AMERICAN
DEBATE
ASSOCIATION

2025 American Debate Association National Tournament Invitation

Dear Colleagues,

We are delighted to be able to welcome you to the 2025 American Debate Association National Tournament, hosted by the University of Houston.

Some unique features of ADA Nationals include the Front Royal Cup, awarded to a team in each division with the best performance across ADA tournaments during the regular season, and the presentation of the Julia Burke Award to a debater. To learn more about the Julia Burke Award and how to nominate your student, go to their website at this link: https://juliaburkefoundation.com/ada-award.php

Best Regards,

Patrick Waldinger   Rob Glass

American Debate Association   University of Houston

Basic Details

Platform/Location

We will offer a hybrid debate tournament – in person on University of Houston's campus and online.

Everything in person will take place on the University of Houston's campus, including the awards ceremony and the elimination rounds.

Schedule

Tournament operates in the Central time zone.

A detailed preliminary schedule that includes different time zones can be found [here](#).

Saturday, March 8

Pairings for Rounds 1 & 2	8:00am
Round 1	8:30am
Round 2	11:30am
Pairing for Round 3	2:10pm
Round 3	2:40pm
Pairing for Round 4	5:50pm
Round 4	6:20pm

Sunday, March 9

Pairing for Round 5	8:00am
Round 5	8:30am
Pairing for Round 6	11:10am
Round 6	11:40am
Pairing for 1st Elim	2:30pm
Elim #1	3:15pm
Awards Banquet	6:15pm

Monday, March 10

Pairing for 2nd Elim	8:00am
Elim #2	8:45am
Pairing for 3rd Elim	11:30am
Elim #3	12:15pm
Pairing for 4th Elim	3:00pm
Elim #4	3:45pm
Pairing for 5th Elim	6:30pm
Elim #5	7:15pm

Entries

Entries will be accepted in the Varsity, Junior Varsity, & Novice divisions. In each division, there will be six preliminary rounds of debate competition, with an appropriate number of elimination rounds relative to the field, not to exceed double octafinals.

Hybrid entries are welcome to debate but cannot make elimination rounds unless they have debated at 3 ADA tournaments as a team prior to ADA Nationals. If you a hybrid and you feel you meet the criteria to participate in elimination round, then you should reach out to the ADA President, Patrick Waldinger – dinger@gmail.com – and inform them why you qualify.

For the purposes of the ADA National tournament only, a debate team is defined as the two-person team that begins the first rounds of the tournament and who debate together throughout the course of the tournament. If one of the debaters of a team cannot debate in any given round, that round will be forfeited. To debate in a round is defined as to give one constructive speech and one rebuttal. Teams that forfeit rounds will be given average speaker points. Teams that forfeit rounds are ineligible to clear to elimination rounds if they miss more than 1/3rd of their rounds rounded down to the nearest round. Debaters who forfeit more than 1/3rd of their rounds rounded down to the nearest round are ineligible for speaker awards.

The entry deadline is Tuesday, March 4 at 8pm ET. Teams dropping after that time will be assessed entry fees due to catering numbers.

Fees

To participate in ADA Nationals, each school must have paid this year's ADA dues as an institutional Member before the tournament. You can pay for membership when you pay your entry fees. Dues are currently $100 per school.

For all participants: $25 per person, covering tabbing expenses, trophies, and staffing.

You can pay fees & dues at this link: https://americandebateassociation.com/ada-nationals/ada-nats-fees/

New, emerging programs, or anyone else that does not have a budget and would otherwise have to pay out of pocket please contact the ADA President, Patrick Waldinger – dinger@gmail.com – to get accommodation.

Fees will be locked on Tuesday, March 4 at 8:00pm.

Topic

The topic for debates will be the 2024-25 CEDA college policy debate resolution.

Tab

The tabroom will be independently administered by Nick Ryan, following ADA rules.

