

## SECTION 3: District Tournament Operations Manual

The National Speech & Debate Association is committed to providing every student with the opportunity to qualify for the National Tournament in a fair and impartial manner. When running the district tournament, due diligence must be made to ensure fairness and avoid any perception of impropriety. The Board of Directors has established and approved these procedures for all district tournaments. The Executive Director must approve specific exceptions to these rules in writing. Each competitive event is governed by the rules established in the Event Rules Manual. During each tournament, an ombudsperson is available through the national office to adjudicate disputes regarding these rules. Please contact the national office to identify who your ombudsperson will be as well as to clarify any of the rules or procedures regarding district tournament operations.

For questions not answered here, please contact the national office at [info@speechanddebate.org](mailto:info@speechanddebate.org) or call (920) 748-6206.

**Note: In 2021, the Board of Directors voted to make the previously pilot qualification rules the permanent set of rules governing district tournaments. Districts no longer have the option to use the traditional up/down or California Plan systems.**

## Planning the District Tournament

The district chair, in consultation with the District Committee and members of the district, will determine the date, time, and place of the district contest. This information and any changes to it must be reported to the national office immediately.

### Guidelines for Scheduling

- If any part of the district tournament series will occur before December 31, the District Committee must officially register all tournament dates with the national office by **October 31** of the competition season. If all parts of the district tournament series will occur after January 1, the District Committee must officially register all tournament dates with the national office by **November 30** of the competition season.
- **A district tournament may not be held after May 1. No part of a district contest may begin on or after May 1.**
- The date should be determined after considering the interscholastic calendar so as to avoid conflict with state contests, major school events, and college entrance examinations, if possible.
- The dates or host locations are made by a vote of the chapter schools or the District Committee, rather than by the chair alone.
- If necessary, multiple weeks or weekends may be used.
- Site logistics (room access, judges, and cooperative hosts) should be prioritized over a centralized location or rotation.
- Non-district qualifying contests may be held at the same location or at the same time as the district qualifying contests. The discretion to create additional competition opportunities is the autonomous decision of the District Committee. However, any additions may not result in the limiting access of competitors to the district competition participation.
- No round may start after 9:30 p.m. (Extemp round after 9:45 p.m.) unless it is the final day of the tournament.

### Online or In-Person Events

In 2022-2023, districts have the autonomy to determine whether each competition event in their district tournament series will be held online or in person. At least  $\frac{3}{4}$  of schools that want to attend that portion of the tournament must agree whether to hold the tournament online or in person.

A district may choose to hold only portions of their tournament online or in person. For example, a district may choose to hold their fall weekend online and their spring weekend in person. Alternatively, a district may choose to hold all of their debate events online and their speech events in person. Or, a district may choose to do CX online and every other event in person on the same weekend. Big Questions and World Schools will follow the same rules. In any scenario,  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the schools that want to attend that portion of the tournament must agree on the method which is used.

### Online Registration and Tabulation: Tabroom.com or SpeechWire

All NSDA districts will be required to use either Tabroom.com or SpeechWire for the registration and tabulation of their NSDA district tournament, including Congress. The selected software must be used for all events of the district tournament series, e.g., a district is not permitted to use Tabroom.com for debate and SpeechWire for speech. Results from tournaments that do not use the permitted software will not be accepted.

## Tournament Roles and Responsibilities

### Tournament Officials

- **District Chair:** The chair exercises general supervision over the tournament. The chair may or may not work one of the other specified tournament roles. The chair should be available for consultation and give assistance where necessary. The chair must have a mastery of this manual as well as understand each part of the tournament process.

- **District Committee Member:** As individuals, committee members should take major assignments in tournament operations. As a committee, they adjudicate disputes, protests, and interpretations of rules. If a committee member's school is involved in a dispute, another party appointed by the committee may serve in this capacity.
- **District Coaches:** The chair and committee should work to make the operation of the tournament a community experience. Distributing leadership beyond just the committee would assist in this endeavor.

## Suggested Tournament Roles

- **Registration Coordinator:** oversees the on-site registration process, accepts outstanding payments from schools, and communicates with tab staff regarding dropped entries.
- **Ballot Collectors:** (two or three individuals) collect ballots after a judge adjudicates a round. They should check over the entire ballot to ensure it's filled out properly, is easy to read for the tab station, and appears to be a constructive ballot that will help students.
- **Ballot Sorters:** oversee the scanning/copying and stuffing or posting of ballots for schools to see their judge feedback and results after the tournament.
- **Debate Coordinators and Assistants:** oversee the pairing of rounds, entering of results, and judge assignments for one or more of the following: Lincoln-Douglas Debate, Public Forum Debate, Policy Debate, Big Questions Debate, and World Schools Debate.
- **Individual Events Coordinator and Assistants:** oversee the pairing of rounds, entering of results, and judge assignments for one or more of the following: Original Oratory, Dramatic Interpretation, Humorous Interpretation, Duo Interpretation, Program Oral Interpretation, Informative Speaking, United States Extemporaneous Speaking, and International Extemporaneous Speaking.
- **Congress Coordinators and Assistants:** oversee the pairing of sessions, entering of results, and judge assignments for Congressional Debate.
- **Judge Training:** checks in volunteer or hired judges, explains events, offers supplemental materials, and ensures judges are prepared and informed. This role could be fulfilled on site or through an online training in advance.
- **Logistics Coordinator:** hosts the tournament, oversees hospitality, and is responsible for competition spaces.
- **Sweepstakes Coordinator and Assistant:** If your tournament offers sweepstakes awards, these individuals can calculate the winners. They will take your parameters (rules/formula) and then create an excel spreadsheet to keep track of the information. Alternatively, they may be responsible for pulling the relevant reports from an approved software that calculates sweepstakes.
- **Double Entry/Qualifier Auditor:** If your tournament allows for double entry, this individual can calculate qualifiers based off the Single Entry Letter of Intent.
- **Extemp Prep Coordinator and Assistant:** oversee the Extemp prep/draw process and work to ensure students are preparing within the guidelines of the rules governing the tournament.
- **Auditors:** After every round, two people should check the work of the tab stations. They should check to be sure the wins/losses, points, ranks, etc. were entered properly into the tabulation software.
- **Tab Room Director:** oversees the entire tabulation room, helps answer questions, is aware of the master schedule and checks in with tab stations to ensure they're on pace, ensures the audits are done properly, and makes changes as necessary based upon circumstances of the tournament.
- **New Coach Liaison:** serves as a resource for coaches attending districts for the first time; answers questions.

*NOTE: The district chair and committee may determine that additional personnel are necessary for the administration of the tournament and assign additional roles, accordingly.*

# Standards for Holding a District Qualifying Tournament

## District Eligibility

1. **Minimum Schools Requirement:** Any district that attained at least 12 **charter** chapters with paid membership, 20 chapters of **any type** with paid membership, 200 new members, or over 700 new degrees in the prior school year is allowed to hold a district qualifying tournament series. If a district does not meet this minimum requirement, it may **not** hold a tournament series unless it is on a pre-approved growth plan due to realignment or a district split. However, schools in the district may petition to attend a qualifying tournament in a contiguous district. Schools must attend the entire district tournament series (inclusive of debate, speech and congress) in their own district.
2. **Minimum Entries Requirement:** If a particular speech or debate event has fewer than four entries, regardless of the district's qualification level, no qualifiers are allowed in that event. An entry must participate in at least one round (or in the case of Congressional Debate, must give at least one speech) in order to count as an entry.
3. **Minimum School Entry Requirement:** In order to qualify entries in a speech or debate event to the National Tournament, a minimum of two schools must have entries that participate in the event. (See Congressional Debate Exception below.)
4. Students who compete for a post-secondary institution while they are in high school are ineligible to compete at the district and National Tournament.
5. **Congressional Debate Exception:** The number of Senate and House qualifiers is independent of all other district tournament benchmark standards.

### A. Senate

A district with six or more schools and 10 or more students represented in the **Senate** will qualify two senators to the National Senate. If fewer than six schools or 10 students are represented, **no Senate may be seated**; however, a district may still conduct a House with sufficient entries.

### B. House of Representatives

A minimum of 16 students must be represented in the House. Refer to the chart below to determine number of **House** chambers, final round requirements, and advancement to the National House (note that the number of students in the far left column is based on *participation*—speaking or presiding at least once).

#### National Tournament Qualification Requirements for House

Participating Students	Qualifiers
16-29	2
30-58	4
59-87	6
88-116	7
117-145	8
146+	9

Non-qualifying (non-District Congress) Houses may also be held for regular merit points. No more than nine (9) students from a district may qualify to the National House of Representatives.

Contestants qualify to the National House of Representatives according to the number of actual participants in each chamber (number of students giving at least one speech). No district shall state or imply that if a student qualified in a previous event, that student may not enter the District Congress or imply that a student previously qualified cannot qualify for the National Congress.

#### Establishing Chamber Sizes



A district must have a minimum of 16 competitors to seat a House of Representatives. Districts may choose their chamber size within the approved range. For a district tournament held online, chambers in the House and Senate must be between 8 and 15 students. If an online district has exactly 16 students in the House, they are permitted to hold a one-chamber House of Representatives. If an online district has more than 16 students in the House, they must hold more than one chamber of between 8 and 15 students.

For in-person district tournament events, chambers must be between 8 and 29 students. This applies to preliminary chambers and elimination round chambers.

**For more information**, please consult the “Running the District Congressional Debate Tournament » National Qualification” section of this manual.

## National Qualification Levels

### National Qualification: Level 1

- 1.1 Qualification Level 1 is reserved for districts on a growth plan due to realignment or district creation. A district that meets the minimum schools and entries requirements is allowed **one** entry to the National Tournament per speech and debate event, as long as the event meets the four-entry minimum. Also, for Level 1 districts:
  - 1.1.1 If there are at least 16 entries in an event, that event is allowed 2 qualifiers.
  - 1.1.2 If there are at least 32 entries in an event, that event is allowed 3 qualifiers.
  - 1.1.3 If there are at least 56 entries in an event, that event is allowed 4 qualifiers.

