

Battle of the Books 2024: Frequently Asked Questions

LOGISTICS

What is the date, location, and time of this year's battle?

- Friday, April 19.
- Coaches and teams can begin arriving at 5 pm.
- The event begins at 7 pm and runs until approximately 10 pm.
- It will be held at Merriweather Post Pavilion, rain or shine.

Is there an intermission?

The event is broken into four rounds, with one intermission after round two.

Can anyone attend? Is it free?

There is no cost to attend. Spectators are welcome to sit on the lawn. Covered seating in the pavilion is limited to participating students, coaches, and assistant coaches.

Where can I park?

Merriweather will provide parking in nearby parking lots and garages. Coaches will receive more information before the event via email. ADA parking access will be available throughout lots and upon request.

Is there access to restrooms and accommodation for accessibility needs?

Yes.

What happens if it rains?

While the pavilion is covered, dress for the weather (e.g., cold, rain, wind).

This event is far too large and complex to reschedule or move in case of inclement weather. The Library and school system work very closely with the Merriweather Arts and Culture Center to monitor the weather in advance and throughout the event. The only reason the event would be canceled is if the weather was dangerous.

Any changes on the day of the event will be emailed to coaches and posted to the Battle of the Books [web page](#).

Will Merriweather have food/snacks for purchase?

No. But you are welcome bring your own food and beverages.

When can participants eat?

We highly recommend that students and coaches eat before the event begins. Teams may bring coolers with snacks and drinks to their seats to consume as needed once the event begins. Teams are responsible for packing out all their trash. Let's leave Merriweather better than we found it.

At the end of the event, how can we find/gather with other parents of students to leave?

We recommend establishing a meet-up spot with your coach so you can all find each other at the end.

LOGISTICS: TEAMS (STUDENTS AND COACHES)

What if a student needs an accommodation?

If any type of accommodation is needed, email bob@hclibrary.org by February 5.

Do all team members need to arrive for check-in at the same time?

Teams can arrive individually or as a group between 5 and 6:45 pm. Coaches should plan to arrive well before 6:45 so their students can find them in their section.

Will coaches swap teams or sit with their home team? How many coaches can sit with each team?

Coaches will sit with their home team. One coach will be seated per team. Assistant coaches may wish to sign up to volunteer in other capacities at the event and/or help gather their home team on site before the event begins. Coaches and assistant coaches may switch out during intermission, if desired.

Is team seating preassigned?

Yes. Coaches received an email from bob@hclibrary.org on March 5 with their *section* assignments. If you cannot find that email, please email bob@hclibrary.org asap.

Teams will get their *seat* assignments within their pre-assigned sections when they check in the night of the Battle.

Do all students bring chairs and mat to sit on?

Students and coaches will have reserved seats.

How many teams are in each section?

It depends. There are a record number of 339 teams competing this year.

Does each team sit next to each other?

Yes. The teams sit side by side.

Can coach and assistant coach use their phones to text about relieving each other/ swapping out?

Students should not be using phones or other devices during the battle. Coaches may use their phones or devices to communicate with each other or parents. Every student and coach is expected to adhere to the same academic and integrity standards held during the school day.

How do we know if parents of our team members did not sign the photo release?

You will be contacted if release forms are not received. If you are not sure, email bob@hclibrary.org.

If we take photos of our teams during the event, can we share them with you for posting?

We have a professional photographer and will post those photos. You are welcome to take your own photos and share them as you wish.

COSTUMES

What type of team costumes are permissible?

Team shirts, spirit wear and/or costumes are encouraged; however, costumes must comply with all requirements listed in HCPSS Policy 9210: Student Dress Code. Please see the Coach's Handbook for more information. If a costume/prop/sign is not in compliance, it will not be permitted to the event. If you cannot wear it to school, you may not wear it to Battle of the Books.

May the name of any of the characters or book titles be on costumes?

No book titles, character names, or authors are allowed on costumes, signs, team members, or coaches.

Are school names allowed on costumes?

Yes.

Is there a need for costumes?

We encourage teams to wear costumes. One of the awards announced during the event is for Best Team Costume.

Do we have to get approval for a logo or T-shirt design?

No.

Can kids wear face paint? Are sunglasses allowed as part of a costume?

Yes.

Do kids need to wear their props for the entire competition to be judged?

No. Judging happens by the middle of the third round. However, there is limited space for props, so it's best to wear props that do not take up much room.

Do coaches need to dress in costume too?

No. That is a decision the coach and their team can make together. Some coaches dress like their students, while others do not.

POSTERS

When are posters due?

Posters are due no later than April 5 at 11:59 pm. No exceptions. Submissions are open and the Dropbox link is on the [BOB webpage](#).

Is there a required file format for Dropbox?

Yes. Please name your document using your section number followed by team name (example: "203 Book Lovers"). Upload a JPEG or PNG file only. Follow prompts for uploading.

Coaches received an email from bob@hclibrary.org on March 5 with their section assignments. If you cannot find that email, please email bob@hclibrary.org asap.

What should team posters include?

Team posters should represent your team's name, its members, and be thematic. NO book titles, authors, or cover art are permitted on team posters for the event and slides. Such posters will not be included in the parade.

Can the posters have drawings of characters from the books?

No.