Transportation, Hotel, and Logistics

Airports

The University of Houston is located near two airports, William P. Hobby Airport (HOU) is a ten minute drive away, while George H.W. Bush International Airport (IAH) is a forty minute drive away. It is not recommended to use airports that are further away.

Hotels

There is no official hotel block for this ADA Nationals. Everything in person will take place on the University of Houston's campus, including the awards ceremony and the elimination rounds.

There is a Hilton on campus, which is convenient but more costly. There are some more cost-effective options near the William P. Hobby Airport.

Parking

For those teams coming to campus using their own vehicles it is recommended that you either use the parking at the University of Houston Hilton or the University of Houston Welcome Center Garage (address: 4434 University Drive, Houston, TX 77004.)

Judging Policies

Judge Entry Requirements

Per ADA Rules, to count towards a school's judging burden, a judge must have 10 rounds of debate on the current 2024/25 debate topic. Those who do not have 10 rounds may judge, but they do not count toward a school's judging obligation and will be listed as a "free strike" on the preference sheets.

Judges are expected to have significant prior experience with policy debate. If a judge does not have significant prior experience with policy debate, they are not eligible to judge without advanced permission from the tournament.

Judge philosophies, as a precondition of entry, must be posted to judges' Tabroom.com accounts no later than March 4, 2025.

Obligations

Each school must provide 3 rounds of prelim judging per team.

Each judge should be entered for a minimum obligation of 2 preliminary rounds. We also very much appreciate additional contributions, particularly if you have judges with significant team or time constraints.

If a judge cannot be placed above the strike line for the number of debates for which they are committed, the tab room reserves the discretion to increase the commitment(s) of other judges from that school.

Each judge is obligated through two elimination rounds. Judges with teams still competing are obligated a round beyond their team's elimination. **If you are hiring judging, it is expected that your hired judges are part of your fulfillment of this obligation.**

Responsibilities

Judges are expected to judge debates assigned to them by the tournament tab room.

Judges are expected to adhere to Check-in and Report times. Failure to do so may result in penalties, including adjusting the school's commitment.

Judges must vote for one and only one team in each debate.

Judges are expected to vote by the decision time for each debate.

Decision Time

In preliminary rounds, judges are expected to render a decision within 2:15 (two hours and fifteen minutes) of the announced start time.

In elimination rounds, judges are to render a decision within 2:30 (two hours and thirty minutes) of the announced start time.

ADA Requirements for Judging (Standing Rule II.A.2)

According to ADA rules, a judge at the National Championship, a judge must:

a) Hold a baccalaureate degree, or have no eligibility for future ADA Nationals, or waive such eligibility, and

b) Not have competed on the current topic, and

c) Have an appropriately published judge philosophy that includes how the judge evaluates and resolves debates, and

d) Abide by the tournament's judge conflict policy, and

e) Be available for a minimum commitment of at least 2 debates, and

f) Be available for assignment to any debate through the second elimination round, at the discretion of the Director, plus one debate beyond the elimination of the school for which the person is judging.

If a judge entered to judge at the National Championship has not judged at least 10 rounds on the current topic, the judge will not count towards the school's commitment and will be a "free strike."

Conduct & Recording Policies

Policy

The tournament abides by the rules and norms of the American Forensics Association and the American Debate Association.

Debate rounds are open to registered tournament participants.

Debates may be recorded for private educational use by tournament participants (registered coaches, debaters, and tournament staff). In such instances, all participants must consent. Public distribution of such recordings is expressly prohibited unless prior written consent of all individuals on the recording is obtained and unless prior written consent of the American Debate Association Executive Committee is obtained. Private sharing for educational use is permitted but should not include publication or posting online.

Debates may be recorded by the tournament for tournament administration purposes. The tournament will not publish, distribute, or retain the recordings, except as needed for tournament administration or as required by applicable law.

Coaches and program directors are encouraged to discuss these policies with their participants prior to the tournament and are expected to take any reasonable and necessary actions to ensure compliance by participants who are affiliated with their respective schools.

