Lincoln Douglas Debate 101

## What is lincoln douglas debate?

Lincoln Douglas Debate (LD for short) is a style of debate that involves applying modern and classical philosophy as well as political and psychological concepts to current (but slightly under-the-radar) issues, and setting up ways to weigh the impacts of these issues.

## What makes lD different than the other styles of debate?

The pool of LD debaters is significantly smaller than all of the other styles because of its difficulty. This style requires immense reading, research, writing, quick-thinking, particular articulation, and decent speaking. Congress kids get to focus on being funny and generally persuasive, focusing on speaking style more than actual quality of content. Public Forum debaters repeat whatever BBC News or CNN said about their issue in a more eloquent way. Policy kids buy dumps of information and spit it out a hundred words a second.

Lincoln Douglas is a totally solo event. All of the other styles require working together with others, whether it be forming alliances in the Congress house, or writing cases and blocks with a partner.

## WHAT MAKES ONE Right for this style of debate?

It takes more than just a love of philosophy or politics to succeed in the LD arena. While that is a vital component to be a good LD'er, you also have to have tremendous work ethic, a high reading level, an abstract thinking style, and massive confidence. While some of these traits come with time (confidence, in particular), most of them should already be developed. You are responsible for writing at least two cases (one for each position). Case writing will be elaborated on later in this handout; however, just know it is tenfold more complicated than any other debate work you will ever do. In order to write *good* cases and blocks (terminology will be explained later, no worries), you are going to have to read tons of legal and academic journals, which are incredibly dry, lengthy, and often times hard to understand. On top of that, you must become familiar with many different philosophies so you can utilize them in round as well as take them down. If you can handle that, go for it.

In addition to all of the work you have to put in, Lincoln Douglas requires a special kind of synthetic, abstract thinking because of the content that comes up in rounds. It is imperative that you can deal with intangible, crazy ideas, whether you are using them or tearing them apart. Statistics and concrete historical examples don't completely go away, but they carry far less weight in LD than they do in all other styles.

However, please don't be scared of this lovely, amazing, absolutely splendiferous style of debate. It is worth trying, even if you don't possess everything mentioned in this passage. Most of these skills come with lots of time and practice. Nobody starts debate being a god/goddess. Unless you're me. (Just kidding!)

## TERMINOLOGY & Phrases to know

I tried to include as much debate-specific jargon as possible. Most of these debate vocabulary words are actually pretty standard across the board for each style. Commit these all to memory, regardless of which style you participate in. Events tend to cross over often, anyway. These words are in no particular order. Certain terms that are unique to LD specifically (value/criterion) will not be mentioned here because they will be greatly expanded upon later in this document.

* ***Case*** Your prewritten speech; a tangible collection of you arguments; your baby.
* ***Contention*** A (hopefully well-supported) argument. Contains claim (tagline), warrant (evidence & analysis), and impact (why it matters, how it upholds value/criterion).
* ***Card***Anything inside quotation marks. Examples include statistics, historical examples, analysis or philosophical ideas either explained or applied to your side, quotations from really smart people, etc. Always credit author and publication in-case. Typically provide what legitimizes author as well. Example: Dr. Ashley Weed of Yale University in her book, *Ashley Weed is Awesome*, explains Ashley logic. "Quotation here."
* ***Flex prep*** Cross-examination questions asked during prep time.
* ***Tagline*** One statement that opens and should basically summarize your argument.
* ***Sub-point*** Part of a contention that typically gives multiple, separately weighed justifications for the general argument or breaks up separate but related ideas that can be grouped together.
* ***Observation*** A statement that either puts limits upon the grounds for debate, or makes the debate fair by fixing side biases.
* ***Burden*** The duties for each side, typically something that needs to be proven. Burdens should always be reciprocal, so as not to be abusive.
* ***A priori*** (Typically definitional) arguments that come before all else.
* ***Extend*** To reiterate an argument, even after defending its attacks.
* ***Critque/Kritik*** Special cases, typically utilizing *a priori* arguments, as well as *typically* negative.
* ***Cross-apply*** Applying something you already said about a contention/framework argument about another. Very helpful in the 1AR.
* ***Framework*** Collectively: value, criterion, *a priori*, definitions, observations, and burdens. Almost always at the top of the case.
* ***Overview*** Arguments that apply to many parts of your opponent's case. Given before any arguments about specific parts of his/her case specifically.
* ***Underview*** Arguments that apply to many parts of your opponent's case. Given after any arguments about specific parts of his/her case specifically.
* ***Crystallize*** Go for the big picture. Sum everything up. A strategy often comparable to final focus speech content in Public Forum.
* ***Link*** How an argument connects with your framework.
* ***Line-by-line*** Covering everything on the flow.
* ***Voters/Voting Issues*** Reasons why you won the round. Voters should never be your standards, or explicitly any one of your contentions. Advanced voter strategy will be given later.