### National Qualification: Level 2

- 2.1 A district meeting the minimum district standard in the previous school year is allowed **two** entries to the National Tournament per speech and debate event, as long the event meets the four-entry minimum:
  - 2.1.1 Maintain 12 or more **charter** chapters with paid membership in the previous school year.
  - 2.1.2 Maintain 20 or more chapters of any type with paid membership in the previous school year.
  - 2.1.3 200 new individual student memberships as a district in the previous school year.
  - 2.1.4 700 or more new degrees from schools with paid membership during the previous school year.
- 2.2 If the district qualifies for Level 2 under one of the above criteria, that district may:
  - 2.2.1 Earn a third qualifier in any event with 30 entries.
  - 2.2.2 Earn a fourth qualifier in any event with 50 entries.

### National Qualification: Level 3

- 3.1 A district that meets the minimum district standard in the previous school year is allowed **three** entries to the National Tournament in **every** speech and debate event as long as at least 10 entries in each event compete in at least one round; if that minimum is not met by a particular event, only two entries shall be granted in that event:
  - 3.1.1 24 or more charter chapters with paid membership in the previous school year.
  - 3.1.2 40 or more chapters of any type with paid membership in the previous school year.
  - 3.1.3 400 new individual student memberships as a district in the previous school year.
  - 3.1.4 1400 or more new degrees from schools with paid membership during the previous school year.
- 3.2 If the district qualifies for Level 3 under one of the above criteria, that district may earn a fourth qualifier in any event with 50 entries.

	Qualifiers to the National Tournament – Entries Required per Event			
National Qualifying Level	1 Qualifier	2 Qualifiers	3 Qualifiers	4 Qualifiers
Level 1	At least 4 entries	16 entries	32 entries	56 entries
Level 2		4 entries	30 entries	50 entries
Level 3		4 entries	10 entries	50 entries

“Entries” refers to both partner and solo entries in the district tournament.

## Auto-Qualification

In any given year at the National Tournament, any entry who places in the top 14 in any main event (or top 4 of Big Questions or top 8 of World Schools Debate), has not completed more than six semesters of high school, and is still enrolled in high school (as a student in good standing) may enter the following year’s National Tournament in the same solo event or in the same team event with the same partner. The district will permit an auto-qualified student to participate in the district contest and to double enter as specified by the district’s uniform double-entry policies. No rule regarding double entry may be violated by auto-qualification. The entry must indicate acceptance of the auto-qualification through their *Single Entry Letter of Intent* prior to its district competition. The district chair should notify the national office of acceptance of the auto-qualification in reporting district results. A student who accepts auto-qualification may double-enter based on rules above but must sign the single letter of intent, which is binding, in favor of the event of their auto-qualification. If the entry signs the single letter of intent and rejects auto-qualification, the results of the district contest are binding.

**NOTE:** An entry that accepts auto-qualification is above and beyond the number of qualifiers a district may earn as per the Level 1-3 requirements above, whether or not the entry participates in the current year’s district tournament series. However, an auto-qualifier may participate and help a district meet its quota requirements.

## Registering for the District Tournament

The district chair must notify chapter schools of tournament dates and locations in a timely manner as well as communicate requirements for entry. Each school is responsible for ensuring all rules of entry are met prior to arriving at the tournament site.

## School Eligibility and Entry Limits

An entry is defined as a registered unit in any event. In a partnership event (Policy Debate, Public Forum Debate, or Duo Interpretation), each team is one entry. A student who is double entered counts as two entries. Two students in a partnership event who both double enter (in solo events) are counted as three entries.

1. **Allotment:** The number of entries a school is permitted to enter is based upon the number of paid members and degrees on record with the national office prior to the district tournament entry deadline set by the District Committee. Each registration deadline must be set to begin no earlier than seven days (168 hours) prior and end no later than one day (24 hours) prior to on-site registration of the event. Districts must establish their entry deadlines for all events in their district tournament series at least 60 days prior to the start of series. If multiple dates are used, allotment is assessed prior to each contest, subtracting entries that may have been used in a prior contest. Current school strength can be found on the School Profile page of the Association website. Please refer to the *High School Unified Manual* to determine how members and degrees are calculated. (The following entry limits were revised in 2016-2017 to account for the additions of POI and INF as main events.) To download our helpful guide for understanding your team's strength and why it matters, visit [www.speechanddebate.org/what-is-strength](http://www.speechanddebate.org/what-is-strength).

Members and Degrees (Strength)	Speech, Lincoln-Douglas, Policy, and Public Forum Entries Allowed
1-15	4
16-20	6
21-30	10
31-40	12
41-50	15
51-60	16
61-70	18
71-80	21
81-90	23
91-100	24
101-120	27
121-140	29
141-160	32
161-180	33
181-200	34
201-230	35
231-260	37
261-300	38
301-350	39
351-400	40
401-500	42
501-600	43
601 +	44

Members and Degrees (Strength)	Senate Entries Allowed	House Entries Allowed
1-20	2	2
21-35	2	3
36-55	2	4
56-75	2	5
76-100	2	6
101-150	2	7
151-200	2	8
201-250	2	9
251-300	2	10
301-350	2	11
351-400	2	12
401 +	2	13

View a team's strength on the School Profile page:

The screenshot shows the NSDA website's School Profile page. On the left is a navigation menu with sections: Reports (Search Records, Membership Reports), Schools (NSDA Test HS, School Profile, School Roster, Enter Points, School Purchases, School Finances, District Info), and Quick Links (Latest Rostrum, Latest Newsletter, NSDA Store). The 'School Profile' section is active, showing fields for Primary Advisor, School Level, District, NSDA #, NCES #, Active status, Resource Package, Charter, Autobill 25+ pts, Balance, Strength (108), Degrees This Year, and Degrees Last Year. A red arrow points to the 'Strength' field which displays the value '108'.

2. **Entry Limit per Event:** Each school may enter up to four entries in each event. Congress uses a separate formula for entry limits. See the Senate/House chart above under “Allotment.”
3. **Penalty for Excess Entry:** The District Committee must not permit excess entry. If a school enters in excess of its allotment, it forfeits all coaching credit points and all sweepstakes points for the entire tournament as well as a penalty of ten trophy points. If the excess entries create additional qualifiers, the district may face penalties resulting in loss of qualifiers.
4. **Bonus Entries:** Any school that registers two entries in every category that actually compete (by participating in at least one round) in the district tournament will be permitted to register two additional entries in the tournament. However, not more than four entries are permitted in each event.
5. **Registration:** Tournament entry must be completed online using SpeechWire or Tabroom.com. Registration must be completed prior to the district tournament entry deadline set by the District Committee.
  - A. The district may choose to impose a late fee of \$5 per day, or \$5 per entry, whichever is less.
  - B. All NSDA districts may allow substitutions with eligible student competitors up to the conclusion of the on-site registration.
  - C. Any substitutions in district entries after the close of registration must be approved by the district chair.
  - D. The district chair will accept incomplete registrations and notify the school that their registration is incomplete. If registration remains incomplete at the start of the contest, the affected students will be ineligible to participate.
  - E. All school fees and outstanding invoices must be paid prior to the beginning of the tournament. The district chair receives a list of outstanding balances prior to the tournament and should communicate this information to each school. The chair will accept payment at the time of registration, which will be sent to the national office along with other required tournament information. If outstanding fees are not paid prior to the start of the contest, the school and its students are ineligible to participate. District chairs must call a tournament official before allowing an unpaid school to compete or its results will be invalid.

## Student Eligibility and Requirements

1. **National Speech & Debate Association Membership:** Only Association paid members in good standing are permitted to participate in the district tournament. It is the affirmative duty of each coach to provide proof of Association membership and proof of website registration for each new student member entered in the district contest. The District Committee must disqualify any non-member student from competition. Beginning with the 2014-2015 school year, only students officially registered as a member user on the organization website ([www.speechanddebate.org](http://www.speechanddebate.org)) may compete in district competition. Further, only students who are registered will count toward a school’s allotment.
  - A. Students must be paid members prior to the district tournament entry deadline set by the District Committee. All necessary fees must be submitted to the national office by this deadline.
  - B. A student may not have attended a secondary school more than nine semesters and must meet the age/eligibility requirements of their state activities association.
  - C. Students must be officially registered as a member user with a valid, unique email address on the organization website.
  - D. Students must have a minimum of 25 merit points, at least 10 of which were gained in interscholastic contests.
  - E. Students who compete for a post-secondary institution while they are in high school are ineligible to compete at the district and National Tournament.
2. **Community Standards:** Prior to registering online for the district contest, all coaches are required to confirm the following statement: “I certify that we, the coach(es), student(s), administrator(s) directly affiliated with our NSDA chapter, have agreed that the student performance(s) reflect(s) our school standards in terms of subject matter, language, and use of gesture.”



