

ELECTING THE PRESIDENT: A GUIDE TO THE ELECTION PROCESS

Thank you for joining our series about electing our leaders and the presidential election. Running twice a week through mid-October, this series will help students in the classroom — as well as citizens of all ages — to understand the election process.

DAY 3: DEBATE WATCHING 101

Tomorrow night will be the first presidential debate — an opportunity for you to directly compare the candidates and their positions. During a debate, candidates meet face-to-face to answer questions, state their views and respond to their opponents' statements. The most common debate formats are:

- Single moderator: one person asks the candidates questions
- Panel: a select group of people question the candidates
- Town hall: questions are submitted to the candidates by voters in advance or during the debate

The debate usually begins with an introduction of the candidates and opening statements. Then the candidates are asked questions and respond — usually within a time limit. The questioner may ask follow-up questions to clarify candidates' responses. Some debates give candidates an opportunity to ask questions directly of each other. At the end, candidates are usually given time to make closing statements. Recently, debates have experimented with the format by using questions from Twitter or narrowing the audience to undecided voters.

BEFORE THE DEBATE, PREPARE

- Decide which campaign issues are most important to you.
- Think about what else you need to know to make your decision.
- Open your mind to new opinions and impressions of the candidates.
- Consider watching the debate with a group. Discussing it with others may help you clarify your thoughts about what was said and how the candidates performed.

DURING THE DEBATE, ASK

- Does the format give each candidate an equal opportunity to speak and respond?
- Are the questions clear, fair and equally tough on all candidates?
- Is the moderator in control of the debate?
- Do the candidates answer questions directly, or do they evade them?
- Do they give specifics about their stands on the issues, or do they speak in generalities?
- Do they talk about their own policies and positions, or do they mostly attack their opponents?
- Can they actually carry out the promises they are making?
- Do they show how their backgrounds and experience qualify them to hold the office?
- Are their answers consistent with their previous positions, and if not, why not?
- What image are they trying to create?
- Do their responses appear "canned"?
- Are reaction shots or other techniques used to create a sense of drama or conflict?

AFTER THE DEBATE, REFLECT

- How are the pre-debate and post-debate commentaries trying to influence you?
- Which candidate appears most qualified for the office?
- For each candidate, on which issues do you agree; on which do you disagree?
- What did you learn about the issues or the candidates?
- What do you want to look into further?

LEARN MORE

Watch a presidential debate:

- **Domestic Policy**
Wednesday, October 3
6–7:30 p.m.
- **Foreign and Domestic Policy**
Thursday, October 11 (Vice Presidential)
6–7:30 p.m.
- **Foreign and Domestic Policy**
Town Hall Format
Tuesday, October 16
6–7:30 p.m.
- **Foreign Policy**
Monday, October 22
6–7:30 p.m.

Create a chart to analyze each debate question. How would you rate the quality of each debate question? How well did each candidate answer each question? What did you learn about debates?

NEXT: MONEY: WHO GETS IT, WHO GIVES IT



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LOCAL BALLOT ISSUE AND CANDIDATE FORUMS

Get your questions answered in person. The League of Women Voters of Seattle-King County invites you to the following forums — free and open to the public:

Thursday, Oct. 4, 7 p.m.
Ballot Issues Forum
Marriage Equality, Charter Schools & More
Seattle First Baptist Church, 1111 Harvard Ave.

Tuesday, Oct 9, 7 p.m.
Sheriff Candidates, Fingerprint & Marijuana Ballot Issues
Wyckoff Auditorium, Bannan Engineering Bldg.
Seattle University, 12th Ave. & Columbia St.

For more League forums in King County, go to seattlelww.org; for other Leagues go to lwwa.org.

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