

NDCA SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR CARD CLIPPING ACCUSATIONS

While the NDCA has come to an agreement on the definition of “card clipping,” **the scope of the NDCA’s authority does not go beyond the NDCA National Championship Tournament.** Schools who host tournaments should consider adopting a similar rule, **and posting that rule in their invitation.**

In response to a recent rise in the accusations of “card clipping” in high school policy, public forum and Lincoln-Douglas debates, on February 2nd, 2014 the National Debate Coaches Association approved a definition of “clipping.” As a result, the NDCA currently defines “card clipping” as, “A judge should find clipping has occurred when a debater represents they have read five words or more that they did not read in any speech. If the judge finds that clipping has occurred the penalty is a loss for the team and zero speaker points for the debater who “clipped.” If a team makes a false accusation of clipping the penalty is a loss and zero speaker points for both debaters on the team who made the false accusation.

Technical malfunction isn’t an excuse for clipping. Debaters have an obligation to accurately represent the material they have read. If a judge finds that students represented they read material that they did not read then it’s clipping and penalties should be imposed even if the judge doesn’t think there was ill intent.

The enforcement is left solely to the discretion of the judge(s) and can not be appealed to the tabroom or the NDCA Board.

While the NDCA has come to an agreement on the definition of “card clipping,” the scope of the NDCA authority doesn’t go beyond the NDCA national championship tournament. The NDCA encourages schools who host tournaments to adopt this or a similar rule regarding clipping and post it in their invitation. Tournament hosting schools are also encouraged to use the NDCA Suggested Guidelines For Card Clipping Accusations in their invitation materials and judge information packets.

The following are the suggested guidelines for judges in resolving “card clipping” accusations:

1. At whatever point the accusation happens, the judge should immediately pause the debate.

2. The judge should then read the definition that the tournament provides for what constitutes “card clipping.”

3. Next, the judge should inform both teams that either the accused team will be found guilty of clipping and will receive a loss and the offending student will be given zero speaker points, or the accused team will be found innocent of clipping and the accusing team will receive the loss and both receive zero speaking points.

4. The accusing team can then decide to continue with or cease in their accusation of clipping. In the event that they decide not to level the accusation, the debate proceeds as normal. If the accusing team decides they will indeed make a clipping accusation the debate ceases and the round is decided entirely on whether or not clipping has occurred.

5. The accusing team then presents their evidence of clipping to the judge(s) (a recording, differences in marked evidence documents, etc.)

6. The judge(s) reviews the evidence and makes a decision on whether or not the definition of clipping has been violated or not. In the event that the judge feels that insufficient evidence exists, and the judge has no firsthand knowledge the clipping occurred, the win should go to the team being accused.

7. Judges are encouraged to use this as a teaching moment in the decision process. The goal is to provide respectful and helpful instructions to both sides while rendering their decision based on the result of the accusation.

8. When filling out the ballot, make sure to write the basis and explanation for decision so that coaches can be made aware of the context of the situation.

9. Please also alert the tab room so they can note that a challenge has been made.

* All discussion while adjudicating the decision should happen in front of both teams. The judge should refrain from any private conversations with only one team or debater, so as to maintain complete transparency.

** None of this precludes a judge, based on their own judgement, from deciding clipping has occurred. As has been traditional practice, judges are empowered based on their own flow, following speech documents, recordings and/or other information that clipping has occurred and to level appropriate penalties

*** These guidelines only apply to the varsity division. JV and novice divisions should be dealt with based on best estimation of intent and judges should use the situation as a teaching moment instead of purely a punitive measure.”