### 3. Double Entry Policy

- A. No student may double enter at the National Tournament. Therefore, a *Single Entry Letter of Intent* must be filed with the district chair indicating the event in which the student will compete at the National Tournament, should they qualify. This letter must be on file before the student competes in the second event.
- B. The District Committee may limit entry to one event in the district tournament. The district may choose to permit double entry under the following guidelines:
  - 1) **Congressional Debate Exception:** Students who double enter within the speech and debate district tournament are still eligible to compete in the District Congress.
  - 2) **No Triple Entry:** The District Committee is allowed autonomy in terms of its double entry policy. However, triple entry is not permitted unless one of the events is Congressional Debate and/or Big Questions. Big Questions does not count against a student's entry limits, so a student may enter two main events, Congressional Debate, and Big Questions, schedule permitting. A student who enters more than two of the following events will forfeit National Tournament entry, district points, and trophy points: Humorous Interpretation, Dramatic Interpretation, Duo Interpretation, Program Oral Interpretation, Informative Speaking, Original Oratory, United States Extemporaneous Speaking, International Extemporaneous Speaking, Policy Debate, Lincoln-Douglas Debate, and Public Forum Debate. No student may triple enter the immediate aforementioned events even if portions of the tournament occur on different dates or different times of the year or if they have failed to qualify in a previous event.
  - 3) **Qualifying in a Partnership Event:** If a student qualifies in a partnership event (Public Forum Debate, Policy Debate, or Duo Interpretation) and an individual event, the student must attend the National Tournament in the partnership event. However, beginning in 2022-2023, if a partnership officially vacates their National Tournament qualification or alternate slot in a partner event, individuals in that partnership are eligible to enter and qualify in an individual event on a different date.
  - 4) **Partnership Events:** Students are permitted to enter in up to two partner events (Public Forum, Policy, and Duo Interpretation) at the district tournament beginning in 2022-2023 at the discretion of the District Committee.
  - 5) **Partnership Event Exception:** If two students qualify for the National Tournament in a partnership event and both individuals also qualify for the National Tournament in their respective individual events, the students may choose to enter the National Tournament in their individual events if indicated on their *Single Entry Letter of Intent*. If two students enter the district tournament in two partner events (as the same partners) on the same weekend, the students must choose one of the team events and both indicate the same preference on their respective *Single Entry Letter of Intent* prior to the beginning of the tournament in which the partnership would double qualify. If the partner events do not occur on the same weekend, the school may forfeit its alternate position that resulted from the first competition, allowing new partnerships to be created. If the school wishes for the alternate status to be retained from the first competition, the same partnership has to be used when entering the next competition. If a partnership officially vacates their National Tournament qualification or alternate slot in a partner event, individuals in that partnership are eligible to enter and qualify in an individual event on a different date.
  - 6) **Single Entry Letter of Intent:** A student who is entered in more than one event must submit a *Single Entry Letter of Intent* indicating the event in which they will compete at the National Tournament, prior to the beginning of the tournament in which the individual would double qualify.
  - 7) **Denial of entry:** No student will be denied entry into an event or denied participation in the district tournament based on previous National Tournament qualification or performance unless that student is attempting to violate the above rules or has failed to submit a *Single Entry Letter of Intent*.
  - 8) **Penalty:** Violation of the above rules will result in disqualification from National Tournament entry.

### 3. **Orations and Literary Material**

- A. In interpretive events (Dramatic, Humorous, Duo, and Program Oral Interpretation), the same selection of literature entered at registration should be used for the duration of the tournament.
  - B. Manuscripts must be available at all district tournament contests in the event of a protest. However, it shall be the choice of each individual District Committee whether or not to require these materials be submitted *prior* to the district contest. The script must identify quoted materials, state the number of quoted words, include a work cited page in APA or MLA format, and both the orator and the coach must attest by signature that the oration is the original work of the contestant.
  - C. All materials used are expected to meet the standards in the *High School Unified Manual*.
4. **Penalties:** An ineligible participant or one who uses ineligible material will not earn credit points, points toward tournament trophies, tournament awards, or National Tournament entry. A student who competes in the wrong contest section or against the wrong opponent, at no fault of their opponent or the tournament officials, will automatically receive last in the round or a loss for that round.

## 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, reach out to the national office for assistance.

### Online or In-Person Events

In 2022-2023, districts have the autonomy to determine whether each competition event in their district tournament series will be held online or in person. At least  $\frac{3}{4}$  of schools that want to attend that portion of the tournament must agree whether to hold the tournament online or in person.

A district may choose to hold only portions of their tournament online or in person. For example, a district may choose to hold their fall weekend online and their spring weekend in person. Alternatively, a district may choose to hold all of their debate events online and their speech events in person. Or, a district may choose to do CX online and every other event in person on the same weekend. Big Questions and World Schools will follow the same rules. In any scenario,  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the schools that want to attend that portion of the tournament must agree on the method which is used.

### Rules for Use of Internet-Enabled Devices

The Current Guidelines Surrounding Use of Internet-Enabled Devices for debate, Congress, and Extemp will be used at all district tournaments that are held online. District tournaments held in person may choose whether to use the new or previous rules. The Current Guidelines Surrounding Use of Internet-Enabled Devices for debate, Congress, and Extemp will be used at the 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. 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 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 who have been approved to run their district tournament online 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 2021 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 2021 National Tournament, while recording their performances. Rulings (answering questions or hearing protests) about this language will be made by the District Committee.

- a. Professional equipment enhancements may not be used. Professional equipment includes professional lighting kits, professional grade camera recording and audio devices, and softboxes. Students are welcome to film their recording on their school’s auditorium stage, but the use of stage lighting is not permitted. Lavalier/lapel microphones and ring lights are permitted.
- b. Recordings may not be edited using any software; all submissions must be non-stop footage of the entire performance.
- c. Students recording split-screen Duos may not record their performances separately and edit them together.
- d. Students may not trim a recording, even to remove the seconds that they walk to and from the recording device to push start/stop.
- e. The length of the recording must not exceed the time limit with the grace period.
- f. Competitors may not use green screens, virtual backgrounds, or on-screen text.
- g. The camera being used must remain stationary throughout the entire performance, and no zooming or panning is permitted.
- h. The camera must remain on throughout the duration of the performance; a student may not turn off their video at any point during their recording.
- i. The use of lighting tricks like shadow puppets are not permitted.
- j. Students may move closer to and further from the camera to simulate zooming, though the camera must remain stationary.
- k. Students may cover the camera with their hands or body.
- l. Students may move out of frame during the recording.
- m. Other individuals may be present while filming, but audience interaction (laughing, applause, etc.) must not be included in the performance.
- n. Competitors may determine how close or distant the camera is set up in order to maximize both verbal and nonverbal communication.
- o. If possible, it is recommended that students and judges remove items that may be distracting in the background. Backdrops of a solid color with no special markings may be used by competitors and judges.

Please see additional rules about Duo below.

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:

- The platforms students use to record their performance.
- 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, you can have judges adjudicate performances on their own time, 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. 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.

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 using the recording rules listed above.
3. Asynchronous recordings where students submit split screen videos using the following rules:
  - Each partner **MUST** record their portion of the Duo from a different physical room and via a separate digital window than their partner. This rule also applies to Duos who share the same residence.
  - Students recording split-screen Duos may not record their performances separately and edit them together.
  - Professional equipment enhancements may not be used. Professional equipment includes professional lighting kits, professional grade camera recording and audio devices, and softboxes. Students are welcome to film their recording on their school's auditorium stage, but the use of stage lighting is not permitted. Lavalier/lapel microphones and ring lights are permitted.
  - Recordings may not be edited using any software; all submissions must be non-stop footage of the entire performance.
  - Students may not trim a recording, even to remove the seconds that they walk to and from the recording device to push start/stop.
  - The length of the recording must not exceed the time limit with the grace period.
  - Competitors may not use green screens, virtual backgrounds, or on-screen text.
  - The camera being used must remain stationary throughout the entire performance, and no zooming or panning is permitted.
  - The camera must remain on throughout the duration of the performance; a student may not turn off their video at any point during their recording.
  - The use of lighting tricks like shadow puppets are not permitted.
  - Students may move closer to and further from the camera to simulate zooming, though the camera must remain stationary.
  - Students may cover the camera with their hands or body.
  - Students may move out of frame during the recording.
  - Other individuals may be present while filming, but audience interaction (laughing, applause, etc.) must not be included in the performance.
  - Competitors may determine how close or distant the camera is set up in order to maximize both verbal and nonverbal communication.
  - If possible, it is recommended that students and judges remove items that may be distracting in the background. Backdrops of a solid color with no special markings may be used by competitors and judges.

## 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.”

## Committee-Determined Tabulation Rules

In speech and debate events, the District Committee may determine the number of judges they will use in preliminary and elimination rounds. In debate events, the District Committee will decide whether to use a full, half, or tenths speaker point scale.

By default, speech events will hold three preliminary rounds, but districts may choose to hold more. In speech events, the District Committee may set the number of clearing entries in each event prior to the start of the tournament, as long as it meets minimum standards. See the section on scheduling elimination rounds in speech for more information. The number of clearing entries does not need to be the same for each speech event. By default, 25% of an event's entry total (rounded up to the nearest whole number) and all entries whose rank totals are tied with an advancing entry will clear.

In debate events, the District Committee may choose between three methods to run their tournament. If they have a small number of entries in all debate events, they may choose to hold a round robin in each event to determine their winner. Alternatively, the District Committee may hold preliminary rounds and then choose to break to a double or single elimination bracket. By default, debate events will hold four preliminary rounds and break to a single elimination bracket.

Finally, the District Committee must determine the method used to break ties between alternates in debate events. See the section on breaking ties for alternate spots for Debate districts for more information.

Each of these options must be decided on by the District Committee, not the chair alone. The district's policies for each event must be decided and communicated to coaches of schools attending the tournament before the start of round 1 of each event. These policies may not be changed after the start of round 1 in each event. In the absence of a publicized policy, the default policies specified above must be used.

# Running the District Debate Tournament

The following rules apply to Lincoln-Douglas, Policy, Public Forum, and Big Questions debate events at the district tournament. Any tournament violating these rules will be invalid, with no national qualification granted.

A district may choose to use one of three methods to run their district debate tournament: round robin, single elimination bracketed, or double elimination bracketed. This selection must be finalized and publicized at least one week prior to the start of round 1. Debate events may use different methods, e.g. Policy could be a single elimination bracketed tournament, Public Forum could be a round robin, and Lincoln-Douglas could be a double elimination bracketed tournament.

## Method 1: Round Robin Tournament

Districts with a small number of entries in a debate division may elect to hold a round robin for their qualifying tournament. If a district uses this method, all entries in an event will debate all the other entries in that event once. If there is an even number of entries, a round robin requires one fewer round than there are entries in the division. For example, if an event had six entries, five rounds would be held. If there is an odd number of entries, a round robin requires an equal number of rounds as there are entries. For example, if there are five entries, five rounds would be held.

