

## Handout on LD Debate Basics, and Judging Notes

### Overview

In every round, the judge has to:

- Take notes of (“flow”) the entire round
- Keep time and give time signals if the debaters need them
- Keep track of preparation time and tell debaters how much they have used
- Fill out the ballot with:
  - Required info: round number, your name, etc
  - Speaker points and win/loss
  - Critical and positive comments
  - Reason for decision

What you need:

- Approximately two pieces of paper per round
- Preferably two different-colored pens
- A timer, stopwatch, digital watch with seconds timer, etc.

### Elements of LD

Each debater’s case will have a value, criterion, and contentions. They may also have an opening quote, definitions, overviews or observations, etc. Regardless of how they label individual elements of your case, the judge should attempt to flow the substance and organization of the case as well as possible.

The **value** is the main theoretical premise behind the debater’s case. It will usually be something broad and generally considered good, such as justice, liberty, or governmental legitimacy. The value is not really an important argument in the round, but simply a way to define a debaters’ position. Many debaters make the mistake of arguing against the value as if it were a contention; instead, they should argue the value *as a value*. That is, they can either accept their opponent’s value or argue why their own is better, or they can indict the value or point out how it clashes with their opponent’s criterion or case position in general.

The **criterion** is often the first place you look when making a decision, because it is the judging standard for the round. Every voting issue should tie back to the criterion. The criterion can be anything as long as it is a standard that can be fulfilled. Maximization of autonomy, utilitarianism, or respect for human dignity are some common examples. The debater should meet the criterion they set up through arguments in their case and rebuttals, and generally that is their burden in order to prove or disprove the resolution.

The criterion is an opportunity for a debater to decide the basis upon which the round is judged; however, many debaters don’t take this opportunity seriously and instead use a criterion that is NOT a weighing standard (like “the social contract” or “deontology”), or fail to link back their arguments to the criterion. This does not mean they automatically lose, but it is something to

comment on and, if their opponent points this out, it is a reason to reject the debater's criterion and, potentially, their entire case.

The value and criterion should work together, but there is no set relationship between the two. Debaters may argue that their opponent's criterion doesn't measure their value, or their value doesn't measure their criterion, or something along those lines. Just disregard those arguments; as long as the value and criterion don't actually conflict (i.e. progress and morality) AND the opponent points that out, you can accept the combination.

The **contentions** are the main arguments that support the debater's position. They will take up most of the speeches and, usually, the rebuttals. Debaters will often have **subpoints** within their contentions (marked by letters), so your flow may have two contentions, each with a subpoint A and B. Alternate and/or less formal methods of internal organization (numbered arguments, clear transitions like "next" or "moreover," etc) are just fine. It's always good to be flexible about the way cases are structured as well as their substance, since it facilitates creative research and argumentation.

The contentions are supposed to focus on analysis rather than unwarranted assumptions. If an argument is not warranted—simply an assertion—you should not vote on it. However, if the other debater doesn't point out that it is an assertion, you may have to if it seems to become a major issue. But try not to. It's fine for contentions to include examples, and they should always contain evidence/quotations, but the focus should be on analysis, and if it is not, this is another good place to write criticisms on the ballot.

Two asides: First, different debate teams use more or less evidence than others. Judges shouldn't accept a debater's indictment of an argument simply because it doesn't include evidence, as long as the evidence contains warranted analysis (warrants explain how or why an argument or claim is true rather than merely stating a claim). Some debaters and judges mistakenly believe evidence and analysis are mutually exclusive, which is probably a result of the history of low-quality evidence in LD. Today, however, many teams will have high-quality analytical evidence, which should hold as much weight as the debater's own analysis as long as they can explain its impact to the criterion. Many debaters will refer to their evidence by the name of the author or source. If you are comfortable noting down the name of the source as you flow, it will often help in following the round.

Second, a note about helping your debaters prepare cases: The best case positions offer a clear thesis which defines the approach to the resolution (or "position") rather than simply a vaguely related assortment of random arguments. Having a solid position adds cohesiveness to the debate and forces the debater to tie every argument back to a clear criterion. As far as researching for debate cases, sometimes debaters should research with specific arguments in mind, and other times it is advisable to simply read articles and books about the topic to look for new ideas. Being flexible and creative with research and case-writing makes debate more educational and fun. Finally, often times resolutions will implicate current political and social events. For example, the current resolution on immigration policy gives rise to arguments about terrorism, privacy, multiculturalism, American citizenship, public panics, propaganda, etc. It is absolutely relevant to include these issues in debate arguments if a debater has interest in

researching or writing about them and working them into analytical case positions (or as examples supporting analytical arguments).

