



Guide for Spartan-Ram Extravaganza!

Competitors & Rules

The following is a combination of best practices and rules to help guide TFA Competitors before, during, and after vIQTs during the 2020-2021 competitive season.

I. Before the Tournament

A. Tabroom.com

1. **You will need a tabroom.com account to compete.** Tabroom.com is where you'll access entry lists, online sectioning, tournament results, and your ballots/judge feedback. Creating an account is easy, quick, and free, and can be done at tabroom.com through the "Sign Up" link at the top right of the homepage.
2. To compete at vIQTs, you'll need to **link your tabroom.com account** to your school/institution's account.

B. Equipment and Environment for Synchronous Rounds

1. Necessary equipment

- a) **A computer with a webcam** - in an online world, it really doesn't matter if you're using a desktop or laptop, so long as it has a working webcam.
- b) **Stable and reliable high-speed internet connection** - you can Google "internet speed test" and run a diagnostic. Try testing from multiple locations in your home to find the best spot.
- c) In team events, you'll need a **means to communicate with your partner(s) during the debate** - this can be a phone call that runs in the background during the round, a separate Google Hangouts call, or some other means.

2. Recommended equipment

a) Ethernet connection

- (1) They're much faster, more stable, and have lower latency than WiFi connections, which are all important for audio quality.

b) Headset

- (1) The second most important factor in how clear you sound is your proximity to a microphone. A headset will keep the microphone consistently close to your face, improving your audio input.

Edited from TFA - Online Competition best practices for Competitors and rules

c) **Dedicated microphone**

(1) If you're in a "busy" location, it makes more sense to have a dedicated, external microphone that you can place near yourselves, rather than rely on your computer's built-in microphone.

d) **Additional monitor(s)**

(1) They allow you to put the video call on a separate screen, keeping your judges and opponents visible throughout the round.

C. Practice

1. Whatever your audio and video setup, make sure you practice using that exact setup prior to your first tournament. Nearly all technical malfunctions can be diagnosed and fixed with one or two practice rounds. Also, **slow down when speaking**, especially if you usually compete in a faster event or on a faster circuit. Even with the best tech setups (and remember, most of your judges are not using the best possible tech setups), online rounds can only be 80% as fast as in-person rounds. It's worth recording your pre-tournament practice rounds online, then reviewing the audio from your speeches. You likely sound different to the judge than you think you do.

D. Setting / Environment

1. Though there may be some things that are not within your control related to your setting, try your best to present a professional setting. Remember that everyone can see your location behind you. Here are some things to consider:
 - a. Perform from a location that is quiet and isolated to minimize disruptions.
 - b. Make the space you're competing from as neat and tidy as possible, and make sure it's appropriate for competition.
 - c. Be aware of your lighting and use settings that maximize visibility to your judges and other participants.
 - d. Dress like you would dress if you were attending an in-person tournament.
 - e. **Remind family members that you are "at a speech tournament", even if it's online.** Please educate your family on proper boundaries and what they should expect while you're competing. Just because you are home doesn't mean they can intrude on you mid-round or ask you to do chores when you should be prepping with your teammates or talking with your coach. While you won't be disqualified for a family intrusion, realize that **your need to communicate with family members will raise concerns about whether you're receiving outside coaching during the round.**

II. Individual Events

A. Synchronous IE's

1. Entering room

- a) When entering the performance room, be sure that your camera is off and you are muted.

Edited from TFA - Online Competition best practices for Competitors and rules

- b) Be mindful of other competitors who may be performing.
- 2. **Sound check**
 - a) Engage in a sound check with your judges. Check and make sure that any judge in the room can hear you and that there are no technical issues before you begin.
- 3. **Time keeping**
 - a) It is recommended that you keep your own time in a way that is visible to you.
 - b) Judges will keep an official time and may provide time signals.
- 4. **Visual enhancements**
 - a) Competitors may not use green screens, virtual/professional backgrounds that are not a solid color. On-screen text is also prohibited.
- 5. **Camera view**
 - a) TFA recommends standing for your speech and positioning yourself in such a way that judges can see the entirety of the performance.
 - b) When their performance begins, students should ensure they are in view of the camera.
- 6. **Observing**
 - a) Students are encouraged to stay and watch the entirety of the round they are competing in, unless they are cross-entered in another event at that time.
 - b) When not performing, students should mute their microphones and are highly encouraged to keep their camera on when possible.
 - c) Observers, when the technology allows, are allowed to observe rounds with their camera off and audio muted. It is still at the discretion of the tournament director to disallow observers based on the virtual room capacity and safety of all participants.
- 7. **Cross entry**
 - a) Students should be aware of a tournament's cross-entry limitations and notify judges when cross entered through the chat feature when entering and leaving a performance room.

B. Extemporaneous Speaking

- 1. **Synchronous**
 - a) You will be competing live in extemp due to the nature of preparing 30 minutes prior.
 - b) Check with the tournament's guidelines to find out how extemp draw will be facilitated.
- 2. **Draw**
 - a) Students participating in extemp should check in at extemp draw no less than 15 minutes prior to the start of draw.
 - b) Students should keep their camera on for the duration of their prep time and prepare in view of the camera.

