

BASIC CASE CONSTRUCTION IN



LINCOLN-DOUGLAS DEBATE

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Abstract:

Okay, you've done the research and have your arguments, so you're ready to write a case. But how? Here I will provide you with a very basic outline that you can use to construct your cases so that they are tournament ready.

Casing Outline

Regardless of whether or not you are affirmative or negative, you can use the same outline when writing your case; the only real difference (besides the content of your arguments) will be the length, since it probably isn't strategic to have a six-minute negative case.

1. The first part of your case should contain a short introduction. This can come in the form of a quotation or a statistic framing your side of the resolution.
 - A. After this, you should state your side and the resolution.
 - I. *"It is because I agree with [author of your quote] that I affirm the resolution, Resolved:..."*
2. The second part of your case is the framework. In the framework, you should establish the burdens of each debater, as well as set up your value and criterion.
 - A. The value is the highest thing that you seek to achieve when affirming or negating. Values can be a number of things, but the most common ones are justice, morality, and societal welfare.
 - B. The value criterion is the mechanism that you use to achieve your value. So, if your value is justice, and your value criterion is maximization of rights, your conception of justice is one that says whomever protects the most amount of rights achieves justice and should win. Within this part of the case, you must provide arguments as to why your criterion should be preferred over any other criterion.
3. After you establish the framework, then come your contentions. These are the parts of your case that are going to formulate arguments justifying your side of the resolution.
 - A. Contention One: Here you should have a sentence briefly explaining the overall argument your contention will make.

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- I. Sub-point A: Your contention may have multiple justifications for its conclusion, so you should separate each justification into sub-points so that it creates an easy way for people to follow your arguments.
 - a. Within this sub-point you should have a claim, warrant (typically evidence), and an impact.
 - II. Sub-point B: This is going to be just like sub-point A, but with different justifications.
 - III. Sub-point C: The number of sub-points you use is optional, but typically most contentions contain no less than two sub-points and no more than four.
- B. Contention Two: Contention two is going to be structured identically to contention one, but in this contention you will be making an entirely separate argument with its own unique justifications.
4. Conclusion: The conclusion isn't crucial, but many judges like to see at least a sentence at the end of your case essentially summarizing your position. You will find that many debaters end their speeches with, "For these reasons I would ask you to vote affirmative/negative in this debate." Not crucial, but some judges appreciate it, and it takes very little time.

Conclusion

Obviously the length of your case is going to depend on how many arguments you want to make/have the time to make in the set amount of time that you are given. Like flowing, how you structure the case is relatively up to you. The important thing to remember is that you must use some form of explicit structure so that everyone in the debate, including yourself, can keep up with what arguments are taking place.