The final speech on each side of the debate is called a *whip speech*. Speakers giving whip speeches incur distinct expectations and limitations, different from speakers giving any of the other speeches in the debate. The fact that these expectations and limitations exist does not imply only one way to give a successful whip speech; many such ways exist, but certain specific expectations for this kind of speech still remain.

**Overview of Whip Speeches**

The main purpose of a whip speech is to summarize the debate that has just occurred in a manner that shows why the arguments on the whip speaker’s side of the debate should prevail. Just as an individual persuasive speech should have a conclusion that emphasizes the most important elements of the speech, the Whip speech should emphasize the most important arguments that have been made by the previous three speakers on his or her side. The most effective methods of summarizing the debate will make direct comparisons between the two sides of the debate rather than focusing solely on what was said by only one side.

Some differences exist between what is expected in a Government Whip speech and in an Opposition Whip speech. Entirely new arguments are strongly discouraged in the Opposition Whip speech, because allowing a new argument that the other side would have no opportunity to refute would be unfair. In contrast, new arguments are permitted in the Government Whip speech, although, presenting new arguments in this speech is strongly discouraged because these arguments would be better presented in the Member of Government speech, when both sides will have time to discuss them. So, the persuasiveness of new arguments in the Government Whip speech may be discounted to some degree. The
Government Whip also has the very important job of refuting any new arguments that have been presented by the Member of Opposition, because the Government Whip is the only speaker with the opportunity to do that. Failure to do so may be considered a major flaw in a Government Whip speech; assuming that new arguments that need to be refuted were presented in the Member of Opposition speech. The characteristics of good refutation will be covered elsewhere and will not be discussed here, but a generally agreed upon idea is that the rebuttal portion of the Government Whip speech should come first and should be brief. Of course, the Opposition Whip speaker has the option of refuting the Member of Government’s extension argument, but this obligation is not as important because the Opposition Whip speaker can fold that refutation into his or her summary.

The most important part of any good Whip speech is the summary. The three primary goals of the summary are: (1) to provide an honest and accurate comparison of the two sides of the debate; (2) to demonstrate the superiority of the Whip speaker’s position in the debate; and, (3) to highlight the importance of contributions made by the Whip speaker’s team. Accomplishing those three goals and finding the right balance between them can be a challenge, but a good Whip speaker should never lose sight of the fact that the overarching goal is to give a persuasive speech, a speech that convinces the audience that the Whip speaker’s side of the debate is more likely to be right. A strong summary is a means to that larger goal.

Obviously, certain tensions exist among these goals. If the Whip speaker’s side is clearly losing the debate, then an entirely honest and accurate summary would probably not do a good job of demonstrating the superiority of the closing team’s position. Similarly, if the Whip speaker’s team contributed very little, then a perfectly accurate summary will not emphasize the importance of that team’s contribution to the debate. But, in the end, honesty and accuracy need to be the primary guides in summarizing the debate, because a debater will gain very little by making assertions that are dishonest or inaccurate. Judges will almost certainly recognize when a debater is not being honest and accurate, and will look upon the Whip speaker very unfavorably because of it.

Distinguishing between honesty and accuracy on the one hand, and impartiality on the other hand can largely resolve the apparent tensions. Judges and audiences expect that the Whip’s interpretation of the debate will be biased toward that debater’s side of the debate, and as long as the Whip speaker is not saying anything false, he or she can safely summarize the debate by emphasizing the aspects of the debate that favored the Whip speaker’s side in the debate. Summarizing the debate in such a manner is not impartial, but is still honest and accurate. Things are somewhat more complicated when the Whip tries to decide how to best emphasize his or her team’s contribution to the debate if that contribution was not actually as significant as what was offered by the opening team on the Whip’s side. In this case, the most accurate thing to do is to offer a summary that highlights the arguments from the opening team, because by being obviously inaccurate, even a good Whip speaker will not fool the judges into thinking the contributions of the closing team were more important than they were. This may not help the closing team place above the opening team on their side (which they probably do not deserve), but they may end up in second place. In contrast,
Summarizing the debate in “Whip” speeches

trying to claim that they added more than they did, in addition to being ethically dubious, may very well put that team into an even lower ranking.

