

THE NCFCA COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO VALUE DEBATE

Competitor's Handbook

National Christian Forensics and Communications Association

By Christy Shipe

First Edition, April 2019

Institute for Excellence in Writing, L.L.C.

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*The NCFCA Comprehensive Guide to Value Debate
Competitor's Handbook*

First Edition, April 2019

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LESSON 1: INTRODUCTION TO VALUE DEBATE	3
Foundation of Debate.....	3
<i>Understanding God</i>	3
<i>Understanding Man</i>	4
Purpose of Debate.....	5
Basics of Value Debate.....	7
Discussion Questions.....	11
Homework Assignment.....	12
LEARNING LOGIC 1: INTRODUCTION TO LOGIC	13
Discussion Questions.....	14
Homework Assignment.....	14
LESSON 2: PRESUPPOSITIONS	
1. Logic is the foundation of value debate.....	15
2. The resolution is debatable.....	16
3. Both sides must discuss the resolution.....	16
4. The burden of proof is symmetrical.....	17
<i>Resolutive Burden of Proof</i>	17
<i>Argumentative Burden of Proof</i>	18
5. The burden of proof is general.....	18
6. Both sides must present prima facie cases.....	19
7. Both sides have a burden of rebuttal.....	19
Discussion Questions.....	21
Homework Assignment.....	22
Activity 2.1 Identifying Values.....	23
LEARNING LOGIC 2: TWO TYPES OF LOGIC	25
Discussion Questions.....	27
Exercise.....	27
Homework Assignment.....	27

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LESSON 3: RESOLUTIONS AND RESEARCH	28
Resolutions	28
Research	30
<i>Topic Specific Reading</i>	30
<i>Philosophical Reading</i>	31
Discussion Questions	34
Homework Assignment	35
Activity 3.1 Impromptu Speaking.....	36
Activity 3.2 Analyzing the Resolution.....	38
LEARNING LOGIC 3: SYLLOGISMS	41
Discussion Questions	43
Exercise	43
Homework Assignment	44
LESSON 4: INTRODUCTION, DEFINITIONS, AND ANALYSIS	45
Introduction.....	46
Definitions	47
<i>Considering the Resolutonal Context</i>	48
<i>Choosing a Respected Source</i>	49
<i>Creating a Reasonable Divide</i>	51
Resolutonal Analysis.....	51
<i>Defining the Conflict</i>	52
<i>Defining the Actor</i>	53
Discussion Questions	56
Homework Assignment	57
Activity 4.1 Analyzing Definitions Sample.....	58
Activity 4.2 Where’s the Conflict.....	62
LEARNING LOGIC 4: CATEGORICAL SYLLOGISMS	67
Discussion Questions	72
Exercise	72
Homework Assignment	74

