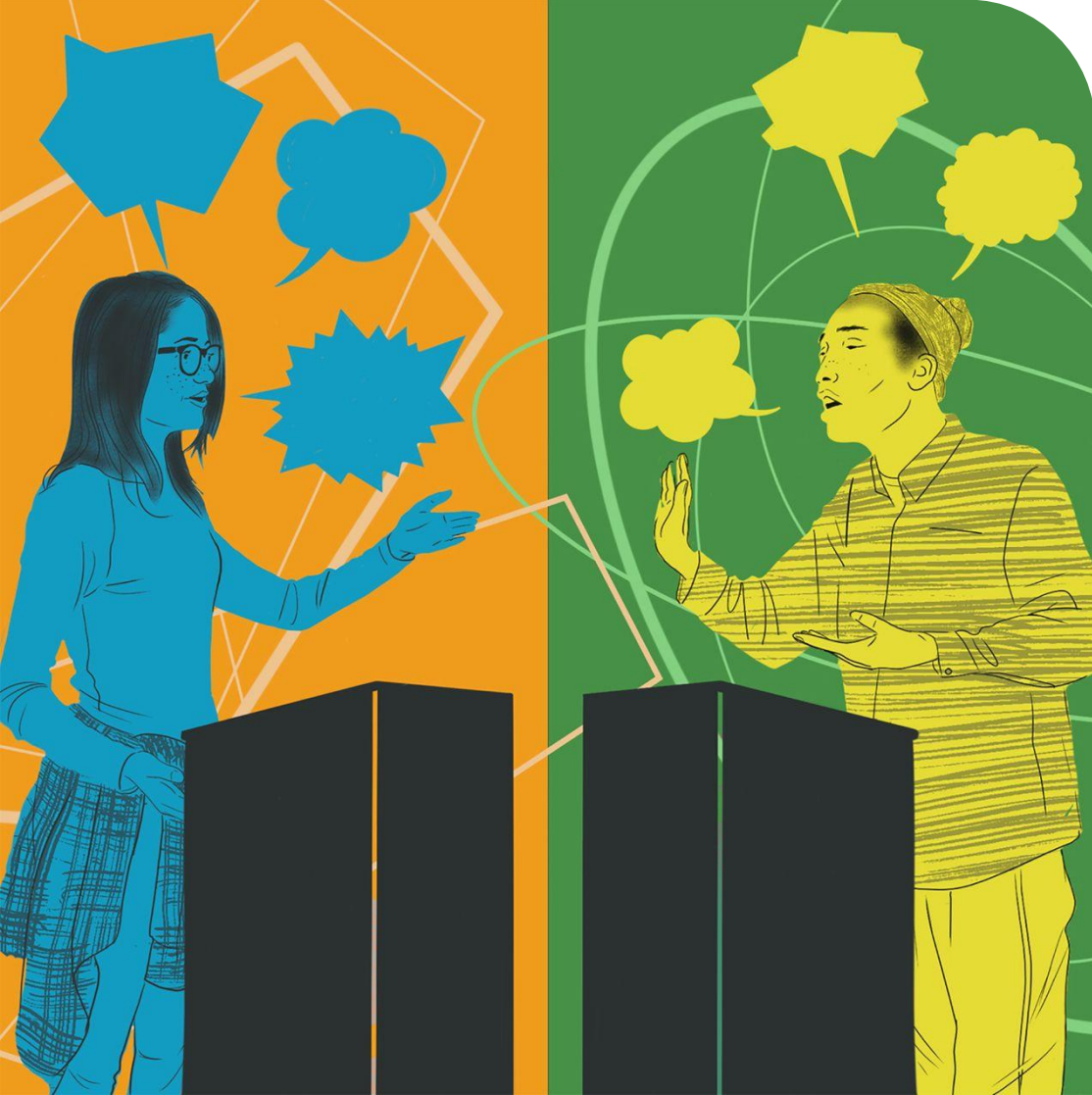
- **Rebuttals** (proving why the other side has made irrelevant, false, or claims that are not important)
- **Questions** (that challenge the case provided by the other side)
- **Weighing arguments** (comparing contributions).



Rebuttal

Teams need to do few things as they prepare their rebuttals:

- **Step I:** Take notes (in abbreviated form) they need to write down what the other side is sharing.
- **Step II:** Identify what to attack on the other side.
Usually the strongest arguments, weakest links in these arguments or their impacts.



