



Flowing an LD Round: Shorthand and Layout.

Flowing is note-taking built for debate. Learn how to set up your paper, a starter shorthand list, and practice steps so you can answer every argument and impress your judge.

Why flow?

A **flow** is a record of every argument and response in the round. It lets you answer what was actually said, notice what was dropped, and plan your rebuttals. Many judges flow too. A debater who flows well sounds organized and prepared.

Goal

Not a transcript. A map. Write the idea, not every word.

Page layout

Use landscape paper (or a spreadsheet or app if allowed). Draw columns, one per speech. Many LD debaters use one sheet for the Aff and one for the Neg, or one sheet for framework and one for contentions.

COLUMN	CONTENTS
1: AC	Aff framework and contentions
2: NC	Neg case plus responses to AC
3: 1AR	Aff responses to NC and extensions
4: NR	Neg responses and voting issues
5: 2AR	Aff final summary

- ♦ Write each new argument on its own row and draw arrows across columns when it is answered or extended.
- ♦ Leave space between arguments. Skipping lines is easier than squeezing.
- ♦ Use different pen colors for Aff and Neg if it helps.

Starter shorthand

V / VC

Value / value criterion

→

Leads to / causes

=

Means / is the same as

w/ , w/o

With, without

T / OK

True / agreed

C1, C2

Contention one, two

up / down

Increases / decreases

not =

Is not / does not equal

b/c

Because

X

Dropped or crossed out

imp
Impact

Aff / Neg
Affirmative / Negative

ppl
People

ev
Evidence

gov
Government

+ / -
Good / bad, pro / con

Make up your own abbreviations for words you hear a lot in your topic. Keep a key at the top of your sheet.

Flowing steps

- 1 **Listen for structure.** Debaters often say 'first, second, third.' Write those numbers.
- 2 **Write the claim.** A few words per argument. Add the key reason.
- 3 **Mark evidence.** Write author name and year if given, plus a few words.
- 4 **Track responses.** Draw an arrow to the argument being answered.
- 5 **Mark drops.** If an argument is never answered, circle it.
- 6 **Review during prep.** Use prep to plan, not to recopy.

PROBLEM	FIX
Falling behind	Write only claims and key words; fill in later
Messy flow	Practice with recorded speeches and redo neatly
Missing responses	Ask politely in cross-ex or use the flow to ask about gaps

Practice plan

- ☐ Flow a short video of a public LD round or a speech from a news site.
- ☐ Compare your flow with a partner's.
- ☐ Re-listen and add what you missed.
- ☐ Time yourself: 5 minutes of flowing, 5 minutes reviewing, three times a week.
- ☐ Build your own shorthand key and keep it with your flow paper.

MY PERSONAL SHORTHAND

Flow practice with a coach

Scholar Coach can help you build a flowing system. Book a free consultation at the link below.

Built from public guidance: New Mexico Forensics Club: Taking Notes in Debate · UIL Intro to LD Debate slides, K. Adcock (uiltexas.org) · NSDA High School Unified Manual, 2021-2022 edition (speechanddebate.org). Rules change by league and tournament, so always confirm against your tournament invitation and current league rules.

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

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