LESSON 5: STANDARD75

 The Framework75

Understanding the Value75

Understanding the Criterion77

 The Function80

 The Process84

Researching the Standard85

Choosing the Standard85

Writing the Standard90

 Discussion Questions91

 Homework Assignment92

LEARNING LOGIC 5: DISJUNCTIVE SYLLOGISMS93

LESSON 6: CONTENTIONS95

 Purpose95

Finding Examples101

Choosing Examples104

Writing Contentions105

 Discussion Questions107

 Homework Assignment108

 Activity 6.1 Outline Sample Negative Case109

 Activity 6.2 Claim, Warrant, Impact110

LEARNING LOGIC 6: CONDITIONAL SYLLOGISMS111

 Affirming the Antecedent112

 Denying the Antecedent113

 Affirming the Consequent113

 Denying the Consequent113

 Hypothetical Syllogism114

 Exercise115

 Homework Assignment117

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LESSON 7: EVIDENCE 118

Reasoning Alone 118

Reasoning with Evidence 119

Finding Evidence 120

Choosing Evidence 121

Preparing Evidence 124

Using Evidence 127

Using the Bible 130

Discussion Questions 131

Homework Assignment 132

Activity 7.1 Cut & Tag Evidence 133

LEARNING LOGIC 7: POLYSYLLOGISMS 135

Discussion Questions 138

Exercises 139

Homework Assignment 139

LESSON 8: REFUTATION AND NEGATIVE STRATEGY 140

Refutation 140

Refuting Arguments 140

Refuting Evidence 142

Refuting Rule Violations 142

Negative Strategy 144

Constructing a Negative Case 144

Refuting the Affirmative Case 145

Evaluating Other Negative Options 149

Structuring the Negative Constructive Speech 151

Preparing for the Negative 154

Winning the Round 155

Conclusion 155

Discussion Questions 156

Homework Assignment 157

Activity 8.1 Four-Point Refutation 158

LEARNING LOGIC 8: SYLLOGISMS FOR VALUE DEBATE 160

Categorical Syllogisms for Definitions 160

Qualifying Language 163

Using Verbs 163

Conditional Syllogisms for Causal Arguments 163

Discussion Questions 165

Exercises 166

Homework Assignment 166

LESSON 9: REBUTTALS & CROSS-EXAMINATION 167

Rebuttals 167

 Cross-Examination 168

Questioning Your Opponent 169

Responding to Your Opponent 173

Preparing for Cross-Examination 173

 Conclusion 174

 Discussion Questions 175

 Homework Assignment 175

 Activity 9.1 Student Cross-Examination Response Sheet 176

LEARNING LOGIC 9: SYLLOGISM CONSTRUCTION 178

 Understanding the Process 178

Start with the conclusion 178

Identify the type of argument 178

Identify the terms 179

Arrange the terms into a valid syllogism 180

 Constructing Conditional Syllogisms 180

 Constructing Categorical Syllogisms 183

 Discussion Questions 186

 Exercises 186

 Homework Assignment 187

LESSON 10: DELIVERY 189

 Persuasiveness 190

 Organization 191

Organized Arguments 191

Organized Speeches 191

Organized Evidence 193

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Delivery/Conduct.....	193
<i>Make sure your audience is ready</i>	194
<i>Make eye contact with the judge</i>	194
<i>Speak confidently</i>	194
<i>Speak slowly</i>	195
<i>Speak clearly</i>	196
<i>Speak loudly enough for people to hear</i>	196
<i>Use vocal emphasis</i>	196
<i>Speak calmly</i>	196
<i>Eliminate verbal pauses</i>	197
<i>Watch your vocabulary</i>	197
<i>Use natural facial expressions and gestures</i>	197
<i>Use all of your speaker time</i>	198
<i>Be professional</i>	198
Evidence.....	199
Cross-Examination.....	199
Refutation.....	200
Speaker-Point Guide.....	201
Conclusion.....	202
Discussion Questions.....	202
Homework Assignment.....	203
Activity 10.1 Student Speaking Skills Response Sheet.....	204
LEARNING LOGIC 10: VALUE CASE CONSTRUCTION – THESIS	206
Discussion Questions.....	208
Exercises.....	209
Homework Assignment.....	209
LESSON 11: AUDIENCE	210
Analysis.....	210
Connection.....	210
Artistic Proofs.....	212
<i>Using Ethos</i>	212
<i>Using Pathos</i>	213
<i>Combining the Artistic Proofs</i>	216
Other Factors.....	218

Debate Experience 219

Judging Philosophy 221

Political Viewpoint 222

Gender 222

Age 222

Race 223

Occupation 223

Conclusion 223

Discussion Questions 224

Homework Assignment 225

LEARNING LOGIC 11: VALUE CASE CONSTRUCTION – STANDARD 226

 Framework 226

 Superiority 227

 Measurability 229

 Exercises 232

 Homework Assignment 233

LESSON 12: THE DEBATE ROUND 235

 Before You Go 235

 What to Bring 236

 When You Arrive 237

 In the Round 237

Speaking 237

Listening 237

Note-Taking 238

Analyzing 242

Using Prep Time 242

Gathering Evidence 242

 Being Judged 243

Win/Loss 243

Speaker Rank and Speaker Points 243

Comments 244

 After the Round 244

 Discussion Questions 247

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LEARNING LOGIC 12: VALUE CASE CONSTRUCTION -