Rebuttal

Take notes in abbreviated (short) form:

- Rather than writing: The use of carbon capture technologies will lead to a long-term decrease of carbon emissions by 30%.
- You want to write:
CarbTech = 30% decrease.

You need to write down what your opponent's are sharing in order to effectively rebut their case.



Rebuttal

Teams need to do few things as they prepare their rebuttals:

- **Step III:** Share your rebuttals using the rebuttal framework:

“Our opponents said...”

“However, that is not true/not important because of 3 reasons”

“First... Second... Third...”





Rebuttal \neq Response

Response = commenting an argument.

Rebuttal = logically disproving the argument.

Weighing = comparing the impact of one argument with another.

Types of Rebuttal

Defensive = here is why this argument is not true or it is only partially true.

Offensive = this is why this argument is actually a benefit for our side.

Even if rebuttal = even if your argument is true, here is why what we argue is more important.



Types of Rebuttal

Exclusivity = here is why this harm/benefit happens on both sides.

If we apply your logic = if your logic is applied in another scenario, it will lead to bad results.

Unlikely = even if your argument is important, it is not likely going to manifest. Here is why...



Types of Rebuttal

Weighing arguments:

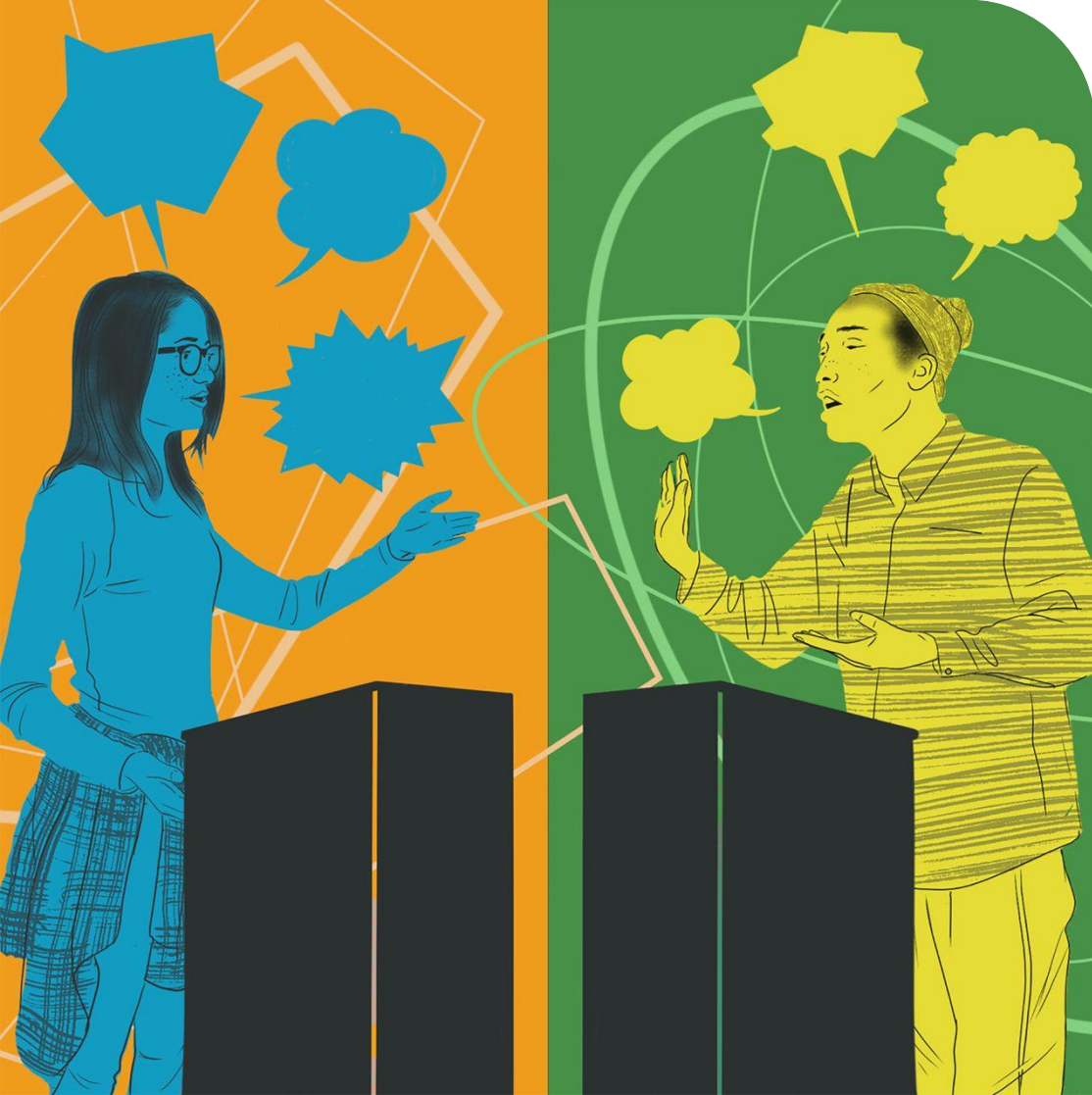
Scope: "Our side brings benefits to more people because..."

