Guidance for LD Topic Submissions

Please consider the following advice before submitting your topic ideas. Topic suggestions that follow this advice help the wording committee see the most potential in your ideas and reduce the need for revising and editing the list of suggestions. Thank you for your suggestions and for helping make LD the best it can be!

1. Make sure your suggestion has a moral/values conflict.

Explanation: The core of LD is its emphasis on morality and ethics instead of implementation or purely practical concerns. If you look at LD topics through the years, you will notice that they are "values" oriented. Unless you can think of ethical or moral arguments on both sides, it is best to submit your topic suggestions to other events.

2. Ask yourself: is there quality "ground" (debatable arguments) on both sides?

Explanation: In addition to making sure there are ethical and moral arguments on both sides of your topic suggestion, make a list of arguments that could be made on both sides of the topic. Would you feel good about your chances on both the affirmative and the negative? Both sides of the debate should have quality arguments, so avoid topics that are lopsided. One way to improve your topic is to research it before you submit it and see if there is a strong "literature base" that includes experts on all sides.

3. Ensure your suggestion uses proper grammar.

Explanation: Topics need to be grammatically perfect, so double check that your suggestions use standard English grammar. Furthermore, two things that your wording should pay close attention to might be the actor and action of the topic. If your topic includes an actor, this will heavily impact how debates on the topic will play out, so consider if your suggestion is worded exactly how you want it.

4. Consider novelty – topics that have not been debated recently are preferable to topics that have been recently debated in Lincoln-Douglas, Public Forum, or Policy.

Explanation: In order to maximize the educational value of topics, please look at topics that have been recently debated in LD and other events. The wording committee prefers topics that offer novel ideas that students haven't debated before. Sometimes topics are reused after many years, but that is after all the students who debated that topic have graduated and moved on.

5. Make sure your topic is accessible for all students.

Explanation: Keep in mind you are suggesting topics for schools all over the United States (and even some schools outside of the country, if they so choose). Make sure everyone will be able to debate on either side of the topic. Accessibility concerns might include: debate experience, availability of research materials (not behind paywalls), regional differences with respect to debate styles, age-appropriate content.

6. Durability, Significance, and Timeliness

Explanation: Make sure your topic suggestions can sustain a full two months of debate across the whole country (durability), covers an important issue with real impacts (significance), and is currently being discussed/debated (timeliness).