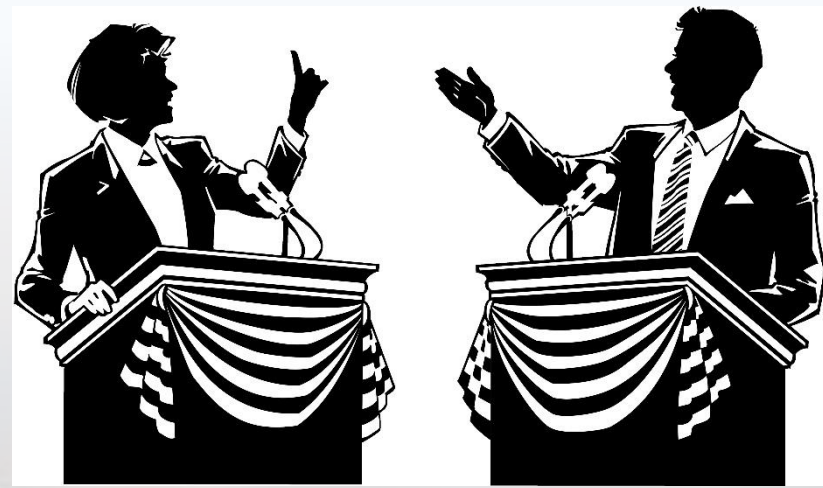


Public Speaking



Debates

Debates



What does the word “**debate**” mean?

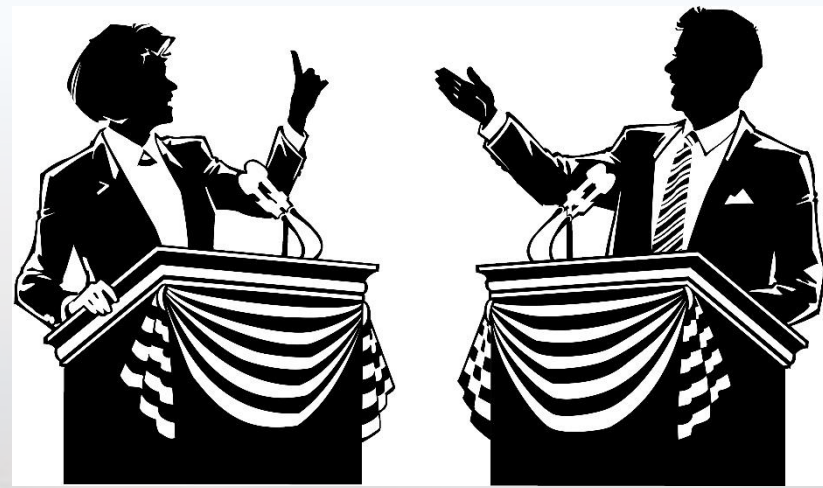
Verb:

1. To engage in argument by discussing opposing points and dispute them by arguing.
They were debating whether it is better to drive a car or take the bus.
2. To consider something; deliberate.
I'm debating wearing a jumper today.

Noun:

A formal contest of argumentation in which two **opposing** teams defend and attack a given proposition.

Introduction to debating



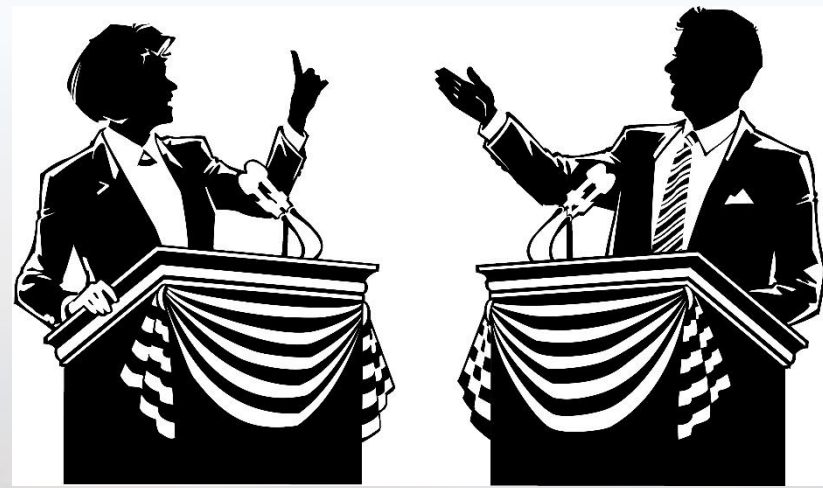
In this class, we will focus on the noun:

A formal contest of argumentation in which two opposing teams defend and attack a given proposition.

Debates often are an element of **speech competitions**, and in educational circles debating competitions are a popular way to improve and practice public speaking skills.

In Western countries, debates are held during **political election campaigns**. They get lots of attention on television and other media, so this is the form you most often find on the internet.

