



Conduct Effective Research

How to Conduct Effective Debate Research in 60 Minutes

Introduction

At DebateFest, you will receive your debate topic and have only **60 minutes to prepare** before competing. Successful debaters do not try to read everything about a topic. Instead, they focus on finding the **most useful information quickly** and turning that information into strong arguments.

The goal is simple:

Find evidence. Build arguments. Prepare responses.

The DebateFest 60-Minute Research Plan

Minutes 1–5: Understand the Topic

Before researching, make sure you understand exactly what the topic is asking.

Ask Yourself:

- What is the issue?
- What key terms need defining?
- What position am I assigned?
- What does success look like for my side?

Example:

Topic:

Should social media companies be held responsible for misinformation?

Identify:

- Social media companies
- Responsibility
- Misinformation

Understanding the terms helps you find better evidence.

Minutes 6–15: Find Background Information

Start by learning the basics.

Search For:

- Topic overview
- Definitions
- Current facts
- Major arguments on both sides

Good Sources:

- Government websites
- Educational organizations
- University research centers
- Major news organizations
- Nonpartisan think tanks

Goal:

By the end of this stage, you should understand:

- What the issue is
 - Why people disagree
 - The major arguments on both sides
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Minutes 16–30: Gather Evidence for Your Side

Now focus on supporting your assigned position.

Look for:

Statistics

Examples:

- Percentages
- Survey results
- Economic data
- Academic findings

Expert Opinions

Examples:

- Researchers
- Professors
- Government officials
- Industry experts

Real-World Examples

Examples:

- Historical events
 - Court cases
 - Government programs
 - Business practices
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Create an Evidence Chart

As you research, record information like this:

Claim	Evidence	Source
Financial literacy should be required in schools	Students who receive financial education make better financial decisions	National Financial Educators Council
School start times should be later	Teenagers need more sleep than adults	American Academy of Pediatrics

This helps you organize information quickly.

Minutes 31–40: Build Your Main Arguments

Most winning debates rely on **2–3 strong arguments**, not 10 weak ones.

For each argument, use:

Claim

What are you arguing?

Evidence

What proof supports it?

Reasoning

Why does the evidence matter?

Impact

What happens as a result?

Example

Claim:

Schools should require financial literacy.

Evidence:

Research shows many young adults lack budgeting skills.

Reasoning:

Students make important financial decisions shortly after graduation.

Impact:

Financial education can reduce debt and improve economic outcomes.

Minutes 41–50: Research the Opposing Side

This step separates average debaters from champions.

Ask:

What will my opponent argue?

Write down:

1. Their likely argument
 2. Their likely evidence
 3. Your response
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Example

Opponent Argument:

Financial literacy should be taught by parents.

Your Response:

Not all parents have financial expertise or the time to teach these skills consistently.

Minutes 51–55: Prepare Powerful Evidence

Choose your best evidence.

You only need:

2–3 Strong Statistics

2–3 Strong Examples

2–3 Strong Expert Sources

Memorize key facts rather than trying to remember entire articles.

Minutes 56–60: Build Your Opening Statement

Create a clear introduction.

Step 1: State Your Position

We affirm the resolution that...

Step 2: Present Your Main Arguments

Our position rests on three key points...

Step 3: Preview Your Evidence

We will demonstrate through research and real-world examples that...

The "FAST" Research Method

Use this simple DebateFest strategy:

F — Find Reliable Sources

Use credible organizations and experts.

A — Analyze the Information

Ask:

- Is it relevant?
- Is it current?
- Is it trustworthy?

S — Select Strong Evidence

Choose quality over quantity.

T — Turn Evidence into Arguments

Always explain why the evidence matters.

What Makes a Source Credible?

Strong Sources

- ✓ Government agencies
- ✓ Universities
- ✓ Academic journals
- ✓ Professional associations
- ✓ Major news organizations

Weak Sources

- ✗ Anonymous websites
 - ✗ Random blogs
 - ✗ Unsupported social media posts
 - ✗ Opinion-only articles
 - ✗ Websites with no author or evidence
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Research Mistakes to Avoid

Mistake #1: Reading Too Much

Don't read entire articles.

Scan for:

- Key statistics
 - Main conclusions
 - Important examples
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Mistake #2: Collecting Too Many Facts

Three strong pieces of evidence are better than fifteen weak ones.

Mistake #3: Ignoring the Opposing Side

Always prepare responses to likely arguments.

Mistake #4: Forgetting Sources

Write down where information came from.

Judges may ask about evidence credibility.

DebateFest Research Checklist

Before entering the debate, make sure you have:

- Defined key terms
 - Researched both sides
 - Built 2–3 main arguments
 - Found supporting evidence
 - Identified expert sources
 - Prepared rebuttals
 - Created an opening statement
 - Practiced explaining your evidence
 - Prepared a closing statement
 - Organized your notes
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Final Advice

Remember that DebateFest is not a contest to see who can find the most information. It is a contest to see who can use information most effectively.

The best debaters:

- Research quickly.**
- Organize clearly.**
- Use evidence strategically.**
- Respond confidently.**
- Explain why their arguments matter.**

DebateFest Research Formula

Understand the Topic → Find Evidence → Build Arguments → Prepare Rebuttals → Communicate Clearly → Win the Debate 🏆