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**"Make Better Arguments:  
Don't Make the  
Same Argument Everyone  
Else is Making"**



**HARVARD  
Kennedy  
School**

# Make Better Arguments!

- Real problem in commentary today: regurgitating same stuff as everyone else.
- Conventional wisdom born in Washington and New York...infects the arguments of everyone else.
- Laziness!
- If you are in the business of making arguments, BE ORIGINAL.



# Matt Lewis, The Daily Beast

- Matt K. Lewis is a Senior Columnist at The Daily Beast
- CNN political commentator
- Author of [\*Too Dumb to Fail\*](#).
- Matt makes some of the most original arguments in commentary today.
- He writes every single day!



# Tips for making better arguments

- Read a lot of other debaters.
  - Study but do not copy.
- Do not die on every hill.
  - Things that are hard to get back in this world: Time and Credibility.
- Ask yourself if the conventional wisdom is wrong.
  - Be not afraid to go in a different direction.



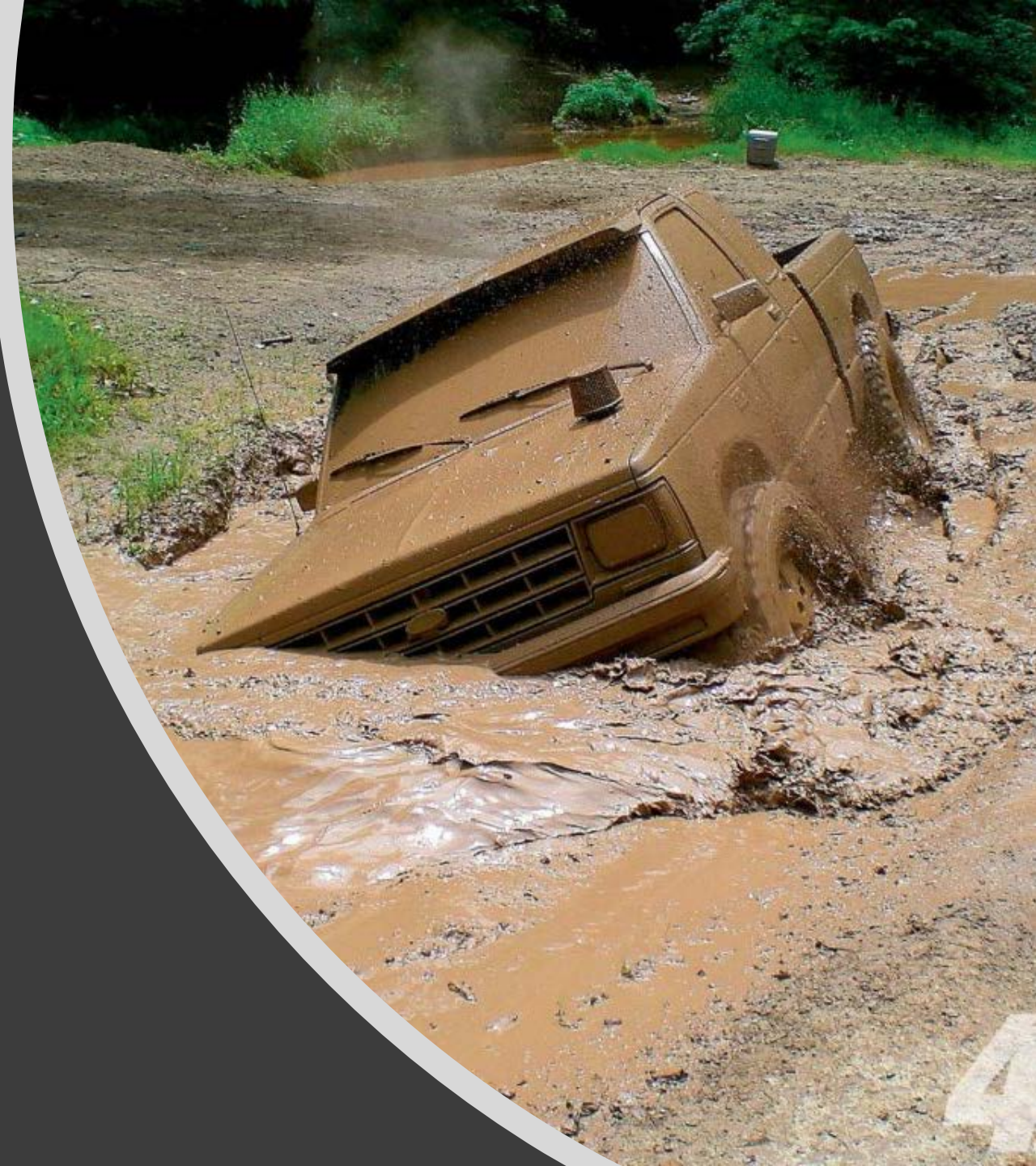


## Tips for Making Better Arguments

- Get clear on concepts.
  - What am I really trying to say?
  - Is everything I've written persuasive?
- Do not overstuff your writing.
  - Write. Relax. Review.
  - Fewer, better developed arguments.
- Remove words.
  - Prepositional phrases
  - Unnecessary adverbs
  - Filler words and phrases

# Tips for Making Better Arguments

- Do not overexplain.
  - Don't get bogged down in details that mean little to the debate.
- Simple words and simple sentences
  - Keep the \$10 words to a minimum.
  - You need quality arguments, not a quality thesaurus.
- Personality and experience
