QUALITIES MOST IMPORTANT IN A DEBATE

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There are some qualities most important in a debate. Among them are the following:

A. Directness

To be direct in one’s speech demands that the speaker always look straight into the eyes of his audience and that he should avoid looking up at the ceiling, down at the door, or out in the haze over the heads of his audience. If the speaker’s eyes do not avoid the audience, he not only inspires respect and confidence but it also enables him to judge the effect of his words and to adjust his remarks to meet all the changing moods of his listeners. The manner of speaking gives the audience the feeling of being talked to, of being contacted. In short, it establishes rapport.

B. Earnestness

Directness may be a great asset to a speaker and when including earnestness it becomes irresistible. The debater, therefore, should also cultivate the quality of earnestness. This does not mean that he should shout and below at his audience, or that he should saw the air with his gesticulations. But it does mean that he should utter each thought as if it were for the moment, at the same time, he should utter it with so much reserved force that will appear to create the impression of being able to say it with a thousand times more emphasis if he only would. Real enthusiasm for one’s thought and reserved force in expressing it are qualities that make for earnestness in speech.
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