

The Great Depression**Social Studies Skills****Participation****Having a Debate****LEARN THE SKILL**

In a democratic society, voters choose between differing points of view. In order to make those choices, they must hear from all sides in the political arena. Each party or candidate is required to present its ideas and plans. Candidates also argue against the ideas and plans of their opponents. Debating skills can make the difference between winning and losing an election.

A debate is an organized opportunity to persuade an audience to agree with a point of view. Debates have rules, such as putting time limits on presentations. Rules also include deciding who speaks first, and making sure each side has an equal opportunity to be heard and to reply to an opponent's arguments.

Skilled debaters plan and practice before a live debate. They write out their points in some detail. They try to anticipate what an opponent will say and how they will respond. Perhaps most importantly, debaters look for weaknesses in their own arguments and prepare responses to a possible attack.

PRACTICE AND APPLY THE SKILL

It is 1932 and President Hoover and Franklin D. Roosevelt are about to meet for a debate. Your class will help. In two groups, decide which group will manage Hoover's presentation and which will manage Roosevelt's.

For your side, prepare a list of debating points, or reasons to vote for your candidate. Then list the points you think your opponents will use to support their side. Next, list reasons *not* to vote for your opponent. Then answer the questions below.

1. Could your candidate win the debate with the material you have prepared?

2. Which of the three lists was most difficult to prepare?

3. Do you think preparing for a debate is a good use of a candidate's time?