Magnitude: "Our side helps people in a more significant way because..."

Vulnerability: "We help a more vulnerable group of people than the other side..."

Likelihood: "Success on our side is more likely because..."

Timeframe: "Our impacts last longer..."

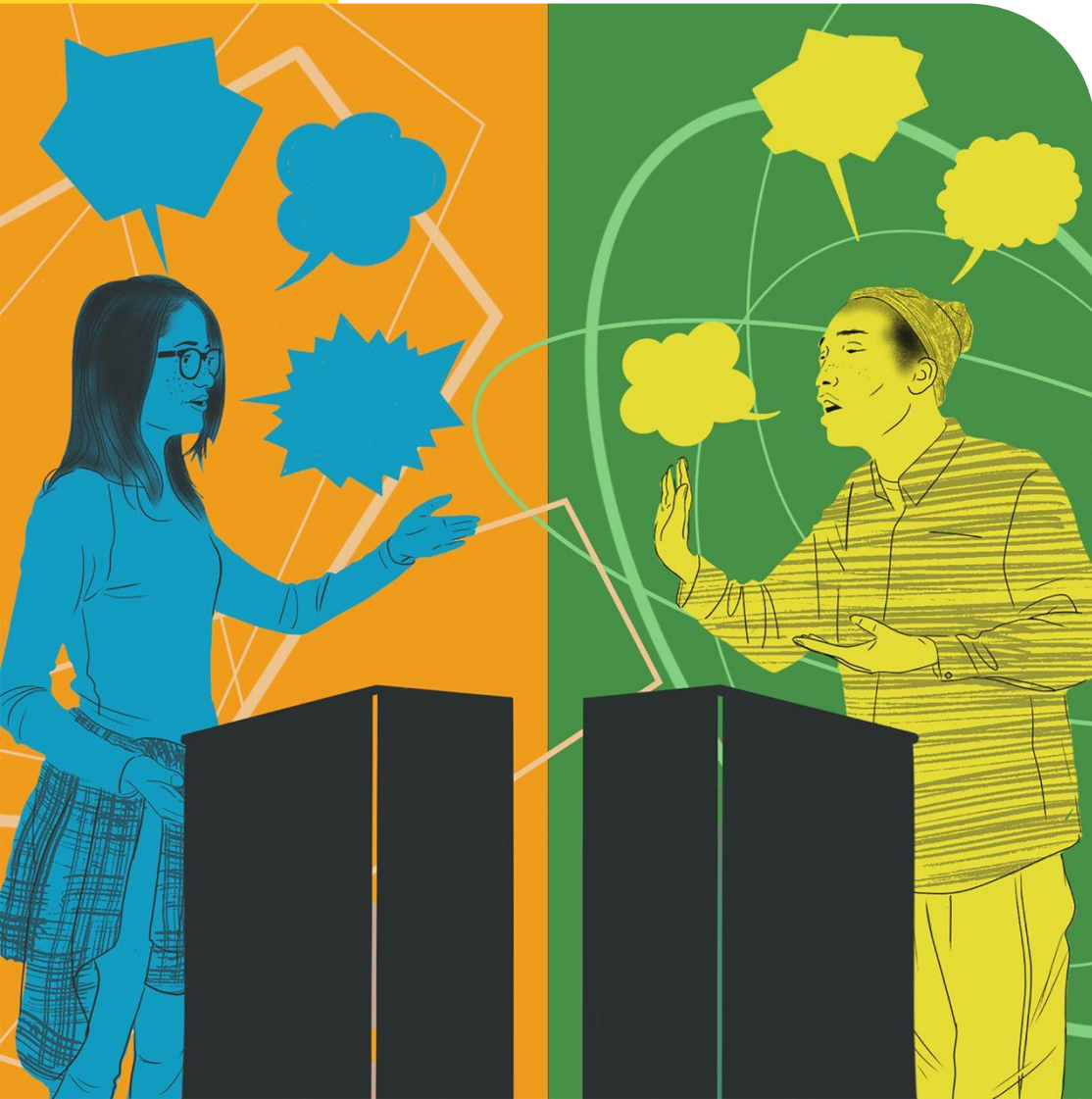


Types of Rebuttal

Comparing contributions, impacts, arguments, is very important.

You only win if you show why comparatively, your side does better than the other.

*You want to think about what the other side will run before the competition, and **prepare your responses/rebuttals/comparatives** in advance (or at least try to pre-empt them).*



Rebuttal Practice:

Claim: Junk food should be banned because it is addictive.

Reasoning: When people eat junk food, they consume a lot of sugar. Sugar is addictive, which means that people will want to consume more and more.
(WHY IS THIS NOT TRUE?)

Impact: This is important because the more junk food you consume, the more your health will be harmed.
(WHY IS THIS NOT IMPORTANT?)



Rebuttal Practice:

Claim: Homework should be banned because it causes stress.

Reasoning: This is because deadlines are short and this puts too much pressure and expectations on students.
(WHY IS THIS NOT TRUE?)

Impact: This is important because doing homework harms students mental health.
(WHY IS THIS NOT IMPORTANT)



Part II: Questions

Teams in debates engage with each other through questions too. Important things to understand:

- Why do we ask questions in a debate round?
- How do we ask questions?
- How do we answer in the best way possible?
- Can a question help you win the debate?





Why questions matter:



They make your arguments directly clash with opponents'. If you 'win' a question battle, your case will look stronger



If you 'lose' there are still things you can do! But firstly, let's cover different question types.



Questions can be split into three types

1.

Clarification = Challenging the setup

Clarifies things that are not clear in the definitions.

2.

Attacking = Challenging the premise of the argument

Destroys the foundation of opponents' arguments so the whole logic doesn't stand.