DEFINITIONS & CONTENTIONS248

 Definitions.....248

 Contentions.....249

 Conclusion.....254

 Exercises254

APPENDICES.....255

APPENDIX 1: RECOMMENDED READING LIST.....255

APPENDIX 2: SAMPLE AFFIRMATIVE CASE.....258

APPENDIX 3: SAMPLE NEGATIVE CASE.....263

APPENDIX 4: SYLLOGISM TEMPLATES.....267

APPENDIX 5: SPEECH QUALITY EXERCISES.....274

APPENDIX 6: NCFCA DEBATE RULES.....276

APPENDIX 7: EVIDENCE CITATION GUIDELINES.....280

APPENDIX 8: GLOSSARY.....284

Sample

BEFORE LESSON 1

ALL STUDENTS

- Read Lesson 1.
- Be prepared to answer the discussion questions.
- Be prepared for a Lesson 1 Terms to Know quiz.

LOGIC ASSIGNMENT

- Read Learning Logic 1.
- Be prepared to answer the questions.

Sample

LESSON 1

INTRODUCTION TO VALUE DEBATE

The right to argue freely has been prized throughout history. From the time of the ancient Greeks, the art of debate has been instrumental in shaping the philosophy, politics, and culture of mankind. America's Founding Fathers highly prized the right to argue freely, enshrining that principle in the First Amendment to our Constitution. Political rulers will become tyrants, the Founders argued, unless the people are guaranteed the right to speak and debate freely about the issues that affect their lives.

It is not only leaders and rulers who practice the art of debate. **Debate** is a common part of our experience as human beings. Chances are that you have been debating with your parents, siblings, and friends on a variety of issues since you were quite young. Debate is a discussion in which opposing arguments are made in order to persuade. The study of debate provides a structured way to learn the skills you need to speak persuasively in the face of opposition.

FOUNDATION OF DEBATE

Debate is a common part of our experience as human beings, but why? Why do we argue with one another? At a basic level, we argue because we don't always agree with one another. We want to persuade other people to see things our way.

Why do we disagree? We disagree because we have different opinions and understandings of the issues that affect our lives. Why do we have different opinions and understandings? We have different opinions because no one has a perfect understanding of everything. No human being has perfect knowledge.

Why don't we have perfect knowledge? None of us has perfect knowledge because that's how God created us. Ah. Now we are getting somewhere.

Do you see how even an exploration of debate leads us back to the existence and nature of God? All subjects, including debate, lead us back to God, which is why a study of debate must begin with a study of God.

UNDERSTANDING GOD

What do we know about God?

- **God is infinite.** To say that God is infinite is to say that He is without limit in every way. He has infinite wisdom, infinite strength, infinite presence, infinite holiness, and infinite love. "Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable" (Isaiah 40:28).

SUMMARY

Lesson 1 explains what value debate is and why the skills it teaches are important for Christian students to learn.

OBJECTIVES

After completing Lesson 1, students will be able to

- summarize the foundation of debate,
- state the purposes of debate, and
- explain the basics of Lincoln-Douglas Value debate.

DEFINITION

Debate is a discussion in which opposing arguments are made in order to persuade.

POINT TO PONDER

Even if social media seems to indicate otherwise, people can disagree and attempt to persuade one another in a respectful manner that honors both God and others.

"Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties."

John Milton, *Areopagitica*

LESSON 1

- **God is perfect.** To say that God is perfect is to say that He is without flaw in every way. In both His nature (Matthew 5:48) and his ways (Psalm 18:30), God is perfect.

TRUTHS ABOUT GOD

- God is infinite.
- God is perfect.
- God is truth.
- God creates.
- God reasons.
- God speaks.

- **God is truth.** God is the source and final judge of all truth, and He reveals that truth through His Word, the Bible (John 17:17). Consider what the Scriptures have to say about each person of the Trinity.
 - **God the Father:** “This God—his way is perfect; the word of the LORD proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him” (Psalm 18:30).
 - **God the Son:** “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’” (John 14:6).
 - **God the Spirit:** “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come” (John 16:13).
- **God creates.** “For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions, or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him” (Colossians 1:16).
- **God reasons.** Through the Scriptures, God has communicated His reasoning, knowledge, and wisdom to mankind. He even invites mankind to reason with Him. “Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD” (Isaiah 1:18). “Set forth your case, says the LORD; bring your proofs, says the King of Jacob” (Isaiah 41:21).
- **God speaks.** Before humans even existed, God spoke (Genesis 1:3). As John says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made” (John 1:1-3).

