

Lincoln-Douglas Debate Judging Primer

L-D Debate is modeled after the value debates Lincoln and Douglas engaged in over the value of slavery. The event pairs two speakers against one another, individually. Each speaker must affirm or negate a single resolution. That resolution is generally philosophical in nature and addresses issue of moral value.

Before the round:

When you receive your judging assignment, you will receive the numbers of the speakers and their sides (affirmative or negative) in the round. When you enter the room, write down the names of the speakers in the appropriate blanks on the ballot.

Read the resolution. The resolution will read something like, "Public high school students in the United States ought not be required to pass standardized exit exams to graduate." The debaters will focus on the wording of this resolution with great detail

During the round:

The round runs as follows:

Affirmative Construction: The speaker affirming the resolution presents his/her core argument. (6 minutes)

Cross-Examination: The neg speaker questions the aff speaker regarding his/her case. (3 minutes)

Negative Constructive: The neg speaker presents his/her core argument and begins to refute the aff speaker. (7 minutes)

Cross-Examination: The aff speaker questions the neg speaker regarding his/her argument. (3 minutes)

Aff Rebuttal 1: The aff speaker refutes the neg speaker's argument and reaffirms his/her own. (4 minutes)

Neg Rebuttal: The neg speaker refutes the aff speaker's argument and reaffirms his/her own. (6 minutes)

Aff Rebuttal 2: The aff speaker refutes the neg speaker's argument and reaffirms his/her own. (3 minutes)

The judge keeps time and provides signals to the speakers. Three fingers indicates three minutes remaining, two fingers indicates two minutes, one finger indicates two minutes, and a half finger indicates a half minute. At the end of time, show a closed fist. If you do not have a stopwatch, check with your team coach. S/he should provide you with one.

Each speaker has four minutes of prep time that they may use whenever they would like. The speaker must tell you that they are using prep time, and you will keep a record of how much prep time they have used.

After the round:

Thank the speakers, but don't provide any oral feedback on their debate. Simply write all comments and notes on the ballot. When you have finished, turn in the ballot to the tab room.

Advice/Other Information:

- Regardless of inexperience, the judge controls the room, not the speaker. Judges should give directions and take control of the room immediately.
- Judge rounds on the strength of debate, not which side of the resolution you personally support. The better debater should win.
- According to the rules, rebuttals should only deal with arguments presented in the constructive portions; they should not introduce new arguments.
- In addition to awarding the round to a speaker, the judge should award speaker points for the quality of debate on a 30 point scale. Judges should not award less than 20 points for a speaker unless they have very serious cause. In this case, the judge should inform the tab room.
- Speakers should stand and deliver their material formally. They should not address each other directly.
- If judges serve on a panel, they must not confer before they render their decision.
- All other questions or concerns must go to the tab room.