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**The Crash-Course Guide to Lincoln-Douglas Debate**

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**The Basics**

The first L-D debate was, of course, the debate between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas regarding the issue of slavery. Like any good L-D topic, this one had no clear cut answer determinable by reams of evidence and New Republican articles, but instead could be proven only in the terms of historical precedent, moral values, and definition. (e.g.: if we define slaves as men then by the moral values reflected in the historically proven U.S. Declaration of Independence, they, too, are created equal and should be treated as such)

L-D debaters are the people who aren't afraid to get up there alone with no partner to share the guts or the glory; the people who kept arguing that sure the plan would work, but it would hurt people for chrissake; or the ones who were just too good for team. In short, they're usually just a little odd and always independent thinkers.

**Flowcharts**

Flowcharts can take on any structure or labels that suit your purposes as a debater. However, certain basic information needs to be included. Value, Definitions, Examples, and a box for each speech is helpful.

This works for either affirmative or negative position. Most of it is self-explanatory. The Examples box is used to chronicle the analogy wars that rage in L-D debate. The Observations box can serve several purposes. It can be used exclusively to note your opponent's points, or you can also flow your case in the upper left corner of this box. The latter technique can be useful for the first few times you run a case, to draw associations between your points and your opponent's. And?? asks "And what do you have to say to that?" It is a space for your rebuttal of your opponent's case. So?? inquires "So what?" or what your opponent had to say to your points. The last space can then be used to outline your last rebuttal. Alternately, So?? asks "So now what?", or your response to their last rebuttal. In this case their rebuttal is flowed in the middle space between And?? and So??, and the last space is used for rude remarks about your opponent.

Obviously, there's no one right way to do things, so choose a method that works for you. The idea is not to get down everything they say, but to make notes for yourself so you know what **YOU'RE** going to say. Watch the abbreviations, too. You'd be surprised how quickly you forget what "nvr n tm" means. It is also good to write down the times of each speech on the edge of your flowpaper, just so you won't forget, and also to quickly remind yourself of something about a specific speech.

**Case Structure: The Sermon**

A good L-D case is written like a good speech. It has 2-5 main points (preferably three), an introduction, a conclusion, revolves around a focused central thesis, and flows easily from point to point. It is interesting (relatively speaking) to listen to and creative in its syntax. It does not have "point one subpoint A sub-subpoint little one sub-sub-subpoint little A," nor does it consist entirely of evidence and quotes, unlike SOME debate styles we could mention.

**1. The Introduction**

The introduction is designed to catch the judge's attention and lend emotional or logical support to the stance you are about to take. It can be a quote or original descriptive paragraph, analogy, or just about anything else. It should lead directly to your side of the resolution, one of your points, or your value. It is best to end the introduction with the resolution, stating something like: For this reason and those that follow, I stand firmly in support of today's resolution, that...

**2. Definitions**

Boooring, right? Wrong. Definitions are a central theme of L-D debate. *"My definition comes from Black's Law 1990 and yours is merely from Webster's 1989"* is not a valid argument for a definition. The point is not where it came from, but which definition best suits the topic and makes the most sense. It is wise to define almost every word in the resolution - the less important the word, the shorter the definition, but even words like "is" and "the" can be twisted by opponents. Pay close attention to the definition you use. It is best to use the first one out of the dictionary if possible, since this is the most common definition and the one your judge will most likely agree with. However, check and double check to make sure your definition has no connotations you don't want, and doesn't conflict with your case. Again, I cite Abe and Steve: the whole point of that debate was whether or not slaves were defined as human beings.

**3. Value**

L-D debate is value debate. The value is the most important (and confusing) part of the round. Essentially, a value is a principle or standard by which you evaluate the resolution. This is best seen in the sample L-D cases found here. Values are usually things like Freedom, Utilitarianism, Quality of Life, Life, Individualism, etc.

Everything should relate to your value(s) (yes, you can run dual values, but make sure they relate). If your opponent runs a point which is good, but does not support his or her value, you can ask in cross-ex **how** it relates to the value and use the fact that it doesn't to have the argument thrown out of the round. Technically, everything in the case **must** relate to the value.

There are three main ways to win an L-D round:

1. Prove that your value is supported by your case, not supported by your opponent's case, and superior to your opponent's value.
2. Prove that your case better supports your value than your opponent's case supports theirs.
3. Prove that your case better supports BOTH values than your opponent's case supports either one. It is perfectly legal to adopt your opponent's value in addition to yours, or for both of you to have the same value walking into the round. You can still win.

