

# Online District Tournament Requirements

The following rules apply to any district tournaments that are held online. If there are any conflicts between the Online District Tournament Requirements and the rest of the District Tournament Operations Manual, refer to the Online District Tournament Requirements and reach out to the national office for assistance.

## Online Requirement

All district tournaments in 2020-2021 must be held online unless special dispensation is received by the Executive Director for outstanding circumstances.

## Rules for Use of Internet-Enabled Devices

The New Guidelines Surrounding Use of Internet-Enabled Devices for debate, Congress, and Extemp will be used at all 2020-2021 district tournaments that are held online. District tournaments held in person may choose whether to use the new or previous rules. The New Guidelines Surrounding Use of Internet-Enabled Devices for debate, Congress, and Extemp will also be used at the 2021 National Tournament.

## Online Tournament Platforms and Software

Districts will be given autonomy over the online video conferencing platform they use to run their online tournament. All districts will still be required to use Tabroom.com or SpeechWire for the registration and tabulation of their tournament. SpeechWire only runs the pilot qualification rules. Districts will be responsible for any cost of an online video conferencing platform they choose to utilize.

## Judge Instruction

Judges of all online district competitions must be given the following instruction. We recommend that tournaments put this language on the top of their online ballots.

“We are all influenced by implicit bias, or the stereotypes that unconsciously affect our decisions. When judging, our implicit biases negatively impact traditionally marginalized and disenfranchised students. Before writing comments or making a decision, please take a moment to reflect on any biases that may impact your decision making.

Please remember that the video quality of a student’s performance or speech may be impacted by lighting, internet, access to equipment, and other family members’ presence in the home. To ensure a more equitable experience for our participants, please be sure your decision-making process and comments are related only to the content and quality of the presentation or speech itself.”

## Speech Events

Districts have the option to run their speech events asynchronously or synchronously. The exceptions are United States and International Extemporaneous Speaking, both of which must have their 30 minutes of preparation held live. Our recommendation is that districts attempt to hold their speech district tournaments synchronously if possible. Aside from Extemp and Duo Interpretation, districts must hold all of their speech events the same way; if a district does asynchronous speech, all speech events must be held asynchronously. For safety reasons, Duo Interpretation may be held asynchronously even if all other speech events are held live. Districts may choose to do a hybrid model of synchronous and asynchronous events as long as it is consistent across all events, with the exception of Extemp and Duo. For example, a district could require that all speech preliminary rounds are asynchronous and all speech elimination rounds are synchronous.

Students competing in speech events must follow these rules, used at the National Tournament, during asynchronous or synchronous performances. Rulings (answering questions or hearing protests) about this language will be made by the District Committee:

“Competitors may not use green screens, virtual backdrops, on-screen text, or professional equipment enhancements such as professional lighting kits or professional grade camera recording and audio devices during their performance in any event. Professional equipment includes items like softboxes or an auditorium’s lighting system; use of these items is not permitted. Backdrops of a solid color with no special markings may be used by competitors and judges.”

## Asynchronous Speech Requirements

Students competing in asynchronous events must follow these rules, used at the National Tournament, while recording their performances. Rulings (answering questions or hearing protests) about this language will be made by the District Committee.

“Submissions or recordings may not be edited using any software; all submissions must be non-stop footage of the entire performance done through the permitted submission platform. The camera being used must remain stationary throughout the entire performance, and no zooming or panning is permitted. Other individuals may be present while filming, but audience interaction (laughing, applause, etc.) must not be included in the performance.”

If a district does speech asynchronously, they may create their own procedures for the following items. Procedures should be consistent across all speech events and communicated well in advance of their event. Districts are encouraged to consider issues of equity while creating their procedures, recognizing that students have different access to technology, quiet spaces, and internet:

- How students should record their performance. The recording platform used for the 2020 National Tournament (speeches.cloud) is an option that is available through Priten Shah at Classrooms.Cloud for a price.
- How students submit their performance, e.g. tabulation softwares may have features that allow coaches to put a link to student performances in their registration, students may upload their recording to a google form, etc.
- Timelines for students to submit their performances.
- Duration of a recording, i.e. whether the same student performance is judged throughout the entire tournament or whether students have the chance to upload a new recording at any point in the event.
- Judging procedure, e.g. you may choose to have judges gather with performers in a live video conferencing room so they can watch recorded performances together (like mains at the National Tournament), you can have judges adjudicate performances on their own time (like supps at the National Tournament), etc.

## Duo Interpretation

Regardless of whether Duo Interpretation is held synchronously or asynchronously, districts must only allow one type of Duo to be performed at a district tournament. Districts may choose one of three options to hold Duo:

1. Synchronous competition where students perform live together in the same room
2. Asynchronous recordings where students perform live together in the same room
3. Asynchronous recordings where students submit split screen videos

For example, a district may not hold Duo asynchronously and allow some entries to submit split screen videos and other entries to perform together. District Committees should choose an option that is in line with the best interest of the students in their district.

