



A GUIDE TO **DIALECTICA**

The Art of Debate

Reason. Rebut. Persuade. Prevail.

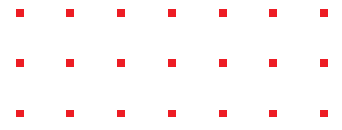
For : Students, educators, and anyone building their communication skills

Level : Suitable for learners aged 13 and up, and their coaches

Format : A self-study training & practice guide

WELCOME

A Message from the Author



Every great leader begins as a communicator.

The ability to speak clearly, tell compelling stories, and defend ideas with logic is one of the most valuable skills in the AI-native world we are all now living in.

Communication is not a fixed talent you are born with — it is a craft anyone can learn. This guide is a journey toward becoming an influential communicator: someone who can hold their ground under questioning, think on their feet, and win an argument on the strength of reason rather than volume.

This manual has been designed as your self-learning guide. It will not simply tell you what a good argument looks like; it will walk you through the frameworks that produce one, one step at a time.

Read it carefully. Practise every exercise. Then put these skills to work — in the classroom, on stage, or anywhere you need to be heard.

We look forward to hearing you reason.

— The Author

Prof. Satya Kiran Sastry
Vice President, Strategic Initiatives
ETHames Business School

HOW TO USE

How to Use This Guide



A good debater is not the loudest person in the room. They are the clearest thinker — the one who can build an argument that holds, spot the flaw in an opponent's reasoning, and respond under a ticking clock without losing composure.

The name Dialectica comes from the ancient Greek *dialektike* — the art of arriving at truth through structured argument and reasoned exchange. This manual pairs that spirit with India's own classical tradition of logical inquiry — the Nyaya school, whose five-limbed reasoning is over two thousand years old — and with the modern parliamentary debate formats you will face on stage. Every framework inside this manual, from ethos-pathos-logos to the claim-warrant-evidence chain to the catalogue of logical fallacies, has been chosen because it makes your reasoning stronger and your rebuttals sharper.

You will notice each chapter follows the same pattern: what the idea means, why it works, an example of it done well and done poorly, practice exercises you can do today, and a short summary you can revisit whenever you need it.

Do not skim this book. Argue out loud, with a friend, against a timer. Debate is not learned by reading — it is learned by arguing. This manual simply tells you what to practise, and why.

I wish you clarity, composure, and a well-built case.

— The Author

Prof. Satya Kiran Sastry

Vice President, Strategic Initiatives

EThames Business School

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is a complete, self-study guide to debate. It takes the frameworks that professional communicators rely on and turns them into a clear, self-paced learning path that anyone — a student, a teacher, or a self-learner — can work through independently to build real, lasting skill.

6

CORE
FRAMEWORKS

18

PRACTICE
EXERCISES

5

REAL-WORLD
MODELS

20

GLOSSARY
TERMS

What This Booklet Delivers

- A structured route from foundational theory to stage-ready delivery, organized into three parts: *Orientation*, the *Dialectica Framework*, and *Application & Practice*.
- Six proven reasoning frameworks — Ethos/Pathos/Logos, Claim-Warrant-Evidence, the Nyaya Five-Limbed Syllogism, Structured Rebuttal, Logical Fallacies, and the Parliamentary Debate Flow — each taught through a consistent meaning-example-practice-summary sequence.
- Practice exercises and real-world models, so students can rehearse against strong examples of the craft.
- A timeless training resource: this booklet stays the same, year to year. It focuses purely on the subject, preparation, and practice — all competition Rules live in the separate Rules & Regulations document known as the Rulebook.

How to Use This Document

Part I orients you to the Challenge and this track.

Part II is the instructional core — study it framework by framework, completing every practice exercise.