Before moving into the details of how to create a good summary, this chapter will consider the reasons why whip speeches are particularly difficult. A good Whip speaker needs to say something new, without saying anything new. He or she needs to say something new because any speech that merely repeats what the audience has already heard from another speaker would not be engaging or persuasive. The Whip speaker must not say anything new because, as described above, the strong expectation is that the final speaker should not add new arguments. This is the paradox of Whip speeches. Understanding how to navigate this paradox is the key to giving good Whip speeches. Excellent Whip speakers need to contribute something that is novel and important to the debate without violating the expectation against presenting new arguments. This is what successful summaries do.

The Government and Opposition whip speeches serve a similar purpose, but they are not entirely the same. The main function of both speeches is to present the audience with a way to look back at the debate that compels the audience to believe that one side is correct and the other is mistaken, and to do this in a manner that is both innovative and illuminating. But, because the Government Whip speaker is the only debater with an opportunity to refute the new arguments (i.e., extension material) presented by the Closing Opposition Team, the Government Whip speaker has a special obligation to refute any of these arguments that are worthy of refutation. In contrast, the Member of Government’s extension argument presumably will have been addressed by the Member of Opposition. So the Opposition Whip speaker has no symmetrical obligation to engage in this kind of refutation. The other significant difference between the two Whip speeches is that new lines of argument by the Opposition Whip are very likely to be entirely ignored by judges, while new lines of argument by the Government Whip are more likely to be merely discounted to some degree. New lines of argumentation are discouraged in both speeches because it is rather late in the debate to be introducing wholly new arguments, which could have been better explored had they been presented in the Member speeches. New lines of argument by the Opposition Whip are particularly discouraged because no one on the Government side will have any opportunity to refute those arguments.

The diagram below summarizes the limitations and expectations of the Government and Opposition whip speakers:
## Limitations

- New lines of argument are discouraged and will not be weighed as heavily.

## Expectations

- Refute any worthy extension material by the Member of opposition
- Present a compelling summary framework (Refutation may be folded into the summary portion of the speech, but it needs to be clear that it exists.)

- New lines of argument are strongly discouraged and will likely be entirely ignored.
- Present a compelling summary framework (Of course, any summary framework should implicitly challenge the main arguments made by the other side.)

### Summarizing: What to Discuss

This text will discuss some general principles of what should be included in a summary, and will then describe three broad methods of summarizing. As with all elements of debate, no simple formula for how to construct a good summary exists. Multiple ways to execute a good summary are available to any creative debater. But, following these general rules will likely lead to a better and more persuasive speech.

Whatever method is used to summarize the debate should allow the Whip speaker to directly compare both sides of the debate. A major danger, especially for new debaters, is to focus only on the good things that their side of the debate is offering, and not to directly compare these things to arguments that the other side is offering. A Whip speech that engages in direct comparison will, to some extent, acknowledge that the other side has some reasonable concerns, and will weigh those concerns with the advantages the Whip’s side is offering. For example, imagine that the Government Team in a debate is advocating making all recreational drugs legal, while taxing and regulating their sales. The Government side will likely discuss issues like the increased tax revenue that will pay for beneficial government programs, the diminished influence of organized crime, and the increased government respect for individual autonomy. The Opposition side will likely discuss issues like the increased use of drugs that are dangerous to users and bystanders, the destruction of individuals’ lives and innocent family members’ lives, and the promotion of corporations likely to be linked to organized crime. Presumably, the debate would also have been filled with a variety of objections to these arguments and responses to those objections. In that example, a good summary might compare the value of increased government respect for autonomy with the harm of more broken families due to drug use, or compare the two sides’ views on how legalization would affect organized crime. The comparison may be about which values are more important (e.g., autonomy vs. family stability) or simply about what state of affairs is likely to occur (e.g., will organized crime grow or shrink?), but the point is
that the summary should place the visions of the two sides next to each other so that they can be easily compared.

Remember that one side does not need to win every point in order to be successful. Thus, the Whip speech can be an ideal time to admit to the audience that the other side does have one or more valid points about some issues in the debate. Still, the Whip speaker will want to avoid agreeing with the major arguments of the other side. Therefore, why might the Whip speaker want to grant the other side any points at all? Several reasons for such admissions are possible: (1) Agreeing takes much less time than trying to argue about every point; (2) if a particular side has not spent much time disputing an issue, agreeing can have the effect of trivializing the point in the minds of the audience; (3) most importantly, agreeing can sometimes significantly increase the Whip speaker’s ethos (i.e., credibility) as a speaker. In many situations, ethos is of tremendous value in a debate. One can think about the decision to accept an opponent’s argument in this way. If at least some good reasons did not exist on both sides of the motion, we wouldn’t be having the debate. Therefore, a debater cannot claim with much credibility that the other side has no good points. So, by willingly admitting that the other team has pointed out a real harm from taking his or her side, the Whip speaker is demonstrating that he or she is being genuinely rational and reasonable, and that the Whip speaker is *not* simply disagreeing with everything that the opponents say. When using this kind of strategy of agreeing with the best points of the opponent, the whip speaker may demonstrate that the argument being admitted is clearly outweighed by the benefits gained, and so the position of the Whip speaker’s side is still clearly superior.

