

CHAPTER 13

AFFIRMATIVE CASING IN LINCOLN-DOUGLAS DEBATE

This chapter focuses on the mechanics of writing the affirmative case. The steps involved in preparing an affirmative case are analyzing the resolution, conducting research, defining terms, and writing the case.

ANALYZING THE RESOLUTION

A Lincoln-Douglas debater should begin thinking about a resolution by asking two questions:

1. What are the objects of evaluation contained in the resolution?
2. What value should be used to evaluate these objects?

Every resolution contains one or more terms that are the objects to be evaluated. Following is an example of a resolution that contains only one object of evaluation: “Resolved: Human genetic engineering is morally justified.” This resolution introduces a single object—“human genetic engineering”—and asks how highly this object should be valued.

Most Lincoln-Douglas resolutions contain two objects of evaluation, and the debater is invited to compare the importance of the two terms. Consider this example: “Resolved: The principle of majority rule ought to be valued above the principle of minority rights.” The resolution introduces two objects of evaluation— “principle of majority rule” and “principle of minority rights.” The debater is asked to weigh the value of one concept as compared to the other.

The second question to answer about a resolution is which evaluative term should be used in the context of the resolution. Some resolutions provide their own evaluative terms. Consider the following topic: “Resolved: On balance, institutional censorship of academic material is harmful to the educational development of students.” The object of evaluation in this resolution is “institutional censorship of academic material.” The resolution itself provides the value that is to be weighed; this value is “the educational development of students.” This resolution doesn’t ask the debater to decide whether educational development is worthwhile—this value is imposed on the resolution. The only question is whether “censorship of academic material” enhances or detracts from “educational development.”