### **Logistics of LD judging**

The schedule for each round will tell you what room you'll be in and the codes of the debaters you are judging. You don't need to write this down; simply pick up the ballot and head to the round. The ballot will have some information for you to fill in: the round number, your name, and sometimes your affiliation or the date. The debaters should fill out their names and school codes on the ballot.

If the debaters ask you questions about how you judge before it begins (for example, whether you mind if they speak quickly or how you judge), that's great. Answer them honestly. If debaters ask me what arguments I vote on, I just tell them I vote on whichever arguments become important in that particular round. It is the debaters' job to point out the main/voting issues in their last speeches, so the judge doesn't even have to decide what to vote on. If you do not want the debaters to speak quickly, use a lot of jargon, or refer to evidence by author names in their rebuttals, etc, feel free to tell them that.

### **Format of the round**

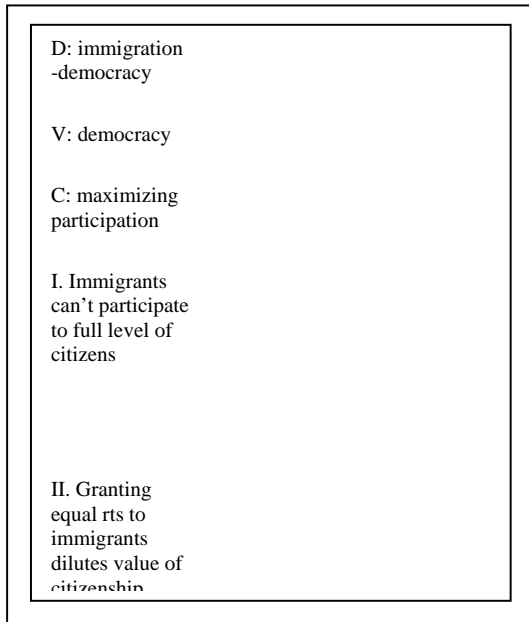
In every LD round, the order of speeches is as follows:

- |   |                  |
|---|------------------|
| 1. 1AC = first affirmative constructive | <b>6 minutes</b> |
| 2. CX = cross examination               | <b>3 minutes</b> |
| 3. NC = negative constructive           | <b>7 minutes</b> |
| 4. CX = cross examination               | <b>3 minutes</b> |
| 5. 1AR = first affirmative rebuttal     | <b>4 minutes</b> |
| 6. NR = negative rebuttal               | <b>6 minutes</b> |
| 7. 2AR = second affirmative rebuttal    | <b>3 minutes</b> |

The debaters will each have preparation (“prep”) time of usually three minutes per person, to be split up however they choose. The judge should keep time during speeches and announce or signal how much time has been used every minute and at 30 seconds, 15 seconds, and the last 5 seconds. If the debaters have timers, you can ask them whether they need time signals. Additionally, when a debater is using prep time, call out how much they have used every 30 seconds, and when there are 10 seconds remaining.

Aside from giving time signals, the judge's only job during the round is to take notes or flow the round. These should be as complete as necessary. I suggest you start with two pieces of paper, one for the affirmative case and one for the negative case. During the 1AC, write the affirmative

case in one color on the left margin of your affirmative sheet of paper like this:



Here, the affirmative has defined “immigration” and “democracy,” has a value of democracy, a criterion of maximizing participation, and two contentions. In a real round, you would write more specific arguments within the contentions, but the outline would be the same.

After affirmative finishes their six-minute constructive, the negative has three minutes to cross-examine the affirmative. They may ask clarification questions, but should spend the time trying to expose weaknesses in the affirmative case. It is fine for the debaters to be argumentative in CX as long as they don't become overly rude, and it is also fine for the person asking the questions to cut off the other debater if they ramble on for too long. The debaters should always be facing the judge in CX.

After CX, the negative will probably use at least half their prep time. When they are ready to speak, note how much prep time they have left, then get ready to flow the NC. Start on your blank sheet for the negative and write down their case. It will follow the same framework as the affirmative except it will be shorter and probably not include definitions (although it certainly can).

The seven-minute NC includes not only the negative case, but after reading their case the negative will make arguments against the affirmative case. About halfway into the speech, the negative will tell you they are moving to the affirmative, so switch over to your other sheet of paper and write down their arguments to the affirmative case. Draw arrows to note which parts of the affirmative case they are making arguments against. For example:

V: Justice -> 1. too vague 2. negative Value is prereq.
C: autonomy -> xxxx
I. Non-citizens can't participate
-cultural differences hinder discourse -> 1. No, discourse should be multicultural in democ.