All rounds of the tournament must be pre-scheduled before the tournament begins using approved software. The rounds must be paired so each entry hits every other entry once, and in LD and CX, each entry should end up with an even number of affirmative and negative rounds. They will not necessarily alternate sides round to round.

Round robin tournaments may elect to use 1 or 3 judge panels, but all debates in the entire tournament must have the same number of judges as all other rounds.

The round robin concludes after the preliminary rounds; no elimination rounds are necessary. Qualifiers and alternates are determined first by total ballot count, and next by the winner of the head-to-head debate between two tied competitors. If a two-way tie still exists, a runoff debate with an odd number of judges should be held between the tied competitors. **If there is a three-way tie, two runoff debates will be held with the top-seeded tied entry receiving a bye in the first run-off round.**

Rounds between entries from the same school may either be debated or decided at the coach's discretion; all ballots must be awarded to one entry by the coach decision.

## Methods 2 & 3: Single and Double Elimination Bracketed Tournaments

### General Rules for Single and Double Elim Bracketed Events

- 1. Minimum Rounds:** At least four preliminary rounds are held in all debate contests unless only four entries compete. If only four entries compete, three preliminary rounds may be held.
- 2. Number of Judges:** One or three judges may be used in preliminary round debates, as determined by the District Committee. All debates must have the same number of judges as all other debates in a round throughout the tournament. Elimination rounds must use three or more judges per round. All judge panels must consist of odd numbers of judges, and no elimination or final round may use fewer judges per panel than any previous round.



3. **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.

4. **Judges** in preliminary rounds must award a win/loss, with no ties permitted, and speaker points to each individual debater on a 30-point scale. The District Committee must decide and communicate whether speaker points will be assigned using a full, half, or tenths point scale before the start of round 1. Judges in elimination rounds only award a win/loss without points.

## Pairing and Tabulation Rules

Rounds 1-2 are randomly preset, and any subsequent rounds must be powermatched.

### Pairing Presets (Rounds 1-2)

Preset rounds are sectioned with the following priorities in order:

1. Avoid two entries from the same school debating each other
2. Avoid entries debating each other more than once
3. Avoid any entry in CX and LD debating on the same side of the topic more than once 4.  
Avoid any entry drawing a bye (due to uneven numbers) more than once
5. Avoid any entry debating more than one opponent from the same school
6. Avoid any school drawing a bye (due to uneven numbers) more than once

### Pairing Powermatched Rounds (Preliminary Rounds after Round 2)

After round 2, entries are ordered or seeded by the following:

1. Highest number of rounds won
2. Highest ballot count
3. Highest total entry speaker points with highest and lowest ballots' scores dropped (drop the highest and lowest total team score in CX and PF, not the lowest score of each speaker)
4. Highest total entry speaker points
5. Lowest average opponent seed
6. Coin flip/random number

Debates are assigned within brackets. All entries with the same win count are grouped in the same bracket.

## Pull Ups

Begin with the top bracket (the most wins). In a non-side-locked round, which is all rounds in PF, and odd numbered rounds in LD and CX, pull ups are required either if numbers are uneven or there is no way to avoid scheduling a debate between entries from the same school or entries that have previously debated. In side-locked (even rounds in CX or LD), pull ups are also required if the number of teams due to debate affirmative is not equal to the number due to debate negative. Until these conditions are met, pull up an entry or entries from the brackets below according to the following priorities in order:

1. Pull entries up only if they are due to debate the short side in a sidelocked round
2. The pull up should not force a debate between entries in the same school
3. The pull up should not force a debate between entries that have previously debated
4. The pull up should come from the nearest bracket possible
5. The pull up should have the worst (highest) average opponent seeding

Do not avoid pulling an entry up because they have been previously pulled up. Pull ups are re-seeded into their new bracket as they would be based on the tiebreakers other than win/loss. For example, if a pull up has the eighth best high/low speaker points out of 12 entries in a bracket, they are given the eighth position despite having fewer wins.

## Pairing

Once the bracket has an even number of entries, schedule entries such that the entry with the best (lowest) SOP score debates the entry with the worst (highest) SOP score. Then the second best debates the second worst, and so on. **The following priorities should be used in pairing powermatched debates:**

1. Avoid entries debating each other more than once
2. Avoid two entries from the same school debating each other
3. Side equalization in CX and LD
4. Position in the bracket as determined by SOP scores

If there is an odd number of entries, one entry will receive a bye. The bye is not assigned first in powermatched preliminary rounds. Instead, it should be assigned in a way that creates the best pairing according to the priorities listed above. The bye must go to an entry that cannot advance to elimination rounds (if impossible, it should go to a team with zero wins) and must not go to an entry that has already received a bye. If possible, the bye should not go to a school that has already received a bye.

SOP (Seed + Opponent Seed) scores are calculated by adding the seeding of the entry together with their average opponent seed up to that point in the tournament. The top seeded debaters might end up lower in the bracket than worst seeded debaters if they debated against worse opponents. The goal of SOP is to even out the difficulty of the brackets over the course of the tournament.

Break this pattern of SOP as minimally as possible to avoid higher pairing priorities. In an event with an uneven number of entries, the bye goes to the entry with the worst SOP score overall that has not yet been awarded a

bye. If two entries must debate against each other a second time in either preliminary or elimination rounds, in LD and CX, the second debate must have sides reversed from the first debate; in PF, the coin flip is still used.

In all cases, the computer should be primarily used to create pairings in preset and powermatched rounds to ensure impartiality and true randomness where necessary; however, the debate tabulation staff should check the computer to ensure pairing priorities are correctly followed.

### Elimination Rounds

After preliminary rounds, the entries should be ranked in order based on the same seeding rules used for powermatching. The District Committee may choose either to advance all entries with a winning record or only advance all entries with one or zero losses.

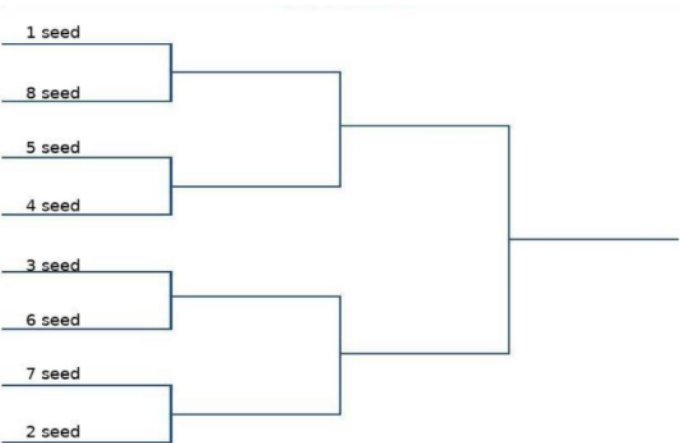
If the number of entries clearing to elimination rounds is fewer than the number of entries that qualify, the clearing entries will automatically bye to Nationals. The District Committee may choose whether to advance the next highest seed as the next qualifier, or they may choose to hold run-off rounds between the debaters in the next highest bracket. Contact the ombudsperson on duty if you run into this scenario for assistance.

If your district is using the single elimination bracket, proceed with the “Method 2: Single Elimination Bracket” rules found below. If your district is using the double elimination bracket, skip to “Method 3: Double Elimination Bracket” to finish your tournament.

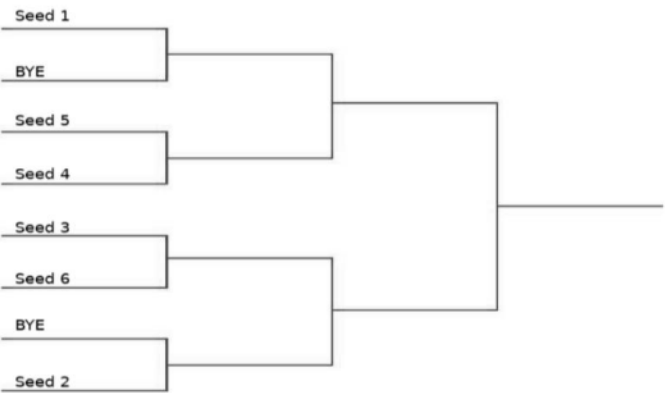
### Method 2: Single Elimination Bracket

Advancing entries will be placed in a single elimination round bracket. The best seeded entry debates the worst seed, the second-best seed debates the second worst, and so on. If the number is not a power of two, then the top seeded debaters are given byes until the bracket is complete. The winner of the best/worst debate should debate the winner of the middle debates, the winner of the second best debates the next middle, and so on.

### SAMPLE SINGLE ELIMINATION BRACKETS



8 ENTRIES ADVANCING



6 ENTRIES ADVANCING (PARTIALS)

Debaters should flip a coin in any LD and CX debate where the entries have not previously debated. If LD and CX debaters have previously debated, they should debate on the opposite sides of the topic from the previous round. PF debaters always flip for sides/position and may choose the same sides and speaker positions as previous debates.

At least three judges must judge each elimination debate. Every round must have an equal or greater number of judges than all previous rounds, and all debates of a given round must have the same number of judges. Brackets may not be broken to avoid same-school debates. Coaches of debaters in same school debates may either decide who advances without a debate or elect to hold a debate as normal.

The winner of the majority of ballots in each debate advances, while their opponent is eliminated. The tournament must continue until the number of entries active is equal to or lower than the number of qualifiers; further rounds for recognition may be held at the discretion of the District Committee.

### **Determining National Qualifiers**

Qualifying spots are always determined by wins in elimination debates. A district which qualifies one entry must conduct a final round (if there are multiple entries advancing to elimination rounds). A district which qualifies three entries must conduct a debate between the two non-advancing semifinalists for the third slot to the National Tournament.

