<H1>THE COMMISSION ON PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES:</h1>

<H3>DEBATE WATCH '96</h3>

Welcome to **Debate Watch '96** -- a simple idea to get American voters talking about the candidates and issues, not just listening. **Debate Watch '96** was suggested by voters in the 1992 presidential election who participated in a national focus group study designed to assess the educational value of presidential debates. The study, which was sponsored by The Commission on Presidential Debates, involved 625 voters in 17 cities throughout the United States who met after each of the debates to discuss what they had learned, what they still needed to know about the candidates and the issues, and what they liked and didn't like about each of the formats used in 1992. Focus group members represented a cross-section of America, and the Commission on Presidential Debates took what they had to say seriously.

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- <L1> A Viewer's Guide to Political Debates
- <L1> DebateNotes (For Notetaking)
- <L1> Facilitator's Guide & Suggested Questions
- <L1> Facilitator's Report
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- Q: Where are **Debate Watches** taking place?
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- *Q*: Who should be invited to participate?<p><p>
- A: Invite your neighbors, friends, co-workers, or family into your home. Organize a **Debate Watch** for members of an organization wo which you belong in place of a regular meeting. Think about including people of all ages, including teens who might not be old enough to vote yet but are interested in current events. It takes no special expertise to talk about the issues so anyone you know would potentially enjoy participating.
- *Q*: How many people should be invited to join?
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- Q: Should we use the DebatesNotes form to pick a winner?,
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Debate Watch '96@, P.O. Box ______, Lawrence, KS 66044. 1-8---xxx-xxxx.

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The Structure of Debates

Candidates may have an opening statement or a moderator may introduce each candidate and begin questioning immediately. In most debates candidates have a closing statement.

(page two)

How to Get the Most Out of a Debate

Focus your attention on a few key points. Know what it is you want in an office holder, then watch and listen to see which candidate best fits your ideal. The following suggestions will help you focus:

- <L1> Set aside your partisan views. Use the debates to learn as much as possible about <u>all</u> candidates and their positions. <<p>p>
- <L2> Pay close attention to the candidates when they talk about how to solve problems. Listen carefully for comparisons candidates make between or among their programs and their opponents.<<p><</p>
- <L4> Identify the candidate's overriding theme in the debate. If you can readily identify it, the candidate has done a good job of getting major points across. If you have difficulty, the candidate's message may not be well developed.

- <L7> **Be aware of the visual information communicated in televised debates.**Observe candidates' faces and mannerisms to help determine whether you like, trust, or believe a candidate.

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<l9></l9>	Don't watch a debate to determine a winner or loser. All candidates have goals for a debate; as aa result, all could claim victory if winning is defined as achieving goals set by the campaigns or the media. The overriding question for you to concentrate on is who would make a better president, senator, governor, legislator, or county clerk.
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- *Q*: Who should be invited to participate?<p>
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- *Q*: Where should **Debate Watch** meet?
- A: **Debate Watch** can meet in your living room, in a school, at a community center, in a public library, in a business, at a church or place of worship, in a union hall, at a restaurant or wherever you can watch a television and comfortably form a circle of chairs or meet around a table after the debate to discuss. With large groups, have a large screen television or several televisions to guarantee that everyone can see. If you are planning to divide a large gathering into multiple

groups at one location, make sure that you have enough space so that groups have several feet between them.

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- *A*: Call the 800 number on this sheet or call the Speech Communication Association contact person nearest you who is listed in the Resource List.<

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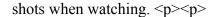
Questions may be posed to candidates from a variety of sources. Members of the media typically serve as questioners in presidential and state office debates. In primary and local debates, experts on the topic debated may serve as panelists. A single moderator or a panel of media representatives or subject experts are the most common questioners. Many debates, especially at the local level, allow for questions from the audience at some point in the debate.

The Richmond town hall meeting in 1992 was the first general election presidential debate to involve citizen questioners.p>

How to Get the Most Out of a Debate

Focus your attention on a few key points. Know what it is you want in an office holder, then watch and listen to see which candidate best fits your ideal. The following suggestions will help you focus:

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- <L6> Identify the images which candidates try to create for themselves.
 Most candidates try to portray themselves as leaders and identify themselves with cherished American values while suggesting that their opponents lack these qualities.
 What in the responses supports their claims?<</p>
- <L7> **Be aware of the visual information communicated in televised debates.**Observe candidates' faces and mannerisms to help determine whether you like, trust, or believe a candidate.
- <L8> Be aware of the technical limitations of televised debates. Television works by showing action. To create action and minimize monotony, directors sometimes include "reaction shots" to show one candidate's response to an opponent's statement. This can detract your attention from what is being said. It is wise to remember the role of actions



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The Structure of Debates

Debates use a variety of formats. Primary debates, featuring candidates from the same party, and local debates traditionally were more free-wheeling and incorporated a wide range of formats because of multiple candidates. In 1992, those two features characterized the general election presidential debates, which included a different format for each debate including a town hall meeting with citizen questioners.

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- <L5> **Identify the candidate's debate strategy.** Does the candidate speak directly to the issues, provide specifics, and present new policies or information? Or does the candidate debate "not to lose" by interpreting questions to suit the candidate's agenda?
- <L6> Identify the images which candidates try to create for themselves.
 Most candidates try to portray themselves as leaders and identify themselves with cherished American values while suggesting that their opponents lack these qualities.
 What in the responses supports their claims?<</p>
- <L7> **Be aware of the visual information communicated in televised debates.**Observe candidates' faces and mannerisms to help determine whether you like, trust, or believe a candidate.<

(page three)

This guide was adapted from material prepared by the following Speech Communication Association members: Diana Carlin, University of Kansas; Robert Friedenberg, Miami University, Hamilton, OH; James Gaudino, Speech Communication Association; Susan Hellweg, San Diego State University; John Morello, Mary Washington College; Michael Pfau, University of Wisconsin.

About the Commission on Presidential Debates: The non-partisan Commission on Presidential Debates has sponsored all the general election presidential debates since 1988. For information about the Commission and the 1996 debates, contact Commission on Presidential Debates, 601 13th Street, NW, Suite 300, Washington DC 2???? or call 202-872-1020.

For more information contact DEBATE WATCH '96@, P.O. Box_____, Lawrence, KS 66044 OR CALL 1-800-

<H1>**Debate Notes**</h1>

Use this form to take notes on topics you want to discuss later. In the box labelled, "Topic," write a few words to summarize the topic (More than one question may be asked on a topic), and then write ideas you want to discuss on the topic. Use initials to indicate which candidate said something you want to comment about and a word or two to describe the content of what was said. Use abbreviations to simplify notetaking. The following are examples of the type of abbreviations you might want to develop: CLR = clear position or response; NP = no policy position stated; NR = not responsive to the question: DEF = defended position against opponent's attack; NODEF = couldn't or didn't defend against attack from opponent or question from moderator; SW = switched position from previous campaign statements.