UNDERSTANDING MAN

TRUTHS ABOUT MAN

- Man is created in the image of God.
- Man is limited.

Once we begin to understand truths about the God who created us, we can then turn our attention to understanding who we are.

- **Man is created in the image of God.** “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27). Mankind has therefore inherited some of God’s characteristics including

- **The ability to reason.** God has given us the ability to think and reason. “But it is the spirit in man, the breath of the Almighty, that makes him understand” (Job 32:8-9).
- **The ability to speak.** God has designed us with the ability to communicate with Him and with each other (Genesis 2-3).

- **Man is limited.** While God is unlimited, man is limited. God has no beginning and no end (Revelation 1:8), but man has a beginning (Genesis 1). God has no teacher (Isaiah 40:13), but we must discover and learn. God can do anything (Matthew 19:26), but we cannot control even basic things like our health or environment. As God said to Job:

“Have you commanded the morning since your days began, and caused the dawn to know its place, that it might take hold of the skirts of the earth, and the wicked be shaken out of it? Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, that a flood of waters may cover you? Can you send forth lightnings, that they may go and say to you, ‘Here we are?’” (Job 38:12-13, 34-35).

Our limitations restrict our ability to reason and communicate. As the apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the Corinthians:

For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, and I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known (I Corinthians 13:9-12).

Until that day when we shall know fully and be fully known, we must do our best to develop and exercise the gifts God has given us to reason and communicate. We must humbly submit all of our thinking and speaking to the one source of absolute truth available to us: God’s Word supernaturally revealed to us in Scripture. Although the Bible doesn’t tell us everything that will ever happen or how every single thing in the universe works, where it speaks, it is authoritative. Everything we think and say should be in harmony with God’s Word.

PURPOSE OF DEBATE

In light of the truth about God and man, why should we study debate? The purpose of debate is to develop skills that we can use in service to God. The study of debate develops critical thinking skills, reveals probable truth, and strengthens communication skills.

DEVELOPING REASON

WORDS TO LIVE BY

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2).

First, the study of debate develops our critical thinking skills. Although God has granted us the ability to reason, He does not wave a magic wand over our minds, causing us to study issues, analyze arguments, and form conclusions. Instead, he expects us to be good stewards of the minds He has given us by actively disciplining and training our minds to think rightly (Romans 12:2, Ephesians 4:22-24, Philippians 4:8, Colossians 3:2, and 1 Peter 1:3). Through debate, we learn to ask penetrating questions, to research information, to analyze ideas, to construct a case, and to defend our positions.

REVEALING TRUTH

WORDS TO LIVE BY

“Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another” (Proverbs 27:17).

The study of debate also reveals probable truth. Debate is based on the idea that probable truth can be discovered through argument. We take our observations and our logical opinions about those observations, and we cast them into the fiery furnace of a debate round to burn up the dross of bad ideas and reveal the gold of good ideas. Through debate, we discover which ideas are weak and which are strong. In the end, we are still left with probable rather than certain truths, but those truths have been strengthened by the clash of debate (Proverbs 27:17).

STRENGTHENING COMMUNICATION

WORDS TO LIVE BY

“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.” Proverbs 25:11

The study of debate strengthens our communication skills. God has granted us the ability to speak, but learning to communicate winsomely and effectively requires careful attention and practice. We must learn to say the right words, in the right way, at the right time. Godly communication can be used to share the gospel (Romans 10:14), to encourage others (Ephesians 4:29), to demolish lies (2 Corinthians 10:5), and to defend the weak (Proverbs 24:11, Isaiah 1:17).

Sadly, not everyone appreciates this God-centered view. In recent years, traditional logic and language have come under attack and are considered by some to be oppressive. Many deconstruct language and logic, labeling them as racist, homophobic, or sexist. You might wonder how a debate round could be conducted without logic and language, yet in 2014, a team from Towson University won the Cross-Examination Debate Association’s national tournament by explaining that traditional debate was racist and proceeding to speak gibberish for the remainder of the round.¹

POINT TO PONDER

When we lose the idea that logic and language are both gifts from God rather than systems man has created, the foundation of communication itself is lost.