Part III helps you apply the frameworks and self-assess. When you are ready to compete, turn to the shared Rulebook.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART I - ORIENTATION

Page No

1 About This Guide	8
2 Who Dialectica Is For	9
3 Learning Objectives	10
4 How to Study This Manual	11

PART II - THE ORATORIA FRAMEWORK

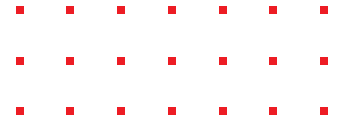
5 Framework 1 — Ethos, Pathos, Logos	13
6 Framework 2 — Claim, Warrant, Evidence	15
7 Framework 3 — The Nyaya Five-Limbed Syllogism	17
8 Framework 4 — Structured Rebuttal	19
9 Framework 5 — Logical Fallacies	21
10 Framework 6 — The Parliamentary Debate Flow	23

PART III - APPLICATION & PRACTICE

11 Voices That Inspire: Real-World Examples	26
12 Dialectica Checklist	27
13 Common Mistakes to Avoid	28
14 Glossary	29

PART I

Orientation



What this guide covers, who it is for, what you will learn, and how to work through it.



1 About This Guide

This guide is built around one belief: in an age where routine analytical work is increasingly automated, the ability to think clearly and communicate persuasively is one of the most valuable skills a person can develop. It is a craft, and like any craft it can be learned, practised, and mastered.

Purpose

To identify, train, and certify young communicators across three distinct disciplines — public speaking, storytelling, and debate — through a structured, self-paced learning journey rather than a single high-pressure audition.

Objectives

- Build skill and stage confidence in students from a wide range of schools and backgrounds.
- Teach transferable frameworks — not just performance tips — that remain useful well beyond the competition.
- Ensure every competitor arrives on stage prepared, through a mandatory certification standard rather than open entry.

COMPANION DOCUMENT

This booklet covers the Dialectica subject, preparation, and practice only. All event details — eligibility, rules, and judging — live in the separate 'Rules & Regulations' document, known as the Rulebook, that applies to all three tracks.

2 Who Dialectica Is For

Dialectica is the Challenge's debate discipline, pairing India's classical Nyaya tradition of structured logic with modern parliamentary debate formats. It rewards students who can build an unassailable case, dismantle an opponent's reasoning, and stay composed under direct questioning.



Future lawyers, policymakers, founders, and leaders who will need to argue and decide under pressure.



Students who love critical thinking, logic, and the cut-and-thrust of live argument.



Anyone who wants to learn to think on their feet and never be lost for a reasoned answer.



3 Learning Objectives

By the end of this manual, you will be able to:

- ✓ Balance ethos, pathos, and logos to persuade a judge on credibility, emotion, and logic together.
- ✓ Build any argument as a complete claim-warrant-evidence chain that withstands scrutiny.
- ✓ Apply the classical Nyaya five-limbed syllogism to structure a rigorous proof.
- ✓ Deliver structured, point-by-point rebuttal using the 'they say / I say / because' method.
- ✓ Identify and name the ten common logical fallacies — in your opponent's case and your own.
- ✓ Navigate a parliamentary debate: roles, points of information, and the flow from prelim to final.
- ✓ Rehearse consistently against the checklist in this guide, so you always know what to improve next.

4 How to Study This Manual

This is a self-study manual. It is designed to be worked through in order, not skimmed. Follow this loop for every framework chapter:

- 1** *Read the framework and its meaning.*
- 2** *Study the Strong Debater / Weak Debater example.*
- 3** *Complete the practice exercises – out loud, not just in your head*
- 4** *Review the Key Takeaways and Quick Summary box.*
- 5** *Move to the next framework only once you can explain the previous one to someone else.*

PART II

The Dialectica Framework

Six core frameworks, each taught through a consistent sequence: meaning, example, practice, and summary.