Values can be anything, as long as they're supported. Your opponent may ask you for "value justification" or "value criteria." "Value justification" is simply why your value is important. Make certain this is woven into your contentions or stated at the beginning, and **know your value**. Be able to explain why it's important off the top of your head without quoting your case, **believe** in your value, at least for the 45 minutes of the round.

"Value criteria" is a nebulous concept, but is essentially the way your case relates to your value relates to the resolution - it can be stated at the beginning or implied throughout the case. When asked this question it often works to read your tag lines on your observations - written properly, these will add up to a standard value criteria without ever taking the time to state it separately. Value criteria can also be more specific values that are a part of the larger value. No one, especially novice, are entirely certain what a value criteria is. Give an answer that sounds authoritative and they'll believe you. However, "value criteria" is considered the "voting issue" in L-D debate. This is why the definition of the relationship between case, value, and resolution makes sense. Be able to summarize the POINT of your case in a few sentences, preferably unarguable ones.

Sample Values:

* Individualism: The value of the individual, furtherance and growth of the individual.
* Utilitarianism: The greatest good for the greatest number of people
* Life: Refers to life itself, with inherent value regardless of quality
* Quality of Life: Refers to the condition of living, e.g. *"I'd rather die than live like a vegetable"*
* Freedom: Traditional American value, can be interpreted to almost anything
* Civilization: A society that has reached a high measure of development; or, (non-traditional definition) A society acquainted with both pragmatic and idealistic methods of operation
* Progress: Development or improvement in knowledge or skill (opposite of stagnation)
* Quality of the Future (non-traditional value): Also open to interpretation, but either
	1. Doing not necessarily what's best for NOW, but definitely will benefit us later
	2. Concern for Quality of Life from this coming second on, not worrying about the past.
* Future: Same thing as Q of F but more generally hoping we have one at all
* Global Security: Not blowing up the world; the US not being invaded.
* Justice: Use of authority to uphold what is correct or true
* Truth: Inherent value, some religious associations, conformity with fact
* Human Dignity: The individual ethics which make us human and not animals nor slaves, adherence to personal ethics
* Social Contract: (there are 3 main ones of these and tons of others) Essentially, the agreement between a citizen and his government
* Dignity: Human dignity + the justifiable pride in a country or nation, something the U.S. lost when Regan was elected
* Potential: judgement not by what something is DOING but by what it could do; since modified:
* Potential Good: the good that something could be doing

There are others, but I have used all of these successfully in various tournaments and topics.

**4. Points.**

Observations are also known as contentions, points, and several other names. They are, in truth, contentions - an observation is a statement of fact, a contention is a statement of opinion backed by fact. Contentions should be specific to the topic and value. Like any good speech, the second-best contention should go first, the worst one in the middle, and the best one last. The last one is what the judge will remember best. Evidence should be included, but the contention should not focus on the evidence. It should be clear and logical, starting with fact and using the evidence and logic to lead to the conclusion that the tag line (and, therefore, the resolution supported by the value) is true. Treat the tag line like the topic sentence of a paragraph. Use alliteration and other literary techniques to make your speech **interesting**. Keep the judge awake, it's been a long day. Make your case as airtight as possible, but don't try to make it unarguable. **A good L-D case is controversial but universal**, with anyone able to see your side and your logic.

Evidence is useful in L-D, though certainly not such an integral part of debate as it is in team. Contentions should have one and at most two pieces of evidence per contention. Evidence does not have to be from a recent periodical, and a date does not prove the evidence more valid. Logical evaluation of the evidence is taken into account; sure, if it's an article on LSD from 1950, some doubt may be cast as to its accuracy. However, a quote from Plato certainly carries more weight than one from Joe Schmuck of the New Republican.

The best way to write contentions is to brainstorm. First, figure out what part of each side of the resolution you can agree with, personally. Liars are obvious, even in debate. Get an angle on the topic that you can at least see the logic to. Second, brainstorm exactly WHY it is you think this way. Get it down to one clear-cut moral or ethic, and therein lies your value. While doing this, and after you've found your value, brainstorm specifically why you think this way, and what supports your value and ethic. Think of analogies, popular news issues, historical incidences... draw lines and group them as to which ones are saying essentially the same thing and backing the same ideal. They should break down into 2-5 easily discernable groups. Figure out one sentence to summarize each group of points, and you have a tag line. Write your contentions around your tag line; make sure everything in the contention agrees with the tag. If necessary, change the tag line.

Then and only then, when the body of the case is written, find definitions, introduction, and conclusion. These are built around your case, not vice versa.