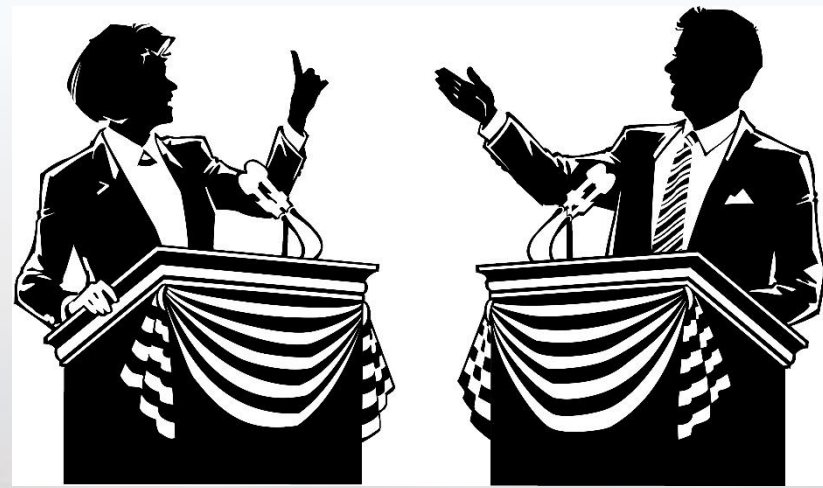
Introduction to debating



Things to note:

- A debate **always** involves **opposing viewpoints**. In a debate, you are not going to compromise or change your mind **EVER**, and neither is your opponent.

Introduction to debating

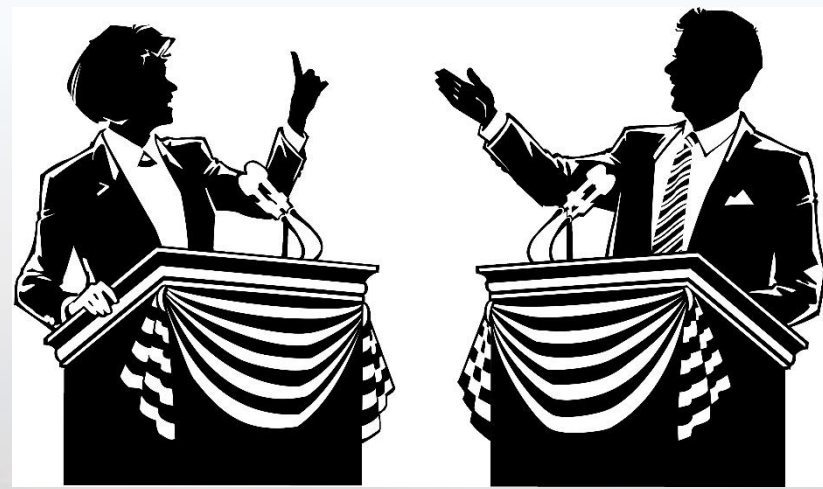


Things to note:

A debate is **NOT** a **negotiation**. It is not a “constructive” process aimed at finding a solution. A debate is “destructive”: there is a **winner** and a **loser**. It more resembles a **boxing match** than a negotiation.



Introduction to debating



Things to note:

- In business situations, **negotiation skills are more useful than debating skills**. Only politicians and contestants in debating competitions engage in debates; in business, you are almost always looking for consensus (a solution both sides can accept). So if you have to choose, **focus on negotiate skills and don't use debating tricks** to “beat” your negotiation partner.
- Debating and negotiating do **overlap** in the area of building a persuasive argument, so you can use everything you learned so far about building persuasive arguments in a debate as well.



Debating Format

Debating format

The most common debating formats used for **debating competitions** (including the BP format we will use in this class) use several **timed phases** during which two debating teams defend a **predetermined position** on the issue under debate, which is called the **motion**.

(Note: Here, I will first give an overview of the general principles used in debates; I will explain the details about the BP rules in a few weeks.)

Debating format

The most common debating format used for **debating competitions** uses several **timed phases** during which two debating teams defend a **predetermined position** on the issue under debate, which is called the **motion**.

Notes:

- Normally contestants **cannot choose** their own position, they have to argue the position they are given, which is either **positive** (supporting the motions) or **negative** (opposing the motion).
- The debate is led by a **facilitator** who tells the contestants when to speak, controls the timing, and executes the voting process that determines the winner.

Debating format

In a **political** debates, the format is the same except for the fact that the contestants are of course free to **assume any opinion** they like and are **on their own** instead of in a team. It is also common (especially in Europe) to have **more than two debaters**, in which case the facilitating process is of particular importance.