The summary should not discuss everything in the debate that has been disputed, so the Whip speaker should identify which issue or issues will be discussed. Obviously, the Whip speaker will want to discuss those issues that are most important in the debate. The most important issues often are indicated by what the debaters have spent the most time talking about, however, the amount of time devoted to an issue is not always an indicator of what is actually most important. Asserting that something is an important issue means that the issue has the most relevance to which side of the debate an intelligent audience ought to believe. Thus, Whip speakers should generally not spend time discussing unimportant issues, except perhaps to very briefly point out why they are unimportant.

At the same time, Whip speakers should focus on discussing the issues in the debate that are advantageous to their side. In most cases, both sides will have issues favorable to their respective sides. Because the Whip speakers want to persuade the audience that their side is correct, they probably will want to spend more time discussing the issues that most clearly support their side. However, focusing only on the arguments supporting the whip’s side of the debate should not be done to the extreme that the whip speaker ignores important issues in the debate that are more supportive of the opposing side. If a whip speaker focused only on the issues supportive of his or her side, the audience would correctly perceive that that speaker was simply avoiding the difficulties facing their side, and would not be persuaded. Instead of ignoring those issues, the Whip speaker should *briefly* but clearly explain why they are either irrelevant, relatively unimportant (i.e., outweighed by the other considerations), or mistaken. Presumably, other debaters on the same side have already tried to respond in these ways, and the Whip speaker should use the best responses to very briefly
undermine the other side’s strongest arguments. Generally, good Whip speakers will spend most of their summary on issues that their side is winning, but will not ignore important issues just because their side is not prevailing on those issues.

In a summary, as in all cases of refutation, a debater should spend as little time as possible restating or explaining the other side’s arguments. Ideally, the Whip speaker will be able to refer to opponents’ arguments with just a quick word or two. The point here is that the Whip speaker should not spend valuable speaking time re-explaining (and so, reinforcing) their opponents’ arguments. Whip speakers will want to spend more time developing and explaining their own arguments. For example, even if each speaker on the other side spent three minutes talking about the injustice of capitalism because of the inevitable disparity between the rich and the poor, a Whip’s summary can refer to all of this argument as “injustice and inequality.” So, the Whip speaker might say something like “The opposition argued repeatedly that our plan would create unacceptable inequality, but they fail to appreciate the reality of modern economics; our economy is not a zero-sum game and we cannot possibly have both an efficient, prosperous society and complete equality.” Of course, the Whip speaker would then go on to explain this analysis more fully, but the point is that the speaker would not repeat the other side’s argumentation unless that speaker was going to show a specific flaw in their argument.

Perhaps the most important general goal of a summary is to analyze the debate from a higher perspective. Competitive debates can often be seen as a series of disputes over the validity and importance of a wide range of arguments and objections to arguments, put forward by the four teams in the debate. Individual debaters often are concerned with the tactical conflict among these arguments and objections, and often have a tendency to focus on the details of those arguments and lose sight of the larger strategic perspective of how all these smaller argument conflicts affect the overarching question (i.e., the motion being debated). Importantly, the judges in the debate are probably taking the larger strategic perspective during the entire debate, and that larger perspective is certainly the one that the judges will attempt to take when trying to decide which team prevails. So, the job of the summary section of the Whip speech is primarily to guide the judges into a “big picture” perspective that will be beneficial to the Whip’s side and team. In order to guide the adjudicators to the bigger perspective, the summary needs to avoid the small conflicts in the debate and, instead, step back to look at what was most important in deciding who is right about the motion being debated. The Whip speaker needs to give the judges a new lens though which they can examine about 45 minutes of debating and more easily make sense of what are the important issues in the debate. Essentially, the summary section of the speech needs to rationally focus the judges’ attention and simplify the inevitable confusion created by 45 minutes of intense debating. For this reason, some refer to summarizing as “crystalizing.” The idea is that the process of crystallization can transform a liquid solution of particles that are disorganized and opaque into a solid well-organized object that is “crystal clear.”
Summarizing: How to Organize

This section will discuss three common ways of constructing a Whip speech, ranging from simple and minimally effective to subtle and very effective. Although limitless methods to construct a summary exist, and although a great debater may offer an excellent summary that does not fall into any of the three categories, most coherent summaries fall into one of those three groups. This text will call the three methods: Repeating, Regrouping and Reframing.

