

GUIDELINES FOR DEBATE TOPIC REPORT AUTHORS

The quality of high school debate depends on well worded, high quality debate resolutions. The purpose of the topic reports is twofold: to examine potential debate issues to determine which topic areas would be productive for debate, and to provide potential debate resolutions in those areas.

Timeline

January 24	Preliminary bibliography & outline of potential issues
April 30	First draft due to NFHS
May	Review of report
June	Authors receive feedback from reviewers and revision of report
July 1	Final draft due to NFHS
July 15	Reports posted for registered attendees & Wording Committee
Early August	Topic Selection Meeting

The Topic Report

The topic report should include:

1. A title page, with the name of the report and author(s), and date.
2. An introduction to the issues of the topic area. Approximately five to ten pages should generally be sufficient. This section should include an explanation of how the topic area meets the NFHS criteria for debate topics (see attached).
3. A minimum of three to six proposed resolutions, with a discussion of the wording selected.
4. A thorough definition section. This should include a variety of contextual definitions of all the words and phrases used in suggested resolutions, as well as other possibilities. These definitions should come from literature about the topic as well as dictionaries. This section is vitally important, since the Wording Committee will use it extensively to frame the final resolution. However, it is also important that definitions included be selected carefully. An extensive, separate definition section that includes words and/or terms not pertinent to the proposed resolutions is not useful. Nor is it necessary to define words or terms used in almost all resolutions such as 'federal government,' 'should,,' 'substantially' or 'significantly,' etc. since the Wording Committee is provided this information.
5. A bibliography of the type of literature that exists on the topic. Selected annotation is strongly recommended. Search terms and results and Internet sites should be included. A list of interest/lobby groups, governmental publications or similar material would be useful.
6. Two-page summary (see next page for details)

Formatting

1. Reports must be submitted electronically. We can accept both PC and Mac documents on disk or as e-mail attachments.
2. Keep formatting simple. Much is lost in transmitting and opening documents. Avoid section breaks and double spacing.
3. Be consistent with font size. We recommend 12 point for text and 14 point for subdivisions.
4. Use autowrap text feature. Do NOT use manual returns.
5. Use Endnotes rather than Footnotes.

6. Use automatic numbering on the bottom of each page.

Required Separate Two-Page Summary Report

1. Title of the report.
2. A numbered list, in priority order, of the top three to six resolutions.
3. A one paragraph description (or list) of the types of affirmative cases that would be debated.
4. A one paragraph description (or list) of the types of negative approaches that would be utilized.
5. A one paragraph comment on the debatability of the topics, especially including balance between negative and affirmative.
6. In one paragraph (180 to 200 words), provide a synopsis of the topic area suitable for publication on the topic ballot. This should include a brief justification of the importance of the area, potential affirmative and negative case areas, and balance.

Resolutions

While the wording of the resolutions will be examined by other individuals, careful thought to wording saves time and improves the quality of the final resolution. In addition, the more thought put into potential wordings of resolutions, the easier it will be to defend them or to suggest alternative wording. The author(s) might wish to consider the agent of change in the resolution, the nature of the action to be defended, the direction of the topic, the scope of the topic, balance and other issues. An examination of past resolutions will be useful. It may be effective to devote a section of the report to each proposed resolution, explaining the wording choice, potential affirmative and negative arguments, and a discussion of the debatability of that specific resolution.

Summary Paragraph

Once a topic area has been selected and placed on the ballot, a summary paragraph must be published. This paragraph briefly outlines the justification for the topic area, and outlines the types of cases and arguments that are likely to be important to the final resolution. While the exact wording of the paragraph may depend on the final resolution selected, a summary paragraph of 180 to 200 words should be included in your two-page topic report summary.

Publication and Distribution

Although the report of the selected topic is no longer printed in Volume 1 of the *Forensic Quarterly*, the reports for the five topic areas on the first national ballot are all posted on the NFHS Web site. We encourage you to keep this in mind, and to proofread your final report carefully. All reports are provided to those who attend the TSM, and are available in electronic form to the public upon request.