Debating format

There are many debating formats; most use the following elements:

1. The **motion** is **disclosed** and the debating teams are told which position they should assume.
2. The teams or candidates are given a **limited time** to prepare and present an **opening statement** explaining their arguments for supporting or opposing the motion.
3. Teams or candidates are given a **limited time** to prepare and present a **rebuttal** attacking the position of their opponent. The speaking order might be reversed this time.
4. The teams are given the opportunity to **ask each other questions**, which can take the form of a **direct confrontation** or a timed **cross examination**.
5. Each team or candidate is given a **limited time** to prepare and present a **closing statement** summarizing their arguments and delivering their message.
6. The **audience** or, in competitions, a **jury**, is asked to **vote** whose position they support. The contestant with the **most supporting votes wins** the debate.

Your objective as a debater

Your **objective** as a debater is to **persuade** the **AUDIENCE/JURY** that **your position has more merit than that of your opponent**. It is **NOT** to convince your **opponent**.

Your opponent has a fixed position so changing their mind is impossible!

If the audience thinks you were more convincing than your opponent you win, otherwise you lose.



Persuasion techniques:

Audience considerations

In a debate, you must influence the audience by persuading them to take your side:

- **Supportive** audience: reinforce.
- **Hostile, uncommitted, or indifferent** audience: undermine (破坏).



Strategy:

1. **Create a conflict** between your and your opponent's position; make the audience doubt your opponent's position.
2. **Sell your position.** Because the human mind doesn't like conflict, the audience will want to resolve the conflict by taking your side.

Persuasion techniques:

Audience considerations

Before being able to build persuasive arguments, you must **analyse the audience**:

- What is the split between **supportive, hostile, uncommitted** and **indifferent**?
- What **type of people** are they (young or old, general public or business people, gender, cultural identity and so on)? Which type of persuasion works best to convince most of them: logic, feelings or credibility, or a mix?
- Why are they there? Do they have a **specific goal** you can appeal to? How does their goal relate to your viewpoint?



A blurred background image of a crowd of people, likely at a public event or debate. In the foreground, a silver microphone is positioned centrally, its mesh grille clearly visible. The text 'Debating techniques' is overlaid in a large, black, sans-serif font across the middle of the image.

Debating techniques

Debating techniques:

Attack whenever you can

During the debate, **keep attacking your opponent.**

- If your opponent **finishes a sentence** in their defence, **immediately attack it**, or bring up a new argument they used and attack that.
- If your opponent attacks you, try not to defend your position, but **launch a counter-attack**. *“You’re wrong; what I said is based on fact. But what about your claim that ...?”*



Debating techniques: Don't get defensive

Try to **avoid defensive behaviour**. Defending yourself provides an opening for an attack by your opponent, and leads to painting yourself in the corner.

Instead, try to make your opponent paint themselves in the corner through constant attack, and forcing them to defend themselves.



Debating techniques: Don't be (too) polite

A debate is not a negotiation; there is no room for compromise or consensus. It is more like a **sports competition**. To win, you need to be **aggressive**, or at least assertive.

In the cross-examination, **don't be too polite**. If you can get away with it, don't wait for your opponent to finish; as soon as they stop to take a breath or finish their sentence, interrupt and launch a counter-attack. If you are out of line, the facilitator will call you to order and, if they do so, stop talking. However, if you can get away with this it will intimidate the facilitator and give you an advantage.

Of course **don't be rude**, because that will make your audience dislike you. Don't insult or attack your opponent personally, always observe etiquette and treat your opponent as a respectable human and an equal.



Debating techniques:

Don't lose your cool

During the debate, stay **calm and reasonable**. Audiences won't vote for contestants who lose their temper. Be firm and aggressive, but don't shout or appeal to loathsome arguments ('blows below the belt', *ad hominem* attacks and so on).

Audiences favour contestants who can hold their ground with a **calculated coolness** and overshadow their opponent with **rational arguments**.



Debating techniques:

Competition etiquette

Observe the following rules on etiquette:

1. When delivering your position statement or rebuttal, **strictly keep to the time**. Also make sure you deliver your message before your time is up and facilitator stops you.
2. **Don't interrupt** your opponent while they are delivering their position statement or rebuttal. Wait for the cross-examination.
3. Always **comply with the facilitator's demands**, whether you agree with them or not.

A blurred background image of a crowd of people, likely at a public event or debate. In the foreground, a silver microphone is visible, slightly out of focus, pointing towards the crowd. The overall tone is professional and focused on public speaking or debate.