The Repeating Method

The Repeating Method is common among newer debaters, but usually is not the most effective method. This method constructs a summary by first identifying those arguments in the debate that best support the Whip speaker’s side (and especially the closing team), and then building a summary around those arguments, trying to explain why they are the most important arguments in the debate. As with all the methods, the Repeating Method can be performed in a better or worse way. The summary will probably begin with an outline of the issues on which the Whip speaker will focus in the summary. Using the Repeating Method, the speaker picks out a few disputed issues from the previous speeches on which the Whip speaker can clearly prevail, and then highlights those in the summary, arguing the best things that his or her side has to say about these. Ideally, debaters using this method will also explain to the judges why these issues are the most important to the debate, but this often does not happen.

The advantage of this method is that it is fairly easy to use. Debaters can usually identify the arguments on which their side is prevailing, and then, all that they need to do is organize the summary by explaining why each of the issues supports their side and why they are the central, or most important issues, in the debate.

One problem is that the audience will probably think that they have heard all of this analysis before and the speech will therefore be rather uninteresting. The Whip speaker could make a legitimate contribution by pushing the analysis of these issues even deeper, which would add something new of interest. However, doing so is both difficult at this point in most debates and moves the speech deeper into details at a time when the audience really wants help in getting a better sense of the big picture.

Being amusing and clever is almost always a good way to improve a speaker’s persuasiveness, and the Repeating Method can be marginally improved by creating an argument for the choice of issues to crystallize, so that the Whip speaker does not appear to be simply choosing the issues that the closing team is winning. The idea is to pick some amusing theme around which to build the summary. For example, a Whip speaker arguing against legalizing recreational drugs might say:

“I will summarize this debate by focusing on five key issues, represented by the letters D, R, U, G, S. ‘D’ for the danger to individuals. ‘R’ for the rights that people don’t have to do whatever
they want. ‘U’ for the underworld of criminals that this will actually promote. ‘G’ for the government bureaucracy that will be created. And, ‘S’ for the social fabric that will be shredded by this disastrous policy.

Countless clever ways exist to introduce the issues used to summarize the debate, using common cultural references, jokes, or anything vaguely amusing. Ultimately, these tactics do not make the relatively weak Repeating Method good, but at least, the Whip speaker will seem clever, and that cleverness may help a bit. Overall, if done well, the Repeating Method can be minimally effective and will be much better than a rambling Whip speech with little coherent organization. But, compared to the other methods discussed below, using this method will significantly limit the effectiveness of a Whip speech.

The Regrouping Method

The second method of summarizing is the Regrouping Method, sometimes called the disjunctive method of creating a summary. The word “disjunction” is just a fancy way of saying “or,” The most common form of disjunctive summary is usually called a stakeholder analysis, but other approaches are structurally similar. This section will first discuss stakeholder analysis, and then some less common approaches to the Regrouping Method.

Debaters offering a stakeholder analysis will first clarify that those people affected by the Government Team’s interpretation of the motion are either in group #1, OR group #2, OR group #3, etc. They are all the stakeholders, all the people who are affected, and whose interests need to be considered in the debate. After identifying these groups, the Whip speaker goes on to explain how his or her side of the debate benefits each of these groups more than the opposing side. If everyone benefits more, then the audience will clearly conclude that the position maintained by the Whip speaker is better. Once again, consider the example of the drug legalization debate. The stakeholders in this debate could be drug users, families of drug users, and the rest of society. But note that stakeholders always can be divided using a variety of different methods. Another division could be current drug users, those who would start using drugs if they were legal, people who produce and distribute drugs, and law enforcement workers. Different ways of dividing groups of people will make supporting the speaker’s side of the debate easier or harder, so the Whip speaker needs to think carefully about how to classify the groups that will be identified as stakeholders, considering how those groups are made better off by his or her side in the debate. A summary using the Regrouping Method should be based on groups that appear natural, unbiased and significant, rather than contrived to fit a debater’s particular agenda. Also, the groups that are used should not omit any important stakeholders, or the summary will appear very incomplete and unpersuasive.