The black ink is the affirmative case and the red is the response by the negative. The negative should respond to each point on the affirmative flow (although they may accept the definitions, value, criterion, observations, etc.). They should not run out of time before they argue against the last points on the affirmative flow. If, because of time constraints or for any reason, a debater does not respond to an argument, that argument is “dropped” and that debater cannot mention it again. If they do mention it, ignore the argument, don’t vote on it, and you should probably make a comment on the ballot.

After the NC, the affirmative has three minutes to cross-examine the negative, which should follow the same format as the previous CX, except the affirmative is free to ask questions about the negative arguments against the affirmative case, as well as the negative case (as well as anything else relevant to the round).

The final three speeches are all rebuttals. The debaters will tell you, either before they begin speaking or when they begin speaking, which case they are going to argue first. It is up to the debater to, during the rebuttal, continually tell you where they are on the flow, so you can follow and write down every argument.

The 1AR has four minutes to argue each point on both sides, so the affirmative may speak slightly quickly. In the 1AR, the affirmative should cover the entire negative case, and all the negative responses to the affirmative case. They should also “extend” or re-explain the argument from their case they are winning, and give “impacts” which tell you why they are fulfilling their criterion. Sometimes the debaters will agree on a combination of criteria, in which case they can impact to that shared standard.

In the NR, the negative will essentially follow the 1AR format, covering each point on both cases. However, the negative also has to **crystallize**. Crystallization is the debater’s opportunity to point out the voting issues in the round. They should outline at least 2 main voting issues and explain why they are winning them and how they tie back to the criterion. Most negative debaters will crystallize at the end of the NR, but sometimes they will do it as they go down the flow. Neither is necessarily preferable; what is important is that they do give voting issues and explain why they are winning them and how they fulfill the criterion/criteria.

The 2AR should consist entirely of crystallization, though it should also include responses to the negative's voting issues.

NOTE: The NR and 2AR may include new arguments. These may be responses to arguments that they previously dropped or simply brand new claims. DO NOT write them down or vote on them. It is a fundamental rule of LD that you cannot make new arguments in your final speech. It is not a reason to lose the round (assuming they also provide legitimate voting issues), though you may want to dock their speaker points by one or two.

### **After the round**

After the round the debaters may ask for a critique and/or a disclosure (telling them who won). If you want to give comments or explain who you voted for and why, that's great, though you are not obligated to. If a debater blatantly misconstrued an argument, used a historically example inaccurately, or was exceptionally rude, you probably should point that out so they don't go into the next round and do the same thing. Less immediate comments are always welcome, but it's up to you. Some tournaments will have policies encouraging or banning oral critiques and/or disclosures, so it's a good idea to check on that, particularly at smaller tournaments.

Finally, you can finish filling out the ballot. At this point, it may already include various critical and complimentary comments on the cases and rebuttals. Feel free to comment on speaking style as well as argumentation. But it is also important to write the reasons for your decision (RFD).

In making a decision, the most obvious way is to look at the crystallization issues and determine who is winning them, which ones outweigh the others, and which have the clearest and strongest impact to the criterion. Ideally the debaters will tell you this in the round, but if they don't, you may have to weigh the main issues for yourself.

Since it is the debaters' job to outline which arguments you should vote on, it is very important to try not to vote on arguments that are not labeled as voting issues, even if you think they should have been, though you may want to comment on the ballot that a specific issue should have been included in crystallization.

A typical RFD will look something like this:

“The debaters agree that both criteria are important, but the affirmative proves that their criterion, maximizing participation, is a prerequisite to the negative criterion, rule by the people. I don't vote on the negative's first voting issue, multiculturalism, since the affirmative proves that rights restrictions won't actually stop individuals from participating. The negative is winning their second voting issue about assimilation harming rule by the people, and this does link back to the criterion; however, the affirmative is clearly winning both of their main issues, on the value of citizenship and on educating immigrants to understand the American system. Because 2AR links these back to participation, which is the primary standard, and also explains why they outweigh the impacts of the negative voting issues, I vote affirmative.”

Your RFD may be considerably less (or more) detailed depending on how good the round is and how many issues there are.

Finally, in every round you must assign **speaker points** to the debaters. You can give the same points to both debaters, but make sure you do not give the winner lower points than the losing debater. Speaker points are not only a measure of a debater's speaking skills (poise, fluency, etc) but also their technical skills (analysis, argumentation, coverage, ability to give clear voting issues and link them to the criterion). Although the ballot may outline a system, (15-20 = bad, 21-24 = average, etc) **ignore it**. The ballot will outline a range of 0-30, 15-30 or 20-30, but the actual average range is 25-30. Do not go below 25 unless the debater makes many major errors or is rude or offensive (and never go below 20 even if the ballot says you can). Don't go above 28 unless the debater demonstrates both persuasion and technical skills.