

LDEP Research Ethics Guidelines for Judges

Competitive fairness and academic integrity require that debate students use research honestly and accurately. Judges are the most direct agents of student accountability in the debate community and therefore share a major responsibility to reinforce norms of ethical research. The Lincoln-Douglas Education Project endorses the following practices by judge-educators to help them fulfill this responsibility.

- 1. Listen carefully to quotations, citations, and discussion of evidence by students.** As much as possible, know what quoted evidence says, not merely what students say it says. Listen carefully to the evidence itself, not just to the student's tag or gloss on the evidence, and note possible discrepancies. Give evidentiary weight only to the actual claims of evidence, not to exaggerated student claims about evidence.
- 2. Discount evidence presented without adequate in-round citations.** Adequate in-round citations include the author's complete name and the source title (book or journal). Author credentials and dates may also enhance the probative value of evidence but are not strictly required in rounds, though complete publication information should be available upon request.
- 3. If you or an observer (including a debater) suspects that research is being misused, examine the original evidence after the round to make a preliminary determination.** Every student should have on hand complete citations and original photocopies or printouts of quotations he or she presents with enough surrounding text to establish the original context so you can check to see if the suspicion of misuse is supported by the facts, and, if so, whether the misuse appears deliberate. If a student cannot provide a copy of evidence from its source with sufficient text to establish its original context, discard the evidence from your deliberations in the round. Evidence without a verifiable source should be treated as no more than an ordinary assertion by the student. Look at written cases and evidence only if you suspect that the evidence is being misused.
- 4. If it appears that evidence was misused *unintentionally*, explain the problem to the student and, if possible, to his or her coach.** Learning to use sources responsibly is a difficult skill that is mastered only gradually by most students. This is an area where judges can contribute materially to a student's debate education and general academic skills.
- 5. If it appears that evidence was misused *intentionally*, report the problem to the tournament director or his or her representative immediately.** Intentional misuse of evidence is a form of cheating and a serious breach of trust. Examples of deliberate misuse might include adding or deleting words to distort the meaning of evidence to one's own advantage or fabricating evidence. Judges have the option to unilaterally sanction students for suspected research dishonesty, but judges may also choose to discuss the appropriate action in particular cases with the tournament director. In any case, judges should report all reasonable suspicions of dishonesty to the tournament director in the interest of fair competition. Tournament directors may choose to impose further sanctions on students who misuse evidence intentionally.