When we lose the idea that logic and language are both gifts from God rather than systems man has created, the foundation of debate is lost.

¹ Kraft, Jessica Carew. “Hacking Traditional College Debate’s White-Privilege Problem.” *The Atlantic*, Atlantic Media Company, 13 May 2014, www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2014/04/traditional-college-debate-white-privilege/360746/.

When you keep God at the center of your debate endeavors, God will shape and mold you. He will develop your reasoning skills, enabling you to know and love Him with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind (Matthew 22:36-40). He will reveal truth, sanctifying you and setting you apart for his purposes (John 17:17), and He will strengthen your ability to communicate complex ideas in simple ways, equipping you to love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:36-40).

The skills you learn in debate will allow you to serve the Lord in many ways. These skills will equip you to understand how others think, discuss timeless ideas, and stand up for truth, giving an answer for what and why you believe, even in the face of another's argument.

It is important to think of debate as learning a life skill, rather than playing a game. Debate practiced as a game tends to train speakers who can only communicate well with others who understand the rules of the game. Debate practiced as a life skill, on the other hand, tends to train speakers who can communicate with anyone regardless of others' knowledge of debate theory.

Keep your eye on the goal of learning a style of real-world communication that will make sense to the average person, rather than adopting sophisticated styles and strategies that only a debate expert could understand. The goal of playing a game is winning that game. The goal of learning a life skill is the practical and effective application of that skill in the real world. The real prize of debate is not winning the debate round but communicating effectively.

POINT TO PONDER

Think of debate as learning a life skill, rather than playing a game. The real prize is not winning a debate round but learning skills that will last a lifetime.

BASICS OF VALUE DEBATE

Academic debate is a structured style of argumentation that follows a certain format and rules, provides feedback from a judge, and achieves an educational purpose. Academic debate styles include policy debate, value debate, parliamentary debate, mock trial, and moot court. This text deals exclusively with value debate.

Value debate examines the values that drive decision-making. Unlike policy debate which asks debaters to consider how to solve a policy problem, value debate challenges debaters to consider why we should make a choices.

Your parents might say, "We should set aside every Friday night as family night." Why? We should set aside every Friday night as family night because we value quality time.

A business might say, "We should train our employees to serve our customers cheerfully." Why? We should we train employees to serve customers cheerfully because we value customer satisfaction.

Value debate will challenge you to answer the question Why? and to justify why your value is more important than others'.

DEFINITION

Academic debate is a structured style of argumentation that follows a format and rules, provides feedback from a judge, and achieves an educational purpose.

DEFINITION

Value debate examines the values that drive decision making.

LESSON 1

DEFINITION

A **resolution** is a proposition which the affirmative team affirms and the negative team negates.

RESOLUTIONS

1. *Resolved: When in conflict, governments should value fair trade above free trade.*
2. *Resolved: Affirmative action is justified in the United States.*
3. *Resolved: Democracy is overvalued by the United States government.*

RESOLUTION

Every debate begins with a resolution. A **resolution** is a proposition which the affirmative team affirms and the negative team negates. In value debate, the resolution is a proposition of value.

Consider the examples of NCFCA resolutions to the right. Each begins with the word Resolved as if these statements are being formally given in front of a legislature or governing body. Thus, the debate topic is called the resolution.

Resolutions are worded in a certain direction so that the debaters in the round will have clearly defined sides. In the first example to the right, the affirmative speaker must argue that when in conflict, governments should value fair trade above free trade, while the negative team must argue that when in conflict, governments should not value fair trade above free trade.

OBJECTIVE

Debate is by nature a persuasive activity. Your overall objective is to persuade the judge to either affirm or negate the resolution. When thinking about persuasion, it is helpful to consider what barriers need to be overcome in order to persuade a person to your point of view. You can think of these barriers as questions that the judge may have before being willing to vote for you. Most judges will have these two basic questions at the beginning of a value debate round:

1. *What* does the resolution mean? (Definition)
2. *Why* should it be affirmed or negated? (Justification)

It is your job to answer these two questions. To define the resolution, you'll explain the terms, the actors, and the conflict in order to ensure meaningful debate.

