



***Massachusetts Speech and Debate League
Online Polar Bear Speech, Congress & Debate Tournament
Saturday, February 27, 2021***

The Board of Directors of the Massachusetts Speech and Debate League is pleased to announce the Online Polar Bear Speech, Congress, and Debate Tournament. The tournament will be hosted online on Saturday, February 27, under the direction of the MSDL Board. Speech events are open to all high schools and Massachusetts middle schools. Debate events, other than Student Congress, are open to MSDL members schools. Members of the New York State Forensic League, or members of one of the New England state leagues (Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, or Vermont.)

- MSDL member schools must have submitted a Participation Agreement, signed by an adult head coach and principal/head of school, prior to attending the tournament. The form is [here](#). League dues can be sent in separately.
- Schools that are not MSDL members may submit a copy of the participation agreement from their local league, provided that it is signed by the principal/head of school. If your league does not have such a form, please use the Massachusetts form. Only Massachusetts high schools are required to pay the annual dues. The form is [here](#).
- Signed forms should be mailed to: Jim Honeyman, Treasure, Massachusetts Speech and Debate League, 219 Walnut St, Wellesley, MA 02481. Or send a scanned copy of the signed form to jimhoneyman@verizon.net.

The tournament will include all speech events, Student Congress, and Public Forum, Lincoln-Douglas, and Big Questions Debate, live, utilizing the National Speech and Debate Association's NSDA Campus video platform through Tabroom.

We recommend that all competitors and judges test the NSDA Campus platform before the start of the tournament. This also provides a preview as to what the platform looks like, and what functionality is available. Competitors and judges should click on the "Test Competition Room" link found here:

<https://campus.speechanddebate.org/>

See further instructions [here](#).

Some schools have encountered issues with firewalls when trying to compete from their school buildings. If possible, testing should be conducted from the location from which students and judges plan to "attend" the tournament.

Phones and other Internet-capable devices, like tablets, may be used to access Tabroom, but many will require the installation of the app Jitsi Meet in order to access NSDA Campus.

Observers will not be able to attend rounds as the platform's video quality can be compromised by extra attendees in the room.

All participating schools will have a "Squad Room" on the Tabroom platform for use during the tournament day. This is a virtual room where members of the team – including coaches and judges – can hang out together when they are not in competition rooms.

Entries

Entry is subject to the following limitations:

1. Students in Student Congress, Debate (PF, LD, or BQ), and Group Discussion may not double enter.
2. Each student may only enter once in any given event.
3. Students in Varsity or Novice Extemporaneous Speaking and Radio Broadcasting may double enter, but they may not enter another draw event.

Event Procedures

All Events

Both movement and lots of color can contribute to a deterioration in the quality of the video over an online platform. We encourage students to wear plain-colored clothing (i.e. minimal patterns), and, if possible, to perform in front of a neutral solid background or plain-colored wall. Only one video camera maybe used, and that camera should remain stationary throughout the performance. No sets are allowed. Students may use a microphone or headset, but these should not be used as props or to make non-vocal sound effects.

Given the constraints of the online environment, the following rules will be in force:

No time signals will be provided in any events. Students in need of time indicators should time themselves, synchronizing the start of timing with the judge. The judge's time is the official time.

Students may elect to sit or stand for their performance, but they cannot move from a seated to a standing position or vice versa during the performance, with the exception of Multiple Reading where movement from one position to another is allowed.

In reading events, the script should be at least partially visible throughout the performance.

Duo Interpretation

Each student should enter the competition space separately – even if both members of a Duo reside in the same household. We expect that each Duo will be judged in a breakout session with the judge(s), but we cannot guarantee that the partners will be beside each other in the online space. Interaction and gestures should be planned accordingly. Since voices cannot overlap using an online platform, the grace period is extended to 60 seconds.

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Extemporaneous Speaking

Preliminary round questions will cover international, national, and economic topics. The final round topic will be The Americas. There will be no cross-examination in the final round. All questions will be derived from online and print editions of current political and news magazines and newspapers.

Students will be assigned to a specific prep room where they will receive three questions. Throughout the prep period, students should remain in the prep room space with cameras turned on and microphones turned off. When it is time for the student to speak, the extemper will proceed to the assigned speaking space.

Group Discussion

The topic area for Group Discussion is Black History Month with a focus on the right to vote, reparations, equity in public schools, affirmative action, and equity in the workplace.

Multiple Reading

Multiple Reading may perform only once, depending on the number of Multiples entered. A student may participate in only one Multiple.

For Multiple Reading, each student should enter the competition space separately - even if more than one member of a Multiple team resides in the same household. Given the constraints of an online environment, blocking and movement may need to be extremely limited. Since voices cannot overlap using an online platform, the grace period in Multiple Reading is extended to 60 seconds.

Radio Broadcasting

Students will be assigned to a specific prep room where they will receive a link to the radio package for that round. Throughout the prep period, students should remain in the prep room space with cameras and microphones turned on. When it is time for the student to speak, the broadcaster will proceed to the assigned speaking space. The broadcaster may present with the video function turned off to simulate an actual radio broadcast.

Judges in Radio Broadcasting will have access to the packet of materials supplied to students for the round.

