

Public Speaking and Debate 2



Rebuttal

Rebuttal

In this lesson, we will have a look at how you can improve your skills when writing the **rebuttal speech** given by the Deputy Prime Minister (PM) and the deputy leader of the opposition.

We will cover the following:

- Adjudication criteria
- Opening statement analysis
- Brainstorming
- Structure
- Language
- Examples



Adjudication criteria for opening statements

A **rebuttal speech** serves to **attack and destroy your opponent's claims**, and you can use it to show off your strengths in terms of:

- **Definition:**
 1. Clearly **identify** each opposing argument you attack.
 2. Clearly **explain** your arguments.
 3. Clearly show how an attack is **linked** to the argument it attacks.
- **Matter:**
 1. Refute given evidence with irrefutable **counter-claims** based on solid **counter-evidence** and good **logic**.
 2. Appeal to **emotions** that move your audience.
- **Manner:**
 1. Be **confident**.
 2. Make good use of **non-verbal communication techniques**.

Opening Statement Analysis

Understand

Before you can formulate any persuasive attacks, it is imperative that you thoroughly **understand** the arguments made in your opponent's opening statement.

1. Check your **flowsheet** and identify your opponent's **claims**.
2. Decide **which claims you can attack** (no connection to evidence, logical fallacy, refutable evidence, and so on).



Opening Statement Analysis

Define

Next, you need to formulate a number of **counter-claims** that attack or undermine your opponent's claims.

Remember what characterises a winning claim in a debate:

1. It supports your position on the motion in an obvious way.
2. It appeals to an emotion that moves the audience.
3. It is backed up by irrefutable evidence and logic.
4. It links back to the motion.
5. It is difficult to attack.

What characterises a winning counter-claim?

(Items in red are different to those for a straight claim.)

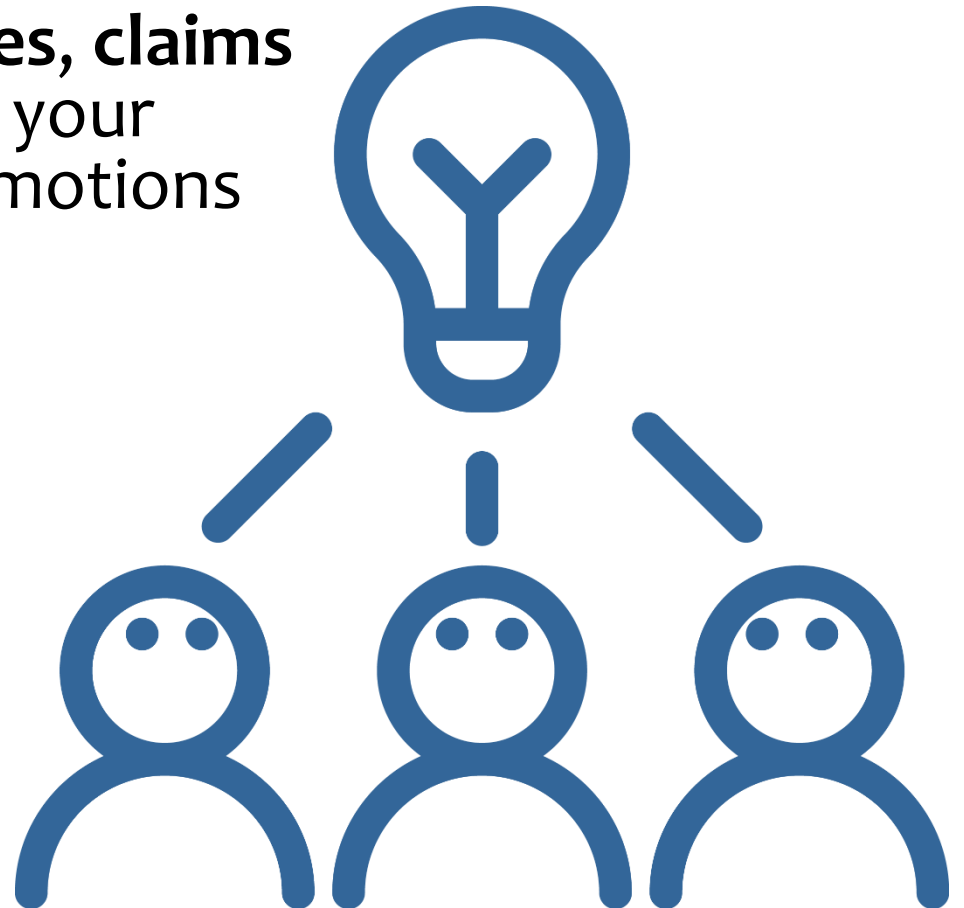
1. It **attacks** one of your opponent's claims.
2. It **appeals to an emotion** that moves the audience.
3. It is **backed up** by irrefutable **evidence** and **logic**.
4. It links back to the **claim you are attacking**.
5. It is **difficult to attack**.