**5. Conclusion.**

This should emphasize the main point of your case and/or your value. It can consist of the same things as an introduction, e.g. quote, story, etc. and should bring a sense of closure to your case.

**Round Structure: Oh, I have another speech?**

Basic round structure:

* 1st Affirmative 6 minutes
* Neg cross-examines aff 3 minutes
* 1st Negative 7 minutes
* Aff cross-examines neg 3 minutes
* 1st Affirmative Rebuttal 4 minutes
* 1st Negative Rebuttal 6 minutes
* 2nd Affirmative Rebuttal 3 minutes

In the first speech the affirmative reads their case, and the negative flows and thinks of arguments against the case. Speak persuasively and confidently - you get the first impression.

In the cross-ex the negative tries to cast doubt upon the affirmative position. As the questioner, **do not make statement in cross-ex. Ask questions and gain answers only. Do not push your opponent for answers - you aren't Matlock and the judge is going to think you're rude. However, don't allow your opponent to evade the question either. Ask again, adding emphasis to the point your opponent ignored in weaseling out of the question. You can ask for yes or no answers - don't let them rattle on forever on an unimportant question. They may ask clarifying questions only, if they ask other questions you can remind them that this is your cross-examination and they will have their turn in a few minutes, offer to answer in your next speech but explain you don't want to take the time to answer now.**

**In cross-ex try to boil your opponent's case down to a few simple points relating directly to the values and, not coincidentally, contradicting directly with your case. As the answerer, answer as clearly and simply as possible. Think about your response - don't be afraid to take some time, it will break your questioner's rhythm. You can talk forever on one topic and try to take up all the c-x time, but it will probably just make you look rude. Have confidence in your case. It is the answer to all of life's problems, remember? Sound as if you KNEW they were going to ask that, and are simply trying to let them see the Great Answer that your case presents.**

**On either side, be polite, don't get angry, and look at your judge the whole time. Don't look at your opponent during the round, watch your judge.**

**In the second speech the negative first reads his or her case, then refutes their opponent's case. Remember this when writing your negative - it needs to be 3-4 minutes long or less to allow time for refutation. You should start by directly relating points in your opponent's case to points in your case. This will lend validity to your arguments and make it easier to back up your statements. This is your only chance to bring up new arguments, however, so be certain to refute any major points your opponent brings up. Follow up the points and doubts brought up in cross-ex.**

**Second cross-ex proceeds much the same as the first.**

**Rebuttals follow the same rules outlined for the last half of the first negative. No new points may be brought up in these speeches, however, though some leniency is granted for the first affirmative, who of course hasn't had a chance to refute the negative's case. Some debaters say that the negative has the burdon of relating all the affermative's points back to the negative's case, but this is a nebulous rule and pretty much ignored. In any case, a creative affirmative can relate all the negative's points to the affirmative case, and argue them effectively, still well within the universal rule of "no new points in rebuttals." Back-up evidence is useful but not necessary. Keep evidence on file for any points that can't be clearly proven through common-knowledge logic, but use evidence only as a step in a chain of logic that proves your point. Be able to live without an ox box. Remember your last speech is your last chance to make an impression on the judge. Ending with a quote or a profound statement can work. Pace yourself so you don't have to rush through 10,000 little points in the last minute.**

**The last affirmative is a special case in rebuttals. You have very little time to talk, so boiling the whole (probably confusing) debate down to a few simple points that even a lay judge can understand is probably to your advantage. *Clearly* state how you've won the case through value, value criteria, and caseside points. Even if you're losing miserably. This is your last shot, the negative doesn't have another chance to talk. Be calm. If the judge thinks you're winning, you are simply validating his or her opinion. If he or she thinks you're losing and thinks you're faking it up there, they're only going to vote against you anyway. Can't hurt to gloss over the worst inadequacies of your round and highlight the good points.**

**The negative rebuttal does much of the same thing, though with greater caution since the affirmative does have a chance to refute your points. Again, the debate should be laid out in a few simple points, though the negative has time to do this with greater detail and care.**

**At no point should you ever feel the need to go into speed-and-spit techniques in L-D. Of course at first you'll wonder how you're going to make a 6-minute speech off the top of your head, and soon you'll be wondering if the timekeeper isn't cutting the minutes a little close. Even so, you shouldn't feel rushed to cram in all the points. If so, you need to take a couple minutes prep time and figure out what all those little disconnected points *really* mean, what the fundamental error of your opponent's stance is (there always is one... after all, they don't agree with YOU).**

