

February 26, 2024

Fundamentals of Argumentation and Debate
Harvard Kennedy School Communications Workshop Series

Tripp Rebrovick, PhD
Coach of Debate, Harvard College
Director of the Harvard Debate Council

<http://tinyurl.com/hksdebate24>

- Fundamentals of Argument
 - Clash is key
 - Keys to Success:
 - Choosing a good argument
 - Flowing and note-taking
 - Using “They Say / We Say”
 - Explicit vs Implicit Clash. Using and incorporating the language of your opponents
 - Rebuttal Blocks
 - Prepare your responses in advance
 - Kinds of Rebuttal
 - Simple Denial - What they said is not true or unfounded
 - Direct Contradiction (Link Turn) - The opposite of what they said is true
 - Impact Turn - What they said is good is actually bad, or vice-versa
 - Alternate Cause - Something else causes the harm
 - Alternate Solution - Another solution will better address the harm
 - Impact Comparison - The consequences we have identified are more important than those our opponents have identified
- Distinguishing a Debate from an Argument
 - Key Ingredients
 - Format, Topic/Parameters, Delineated Sides
 - Judging & Scoring/Decision metrics or criteria
 - Most common formats in the US and Internationally
 - Colleges and Universities:
 - Cross-Examination/Policy Debate
 - World Schools Debate
 - Parliamentary Debate
 - High Schools and Middle Schools
 - CX, WSD, and Parliamentary
 - Public Forum Debate
 - Lincoln-Douglas Debate
 - Elementary Schools
 - Big Questions Debate

- Preparation
 - Creating a Case
 - Contentions - Harms, Solvency
 - Anticipate and Know
 - Do research against your own positions
 - Plan for contingencies - If they focus on X, we will focus on Y
 - How will you respond to each kind of rebuttal?
 - The Role of Evidence
- Different Formats of Debate in the US and the World
 - CX, LD, PF, WSD, Parliamentary
- Q & A
 - How can you engage an opponent without disregarding them?
 - What are some common myths about debate?
 - Are there strategies to form effective arguments on the fly?
 - How do you remain objective without letting emotions take over?