Debating Skills

10 skills you will need to win a debate

Critical Thinking

Debating forces you to:

- **evaluate arguments.**
- make decisions based on **logic.**
- make decisions based on **evidence.**

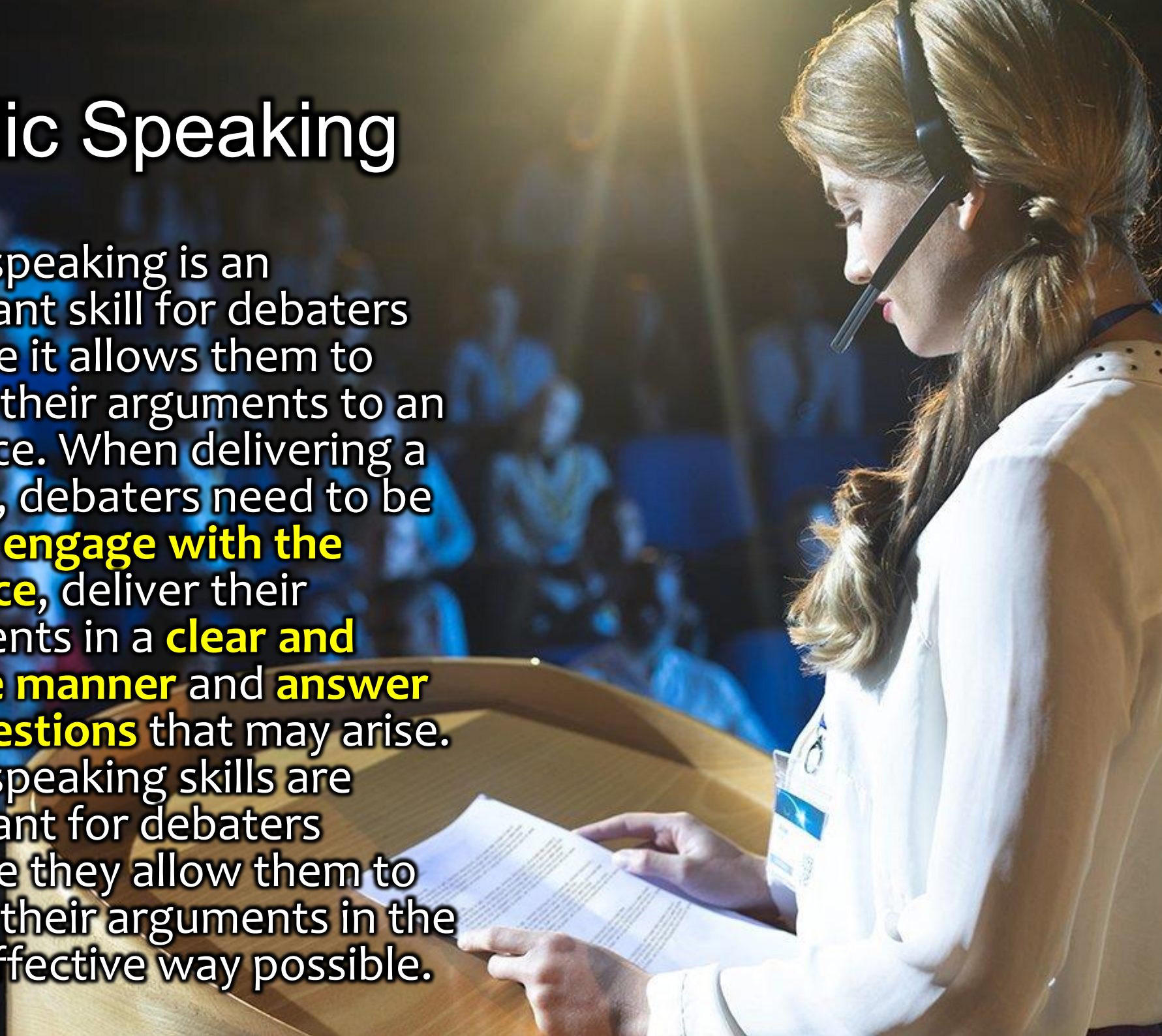
You need to be able to critically think about an argument to determine whether the argument is valid or invalid, whether the evidence is reliable or unreliable, and whether the argument is sound or unsound.



Critical thinking is a skill that can be practiced and improved with practice. To improve your critical thinking skills, you need to read and engage with texts critically, think critically about the arguments you hear or see, and practice making arguments and counter-arguments.

Public Speaking

Public speaking is an important skill for debaters because it allows them to deliver their arguments to an audience. When delivering a speech, debaters need to be able to **engage with the audience**, deliver their arguments in a **clear and concise manner** and **answer any questions** that may arise. Public speaking skills are important for debaters because they allow them to deliver their arguments in the most effective way possible.



