"How To Win An Argument" by Dave Barry

"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-fanatic 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 searing 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 going to prove that Peruvians are underpaid, a position you base solely on the fact that *you* are underpaid, and you'll be damned if you're going to let a bunch of Peruvians be better 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 $1452.81 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.  
  
**Use Meaningless But Weighty-Sounding Words and Phrases**  
Memorize this list:  
Let me put it this way  
In terms of  
Vis-a'-vis  
Per se  
As it were  
Qua  
So to speak  
  
**Use Snappy and Irrelevant Comebacks**  
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?  
  
The last one is especially invaluable. Nobody has the vaguest idea what "parameters" means. Here's how to use your comebacks:  
You say, "As Abraham Lincoln said in 1873..."   
Your opponent says, "Lincoln died in 1865."  
 You say, "You're begging the question."  
  
You say, "Liberians, like most Asians....."  
Your opponent says, "Liberia is in Africa."  
You say, "You're being defensive."  
  
**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 Adolf Hitler might say," or "You certainly so remind me of Adolf Hitler."  
So that's it. You know how to out-argue anybody. Do not try to pull any of this on people who generally carry weapons."