Brainstorming

To identify counter-claims, going through your flowsheet and **explore any knowledge you have** and **what you know to be true** about the claims you want to attack.

For a rebuttal, brainstorm **stories, claims** and **evidence** that **conflict** with your opponent's claims and evoke emotions you can play.

Note: In your rebuttal, you have **less freedom** than when making an opening statement: you need to address the specific points brought up by your opponent, not your own!



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- If the claim is obviously **questionable** (not true or generally not accepted):
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- If the claim **could be true** but your opponent did **not back it up** with evidence:
Brainstorm **counter-evidence** that **directly refutes** your opponent's claim and formulate a **conflicting counter-claim**.

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- If one of your opponent's claims is backed up by **flawed evidence**:
Brainstorm **counter-evidence** that **contradicts** flawed evidence and formulate a **counter-claim** that uses the correct evidence.

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Explain why the logic is wrong, then **apply correct logic** to their evidence and formulate a **counter-claim**.

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Find evidence, stories and examples to **back up you counter-claims**.

Brainstorming

Let's try it ourselves.

Motion: Smoking should be banned.

Your position: Against the motion (Smoking should NOT be banned).

Claims made by your opponent:

- Smoking increases chance of cancer
- Smoking ban avoids deaths of loved ones
- Smoking ban reduces fire hazards

Evidence used by your opponent:

- Lung cancer is the **third most common cancer** in the United States. 20.4% of cancer deaths, **highest death rate** of all cancers.
- People who smoke are **15 to 30 times more likely to get lung cancer** than non-smokers.

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Claims made by your opponent:

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-> **Need evidence to show deaths from lung cancer vs mental health problems.**
- Smoking ban avoids deaths of loved ones
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- Smoking ban reduces fire hazards -> **Counter-claim: It's not really significant,**
Evidence: Number of fires from cigarette buds vs electric wiring, lightning &c.

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Evidence used by your opponent:

- Lung cancer is the **third most common cancer** in the United States. 20.4% of cancer deaths, **highest death rate** of all cancers. -> **True, so no counter-evidence but attackable: 80% of cancers is not lung cancer. If smoking is banned, govt has less tax money to spend on cancer research, so fewer deaths are avoided** -> **Evidence: Find numbers gov money spent on cancer research.**
- People who smoke are **15 to 30 times more likely to get lung cancer** than non-smokers.

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- People who smoke are **15 to 30 times more likely to get lung cancer** than non-smokers. -> **Also true. I see no way to attack this -> Drop it.**

Brainstorming

Let's try it ourselves.

Motion: Smoking should be banned.

Your position: In favour of the motion.

Claims made by your opponent:

- Less freedom to enjoy life
- Less gov income from tax

Evidence used by your opponent:

- Govt has no business interfering with our personal choices > protests, values.
- Loss of tax income 11 bn in US > cannot be spent on healthcare so more deaths.

Brainstorming

Let's try it ourselves.

Motion: Smoking should be banned.

Your position: **In favour of the motion.**

Claims made by your opponent:

- Less freedom to enjoy life -> This is true. But think about it: the 'freedom' offered by allowing smoking reduces the freedom non-smokers, who cannot easily avoid harmful smoke, and there is more non-smokers than smokers.
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- Less gov income from tax -> This is very true. And in fact, it's worse: the tobacco sector also generates economic benefits. Counter-claim: loss of tax revenues and economic losses is offset by lower healthcare expenses; the sports sector (smokers do less exercise because they have breathing problems)? -> Evidence: Need numbers about tax money for lung cancer patients; market value of sports vs tobacco and link smoking ban to increased exercise activity (case study?).

