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How to Talk to a Global Warming Skeptic

By an eHow Contributor

The climate crisis has evoked an ever-polarizing argument about where this planet is headed and what we as human beings can do about it. A global warming skeptic isn't necessarily someone who refutes the facts of global warming, but challenges the conclusion that serious steps need to be taken to avert disaster. If you believe that global warming is a serious problem, it pays to keep your cool when you talk to a skeptic.

Difficulty: Moderately Easy

Instructions

- 1 Respect the conviction of the skeptic, even if you disagree with him. The implications of global warming are terrifying, and well-funded misinformation can convince many people that things aren't so bad. A skeptic on the subject probably isn't ignorant and usually has good intentions. It may simply be easier to believe that global warming presents no threat than to confront a harsh (and ultimately apocalyptic) truth. Understand this reaction and treat the individual with respect: it will make him more willing to listen to your arguments.
- 2 Cite your facts calmly, with the weight of evidence to back them up. Many global warming skeptics depend on nebulous sources for their information: "leading organizations" or "well-known theorists" rather than concrete names. Don't fall into the same trap. Research the facts, find out who supports them (along with their credentials and level of expertise in the field), and deploy them rationally and logically.
- 3 Research the arguments of the other side. Most global warming skeptics use three basic arguments to support their beliefs: climate change is a natural phenomenon; the evidence is inconclusive; and addressing the problem will harm economic growth. Study the details of each one, and then find sensible and well-researched

facts to refute them.

- 4 Find out who stands to gain by questioning global warming. Many of the organizations refuting the data are funded by oil companies, laissez-faire businessmen and other people who stand to lose a lot of money if we implement serious measures to stop global warming. Learn who lies behind the "facts" a global skeptic might cite, and point out how these individuals benefit from lying.
- 5 Talk about the future. If we don't deal with global warming now, the next generation will...only by then, the problem will be many times worse. Cite the immense financial burdens they will need to undertake, point out the immense increase in global disasters and immense decrease in quality of life, and ask the skeptic if such selfishness is truly in the best interests of the planet.

Tips & Warnings

- The global warming debate produces a lot of heated responses. If you find yourself losing your temper, slow down and count to ten (screaming matches will convince no one). If your opponent refuses to let you talk, politely ask him to respect the rules of decorum. If he continues to interrupt or prevent you from speaking, say "I can't continue this until you can practice some basic courtesy and resume the discussion when everyone is calmer."