



Massachusetts Forensic League

Lincoln Douglas Judge Manual

On behalf of the Massachusetts Forensic League and all member schools, we would like to thank you for judging for us today. Without you, this tournament could not function. We hope that you enjoy the results of the hard work that these competitors have put into preparing their cases and arguments.

This booklet has been written to help you with the practicalities of judging high school debates. While it has many guidelines, there are very few “rules” in debate. There may be times when this booklet does not apply to the debate you are judging. Feel free to use your common sense and judgment. If you have any type of question during the day, please ask a tournament official. Remember that you are doing all the debaters a favor, and that all will end well if you rely on your judgments.

The Tournament

Your school’s head coach should tell you where and when you should arrive at the tournament site. When you do arrive at the tournament site, find the coach to find out which pool you are in. You will often be assigned to judge only one of the debate events, and sometimes even just a segment of a single event, for the day. If you can’t find him/her, check in at the registration table, usually in the main lobby, and the tournament staff will help you find someone from your school.

The control center of the tournament is the tabulation room, which everyone will refer to as the “tab” room. From this room emerge all schedules, instructions, and results — which requires that into this room go all ballots, problems, and complaints. Work is feverish here, and it is important that mistakes be avoided. The MFL keeps a “closed tab”, meaning that the room is off-limits to all who are not assigned to work there. However, there will be a table set up in front of the tab room, referred to as the Ballot Table – the people there will be able to answer questions and direct requests into Tab. Some tournaments will also supply runners — students or helpers from the host school — who are posted around the tournament to answer questions.

The rest of the tournament is comprised of the classrooms of the school. It is in these rooms that the debates will take place. It is important that these rooms be used and not abused. Please direct students away from school equipment if you think their activities suspicious. Usually, these rooms will be set up so that the judge may sit in the center, facing front, with the debaters at the front, to either side. Thus the speaker may face the judge from his position at the front of the room. The debaters will usually mark their names on the blackboard to help you identify them. When you leave the room, please be sure you leave nothing behind, as judges will be switching rooms throughout the day.

The Schematic: Before the beginning of each debate round, the tab room will issue a schedule listing the room, debaters, and judges involved in each debate. We call this the “schematic.” These are passed out to all judges and debaters, though you occasionally may have to seek one out. There are separate schematics for each event, and sometimes each event will be divided between divisions (“Varsity” and “Novice”), so be sure you’re looking at the right schematic. Your coach can tell you which divisions you are judging. Your job is to find your name in the judge column, see what room you are directed to, and go there. Pick up “ballots”, or comment sheets, from the tournament staff on the way – either at the ballot table or from runners who will supply them when the schematic is released. There are different types of ballots for each debate event – be sure you have picked up the right ballot for the debate event you are judging.

Flights: Sometimes your name will be listed next to two sets of debaters. This means the tournament is “double-flighted”, because there are more debates than judges or rooms. A double-flighted tournament means that a judge will watch one debate – marked as the “A flight” – first, and then watch another pair of debaters debate, called the “B flight”. Flights are assigned by chance – there is no qualitative distinction between the flights. Follow the instructions of the tournament staff whether to hand in your ballot between flights or to watch both debates before handing in your ballots.

Conducting the Round

After you have read the schematic, picked up your ballots, and found your assigned room, you will find yourself in a debate “round.” There will be several rounds during the day, in which one or two-person teams meet similar teams from other schools. Teams or individuals will typically debate both sides of the topic during the day, going back and forth from round to round. From the decisions in their rounds, debaters build a win-loss record which will be used to determine the winners. You are present to determine the winner and create those win-loss records.

When you enter the room, the debaters usually will have written their names or codes on the blackboard. If they haven't, ask them for this information. Copy it onto the ballot, being careful to note which debater or team is speaking on the affirmative and which is speaking on the negative. The students are assigned which side of the debate they are on by the schematic, so they should already know. Also, write your name or judge's code in the space provided, and your school. If you have students in your round whom you know personally, contact the tab room before starting the round. They will make any necessary adjustments

The debaters will then get up and deliver timed speeches that comprise the debate. The times and pattern for these speeches will be indicated on the ballot, and depend on the event. You should listen to these speeches, and time them to ensure the debaters do not go over time. If asked, please provide time signals to debaters – however, some debaters will time themselves, or sometimes their teammate or audience member will keep time for them. This is permitted, but maintain an “official” time as well on your own. A 15-20 second grace period is permitted for debaters to finish their sentences or thoughts at the time limit.

Remind all people in the room to turn off cell phones and beepers before the round begins. It is common courtesy to listen with interest to all students. No eating or drinking should take place during a round of competition. Do not stop a student during a presentation unless there is an emergency (e.g. fire alarm) or a significant disruption to the performance that clearly impacts the contestant's ability to proceed. In that case, please allow the contestant to start again (from the beginning) once the disruption ceases.

After the round is done, decide who has won the debate using the guidelines listed below. It is important to judge based only on what the debaters tell you. You are judging not who is “right”, but who is most skilled at debating. You may feel quite strongly that one side or the other is correct, and you may also be able to think of strong arguments yourself. Please do not let these arguments affect your decision; instead decide based on what happens inside the round. Debaters should only be responsible for arguments that their opponents present, not ones in the minds of the judges, since these are not spoken in the round.

Write comments for each debater, and also the Reason For Decision, which describes your reasons for deciding the round as you did. Clearly mark the school and the code/name of the winner on your ballot, and hand it into the ballot staff as instructed.

