

# How to Judge and Write a Ballot for LD Debate

## Rule 1: Do Not Intervene

As a judge it is important to remember that you must be completely unbiased. The Greek term “tabula rosa” means blank slate. This is exactly what you must be when you walk into a round holding a debate ballot. You must leave all personal feelings once you enter the room. You must also not refer to any knowledge you have about the topic when making your decision. The only information you can use when filling out the ballot is the information presented by the debaters. If one debater makes an inaccurate claim that you know is false but the opponent says nothing against it, you cannot intervene and not accept it. If you were to intervene than the debater would be unfairly debating you rather than the opponent. You may write a criticism of the argument on the ballot so the debater can rectify the argument for future rounds but you should not vote against it without some form of refutation by the opponent.

Limited tabula rosa: you do not have to accept outrageous claims. The argument should be sound enough to stand on its own. If a debater makes the claim “The world is flat” without any proof, you do not have to accept it.

## What to Look For

The affirmative is trying to prove the resolution (topic) to be true while the negative is trying to class and disprove the affirmative’s position. Each debater will present standards that will be proven with contentions (main arguments).

### Standards:

- **Value Premise** – the motivational theme behind the case’s position. We are motivated by values in everyday life. If we go to war, we say it is in the name of *freedom, democracy, or life*. If we attend school, we say it is important because we value *knowledge, and security* (I want to have a good job).
- **Criterion** – the guideline or means of achieving the value/s. We can say we value something but it is difficult to prove that we are achieving it or have achieved it unless we set a standard that we can use for measuring. If we use the value of *democracy* as our reason for going to war, how do we know when it is achieved? We must set a criterion, such as, *the disempowerment of our enemy who threatens democracy* to explain how the value will be achieved. The debater can contend he or she should win the round if he or she proves affirming or negating the round through the use of the criterion will achieve the value.

### Contentions:

Each debater will prove his or her standards with arguments that will prove the criterion. In each main argument there must be a **claim** (a simple sentence expressing the argument’s position), a **warrant** (analysis and evidence proving the position to be true) and an **impact** (analysis indicating why the position is important and how it proves the criterion).

Each debater will present his or her standards and contentions in the round. Both debaters must attack the opponent’s contentions and defend his or her contentions while arguing for which standards should be used for judging the round. Go with the standard you feel has been argued the strongest in the round and reference the contentions that persuaded you to make your decision.

### What to Write:

Try to breakdown your critique of each debater by focusing on **presentation**, the **logic of the case** (did it make sense), **argumentation** (how well the debater attacked and responded to attacks) and **conclusion** (did they provide an overall summary of what was important in the round).

A judge must also rate each debater on his or her presentation based on a scale of 1 to 10. The **speaker points** should reflect the overall presentation (fluency, poise and persuasiveness) of each speaker and should not pertain to the win/loss decision. A losing debater can be awarded higher points than the winning speaker.

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## Middle School Lincoln- Douglas Debate Ballot

EXAMPLE

Round 2 Room 101 Judge T. Judge

Affirmative Code BA132 Negative Code ZT120

Name of Aff. K. Tyler Name of Neg. M. Knight

In my judgment as evaluator, the better job of overall debating in this round was done by the Affirmative  
(Aff. or Neg.)

	Clearly Excellent			Very Good			Good			Fair	
Affirmative Speaker Points	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
Negative Speaker Points	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	

Suggestions to debaters and an explanation of the reason for decision:

Standards (Value/ Criteria Clash)

Both debaters argued for freedom as the value for the round. The affirmative proved that freedom was best achieved when we use the criterion of protecting individual rights. The negative's criterion was not brought up after the first speech so the round's standards was based on which side could prove that protecting individual rights would achieve freedom.

Case Analysis

The affirmative's first contention of national security didn't have anything to do with her standards. Perhaps she should consider changing it to something that fits with her criterion.

The negative's criterion is weak and I think that is why it was not significant in the round. The negative's two contentions are strong so changing the criterion would make defending the position easier.

Rebuttals

The affirmative used her second and third contention to support her standards well. She also did a great job of attacking all the negative's arguments.

The negative was able to attack the first contentions of the affirmative's case but did not say anything about the third contention. The negative also did not refute the attacks on his second contention.

Presentation

Affirmative: Be careful not to appear too aggressive when asking questions. Nice job on the 1AR. Your speed and fluency were great!

Negative: Great job with handling the CX period. Try to create some organization in the rebuttal. You jumped all around and it was hard to follow.

Reason for Decision

The affirmative proved that personal protection (2<sup>nd</sup> contention) and impartial juries (3<sup>rd</sup> contention) help protect individual rights (criterion) and uphold freedom (value). While the negative's argument of racism (2<sup>nd</sup> contention) does offer some doubt, he did not address the affirmative's 3<sup>rd</sup> contention that mentions the safe guards within the system.

Signature of Judge T. Judge Affiliation Zeta MS

Time Limits: AC 6 min. CX 3 min. NC 7 min. CX 3 min. 1AR 4 min. NR 6min. 2AR 3 min. Prep. 5 min