**Strategies for Refutation During the Rebuttal**

An effective rebuttal depends upon countering the opponent’s argument point by point. If the other side never addresses a particular argument, they are essentially conceding that argument to their opponent.

There are several effective strategies for refuting an opponent’s arguments.

* **Attack the argument on its relevance.** If you can attack an argument on its relevance, you never even have to address the evidence.

*Example:* For a debate on standardized testing… “The Negative’s third constructive point argued that too much testing in general adversely impacts young students. The point is irrelevant, as the issue here is whether the standardization of the tests across schools is harmful. For most students, the absence of a standardized test would simply mean having to write a school-developed exam in its place.” (Example from Merali, *Talk the Talk*, 2006)



* **Attach the argument on its significance.**

*Example:* For a debate on global warming… “Even though reducing global warming will increase bureaucracy, it is not a reason not to act, since the consequences of global warming are so much more severe than the consequences of increased bureaucracy.”

* **Issue a challenge.** This strategy implies what is wrong with the opponent’s strategy and challenges them to respond to a specific point.

*Example:* If the affirmative proposes that we eliminate standardized testing, how else will we be able to compare the achievement of students from different districts and states?

* **Catch contradictions.** Point out contradictions in your opponent’s arguments that must be addressed.

Example: “The Affirmative’s first speaker said that searches by school officials or police officers are justified because school lockers are school property, but the second speaker said that searches are a reasonable intrusion into an area that she clearly stated was a student’s private property. Which one is it, public or private?” (Example from Merali, *Talk the Talk*, 2006)

* **Answer the argument.**

If you can’t dismiss the argument based upon its relevance or significance, directly attack the argument by showing flaws in its reasoning or offering evidence to the contrary.