

## What are the keys to winning an argument?

Here are some top tips from Professor Chris Reed, of Dundee's Centre for Argument Technology for [bbc.com](http://bbc.com)

### **1. Be cogent**

When arguing it's important to be convincing and clear. One of the best ways of doing this is by finding evidence to support your claims. Sometimes one piece of evidence is enough, but often it's better to find more than that. The more claims you can make, supported by evidence, the more cogent your argument will be.

### **2. Build your argument**

Go further. Much further. Look at the reasons you believe you're right and find reasons why those reasons are true. Then dig up reasons for those reasons! Analysis conducted on debates tries to build a huge picture mapping the connections between reasons and conclusions all through a debate.

### **3. Be relevant**

Some themes turn out to be at the core of a debate, but others are on the fringes. Try to focus on the heart of the issue and avoid getting side-tracked. Getting side-tracked will weaken your stance. Our analysts rate arguments not just for their logic but also for their 'centrality'.

### **4. Counter objections**

The best debaters know what their opponents' arguments are going to be before they even hear them. If you have thought about the attacks that could be launched against your position, you can mention them and deal with them in advance. It might even deter your opponent from using them at all.

### **5. Look for the weak spots**

Different types of arguments can be attacked in different ways – although you don't need to be hostile, so we prefer the word 'critique'. For example, if you're met with "This is what the expert says," you might want to ask whether the expert is biased or has a vested interest.

### **6. Listen**

Winning an argument is at least as much about listening as it is about talking. Don't dominate the conversation; let everyone else have their say. The deadliest points tend to be short and sharp.

### **7. Don't get bogged down**

Too often a debater will get stuck on a single aspect of the problem. You need to widen your area of attack, take on more than one opponent and more than one issue.

### **8. Break out of the echo chamber**

Most of us like to share our opinions, but too often we talk only to others who agree with us. Because our friends on social media share our point of view, it's too easy to assume it's obviously correct. You've got to break out of that bubble and force yourself to understand why your opponent thinks differently. A good way to do this is to practice arguing for the opposite of what you believe.