

Judging Debate: Lincoln-Douglas Value

YouTube Video Link: <https://youtu.be/yKHE3-qH4jQ>

Value debate challenges us to think critically about the ideals held by individuals and societies. It seeks to discover which values should drive decision-making.

It does not involve proposing a plan of action or a policy change.

For example, the question of the environment for value debate would not be “what should we DO to protect the environment?” but rather something like, “should we VALUE the environment above the economy?”

In each round, one debater affirms the resolution while another opposes or negates it, demonstrating a clash of competing desirable values.

Throughout a tournament, debaters have to alternate between affirming and negating the assigned resolution, which is assigned for the entire season.

This year’s debate resolution is

Resolved: In the exploration and utilization of outer space, international cooperation should be prioritized.

This year, debaters are invited to think philosophically about space exploration, an exciting frontier of human ambition, ingenuity, and groundbreaking endeavors. Ideas that used to be in the realm of science fiction are becoming tangible possibilities. However, value debaters are not primarily concerned about what is possible but rather **what is ethical**. The foundational question that value debaters must answer is how should mankind explore and use outer space and all that it contains?

Debaters have their own preferred positions and personal opinions, just like you do. But learning how to argue from both sides of a resolution is a great way for all of us to see that there are reasonable arguments for both sides in a clash of desirable values.

There are different ways to structure Value Debate cases and arguments, but you can anticipate that many rounds will have a few key features.

- **Precise definitions.** The words in a value resolution can have different nuances of meaning, and we may want or need to use a precise definition to support an argument.
- **Hierarchy of values.** We will usually appeal to values or ideals that we believe our assigned side of the resolution best supports. When there is a clash of values, we will try to convince you that our value ought to be preferred compared with our opponent's value.
- **Criterion or standard.** We may offer you a defined way to help explain, measure, or evaluate which arguments best support the preeminent value we have identified.

Debaters in NCFCA vary in their age, experience level, and skills, but here's what you can expect from well prepared and experienced value debaters

- Expect **solid argumentation.** It's up to us to explain the logical connections between our assertions and the resolution. We may do this through examples, analogies, precepts of philosophy, cited sources, our own analysis, and other methods.
- Expect a **clash of ideas.** Debaters should engage with their opponent's arguments, and explain why their own arguments are superior. We may legitimately decide to agree with our opponents on some issues, but we should also identify areas of disagreement and refute our opponent's positions regarding those key points.

Here's what NOT to expect of value debaters.

- **Don't expect perfect proof.** Positions on desirable but competing values cannot be absolutely proven as right or wrong, and debaters should not be expected to achieve complete proof for their position. We are responsible for convincing you that our side of the resolution is more valid as a general principle.
- **Don't expect a plan.** Value debaters should not propose a plan for change but rather a defense of what should be most highly esteemed between two choices.
- **Don't expect answers to every argument.** With limited time, we often have to choose which arguments to prioritize, so ignoring or "dropping" a lesser argument that is outweighed by a more important one should not necessarily be considered a losing move.

We know choosing the winning speaker can be a challenge in close rounds. Even experienced judges often disagree about who won.

We simply ask that you **decide who was most persuasive to you**. Here are some things you should consider.

- **Reasoning.** Which debater made the best logical connections between key arguments and the values highlighted as most important in the round?
- **Focus on the resolution.** Which debater best addressed the central question(s) of the resolution?
- **Clarity.** Which debater was easier to follow and understand?
- **Quality of arguments.** Which debater presented the best quality and depth of arguments in favor of his or her position?
- **Support.** Which debater provided the best support for critical points?
- **Clash.** Which debater best addressed and refuted the opponent's arguments?
- **Proof of principles.** Which debater best supported their side of the resolution as a general principle by the end of the round?
- **Conduct and ethics.** A debater who plainly behaves in a deceitful or rude manner toward an opponent should not be granted a win.

We're confident that you will be able to make a solid decision simply based on listening to the arguments the debaters present, but if you have any questions, you can reach out to our tournament staff after the round.

If you also plan to judge Team Policy debate, you can find a separate video orientation for that event.

Thank you for your part in helping our students learn key communication and analysis skills!