

How To Communicate Effectively in Speech

A Collection of Tips

Tip 1:

Get people who disagree with the whole package of your views to defend publicly parts of it with which they do agree. This provides a credibility boost and a good way to work meaningfully with people who disagree.

Tip 2:

In debates, always pause instead of using filler words. No matter how slowly it makes you go, doing so will inevitably make you look smarter and speak more carefully.

Tip 3:

Rehearse the basic form of a key argument over and over before you deploy it in conversation. It should be so familiar to you by the time you enter a debate that if anything you're at risk of saying it too quickly (because you assume that everyone else is just as familiar with it).

Tip 4:

Take advantage of the social prestige or credentials of group members. If you have a particularly popular member, or someone known to be really intelligent, or someone trained in debate, use them! Mortgage your reputations for causes you believe in.

Tip 5:

Be very careful about personal testimony as a form of persuasion. It's much riskier than more abstract arguments. It exposes you to deeper and more perverse ridicule, could be unseemly in what it reveals, is often unconvincing because of the differences between any two people's experiences, which could make one person's seem irrelevant to the other's, etc. There might be a place for this, but it's a limited one.

Tip 6:

Be on the lookout for, and call out, double standards in other people's treatments of your views or your advocacy. In liberal, pluralistic democracies, and in universities which try to emulate them, every respectful person deserves a seat at the table. If you but not other ideologically oriented student groups are being excluded from some function or otherwise treated differently, call the offenders out on it. They will often be blind--utterly blind--to what they're doing, so they may be acting in good faith and ready to correct themselves when you open their eyes.



Tip 7:

Never ever play the victim. Never ask for special treatment, complain about being disregarded or ridiculed, etc. Be cheerful and determined; play offense and defense. Just don't worry about yourself too much. Worry about the cause you're defending.

Tip 8:

If you're in a debate, you're starting off at a disadvantage: most people arguing against traditional sexual ethics are simply *against* one view; they rarely flesh out what their own view is, and when they do, it's usually quite malleable and shifting. That's a hugely unfair advantage for them. To win a debate, you cannot simply fend off criticisms of your view. You must also show that it is the best option out there. And the most efficient way to do this in a debate is to show that it's superior to (more coherent than, or accounts for more of the facts that everyone accepts than) your opponent's view. If you're debating the proper legal status (if any) of same-sex unions, don't just defend traditional marriage against the inclusion of same-sex couples. Find out all the unions your opponent thinks deserving of recognition, and then ask him to explain why *other* unions should be excluded on *his* view. This way, any *spurious* argument he makes against the line that you have drawn (e.g., that it's unfair to those who fall outside it, that it's a form of bigotry, that it's without defense, that it's question-begging) can just as easily be leveled against the line that *he* has drawn. Then the debate actually goes to the substantive questions: granted that we must draw a line and that the mere drawing of a line isn't bigoted or unjust or whatever just as such, which line *should* we draw, and why? Your opponent will have no answer for this question unless his view is the traditional view.