

DEBATE QUESTIONS

The debate questions that you write and select will be important in setting the tone of your debate, and can help make it more engaging, focused, and professional. You'll want to think about what you/your organization is hoping to accomplish with this debate, and what your audience is interested in. Here are some general tips on writing good debate questions:

- Keep your questions *politically neutral*, *simple*, and *higher-level*.
- Make the *interconnections* between different issues. Place environmental issues in the context of other priority voter issues – including health, the economy, education, and more – while using plain language. This can help introduce new perspectives for attendees and candidates, and attract a larger audience.
- Consider the *length* of your questions. Your audience may appreciate some brief context on the issue that you're asking candidates to talk about, but a long explanation could be hard to follow and consume time for other questions. Try to keep your questions to about 15 – 20 seconds in length so your audience can focus on the question at hand.
- Together with your moderator, think about how your *debate format* can contribute to a more engaging debate.
 - Are there certain questions that would benefit from a long-form response style, while others could be a simple yes/no question? (Note that yes/no/short-form questions can be a great way for your moderator to follow up and clarify candidate commitments, or could also be grouped into a “rapid fire” section.)
 - Which questions lend themselves to open discussion among candidates (if you plan to include open debate)?
- Debates should feature a few *local questions* that touch on significant issues facing the community. This helps draw attention to community concerns and the perspectives of those directly affected by them. Consider inviting **local groups** (grassroots groups, community centres, businesses, etc) to provide some suggestions. Attribute their question to them or have them join in to pose it directly to candidates. This helps validate that the issues being discussed at your debate matter to the community.
- Consider *reaching out* to your audience to see what issues they want to hear about.
 - Prior to the debate, you can use tools like [Sli.do](#) or Google Forms to get audience-submitted questions.
 - During the debate, you can use basic tools like Zoom polls (if hosting a virtual debate) or more interactive tools [Mentimeter](#) to ask audience members what their top priority issues are, and ask for the candidates to reflect on the answers. Mentimeter will organize the responses in a word cloud based on popularity (with the largest ones being the most popular).