Lincoln-Douglas Debate

Lincoln-Douglas, or LD, debate involves two individual students each debating a proposition of value. Value debate is different from debate about specific governmental policy in that it addresses broader questions of ethics, morality and philosophy. This question will be

phrased in a “resolution”, which is a statement of value that the affirmative debater will be tasked with defending, and the negative will be tasked with attacking. Debaters will debate such topics of the role of the individual’s rights versus those of society, what constitutes a fair society, and elements thereof, among other topics. Lincoln-Douglas debaters across the nation debate the same topic for two month time periods.

The debate consists of two constructive speeches, each followed by a three-minute cross examination period. After the constructives and cross-examination, each debater then will speak for in rebuttal. The timing of the speeches is:

6 Minutes:	Affirmative Constructive	(AC)
3 Minutes:	Cross-examination	(CX)
7 Minutes:	Negative Constructive	(NC)
3 Minutes:	Cross-examination	(CX)
4 Minutes:	First Affirmative Rebuttal	(1AR)
6 Minutes:	Negative Rebuttal	(NR)
3 Minutes:	Second Affirmative Rebuttal	(2AR)

The debate is so timed to give the affirmative speaker the first and last word, but also to give each speaker an equal amount of time. Each kind of speech serves a different purpose.

1. **The Constructive:** Constructives are where the debaters establish their case and the analysis in support of their side. The affirmative will define the terms of the resolutions, and then present their case. Cases feature several common elements.

The Value Premise is one of the first things you may hear. This is a value the debater will argue you should use to weigh the round. If the debater tells you that his or her value premise is justice, that means you will be judging the round based on who convinces you that they are taking the most just course of action. Often the debater will supply a *value criterion* to weigh their value premise. The criterion is a guide to help you determine who best upholds the value. So if the value premise is “justice” and the criterion “giving each his/her fair due”, you would know justice is upheld if each is given his/her fair due.

Contentions are the different ways in which the debaters show you that they uphold their values. They tend to vary greatly and can be very interesting. It is really important that they can relate their contentions back to their value structure.

Evidence is important and debaters often employ it, the most important thing is for them to provide analysis behind all of their main ideas. Evidence is often referred to as cards. The “John Smith card” will usually be analysis written by John Smith.

2. **Cross-examination** periods are chances for the opponents to clarify each others’ cases in the round, in order to better respond to their opponent’s points. These are not intended to be prosecutorial sessions where the questioner backs the questioned into a corner. The questioner should always question and avoid statements of any kind.

3. **Rebuttals** occur after the constructives and cross examinations. They are a chance for each side to clarify what they presented, and show how they best answered the points of the other side. Rebuttals are not a chance to make sudden, surprise introductions of new analysis or evidence. Debaters should refrain from bringing in new material; judges should disregard any material that their opponents correctly identify as being completely new and not a response to the others’ case. This rule is somewhat relaxed during the 1AR, as this is the first chance the affirmative has to respond to the negative case – but even then, they should refrain from introducing material that does not directly respond to the negative case.

Crystallization: The debaters will clarify the round and present arguments to you on which issues are the most important, and how they won on those issues. They will sometimes refer to these as “voting issues”. Listen to the debaters and judge which of them presents the strongest case based on their own criteria.

Adjudicating LD Debate: When it comes to deciding who won the round you basically are judging who has best supported their side. To do so, it may help to look at the following:

a. *Defense of the basic structure:* Have both debaters given you a clear framework to decide the round? Have they shown you throughout the round how they win based on it? Have they shown you how their opponent does not?

b. *Defense of contentions:* Have the debaters provided you with good, clear ideas and analysis behind them? Do these ideas have evidence or analysis to back them up? Do they link back to the framework? Whose ideas are more convincing?

c. *Harms vs. benefits:* this is a common way that the debaters will tell you in their speeches to look at the round. They want you to weigh the harms of each course of action and the benefits of each course of action. Their job is to show you that their side wins because they have more benefits than harms.

d. *Impacts*: it's a good idea to look at the impacts of the actions the debater is proposing, not just the actions by themselves. You want to ask yourself, what will happen if the debater's course of action is taken? Does this coincide with their value?

Speaker Points: Along with the basic decision, you will also be asked to give speaker points to each debater. The points go up to 30. Judges never give below a 20 unless there are very extreme circumstances. If the debater is a good or great speaker, somewhere between a 27 and a 30 should be given. If he or she is mediocre, a 24 to a 26 should be given. And if he or she is a rather poor speaker, they should get somewhere from a 20 to a 23.

Flowing

To “flow” a round is to use a note-taking technique which the debaters themselves employ to track arguments in both forms of debate. No matter what the debaters themselves say, flowing a round is not *required* of a judge. However, it is often an invaluable aid for the judges themselves to track arguments and see how the debate has taken shape. You are encouraged to try it, especially if you find it difficult to remember who said what at the end of the round. Virtually all experienced judges flow debates.

Flowing is usually done with a sheet or sheets of paper divided into columns for each speech. Sometimes debaters and judges will flow in two colors of pen, one for things said by each side of the debate, to help keep track. The idea is to write shorthand notes about the arguments presented by one side of the debate down a column, and then write the responses that the other side presents to those arguments in the next column, with lines connecting the arguments to the responses. The next speech will be in the third column, and so on until you have constructed a picture of the entire debate. After the debate, you will best be able to see how each debater answered the points of the other side, and will be able to confirm the claims made by each side during their rebuttals and crystallization. A flow is often hard to understand for anyone except the person who wrote it, but ask an experienced judge to see an example of a flow if you want a better picture.

Drops: The debaters may refer to the other having “dropped” an argument in rebuttals. A drop is when one debater presents an argument, and the other debater fails to answer it. It is commonly accepted in debate that when this occurs, the argument is conceded by the side that dropped it. The flow will help you track this.