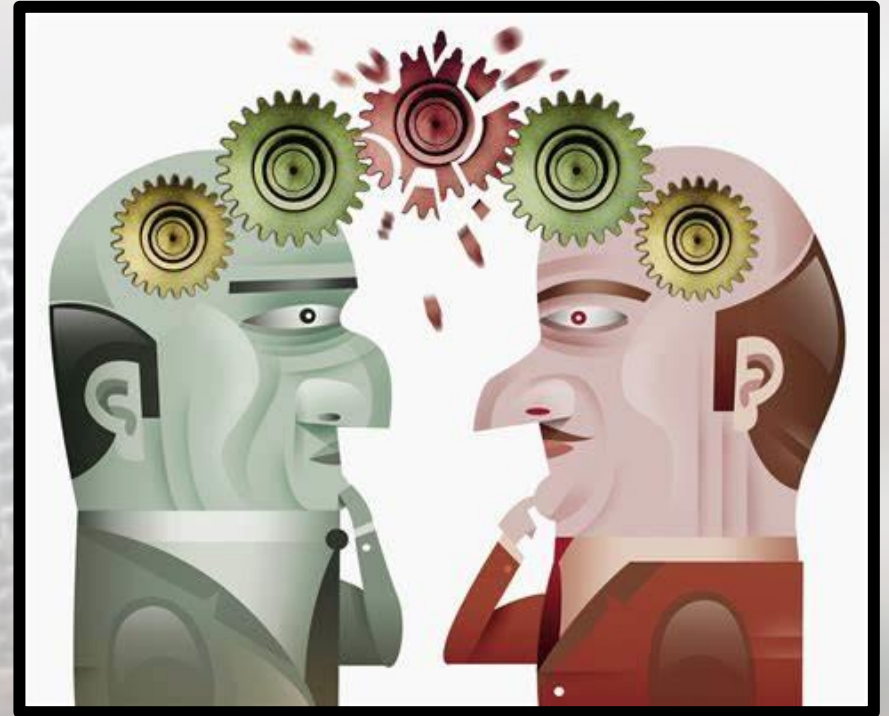
Persuasive Writing

Persuasive writing is an important skill for debaters because it allows them to convince their opponents of their point of view. In order to be persuasive, writers need to **understand their audience** and **craft their argument** accordingly. Writers should also be aware of common objections to their argument and have rebuttals ready.



Argumentation

Argumentation is a key skill in debate because it is the process of making an argument. In argumentation, you will **make a claim, provide evidence to support that claim, and then defend your claim against objections.**



In debate, argumentation is used to make arguments for and against a topic. The goal of argumentation in debate is to convince the audience and the judge that your argument is the best. To do this, you will need to use strong evidence, good reasoning, and effective rebuttals.

Research

Research is an important debating skill because it allows you to support your arguments with facts and figures.

When you are arguing a point, it is important to be able to **back up your claims with evidence**. This will make your argument more persuasive and will help you to win over your audience.

Research can also help you to **identify weaknesses** in your opponent's arguments. If you can find evidence that contradicts their claims, you can use this to counter their arguments. This will make your argument more effective and will help you to win the debate.

Analysis

Analysis is the process of **breaking down a topic or issue into smaller parts** in order to better understand it. When you analyse something, you're looking at it from different angles and considering different factors. This can help you make better decisions and arguments.

