

What to Expect Competing in Lincoln-Douglas Debate

Lincoln-Douglas Debate (LD) is a one-on-one debate event. Topics range from individual freedom versus the collective good to economic development versus environmental protection. Students may consult evidence gathered prior to the debate. An entire debate is roughly 45 minutes and consists of constructive speeches, rebuttals, and cross-examination. **Lily Perry** explains what it's like to do Lincoln-Douglas Debate.

Why did you choose your event?

I was attracted to the description of LD for two main reasons: the philosophical aspect and the lack of a partner. The idea of debating about philosophy appealed to me because I was accustomed to using only facts and figures to support many arguments in school essays or presentations; I had never used moral arguments. The lack of a partner appealed to me because I felt that if I had a partner, either my partner or I would slack off, leaving one person to do more than his or her fair share of work. After experiencing my first LD tournament, I knew that I would remain an LDer because I loved the challenge that each round offered and using the value and value criterion set that LD requires.

What skills are important in LD?

The independence LD offers is something I highly value. Independence means more than simply lacking a partner; independence allows LDers to become self-sufficient. We are forced to research and write cases affirming and negating the resolution by ourselves. LDers must be able to consider each side of any topic by themselves. Because LDers are alone and have only four minutes of total prep time, we need to be able to think of an argument for our opponent's statements and find evidence to back up our arguments by ourselves within the amount of prep time we have.

What kind of challenges did you face in round?

LD challenged me to research important issues in the world, view each issue from more than one perspective, and weigh the

issues with different sets of values. Before tournaments, I always prepared refutations for possible arguments my opponents would make. The toughest rounds are the ones in which an opponent uses an argument I never thought of before. In these rounds, I am challenged to think quickly and use the knowledge I have to refute my opponent's argument. Another challenge for me is giving speeches that fit within the time limits. In rounds, I tend to have more to say than there is time to say it! I am challenged to address the main arguments of each round clearly and concisely.

What does a typical tournament look like for an Lincoln Douglas Debater?

Once the pairings are posted for the first round, an LDer will calmly gather their evidence binder and proceed towards the room. While the affirmative side gives their speech, the negative side will write the affirmative's contentions and main supporting evidence while drafting ideas he or she will use to refute the affirmative's arguments. The affirmative side does the same during the negative side's speech. Cross examinations are usually intense as both sides attempt to catch the other in a trap. Each debater spins a web of questions to lead the opponent to contradict their case. Rounds typically fly by with not a single dull moment. In between rounds, LDers will mingle with their teammates or friends from other schools.



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— Lily Perry, student,
Iolani School, HI