Hybrid Debate Policies

Room Assignments

a. Online Team(s) with In-Person Judge(s):

If at least one team is online, in-person members of the panel should be assigned to a specific room together, that is not the same room as the in-person team.

b. One or More Judges Online, with one or both teams in-person:

    1. If feasible, if one or more judges is online, the panel should all participate online.

    2. If feasible, it would be helpful to have a:

        a. Tech/smart room, OR

        b. Zoom set-up with a mic to facilitate audio during CX.

            If tech enhancements are not available, debaters should be wearing headsets and nimbly muting to minimize audio echo/feedback. We should encourage participants to bring extra laptops to set-up a "speaking computer".

Judge Placements

a. MPJ will not be altered to bolster in-person paneling.

b. The tournament will publicize which judges will be online, and which judges will be on-site at the tournament. Teams can then adjust their pref sheets accordingly.

Notes About Online Judging & Scheduling

Are Times Locked In So I Can Schedule When I Judge?

Please do not. You should assume some shifts in schedule will happen, just like those which occur at in-person tournaments. Some pairings may come out sooner, because not every round runs out the decision time clock. Some pairings may run behind because a debate had to use Tech Time. We would appreciate if participants – competitors, coaches, and judges – assume some degree of flexibility and not treat the schedule as set in stone. For example, please assume some degree of flexibility regarding your meal planning or trying to judge a debate between other meetings – we cannot promise that the schedule runs at exactly the times we have identified.

Check-In Time

All participants (teams and judge) are expected to check into their room *within 10 minutes of the release of the pairing*. This is to facilitate everyone testing their ability to connect, for email thread set-up, setting up Zoom naming conventions, and disclosure. **This means you need to login to the room**. This will allow tournament staff to verify we have seen everyone and minimize the need for replacements or delays in the schedule. Once you have checked in, you may go off-screen or prep somewhere else as needed – you just need to come back at Report Time.

Report Time

We kindly request that all participants observe "Report Time" – at 10 minutes before Start Time, and report to competitions rooms at that time. You may continue to prep/coach off-screen, but in order to verify we have all participants able to access their rooms and ready to debate at start time, we need folks in their rooms and we need a little lead time to ensure we start on time. This will help minimize delays and enable tournament staff to quickly target those needing help accessing the platform/tournament/rooms or finding folks who are missing. It is a little trickier for staff to identify missing persons and start debates in our new online environment, and we ask for your cooperation to help make this work by observing Report Time.

Tech Time

In most instances, tech fails have been minimal (especially when folks use ethernet connections).

1. Most of the time tech issues can be caught quickly (you might notice a screen freeze, for example – good reason to keep screen on) and resolved without significant time spent.
2. If you cannot immediately reconnect, you should use a Help Ticket via the website – direct your issue to the Tech support folks (Classrooms.cloud/Zoom) option on the menu – for assistance.
3. In the event of a tech failure by a team, a team may use up to 10 minutes of "Tech Time". This should be clocked by the judge, and not used as standard prep time. It is only for use with tech/connection/AV issues unique to the online format (not for setting up your email chain, e.g.).
4. The judge should notify the tab staff asap if Tech Time is invoked, or if the judge has a tech issue, so that the tab staff can factor that into scheduling.

ADA Policy on Tech Time (Standing Rule I.1)

If debates occur utilizing an online venue, tournaments may permit each team to be allocated up to 10 minutes of "Tech Time" for resolving exclusively tech-related problems (e.g. internet connection, audio/video issues). Tech time should not be used as additional standard prep time. If the time elapses before the team can resolve the issue, they will forfeit the debate. In the event a speech needs to be redelivered entirely or in part, the time for that should count as tech time for the team experiencing the problem, if their tech time runs out while giving the speech the remaining time should be deducted from prep time. In the event a speech needs to be redelivered entirely or in part due to a judge tech issue, the judge must communicate the issue to the tab room immediately to minimize delays in the tournament schedule.