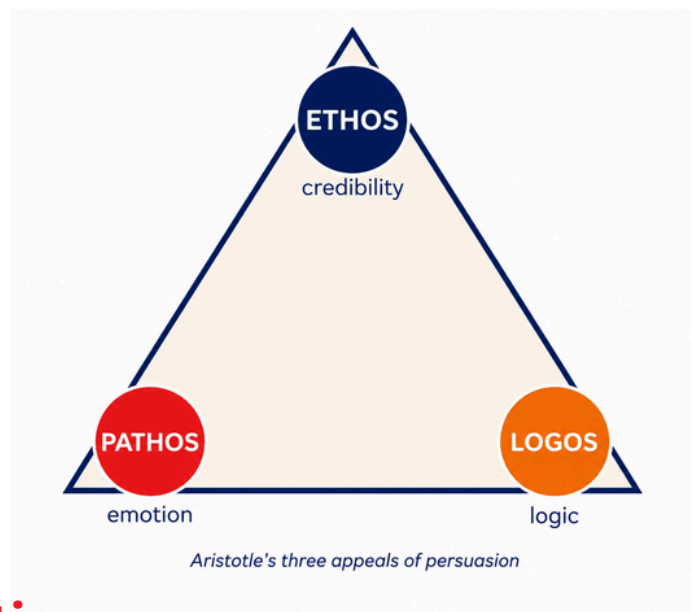


5 Framework 1 :

Ethos, Pathos, Logos

Meaning

Over two thousand years ago, Aristotle identified three ways to persuade an audience: ethos (your credibility), pathos (emotion), and logos (logic and reason). A winning argument uses all three, in balance, rather than relying on one alone.



Simple Explanation

Ethos: why the audience should trust you — your credibility, fairness, and command of the facts.

Pathos: the emotional weight of your argument — why it matters to real people.

Logos: the logic itself — the reasoning, evidence, and structure that make your case sound.

Example

Strong debater: Establishes credibility ('having studied the data'), appeals to stakes ('this affects every student'), then delivers a tight logical chain — all three appeals working together.

Weak debater: Relies only on emotion, shouting that the motion is 'unfair,' with no credibility or logic to support it — easily dismantled by a calm, reasoned reply.

5 Framework 1 : Ethos, Pathos, Logos

Practice Exercises

- 1. Label the appeals:** Take a short opinion article and mark every sentence as ethos, pathos, or logos. Notice which the writer leans on most.
- 2. Balance drill:** Write three versions of the same argument — one heavy on ethos, one on pathos, one on logos. Then combine the strongest sentence from each.
- 3. Spot the imbalance:** Watch a debate clip and identify which appeal the losing side over-relied on. Over-reliance on any one appeal is a common weakness.

Key Takeaways

- Ethos means credibility, pathos means emotion, and logos means logic.
- The strongest arguments use all three appeals in balance.
- Over-relying on emotion alone is the fastest way to lose to a calm, reasoned opponent.

REMEMBER

Credibility, emotion, and logic. Ethos, pathos, logos. Win with all three, not just one.



Watch & Learn

How to Use Rhetoric to Get What You Want

Camille A. Langston, TED-Ed — scan the QR code or visit

ed.ted.com/lessons/how-to-use-rhetoric-to-get-what-you-want-camille-a-langston

6 Framework 2:

Claim, Warrant, Evidence

Meaning

This framework is drawn from philosopher Stephen Toulmin's model of argumentation. Every solid argument has three parts: a claim (the position you are arguing), evidence (the facts that support it), and a warrant (the reasoning that explains why the evidence proves the claim). Miss any one and the argument collapses.

WHY IT WORKS

Why it works: PREP forces a complete thought in seconds. The opening Point tells the listener where you are going, the Reason and Example earn their agreement, and the closing Point locks the message in memory. Because the shape is fixed, your mind is free to focus on content, not structure – which is exactly why it holds up under pressure.



Simple Explanation

Beginners state a claim and throw facts at it, but forget the warrant – the bridge that explains why those facts actually support the claim. The warrant is where most weak arguments break. Always ask: 'Why does this evidence prove my point?'

