HOW TO ARGUE EFFECTIVELY

I argue very well. Ask any of my remaining friends. I can win an argument on any topic, against any opponent. People know this and steer clear of me at parties. Often, as a sign of their great respect, they don’t even invite me. You too can win arguments. Simply follow these rules:

Drink Liquor
Suppose you are at a party and some hotshot intellectual is expounding on the economy of Peru, a subject you know nothing about. If you’re drinking some health-tonic drink like grapefruit juice, you’ll hang back, afraid to display your ignorance, while the hotshot enthralls your date. But if you drink several large martinis, you’ll discover you have strong views about the Peruvian economy. You’ll be a wealth of information. You’ll argue forcefully, offering keen insights and possibly upsetting furniture. People will be impressed. Some may leave the room.

Make Things Up
Suppose, in the Peruvian economy argument, you are trying to prove that Peruvians are underpaid, a position you base solely on the fact that you are underpaid, and you’ll be doomed if you’re going to let a bunch of Peruvians get there off. Don’t say: “I think Peruvians are underpaid.” Say instead: “The average Peruvian’s salary in 1981 dollars adjusted for the revised tax base is $1,452.81 per annum, which is $836.07 below the mean gross poverty level.”

NOTE: Always make up exact figures. If an opponent asks you where you got your information, make that up too. Say: “This information comes from Dr. Havel T. Moon’s study for the Buford Commission published on May 9, 1982. Didn’t you read it?” Say this in the same tone of voice you would use to say: “You left your soiled underwear in my bathroom.”

Use Meanings But Wrighty-Sounding Words and Phrases
Memorize this list:

- Let me put it this way
- in terms of
- Vis-à-vis
- Per se
- As it were
- Qua
- So to speak

You should also memorize some Latin abbreviations such as “Q.E.D.” “e.g.” “i.e.” These are all short for “I speak Latin, and you don’t.” Here’s how to use these words and phrases. Suppose you want to say: “Peruvians would like to order appetizers more often, but they don’t have enough money.” You never win arguments talking like that. But you will win if you say: “Let me put it this way. In terms of appetizers vis-à-vis Peruvians qua Peruvians, they would like to order them more often, so to speak, but they do not have enough money per se, as it were. Q.E.D.” Only a fool would challenge that statement.

The Snappy and Irrelevant Comeback:
You need an arsenal of all-purpose irrelevant phrases to fire back at your opponents when they make valid points. The best are:

You’re begging the question.
You’re being defensive.
Don’t compare apples to oranges.
What are your parameters?
This last one is especially valuable. Nobody (other than engineers and policy wonks) has the vaguest idea what “parameters” means. Here’s how to use your comebacks:

You say: “Abraham Lincoln was a great man.”
Your opponent says: “Abraham Lincoln was a great man.”
You say: “Lincoln died in 1865.”
Your opponent says: “Abraham Lincoln died in 1865.”
You say: “Lincoln was a great man.”
Your opponent says: “Lincoln was a great man.”
You say: “Abraham Lincoln was a great man.”
Your opponent says: “Lincoln was a great man.”
You say: “You know what? Abraham Lincoln was a great man.”

Compare Your Opponent to Adolf Hitler
This is your heavy artillery, for when your opponent is obviously right and you are spectacularly wrong. Bring Hitler up subtly. Say, “That sounds suspiciously like something Hitler might say.” Or “You certainly do remind me of Adolf Hitler.”

So that’s it. You now know how to outargue anybody. Do not try to pull any of this on people who generally carry weapons.