Lincoln/Douglas Debate

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Debating is like Fencing

• Thrust
  – Making assertions backed by evidence

• Parry
  – Refuting opponents assertions
Burden of Proof

• In a formal argument, the Affirmative must establish a prima facie case (that stands on its own) and thus carries the burden of proof. The Negative only needs to show that the case is not proven to win the argument and thus may well focus on attacking and disproving the given case.

• An alternative case may also be given, but is not needed.
Format

- First Affirmative Constructive – 7 minutes
- *Cross Examination of the Affirmative by the Negative* – 3 minutes
- First Negative Constructive – 8 minutes
- *Cross Examination of the Negative by the Affirmative* – 3 minutes

- Rebuttal Speeches – *No new arguments are allowed* – new evidence, analysis of existing arguments is allowed
- First Affirmative Rebuttal) - 4 minutes
- Negative Rebuttal – 7 minutes
- Second Affirmative Rebuttal – 4 minutes
First Affirmative Constructive

*Prepared written speech*

**Prima Facie case**

- State the resolution
  - State “I support the resolution”
- Short introduction that attracts the audience’s attention and interest in the topic
- Clearly state each of your principal assertions
- Develop each assertion with reason and evidence
- Conclude by concisely restating main
First Negative Constructive

*First part prepared written speech then extemporaneous*

- State the resolution
  - State “I oppose the resolution”
- Short introduction that attracts the audience’s attention and interest in the topic
- Clearly state each of your principal assertions
- Develop each assertion with reason and evidence
- Refute Affirmative’s assertions
- Conclude by concisely restating main assertions
First Affirmative Rebuttal

No new evidence allowed
• Respond to the Negative Assertions
  Refute them
  – Show how they are not as strong/relevant as the Affirmative assertions
• Rebuild the Affirmative case
Negative Rebuttal

• Respond to latest Affirmative arguments
• Make your final case to the audience that the Negative position is superior to the Affirmative
• Try and convince the audience the Affirmative has failed to carry the burden of proof
• Summarize the debate and conclude effectively and ask for the audience to agree with the Negative position
Second Affirmative Rebuttal

• Respond to final Negative arguments
• Summarize the debate and show the audience how the Affirmative position is superior – and the Affirmative has carried the burden of proof
• Conclude by summarizing one to three main points.
Refutation

- Logic
- Definitions
- Analogies
- Evidence
  - Examples
  - Data
  - Experts
- Connections between assertion and evidence
- Present counter-arguments
Refute Logic

- Check that logical connections are clear and sound.
- Watch for unfounded assumptions.
- Test causes for clear and direct connections.
- Check that generalizations, inductive and deductive arguments are used in the right way.
- Look for bias, intentional or otherwise.
- Watch out for distractions and changing the subject.
- Show that they are using a fallacy of some sort.
Refute Definitions

• Check for single, clear meanings.
• Verify that meanings are clear to everyone.
• Seek ambiguity and uncertainty.
• Challenge expertise and assumptions of authority.
• Show that there are contradictory definitions.
Refute Analogies

• Show why situations are not analogous

• Extend analogy to absurd situation
Refute Evidence

• Example
  – Show that example is not typical
  – Give counter-examples

• Data
  – Show that there is not enough data being used.
  – Show that some critical evidence is not being used.
  – Indicate how data that might refute the argument is being ignored.
  – Show how data is being misinterpreted or misrepresented.
  – Seek to uncover suppressed evidence.

• Question expert testimony
Cross Examination

• Basic function is refutation
• You ask questions – have a strategy or at the very least a direction to your questioning
• Be courteous
• Face the audience