UMW Speaking Center Presents

What to Do in a Rebuttal

The goal of refutation is to answer your opponent’s arguments.

The steps of the refutation process include:
1. Identify the particular argument you are refuting.
2. Critically evaluate the argument and explain why it is wrong.
3. Supply additional evidence to support your new claims.
4. Explain the implication of this particular argument for the larger issue in the controversy.

POINTERS

● Take the place of the judge/audience and speak in their language.
● Synthesize the arguments.
   ○ Provide an itemized list – “There are several reasons my opponent is wrong.”
   ○ Meld arguments – “all of my arguments show that” or “the cumulative weight of my arguments point to”
● Point out opponent’s omissions (arguments they didn’t answer) and explain the significance of those arguments
● Point out what is at stake in the controversy.
● Provide decision criteria or helpful hints for evaluating the debate.
   ○ “My evidence is superior.”
   ○ “My position makes the most sense.”
   ○ “My argument incorporates your position.”

WHAT NOT TO DO

● Don’t concede.
● Don’t ignore important arguments.
● Don’t spend too much time on your opponent’s arguments.
● Don’t give another constructive answer.