## Extemporaneous Speaking

Extemporaneous Speaking preparation must be held live; students must have 30 minutes to prepare a speech on a topic they just learned. After the 30 minutes of prep, students may either give their speeches live to a judge or record speeches to be judged asynchronously. We encourage districts to explore different options for holding Extemp draw live online and to choose the option that works best for them.

## Debate Events (PF, LD, CX, BQ)

Debate events must be held live. Districts may conduct a coin flip where necessary in whatever manner they deem best; some tabulation softwares like Tabroom.com offer an automated coin flip option. As long as NSDA evidence rules are followed, districts may suggest different methods for evidence sharing throughout a debate, though no specific method may be mandated.

In partner events, partners may either compete together in the same room or from two different locations. Partners may share a device or use two separate devices. We recommend that all competitors follow local guidelines for social distancing at the time of the tournament.

Students competing in debate events must follow these rules. Rulings (answering questions or hearing protests) about this language will be made by the District Committee:

“Competitors may not use green screens, virtual backdrops, on-screen text, or professional equipment enhancements such as professional lighting kits or professional grade camera recording and audio devices during their performance in any event. Professional equipment includes items like softboxes or an auditorium’s lighting system; use of these items is not permitted. Backdrops of a solid color with no special markings may be used by competitors and judges.”

# Running the District Debate Tournament

The following rules apply to Lincoln-Douglas, Policy, Public Forum, and Big Questions Debate events at the district tournament. The district tournament is a double elimination contest. Entries who receive their second loss are eliminated from the tournament.

## General Rules and Instructions

1. **Starting Times:** No debate is valid if started after 9:30 p.m. unless it is the final day of the tournament.
2. **Minimum Rounds:** At least three rounds must be held in all contests.
3. **Number of Judges:** One or three judges may be used in the first two debate contest rounds (**even if there are eight entries or less**), as determined by the District Committee. When eight or fewer debate entries remain, three judges must be used. Any odd number of three or greater may be used for debate elimination and final rounds. Once multiple judges have been used, it is essential that the same number or higher be used for all subsequent rounds. All sections within the same event must use the same number of judges. College-age judges are permitted at the discretion of the District Committee. Current high school students may not judge any portion of the district tournament series.
4. **Fines:** If a judge fails to fulfill a judging assignment, a fine may be assessed at the discretion of the District Committee.
5. **Protest of Judges:** Judges assigned by the tournament committee are final unless protested before the beginning of the tournament. If a judge is added to the pool after the tournament begins, any protest must be made prior to the round in which that individual is assigned to judge. If protested, the District Committee will hear the protest, and its decision is final. If a member of the committee is involved in the protest, they should be recused.
6. **Judge Strikes:** The District Committee may permit a judge strike policy at the district tournament.
  - A. Districts are encouraged to solicit opinions of all schools in the district when determining whether a strike system will be used, and if so, what type of system. The decision of the District Committee is final.
  - B. If a District Committee chooses to implement a judge strike system, the chair must submit a complete description of the proposed strike procedure to the national office for the approval. The description must be approved at least seven days prior to the beginning of the tournament. Strike policy wordings should be sent to [director@speechanddebate.org](mailto:director@speechanddebate.org).
  - C. The system used must be maintained throughout the entire district tournament.
7. **Computer Usage:** Permission to use laptop computers in any event shall be the autonomous decision of the District Committee. Granting usage subjects debaters to the guidelines contained in the rules section of this manual.
8. **Forfeits:** Judges should notify the District Committee of a student who arrives to their round more than 15 minutes after the posted start time of the round. If there are multiple judges in the round, all must agree that the student was more than 15 minutes late. Debaters who are 15 minutes late forfeit the round, but the District Committee may waive the penalty. For a speech competitor, the District Committee may choose to drop each judge score in the round by two ranks. The judge(s) should not adjust the student's ranks themselves. The District Committee may waive the penalty.
9. **Disqualification:** In the case of a disqualification, all previous decisions will stand and no revision of decisions will occur **unless dictated by a specific protest procedure (e.g., evidence violation)**.
10. **Harassment and Discrimination.** Harassment and discrimination in any National Speech & Debate Association event will not be permitted. All district tournaments must follow the NSDA Harassment & Discrimination Policy. All districts are encouraged to create an Equity Office at their district tournament to respond to reported violations of this policy.
11. **Scouting:** Scouting is strongly discouraged.
12. **Disputes:** The District Committee or tournament committee appointed by it has the full power to adjudicate disputes or interpretation of rules but may not change the rules. The District Committee is authorized to determine how a rule is to be interpreted or applied in a specific situation. In case of a serious dispute or critical question of procedure, which the District Committee cannot resolve, the national office or acting tournament referee must be phoned for a ruling. Please consult the national office to determine the referee for your event.