### **Determining Alternates**

Alternate placement is determined by one of two methods. By default, the preliminary round seeding method is used; District Committees that opt for run-offs must publicize that decision before the start of round 1 of each event.

#### **OPTION 1: PRELIMINARY ROUND SEEDING**

The order of the finishers is determined by the following tie-breakers in order:

1. Winner of the final round
2. The last round competed in, e.g., a student in finals places better than a student that does not advance from semifinals
3. Preliminary round seeding as determined by the tie-breakers used to break

#### **OPTION 2: RUN-OFFS**

Entries who are eliminated in the same elimination round are considered tied for alternate positions, and a series of run-offs must be held to determine the final ordering. If a slot for the National Tournament falls to the quarterfinalists, for instance, then all debaters willing to attend the National Tournament will be scheduled so the highest seed debates the lowest seed, and the middle two seeds debate; the winners of those two debates then debate for the slot to the National Tournament.



### Method 3: Double Elimination Bracket

Districts may elect to use a double elimination bracket for the elimination rounds of their district debate tournament. A double elimination bracket requires that an entry must lose two debates in elimination rounds before they are eliminated from the tournament. This method requires more elimination rounds than a single elimination bracket.

Tournaments using a double elimination bracket will use the same rules as a single elimination bracketed tournament for preliminary rounds and determining which entries will clear to elimination rounds. The first elimination round will also be conducted according to the same rules as the single elimination bracketed tournament. The best seeded entry debates the worst seed, the second-best seed debates the second worst, and so on. If the number is not a power of two, then the top seeded debaters are given byes until the bracket is complete.

#### Pairing Elimination Rounds

After the first elimination round, a double elimination format bracket is divided into a “winner’s bracket” of debaters who have not lost in elimination rounds, and a “loser’s bracket” of debaters who have already lost one debate in elimination rounds. The winner’s bracket operates exactly like a single elimination format bracket, except that when an entry loses, they are moved to the loser’s bracket instead of eliminated from the tournament.

The loser’s bracket is paired among teams with one loss. The loser’s bracket teams are ‘seeded’ with either a) the better seed of the last loser’s bracket debate they won, or b) the worse seed of the last winner’s bracket debate they lost. For example, the loser of a winner’s bracket debate between the 1 and 8 seed is seeded 8 going into the next loser’s bracket debate. The winner of the loser’s bracket debate between the 5 and 11 seed in the loser’s bracket is seeded 5 going into the next loser’s bracket debate.

Each loser’s bracket round must have a number of entries equal to a power of 2 (powers of 2 are 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, etc.). If there are more debaters than that, give byes to the *best* seeded debaters until there is a power of 2 number of rounds. For example, if there are five entries in the loser’s bracket, one will receive a bye and the bottom four seeds will debate. If there are 13 entries in the loser’s bracket, five will receive byes and the bottom eight seeds will debate. If there are six entries in the loser’s bracket seeded 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, and 11, byes are given to the 5 and 6 seeded entries.

Pair the debaters in the loser's bracket so that the *average total seed* of the two debaters competing against each other is the same as all other debates in the loser's bracket. Using the above example, the 7 and 11 seeds would debate (sum 18) and the 8 and 10 seeds would debate (sum 18).

Debaters may debate the same opponents they have already faced in preliminary rounds, but they may not debate twice in elimination rounds. When the seeding schedules two entries to debate for a second time in elims, *flip* one half of the opponents such that the seed total of all debates are as close as possible to each of the others while avoiding repeat debates. In these cases, the “worst” seed sums will be 2 higher than the “best” seed sums. Using the above example, imagine the 8 and 10 seeds had already debated in elims. Instead of keeping each seed sum at 18, the 7 and 10 seeds would debate (sum 17) and the 11 and 8 seeds would debate (sum 19).

Rounds between entries from the same school may either be debated or decided at the coach's discretion; do not break brackets to avoid same-school debates.

**Make a copy of this [fillable double elimination bracket](#) to follow along.**

## Determining National Qualifiers

Qualifying spots are always determined by wins in elimination debates. A district which qualifies one entry must conduct a final round (if there are multiple entries advancing to elimination rounds) between the champion of the winner's bracket and the champion of the loser's bracket. If the undefeated entry loses the final round, the two entries in finals must switch sides and debate again. The winner will qualify to the National Tournament. A district which qualifies three entries must conduct a debate between the two non-advancing entries that were eliminated in the round before the final round, one from the winner's bracket and one from the loser's bracket.

## Determining Alternates

Alternate placement is determined by one of two methods. By default, the preliminary round seeding method is used; District Committees that opt for run-offs must publicize that decision before the start of round 1 of each event.

### OPTION 1: PRELIMINARY ROUND SEEDING

The order of the finishers is determined by the following tie-breakers in order:

1. Winner of the final round
2. The last round competed in, e.g., a student in finals places better than a student that does not advance from semifinals
3. Preliminary round seeding as determined by the tie-breakers used to break

### OPTION 2: RUN-OFFS

Entries who are eliminated in the same elimination round are considered tied for alternate positions, and a series of run-offs must be held to determine the final ordering. If a slot for the National Tournament falls to the quarterfinalists, for instance, then all debaters willing to attend the National Tournament will be scheduled so the highest seed debates the lowest seed, and the middle two seeds debate; the winners of those two debates then debate for the slot to the National Tournament.

# Running the District Congressional Debate Tournament

## General Rules and Instructions

1. **Qualifier Numbers.** The number of Senate and House qualifiers is independent of all other district tournament benchmark standards.
  - a. **Senate**

A district with six or more schools and 10 or more students represented in the **Senate** will qualify two senators to the National Senate. If fewer than six schools or 10 students are represented, **no Senate may be seated**; however, a district may still conduct a House with sufficient entries.

## b. House of Representatives

A district must have a minimum of 16 competitors to seat a House of Representatives. Refer to the chart below to determine number of **House** chambers and advancement to the National House (note that the number of students in the far left column is based on *participation*—speaking or presiding at least once):

**National Tournament Qualification Requirements for House**

<i>Participating Students</i>	<i>Qualifiers</i>
16-29	2
30-58	4
59-87	6
88-116	7
117-145	8
146+	9

Non-qualifying (non-District Congress) Houses may also be held for regular merit points. No more than nine (9) students from a district may qualify to the National House of Representatives.

Contestants qualify to the National House of Representatives according to the number of actual participants in each chamber (number of students giving at least one speech). No district shall state or imply that if a student qualified in a previous event, that student may not enter the District Congress or imply that a student previously qualified cannot qualify for the National Congress.

- 2. Establishing Chamber Sizes.** A district must have a minimum of 16 competitors to seat a House of Representatives. Districts may choose their chamber size within the approved range. For a district tournament held online, chambers in the House and Senate must be between 8 and 15 students. If an online district has exactly 16 students in the House, they are permitted to hold a one-chamber House of Representatives. If an online district has more than 16 students in the House, they must hold more than one chamber of between 8 and 15 students.

For in-person district tournament events, chambers must be between 8 and 29 students. This applies to preliminary chambers and elimination round chambers.

- 3. Legislation.** Chapters are encouraged to submit at least two bills or resolutions no later than 24 days prior to the scheduled Congress. All legislation presented shall meet Association formatting criteria (see rules section) and must be the original work of students from the submitting school. Non-original work shall not be considered for the agenda. It shall be the affirmative duty of each school submitting legislation to ensure their materials are original.
- A. The District Committee shall attempt to accept at least one bill or resolution from each school submitting bills or resolutions, provided the legislation is submitted by the deadline.
  - B. At least 14 days before the official Congress date, the district chair should send to each participating school a copy of not fewer than six bills or resolutions, which shall constitute the agenda for each chamber per day.
  - C. If the District Committee allows for a suspension of the rules, bills or resolutions not submitted may be considered only after the district's officially established legislative agenda has been considered (debated).
  - D. A District Committee may deny bills or resolutions from being offered from the floor at the District Congress.
- 4. Time Allowance and Sessions.** A district must offer at least two rounds, one of which must be a final round. If a district has only one chamber in a division (Senate or House), the scores from all rounds shall cumulatively determine placement and advancement to the National Tournament; a final round is not required. When planning the schedule, each round must include at least ten minutes per student in a chamber. For example, a round with 20 students in each

chamber must be at least 200 minutes long. However, if there are 25 or more students in a chamber, the district may choose to hold four hour rounds instead. Additional time should be planned for breaks/meals. Each round includes:

- A. Election of a presiding officer
- B. New seating chart (necessary accommodations for students with special needs may be made)
- C. Resetting of precedence/recency
- D. New legislation that has not been debated in a previous session at that tournament

Optional rule for districts: Time for debate per legislation item should last no more than one-third of a session's floor time. In 2021, the Board of Directors voted to permanently allow districts to choose whether to use this rule for their district tournament. It will not be used at the 2022 National Tournament.

## 5. District Congress Officials

- A. The District Committee will determine the manner in which judges are procured: whether from participating schools, or from the community (such as local legislators, legislative staff, attorneys, law students, civic organization members, chamber of commerce professionals, etc.). **Unaffiliated judges and parliamentarians are required.** 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.
- B. A parliamentarian supervises each chamber and remains throughout all preliminary sessions: to call roll and ensure students are in assigned seats, to monitor timekeeping by the presiding officer, to intervene in case a student officer becomes too deeply involved in parliamentary rules, to correct gross errors in procedure, to record session start and end times, and to record actions taken. Ordinarily one should remain in the background, but step forward firmly when one's presence is required. The purpose of Congress is to debate legislation; the parliamentarian ensures this is done. Parliamentarians will holistically rank all participants at the end of the last preliminary round, with the top 8 serving as a judge rank, and all ranks serving as a final tie break.
- C. Scorers: In addition to the parliamentarian, at least two scorers must be used for each session in each chamber, **and those scorers must not be affiliated with students in that chamber.**
  - i. For each round, scorers:
    - 1. Rate 1-8 points per speech, considering answers to questions
    - 2. Rate 4-8 points per full hour of presiding (fractions of an hour are not scored)
    - 3. Rank their 8 most preferred legislators (which may include POs)
    - 4. Assign up to eight (8) points per speech, considering answers to questions in the awarding of points.
  - ii. No more than 40 points may be awarded a day per student. A total of the average of the scorer panel's points for each speech and complete hour of presiding shall be recorded.