## round structure

Each side has four minutes of prep time. Each side speaks for 13 minutes. In general, view the round like this: the affirmative case and position is like a baby, being entered in a pageant. It is the affirmative’s job to protect that baby, and to make it win the pageant. The negative, on the otherhand, is then faced with the task of completely undermining the affirmative baby’s success, and presenting his/her baby as the more desirable winner for this pageant.

***1AC*** Affirmative constructive. 6 minutes. Affirmative gets up and gives their prewritten case. Case writing strategies will be given later.

***Cross-Examination*** Negative asks the affirmative questions. 3 minutes. When asking questions, ask for clarification, and try to add spikes. Get your opponent to agree to something that will strengthen your position. When answering questions, remain confident and try to predict where your opponent is going with their questions. Try to suck up as much time as possible with lengthy answers without being a jerk. Advanced cross-ex strategy will be gone over later.

*\*\*Negative should take 2ish minutes of prep now. Affirmative should be beginning to outline voters.*

***1NC*** Negative constructive/first rebuttal. 7 minutes total. Approximately 3-4 minutes spent on prewritten case, and the rest devoted to attacking the affirmative's case. Take your time.

***Cross-Examination*** Affirmative asks negative questions. When asking questions, ask for clarification, and try to add spikes. Get your opponent to agree to something that will strengthen your position. When answering questions, remain confident and try to predict where your opponent is going with their questions. Try to suck up as much time as possible with lengthy answers without being a jerk.

*\*\*Affirmative should take 2 1/2 or 3 minutes of prep here. Negative should outline voters.*

***1AR***  Affirmative rebuttal. 4 minutes. Typically considered one of the hardest speeches in the whole debate world. Cover both sets of standards, rebuild affirmative, and attack negative (usually in that order). Cross-apply arguments. Agree to points strategically. Try to cover everything on the flow.

Example 1AR Time Allocation (gives 10 seconds of flex time)

1. 0:00-0:20 Address framework/definitions.
2. 0:21-:050 Address standards (BOTH SIDES ADDRESSED TOGETHER).
3. 0:51-2:20 Rebuild affirmative case.
4. 2:21-3:50 Attack negative case.

*\*\*Negative should take the rest of his/her prep right now. Affirmative, finalize voters.*

***1NR*** Negative rebuttal. 7 minutes. Go over the standards, negative, affirmative, and then hit the standards quickly again before give voting issues. Take your time. Definitely crystallize.

*\*\*Affirmative takes rest of prep right now.*

***2AR***  2nd affirmative rebuttal. 3 minutes. Go over standards, and then crystallize/give voting issues. Take it easy.

## Case WRITING

This will go over basic case structure and writing tips/techniques. Following this passage will be my NDI 2010 affirmative case.

Case Structure

1. (optional—usually only for speechy circuits and judges) Opening quote
2. State your position to the resolution, and (affirmative) state the resolution.
3. Definitions. Affirmative must define ALL important words within the resolution, including where you retrieved the definition from. Definitions do not have to be straight from a dictionary; you might have to do some digging around to find one from an essay or journal.
4. Framework. This includes burdens, observations, *a priori*, etc.
5. Standards. Give and define your value. Prove why your value is resolutional and most desirable. Then give your criterion, define it, prove why it meets your value, and justify it as the most appropriate weighing mechanism in the round.
6. I will further uphold my standards through my x contention(s).
7. Contentions.
8. For all of these reasons, I urge a vote in affirmation/negation. I now stand open for cross-examination. (This sentence does not have to count towards your speech time. Most judges allow you to say this at the end of your speeches.)