**Speaking**

**Your coach can help you more with speaking than any guide, but here are a few basic tips. Try to speak smoothly, but don't fill in the blanks with "Uh..." Just pause, and lower your voice on the next statement as if the pause was dramatic and intentional. Practice your case in front of the mirror. Figure out what inflections and gestures you want to use reading that heart-rending conclusion, edit the run-on sentence to give yourself time to breathe. By the time you're done, you should be able to nearly read the case without looking at it, improving eye contact with the judge.**

**Judges**

**The judge is god. Your opponent does not exist, they are merely a dissenting voice to the truth you speak. It is the judge you must impress. If you convince the judge you are right, you will win the round. If not, chances are your opponent will win. Therefore you must read your judge, and speak to your judge. It doesn't hurt to act a little frightened and shy around your judge, but confident and professional to your opponent in front of the judge.**

**Pretend the judge is the president (the one you voted for) and you are approaching him or her about a topic in which you passionately believe. Don't strike up a conversation with the judge, unless they start it first. Even then, play something of the yes-man, as you would with an important public figure. Let the judge KNOW they are in power. A quiet "hello" upon entering the room won't hurt, but not "how are you doing?" That requires an answer. If they ask, a polite "fine, thanks" will suffice for an answer; don't tell them the story of your great aunt Mildred's recent funeral. Don't judge a book by its cover, but in time you will recognize lay judges from coaches, republicans from democrats, college students from varsity debaters. Speak to the type of judge you think you have. If your judge looks conservative, don't advocate anarchism. If it looks like a college student, throw a little humor into the round. Watch your judge THE WHOLE TIME for their reaction. If they frown at a little joke, keep it absolutely serious from there out.**

**College judges are probably the easiest, as they're near our age and usually laid back. Varsity judges are probably the worst, as each L-D debater has his/her own style, and is partial to a style similar to their own. Remember, always, though, you may be wrong. Don't insult democrats just because your judge looks like Rush Lindbaugh. Any listeners, from Newt Gingrich to Berke Breathed, should not be offended by what you say.**

**Vocabulary and Other Miscellaneous Tips**

**There are a few words which seem to appear only in L-D debate, and appear often. Among these are:**

* **Utilitarianism: The greatest good for the greatest number of people, held as the highest value. Majority rule is utilitarian, but so is communism.**
* **Pragmatic: Practical, the real-world scenario.**
* **Ideal: Opposite of pragmatic, what we'd LIKE to happen. Both are necessary to reasonable thought.**
* **Inherent: Inevitably and originally a part of, e.g. *"jealousy is an inherent part of human nature"***
* **Intrinsic: In the L-D sense, something that has value in and of itself. It is easiest to view in terms of motivation. An intrinsic motivation for getting a job is because you want to work there. You want the job because it is that job. In terms of values, Life is usually considered intrinsically valuable.**
* **Extrinsic: Opposite of intrinsic, something that has value because of what it does or causes. In terms of motivation, an extrinsic motivation for getting a job is because it pays good wages and has good benefits. You want the job for what it can give you. In terms of values, Social Contract would be mostly extrinsically valuable, because it gives us things like comfort and social order. You can use an extrinsic value in conjunction with an intrinsic one in a dual-value case to lend both practicality and idealism to your view.**
* **Social Contract: The Social Contract is essentially the agreement between a people and their government. However, when people quote the Social Contract they could be quoting any one of hundreds of written documents outlining what people think this relationship is, and what they think it ought to be.**

**There are three main writers credited with the classic social contract theories: Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau. Hobbes and Locke essentially agreed, but Hobbes was more vehement on the point, that humans were evil by nature, and government and Social Contract was all that kept us from reverting to animals. The people served the government, which was doing the people a favor. Rousseau's view was that people are basically good, and government exists to improve life for everyone.**

**By either viewpoint, government has two basic functions:**

* 1. **to protect its people**
	2. **IF its people are secure, then to provide services for these people.**

**Hobbes may argue that the second is not a duty of government, but in the U.S. the government certainly tries to do that. It can also be argued, in a Rousseau Social Contract case, that government exists to prevent tyranny of the majority.**

* **Maslow's Hierarchy: People use Maslow's Hierarchy as a system of ranking values, to prove one value higher than another. It looks like a system of values. It isn't. Maslow was a psychologist. Maslow's Hierarchy is a pyramid of psychological needs, not of values. It can be used to prove one value higher because it supports a psychological need, but just because a value is higher on Maslow's pyramid does *not* mean it is a higher value.**

**Essentially, the pyramid can be interpreted: Without food, air, and shelter, humans will not be safe, nor even need to think about being safe. S/he will be concerned exclusively with breathing or not starving. Without safety, man cannot have love and belongingness, or any form of social order, nor will s/he be concerned about getting along with others if s/he is in danger. Without love and belongingness, no true self-esteem can be formed. With all of these things accomplished correctly, a person may become self- actualized.**