WHY IT WORKS

Why it works: evidence never speaks for itself – the warrant tells the judge why it matters. Most weak arguments state a claim and pile on facts while leaving the reasoning unspoken, which is exactly where a sharp opponent attacks. Making your warrant explicit closes that gap before it can be exploited.

Example

(The figures below are illustrative, for teaching purposes only – not researched statistics.)

Strong debater: "Curfews reduce accidents (claim). Cities with curfews saw a 20% drop (evidence). Because fewer young drivers are on the road at high-risk hours (warrant)." The chain is complete.

Weak debater: "Curfews reduce accidents. Cities with curfews saw a 20% drop." — states a claim and evidence but never explains the connection, leaving the argument open to attack.

Practice Exercises

1. Complete the chain: Write three arguments, each with all three parts clearly labelled — claim, warrant, evidence. If you cannot write the warrant, your argument is not ready.

2. Find the missing warrant: Take an argument from a news debate that states a claim and evidence, and write the unstated warrant yourself. Often it is weaker than it first appears.

3. Attack the warrant: With a partner, one states a claim and evidence; the other attacks only the warrant. This trains you to find the true weak point in any argument.

Key Takeaways

- A complete argument has a claim, evidence, and a warrant connecting them.
- The warrant — the reasoning bridge — is where most weak arguments break. One strong example beats three vague ones.
- Always be able to answer: 'Why does this evidence prove my claim?'

Remember

Claim, warrant, evidence. The warrant is the bridge — and the bridge is where most arguments fall.



Watch & Learn

The Toulmin Model of Argumentation

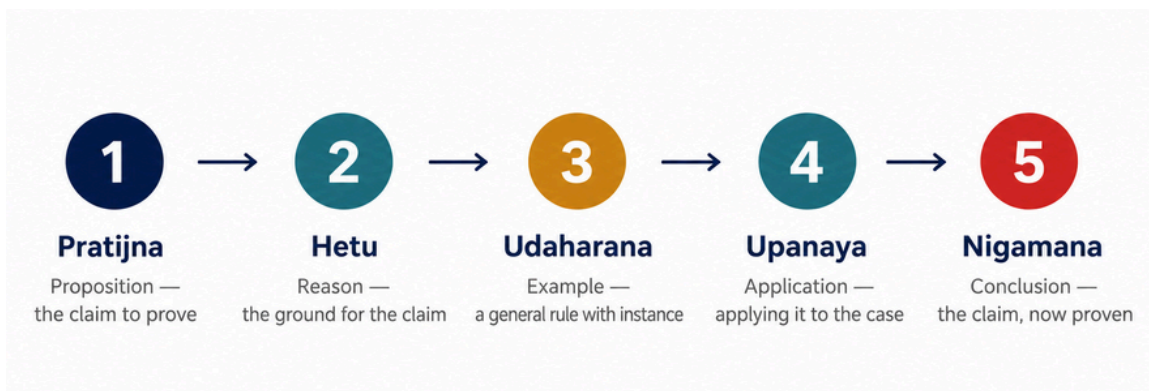
TED-Ed lesson, video by David Wright — scan the QR code or visit ed.ted.com/on/yPxXXc5q

7 Framework 3 :

The Nyaya Five-Limbed Syllogism

Meaning

India's classical Nyaya school of logic, over two thousand years old, structured a complete proof in five steps: pratijna (proposition), hetu (reason), udaharana (example with a general rule), upanaya (application to the case), and nigamana (conclusion). It is a rigorous ancestor of the modern argument.



Simple Explanation

The Nyaya method forces you to prove a claim step by step: state it, give the reason, support the reason with a general rule and example, apply it back to your specific case, and only then conclude. Its discipline prevents the leaps of logic that judges pounce on.

WHY IT WORKS

Why it works: the five limbs leave no room for a hidden leap. By forcing you to state the rule, give an example, and apply it back to the case, the Nyaya method exposes the exact step where reasoning usually breaks — in your argument or your opponent's. Its discipline is a defence against your own blind spots.