To justify your position, you'll propose a value which ought to drive decision-making. Then you'll explain why your value is superior and how your position achieves it. Finally, you'll provide examples which demonstrate your value in action.

FORMAT

DEFINITION

The **Lincoln-Douglas debate format** is one-on-one debating, named after the famous 1858 debates between Stephen Douglas and Abraham Lincoln.

The **Lincoln-Douglas debate format** is one-on-one debating named after the famous 1858 debates between Senator Stephen Douglas, an Illinois Democrat, and his Republican challenger for the United States Senate, Abraham Lincoln. The two orators staged a series of debates on the controversial topic of slavery, discussing to what extent it would be allowed in the western territories of our country. Many orators have been inspired by these debates, especially by Lincoln's strong pleas to end slavery for moral reasons.

Just as Lincoln and Douglas faced each other on platforms of the past, today's Lincoln-Douglas debaters face one another in a debate round which consists of five speeches, two cross-examinations, and preparation time:

Affirmative Constructive (AC)	6 minutes
Negative Cross-Examination (CX)	3 minutes
Negative Constructive (NC)	7 minutes
Affirmative Cross-Examination (CX)	3 minutes
1st Affirmative Rebuttal (1AR)	4 minutes
Negative Rebuttal (NR)	6 minutes
2nd Affirmative Rebuttal (2AR)	3 minutes
Preparation time (each team)	3 minutes

Constructives are speeches that construct or build arguments. **Rebuttals** are speeches which refine or refute arguments made during the constructives. **Cross-examinations** allow the debaters to ask and answer each others' questions. The speeches are commonly referred to by their abbreviations given above.

While the affirmative speaks three times and the negative only speaks twice, the total time allotted to each side is the same. The affirmative speaker has two opportunities to respond to negative arguments in the first and second affirmative rebuttals. The negative also has two chances to respond to affirmative arguments in the negative constructive and rebuttal.

In addition to speaking time, each team receives a total of three minutes to prepare for speeches. This time is frequently called prep time. The negative team may take its prep time before the NC and the NR. The affirmative team may take its prep time before the 1AR and the 2AR. Prep time may be taken in whatever increments the debater wishes, understanding that each team has only 3 minutes of prep time for the entire round. For example, the negative team could take 2 minutes of prep time before the NC and 1 minute before the NR. The affirmative team could take 30 seconds of prep time before the 1AR and 2 minutes 30 seconds before the 2AR.

DEFINITION

Constructives are speeches which build arguments.

DEFINITION

Rebuttals are speeches which refine and refute arguments already presented in the constructives.

DEFINITION

Cross-examinations allow the debaters to ask and answer each others' questions.

ROUND

When people talk about “the debate round,” they mean one individual debate between two people. You might be the affirmative speaker or the negative speaker in the debate round. One complete debate round is outlined on the previous page and takes a total of about 40 minutes to complete.

TOURNAMENT

A debate tournament is a series of rounds, typically six preliminary rounds followed by elimination rounds. Every debate team at the tournament competes in the preliminary rounds. Teams with the best records then go on to compete in single-elimination rounds to determine who is the best team at the tournament. More about debate tournaments is explained in Lesson 12.

Each team debates both affirmative and negative sides during the preliminary rounds. With six preliminary rounds, that means you would be affirmative three times and negative three times. This practice allows you to understand all sides of an issue as well as learn the full set of skills debate has to offer.

BALLOT

One of the valuable experiences of academic debate is receiving evaluations and feedback from a volunteer judge. Every round, at least one judge will fill out a ballot to evaluate: 1) who won the arguments presented in the round and 2) who was the best speaker in the round. At a debate tournament, separate awards are given to the person who won the most rounds and the person who accumulated the most speaker points during the tournament. A sample ballot is on page 245. You will also notice an area for comments so that the judge can explain the decision and give any other helpful feedback. More about judging is explained in Lesson 12.

A sample ballot is on page 245.

CHALLENGES

The first year in debate can be challenging. Expect it. Welcome it.

