



"A hands-down
winner!"

The top-secret manual to turn good case writing
and argumentation into an undefeated record.

Written by Jennifer Dziura

The Secrets & Science of Persuasion in Lincoln-Douglas Debate™

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Secrets & Science of Persuasion author Jennifer Dziura was the 1995 and 1996 Lincoln-Douglas champion of Virginia, represented her district in the NHL Nationals in both Lincoln-Douglas and foreign extemporaneous speaking, and went on to captain the Parliamentary Debate Team at Dartmouth College. She has judged Lincoln-Douglas, C-X, and parliamentary debate, and is the author of a booklet entitled "Dewar's Guide to Debating" for Dewar's Scotch. She is also author or co-author of over a dozen educational books, has entertained the troops in the Middle East as a standup comedian, and has appeared as a "genius" in television pilots for SyFy and National Geographic. She runs an adult spelling bee in Brooklyn, NY, and has spoken at Harvard, Yale, and other universities about designing your own career, networking, and forging your own path to success.

Packed with humor, science, and frank advice, The Secrets and Science of Persuasion in Lincoln-Douglas Debate is a must-have manual for anyone seeking to consistently win debates. Whether you are a seasoned veteran striving to argue your way straight to the top, or someone who wants an insider's look at how debate champions think, this book can help you improve your game and become more a more confident competitor. As this former state champion and national competitor in Lincoln-Douglas debate reveals her top-secret techniques that will challenge and inspire, she also sheds light on instances when psychology, empathy, common sense, and reasonability save the day.

Have fun and good luck!

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Introduction

This book is not for beginners.

If you've never done Lincoln-Douglas before, there are dozens of other free¹ and widely available sources on the format of L/D debate, values and criteria, how to construct a case, how to cross-examine your opponent (face the judge!), how to flow, whether/how to use kritiks, and the most salient ideas of twenty or so well-known philosophers.

I'm assuming you're good with all of that, but you're still not the state (or national) champ.

Why?

Sometimes you know what you did wrong in a round. Sometimes you didn't do anything *wrong*, exactly, but the judge just didn't seem to like you. Sometimes the judge was just stupid and wrong (*sure ... we'll talk more about that soon*). Sometimes you did well, but you just got steamrolled by your opponent's oppressive awesomeness.

Why aren't you the one with the oppressive awesomeness?

The reason has something to do with persuasiveness.

Despite what your policy debate colleagues say, L/D is not *all* about the art of persuasion.

But the art of persuasion is what makes a difference when it comes down to the wire. It's very important with inexperienced judges. And it's extremely important if, for whatever reason, the judges maybe just don't seem to be on your side.

¹Try the free "Introduction to Lincoln Douglas Debate" at [http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/LDIntroduction_to_LD_Debate_\(NFL\).pdf](http://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/LDIntroduction_to_LD_Debate_(NFL).pdf) (or, Google "intro to LD debate" and it'll come up) by Seth Halvorson and Cherian Koshy

You should be prepared for any value clash

There aren't that many possible values, and arguments about values don't change from topic to topic.

There's no excuse for not being prepared to argue that justice trumps liberty, or that individualism trumps security, or that self-actualization trumps democracy. Or vice-versa, on any of those.

Here is a list of popular L/D values:

- *justice*
- *morality*
- *equality/egalitarianism*
- *self-actualization*
- *liberty/autonomy*
- *quality of life*
- *happiness*
- *well-being*
- *safety/security*
- *dignity*
- *privacy*
- *health*
- *social harmony*
- *community*
- *democracy*
- *progress*
- *fairness*
- *community*

When you write a case, practice – at least mentally – defending your value against all of the above, and any others you can think of. Certain topics lend themselves to more specific values – *the duty of nations, self-government, meritocracy, environmental protection*.

Many arguments about values come down to "chicken and the egg" type debates. We need security in order to self-actualize, so security is foundational. But self-actualization is the goal. Should we value the foundation more than the goal? We can't have the goal without the foundation. But the foundation is only valued because it helps us achieve a goal. We could do this all day.

What to do when ... your opponent makes a killer first impression

Or: Naming a Thing Defuses It

Sometimes, people pass gas. It's part of being human.

Imagine your teacher is beginning a lecture about *King Lear*, and then just farts. It's funny even reading that, right?

Here are his options:

MOST EMBARRASSMENT: *(Pretend it never happened. Students laugh and make eye contact with each other. Students are building social capital that doesn't include the teacher.)*

LESS EMBARRASSMENT: Excuse me!

LEAST EMBARRASSMENT: Oh, well that's embarrassing. *(Now students are embarrassed on the teacher's behalf. No one says "Ha ha, you farted" after you've just said "I'm so embarrassed.")*

Isn't it odd that the thing that makes an embarrassment lose its power is calling it out? Seriously, try it. Next time you're embarrassed, say this simple, magic phrase: "Wow, I'm so embarrassed." This moves people from pointing out the embarrassing thing to feeling sympathy and trying to make you feel less embarrassed.

This doesn't just work for embarrassment. It works for almost anything.

Calling something out dismisses it.

I once knew a standup comedy teacher who had a student who was a little person (a person with dwarfism). And she did not want to talk about it. *At all.*

The teacher explained that as long as she didn't mention it, people were going to be thinking about it the entire time. People would not be able to focus on her jokes. They'd be thinking, *Sure, I also hate when people tailgate me, but when are you going to mention that you're less than four feet tall?* This is unfortunate (anyone can understand why someone might not want to talk about her own health, appearance, etc.), but it's true. Not that this aspiring comedian had to do her whole set about being a little person. To the contrary! All she had to do was say something like, "You were expecting someone taller?" Everyone laughs, and now she can tell jokes about bad drivers.