

How To Hold A Debate Watch



OHIO DEBATE COMMISSION

The Debate Watch Playbook

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What is a Debate Watch?

Debate Watches are focus groups that watch debates, turn them off immediately after they ended (before media commentary), and discuss what people had learned.

The goal is not to say who won or lost, it is to share views with those who may agree and those who don't. It is to listen respectfully to others' opinions

How to hold a Debate Watch in person.

There is no single way to hold a Debate Watch. It can involve 12 to 20 people, or several hundred. Ideally, it can include people of different generations and different views. The post-debate conversation can last 20 minutes or an hour. There can be a facilitator of the conversation or not.

Once you have decided your date(s), identify and secure space. Options include theater-style classrooms, a synagogue or church, a library, living room, performing arts center, or a common area outdoors. If some of those you want to attend are nervous gatherings you could even add an online option.

You can host a DebateWatch for one debate, two, three, or all four.

Make sure the screen where the debate will air can be viewed clearly by everyone present.

Before the start of each debate, consider encouraging participants to arrive prior to the start of the debate to set the stage for the post-debate discussion, to view the pre-debate program televised on C-SPAN, or to take advantage of refreshments being served.

After the Debate turn the TV off when the debate ends – be for e the post-debate commentary.

Discussion Questions

- **What did you learn about the candidates or issues that you did not know prior to the debate?**
- **What topics or issues discussed in the debate were most useful or informative?**
- **Were there issues you were hoping would be discussed that were not?**
- **What issues would you like to see discussed in subsequent debates?**

Guiding Principles

Be open to other points of view. Show respect. Listen respectfully as others comment. Look for areas of commonality: agree where you can. Be focused: keep your comments focused on the debate itself.

Debate Watches are important.

We want to thank the Commission on Presidential Debates for a lot of the information mentioned in this resource book. Debate Watches offer a space for free-flowing conversation among voters.



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