CONTENTION Formation (Flexible)

1. Tagline
   1. Also known as a claim.
   2. Read it slowly.
   3. Keep it concise.
2. Card
   1. Introduce it by what you want to get from it.
   2. Citation
3. Warrant
   1. Analyze the card.
   2. Put it in your own words.
   3. Show how this proves your point.
4. Impact
   1. Persuasive, POWERFUL, MEMORABLE rhetoric
   2. Why does this argument matter?
   3. Link to V/C

Contentions may have more than one offensive point. However, if the contention has multiple ideas that can stand on their own, consider separating them into sub-points or even into their own contention! (This makes referencing the argument much easier in round, and it increases the content your opponent must cover. On the flip side, this also means you have more to defend.) Sub-points are a beautiful thing in particular, however, because an opponent may make the mistake of addressing the contention as a whole, possibly overlooking or not properly addressing a key part of a sub-point, which can be extended for a win.

General case writing tips

* Keep your case formatting consistent. This is beneficial for a few reasons. 1.) It allows you to have a shell to fill in information to complete other cases more quickly in the future. 2.) In round, if you are familiar with how you format your contention taglines, cards, etc., then you will be able to quickly reference them without wasting time searching for them. All of my LD cases have had the same format since day one.
* Write contentions first. Once you know what you want to argue, you can then form a value/criterion pair that best links to said arguments.
* Save all cases and evidence. The same basic concepts come up in every single topic for the most part (human rights, for example).
* Your case (and subsequently speeches) should essentially tell a story. Because of this definition, we must look to this. The only way to achieve this is by that. If that isn’t done, this will happen, which means we cannot achieve that. Organize your case so that each idea links into the next, just like a great story.
* Never, ever feel like you must stick to this exact format. (I alluded to this at the beginning of this section.) Every case does not need burdens, observations, etc. You do not need any set amount of contentions for either case. Your framework doesn’t have to take up a set amount of time in your case. It is very important that you write your case the way you want it to be written, making sure it keeps certain key elements.
* Semi-relating to the idea presented above, be psyched about what you are running. Debate is so much more fun when you are pumped about an argument or framework setup. Don’t be afraid to run crazy, wonky ideas. Most LD judges love those, as long as they are ran well. However, if you do decide to run off-the-wall arguments…
* Consider writing multiple cases. If you find out that your totally abusive definition that your entire case is based upon is just not going to win you any rounds mid-tournament, you don’t want to have to be forced to keep using that case.
* Remember that each resolution has a million and five different interpretations. Try to look at it from many different perspectives as to find the strongest, most effective arguments.
* While having a rock solid case will most definitely benefit you, a great case does not guarantee you will win the round, for two main reasons. 1.) There is no unbeatable argument. Every argument has a counterargument. 2.) Good argumentation and articulation wins you a round. I could still run a crazy awesome argument terribly and lose. I could run a very generic argument incredibly well and win.
* That being said, try not to go for crazy stuff until you have become at least more than proficient at arguing basic ideas. Getting caught up in obscure philosophy so early in the game that you fail to develop these rudimentary skills will harm you in the end.
* Read, read, read. And read some more. More reading = more knowledge. More knowledge = more ideas. More ideas = better case.
* You can paraphrase cards!

## argumentation

Each argument has a counterargument. No argument or piece of evidence is perfect or totally unshatterable. There are ways to take down every argument.

types of refutations

1. Disprove it.
2. Outweigh it.
   1. Timeframe
   2. Magnitude
   3. Probability
3. Show that the argument is non-unique.
4. Prove any links to be insufficient or invalid.
5. Prove that the standards and contentions do not match at all.
6. Show irrelevance in regards to either the resolution or the round.
7. Turn
   1. Based on a link to standards
   2. Based on impact
8. Contradictions
   1. Explain logical inconsistencies
   2. Or accept one premise and turn the impact
9. Correlation vs. Causation
10. How the study was conducted

general argumentation tips

* What happens if my opponent does not address my argument?

