

Building Your Case Handout

Note: if you struggle with this, don't freak out! Thinking of case ideas is hard. Don't expect to come up with answers to these questions immediately – it could take you days to complete this sheet.

Before we start: Create a Microsoft Word document. You will write the outline for your case in this document.

Note: we are not actually "writing" the case yet. We're just making an outline. Don't feel like everything has to be clearly explained or formatted yet. You don't even have to write in full sentences. Writing only "Introduction: person riding bicycle for progress" or "Value: Practicality" is enough for now. Of course you will expand on it later, but this is just a rough outline.

DON'T FORGET ABOUT THE CONCEPT OF CONFLICT AS YOU ARE CRAFTING YOUR CASE! ALWAYS KEEP THIS IN MIND – ESPECIALLY IN THE EXAMPLES.

Step 1: Preliminary definitions:

Pick some definitions of the terms in the resolution. They should be definitions that you agree with. Write them down in your outline at the top.

Step 2: Finding the value: Do this step multiple times until you exhaust all your possibilities

Examples of good values include: life, liberty, prosperity, progress, human rights, peace, justice, etc.... (please note that this is a very incomplete list of possible values you could use – these are all just examples).

In this step, we will come up with a list of possible values you could use for your case.

A. Remember, the value is the reason WHY your side is the best! So it's important to ask yourself "Why?" during the process of finding your value. Why do you believe fair trade is more important/needed/valuable than free trade? Or, why is free trade NOT more important/needed/valuable than fair trade?

B. CONTINUE ASKING WHY to your previous answer, until you cannot ask WHY anymore and you have an abstract noun value!!!

Ex.- WHY do you believe (A) is important or valuable? Answer: (B) Why should we strive to uphold (B)? Answer: (C) Why do we need (C)? Answer: (D)-abstract noun-VALUE!

Keep asking this question of "Why?" over and over again in this way until you get to some sort of value behind the reason why you believe your side of the resolution is the best!! The value you end up with should be the fundamental reason why your side is better – ie, because my side gets us this thing that we value, my side is important.

C. Write down your final answer, summed up in just 1 or 2 words.

CONGRATULATIONS! YOU HAVE JUST FOUND A POSSIBLE VALUE! Write it down and circle it on a separate piece of paper.

D. Repeat Step 2 again from the beginning (starting at A.) and try to take a different train of thought. Do Step 2 over and over until you can't think of any more possible values.

Step 3: Choosing a value from the ones you came up with:

Look at all the possible values you came up with from Step 2. Pick the best one – the one you believe in the most, the one that you think is the strongest, the one that best supports your side, etc...

CONGRATULATIONS! YOU NOW HAVE A VALUE! Put it in the outline underneath the definitions.

Step 4: Finding the Criterion: Do this step multiple times until you exhaust all your possibilities

A. How exactly do you propose to uphold your value under your side of the resolution? (It's OK if your answer to this is "by upholding my side of the resolution," but if you can come up with a more specific answer, that is better).

B. Or, how do you know when your value has been achieved? (Again, it's OK if your answer to this is "when we have my side of the resolution," but if you can come up with a more specific answer, that is better).

C. Summarize your answer to A. in just 1 or 2 words. Write down your answers on a separate piece of paper.

D. Summarize your answer to B. in just 1 or 2 words. Write down your answers on a separate piece of paper.

E. Repeat Step 4 again from the beginning (starting at A.) and try to take a different train of thought. Repeat this Step over and over until you can't think of anymore criterions for the value you chose.

Step 5: Choosing a Criterion

A. Look at your final answers from Step 4 (all the answers you wrote down from parts C and D). Do you feel that you need to talk about any of these concepts in your case to better present your argument? If yes, continue; if no, you do not need a criterion. Skip the rest of Step 5 and move on to Step 6.

B. Which concept do you think is more important to your argument? Write it down.

C. Is your answer you just came up with in B. (above) the same as your side of the resolution? If so, you will probably not use a criterion in your case.

D. Otherwise, CONGRATULATIONS, YOU HAVE FOUND YOUR CRITERION!!! Put it in your outline underneath the value.

Step 6: Revisit your definitions.

Look at your definitions of the resolution again. A good definition should be fair—not abusive to the other side of the debate. For example, if you're on the side of free trade, your definition shouldn't say "fair trade is a no-good policy that is used by evil guys like Hitler to disrupt peace and make everyone selfish." In other words, if you don't think your opponent would like your definition, then it isn't a good definition. A good test to see whether a definition is fair is to ask: Can I use this definition on both sides of the debate?

If you feel that you need better definitions for the terms in the resolution, find better ones to replace the old ones at the top of your case.

Also, now is the time to define other terms as well. You need to define your value and your criterion (if you have one). The definitions for your value go next to your value; the definitions for your criterion go next to your criterion.

For instance, say your value is Progress and your criterion is Educational Excellence:

“My value is progress, defined by Merriam-Webster as blahblahblah.... My criterion, or way to achieve this value, is Educational Excellence, defined by Dictionary.com as blahblahblah...”

Step 7: Crafting Contentions

The following is a good general guideline to follow (although feel free to change it or experiment if needed):

Contention 1: (Your Value) is the highest value

Contention 2: (Your side of the resolution) leads to (your criterion), achieving (value)

Contention 3: (Other side of the resolution) harms (criterion) and (value)

Note: if you don't have a criterion, remove the criterion parts of Contentions 2 and 3. If you don't have a criterion, you obviously don't say that "fair trade leads to fair trade, achieving blahblahblah..." That's redundant...

Put the contentions right after the value and criterion.

Step 8: Find examples

For contention 1 (your "my value is highest" contention): I didn't mention this in the video, but you actually may not need real-world examples for this contention (although feel free to include them if you want). Instead, go to brainyquote.com and find some quotes that support your value (quotes tend to work better for this contention). Drop the quotes into your outline under contention 1.

For contentions 2 and 3 (your other contentions): You DEFINITELY need at least 1 real-world example for each of these contentions. Fire up Google and do a few searches. For example, if your contention is "free trade leads to progress," do a search for "free trade progress" and find an example of free trade leading to progress. Then you might use the example of the internet (free trade) leading to progress (Internet's benefits).

Put these examples inside the body of your contentions in your case outline.

Note: DO NOT USE EXTREME/RIDICULOUS/SUPER RADICAL EXAMPLES!!! They are unconvincing and not good argumentation. (An example of such an “extreme example” would be me saying “Patriotism is bad. Take the example of Hitler; he was patriotic, and as a result, he killed Jews!” This is not a reasonable example of patriotism; the whole example is ridiculous because it is so extreme).

This isn't to say that you can't use examples of something going wrong. You should do that. Just use common sense.

Common extreme examples that you should avoid:

-Hitler

-North Korea/Kim Jong Un

Step 9: Introduction

This can be a Story, Shocking statistic or fact, an example, or quotes are often used. Relate it to the Resolution! Analogies also work really well.

Put the Introduction at the very beginning of the outline, even before the definitions.

Embed the resolution at the end of the intro before the definitions.

Step 11: Organize

Make sure your outline is properly organized so that everything is presented in the following order:

1. Hook/Introduction
2. Resolution (write out the resolution word for word after the introduction)
3. Definitions
4. Resolutional Analysis (optional)
5. Value
6. Criterion
7. 3 Contentions

You now have a full outline for your case! Although it is not written out and cannot yet be presented in a round, this is a good foundation for you to use in writing your case.

Step 12: Make sure each contention has a claim, warrant, and impact.

Step 13: WRITE!

You have an outline! Now WRITE!!! Write the case based on your outline.