

V. Lincoln Douglas Debate Event Description

Event description – Lincoln Douglas debate is designed to center on a proposition of value. A proposition of value concerns itself with what ought to be instead of what is. A value is an ideal held by individuals, societies, governments, etc. Debaters are encouraged to develop argumentation based upon a values perspective. To that end, no plan (or counterplan) will be offered by the debaters. In Lincoln Douglas Debate, a plan is defined by the NFL as a formalized, comprehensive proposal for implementation.

The debate should focus on reasoning to support a general principle instead of particular plans and counterplans. Debaters may offer generalized, practical examples or solutions to illustrate how the general principle could guide decisions.

The hallmarks of Lincoln Douglas debate include:

- 1) Parallel Burdens
- 2) Value Structure
- 3) Argumentation
- 4) Cross Examination
- 5) Effective Delivery

1. Parallel Burdens - No question of values can be determined entirely true or false. This is why the resolution is debatable. Therefore neither debater should be held to a standard of absolute proof. No debater can realistically be expected to prove complete validity or invalidity of the resolution. The better debater is the one who, on the whole, proves his/her side of the resolution more valid as a general principle.

- *Burden of proof*: Each debater has the equal burden to prove the validity of his/her side of the resolution as a general principle. As an LD resolution is a statement of value, there is no presumption for either side.
- *Burden of clash*: Each debater has an equal burden to clash with his/her opponent's position. After a case is presented, neither debater should be rewarded for presenting a speech completely unrelated to the arguments of his/her opponent.
- *Resolutional burden*: The debaters are equally obligated to focus the debate on the central questions of the resolution, not whether the resolution itself is worthy of debate. Because the affirmative must uphold the resolution, the negative must also argue the resolution as presented.

2. Value Structure -The value structure (or framework) is established by the debater to serve two functions: a) to provide an interpretation of the central focus of the resolution, and b) to provide a method for the judge to evaluate the central questions of the resolution. The value structure often consists of a statement of the resolution (if affirming), definitions (dictionary or contextual), the value premise (or core value), and the value criterion (or standard). This structure is commonly but not always employed.

Definitions: The affirmative should offer definitions, be they dictionary or contextual, that provides a reasonable ground for debate. The negative has the option to challenge these definitions and to offer counter-definitions.

Value Premise/Core Value: A value is an ideal held by individuals, societies, governments, etc. that serves as the highest goal to be protected, respected, maximized, advanced, or achieved. In general, the debater will establish a value which focuses the central questions of the resolution and will serve as a foundation for argumentation.

Value Criterion/Standard: In general, each debater will present a value criterion (a standard) which the debater will use to:

- explain how the value should be protected, respected, maximized, advanced, or achieved.
- measure whether a given side or argument protects, respects, maximizes, advances, or achieves the value.
- evaluate the relevance and importance of an argument in the context of the round.

The relationship between the value premise and the criterion should be clearly articulated.

During the debate, the debaters may argue the validity or priority of the two value structures. They may accept their opponent's value structure, prove the superiority of their own value structure, or synthesize the two.

3. Argumentation – Because Lincoln Douglas debate is an educational debate activity, debaters are obligated to construct logical chains of reasoning which lead to the conclusion of the affirmative or negative position. The nature of proof may take a variety of forms (e.g., a student's original analysis, application of philosophy, examples, analogies, statistics, expert opinion, etc.). Arguments should be presented in a cohesive manner that shows a clear relationship to the value structure. Any research should be conducted and presented ethically from academically sound and appropriately cited sources.

4. Cross-Examination - Cross-examination should be used by the debater to clarify, challenge, and/or advance arguments in the round.

5. Effective delivery: Lincoln Douglas debate is an oral communication activity that requires clarity of thought and expression. Arguments should be worded and delivered in a manner accessible to an educated non-specialist audience. This encompasses:

- *Written communication:* Cases and arguments should be constructed in a manner that is organized, accessible, and informative to the listener. The debater should employ clear logic and analysis supported by topical research.

- *Verbal communication:* The debater has the obligation to be clear, audible and comprehensible, and to speak persuasively to the listeners. Additionally, debaters should strive for fluency, expressiveness, effective word choice, and eloquence.

- *Non-verbal communication:* The debater should demonstrate an effective use of gestures, eye-contact, and posture. Throughout the debate, the debaters should demonstrate civility as well as a professional demeanor and style of delivery.