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- Loss of tax income 11 bn in US > cannot be spent on healthcare so more deaths. (1) It is not spent on that now anyway but on other things like defence and national security -> need numbers (2) Healthcare cheaper because less cancer patients -> find number to prove if the gain is bigger or smaller than the loss.

Build your rebuttal statement

Now you have the following:

- **Counter-claims** that counter or undermine your opponent's claims.
- **Evidence** that 'proves' your counter-claims are valid.
- **Counter-evidence** that 'proves' your opponent's claims are wrong.

Your **rebuttal statement** is simply a **series of attacks** in the form of **counter-claims**.

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3. Present your counter-claim:
 - **State** your counter-claim, making sure it evokes the emotion you want to play.
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 - Give an **example**.
 - Explain how the counter-claim **links back** to the claim you attacked.
4. If more than 1 counter-claims in this attack: repeat 3 for each.
5. Repeat 2-3 for each claim you are going to attack.
6. Conclusion: Optional. *"Thanks for your attention"* is usually enough.

Language considerations

State the claims you are going to attack

Your attacks are always associated with certain claims made by your opponents. Before launching your counter claims, **introduce each claim** you are going to attack **in turn**. Don't forget to address the **speaker**, not your opponent.

- **First attack:**
"Ms Speaker, my opponent claimed that However, ..."
- **Continued attacks:**
"Next, I would like to continue with pointing out that although my opponent claimed that ..."
"An additional claim made by my opponent is that ..., but in fact ..."
...
- **Last topic:**
"Finally, my opponent claimed that ..., but I would like to point out that ..."

Language considerations

Attacking evidence

Take a look at language you can use to **attack flawed evidence**.

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Useful patterns:

- If your opponent provided **no evidence** to back up a claim:
“My opponent claims that ..., but she fails to provide any evidence for this. I would like to point out that a study published by ... in ... clearly indicates that ..., which means that For example, ...”

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“My opponent claims that ..., but she fails to provide any evidence for this. I would like to point out that a study published by ... in ... clearly indicates that ..., which means that For example, ...”
- If your opponent presented **attackable evidence**:
“I would like to draw your attention to the fact that the evidence provided by <the PM/leader of the opposition> to back up their claim that ... is questionable. A study published by ... in ... clearly indicates that ..., which directly contradicts my opponent, and indicates that in fact For example, ...”

Language considerations

Attacking flawed evidence

Examples:

(Motion: Agricultural enterprises should engage in CO₂ capture.)

- **Claim without evidence:**

“My opponent claims that imposing regulations requiring farms to implement CO₂ capture will significantly reduce global warming, but she fails to provide any evidence for this. I would like to point out that a study published by *The Agronomist* in 2021 found that only 8% of farms world-wide would remain economically viable after incurring the expense needed to install the high-tech equipment needed for CO₂ capture, which means that most countries are unlikely to be able to support this approach for economic reasons, and that therefore CO₂ capture regulations would only have a very limited effect on global warming.”

counter-claim
link-back

- **Attackable evidence:**

“I would like to draw your attention to the fact that the evidence provided by the PM to back up her claim that 81% of farms are ready to implement CO₂ capture equipment is questionable; It seems that the government's conclusion is based on regional data from developed countries that is irrelevant to the readiness of the vast majority farms in the world: A study published by *The Agronomist* in 2021 clearly indicates that only 8% of farms world-wide is in countries that can support a mechanization rate compatible with the installation of the high-tech equipment needed for CO₂ capture, which directly contradicts my opponent. In the light of this evidence, it is safe to assume that CO₂ capture regulations would only have a very limited effect on global warming.”

Language considerations

Attacking logic

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Useful patterns:

- If your opponent made a claim using **flawed logic**:
“My opponent claims that ... on the grounds that However, I would like to point out that their logic is flawed: The claim that ... does not follow from the evidence because.... In fact, the evidence my opponent provided indicates that ... because ...”

