

# How to Write a Debate Outline

Creating Your Basic Outline Avoiding Logical Fallacies

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Debates are a common assignment in high school and college classes where two individuals or teams discuss an issue. In many ways, writing a debate outline is similar to the other outlines you might write for papers and speeches. However, since debates are not necessarily a familiar form of communication, it is important to know how to write a debate outline so your side is structured properly.

## Part 1 of 2: Creating Your Basic Outline

**Identify the form of debate you are using.** Each form has its own organizational structure. You will base your debate outline on that structure. There are two common forms used in schools and competitions. Other forms are simply varieties of these two, changing the amount of time available and the organization of different segments.

- Team debates are one of the most common debate forms. In the first half of the debate, each team has two segments to present arguments for their side. In the second half of the debate, each team has two segments to rebut arguments presented in the first half.
- Lincoln-Douglas debates are set up to allow one side to present their arguments, and then the other team to cross-examine them. The second team then presents their arguments and has the first team cross-examine them. Finally, each team has an opportunity for a final rebuttal.

**Do your research.** Whatever form your debate takes, you will have the opportunity to present your side of the issue. Gather all of your research and look for common arguments. On a piece of paper, list different pieces of evidence under each line of argument. This can include quotes, examples, cases, facts, and statistics. Be sure to note all bibliographical information on your notes.