

Lincoln-Douglas debate is a form of debate in which public speaking skills are emphasized. Arguments should be worded and presented so they can be understood by a general audience. A high school principal, a member of the school board, or any other intelligent adult should be able to judge a round of Lincoln-Douglas debate. The intended audience is not limited to former debaters, college debaters, or high school debate coaches.

Written communication plays an important role in Lincoln-Douglas debate. Debaters are encouraged to write affirmative and negative cases that are marked by expressiveness, appropriate word choice, and eloquence. The case should employ clear logic and be supported with topical research.

Although the affirmative and negative cases are pre-prepared, they should be delivered expressively, with attention to eye contact, gesturing, and appropriate posture.

A final consideration in speech delivery is civility. Debaters should treat their opponents with respect. Professional demeanor is expected of all competitors in Lincoln-Douglas debate.

SPEAKER RESPONSIBILITIES IN LINCOLN-DOUGLAS DEBATE

Affirmative Constructive Speech: In this speech, the affirmative debater provides a pre-prepared case advocating the resolution. The speech should state the resolution, define key terms, identify a value central to the resolution (core value or value premise), offer a criterion (or standard) for achieving or measuring the central value, and show why the resolution meets this standard.

Negative Constructive Speech: In this speech, the negative case is presented (usually taking up about half of the allotted seven minutes); then the negative offers answers to the affirmative case. The negative case is a pre-prepared statement opposing the resolution. The negative case should define key terms, identify a value, defend a criterion (or standard) for achieving or measuring the central value, and show why the resolution fails to meet this standard.

First Affirmative Constructive Speech: In this four-minute speech, the affirmative should answer the negative case and then re-defend the affirmative case (answering the attacks made by the negative in the previous speech). No new arguments are allowed in any rebuttal speech, but the debater can offer new evidence in support of existing arguments. Answers to the other debater's arguments do not count as new arguments.

Negative Rebuttal Speech: The negative has six minutes to crystallize the debate, showing why the negative case is superior to the affirmative case.