

The strategy in proper use of preparation time is simple—save as much time as possible for the period just before your final rebuttal. As you become more experienced in debate, you will discover that you are able to save most of your preparation time for the crucial last rebuttal.

HOW ARE DEBATE RESOLUTIONS SELECTED?

Most Lincoln-Douglas competitions use the national topic selected by the National Forensic League (NFL). These topics originate with the work of the NFL Lincoln-Douglas Wording Committee. In each academic year, the committee carefully words ten possible Lincoln-Douglas resolutions. Those ten topics are then submitted for a vote (now using an online voting procedure) where each NFL member school is asked to choose one of the ten resolutions for each two-month period of competition: September-October, November-December, January-February, March-April, and a topic for the national NFL tournament). The NFL doesn't release a Lincoln-Douglas topic until approximately one month before the debate on that topic is to begin. Each topic is announced on the NFL website (www.nflonline.org).

Although the NFL topics are used in most national and regional debate tournaments, some state competitions specify their own topics. In the state of Texas, for example, the University Interscholastic League (UIL) selects its own Lincoln-Douglas debate topics. Rather than changing the topic every two months, the UIL announces one topic for the fall semester and another topic for the spring semester. The safest way to know the topic that will be used at a given tournament is by consulting the invitation for that tournament. The tournament invitation will indicate that the topic in use will be the NFL September-October resolution, the spring UIL resolution, and so on. The tournament invitations will either list the actual wording of the resolution or let you know the web address where you can discover the wording of the topic.

HALLMARKS OF LINCOLN-DOUGLAS DEBATE COMPETITION

Lincoln-Douglas competition began in the 1970s as an event sponsored by the NFL. The number of participants in Lincoln-Douglas debates now equals or exceeds those in traditional policy debate. In 2007, the Executive Council of the NFL provided a definition of Lincoln-Douglas debate. The following paragraphs are drawn from the NFL's official description of this form of debate.