

# How to win an argument

By Hitham Elhimmali , 02 March 2017

## **Make a logical case**

Winning an argument depends on three things: logic, charisma, and team work (in a debate, when you're part of a team).

Logic is one of the fundamental pillars of constructing an argument. If your argument is not logical, you won't convince your audience. What's more, your opponent may spot your flawed logic and target it as a weakness.

## **Be aware of your body language**

It also helps to be charming. Charismatic speakers tend to catch and hold people's attention. If you can get people to listen to you, you have already done almost half the job of winning them over to your side. You can appear to be more confident by practising your body language and gestures. Some people are blessed to be born with natural confidence, but that doesn't mean that you can't learn to be more charismatic.

Keep your emotions in check and stay calm. Fidgeting or responding in an agitated way to an opponent's claims may be interpreted as weakness. Worse, you might come across as disrespectful.

## **Never make it personal**

Don't attack the person you're debating with. Focus on their argument or the case they have presented. Your attitude defines who you are: never call your opponent names, or say he or she is a liar, even if they did lie.

**Prepare before you speak:** For a public debate, where the topic is announced in advance, you need at least two days to prepare. That's the minimum amount of time you need to hunt for detailed information about the subject and check all the facts. You have to put in this effort if you want to build a solid case, reinforced by evidence-based arguments.

If you're in a team, hold a brainstorming session in which you discuss the logic, structure and evidence for your argument, consider counter-arguments that your opponents might make, and think about your individual role in the debate.

## **Study your opponent**

Examine the opposing view of your case, analyse your opponent's tactics

## **Try to put yourself in your opponent's shoes**

Put yourself in the other person's perspective and study their point of view. This helps you spot and understand any weaknesses in your own argument.

You might even agree with a fundamental idea underlying your opponent's argument, but disagree with your opponent's strategy to make their case.

## **Not all arguments are productive**

Sometimes, having an intellectual argument can be fruitful and stimulating: it helps you understand both sides of a situation.

But arguing with people who have an extreme or narrow-minded point of view can be dangerous, especially where I live in Libya. So, depending on the person and their ability to listen to and respect another person's point of view, I make a decision: either we have a healthy discussion, or I withdraw from an argument that would be a waste of time and might create more harm than benefit.

## **Set ground rules with your opponent**

both parties will listen to each other, respect one another, will have a similar amount of time to present their case, and will have the right to respond to each other's argument.