Example

Strong debater: "This policy will help (proposition). Because it lowers costs (reason). Whatever lowers costs helps families, as with the fuel subsidy (example). This policy lowers costs (application). Therefore it will help (conclusion)."

Weak debater: "This policy will help because it lowers costs." — collapses four steps into a leap, giving an opponent room to deny that lower costs actually help.

7 Framework 3 :

The Nyaya Five-Limbed Syllogism

Practice Exercises

- 1. Five-step proof:** Take one of your arguments and lay it out in all five Nyaya limbs. Notice how the 'example' step forces you to justify your general rule.
- 2. Spot the missing limb:** In an opponent's argument, identify which of the five steps they skipped — that gap is your line of attack.
- 3. Modernise it:** Rewrite a five-limb proof in natural, conversational English for the stage. The discipline stays; the stiffness goes.

Key Takeaways

- The Nyaya syllogism proves a claim in five disciplined steps.
- The 'example' step forces you to justify the general rule behind your reasoning.
- Skipping steps creates the logical leaps that judges and opponents attack.

Remember

Proposition, reason, example, application, conclusion. Five steps that leave no room for a leap.



Watch & Learn

Nyaya: Classical Indian Logic

Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy — scan the QR code or visit
iep.utm.edu/nyaya

8 Framework 4 : Structured Rebuttal

Meaning

Rebuttal is the heart of debate: responding directly to your opponent's argument rather than just repeating your own. The reliable structure is 'they say / I say / because / so what' — restate their point fairly, state your response, justify it, and explain why it matters to the round.



Simple Explanation

Weak debaters ignore the opponent and re-state their own case louder. Strong debaters engage: first restate the opponent's point fairly (so the judge trusts you), then respond, then justify the response, then show why your rebuttal decides the clash. Fair restatement first is what earns credibility.

WHY IT WORKS

Why it works: judges reward clash, not parallel monologues. Restating your opponent's point fairly first proves you understood it and earns trust; only then does your response carry weight. Ending each rebuttal with 'so what' tells the judge why winning that exchange decides the round.

Example

Strong debater: "My opponent says curfews cut crime (they say). But the data does not support that (I say), because the studies they cite ignore other factors (because) — which means their main argument does not stand (so what)."

8 Framework 4 : Structured Rebuttal

Practice Exercises

- 1. Four-step rebuttal:** With a partner, one makes an argument; you respond using all four steps aloud. Do not skip the fair restatement — it earns the judge's trust.
- 2. Steelman first:** Before rebutting, restate your opponent's argument so well that they agree it is fair. Only then respond. This habit wins credibility.
- 3. The 'so what' drill:** After every rebuttal, force yourself to add one sentence explaining why it matters to who wins the round. Rebuttals without impact are forgotten.

Key Takeaways

- Rebuttal engages the opponent's argument; it does not just repeat your own.
- Restating the opponent's point fairly first earns the judge's trust.
- Every rebuttal should end with 'so what' — why it matters to the outcome.

Remember

They say, I say, because, so what. Restate fairly first — then dismantle.



Watch & Learn

British Parliamentary Debate: Resources & Guides

Debate England — scan the QR code or visit debateengland.com/resources-for-british-parliamentary-bp

9 Framework 5 : Logical Fallacies

Meaning

A logical fallacy is a flaw in reasoning that makes an argument invalid, even when it sounds convincing. **Learning to name them lets you spot the weak point in an opponent's case instantly** — and avoid the same traps in your own.