3.

Pushing = Testing the boundaries

Points out extreme cases of opponents to make it easier for your team to rebut.

Clarification questions

- Ask it when you disagree with the definitions or don't understand them:
 - *'What do you mean by X?' (What do you mean by 'junk food'?)*
 - *'Does X in your definition also include Y and Z?'*Has to be addressed to the first speaker
- When offering this question, say 'Clarification' and then ask.

Attacking questions

- Attacks an unspoken assumption that argument is built on. Example:
 - *'You claim that paying students for good grades will motivate them to study harder. That assumes students aren't working hard, which is not true because...'*
- To help the judge better understand your question, clearly explain the unspoken assumption you are bringing up.
- At the end of the question, you can explicitly say that if the assumption isn't true, the whole argument doesn't stand.
 - *'Since students are working hard, your argument is completely out of this debate.'*

Pushing questions

- Puts opponents' logic to test by asking whether they support some extremely unfavourable action for their team:
 - *Would you also support X?*
- Forces opponents to either abandon their principle or support some extreme case.

Let's look at an example:

- Topic **"This House would legalize performance-enhancing drugs in sports"**
- *PRO argues that these drugs make sports more entertaining.*
- *CON can ask "Would you also abolish gloves in boxing to make it entertaining?"*
- *If PRO says no, CON can rebut their inconsistency. If PRO says yes, CON can rebut by explaining why this leads to terrible consequences.*



Dos and Don'ts for Asking POIs

01

Write questions down!

Very important for live and even async rounds.

02

Make your questions clear and concise!

03

Respect the rules and opponents!

Focus on the case, not on the opponents.

04

Talk to the judge!

You may not change opponents' minds with your question, but you can change the judge's. So make sure they understand your question.





Dos and Don'ts for Answering

01

Answer the question directly!