Student Congress

Legislation is due to Mr. Paul Wexler at pjwexler06@gmail.com by 3:00 pm on Friday, February 19.

Public Forum Debate

We will be using the **February topic**:

Resolved: On balance, the benefits of urbanization in West Africa outweigh the harms.

Lincoln-Douglas Debate

We will be using the **January/February topic**:

Resolved: States ought to ban lethal autonomous weapons.

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Big Questions Debate

We will be using the **2020-2021 topic**:

Resolved: Mathematics was discovered, not invented.

Novices

A “novice” competitor is defined as any student who has not competed in high school forensics in a previous school year. A student who competes in two or fewer high school tournaments while in middle school retains novice status; but if a student competes in more than two high school tournaments, that student cannot be considered a novice. In Extemporaneous Speaking, a student may be considered a novice if it is his/her first year in high school Extemp. Special recognition will be given to the top-ranking novice in each category.

Coaches: Please make sure to review your roster to ensure that only this year’s novices are flagged.

Judges

Speech

Schools must provide one judge for every five Speech and Congress entries, or fraction thereof. All Speech and Congress judges must have graduated from high school prior to the date of the tournament.

Debate

Schools must provide one judge for every two entries in, or fraction thereof, in each division:

- Varsity division judges must have graduated from high school prior to the date of the tournament.
- Novice division judges can be individuals qualified to judge varsity, or they may be high school students who are juniors or seniors with at least two completed years of high school debate experience.
- Adult Lincoln-Douglas judges must be (a) former high school or college debate competitors, (b) have prior tournament experience judging Lincoln-Douglas, or (c) be trained prior to this tournament to judge Lincoln-Douglas.

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All Events

A \$50.00 penalty will be imposed for each missing judge. This penalty is not to be used in lieu of your requirement; if we do not have sufficient judges, we may have to reduce your entry numbers in line with your number of judges.

All judges must be capable of conducting rounds online and judging online through Tabroom. Coaches should spend time with their judges in advance of the tournament reviewing the events to ensure that they are prepared for the competition.

If you have a judge who is not available for every round, you must find a replacement for that judge. All judges are expected to be available to judge for every round. Missing judges seriously compromise the smooth operation of the tournament. Any judge who is not available to judge a round of their obligation may incur the \$50.00 missing judge penalty.

Awards

The awards ceremony will be in a Zoom room at the conclusion of competition. Arrangements will be made to distribute awards to all finalists when it is safe for us to do so. The top novice in each speech category will also receive special recognition.

Instead of Team Sweepstakes awards at each online tournament, we will be presenting cumulative sweepstakes awards at the end of the first semester. These awards will be based on the scores of all students from each school, computed by using preliminary ranks. Sweepstakes awards will be presented in different categories:

Interpretation: DP, DUO, PR, PO, KL, PL, MULT, POI

Debate: Debate, Congress, GD

Limited Preparation: VX, NX, RB, IMP

Platform: OO, DEC, INFO

We will also award a cumulative Novice sweepstakes award, based on preliminary round scores for all novices.

Fees

The entry fee for all events except Duo Interpretation, and Pubic Forum Debate is \$6 per entry. The entry fee for Duo and Public Forum Debate is \$12.

Registration Instructions

Registrations must be entered on Tabroom (www.tabroom.com) by 5 p.m. on **Tuesday, February 23rd**. There is significant planning that must take place in order to secure virtual rooms for our online tournament with live performances in all events. We ask that you register only those students who actually plan to participate in the tournament.

Drops can be made until 5:00 on **Wednesday, February 24th**, after which drops should be emailed to jeba78@verizon.net.

Payment

Since we will not be meeting in person for the tournament, checks – made out to Massachusetts Speech and Debate League - should be mailed within 30 days after the tournament to:

Jim Honeyman, MSDL Treasurer
219 Walnut Street
Wellesley, MA 02481

Registration Confirmation

Please text (508-397-5143) or email (jeba78@verizon.net) confirmation of your registration by 8:30 AM on Saturday morning, February 27th. Please be sure to include your school name when contacting us.

Alternatively, schools may confirm online from 6:00 AM to 8:30 AM on the day of the tournament if there are NO CHANGES. The “Onsite Confirmation” tab will appear on Tabroom at 6:00 AM; use the check box to confirm that your team is set and read to participate with no changes to the registration.

This advance confirmation allows us to manage any last-minute drops and get the tournament off to a prompt start. MSDL rules require all schools to check in before 8:30 AM or pay a \$25 fine.

Tentative Schedule – subject to change

8:00	Debate Judges Meeting
8:45	Speech and Congress Judges Meetings
8:45-5:30	Debate Rounds (4 or 5 preliminary rounds)
9:00-4:00	Speech and Congress Preliminary Rounds
4:00	Speech and Congress Finals
6:00	Awards

The Massachusetts Speech and Debate League fosters a culture of diversity and inclusion. We expect all members of our community to treat one another with respect. Should you have any issues, please come to the TAB room and ask to speak with a member of the MSDL Board.

Standard rules of professionalism and etiquette shall apply at all times.

We look forward to seeing you at the tournament!

Sincerely,
The MSDL Board