

Learn About Something Before You Talk

The better you understand something, the easier it is to notice when you're being lied to. Plus, the less likely it is you'll be fooled by the lies.

When I'm watching a movie and I see someone on screen starting a fire by randomly hitting rocks together and suddenly their campfire logs burst into flame I always think, "That's not how it works!" Anyone who tries to light a fire this way isn't going to end up with a fire unless someone else builds one for them.

The same thing happens when I hear a non-libertarian person or idea called "libertarian." You can't fool me, but those not as familiar with the core idea might accept the lie without question. For that matter, those spreading the lie may not realize they are lying.

How many people know "libertarian" refers only to those who understand no one has the right to use violence against anyone who isn't currently violating the life, liberty, or property of another? My guess would be not many.

I also see this happen in debates about guns. Anti-gun activists are among the worst in this respect. Years ago a rabidly anti-gun politician was asked what a barrel shroud was since she was trying to get them banned. She said she wasn't really sure but thought it might be the "shoulder thing that goes up." Hint: It's not.

It was obvious she hadn't bothered to learn what she was trying to criminalize and didn't even understand the basics of the English language. Knowledgeable people are still laughing at her.

If you're trying to turn decent, everyday people into criminals by imposing a new law against objects, you could at least make an effort to learn the fundamentals of what you're talking about. It would be a crime to destroy lives through your lazy legislative ignorance.

It's usually helpful to know what you're talking about before you start talking. Sure, you can use hyperbole for effect — unfortunately, humans respond to emotion better than to reason — but if you're not even in the same hemisphere as reality, people familiar with the subject are going to notice and ridicule you.

When you catch someone lecturing on a topic they clearly don't understand, pretending to know more than they do, point it out. You probably won't change their minds, but you might help an onlooker learn enough to not fall prey to the lies being told.