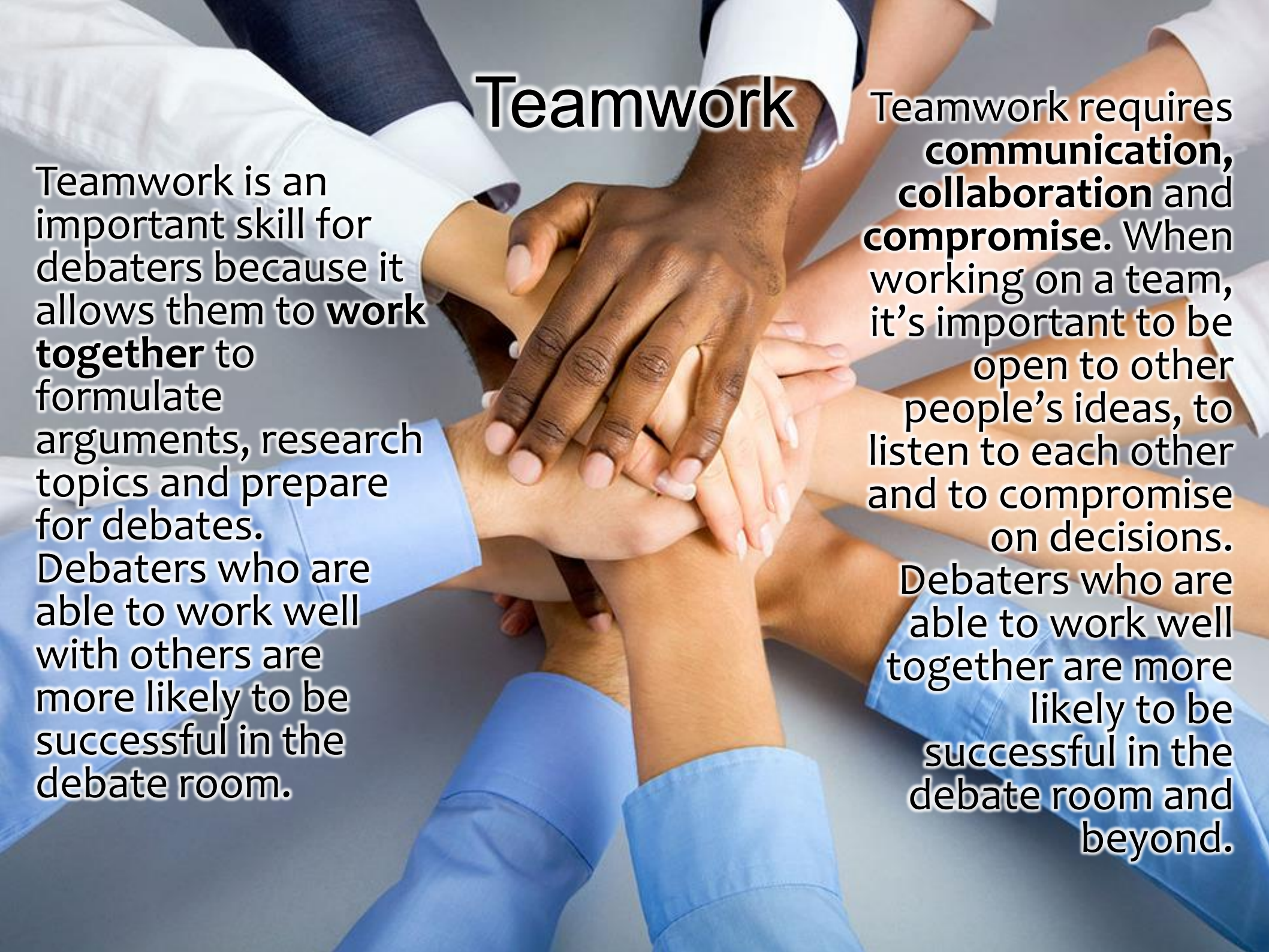


In debate, analysis is important because it can help you understand the other side's argument and find weaknesses in their reasoning. When you can do this, it can make your own argument stronger. Additionally, analysis can help you find supporting evidence for your argument.

Listening

Listening is an important skill for debaters because it allows them to **understand their opponent's argument** and **prepare a counterargument**. Good listeners can also use their opponent's argument to strengthen their own argument. Debaters who are skilled listeners are also able to build rapport with their opponent and the judges, which can help improve their overall performance.





Teamwork

Teamwork is an important skill for debaters because it allows them to **work together** to formulate arguments, research topics and prepare for debates. Debaters who are able to work well with others are more likely to be successful in the debate room.

Teamwork requires **communication, collaboration and compromise**. When working on a team, it's important to be open to other people's ideas, to listen to each other and to compromise on decisions. Debaters who are able to work well together are more likely to be successful in the debate room and beyond.

Time Management



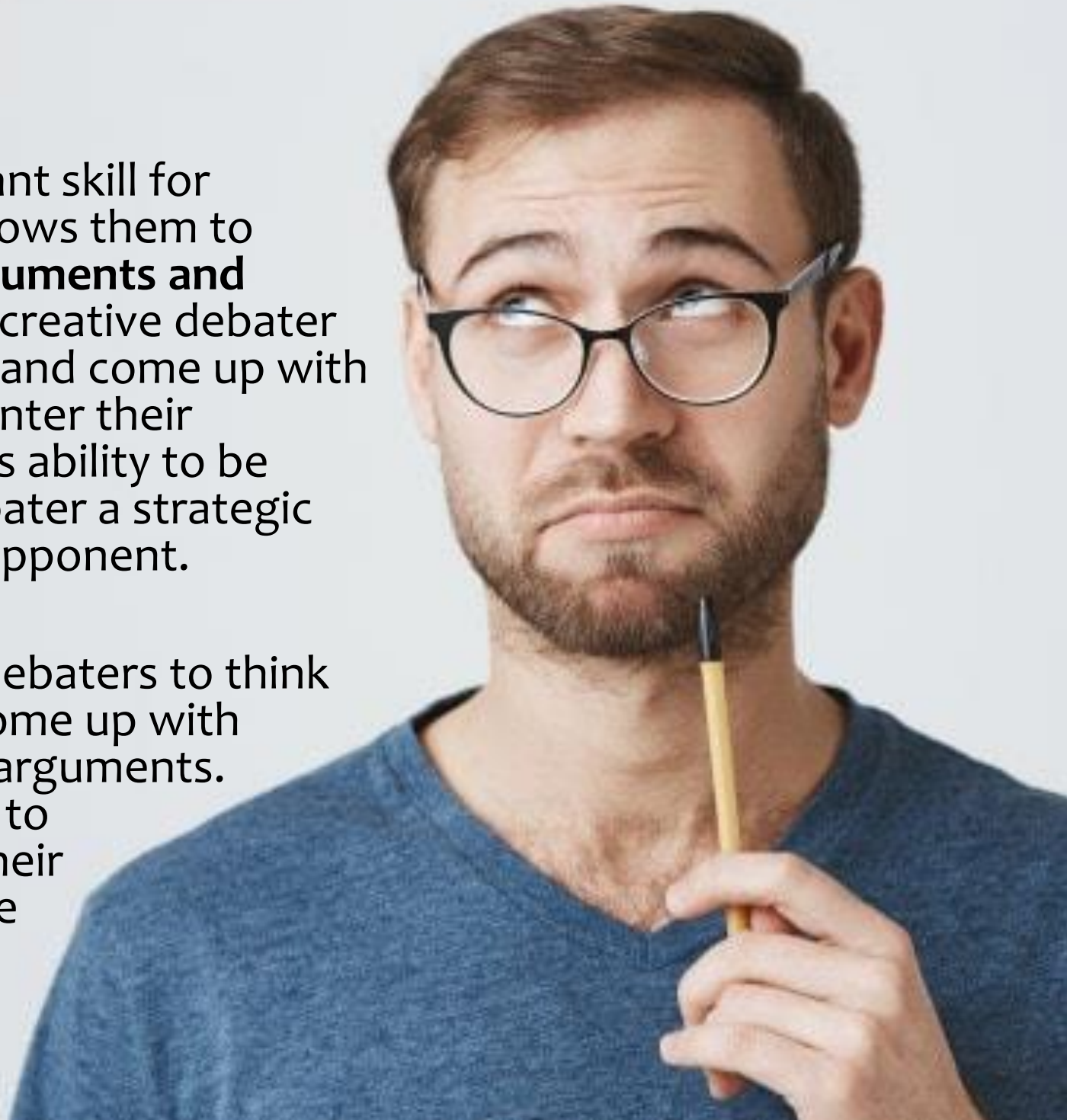
Good time management means being able to **prioritize tasks, set deadlines and stick to them.** It also means being able to manage your time on the debate floor, which can be difficult with two opponents trying to out-talk each other.