**6. Protests.** Judges assigned by the tournament committee shall be final unless protested before the tournament has begun. If a judge(s) is added to the judge pool after the tournament has begun, any protests must be made prior to the session in which that individual(s) is assigned to judge. If protested, the District Committee shall hear the protest, and its decision shall be final. Members of the District Committee involved in the protest should recuse themselves.

## 7. Setting up the District Congress.

- A. Rooms must allow for all contestants to be seated appropriately as to be seen by the presiding officer, with no barriers between.
- B. Obtain needed materials/supplies for presiding officers and parliamentarians: gavels (optional; may be ordered at [store.speechanddebate.org](http://store.speechanddebate.org)), timers/stopwatches, Table of Parliamentary Motions, amendment forms, and recency charts.

**8. Disqualification.** In the case of a disqualification of a contestant in a district tournament series event, all previous scores, ranks, and decisions of other contestants stand and no revision of past sessions will take place.



**9. 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.

**10. Petitions.** Protests of District Committee decisions may be filed, *in writing*, with the Executive Director who shall issue a decision. The director's decision may be appealed to the Board of Directors, whose decision shall be final.

### Assigning Students to Chambers

1. The District Committee may choose to either allow coaches to select which chamber their students will compete in or randomly place students in each chamber using approved software. Chamber size within each division should be consistent.
2. Once chamber assignments are made, only replacing an absent student with an alternate is allowed, and no changes shall be made once a chamber has convened.
3. Seating charts should be generated and printed facing toward the back for both the presiding officer and parliamentarian. Seating charts should be printed facing toward the front for each scorer.

### Recency and Direct Questioning

Preset, randomized recency will be used in every round of Congressional Debate at the National Tournament beginning in 2022. All district tournaments must use preset, randomized recency in Congressional Debate beginning in 2022-2023.

Direct questioning will be used in every round of Congressional Debate at the National Tournament beginning in 2022. All district tournaments must use direct questioning in Congressional Debate beginning in 2022-2023.

### Tabulation

#### Tabulating Ranks

Scorer and parliamentarian ranks are inputted (software automatically considers non-ranked students as ranks of 9 and uses higher parliamentarian ranks as tie-breaks only). Each individual chamber is tabulated independent of others. Legislators with the lowest cumulative rank total advance to the next level of competition, employing the following tiebreakers:

1. Judges' preference (or students' preference for the student rank option below)
2. Reciprocal fractions
3. Adjusted cumulative rank total after dropping highest and lowest ranks
4. Reciprocals of adjusted cumulative rank total
5. Rank by the parliamentarian (ranking first to last)

#### Student Rank Option

Districts have the option of allowing student cumulative rank totals (not student preferential redistribution of ballots) to determine national qualifiers. If a district exercises this option, it must do so for both Senate and House. After judge cumulative rank totals from elimination rounds have determined the top eight students in the chamber, students shall rank order their preference next to each student's name. Each individual rank for all participating students will be inputted, to determine the lowest cumulative rank total. If a student completes a ballot incorrectly (duplicate or missing rank), it must be discarded, and shall not count in tabulation.

## Qualifiers and Alternates

**Qualifiers are determined by rank total from the final round only.** If no final round is held, the top contestants, up to the 14th place in each chamber, are qualifiers and alternates in order of finish. If a final round is held, all students who compete in the final round are qualifiers and alternates in order of finish. Alternates may attend if qualifiers withdraw before June 1, regardless of whether or not the qualifier has entered the tournament. After June 1, alternates can only replace qualifiers that have been officially entered into the tournament. No alternate (who is replacing an officially entered qualifier) may enter the National Tournament after 4:00 p.m. on registration day of the National Tournament. National Tournament alternates are determined as follows:

1. Alternates are first determined by order of placement, whether by rank total from the final round by judges or by students. To break ties further, see the list of tiebreaks under “Tabulating Ranks” above.
2. If student ranking was used and additional alternates are necessary beyond those ranked by the students, the original judge rank total from finals, using appropriate tiebreakers through the parliamentarian’s rank, shall be used.

# Running the District Speech Tournament

## General Rules for Speech Events

1. **Minimum Rounds:** At least three preliminary rounds must be held in all speech contests.
2. **Number of Judges:** One, two, or three judges may be used in preliminary rounds, as determined by the District Committee. All sections of an event must have the same number of judges as all other sections in a round throughout the tournament. All speech events must use the same number of judges in the preliminary rounds. Elimination and final rounds must use three or more judges per section. All elimination round judge panels must consist of odd numbers of judges, and no elimination or final round may use fewer judges per section than any previous round.
3. **Judges** in all speech rounds should rank each entry in order, best to worst, 1-7. Ties are not permitted; points are not necessary.

## Preliminary Rounds

Preliminary round sections are assigned with at least four and no more than seven entries each; the ideal is sections of six. The priorities for paneling these rounds, in order, are:

1. Avoid entries from the same school in the same section
2. Avoid entries competing against each other multiple times
3. Avoid schools competing against each other multiple times

Speaker order is varied within preliminary rounds so that every entry's average speaker position is as equal as possible to all other entries in the same event. Each entry should speak early in a round (first 2 speakers) and late in a round (last 2 speakers) at least once during preliminary rounds.

In all cases, the computer should be primarily used to create pairings to ensure impartiality and true randomness where necessary; however, the speech tabulation staff should check the computer to ensure pairing priorities are correctly followed.

If there are sections with uneven numbers of students, students receiving the lowest rank in the larger section will have their rank truncated. That is, if section A has 6 students and section B has 5, both the fifth and sixth ranked students in section A will receive a rank of 5.

## Preliminary Round Breaks

After the preliminary rounds are concluded, the entries are ordered by rank total, lowest being best. If each entry is given four or more scores (if there are four prelims with one judge, or three prelims with two judges each, etc.) then the worst (highest) rank score is dropped from their rank total.

If there are less than eight entries, no elimination rounds are required. Any event with eight or more entries must break to elimination rounds.

The District Committee may choose how many entries will advance to elimination rounds in each event. The

break point for elimination rounds must meet the following standards:

- Number of entries that will advance in each event will be announced prior to the start of round 1.
- A minimum of 25% of an event's entry total (rounded up to the nearest whole number) must advance in each event. No final may be smaller than four entries. For example, an event with twelve entries must clear a minimum of four students to finals.
- All entries whose rank totals are tied with an advancing entry also advance. For example, if the target to advance is six, but a rank total tie exists between sixth and seventh, the top seven entries advance.

## Elimination Rounds

If more than seven entries advance, section a quarter or semifinal round. Sections should have no fewer than four and no more than seven entries. If more than 21 entries advance, quarterfinals must be held. If 15-21 entries advance, semifinals in three sections are held unless the District Committee has set and communicated a lower threshold for quarterfinals. Ranks are not truncated in elimination rounds.

### Snaking Sections

Elimination rounds are snaked: the top placing entry is placed in the first section, and the next entries are assigned in order by the rank totals going into the round until the number of sections is exhausted. The next entry is placed in the last section and the rest filled in up to the first section. Then, the next entry is placed in the first section and filled in to the last, and so on.

#### SAMPLE SNAKED ELIMINATION ROUND

Section 1	Section 2	Section 3	Section 4
Seed 1	Seed 2	Seed 3	Seed 4
8	7	6	5
9	10	11	12
16	15	14	13
17	18	19	

Sections are then adjusted by swapping entries with the same rank total to avoid entries from the same school competing in the same section, where possible.

### Speaker Order

Speaker order in elimination rounds is determined by totaling the entries' past speaker orders and ordering the section by the reverse of their previous speaker position totals, so the entry with the highest total of past orders speaks first, the next highest speaks second, and so on. Speaker order may be adjusted to accommodate double entry.

### Advancing from Elimination Rounds

After each elimination round, placement order is determined first by lowest total ranks in all preliminary rounds, dropping the worst (highest) preliminary round rank for each entry whether or not each entry received

four or more scores in prelims. Then add the total of all ranks earned in elimination rounds. **Beginning in 2022-2023, elimination round ranks are no longer multiplied by two.** Ties are broken by the lowest rank totals from the last elimination round only.

Six entries advance out of a semifinal round (an elimination round with two or three sections), together with any entry tied with an advancing entry on both overall rank total and ranks in the previous elimination round. Twelve entries should advance out of a quarterfinal, together with any entries tied with an advancing entry on both overall rank total and ranks in the last elimination round. Advance the top overall entries, not equal numbers from individual sections. If more than seven entries are tied to advance to finals from semifinals, or more than 14 are tied to advance to semifinals from quarterfinals, then all entries tied for the last spot on both scores are excluded from advancing.

## Final Round

If the number of entries clearing to finals is equal to or lower than the number of slots the district will send to Nationals, it may be skipped; otherwise, finals must be held. Speaker order in finals is determined by the same method as elimination rounds. Final round judge panels should consist of an odd number of at least three judges and should never be smaller than the number of judges used in any previous round of that event.

## Determining National Qualifiers and Alternates

**If elimination rounds were held:** Qualifiers are determined by the cumulative scores of finalists based on the factors below. After finals, the order of placement overall is determined by, in order:

1. The last round competed in. *This means that when determining the overall final rank of every student in an event, a finalist places better than a semifinalist, a semifinalist places better than a quarterfinalist, etc.*

**2. Lowest total overall ranks score, dropping the worst prelim rank**

3. Lowest total ranks in the final round

4. Judge's preference (head-to-head) in the final round

5. Highest total reciprocal of ranks in the final round

6. Judge's preference (head-to-head) in elimination round(s)

7. Judge's preference (head-to-head) in prelim round(s)

If ties still exist for a spot to Nationals, hold a run-off round with three judges. The winner of the run-off, on ranks, judges' preference, then reciprocals, wins the tie.