Ad Hominem attack the person	Straw Man distort the argument
False Dilemma only two options	Hasty Generalization too few examples
Appeal to Emotion feelings over facts	Bandwagon everyone does it
Circular Reasoning assumes the conclusion	Red Herring irrelevant distraction

Simple Explanation

The ten most common fallacies to know: Ad Hominem (attacking the person, not the argument), Straw Man (distorting their argument to attack it), False Dilemma (claiming only two options exist), Hasty Generalization (concluding from too few examples), Appeal to Emotion (feelings in place of facts), Bandwagon (it's true because everyone believes it), Circular Reasoning (the conclusion is its own proof), Red Herring (an irrelevant distraction), Slippery Slope (claiming one step must inevitably lead to an extreme outcome), and Appeal to Authority (citing an expert's opinion as proof, even outside their expertise).

WHY IT WORKS

Why it works: a fallacy is persuasion without substance — and once named, it collapses. Knowing the ten common fallacies lets you spot the weak joint in an opponent's case instantly and label it for the judge, while auditing your own case for the same flaws before anyone else finds them.

9 Framework 5 : Logical Fallacies

Example

Strong debater: "That is an ad hominem — my opponent attacked me rather than my argument, which still stands unanswered." Naming the fallacy neutralises it in front of the judge.

Weak debater: Falls into a false dilemma — 'either we ban it or chaos follows' — and is exposed when the opponent names a third option.

Practice Exercises

- 1. Fallacy flashcards:** Make a card for each of the ten fallacies with a one-line definition and a real example. Test yourself until you can name each on sight.
- 2. Spot them live:** Watch a televised debate and note every fallacy you hear. Politicians provide an endless supply of practice material.
- 3. Audit your own case:** Read your prepared argument and hunt for fallacies in your own reasoning before an opponent finds them for you.

Key Takeaways

- A fallacy is flawed reasoning that can sound convincing but does not hold.
- Naming a fallacy out loud neutralises it in front of the judge.
- The fallacy that attacks the person rather than the argument is called Ad Hominem.

Remember

Learn the ten fallacies by name. What you can name, you can defeat — and avoid.



Watch & Learn

The Strawman Fallacy & Common Logical Fallacies

Educational explainer (YouTube) — scan the QR code or visit
youtube.com/watch?v=Ua4Nv5nUFys

10 Framework 6 :

The Parliamentary Debate Flow

Meaning

Dialectica's competition rounds use parliamentary-style formats. Understanding the flow the roles of proposition and opposition, points of information, and the progression from written prelims to the Grand Final panel — lets you compete with confidence instead of confusion.



Simple Explanation

- Proposition and opposition each have distinct burdens — one defends the motion, the other opposes it.
- Points of Information (POIs) are brief interjections offered during an opponent's speech, accepted or declined strategically.
- The competition flows from written analytical prelims, through fast head-to-head campus rounds, to a high-stakes panel final.

Example

Strong debater: Knows their role's burden exactly, offers a crisp POI at the right moment, and paces their speech to the time signals — competing calmly within the format.

Weak debater: Is unsure whether to defend or oppose, misses chances to offer POIs, and runs out of time because they never rehearsed to the clock.

10 Framework 6 :

The Parliamentary Debate Flow

Practice Exercises

- 1. Role clarity:** For a given motion, write the single core burden of the proposition and of the opposition in one sentence each. Confusing these loses rounds.
- 2. POI timing:** In a practice round, offer exactly two points of information at appropriate (non-protected) moments. Practise both offering and politely declining.
- 3. Beat the clock:** Rehearse a full speech to a strict timer at least five times, building a ten-second buffer so you never get cut off mid-argument.

Key Takeaways

- Proposition defends the motion; opposition argues it should not stand.
- Points of Information are strategic interjections — know when to offer and when to decline.
- The competition flows from written prelims to campus rounds to a panel Grand Final.

Remember

Know your burden, time your speech, and use points of information with intent.



Watch & Learn

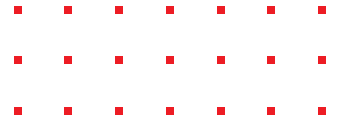
What Is British Parliamentary Style Debate?

