

CHAPTER 15

CROSS-EXAMINATION TECHNIQUE IN LINCOLN-DOUGLAS DEBATE

Many of the principles discussed in Chapter 9 also apply in Lincoln-Douglas debate. Yet there are some key factors that make cross-examination unique in Lincoln-Douglas debate.

The delivery focus of Lincoln-Douglas debate means that impressions created in cross-examination are more important than in policy debate. In policy debate, there is usually a certain decision logic that the judge attempts to implement (stock issues, policymaking, hypothesis testing, and so on). In Lincoln-Douglas debate, there is less agreement among judges and participants on a prepackaged decision logic. Judges are typically instructed to reward debaters who are able to demonstrate poise and confidence in public speaking. Cross-examination offers a prime opportunity for debaters to impress (or turn off) a judge.

The fact that only two cross-examination periods exist in Lincoln-Douglas debate makes each of them more important. Each side has only one opportunity to advance its position.

In Lincoln-Douglas debate, unlike in policy debate, cross-examination cannot serve the purpose of providing preparation time for a partner; the person conducting the cross-examination also becomes the next speaker.

CREATING A STRONG IMPRESSION IN CROSS-EXAMINATION

Cross-examination offers an opportunity for you to sell your ideas as well as your personality to the judge. The judge is more likely to be paying close attention to you during the cross-examination period than during any other point in the debate. The interactive nature of cross-examination naturally creates interest. Also, because the judge is not flowing during the cross-examination, you are more likely to be able to make direct eye contact.

Creating a strong impression involves a number of nonverbal components. Your eye contact should be with the judge, not with your opponent. You should stand near the podium but avoid barriers between you and the judge. When you are being questioned, you create a stronger impression by standing free from the podium. You want to come across as forceful and confident without being arrogant or dismissive of your opponent.