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Useful patterns:

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“My opponent claims that ... on the grounds that However, I would like to point out that their logic is flawed: The claim that ... does not follow from the evidence because.... In fact, the evidence my opponent provided indicates that ... because ...”
- If your opponent made a claim with an obvious **weakness**:
“My opponent claims that ... on the grounds that However, I would like to point out that they forgot one important factor: I would like to point out that a study published by ... in ... clearly indicates that ..., which leads to the conclusion that In the light of these findings, I would argue that my opponent’s claim is not tenable. On the other hand, ...”

Language considerations

Attacking logic

Examples:

- **Flawed logic:** (Motion: Agricultural enterprises should engage in CO₂ capture.)
“My opponent claims that CO₂ capture can significantly reduce global warming on the grounds of a UCLA study that shows that 81% of farmers in California are prepared to take part in it. However, I would like to point out that her logic is flawed: The claim that a global effect can be achieved does not follow from survey data from California, which represents an exceptionally well-developed region: her **hasty generalization** does not consider developing nations. A recent study published in *The Agronomist* clearly shows that 87% of global agricultural production occurs in developing areas where the mechanization rate is only 1/20th of that of developed areas, suggesting the former cannot even afford basic farming equipment, let alone high-tech CO₂ capture systems. Based on this, it is clear to see that CO₂ capture equipment is unaffordable for the vast majority farms responsible for global agricultural CO₂ emissions; **Evidently, CO₂ capture is far way from being a significant factor in mitigating climate change**, which needs to address emissions from farms anywhere in the world, including those in developing countries.”

Language considerations

Attacking logic

Examples:

- **Weak logic:** (Motion: Smoking should be banned.)

“My opponent claims that *smoking should be banned* on the grounds that *it presents a security risk to our national parks*. However, I would like to point out that they forgot one important factor: *Most wildfires in national parks around the world are not caused by cigarette butts, but by lightning and heatwaves*. I would like to point out that a study published by *Nature* in 2018 clearly indicates that *83% of the forest fires in California in 2016 were due to extreme weather events linked to global warming*. It is safe to assume that similar numbers apply to *forests anywhere in the world*, which leads to the conclusion that *a smoking ban would do little in terms of conservation*. In the light of these findings, I would argue that my opponent’s claim is not tenable. On the other hand, *using the money potentially spent on signs and staff attempting to implement smoking bans could be used instead for campaigns that encourage national parks and park visitors to reduce their fossil fuel consumption, which would do more to reduce the fire hazards in our national parks*.”

Language considerations

Attacking claims that are hard to refute

Take a look at language you can use to **attack claims that are hard to refute** directly.

Useful patterns:

- Make a **counter-claim** that is **as strong as or stronger than** the claim you want to attack:
“My opponent claims that ... However, I would like to point out that it is equally valid/plausible to claim that”

Language considerations

Attacking claims that are hard to refute

Take a look at language you can use to **attack claims**.

Useful patterns:

- Making a **counter-claim**: (Motion: Social media are beneficial for education.)
“My opponent claims that *social media are an effective way for educators to reach young people, and that therefore they are beneficial to education.* However, I would like to point out that it is equally valid to claim that *social media are an effective way for malevolent agents to reach young people and discourage them from subscribing to wholesome values like the pursuit of education.* I can quote from my own experience: *The daughter of a friend mine dropped out of university after posting a picture of receiving a prize at a competition, and received 211 posts from trolls who negatively commented on her appearance in relation to her intelligence. This is not an isolated incident: A study published on [statista.com](#) found that the motivation of college drop-outs to forsake their studies is strongly correlated with the level of bullying and trolling they experienced. Furthermore, a study published by Harvard University clearly indicates that the level of cyber-bullying is steadily rising with the penetration of the internet. Evidently, the negative influence of social media on students has the potential to outdo any benefits it may have.*”

Language considerations

Conclusion

A conclusion in a rebuttal statement is **optional**.

