

Debating with Integrity Series

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Debating with Integrity: Grace and Truth

Vimeo Link: <https://vimeo.com/1021686477>

Why debate with integrity? Before answering that question, let's start with a definition like good debaters always do. According to *Collins English Dictionary* accessed online in 2024, integrity is "the quality or state of being of sound moral principle; uprightness, honesty, and sincerity." To debate with integrity therefore means to debate according to sound moral principles. As ambassadors for Christ, we know exactly what sound moral principles we should follow—the principles that can be found in God's Word and in the example of THE Word, Jesus Christ.

John 1:14 says, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." Since Christ is full of grace and truth, we should also be ambassadors who are full of grace and truth.

So how can Christian debaters be full of truth in the debate round? First, a debater who is an ambassador for Christ **refuses to twist or exaggerate the evidence**. If the evidence says that the national debt *may* ruin our nation, don't claim that the evidence says our country *definitely will* be ruined by the national debt. Integrity means quoting evidence in a way that is faithful to the original meaning. If the author heard you quoting her, she should agree with the way you've characterized her words.

The same principle applies to the way a debater characterizes his opponent. If you quote or summarize your opponent's position, he should agree that his position has been described correctly. **A hallmark of debating with integrity is accurately and graciously characterizing the other side.**

Furthermore, **debaters with integrity will directly quote and cite their sources** so that their opponents and audiences can verify that the information is credible and truthful. You can watch our videos on [Evidence Citations](#) and [Evidence in LD](#) for more information.

One additional way that debaters can be full of truth is by **refusing to make claims about information that they don't really know**. For example, if you are asked if your evidence comes from a topic expert, don't say "yes" unless you really know it's true. It's better to say "I don't know" than to confidently make assertions that may not be true.

Christian debaters should also be full of grace. The Bible not only commands us to be truthful in what we speak but it also has a lot to say about the way we speak.

- Colossians 4:6 tells us that our speech should always be gracious.
- Ephesians 4:16 says that we should speak the truth in love.
- 1 Corinthians 13:1 adds that even if we have the most amazing speaking skills in the world, it's just a bunch of annoying noise without love.
- 1 Peter 3:15 says that when we make a defense, we should do so with gentleness and respect.
- 2 Timothy 2:25 tells us that we should also use gentleness when correcting an opponent.

Truthful, gentle, and loving speech is the mark of an Ambassador for Christ and sets us apart from the deceptive, aggressive, and mocking style of much of our world today.

If you want to debate with integrity, your debating will be full of grace and truth.

Debating with Integrity: Evidence Citations

Vimeo Link: <https://vimeo.com/1021696039>

Before going to a debate tournament, you spend hours researching the debate topic in order to gain understanding of the issues and also to be prepared with quotations from experts that you can use to support your arguments. These quotations are popularly known as debate evidence.

Part of debating with integrity is properly citing the sources of your evidence.

There are three reasons why evidence citations are important.

First, to debate with integrity, you should give credit where credit is due. If you're not personally the source of the information, then you should give credit by citing the source of the information. The only exception to this principle is when you're speaking about topics of common knowledge such as the fact that the sun rises in the east or George Washington was our first president.

The second reason citations are important is that they add credibility to your arguments. The judge is far more likely to trust a topic area expert with multiple degrees and years of experience rather than just accept the word of a high school student.

The third reason you need citations is because your opponent and judge have the right to verify your evidence by examining it for themselves. The Compliance Team may also ask to see your evidence after the debate round. Providing a citation allows all of these people to verify the accuracy and trustworthiness of your evidence for themselves.

So now that you know why citations are important, how do you properly cite evidence in the debate round?

There are two types of citations that you will use in debate: **a verbal citation and a written citation**. NCFCA rules require you to verbally cite your sources in

the delivery of your speech. The rules also require you to have a written citation that includes the source and date. The rules are identical in this regard for both Team Policy and Lincoln Douglas Value debate. Let's take a look:

[Lincoln-Douglas Value Debate | NCFCA](#)

A best practice is to also include background information about the source and publisher if applicable.

So how do you find the information you need to create a solid evidence citation? Let me demonstrate from a few different sources.

- <https://www.cato.org/cato-handbook-policymakers/cato-handbook-policymakers-9th-edition-2022/foreign-aid-economic-development#the-dismal-record-of-foreign-aid>
 - Author's bio
 - About page
- <https://www.uscis.gov/CAM>
 - How to cite a government website
- <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14751798.2023.2264070#abstract>
 - Citing a study using the citation button

For more examples, you can go to our Debate Evidence Citation Examples on our website.

Bottom line, a failure to properly cite your sources can result in a loss of speaker points or even a loss of round in extreme cases. To avoid these situations, be sure to **carefully cite all of your sources**.

Debating with Integrity: Evidence in LD

Vimeo Link: <https://vimeo.com/1021715757>

One of the common misconceptions about value debate is that value debaters use reasoning to support their arguments instead of evidence. One reason that this is a misconception is that reasoning IS a type of evidence. But regardless, **is it true that LD value debaters don't need to cite and quote evidence from experts?**

Whether or not you cite and quote evidence in LD value debate depends on whether or not you rely on the works of others to make your arguments. If all of your arguments and reasoning are original to you, then you don't need to cite or quote anyone else. But if you've gained your understanding and arguments from others, then you need to give credit where credit is due by citing and quoting the source of the ideas you advocate.

When you cite a source, you should also provide a **direct quotation** in order to corroborate your claim about what that source says. I can say "A Harvard study shows that humans don't trust autonomous weapons" but that doesn't prove that such a study exists unless I properly cite the study and read a direct quotation that corroborates my claim.