Otherwise, the judge will think that you don't believe in your own arguments.

02

Structure your answer.

You can say "I can answer your question in two points. First... Second..."

03

Acknowledge time limits!

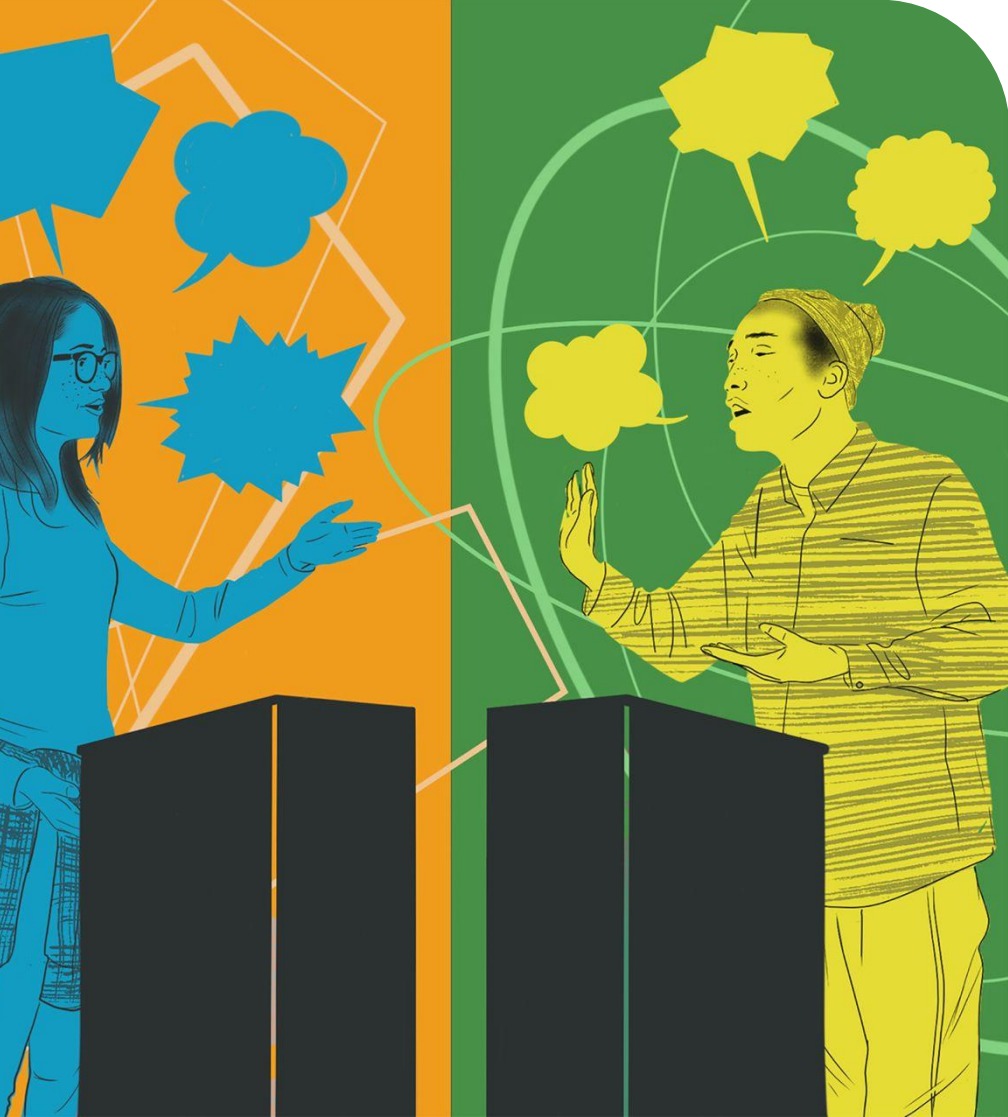
Keep your answer short and concise.

04

Make your case stronger.

Use this as a chance to improve the quality of your case.





Pro Tips For Best Debaters:

- You can use questions to directly clash your strongest material with the opponents' case:
 - *'In our speech, we already said that... How does your case respond to it?'*
 - *'Please engage with our point about...'*
- You can rebut with questions:
 - *'In your rebuttal, you said that our argument isn't true because X. However, that's not true...'*

Q&A