**If no elimination rounds were held:** The order of placement overall is determined by, in order:

1. Lowest total overall ranks score **(do not drop any ranks)**

2. Highest total reciprocal of all ranks

3. Judge's preference (head-to-head) in prelim rounds

If ties still exist for a spot to Nationals, hold a run-off round with three judges. The winner of the run-off, on ranks, judges' preference, then reciprocals, wins the tie.



# Sweepstakes Awards

## Overall District Sweepstakes Plaque

### Overview:

1. A school must actively participate in both debate and speech with at least three entries in each area. Congressional Debate is not currently included in calculation of the **overall** District Sweepstakes Plaque.
2. Top five speech and top five debate entries per school will count towards its sweepstakes calculation.
3. Team events (Public Forum, Policy, Duo) count as one entry.
4. Tie breakers:
  - A. Add the 6th speech and the 6th debate entry per school.
  - B. Greatest number of 1sts, 2nds, 3rds, etc.
  - C. Add the 7th speech and the 7th debate entry per school.
  - D. Add the 8th speech and the 8th debate entry per school.
5. Tiebreakers described in the *District Tournament Operations Manual* will be used to determine places. If ties cannot be broken, both students will receive the points for the highest place in which they tie.
6. 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place sweepstakes finishes should be awarded in each district.

**Point Schedule Per Event** - Points are allocated based on **actual entries** for qualification rather than any district bonus.

	Category A Event ≤ 37 entries Team event ≤ 29 entries		Category B Event = 38-57 entries Team event = 30-49 entries		Category C Event ≥ 58 entries Team event ≥ 50 entries	
	1 or 2 qualifiers		3 qualifiers		4 qualifiers	
	Speech	Debate	Speech	Debate	Speech	Debate
1 <sup>st</sup> Place	6	7	7	8	8	9
2 <sup>nd</sup> Place	5	6	6	7	7	8
3 <sup>rd</sup> Place	4	5	5	6	6	7
4 <sup>th</sup> Place	3	4	4	5	5	6
5 <sup>th</sup> Place	2	3	3	4	4	5
6 <sup>th</sup> Place	1	2	2	3	3	4

### Example:

	Team A		Team B	
PF 2 Qualifiers	1 <sup>st</sup> Place 3 <sup>rd</sup> Place	12 points	2 <sup>nd</sup> Place	6 points
DUO				
Policy 2 Qualifiers	2 <sup>nd</sup> Place 4 <sup>th</sup> Place	10 points	5 <sup>th</sup> Place	3 points
LD 3 Qualifiers	4 <sup>th</sup> Place	5 points		
IX 2 Qualifiers	6 <sup>th</sup> Place	1 point	2 <sup>nd</sup> Place	5 points
USX 2 Qualifiers	4 <sup>th</sup> Place 6 <sup>th</sup> Place	4 points		
DI 2 Qualifiers			1 <sup>st</sup> Place	6 points
HI 2 Qualifiers			2 <sup>nd</sup> Place	5 points
OO 2 Qualifiers			1 <sup>st</sup> Place 3 <sup>rd</sup> Place	10 points
	Team A Total:	32 points	Team B Total:	35 points

## Congress, Debate, and Speech Sweepstakes Awards

In addition to an overall District Sweepstakes Plaque, awards will be given for the three distinct divisions at the district tournament: Congress, Debate, and Speech. Each of these areas functions essentially different and are often held on different days/weekends. This also allows schools whose programs focus in one or two of the areas to still have a chance at earning some type of squad award.

A school's top eight *placing* speech, top six debate, and top five congress entries will count toward calculation in each area, respectively.

Computing the sweepstakes award for Speech and the award for Debate functions in the same manner as those two areas are figured for the overall sweepstakes award (see schedule for awarding sweepstakes points on the previous page).

In Congress, each of a school's top five students who place in their respective Senate and House chambers will receive points based on the schedule to the right. If a preliminary and a final session are held, only the final session will count.

Program Oral Interpretation and Informative Speaking count toward the Speech Sweepstakes Award.

	Congress
1st Place	8
2nd Place	7
3rd Place	6
4th Place	5
5th Place	4
6th Place	3

## District Cumulative Sweepstakes Award

**This award is calculated solely by the national office and awarded in August of the year following the district tournament.**

Rounds for all student entries accumulate from year to year and a District Tournament Trophy is awarded for one-year possession to the school participating in the present tournament whose total is highest at the conclusion of the tournament. Its record will be set back to zero and the records for other schools carried forward to the next year. The trophy will become the permanent possession of the school winning it three (3) times. A tie will be broken in favor of the school whose students were in the largest number of rounds in the present tournament. If still tied, the trophy will be awarded to the school with the highest total of Association merit points earned at the present tournament. Program Oral Interpretation and Informative Speaking count toward the Cumulative Sweepstakes Award.

## Reporting to the National Office

The district chair is required to submit several reports to the national office within 48 hours of the completion of the district tournament. Please do not submit materials not requested here. Note that if your district uses SpeechWire to tabulate your tournaments, it will take time to manually upload the data file to Tabroom.com after the completion of your district tournament series.

### Tabroom.com Districts:

1. Any **fees** due to the National Speech & Debate Association collected at the tournament. These should be sent immediately after each portion of tournament.
2. Review the Qualifiers and Alternates Report under the Results tab. Tabroom.com will generate this for all events. It is the affirmative duty of the chair to ensure that the qualifiers and alternates listed on this page are accurate, but a paper copy does not need to be submitted to the national office.
3. If your district had auto-qualifiers, mail or scan and email their **Single Entry Letter of Intent** forms to [info@speechanddebate.org](mailto:info@speechanddebate.org). Since coaches on Tabroom.com filled out event preferences for double entered students during the online registration process, chairs only need to collect paper copies of the Single Entry forms from auto-qualifiers. These should be sent at the conclusion of your tournament series, not after each portion.

### SpeechWire Districts:

1. Any **fees** due to the National Speech & Debate Association collected at the tournament. These should be sent immediately after each portion of tournament.
2. Review the qualifiers and alternates reported by SpeechWire. It is the affirmative duty of the chair to ensure that the qualifiers and alternates are accurate before they are uploaded to Tabroom.com.
3. **All Single Entry Letter of Intent forms.** These should be mailed or scanned and emailed to [info@speechanddebate.org](mailto:info@speechanddebate.org) at the conclusion of your tournament series, not after each portion.
4. SpeechWire will send your tournament results to the national office to be uploaded to Tabroom.com. The district chair will be notified when the upload is complete. The chair will approve the qualifiers list and post the qualifiers to Nationals. Uploads of tournament results will occur after the entirety of the district tournament has been completed, not after each portion of the tournament.

## District Tournament Audit Procedures

Tabroom.com or SpeechWire must be used to tabulate the district tournament. District Committees are strongly encouraged to make the tabulation process as transparent as possible.

### Notification Process

The District Committee must develop district tournament audit procedures and notify all coaches of the audit procedures that will be used. The district chair will register their audit procedures with the national office in the fall when they submit their District Dates Form. Those audit procedures may be publicized by the national office, but it is the affirmative duty of the District Committee to ensure that their district's coaches are aware and understand the audit procedures that will be used during the tournament. It is also the affirmative duty of coaches to hold the District Committee accountable to publishing procedures that meet these minimum standards prior to the tournament.

### Minimum Audit Requirement

At a minimum, primary results of each round (win/loss or rank) must be released to the advisor or a coach representative from each school in attendance after the conclusion of each round. The coach representative is responsible for reviewing results in a timely manner and alerting the District Committee to any potential errors or violation of the audit procedure.

### Examples of Audit Procedures

These examples are not exhaustive and are meant to provide guidance for the options District Committees have for meeting the audit requirements.

- If a tournament is using paper ballots, the District Committee can appoint an Audit Committee to compare ballot results to the results input into the computer after each round. After passing the Audit Committee, the ballots and audit sheet can be made public to the coach representative so they may take responsibility for the results. This allows two independent groups to verify results.
- If a tournament is using online ballots, the District Committee can publicize the results and written feedback to coach representatives after each round. This allows coaches to verify that the sides were appropriately assigned in debate on the online ballot and notice major discrepancies between the reasons for decisions and the results.
- The District Committee can publish results publicly after each round. This allows both coaches, competitors, and the judges themselves to verify that the results match what the judge intended or that the results match a decision that was disclosed to the competitors.

### Violations of Audit Requirements

It is the affirmative duty of coaches to hold the District Committee accountable to their published auditing procedures and use this procedure to check results after each round. If a district is not auditing results and/or providing the audit to a coach representative, the coach representative should file a protest to the Committee, citing this procedural violation. If a protest is filed, the District Committee is required to contact the NSDA ombudsperson for a ruling.

If coaches believe errors in tabulation have occurred, they must first address the issue with the District Committee in a *timely fashion*. If the tournament is still in progress, the protest should be lodged within one round of the audit being available to coaches.

The audit for the final round results must be made available before the awards assembly. No protests regarding tabulation will be permitted after the awards assembly.

The national qualifiers determined by the national office will be official. If the District Committee erroneously identifies and announces that a student has qualified for the National Tournament, that student will not keep that qualification spot for the National Tournament.

# District Tournament Rules and Penalties

In addition to pairing/sectioning protocols outlined above, the district tournament series has specific rules and policies that must be followed in order to ensure that qualification to the National Tournament is valid.

It is the affirmative duty of the District Committee to ensure all rules and procedures in this manual are followed. Failure to adhere to these rules may invalidate tournament results.

