

Debate Rules Executive Summary, 2025-2026

The following is an executive summary of revisions made to the Stoa debate rules for the 2025-2026 debate season. This summary is intended to help coaches and students note where revisions have been made.

Review of this document should not be used in place of reading the updated rules and becoming familiar with their actual language.

Lincoln-Douglas Rules, Part III

The first sentence of part III has been changed to read as follows: “Lincoln Douglas Value debate is a discussion of values in the context of the resolution.”

Reasons for the change

This is a slight wording change to emphasize that the discussion of values is “in the context of” the resolution.

Lincoln-Douglas & Team Policy Rules, Part III, Section F

The support section of the rules for both Lincoln Douglas and Team Policy have multiple updates. Added or changed text is within this section is noted by the red text below. Black text represents words that were not changed from last year.

Reasons for the change

For the 2024-2025 competition year, protocols regarding summarization of evidence and cited support were added to the rules under subparagraph F.4. With the addition of these changes, debaters seemed to treat summarization as another type of evidence, which was not the intent of the original rule change. Consequently, these protocols have been removed and replaced with the clarification that “Summarization of written materials is not, in and of itself, evidence.” This change is being made to clarify that summarized written materials should not be treated the same as evidence.

When the existing subparagraph F.4 was added, some of the evidence rules were moved to no longer just apply to evidence, but were broadened to apply to any “cited support.” These subparagraphs are being moved back under the evidence subparagraph F.3. and the inclusion of “cited support” is being removed to clarify that these subparagraphs refer to evidence.

A change was made to the subparagraphs regarding judicial review, which clarifies that judges may review evidence and other written materials presented during the round. The prior rules used written materials in some instances and evidence in other instances.

Following are the new subparagraphs F.3) through F.7) of the Team Policy and Lincoln-Douglas Rules, with new language in red:

- 3) Evidence (a subset of support) is the oral verbatim reading of quoted text as well as an accompanying citation from a particular source that is publicly available
 - a) Evidence must be physically present, on paper, in the debate room.
 - b) The written source citation must include:
 - i) All authors (if available).
 - ii) Publication name.
 - iii) Complete date (if an internet source does not include a publication date, then the date of the last website update and the date accessed should be included).
 - iv) URL (if available).
 - v) Page number, if from a printed source.
 - vi) The citation is located directly above or below the quoted text. (If quoting from a book, a bookmark, notecard, or other notation should be used to place the full citation next to the quoted text.)
 - c) Evidence must be read verbatim from the first word of the sentence to the ending punctuation without redaction or addition.
 - i) Information in parentheses may only be orally omitted when it does not change the meaning of the quotation. Information in parentheses must remain within the printed quotation.
 - ii) When citing information from a dictionary or legal statute (e.g. U.S. Code, the Constitution) a single clause may be considered a complete sentence.
 - iii) Charts and graphs may be explained in the debater's own words, but not displayed.
 - d) Evidence may not be pieced together from non-contiguous sentences of an article. Non-contiguous sentences from the same article need to either be cited as separate pieces of evidence, or identified orally that sentences or sections were skipped (e.g. "later in the article").
 - e) Ellipses may not be added by the debater, but may be included if part of the original material.
 - f) Evidence presented by a debater must be consistent with the intent of the source piece.
 - g) Evidence must be made available if requested by the other team or the judge, as the team presenting the evidence has the burden of validating that evidence if challenged.
 - h) When evaluating the round, the judge is free to disregard any evidence presented which is found to be deficient in any aspect described above.
- 4) Summarization of written materials is not, in and of itself, evidence.

- 5) Judicial Review—if the judge desires to review any **evidence or other** written materials presented in the round, this request must wait until the round is over, and must be at the initiative and direction of the judge.
 - a) Review may only include **evidence or other** written materials that were orally presented by the debaters during the round.
 - b) Debaters may not extend or explain arguments during the review.
- 6) Debaters may not attempt to provide the judge with **evidence or other** written materials before, during, or after the round. Debaters are free to refer orally to the judge’s right **to review evidence or other written materials**, both in speeches and in cross-examination.
- 7) Debaters may not display “props” to the judge at any point in the round. A “prop” is defined as an object that substitutes an oral communication with a visual depiction.

Parliamentary Rules

The first two sentences of the Statement of Purpose have been revised to read as follows: “Parliamentary debate is an advanced form of debate that is extemporaneous in nature with rotating topics. Parliamentary debate asks competitors to develop and defend ideas and positions on a wide range of issues.”

Reasons for the change

This change is being made to emphasize that this is an advanced form of debate and less experienced debaters should not attempt to participate without sufficient experience in other debate forms.

Lincoln-Douglas Ballots

No change

Team Policy Ballots

No change

Parliamentary Ballots

No change