



LD Rebuttals and Voting Issues: Structuring the Last Speeches.

Rounds are won in the 1AR, NR and 2AR. This guide gives a simple structure for each rebuttal, a voting-issues template, and a drill for compressing a whole round into one clear story.

What changes in rebuttals

In constructives you build. In rebuttals you **choose**. You cannot answer everything, so pick the arguments that decide the round, explain them, and tell the judge why you are ahead. Brand-new arguments in late speeches are usually frowned upon, but new responses to opposing points are generally fine.

SPEECH	TIME (STANDARD)	PRIORITY
1AR	4 min	Protect the Aff case while answering the NC. Hardest speech to time.
NR	6 min	Collapse to your best 1 or 2 arguments and answer the 1AR.
2AR	3 min	Final story: why the Aff wins. Few or no new arguments.

Times vary by league. Practice with the times your tournament uses.

Collapse and extend

Collapsing means dropping weak arguments to focus on strong ones. **Extending** means repeating an argument with its reason and impact so it stays alive. A dropped argument may be treated as conceded, so extend what you need.

- 1 List what is still alive.** Check your flow for arguments the other side did not answer.
- 2 Pick one or two winners.** Choose the arguments with the biggest impact and best support.
- 3 Extend them fully.** Claim, reason, evidence, impact.
- 4 Answer their best attack.** Spend time on the argument most likely to beat you.
- 5 Weigh.** Explain why your argument matters more.

Voting issues template

A **voting issue** is a reason the judge should sign your ballot. Give two or three, each in about 30 seconds.

PART	SAY THIS
Name it	'Voting issue one: framework.'
Claim	'My criterion should be preferred.'
Reason	'Because it measures fairness for everyone, while theirs ignores individuals.'
Impact	'Under my criterion, the Aff/Neg wins.'
Fallback	'Even under their criterion, I still win because...'

Weighing words

Use comparisons: 'more important because', 'affects more people', 'harder to reverse', 'happens sooner', 'more certain'. Always say why your side wins on that comparison.

Drills

- ☐ Take a past round flow and write a 2AR or NR in 3 minutes.
- ☐ Practice a 30-second round summary: 'This round came down to...'
- ☐ Rewrite a long voting issue in two sentences.
- ☐ Time yourself on a 1AR; practice ending 5 seconds early.
- ☐ Ask a parent to listen and tell you the two arguments they remember.

Common mistakes: trying to answer every point, reading evidence in the last speech without explanation, saying 'they dropped it' without saying why it matters, and ending with no clear ask.

MY ROUND STORY IN THREE SENTENCES

Close strong

End with one sentence the judge can write on the ballot: 'I affirm/negate because ____ matters most and I achieve it.' Make it easy for the judge to agree.

Want feedback on your final speeches?

Scholar Coach coaches rebuttal structure with live practice rounds. Book a free consultation at the link below.

Built from public guidance: NSDA High School Unified Manual, 2021-2022 edition (speechanddebate.org) · UIL Judging Lincoln-Douglas Debate instructions, 2024-25 (uiltexas.org) · UIL Intro to LD Debate slides, K. Adcock (uiltexas.org). Rules change by league and tournament, so always confirm against your tournament invitation and current league rules.

NOTES

Want a plan built around **your** debater?

Book a free consultation. The short intake takes about a minute and opens right away.

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