

# An Introduction to Evaluating Lincoln-Douglas Debate (LD)



## Basic Understanding

Lincoln-Douglas Debate, or LD, is an individual debate event that addresses what we value. During a round, questions of morality, justice, or how a society should function are examined. The event is centered on a resolution. The student representing the affirmative will advocate for the resolution while the student representing the negative will oppose the resolution. To begin the debate, each student presents his/her case, also known as a constructive, and refutes the opponent's arguments as the debate progresses. At the end of the debate, the judge determines which student better argued his/her side of the resolution. This student is deemed the winner of the round.

Speech	Time	Responsibility of Debater
Affirmative Constructive	6 min	Present the affirmative case
Negative Cross-Examination	3 min	Negative asks questions of the affirmative
Negative Constructive/ Negative Rebuttal	7 min	Present the negative case and refute the affirmative case
Affirmative Cross-Examination	3 min	Affirmative asks questions of the negative
First Affirmative Rebuttal	4 min	Refute the negative case and rebuild the affirmative case
2nd Negative Rebuttal	6 min	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 min	Address negative voting issues and offer crystallization for why the affirmative should win.

*\*Each debater is entitled to 4 mins. of prep during the round.*

*Note: Judges will ignore arguments introduced for the first time in the final rebuttal.*

## Evaluating the Round

There are three key areas to consider when evaluating a Lincoln-Douglas Debate round. First, **well-structured argumentation**: debate is an exchange of ideas between students. The judge is responsible for determining which student is the better debater in that round. Successful debaters will focus on advancing their own arguments while also refuting their opponent's points. The cases presented and the refutations provided both require well-developed argumentation. Declarations relying on charismatic delivery are not strong arguments. To make a complete argument, debaters should establish a claim, or a response to their opponent's claim; a warrant, explaining why their argument is

true; and an impact, explaining why their argument matters. Judges must keep in mind that in Lincoln-Douglas Debate, all offensive arguments should link back to a standard or framework (see below). Properly formulated arguments are to be given more weight than those lacking one or more of these aspects. It is important to keep the overall goal in mind; the judge is not in the room to evaluate competing speeches, but to preside over an interactive exchange of ideas. When a competitor fails to address one of the opponent's arguments, this point is given more weight when the argument is brought up again in later speeches. By failing to respond to an argument, the debater has tacitly agreed to the point. When making a decision, the judge should pay close attention to which side is advancing the most significant arguments in the round. Second, **framework level arguments**: each debater should provide a framework, or a standard they think the judge should use to evaluate the round. The debater will explain to the judge why his or her specific framework should be used to evaluate the round. Each debater must respond to the opponent's framework. Typically, because of the broad nature of LD topics, the debater proposes a value or ideal based upon the topic. After a value is established, the debater proposes a value criterion, or a specific means of measuring if the value is achieved. For example, if justice is the value, an appropriate criterion could be protection of rights because a debater can justify that the protection of rights leads to justice. Throughout the round, judges should consider which debater's framework they are using to compare arguments. The framework used to evaluate the round should be the one that is better defended. **Note**: The value and criterion approach to framework analysis is common in Lincoln-Douglas Debate, but other well-formed approaches should not be discredited simply because they are of a different format. Third, **offensive argumentation**: once the judge has determined which framework s/he is using to evaluate the round, it is necessary to determine who is winning the debate under the terms of that framework. Just because the judge determines that one debater's framework will be used to evaluate the round does not mean that the debater will win the round. The other student in the round may be able to show why s/he ought to win the round when examining the debate through the opponent's framework.

## Filling out the Ballot

At the end of the debate, the judge will indicate on the ballot which debater won the round based and assign speaker points, generally on a scale from 25-30, with 30 being outstanding. Judges will note on the ballot why they favored one framework over the other. They may also give tips on improving argumentation, speaking style, etc. Debate is an educational activity and all feedback is welcome. 