

Policy Debate

Policy debate is the grandfather of all debate events; it is the oldest form of speech competition, in which teams of two advocate for and against a resolution, that typically calls for policy change by the United States federal government. Students must prove that a current national or international policy must be changed. In addition, students must design a plan of action that will solve the problem that is inherent in the policy. Policy debate uses a single topic for the entire debate season, which is announced in the spring and debated through the National Tournament the following June.

Lincoln-Douglas Debate

Lincoln-Douglas debate is a one on one debate, and is sometimes called value debate because it traditionally places a heavy emphasis on logic, ethical values, and philosophy. This debate event was patterned after the early debates between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas in the nineteenth century. The purpose of this debate is to argue whether or not actions are moral or justified rather than proposing a plan to solve a current problem. Lincoln Douglas Debate resolutions change up to five times a year (usually bi-monthly) depending on the protocol implemented by the league.

Public Forum Debate

Public forum debate can be compared to a nationally-televised debate, such as "Crossfire" in which the debaters argue a topic of national importance in terms that a "common" person would understand. The debate in public forum is conducted by teams of two people alternating speeches for their side. There is little focus on extreme speed or arcane debate jargon or argumentation theory; instead, successful public forum debaters must make persuasive and logical arguments in a manner that is accessible to a wide variety of audiences. Because of its strong relevance to the real-world and ability to develop life skills, public forum debate has exploded in popularity since its introduction into high school debate by the National Forensics League.

Parliamentary Debate

This structured debate is a two person team debate in which the style emphasizes argumentation and rhetoric, rather than research and detailed factual knowledge. In this debate format, tournament officials assign a new topic for every round. After the announcement of the topic, the two teams have a limited preparation time, usually twenty minutes, during which to write out their respective cases for the side they were assigned; either Affirmative or Opposition.