

Most presidential debates focus on a particular set of issues, usually under the umbrella of a wider framework such as domestic policy or foreign policy. The moderator typically presents questions directly to the candidates and lets them respond to each other’s answers. In general, the candidates do not guide the topics or questions; they can only guess what they will be asked as they prepare for the debate.

As you watch the debate, try to make note of the policies put forward by the candidates and complete the guide below.

1) Who is moderating the debate and what, if any, broader topics are the focus of the debate (domestic policy, foreign policy, COVID-19, etc.)?

2) As you watch the debate, refer to the table below and mark any of the issues that are discussed. There are also a few empty boxes to fill in if another, unlisted topic is discussed.

IMMIGRATION	COVID-19	REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS/ABORTION
HEALTH CARE	RENEWABLE ENERGY/FOSSIL FUELS	BLACK LIVES MATTER
LAW ENFORCEMENT	FOREIGN AID	THE MILITARY
TAXES	ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY	THE ECONOMY

3) What policy presented by which candidate did you agree with the most and why?

4) What policy presented by which candidate did you disagree with the most and why?

5) Which candidate do you feel audiences are most likely to consider the winner of the debate? Why?

6) Which candidate do you feel presented the best overall set of plans/policies? Why?

7) Consider your answers to questions 5 and 6. Is your answer the same for both questions? Is your answer different for each question? Reflect on your answers and explain your reasoning. Be sure to answer the following points in your response:

- Who do you feel “won” the debate and who do you feel had the best policies overall?
- Why might people disagree about who won the debate?
- In terms of winning over voters, which do you believe is the most important part of a debate performance: providing substantive policy answers or using strong retorts/criticisms against an opponent?
- To what extent do you believe an undecided voter may have been convinced to vote for one candidate or the other?