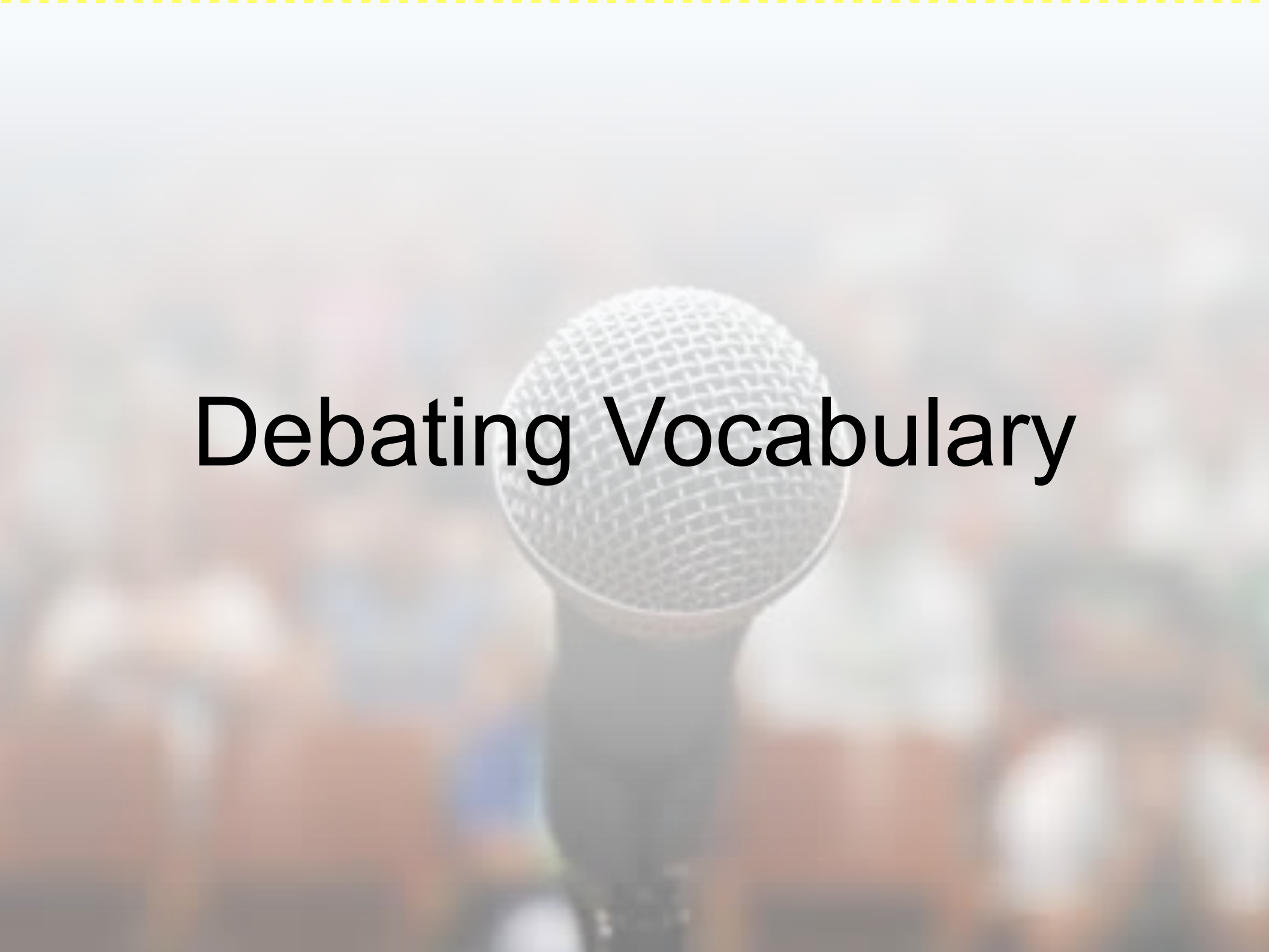
Time management skills are important for debaters because they allow them to be more efficient with their arguments and use their time more effectively. When debaters are able to manage their time, they can focus on making their arguments stronger and more effective.