## Equitable Tournament Practices

- Equity is a core value of the National Speech & Debate Association. As such, District Committees are expected to read through the [Inclusive Tournament Checklist](#) and implement relevant methods for making their tournaments as safe, welcoming, and inclusive as possible.
- All District Committees must adhere to and make public the [NSDA Harassment and Discrimination Policy](#).
- District Committees must use the following language on top of all ballots used at the district tournament:  
“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.”  
If a district tournament is held online, ballots must also include this language:  
“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.”
- District Committees are encouraged to share the free judge training course and free cultural competency course materials found [here](#), created in partnership with NFHS, with all tournament judges.
- District Committees are encouraged to create a [Belonging and Inclusion Station](#) to hear inquiries and reports related to the Harassment and Discrimination Policy.

## Protest Adjudication

The members of the District Committee present shall have full power to adjudicate any protest, dispute, or interpretation of the rules. Protests must be filed in writing and must include:

- Name of the school advisor or authorized adult representative(s) filing protest and school, city, state. To file a protest, the advisor or adult representative must be on site. School advisors may appoint one or more adult representatives who are permitted to file protests in case the advisor is absent or incapable of filing a protest due to a tournament-related commitment. Authorized adult representatives must be approved by the school’s administration and explicitly appointed prior to the tournament.
- Code of person/team being protested.
- Round being protested.
- Section/room and speaker number of person/team being protested.
- Specific infraction being protested described with supporting detail.
- Signature of protesting coach.

After the infraction has been observed/discovered, **the protest must be filed in a timely manner**. A timely manner is defined as within one hour of the end of the round in which the infraction occurred, unless a specific rule specifies otherwise.

If the district chair and/or committee are unclear as to how a rule should be interpreted or the penalty for a rule, please contact the district tournament referee assigned to the district by the national office.



This enumeration does not imply that other tournament rules may be violated.

### **Penalties**

The penalty for starting an event after the permitted start time, holding less than the minimum required rounds, using fewer than the minimum required judges, or not meeting requirements for number of students in a section is that that particular event may not be awarded any national qualifiers.

# Judge Instructions and Guidelines

## General Instructions

- All judges are to report to their assigned rooms at least five minutes before the time the contest round is scheduled to begin.
- Each judge's ballot is to be secured from contest official and returned immediately following each round. If online ballots are used, judges should follow tournament procedure for opening their ballot and submitting their ballot within the allotted time.
- Read the instructions on the ballot.
- Do not confer with other judges.
- Judges should not interrupt the flow of debates or contests in any way. They are silent evaluators and should not reveal their decision.
- 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.

## Statement on Conflicts of Interest in Judging

Fair competition requires not merely the absence of impropriety but also the absence of the *appearance* of impropriety. A conflict of interest is a relationship that might reasonably be thought to bias a judge toward or against a competitor. Such relationships may themselves be quite innocent, but they could reasonably be thought to compromise a judge's impartiality.

A judge **must** recuse themselves from judging a student under the following conditions:

1. The judge and the student may be perceived to have a competitive or financial agreement that may bias the judge's impartial evaluation of the round. Examples include but are not limited to:
  - A. The student attends a school (or a collaboration of schools) that the judge attended, coached for, or competed with. **NOTE:** Two potential exceptions to this guideline would be that if a designated committee or ombudsperson felt that enough time has passed since that judge's attendance at the school to resolve concerns of impropriety. In addition, if both coaches felt comfortable with a judge that graduated from a school of one of the competitors, the tab room may allow that judge placement.
  - B. The judge has a paid or unpaid coaching, consulting, or judging relationship with the student or school during the same academic year. **NOTE:** Serving a tournament-hired judge does not constitute a conflict of interest.
  - C. The judge has received or provided expressed or implied offers to provide future coaching, consulting, or judging to a school or student.
  - D. The judge has provided exclusive pre-round preparation to a student either before or during a tournament through any method including electronically, verbally, or through the transfer of resources. **NOTE:** Sharing of information does not constitute preparation, but the discussion of strategies, arguments, evidence, etc., would constitute preparation. If such preparation is provided during a tournament, the judge should immediately (before pairings are released) recuse themselves from judging the student they prepared for the rest of the tournament. If practice rounds before or during the tournament has occurred between schools that a judge is fulfilling obligations for and could potentially judge, that would be defined as preparation and all parties should consider that a conflict.
2. The judge and the student may be perceived to have a personal or social arrangement that may bias the judge's impartial evaluation of the round. Examples include but are not limited to:
  - A. The judge and the student may be perceived to have had a personal relationship that may bias the judge's impartial evaluation of the round.
  - B. The judge and the student are or have been in a familial, physical, or emotional relationship.

- C. The judge and the student have communications of a personal nature over email, telephone, or the internet including social networking sites that goes beyond causal exchanges. For example, communications that are extensive and/or repetitive may create a conflict. Judges who socialize with the student outside of the competition arena are considered to have established a personal or social relationship with that student.
- 3. The judge does not believe they are able to fairly and impartially adjudicate a competition involving a particular student for whatever reason.

Judges may **choose** to recuse themselves from adjudicating a student under the following conditions. (If these conditions exist, it is the affirmative duty of the judge to make such information publicly available prior to the round beginning.)

- 1. The judge shares transportation and/or lodging with the student's team on a regular basis.
- 2. The judge has a personal, financial, or familial relationship with the student's coach or member of the student's family.
- 3. The judge is an administrator of, currently employed by, or anticipates employment from a forensic-related enterprise with whom a financial or advisory relationship exists or is sought with the student. **NOTE:** These guidelines do not prohibit lab leaders/institute staff from judging their lab students; however, if those lab leaders maintain consistent contact with those students and/or engage in personal relationships with them, they should recuse themselves from judging those specific individuals.

*The expectation of competitors, judges, and coaches is to engage in the highest levels of professionalism and integrity. While the responsibility is on judges to aide transparency, the responsibility exists for coaches and student competitors as well. It is the affirmative duty of all coaches and debaters to assist efforts in transparency. No decisions will be modified as a result of disclosed information.*

## District Team for USA World Schools Debate Invitational

All Association districts are allowed to qualify up to **two** teams of three to five students using the procedures outlined below. The deadline for the district chair to officially name a team is May 15. Each district must provide a full-time judge for each team available for the entirety of the competition. Districts that do not provide a full-time judge for each team will not be permitted to enter.

### Methods to Select the World Schools District Team

Teams are comprised of three to five members from each district opting to participate. After the entire district tournament series (speech, debate, Congress) is complete, any student who competed at districts would be eligible for participation on the World Schools District Team. The established criteria of the district should be made available to all coaches attending the district tournament. This could be done via the tournament invitation or through an email announcement.

#### A district has two options for selecting its members:

**Option A** – Districts may invite alternates to be on the team. To provide an objective method of selecting the team members, districts would do the following:

- Invite the highest point earners that are senior, 1st alternates to serve on the team.
- If a student turns down the opportunity, go to the next name on the list of senior, 1st alternates by merit points.
- If you get through all senior, 1st alternates, then go to senior, 2nd alternates by merit points.
- Keep working through the senior alternates (3rd, 4th, 5th, etc.). If there are no seniors left, go to junior, 1st alternates by merit points, then sophomores, and then freshmen.

**Option B** – Any district participant would be given the opportunity to apply for consideration. The district would select a committee to examine the applications and make decisions to field the team. The selection committee may consist of current coaches, retired coaches, community members, administrators, and more. Selection committee members should recuse themselves from scoring their own student applicants. In addition to the above criteria suggested in option A, the selection committee might also consider additional criteria, but are not bound to them:

- Give preference to applicants who are from schools that did not qualify to the National Tournament.
- Give preference to applicants from schools with fewer than three entries.
- Give preference to new schools to the district.
- Give preference to schools with new coaches in the district.

**Note:** If your state association prevents hybrid teams, a district may select entries all from one school to enable a participating team to attend Nationals.

Additionally, the application process could consist of a qualifying World Schools Debate tournament to determine which teams will attend Nationals. All participants must compete or have competed in another event at their district tournament.

Students do not have to be a non-qualifying entry from districts to be selected to compete for the district World Schools Debate team. Students who attend the district tournament and qualify in a main event for the National Tournament may forgo their qualification and participate in the USA World Schools Debate Invitational, if they are selected for the team by their district and have preferred it on the Single Letter of Intent prior to the District Tournament Series.

### **Coach of the World Schools District Team**

The coach of the district team could be selected by the District Committee. This person would be the main point of contact between the national office and the district team.



# District Qualification Process for Big Questions Debate

For additional information about debate rules and access to resources and judge training, visit the Big Questions website at [www.NSDABigQuestions.org](http://www.NSDABigQuestions.org).

## Entries/Qualification Process

- The two top-placing students at each district's Big Questions division will qualify to the National Tournament.
- District chairs must elect to hold a Big Questions national qualifying event on the Tabroom.com District Dates form.
- Big Questions entries will not count toward a school's district entry limits.
- The district Big Questions division may be held in conjunction with the district tournament or as a stand-alone event on a separate date as long as it occurs before May 1. The district event must meet the following requirements:
  - Minimum of 10 high school competitors.
  - Minimum of 2 schools.
  - All students must compete as individuals.
  - All competitors must be NSDA members and eligible to compete in the district tournament series.
  - The event must be organized through or with the permission of the district chair.
  - The event must follow district rules for conducting a district debate tournament. The District Committee may choose whether to run Big Questions as a round robin, single elimination bracketed tournament, or double elimination bracketed tournament.
  - The two top-placing students will not be eligible to compete at the National Tournament if they have qualified in a main event. Students may choose to attend the National Tournament in Big Questions instead of World Schools Debate.
  - If the Big Questions district event is held before the district's main national qualifying tournament, the two top-placing students' names may be withdrawn and replaced with alternates if the two top-placing students qualify in another event.
- Only entries composed of individual debaters may compete at Nationals.
- Each qualifier must provide a full-time judge for the entirety of the competition at the National Tournament. Students who do not provide a full-time judge will not be permitted to enter.