**Format:**

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 s/he is the better debater in the round.

**Debate Structure / Timing and Summary:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **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 four minutes of prep time during the round.

**Tips / “things” to do:**

1. Verify that the students in the room are the correct students and that they are debating the assigned side of the resolution;
2. Bring an open mind to the debate (“tabula rosa”). The students did not write the resolution, they just have to debate it;
3. Take notes during the debate (“flowing”) keep time;
4. Put speaker points on the ballot and sign your name.

**“Things” to look for:**

1. Each debate should offer a case (“offense”), as well as answer their opponent’s case (“defense”);
2. New arguments belong in constructive speeches. The 1st affirmative rebuttal should certainly answer the negative constructive, but there should be no brand new arguments in the negative rebuttal or the 2nd affirmative rebuttal.

**“Things” not to do:**

1. Do not impose upon the debate your particular preferences for how a given side of the resolution should be debated. A resolution that for instance talks about restricting free speech on campus does not per se require one to argue for or against hate speech. Just because your team is arguing a certain vantage point does not in anyway justify stifling the creativity of debaters in interpreting the resolution using perfectly legitimate definitions of words and phrases;
2. Do not interact with the students during the debate. Take notes and write your comments on the ballot;
3. The SPDL league is not a place for oral critiques. This is truly a teaching league and the students’ coaches need to see your feedback on the ballot.

**Language to use on ballot:**

1. Every ballot should at its essence say something like “I vote [affirmative or negative] because of [key issue #1], [key issue #2], and [key issue #3];
2. Great ballots will recognize something good that each debater did, as well as something each debater could do to improve upon their performance.

**Language not to use on ballot:**

1. Do not be silly and comment upon anything that has nothing to do with the debate at hand.

**Overall:**

Lincoln-Douglas is a debate of values. That typically will play out with the students offering a framework to weigh the issues in the debate. You may hear this referenced as a value and value criterion, or alternatively as a standard. Sometimes debaters will offer definitions to help clarify the resolution and they too may become part of the debate.

Because this is a debate event, you should expect the students to offer cases that include arguments that are complete with a claim, warrant, and impact. Sources should be duly noted (e.g., “Jones in ‘88”).

As the debate progresses, you should expect a civil engagement by the students that unfolds as a clash of ideas. Arguments should be built upon from the earlier speeches, ultimately ending with some presentation by each side of key voting issues or reasons to affirm or negate the resolution.

As this is a debate event, while the presentation should be audience appropriate, this is a debate event, and not a poetry reading. The winning debater is almost certainly the one who provides the best researched case, defends that case, attacks the opponent’s case, answers and asks important questions, and leaves you with an impression that their side of the resolution was better upheld.

Lincoln-Douglas is a wonderful event and in many years it is the event that students coming out of SPDL are achieving the most success in across a much broader geographical footprint. Let’s work together to keep this event a great learning opportunity for our students.

s/Chris Berdnik

William Tennent High School

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