As you start your journey into the art of debate, be patient with yourself. Recognize that you are learning new debate terminology which is like learning a foreign language. On top of that, you’re learning to understand complex value questions that the greatest philosophers have contemplated for centuries.

Hang in there. Keep the goal of learning life skills in mind as you go through the learning process. Many, many students have started just where you are and have gone on to successfully learn the communication skills that are helping them make a real difference for Christ in the world around them. Many of those

students have been scared of public speaking, have hated doing research, or have wished the ground would open up and swallow them in the middle of a debate round (the author of this book included). Yet if all of them could speak personally to you today, they would tell you that learning debate is worth it.

The rewards of debate may not come quickly, but when they come, they are definitely worth the wait. Your newfound ability to reason, to understand the issues of our day, and to communicate with others will give you a confidence that God will use to reach others and change lives. Welcome to the journey!

TERMS TO KNOW

- debate
- academic debate
- value debate
- resolution
- Lincoln-Douglas debate format
- constructives
- rebuttals
- cross-examinations

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Explain the foundation of debate.
2. Why should a Christian student learn debate?
3. What types of skills does the study of debate develop?
4. What is the job of the affirmative debater? The negative debater?
5. In order to persuade the judge, what two questions should every value debater answer?

6. Explain the purpose of each of the three types of speeches in a debate round.

7. What do you personally hope to gain from your study of debate?

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

ALL STUDENTS

- Read Lesson 2.
- Be prepared to answer the discussion questions.
- Be prepared for a Lesson 2 Terms to Know quiz.

EXPERIENCED STUDENTS

- Begin general research on the resolution and be prepared to share your findings at the next meeting. Seek to answer these questions:
 1. What do the terms of the resolution mean?
 2. Where is the conflict in this resolution?
 3. What reasons are there for affirming the resolution?
 4. What reasons are there for negating the resolution?

LEARNING LOGIC 1

INTRODUCTION TO LOGIC

The most important tool in a value debater's toolbox is logic. The substance of value debate is argument, and logic is the tool you need both to construct your arguments and analyze your opponent's arguments. A student of debate must also be a student of logic.

Webster's 1828 Dictionary gives this definition of logic:

Logic is the art of using reason well in our inquiries after truth, and the communication of it to others. ... Correct reasoning implies correct thinking and legitimate inferences from **premises**, which are principles assumed or admitted to be just. Logic then includes the art of thinking, as well as the art of reasoning. The purpose of logic is to direct the intellectual powers in the investigation of truth and in the communication of it to others.

There are several principles we can glean from this definition.

- Logic is the art of reasoning well.
- Logic involves correct reasoning and correct thinking.
- The first purpose of logic is to discover truth.
- The second purpose of logic is to communicate truth to others.

The world is in desperate need of people who love God with all of their hearts and know how to reason well with all of their minds. The world needs those same people to discover, investigate, and communicate truth! One of the greatest benefits of debate is learning how to use correct thinking skills to discover truth, reasoning skills to understand truth, and communication skills to share that truth.

Keep in mind we have only discovered logic, not invented it. Logic exists because God created our world in an orderly way and created us in His image as rational beings. Thus, when we define logic and the rules that govern its practice, we are really just discovering and using what God created for us to discover and use.

It is also important to understand the limits of human logic. Our ability to reason well is limited by the fact that we are fallen creatures whose minds have been marred by sin. Unlike our omniscient God, we have limited brain capacity. Unlike our omnipresent and eternal God, our human thought is limited by space and time. Nevertheless, we can exercise and develop our minds, and we should endeavor to make the most of what God has given to us by being wise stewards of our minds.

POINT TO PONDER

“Histories make men wise; poets, witty; the mathematics, subtle; natural philosophy, deep; moral, grave; logic and rhetoric, able to contend.”
– Sir Francis Bacon

DEFINITION

Logic is the art of using reason well in our inquiries after truth, and the communication of it to others.

DEFINITION

A **premise** is a principle assumed or admitted to be true.

POINT TO PONDER

An inference is another word for a conclusion.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Explain what logic is in your own words.
2. Why is the study of logic so important?
3. Why does logic exist?

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

- Read Learning Logic 2.
- Be prepared to answer the questions.
- Complete the exercise.