Creativity

Creativity is an important skill for debaters because it allows them to **come up with new arguments and rebuttals on the fly**. A creative debater can think on their feet and come up with new arguments to counter their opponent's points. This ability to be creative can give a debater a strategic advantage over their opponent.

Creativity also allows debaters to think **outside the box** and come up with unique ways to frame arguments. This can help debaters to better communicate their arguments to the judge and to better engage the judge in the debate.



A blurred background image of a crowd of people, likely at a public event or debate. In the center foreground, a silver, mesh-covered microphone is visible, slightly out of focus. The text "Debating Vocabulary" is overlaid in the center of the image.

Debating Vocabulary

Debating vocabulary

Debate: A formal contest of argumentation in which two opposing teams defend and attack a given motion.

Motion: The issue being debated.

Debater: Participant in a debate.

Position: The 'opinion' of a debater, can be positive (supporting the motion) or negative (opposing the motion). In a competition, debaters cannot choose their position.

Facilitator: The person who leads the debate and enforces the rules.

Jury: Panel of judges who decide on the performance of the debaters.

Direct confrontation: Debaters can interrupt and ask each others question directly.

Cross-examination: Debaters can ask a question and the opponent can answer without interruptions.

Opponent/Opposition: Those who **oppose** you with an opinion that is **opposite** to yours.

Claim: Something you say is true.

Argument: A course of reasoning demonstrating a claim is true or false.

Opening statement: Speech given by the first speaker of each team that establishes the arguments supporting their position.

Rebuttal: Speech aimed at breaking down the argument of the opposition.

Closing statement: Biased summary of the arguments of both sides.

Supportive audience: Audience that supports your position.

Hostile audience: Audience that opposes your position (and supports your opponent).

Uncommitted audience: Audience that hasn't decided yet which side they support.

Indifferent audience: Audience that doesn't care about the motion.

Exercise: Watch a debate

Watch a video of a debate of the following motion:

Global warming: Adaptation is better than mitigation.

(This means: In the light of global warming, it is more important to change our living environment in such a way that we we can deal with living in a warmer climate than trying to reduce the rise in temperature.)

The team on the **left** is the **affirmative** team (so defending **adaptation**), the team on the **right** is the **opposing** ('negative', so defending **mitigation**) team.

Note: The video jumps in at the cross examination phase, so the position statement and the rebuttal have already happened before; the debaters are responding to what was said during those phases.

Exercise: Watch a debate; analysis

Global warming: Adaptation is better than mitigation.

- The first question tries to **attack the question** itself and masterfully parries the attack by pointing out a **fallacy in the question**: carbon trade and carbon tax are not the same (hasty generalization). By deploying deep knowledge (ethos) they basically already won the round before actually answering the question!
- The second person seems to point out a **fallacy in the rebuttal** of the other team: "we have 40 years so mitigation is not urgent" (non sequitur). However, he misses the opportunity to attack them on that, but instead asks a question they can answer successfully because it is their expertise: "why is adaptation urgent", causing him to lose that point.
- The next question is not a very good attack in my opinion, because again it concerns the area of expertise of the opponent, and can easily be answered. The other team cleverly turns the question around and successfully argues that the **same problem applies** to their position as well, thereby **undermining** their position using a **counter-attack**.
- The next question is parried by the affirmative team by pointing out the negative team **misunderstood** their explanation in the rebuttal about the 'Solomon evidence'.
- The next question by the affirmative is an attempt to floor the opponent by asking a **question that is a fallacy in itself** (strawman). The negative team points this out and gives a good answer.
- The last question is a **red herring**; it talks about the impact on people, not about the motion as such. Successfully parried by the affirmative team.

Note that the importance of ethos here! **Because there is jury, pathos is not the most important thing, but knowing your facts (ethos) and pointing out flaws (logos) is.** In my opinion, the negative did better. What do you think?

Let's give it a go!