Value debaters should provide enough information about the source so that the audience knows where and when the information was produced, and provide a direct quotation so that the audience can judge for themselves what the source said. For example, you might say:

In 2016, political scientist Michael C. Horowitz wrote an article in the journal *Daedalus* explaining some of the ethical concerns about autonomous weapons in warfare and how they might undermine human dignity. He writes:

“It is at the platform level that the ethical challenges of LAWS begin to come into focus. Autonomous planes, for example, flying for thousands of miles and deciding for themselves whom to target, could risk the moral offloading of responsibility and undermine human dignity in some scenarios, even if they behave in ways that comply with the law of war. While it is possible to address this issue through training, accountability rules, and restricting the scenarios for using autonomous weapon platforms, this area requires further investigation.”

Value debaters should also have the **full printed citation** available should anyone request to see it. For more about citations, see our video [Debating with Integrity: Evidence Citations](#).

Value debaters also reference philosophers and their ideas during the course of a debate round. They often say things like this: “Pascal believed that the chief end that all men seek is happiness.”

Once again, this is an example of an unsubstantiated claim. How does the audience know that Pascal actually believed this? To debate with integrity, you should provide citations and direct quotations for your philosophical evidence. For example, you could say:

French philosopher Blaise Pascal believed that the chief end that all men seek is happiness. In his 1670 work *Pensées*, he wrote:

“All men seek happiness. This is without exception. Whatever different means they employ, they all tend to this end. The cause of some going to war, and of others avoiding it, is the same desire in both, attended with different views. The will never takes the least step but to this object. This is the motive of every action of every man, even of those who hang themselves.”

The citation and direct quotation allow your opponent and audience to verify the accuracy of your claim.

Beware of quotation websites such as Brainy Quote, A-Z Quotes, and others as they often attribute famous sayings to people who never said any such thing. Track down the original source of the quotation to make sure that the famous person actually said what the internet claims they said.

By verbally citing and directly quoting sources, LD value debaters give credit where credit is due and allow their opponents and their audience to judge the accuracy, credibility, and quality of their evidence and arguments.

Debating with Integrity: Rule Violations

Vimeo Link: <https://vimeo.com/1021752549>

When you're at a debate tournament, situations can arise where you believe a rule has been violated by your opponent. It can be difficult to know how to address these violations and when you should bring something to Compliance. For those who are new to NCFCA, all of our tournaments have a Compliance Team on hand to help ensure that our rules are upheld.

Here are a few tips on how to handle a debate rule violation:

First, if the violated rule is related to the substance of the debate, address it in front of the judge. The judge is the only impartial adult listener who hears the entire debate round. Don't wait until after the debate is over to bring the issue to Compliance. It's extremely difficult for the Compliance Team to piece together what happened after the fact. However, if you discuss the issue in front of the judge, the judge can address the problem directly on the ballot or be a witness who can confirm the details to the Compliance Team.

When you address a rule violation in front of the judge, make your appeal based on ethical reasoning and common sense rather than appealing to the rules. It's far more persuasive to explain the reasoning behind the rules rather

than saying, “This is against the rules.” Furthermore, your judge may not be familiar with the rules.

Instead, if your opponent doesn’t cite their sources, for example, you can say: “There’s no way to verify the source of this information. It may be from an excellent source or it may be from someone untrustworthy. Without knowing who produced this information, we have no way to judge its quality. Therefore, we would ask that this information be disregarded until it can be verified to be from a trustworthy source.”

If you suspect your opponent has misquoted a piece of evidence, you should ask to see the card as soon as possible so that you can examine it yourself. If you discover a problem, explain the problem to the judge in your next speech.

If your opponent fails to produce evidence you’ve requested in a timely manner, you could say: “The evidence we requested hasn’t been produced in a timely manner in order for us to examine it and have time to respond. Therefore, we would ask that this unverified evidence be disregarded in today’s debate round.”

If your opponent summarizes evidence without reading a direct quotation, you should also ask to see the evidence card in order to verify that your opponent’s summary is accurate.

If your opponent makes a false claim—including exaggerating taglines, for example—you should point out why the claim is false or exaggerated. When you do this, don’t accuse your opponent of lying. Perhaps he just made a mistake. You can avoid personal attacks by dealing with the claim or evidence directly, like this: “My opponent claimed that our national debt will bankrupt the country in ten years. But his evidence actually said that experts are unsure of what will happen.”

Second, you should understand what truly is and is not a rule violation.

Before bringing an issue to Compliance, read through the debate rules and find which one has been violated. If you can’t point to a specific rule that covers your situation, it’s likely that no rule violation has occurred. Perhaps an ethical violation has occurred, but not everything that is unethical is a rule violation.

As you consider whether or not a rule has been violated, consult with a parent, coach, or other trusted adult before going to Compliance. If you can confirm that an actual rule has been violated, then you should **bring it to the attention of the Compliance Team** after the debate round.



If no rule has been violated but you still believe what happened was unethical, **pray about the situation and discuss with a trusted adult** about next steps to take. NCFCA is a Christian community, and we encourage everyone to follow biblical principles of loving confrontation, repentance, forgiveness, and restoration.

Third, if you have a question about the rules, please feel free to go to Compliance to ask your question. Our Compliance Team is there to help you.

Finally, when it comes to the rules, remember to apply them to yourself first before applying them to an opponent. As Jesus said in Matthew 7:3-5,

Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

Are you upholding not only the letter but also the spirit of the rules? Are you being completely honest and loving during debate rounds? Are you treating your opponent how you would want to be treated?

Upholding the rules of NCFCA debate starts with you.