- c) Students are not allowed to receive outside assistance on their speeches. This includes but is not limited to help from other students or coaches or referencing previous speeches or outlines.
 - d) Competitors will be supervised by an extemp draw worker for the entirety of their 30 minutes of preparation.
- 3. Entering the competition room**
- a) Please be sure that your camera is off and you are muted. In case there is a backup of speakers, please wait for a judge to address you before you start speaking. Make sure that you have a background free from distractions.
 - b) Green Screens/backdrops or any form of professional background are prohibited.
- 4. Sound check**
- a) Engage in a sound check with your judges. Check and make sure that any judge in the room can hear you and that there are no technical issues before you begin speaking.
- 5. Topic choice**
- a) Once in your speaking room, it is important to state your topic for your judges. In lieu of a topic slip, judges may prefer to hear the topic verbally, or judges may want you to type your topic into the chat.
- 6. Time keeping**
- a) It is recommended that you keep your own time in a way that is visible to you. Judges will keep an official time and may provide time signals.
- 7. Camera view**
- a) TFA recommends standing for your speech and positioning yourself in such a way that judges can see your whole body. While movement between points may happen, make sure that this does not take you out of the camera's view.
- 8. Entering room**
- a) When entering the performance room, be sure that your camera is off and you are muted.
 - b) Be mindful of other competitors who may be performing.
- 9. Sound check**
- a) Engage in a sound check with your judges. Check and make sure that any judge in the room can hear you and that there are no technical issues before you begin.
- 10. Time keeping**
- a) It is recommended that you keep your own time in a way that is visible to you.
 - b) Judges will keep an official time and may provide time signals.
- 11. Visual enhancements**
- a) Competitors may not use green screens, virtual/professional backgrounds that are not a solid color. On-screen text is also prohibited.
- 12. Camera view**
- a) TFA recommends standing for your speech and positioning yourself in such a way that judges can see the entirety of the performance.

- b) When their performance begins, students should ensure they are in view of the camera.

13. Observing

- a) Students are encouraged to stay and watch the entirety of the round they are competing in, unless they are cross-entered in another event at that time.
- b) When not performing, students should mute their microphones and are highly encouraged to keep their camera on when possible.
- c) Observers, when the technology allows, are allowed to observe rounds with their camera off and audio muted. It is still at the discretion of the tournament director to disallow observers based on the virtual room capacity and safety of all participants.

14. Cross entry

- a) Students should be aware of a tournament's cross-entry limitations and notify judges when cross entered through the chat feature when entering and leaving a performance room.

C. Asynchronous IEs

1. Backdrops and Recording Equipment

- a) Competitors may not use green screens, virtual/professional backgrounds that are not a solid color. On-screen text is also prohibited.
- b) Submissions or recordings may not be edited using any software. All submissions must be non-stop footage of the entire performance regardless of submission process.
- c) The camera must remain stationary throughout the entire performance. Audience interaction (laughing, applause, etc.) should not be included in the performance.

2. Recording process

- a) The process for recording/submitting performances may be done by sharing a Google Drive mp4 file or a link to a private YouTube video, depending on the ease of the technology for each student. The link will be added to the students' entry in Tabroom.com

3. Performance length

- a) Submitted performances should be no longer than the times posted in the Event Rules section outlining times for each event. Please pay attention to the varying rules and time limits for each event.

4. Stable connection

- a) It is recommended to record performances with an ethernet connection when possible to increase audio and video quality. If using WIFI, the student should be close to the router. It is recommended to limit household wifi use by others in the household while recording.

5. Observing

- a) When observing a round, students should mute their mics and are encouraged to keep their camera on when possible.

- b) Observers, when the technology allows, are allowed to observe rounds with their camera off and audio muted. It is still at the discretion of the tournament director to disallow observers based on the virtual room capacity and safety of all participants.

III. Emergency or Dangerous Situations

A. Reporting Dangerous Situations

1. Due to the nature of the online settings, you will frequently interact with other competitors in their “home” spaces. If you observe a situation where a student may be in physical, emotional or psychological danger, please notify your coach/school affiliate, the tab staff, and tournament host immediately (or as soon as safely possible).

IV. After the Tournament (Both Debate and IEs)

A. Accessing Your Ballots

1. Your **ballots**, along with any feedback and written Reasons For Decisions (**RFDs**) from your judges, are accessible on tabroom.com. You and your coaches will have access to your ballots once they’ve been released by the tournament. Additionally, your tabroom.com account saves all of your ballots from any tournament you’ve attended that used tabroom.com.
2. To access your ballots:
 - a. Go to your tabroom.com profile page. To get there, go to the tabroom.com homepage and click on your email address in the top right corner.
 - b. Click the “Results” tab. Here you’ll see a list of all prior tournaments you’ve attended that have released results. Click on the specific tournament you want to access.
 - c. Here, you’ll see a list of your debates at that tournament. If the judge(s) wrote feedback for that round, you can access it by clicking the blue box link on the right side of that specific round. Remember that some judges do not enter their feedback.