DT101 Module 5

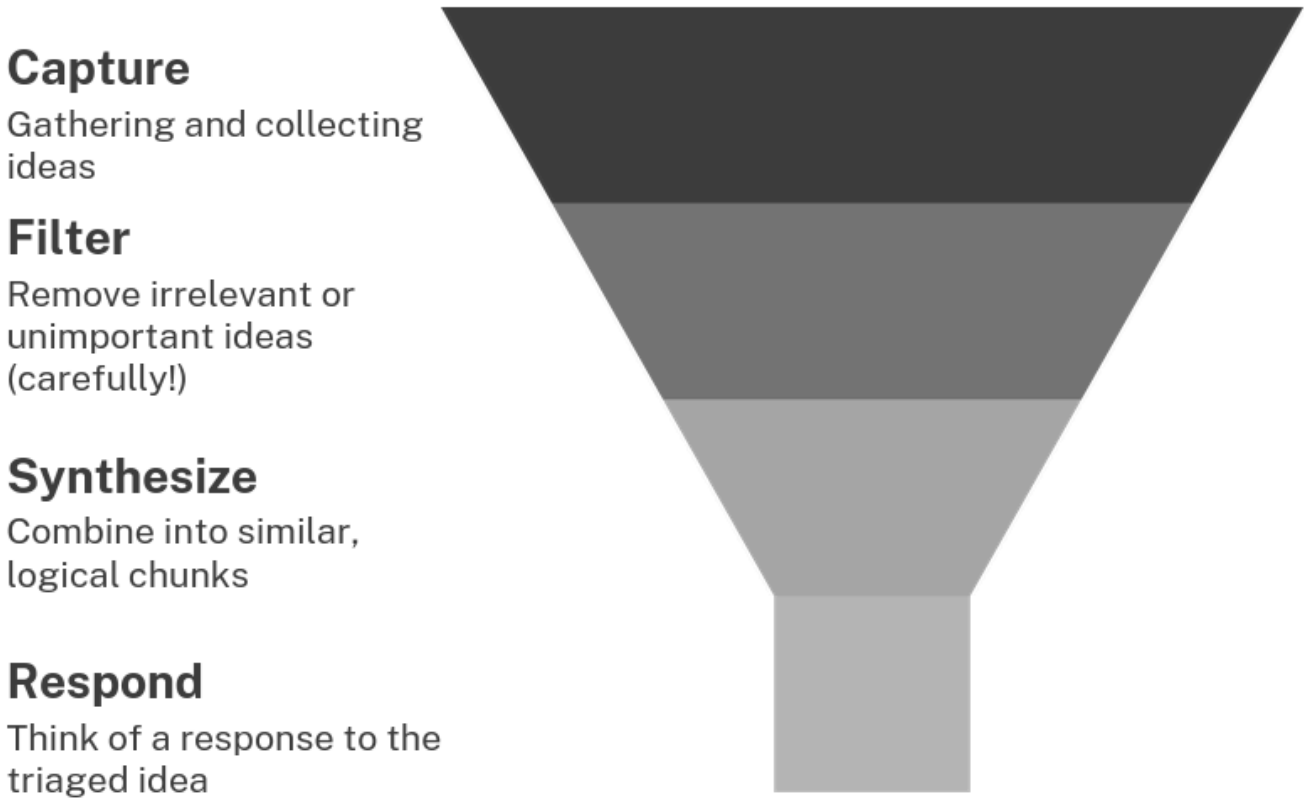
Handout: Rebuttals and Refutations

Engagement

What differentiates debating formats from speeches, public speaking and declamation formats is engagement. Simply put, engagement is responding to other people's ideas and arguments. Debate topics are specifically designed such that both sides have expected, understandable arguments to give. Your job as a debater is not to sweep the other side under the rug, but genuinely acknowledge and respond to their side.

Triage

Triage is the process of selecting arguments and ideas to respond to. Debates have a tendency to branch out and introduce more ideas as more speakers get a chance to add their thoughts. When you have to respond to arguments, you need to triage them effectively, ensuring, that you address the important issues while staying with in your time limits.



Following the process in the above given funnel shows you how to triage well.

Steelmanning

Steelmanning is responding to the most charitable version of the opponent's argument. The main goal here is not to respond to the opponents argument as presented, but rather use the strongest interpretation of the idea you can and respond to that instead.

Steelmanning seems harder at first, but is the habit that separates debaters who win worlds and the ones who plateau very quickly.