Oxford Scholastica — scan the QR code or visit

oxfordscholastica.com/blog/politics-articles/what-is-british-parliamentary-style-debate

PART III

Application & Practice



Turning the six frameworks into performance: real-world models, a self-check, and common mistakes to avoid.



11 Voices That Inspire: Real-World Examples

Studying real persuaders is the fastest way to see these frameworks in action. Watch (or read transcripts of) the speakers below and identify which frameworks from this manual they use.

WHY IT WORKS

Why it works: format is not bureaucracy – it is the game's strategy. Knowing your role's burden, when to offer a point of information, and how to pace to the clock lets you spend your energy on argument instead of confusion. The debater who owns the format competes with a calm the content alone cannot give.

“ Nani Palkhivala

India's legendary constitutional lawyer built cases of near-perfect logical structure – a master of claim-warrant-evidence under pressure.

Shashi Tharoor (Oxford Union): ”

His 'Britain owes reparations' speech balances ethos, pathos, and logos, weaving credibility, moral weight, and hard evidence together.

“ Abraham Lincoln

The Lincoln–Douglas debates remain a model of structured rebuttal and reasoned clash over emotional noise.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg ”

Famous for calm, precise oral argument – never rattled, always returning to the logical core of her case.

“ Barack Obama

A skilled user of rhetorical structure and the deliberate balance of the three Aristotelian appeals.

As a practice task, choose one speaker above, watch a clip, and identify at least two of the six Dialectica frameworks they are using. Always watch or read the original speech yourself rather than relying only on this summary – that habit of checking primary sources is part of building a credible case.

12 Dialectica Checklist

BEFORE YOU TAKE THE STAGE, CAN YOU...

- ☐ Balance ethos, pathos, and logos rather than relying on one appeal?
- ☐ State every argument as a complete claim-warrant-evidence chain?
- ☐ Explain the warrant — why your evidence actually proves your claim?
- ☐ Rebut using 'they say / I say / because / so what,' restating fairly first?
- ☐ Name the ten common logical fallacies on sight?
- ☐ Identify the core burden of both proposition and opposition?
- ☐ Offer and decline points of information with intent?
- ☐ Deliver your speech within time, with a ten-second buffer?

13 Common Mistakes to Avoid

As you practise, watch for the errors that most often cost marks. Each maps directly to one of the six frameworks in this booklet.



Relying on emotion or volume instead of a balanced, reasoned case.



Stating a claim and evidence but forgetting the warrant that links them.



Ignoring the opponent's arguments instead of rebutting them directly.



Falling into logical fallacies — or failing to name the opponent's.



Losing composure under questioning instead of pausing and redirecting.

14 Glossary

Term	Definition
Ethos	Persuasion through the speaker's credibility and character.
Pathos	Persuasion through emotion.
Logos	Persuasion through logic and reason.
Claim	The position or conclusion you are arguing for.
Warrant	The reasoning that links evidence to a claim.
Evidence	The facts, data, or examples that support a claim.
Rebuttal	A direct response that answers an opponent's argument.
Refutation	The act of proving an opponent's argument wrong.
Clash	The direct disagreement between the two sides on a point.
Nyaya	India's classical school of logic and reasoning.

14 Glossary

Term	Definition
Syllogism	A structured logical argument moving from premises to a conclusion.
Proposition	The side arguing in favour of the motion.
Opposition	The side arguing against the motion.
Point of Information	A brief interjection offered during an opponent's speech.
Motion	The statement being debated (e.g., 'This house would...').
Ad Hominem	A fallacy attacking the person rather than the argument.
Straw Man	A fallacy that distorts an argument to attack it more easily.
False Dilemma	A fallacy claiming only two options exist when more do.
Slippery Slope	A fallacy claiming one step must inevitably lead to an extreme,
Appeal to Authority	A fallacy citing an expert's opinion as proof, even outside their area of
Burden of Proof	The obligation to prove one's own claim.
Rebuttal Speech	The portion of a debate dedicated to answering the other side.