



Values and Criteria in LD: **Worked Examples.**

For students who keep hearing 'value' and 'value criterion' and want a clear, usable explanation. Learn what each does, how they fit together, and how to choose and defend them.

What is a value?

A **value** is the big goal your side says matters most when answering the resolution. LD resolutions usually ask what is just, moral or better, so the judge needs a way to decide. Your value gives them the target.

Common values include **justice, morality, human dignity, liberty, equality, safety, the common good, and the rule of law**. A value should be broad enough to matter and clear enough to explain in one sentence.

Value test

Can you finish this sentence? 'The most important thing to protect or promote when judging this resolution is _____, because _____. ' If not, the value is too vague.

What is a value criterion?

A **value criterion (VC)**, also described as a standard, is the **measuring stick**. It explains how to tell whether the value is achieved. If the value is the destination, the criterion is the map.

VALUE (GOAL)	POSSIBLE CRITERION (MEASURE)	IN PLAIN WORDS
Justice	Giving each person what they are owed	Does this treat people fairly?
Liberty	Protecting individual choice from interference	Does this let people act freely?
Safety	Minimizing harm to the most people	Does this reduce danger overall?
Human dignity	Respecting people as ends, never as mere tools	Does this treat people with respect?
The common good	Maximizing benefits to society as a whole	Does this help the community?

Notice that the criterion links to a philosophy (see the philosophy primer in this series). Many cases also use one phrase: 'value of justice, criterion of ____'. The table shows examples only. Many leagues and judges expect a value and a criterion, but not every judge does, so check your league and read your judge's preferences.

A worked mini-example

Imagine a resolution (made up for practice, not a real season topic): '**Resolved: Schools ought to require community service for graduation.**'

PIECE	AFFIRMATIVE	NEGATIVE
Value	The common good	Liberty
Criterion	Maximizing benefits to the community	Protecting individual choice
Core argument	Service builds a stronger community, and a graduation requirement ensures everyone participates	Forced service violates students' freedom, so it is not just

PIECE	AFFIRMATIVE	NEGATIVE
How to win	Show service benefits outweigh the burden	Show the right to choose outweighs the benefit

Now the round is a clash: which value and measuring stick should the judge use? Once the judge accepts yours, every argument gets tested against it.

How to defend and attack frameworks

- 1
- State it clearly. Value, criterion, and a one-line reason each in under 60 seconds.
- 2
- Link your contentions. Every contention should show it meets your criterion.
- 3
- Attack theirs. Say why their value is too narrow, ignores a group, or can be reached under yours too.
- 4
- Show 'even if'. 'Even if you accept their criterion, I still win because...' keeps you alive.
- 5
- Weigh at the end. Explain which framework the judge should prefer and why.

WEAK FRAMEWORK	WHY IT FAILS	STRONGER VERSION
Value: good	Too vague to measure	Value: justice
Criterion is the same as the contention	It assumes the answer	Use a principle that tests many arguments
Value picked only because it favors your case	Judge sees no reason to adopt it	Give a reason it matters for this resolution

Practice

- ☐ Write a value and criterion for both sides of three different practice resolutions.
- ☐ Explain each in 30 seconds to a parent without using jargon.
- ☐ Find two sentences that show your criterion is a good way to judge the topic.
- ☐ Predict your opponent's framework and write a one-minute response.

FRAMEWORK NOTES

Next step

Not sure which values fit your topic? Scholar Coach can walk through your case with you. Book a free consultation at the link below.

Built from public guidance: UIL Intro to LD Debate slides, E. Huber (uiltexas.org) · UIL Intro to LD Debate slides, K. Adcock (uiltexas.org) · UIL Judging Lincoln-Douglas Debate instructions, 2024-25 (uiltexas.org) · Baylor University (R. Edwards): LD Intro to Philosophy slides, hosted by UIL. Rules change by league and tournament, so always confirm against your tournament invitation and current league rules.

NOTES

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