The fundamental idea behind the Regrouping Method is to consider the set of important arguments that have been made in the debate and regroup them according to the different perspectives to which they are relevant. In a stakeholder analysis, those perspectives are defined by different groups of people affected by the debate, but perspectives can be divided
in other ways, as well. A different approach is to take the perspectives of various academic disciplines, such as economics, politics, ethics, sociology, feminism, religion, etc. A Whip speaker does not need to take all of these perspectives, just the ones that seem most relevant to the discussion at hand.

Another Regrouping Method can be used when the debate clearly surrounds issues in one particular discipline, such as moral philosophy, for instance. Imagine a debate on the motion, “This house believes that grown children have a moral obligation to care for their aging parents.” In this case, a Whip speaker might start her summary by saying,

“Three primary types of moral theories have been debated for centuries and although we are certainly not going to decide which is correct today, I will demonstrate that all three of these theoretical perspectives support my side’s position concerning a moral obligation to care for one’s parents. Since all these perspectives agree that my side is correct, the right answer in this debate is obvious.”

A similar approach can be taken using competing theories in politics, economics, etc.

As stated earlier, the goal of the summary is not to add new arguments, but to re-examine the arguments that have already been made in a way that highlights what is best for the whip speaker’s side and team. By regrouping the various arguments that have been made using the lenses of a new set of perspectives, the Whip speaker is adding something important to the debate without making any new arguments. The Regrouping Method is not difficult to do well, and it can be done quite effectively, helping the Whip speech make a major contribution to the debate.

Reframing Method

The third method of summarizing is the Reframing Method. This method is generally considered to be the most powerful and effective method of summarizing a debate. The debater using this method reframes the issues in the debate by asking and then answering certain questions that are fundamental to the original motion being debated. The goal is to present the audience with a set of questions that are obviously central to settling the debate, and to then show how the arguments that have already been made actually provide answers to those questions that support the Whip speaker’s side of the debate. Learning to identify the best fundamental questions around which to build a summary is not simple, but when it is done well, it provides the audience with both a sense of closure on the debate and an impression that the side represented by the Whip speaker has obviously prevailed.

Even though it is the best method, the Reframing Method is not the only one being taught, because it is the most difficult to learn to do well. No simple formula exists to identify and construct the most appropriate fundamental questions for a given debate. At the same time, the ability to do that is important far beyond constructing good summaries in Whip speeches. Being able to see the fundamental questions behind an issue is important for every person in
a debate and is important to becoming a good critical thinker for life outside of competitive debates. So, what follows includes some examples and some hints about how to construct fundamental questions, but much of it will require genuine insight and practice over time.

So, what are fundamental questions? As stated above, they are the most basic questions that need to be answered in order to come to a rational conclusion about the motion being debated. Imagine that the motion being debated is, “This house believes that the U.S. should provide airstrikes in support of the Syrian rebels.” In that case, the fundamental questions might be:

(1) Does the U.S. have the right to militarily intervene in Syria?
(2) Will U.S. airstrikes in Syria make the situation better?

Answering both of those questions is clearly important to deciding which side of the debate is best. These two questions could provide a solid framework for a summary, looking at each of the important arguments that had been made in the debate and re-examining them in terms of how they influence the answer to those two questions. But, a good Whip speaker should realize that these are not the only fundamental questions that could be used. Indeed, Whip speakers need to choose a set of fundamental questions that emphasizes the strengths of their arguments (just as when using the Regrouping Method, the debater needs to choose the stakeholder groups carefully), while still ensuring that the questions appear to be fundamental, neutral, and fair. Indeed, the fundamental questions given in the example above are so neutral and fair that they may not be perfect for either side of the debate to use.

The most effective Whip speakers will ask a set of fundamental questions that seem entirely neutral and that maximize the likelihood that the audience will be persuaded that the speaker’s side of the debate is right. So, using this same example about Syria, the Opposition Whip might build a summary around these fundamental questions:

1) Will the world be better off if the rebels succeed in overthrowing the current government?
2) Are airstrikes the best method to facilitate the overthrow of the current government?
3) Is the U.S. the right agent to be carrying out these airstrikes?