Can we use emojis or small illustrations or something like that to represent the different books in the poster? Is clip art allowed?

Emojis, small illustrations, and clip art are allowed as long as they do not give hints or clues.

Can teams put their pictures on their poster?

Yes.

Physical posters: Do teams need to bring their poster to the event or upload only? What are the dimensions? Can teams take a picture of a physical poster and submit?

Teams are welcome to bring physical posters, but they are not required or used by judges.

We recommend standard project poster boards be 22"x28" or 24" x 36". Posters should be flat, so we do not recommend tri-fold poster boards.

If creating a physical poster for the digital submission, teams may take a photo or use a large-format scanner to upload.

Should the poster be landscape or portrait?

Landscape works best, as that is the screen orientation at the venue.

Will teams get a confirmation email after uploading their digital posters?

If you are unsure about whether your upload was successful, please email bob@hclibrary.org before the deadline to confirm the submission.

PROCEDURES, RULES, and SCORING

Is there a collection of practice questions that coaches can use in mock battles?

We do not have a collection of practice questions. Ask your students to write their own practice questions for their teammates. You may also work with other teams and write questions for each other.

How much time will be allowed for the answering of each question?

30 seconds.

Do the 30 seconds begin as the questions are being read, or after they are read twice?

After the second reading.

Will you have a timer counting down the 30 seconds?

Yes.

Can students change their answers while they still have the answer sheet? Also, can they take notes on the questions?

It would be best if they used the 30 seconds to answer each question.

Will all the options for answers be the correct title and author (i.e., no incorrect options will be provided - slightly wrong title or author name)?

Yes.

To clarify, the questions come from the content of the book. Will any questions from covers?

It's possible. Every part of the book is fair game for questions.

Will the answers be announced after each question?

No. Answers will be announced after each round.

Will students have to write the whole title of the book, or a letter that represents the book?

They will circle a letter that is associated with a book title and author listed on an answer key.

Are the titles and authors provided together in the Answer Key?

Yes.

Should the coach record the response or is there a preference?

We prefer that the students record the answer.

While the team fills out each round of answers, can coaches write the answers the team chooses on their own paper, to reference when the answers are read aloud, to see if they were correct?

Yes, we encourage tracking your answers.

Will questions become more challenging with each round?

No, but the bonus questions will be more challenging.

Do the teams turn in the sheets after each round of 10 questions?

Yes.

BOOKS

Are the teams allowed to keep the book and author names with them? Can teams have copies of the books at the Battle?

No. An answer key will be provided to teams.

How are books chosen?

A committee of librarians from Howard County Library System and the Howard County Public School System discuss and determine the title list for each year. The target number of books per list is 10-12 titles. Reading levels of titles reflect on, above, and below grade level of participants. In its entirety, the list should represent a broad and diverse range of topics, writing styles, settings, genres, characters, authors, and classifications. Most books need to be available in paperback with no more than two titles in hardback. Books may not reappear on the list. Award winning books such as Caldecott, Newbery, and ALA Notables are all excellent sources for potential list candidates.

Where will I obtain the Battle books?

Each team is provided with a set of books, courtesy of the Battle sponsors. A limited number of copies of the books are available to borrow at HCLS branches. Battle books are subject to the same borrowing period (three weeks) as other library materials. If possible, books will be available in audio format, although some Battle questions will address visual details in the books, such as illustrations and photographs. Remember, all questions will come from the specific editions given to the teams; see the Coach's Handbook for ISBNs.

REGISTRATION: TEAMS (STUDENTS AND COACHES)

Is it too late to register and participate?

Yes. Registration closed last fall.

Who can participate?

Teams of Howard County fifth graders who attend the same school. The competition is open to all 5th grade students that attend public, private, or home schools in Howard County.

What constitutes a team?

A team is comprised of five students and an adult coach (at least 18 years old). When registering, the online form requires the registration of three to five students. If a team loses a member before the actual Battle, remaining members may still participate; however, teams must have at least three members to participate on the day of the Battle.

Does a homeschool team all have to participate in the same co-op or tutorial or can they be from a mix of unaffiliated/co-ops/tutorials?

They should represent one co-op. If a co-op wants to put individuals from other Howard County home school associations that is okay.

Does a homeschooler have to reside in Howard County in order to participate, or is it enough that they attend a co-op/tutorial in Howard County?

They only have to attend a co-op/tutorial in HoCo. BOB is only open to students who attend HoCo associations, not students that are virtually attending some other organization or attending a co-op in another county.

For homeschoolers, what constitutes a 5th grader? Is there a birthday range? Do they need to be being reviewed as a 5th grader? Do they need to be doing 5th grade-level work?

A fifth grader is someone that would be attending/accepted as a 5th grader if they were in a public/private school.

Who can be a coach?

Any adult over 18 years of age, such as a parent, volunteer, older sibling, scout leader, or teacher may be a coach. An individual may only coach one team. A team may opt to have an assistant coach as a stand-in, in case the coach is unable to perform their mentoring duties the night of the battle. The coach or another designated adult MUST attend ONE of the mandatory coaches meetings held in the fall prior to the event. In addition, the coach or other designated adult must also attend ONE of the Battle's logistics meetings in the spring.

Don't see your question here? Email bob@hclibrary.org.