

NHSDLC

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Introduction and rules of the
NHSDLC Lincoln-Douglas Debate



NHSDLC
NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL DEBATE LEAGUE OF CHINA



ABOUT The NHDLC Lincoln-Douglas Debate

EVENT DESCRIPTION

In this one-on-one format, students debate a topic provided by the Association. Lincoln-Douglas Debate (LD) topics range from individual freedom versus the collective good to economic development versus environmental protection. Students may consult evidence gathered prior to the debate but may not use the internet in round. An entire debate is roughly 45 minutes and consists of constructive speeches, rebuttals, and cross-examination.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR LINCOLN-DOUGLAS DEBATE

Lincoln-Douglas Debate typically appeals to individuals who like to debate, but prefer a one-on-one format as opposed to a team or group setting. Additionally, individuals who enjoy LD like exploring questions of how society ought to be. Many people refer to LD Debate as a “values” debate, as questions of morality and justice are commonly examined. Students prepare cases and then engage in an exchange of cross-examinations and rebuttals in an attempt to convince a judge that they are the better debater in the round.

TRAITS OF SUCCESSFUL LD DEBATERS

When considering what event you should choose, or in which direction to point a student when selecting an event, below are some general traits of successful LD debaters to keep in mind:

- Independent
- Thinks logically
- Analytical
- Intrigued by philosophy
- Determined
- Thoughtful

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STRUCTURE OF LD

Speech	Time Limit	Purpose
Affirmative Constructive	6 minutes	Present the affirmative case
Negative Cross-Examination	3 minutes	Negative asks questions of the affirmative
Negative Constructive	7 minutes	Present the negative case and refute the affirmative case
Affirmative Cross-Examination	3 minutes	Affirmative asks questions of the negative
First Affirmative Rebuttal	4 minutes	Refute the negative case and rebuild the affirmative case
Negative Rebuttal	6 minutes	Refute the affirmative case, rebuild the negative case, and offer reasons that negative should win the round, commonly referred to as voting issues
2nd Affirmative Rebuttal	3 minutes	Address negative voting issues and offer reasons for why the affirmative should win

*Each debater is also entitled to 4 minutes of prep time during the round.



GUIDANCE

To LD Preparation

ARGUMENTATION

First, a debater must clearly establish their claim. This is generally a declarative statement that establishes the point they are setting out to justify. Next, a debater must clearly establish why their argument is valid. This is known as the warrant for an argument. Debaters need to go beyond asserting their claims by backing them up with analysis explaining why the argument is true. The warrant can come in many forms, but is necessary for the development of the argument. It is important to note that having an author simply make an assertion about a topic is not a warrant. Finally, a debater must provide an impact for their argument. This means the debater establishes why the argument is significant in the round.

CASING

After students brainstorm arguments, it is time to construct cases. While there is no rule requiring a specific structure, there is a traditional approach to constructing a case. Most commonly, LD debaters use a value and criterion model to structure their case. Under this model, the students propose a specific value that they feel is the ultimate goal debaters should be striving for in the round. Subsequently, they offer a criterion which offers a specific mechanism to determine if the value is being achieved by either debater in the round. A common example is offering a value of Justice with a criterion of Rights Protection. A debater should offer definitions of these terms, as well as explain how the value best fits the resolution and how the criterion best measures if the value is achieved. After they establish their value and criterion, they would offer contentions. These are the main arguments of the affirmative or negative and would strive to assert that the value/criterion is being achieved. When developing arguments the arguments should link back to the value/criterion.

REFUTATIONS

Lincoln Douglas debate is more than just cases! Debaters engage in refuting each other's arguments. Students may refute cases by denying the validity of the argument, which is most common. Additional strategies include, but are not limited to, asserting the reverse of the argument, showing the opponent's arguments do not carry as much weight as their arguments, or taking out the link between the opponent's argument and the value/criterion being used in the round. Students can pre-write their answers to arguments they expect their opponents to make. These are commonly known as "blocks."

CRITERION

The criterion (plural: criteria) is also called the value criterion or the standard. The criterion should act like a litmus test on the resolution. If you prove that your side better meets your criterion, and thus your value premise, you should win the debate. Your criterion can come in the form of a phrase or a sentence. Many people use a criterion of "the protection of rights" to suggest that if they protect more rights, they should win the debate. You will need to investigate which criterion is right for your case. Again, your criterion should be unbiased and supported with evidence. In the analogy, both sides are capable of scoring more points so each side can access the criterion. Under no circumstances should you just state your value premise and criterion without explaining the logical connection between the two. Your judges will need to understand your rationale in order to evaluate your arguments.

VALUE PREMISE IN LD

This is a structural element of a LD case that identifies what you believe the goal of the resolution should be and why you've selected your value premise. This is also sometimes called a value or a core value. Regardless of what it is called, it represents exactly same thing: what value does the resolution care about? When debating our earlier example of the resolution about civil disobedience, many people used the value premise of justice. They selected justice because they argued that the resolution asked what a justified action would be in a democracy. Your value premise should always be fair. A value premise is fair when it is a goal that is achievable by both sides. That is to say that you'd never want a value premise of "height" in our basketball analogy because then the tall/slow players would always win. Likewise, you'd never want a value premise of conscience on the civil disobedience resolution.

EVIDENCE IN LD

Evidence is normally the heart of sound argument. Evidence can take many forms and debaters often refer to it as cards. The best forms of evidence in debate will be an argument—of sorts. A good piece of evidence will have a claim, a warrant, and perhaps a statement of significance of the claim, or an impact.

In NHSDLC LD competition, evidence will not be compulsorily required. It will also not be a key factor in judges' decision-making process. But evidence is allowed in debates whenever debaters find necessary to support their arguments.

PERFORMANCE TIPS

It is important to remember that you are communicating to your judge. The decision rests solely in the hands of the judge! You must focus on persuading them, which means that you should be directing your speeches and cross-examination questions and answers to the judge, and not to your opponent.

When at your first tournament it is important to keep in mind that it gets easier with more practice. The goal is not about where you begin, but where you end. If you get better from round to round or tournament to tournament—you're successful. Focus not only on what you could improve upon, but also on what you did well. Celebrate what worked and try and emulate that in future rounds or tournaments. Take feedback from judges as opportunities to improve. If judges provide oral feedback, take notes on what they share to review with your coach. Finally, do not fixate on the outcome of a round—focusing on wins and losses won't lead to greater success!



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