Debate: What are some questions that   
you can always ask in cross-examination?

Seth Brake:

January 9, 2015

Always is probably too broad to apply to questions, but here are some staples that I would always have in my arsenal:

**1. Request for Support:**

*How do you know? How did you come to that conclusion? What evidence is there to support this point?*

The most fundamental task in debating is to identify the logical pattern of your opponents contentions and then to attack the logical connections, but sometimes the only way to lay such logic bare is to press for your interlocutor to just explain it to you.

**2. Establish Definition:**

*What do you mean by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_? What does \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ mean? May I ask what definition you use for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?*

Sometimes the flaw in logic precedes the logical structure and begins with a flawed definition. These types of debate require that good cross examination questions to set up the refutation because otherwise it devolves into a mess of confused definitions.

**3. Question Assumptions:**

*What happens if we get this wrong? What if <premise that you can disprove> proves to be incorrect?*

Cross examination allows you to built common understanding about what should happen for the remainder of the round. If there is a point that would reasonably derail your opponent's case, it can help to establish agreement that this point is worth contesting so that it is hard for them to shift ground later and claim that the point is unimportant.

**4. Find Common Ground**

*Can we agree that <point necessary for future argument>?*

No one is ever fully prepared for a debate round. You will not be able to prove every little facet of a point, and therefore it is essential that you be able to build cross examination answers in lieu of evidence. If there is an element to your next argument that is reasonable enough that everyone should agree to it, it is helpful to set it up in the cross examination.

This is the most important question in your cross examination arsenal.

Example: Lets say I want to show that a tax on a good would hurt low-income families. I would ask "Is this good primarily consumed by upper or lower income families?" or if I expected them to be dodgy I might ask the infinitely more annoying "Can we agree that this good is consumed primarily by low income families?"

Retrieved from https://www.quora.com/Debate-What-are-some-questions-you-can-always-ask-in-cross-examination