They provide three unique opportunities to convince the audience that the opposition is right, any one of which is sufficient to persuade the audience and the adjudicators. First, the world may be worse off if rebels overthrow the government because they may set up a repressive regime or they may not be successful in setting up any stable government at all, in which case, the air strikes will just make things worse. Second, even if a rebel overthrow would make things better, other methods of overthrow might accomplish the same goal more effectively. For example, either a negotiated settlement (which might be thwarted by airstrikes) or a military victory without foreign intervention might be a path superior to rebel overthrow. Third, even if a rebel overthrow would make things better and the best way to achieve that is through air strikes, the U.S. military may not be the right actor to perform
those airstrikes, perhaps because U.S. intervention will inflame tensions much more than
strikes by NATO or other Middle-eastern states.

The strategy in this summary framework is to ask fundamental questions in a way that
highlights that, if the Whip speaker’s side is right about any one of the answers to those
questions, then that side is right about the whole debate. Obviously, this is a more powerful
way to structure the fundamental summary questions than to ask a set of questions that
require answers to all of them to convince the audience, but that is not always possible. In
debates about policy (which are the most common debates), because the Opposition Team
just needs to show that the Government’s plan has some major flaw, they will more likely be
able to set up a series of questions so that getting the audience to agree about any one of them
will persuade them that their side is correct.

Of course, the Government Whip can devise other ways to construct fundamental questions
that are more likely to persuade people to the Government side of the debate. The
Government Whip’s summary could be built around these questions:

(1) What are the goals of U.S. foreign policy in the middle-east?
(2) Will the current Syrian government change into a partner for peace without
external military intervention?
(3) Will limited airstrikes increase the likelihood that the government of Syria
will transform into a partner for regional peace?
(4) Will anyone else intervene with sufficient effectiveness if the U.S. does not?

Those questions highlight the features of the situation that suggest that U.S. intervention is
appropriate, such as the longstanding U.S. interest in regional peace, the fact that other agents
are unlikely to intervene and be effective, and emphasizing that the Government side of the
debate does not need to guarantee success, just increase the probability of success so that the
likely benefits will outweigh the likely harms.

Regardless of which fundamental questions the Whip speaker uses, the question should be
answered in such a way that the audience clearly sees the process of the Whip speaker
directly comparing the arguments relevant to that question that were offered by each side. An
effective summary needs to show why the arguments already made (when properly
understood in the context of these fundamental questions) are enough to win the debate.
Whip speakers understandably should emphasize the arguments made by their teammate in
the Member speech. Doing so can help their team place well in the debate. That being said,
providing a summary that ignores strong arguments on the Whip speaker’s side just because
they were made by the opening team is unwise. The more persuasive a Whip speech is, the
more credit the Whip speaker’s team will get, even if some of the arguments emphasized in
the summary were arguments made by the Opening team.

In most cases, although the earlier debaters may have touched upon the fundamental
questions, those questions have not been stated quite so clearly and directly, and have not
been answered in a manner that seems to settle the entire matter so completely. The
Reframing Method starts by identifying what the important questions really are, and then
explaining why the correct answers (as provided in the Whip speaker’s side in the debate) demonstrate that his or her side is superior. Thus, the Reframing Method stands in direct contrast to the Repeating Method, which starts by identifying arguments that the Whip’s team is winning, and only then tries to explain why these arguments are the most important.

Because debate motions are so diverse, appropriate fundamental questions are also quite diverse. However, most debate motions tend to be about public policy issues, and there are some common fundamental questions that can often be asked that either are appropriate as they are stated here, or, are likely to point you toward the fundamental questions that would be appropriate in a particular debate.

Regardless of which side of the debate you are on, the following questions are often relevant:
• Will this plan achieve its goal (eliminate or significantly reduce the harm in the SQ)?
• What is the purpose of … (whatever kind of thing is relevant to the plan)?
  o What is the purpose of government?
  o What is the function of public education?
  o What is the proper goal of doctors?
  o What are the legitimate ends of foreign intervention?
  o What is the purpose of punishing criminals?
• How do we determine when an action of this type (e.g., paternalism) is warranted?
• What will happen if we do nothing?
• Who is the best actor to address this problem?
• Which are greater, the advantages of the plan or the disadvantages?

Some questions tend to be more appropriate when defending the Government’s position, because they are typically proposing a change in the status quo. Some examples of those questions are:
• Are we obliged to take action?
• Is reducing harms important even if those harms can’t be completely eliminated?
• Is causing some harm worthwhile given a necessity to eliminate greater harm?