  - You know stuff. Don't be afraid to use it.



# Tips for Making Better Arguments

- Know Thy Self.
  - What does your experience tell you about this debate?
- Know Thy Enemy.
  - What is the opponent's best argument?
  - How will your argument be attacked, and how do you defeat it?
- A Thousand Battles, A Thousand Victories.

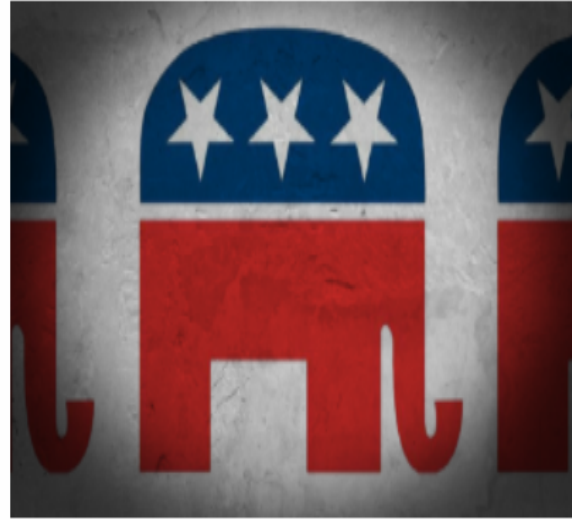


Know thy self, know thy enemy. A thousand battles, a thousand victories.

(Sun Tzu)

# Tips for Making Better Arguments

- Know your audience to improve your argument.
  - What will be persuasive to this group?
- Find persuasive evidence.
- Common-sense makes sense.



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**Related Article:** This is the latest weapon for a know-nothing GOP

**The census outrage:** This week, Democrats were in a full-scale meltdown because the Trump administration decided to add a citizenship question to the 2020 census form. Democratic attorneys general readied their lawsuits. Liberal talking heads took to the airwaves. Democratic members of Congress wrote the most vitriolic statements their trembling hands could muster.

Meanwhile, most of America said: "What's the big deal?" There is nothing remotely illogical or illegal about the United States figuring out how many citizens it has, as it seems like a common-sense thing to know. Our government can tell us how many [zoologists](#) are employed in each state but can't count the total number of citizens? What a crock, and the associated outrage reminded me of Nancy Pelosi's unhinged claim of a looming "apocalypse" should the Republicans cut taxes.





Discussion on  
Making Better  
Arguments

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