**This is the sort of person all of us normal, fallible humans would find truly annoying. This person has figured out their system of morals, understands himself, etc. 100% grade-A superego. But within himself this person would be very calm and happy, regardless of we the imperfect. No one stays self-actualized forever, but a truly good person may reach it on occasion. Ghandi was self-actualized. The columns on the sides reflect the fact that Esthetics and Thought pervade all human activity. Even if you're starving, you'd sooner take a steak dinner by candlelight than a bowl of grey gruel. Even if you're starving, you're *thinking* of how to get food. Maslow used the Hierarchy to figure out where things may have gone wrong in a person's psyche. If their mother didn't love them, forgoing the Love and Belongingness need, chances are their self esteem will be harmed in later years.**

**Arguing Maslow as evidence that one goal is higher than another results in an endless loop: self-actualization is higher on the pyramid, therefore more valuable. But to be self-actualized, we must have safety first, so safety is the higher goal though it is lower on the pyramid. The second argument actually works, if their case compromises safety for self- actualization. Unless that is the case, however, an entire debate can rage for hours circling around this same argument.**

* 1. **Self-Actualization**
	2. **Self-Esteem**
	3. **Love and Belongingness**
	4. **Safety**
	5. **Food, air, shelter, sex, etc.**

**Other things you'll hear:**

**Generic disads from failed team debaters: everything in the world leads to nuclear war or anarchy. Don't bother arguing that nuclear war will never happen or that anarchy isn't such a bad idea. Just destroy the links (there's always a wild one that stretches it a little) and get on with it. Even just say to the judge, "My opponent's trying to tell you that a liberal arts education will lead to nuclear war. ExCUSE me, but some people have a liberal arts education RIGHT NOW and we're not glowing green yet, folks."**

**Point-sub-sub-sub-subpoint cases: just flow the main point and if they say you missed point 1-B- little 2 - little e, mention that that point was flowed under the umbrella of point 1, which you disproved clearly. If little e related to 1, it fell as well. If not, it did not directly relate to the topic and should never have been stated in the first place. Besides, your opponent SAID the gist of point 1 was "" in c-x, right? In short, force your opponent to debate the real issues and not piddly little subpoints. If you didn't catch it, chances are the judge didn't either.**

**Make certain you schedule yourself for at least two tournaments for each topic. You'll discover the holes in your case at the first tournament, and by the second you'll know all the major arguments against your cases, and have rebuttals against them already thought out.**

**A good argument in support of many values deals with means and ends. If your value is broader and more encompassing than theirs, you can argue that their value is a means to the end goal, your value. There are other means to the end goal... and which do we value more, the means or the goal? Of course, we value the goal. If you fall on the other side of this argument, you can argue that yours is the ONLY means to this goal, and therefore more valuable being necessary to theirs and intrinsically valuable as well.**

**Things to bring with you:**

1. **Some sort of containment system. Many people bring briefcases, but I always had a backpack instead.**
2. **The traditional two sets of pens in two different colors. Use one color to make the lines on your flowchart and the other to flow, or one for affirmative and the other for negative, or just use them for variety. Also three flowcharts (one to use, one to lose, and one to give to someone who forgot theirs).**
3. **A dictionary and thesaurus. The day my opponent came up with a case advocating amorality, I was very glad of my dictionary. A copy of the Value Debate Handbook can be useful, if you care to read through all the rules.**
4. **A book of quotes.**
5. **A typewritten, double-spaced copy of your case, in two separate folders for affirmative and negative. Keep an extra copy in your briefcase or flowcharts just in case you forget one. Your back-up evidence, with your favorite pieces picked out ahead of time, should go as well.**
6. **A reading book and/or set of headphones. You'll spend a lot of time waiting.**
7. **Mountain Dew or some other highly caffeineated beverage, snacks like candy and granola bars, and about $5-$10 per day for food. Tournament food is expensive, and often the team will pick a restaurant and go to dinner together.**
8. **Books that you know WELL, preferably some well-known writers as well as your favorite Star Trek novel. But anything can come up with good quotes occasionally, and it's impressive to be able to quote something from memory. Bring the books to make sure you have the quote right, and to prove that it actually says what you quoted. Writers such as Thoreau, Hobbes, Rousseau, Twain, Martin Luther King, and any of the great philosophers from Plato to modern times, make good reading material. Write an essay on one of them for English class to give yourself an excuse to read one of the Great essays.**