Similarly, some questions tend to be more appropriate when arguing for the Opposition, such as:
• Do better ways exist to achieve this goal?
• Should a different method be used?
• Does the plan violate any important rights?

The questions listed above can be useful as a starting point for those unfamiliar with how to formulate fundamental questions, but most of the questions would sound much too generic if they were used verbatim because Whip speakers offer fundamental questions in a context where at least six people have just spoken on a particular topic and have presumably said some interesting things. Ideally, at least some of the fundamental questions will be pertinent to the arguments that have been made.

Of course, there are exceptions. Some fundamental questions will come up regularly, such as the question, “What is the purpose of government?” Because debates are often about what
the government should do, and because controversial positions about that often depend on different theories of what government should do, the question is a very common fundamental one in debates. So, you should be familiar with the range of plausible answers to that question, and with the strengths and weaknesses of the following answers:

- Government exists to maintain order and security.
- Government exists to protect the rights of individuals.
- Government exists to improve the lives of its citizens.
- Government exists to give expression to the will of the citizens.
- Government exists to fulfill the collective obligations of the populace (to themselves and to others).

Of course, other common questions exist and excellent debaters will want to know or learn some of the common answers to them. As debaters become more experienced, those questions and answers will become familiar.

The Response Trap

One common error in Whip speeches deserves careful attention. That error involves using too much of the Whip speech to respond to the previous speaker instead of focusing on one’s own summary framework. When a whip speech does not provide enough time for the summary framework, the audience gets no sense of closure about the case for which the Whip speaker is arguing. Because the Government Whip speaker needs to respond to the arguments presented by the Member of Opposition, while the Opposition Whip has no similar obligation, one might assume that the Government Whip speaker is more likely to fall into the response trap, but such is not the case. Certainly, some Government Whip speakers spend too much time on rebuttal and do not emphasize their summary framework enough, but most of the time, they move through the rebuttal in a reasonable amount of time and then have time to present their summary framework.

The response trap is a bigger problem for the Opposition Whip speaker because, by directly responding to the arguments within Government Whip’s framework, the Opposition Whip distracts the audience from the Opposition’s own summary framework. Thus, the trap for the Opposition Whip speaker is not actually about wasting time, it is about validating the framework used by the Government side, which is typically structured so as to be favorable to their conclusion. If the Opposition Whip tries to directly refute the arguments made by the Government Whip, then the Opposition Whip helps to ensure that the debate is happening within the Government’s chosen framework. Having the debate occur within the Government’s framework is obviously not helpful for the Opposition.

Avoiding the response trap is about not wanting to have the debate on territory that has been set up by your opponents. Instead, a primary goal of the Opposition Whip should be to largely ignore the framework offered by the Government Whip, and offer a new summary framework that is sufficiently compelling so that the audience will prefer to think about the debate through that lens. Of course, if serious flaws exist with the government’s summary framework, then the Opposition Whip should probably begin by pointing out those flaws. For example, if the Government Whip speaker used the regrouping method, but entirely left out a
large group of people who were significantly harmed by the government’s plan, the Opposition Whip should attack the framework itself. However, attacking the framework is different from arguing within the Government framework and should be very brief. Mainly, the Opposition Whip’s goal should be to change how the audience looks at the debate altogether. That goal may be best accomplished by spending all or almost all of the time within the Opposition’s summary framework.

One might ask, “Where does rebuttal occur in a whip speech? The answer is that rebuttal needs to be woven into the summary framework. The summary framework is just that, a framework, and an outline within which arguments need to be made. Refutation in Whip speeches should generally involve direct comparisons between what the two sides are offering. Consider an example where the Government has proposed the legalization of recreational drugs. The Government side has argued that legalizing drugs will reduce the number of drug addicts because people will no longer be attracted to drugs as a forbidden fruit, public use will discourage people from using drugs excessively, and better addiction treatment centers will be provided under their plan. The Opposition side has argued that addiction will increase because of a decreased stigma regarding drug use, an increase in availability without risk of jail, and a decrease in cost. Of course, both sides have offered other arguments, as well. Now, finally, imagine that the Government Whip speaker offers the follow reframing summary framework:

(1) Do people have a fundamental liberty right to use drugs if no one else is harmed?
(2) Would our society be better off if drugs were legal?
(3) When is it acceptable for governments to restrict individual liberty?