If you have enough time, it is a good idea to summarize your counter-claims because they reinforce your case. But keep in mind it is **more important to get as many attacks in as possible**, so if you run out of time prioritize additional attacks over a conclusion.

Examples of Rebuttal Statements

Watch two videos of rebuttals.

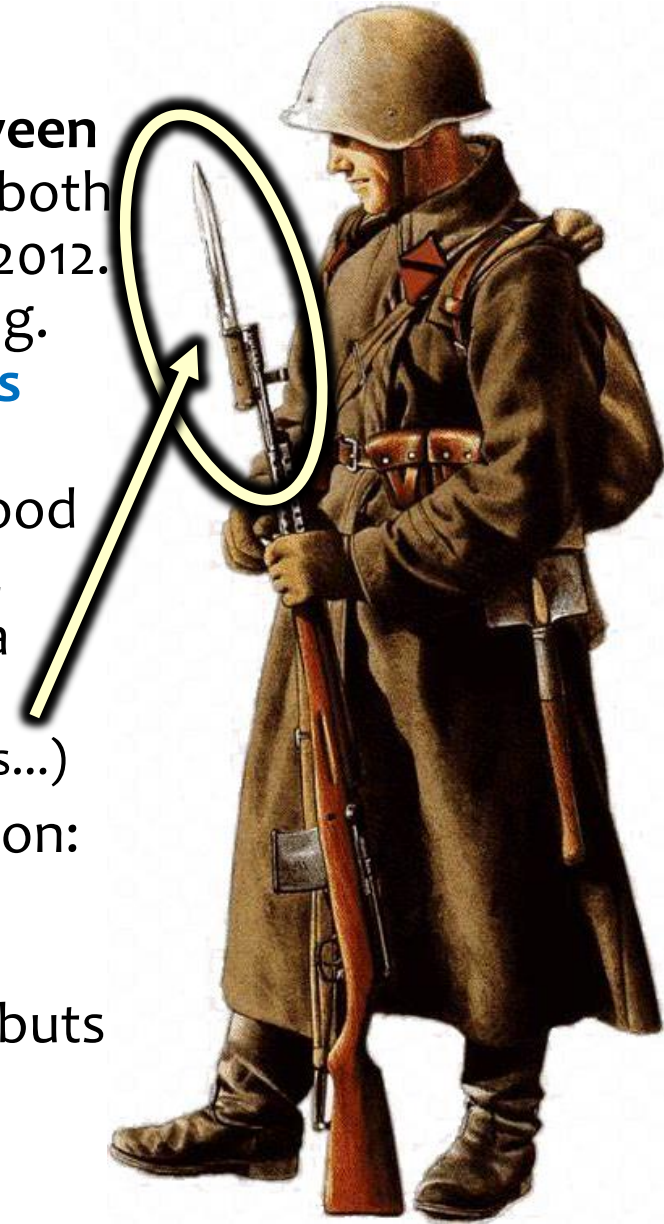
1. Non-competition **political television debate between Mitt Romney and Barak Obama** when they were both running for president after Obama's first term in 2012. The main topic on the video is on military spending.

Romney's claim: Obama's military spending plans are a threat to US security.

Note: This is not a competition of course, but a good (and very very famous...) example of an excellent way to rebut your opponent. In the video, Obama talks about 'bajonets', which is 刺刀 in Chinese. (See picture on the right in case you don't know what it is...)

2. High school BP debating competition on the motion: **Being a global citizen is better than instilling nationalism.**

The speaker is the Deputy Prime Minister, who rebuts the Leader of the Opposition.



Summary

To create a **rebuttal statement**:

1. **Select** which of your opponent's claims and evidence you are going to attack.
2. Generate **counter-claims** backed up by evidence for claims you are going to attack, and **counter-evidence** for evidence you are going to attack.
3. Build your rebuttal, structured as follows:
 - Brief introduction.
 - For **each attack**:
 - Clearly state **which claim you are going to attack**.
 - **State** your counter-claims, making sure they evoke the emotion you want to play, and present **evidence** and use **logic** to 'prove' that your counter-claims are true.
 - Give an **example**.
 - Explain how your counter-claims **link back** to the claim you attacked.
 - Brief Conclusion (optional).