1. Repeat argument
2. Explain argument
3. Impact
   1. Criterion
   2. Resolution

\*\*Write out extension blocks with succinct claim, warrant, and impact.

* You can also call out your opponent for how they extend arguments. Specifically, if they don’t follow the extension strategy. (Ex: My opponent tries to extend this argument, but it has no link.)
* Try to make one argument take out several other arguments.
* Cross-apply, cross-apply, cross-apply! (especially on the affirmative)
  + \*\*Don't have to use the term cross-apply.
* SPIKES! Have a point or card that seems benign but can later be used to severely damage your opponent’s position.
* Connect cards (yours and your opponents) to other arguments in the round.
* Never ever make the “well my argument comes first!” argument unless you know how to properly use it. It is very annoying when chicken vs. egg arguments that are ill-warranted and ill-impacted show up in rounds.

## VALUE/criterion

This one passage is honestly what puts Lincoln Douglas off in its own little corner of the debate world.

A *value* is an ideal that ought to be looked to when either affirming or negating a resolution.

* Explicitly--Resolved: Justice ought to recognize animal rights. (justice)
* Implicitly--Resolved: Economic sanctions ought not be used to achieve foreign policy objectives. (government legitimacy)
* Needs to be displayed, achieved, or upheld by your case, later speeches, and position in general
* Examples: justice/morality, government legitimacy, societal welfare
* Try to pick one that both sides can link to—this makes for more substantive debate. (Just provide the best link!)

A *criterion* is a way to meet the value.

* Typically a weighing mechanism of some sort, a specific process, or a type of logical syllogism.
* Used to weigh impacts, which leads to a winning round.
* Examples: maximizing human rights, minimizing dehumanization, following Kant's principle of humanity, following (insert social contract theorist here)'s social contract, utilitarianism
* Can (and should usually should) be more biased than your value.

General V/C:

* Grouped together & called standards
* Pick these AFTER you write (brainstorm) contentions
* Most important part of round. Spend adequate time on them.
* Linking your arguments to your criterion automatically links it to your value. However, some arguments link just only to your value.

## How to flow

Example flow structure

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Affirmative constructive | Negative rebuttals against the affirmative case | Affirmative rebuilds | Continued negative refutations | Continued affirmative rebuild |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Negative constructive | Affirmative rebuttals against the negative case | Negative rebuilds | Continued affirmative refutations |

You will need: a legal pad (extra long notebook), and multiple pens of different colors.

1. Divide one sheet of paper into five evenly spaced sections. This sheet of paper will be dedicated to everything that is spoken about the affirmative case.

2. Divide another sheet of paper into four evenly spaced sections. This sheet of paper will be dedicated to everything that is spoken about the negative case.

3. Delegate a specific pen color to the negative, and a different one to the affirmative. (Alternatively, pick a pen color that designates anything you say, and a different for whatever your opponent says in speeches.) Anything that one side says will stand out from what the other says. This helps prevent argument mix-ups.

4. Remember to always pre-flow your cases!

5. Remember to always write everything you hear your opponent say. If he/she says something confusing, or you can't hear it clearly, ask him/her to clarify your understanding of the argument.

6. Try to write down each detail as succinctly as possible. If you have a quick-speaking opponent, sometimes it is hard to write down everything they say. Developing a form of shorthand that helps you write down everything but still efficiently record everything said will benefit you greatly. Common abbreviations include: "V" for value, "C" for criterion, "J" circled for justice, "govt" for government, "SC" for social contract, "legit" for legitimacy, "ppl" for people, arrows up for increasing and down for decreasing, "#" for number, "b/c" for because, arrow pointing to the side denoting a cause/effect, etc.

7. Additionally, try to keep your flows fairly neat and detailed. This allows you to reuse your flows for practice and for prepping out your teammates against common arguments.

8. Voting issues can be written wherever you have space!