The question is, where in the Government Whip speech should the speaker refute the Opposition’s arguments about why addiction will increase? If some of those arguments were brand new in the Member of Opposition speech, then they might be appropriately addressed at the start of the Whip speech, before getting to the summary framework. However, refuting all of these ideas within the context of the second fundamental question might be a better idea. And, spending minimal time on this dispute would make more sense, even if previous speakers spent a lot of time talking about it. The question about whether the number of addicts is going to increase is clearly a part of the larger question of whether legalizing drugs will be good for society, but it is only one part of that question. Other questions involve economics, incarceration, foreign relations, organized crime, etc. So, imagine a smart Government Whip speaker in that circumstance saying, “We think that addiction rates will go down for all the reasons we have given, which make more sense than their reasons because… But, even if we are wrong, and addiction will increase, the larger and more important point is that, as we have asserted, so many other benefits will accrue to society. Therefore, the answer to our second fundamental question is that society would be better off after legalization.”

The point of this long example is to demonstrate how direct comparison and refutation fit within a summary framework. Note that, even if the Second Government Team believed that they were unlikely to win the argument that addiction would decrease under the government plan, their choice of a framework made the loss of this argument largely irrelevant (even if previous speakers had spent lots of time focusing on that argument), just by refocusing the attention of the audience using the right lens.
Summary

The main function of a Whip speech is to convince the audience to look at the big picture (the entire debate) through a certain lens that is favorable to the Whip speaker’s side. That lens should focus the audience’s attention on the strengths of the arguments supported by the whip speaker. The lens may also emphasize vocabulary that is beneficial to the Whip speaker’s position. For example, those who are in favor of abortion rights would rather label their opponents as “anti-choice” rather than “pro-life” in order to focus on the value of choice rather than life. Thus, the function of a good Whip speech is to convince the audience to look at a confusing set of arguments in a way that simplifies the task of deciding which set of arguments is best, and to do so in a manner most favorable to your side. Of course, while other details need to be kept in mind, the primary thing to remember and master is to create a compelling framework in the Whip speech.

Several different approaches to creating a summary framework are available. Three of them are discussed above: (1) the repeating method, (2) the regrouping method, and (3) the reframing method. The first method is not recommended if you want a strong Whip speech. The second and third methods can both be very effective, but the reframing method is the most effective if it is done well. Reframing is also the most difficult because it is harder to see what the fundamental questions are, but knowing how to formulate the fundamental questions well is important to do well in all positions in the debate.

Finally, remember that the Whip speaker has about an hour between the beginning of preparation time and the Whip speech. In that time, the Whip speaker has three main tasks. First, the Whip speaker must help his or her partner create extension material: new lines of argument, deeper analysis of existing arguments, rebuttal arguments, new examples and analogies, etc. Second, the Whip speaker must think of good points of information to ask that seriously challenge what the speakers are saying. Third, the Whip speaker needs to focus on how to frame the debate. As the arguments in the debate unfold and get pushed deeper, the Whip speaker must continue to think about the best way to summarize the debate. In the end, the performance of the Whip speaker will be judged based on how persuasive the Whip speech is. A persuasive speech is the best way for a Whip speaker to help the team, so listening to all of the previous speeches is important. However, a Whip speaker need not be obsessed with getting every idea down in notes. A good Whip speaker should take the time necessary to create an effective framework that weaves together all of the most important issues discussed during the debate. Once an appropriate framework is created, the placement of important arguments in the debate within that framework becomes fairly obvious, even if some arguments come up in more than one place.
Terms and Concepts From Chapter 9

Check your memory and comprehension by describing or defining these key terms and concepts:

- Whip speaker
- Extension
- Summary
- The paradox of Whip speeches
- Direct comparison
- Crystalize
- Repeating method
- Regrouping method
- Reframing method
- Fundamental questions
- Response trap

Discussion Questions For Chapter 9

- What are the primary goals of a Whip speech?
- How much refutation should be included in a Whip speech?
- What kinds of new information should Whip speeches contain?
- How are Government and Opposition Whip speeches different from one another?
- How should one decide what issues to talk about in a Whip speech?

Exercises For Chapter 9

- Begin by choosing a debate motion. (Countless motions are available on-line.) Quickly write down the main arguments you would expect each side to make. Then, using the repeating method, construct a summary framework for one side that could crystalize the debate that you imagine might have happened about this topic. When you are happy with that framework, do the same thing for the other side of this topic.

- Repeat the above exercise, but use the regrouping method.

- Repeat the above exercise, but use the reframing method.