

Public Forum Invitational at Northwestern University

October 4th-5th, 2025 - NSDA Campus - Central Standard Time

Welcome all to the Public Forum Invitational at Northwestern University! If you ever have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the tournament email (debatenorthwestern@gmail.com) or directors below.

Best,
Natalie and Lucas

Contact

Natalie Roots-Nowakowski - b6r8d7@u.northwestern.edu - 202-802-4840

Lucas Yang - lucasyang@u.northwestern.edu - 443-518-0146

Live Doc

The [Live Document](#) will be updated with important information and announcements about the tournament.

Registration

Deadlines

Registration Opens - June 1st

Hired Judge Request Due - September 15th

Registration Closes - September 29th

Fees Freeze/Judge Information Due/Drop Deadline - September 30th

Fees

Middle School: \$60

Junior Varsity: \$65

Varsity: \$70

Hired Judge: \$200

After the payment deadline of September 30th, late fines will be enforced – \$25 per entry, which will incrementally increase each day the payment is past due.

After the hired judge request deadline of September 15th, teams still may request one, and we will do our best to supply. There will be an additional fine of \$50.

Payment

Payment can be made through <https://northwesterndebate.square.site/>, and the receipt can be emailed to debatenorthwestern@gmail.com for verification. Take note of the MS, JV, & Varsity options on the website when making your payment. Please email us your receipt (include your school name), and we'll respond with confirmation of accuracy for your designated entries.

Tentative Round Schedule (all in CST)

Saturday, October 4th

Check-in: 8:00am-9:00am

Judge Training: 9:15am

Blast: 9:50am

Round 1: 10:00am

Round 2: 12:00am

Round 3: 2:00 pm

Round 4: 4:00 pm

Round 5: 6:00 pm

Round 6: 8:00pm

Sunday, October 5th

Check-in: 9:00am-9:50am

Blast: 9:50am

Octos: 10:00 am

Quarters: 12:00 pm

Semis: 2:00pm

Finals: 4:00 pm

Award Video Posted: ~7pm

Judges

Requirements

Judges must be 18 years of age or older. They must hold a high school diploma or equivalent.

Judge Obligations

Each entered school is required to provide one qualified judge for every two teams registered. **If all teams are eliminated from the tournament, your judges are obligated to judge one round after your last team is eliminated.** For example, if your furthest advancing team is out by the end of prelims, your judges must be available to judge the first elimination round.

A “qualified judge” is one who has been trained either in the activity or by the team that has registered them, has the ability to follow the flow of debate within a round, is able to speak and understand English, and can adequately assign wins/losses and speaker points based on the contents of the round. We strongly suggest that judges read through the “[Culturally Competent Training Handout](#)” and receive their “[Intro to Judging Debate](#)” judge accreditation on the official NSDA website.

Hiring

If a team does not meet the judging requirements, it may hire a judge. A judge for the whole tournament will cost \$200, and the payment goes to the tournament. Please request a judge by September 15th.

Fines

If a non-hired judge fails to show up for their assigned round, the team they are associated with will be fined \$100 per missed round.

Disclosure

Judges are encouraged to disclose their decision for the round AFTER their ballot has been submitted. Judges are also highly encouraged to provide reasoning for their decision (RFDs) to the debaters both immediately after ballot submission and within the ballot itself. **Just because a decision is disclosed and an RFD is provided does not mean ballot comments ought to be left empty.**

Strikes

Debaters will not be able to submit judge strikes in VPF, JVPE, or MSPF. If debaters receive a judge assignment that presents a conflict of interest or an undue advantage to either team, they ought to contact Tab before the round has begun. **We will not be retroactively ruling decisions null and void except in the case of extenuating circumstances.**

Rules

This tournament will follow the Public Forum Rules outlined in the National Speech and Debate Association 2024-2025 [High School Unified Manual](#). The tournament will observe the NSDA September-October topic.

Consult Tabroom before taking any action to demote a team's standing or challenge a violation.

Evidence

NSDA Campus File sharing, email chains, or links in the chat are acceptable ways to share evidence. Any evidence read in a round must be available to the opponent upon request. Time used sharing the evidence shall not be factored into prep time. Time spent reading the opponent's evidence must be on the clock, either as prep time or while another speech/crossfire is underway.

Judges may only request to view evidence after the round has concluded. Judges are instructed to treat all evidence presented in round as truthful unless unique reasons to suspect dishonesty or conduct violations present themselves. Competitors may not instruct or request that judges review specific pieces of evidence. If competitors suspect evidence of conduct violations or abuse, they ought to report such incidents to tournament staff.

Structure

Public Forum Debate Time Limits	
First Speaker - Team A	4 Minutes
First Speaker - Team B	4 Minutes
Crossfire	3 Minutes
Second Speaker - Team A	4 Minutes
Second Speaker - Team B	4 Minutes
Crossfire	3 Minutes
Summary - First Speaker - Team A	3 Minutes
Summary - First Speaker - Team B	3 Minutes
Grand Crossfire	3 Minutes
Final Focus - Second Speaker - Team A	2 Minutes
Final Focus - Second Speaker - Team B	2 Minutes
Prep Time	3 Minutes per Team

Speaker Points

Speaker points are based on the holistic presentation of a speaker. Low-point wins (the winning team has fewer points than the losing team) are acceptable. Here is a standard:

29-30: Incredible speech, near perfect.

28-29: Fairly eloquent and insightful.

27-28: Good fluidity, but a bit rough.

26-27: Frequent stalling or stumbles.

Below 26: Offensive or extremely rude

Coin Flips

Coin flips will be conducted through the Tabroom mechanism before the round starts. Debaters are not permitted to perform coin flips in the round room.

Mavericks

No mavericks will be allowed to register. If your partner drops, you may continue to compete as a maverick. Although you will not be eligible for elimination rounds.

Format

After Round 2, all rounds will be power-matched by record. Out-rounds will use a seeded bracket format. All rounds will be single-flighted.

Equity and Inclusion

The Northwestern University Invitational staff is committed to ensuring a healthy and equitable debating environment. Our designated equity officer, Natalie Roots, is available for the duration of the tournament to help facilitate relevant conversations and respond to instances of conflict. They are the primary resource for students, judges, and teams to express concerns directly to tournament staff. Contact Natalie at randomnatalie8@gmail.com.

We strongly suggest that judges read through the NSDA's [Culturally Competent Judging](#) handout and complete their [Multicultural Competence](#) course/judge accreditation.

Ethics

High school debate aims to improve students' basic education and provide a platform for developing essential life skills. To achieve these objectives, coaches must encourage a culture of strong, positive ethical behavior. To support coaches in this effort, certain actions should be avoided as they can constitute clear ethical violations or create the appearance of such violations.

These actions include: communication between debaters and non-debaters during a round, communication between judges during a round, accessing shared documents during a round (such as sending cases to a team email instead of a personal one), live-streaming a round to outsiders, recording rounds without permission, intimidating debaters or judges, and using fabricated or misrepresented evidence. Although this list is not exhaustive, it serves as a guideline to help preserve the integrity and benefits of competitive debate for everyone involved.

Staff

Tournament Directors: Natalie Roots-Nowakowski, Lucas Yang

Tab Team: Natalie Roots-Nowakowski, Lucas Yang, Alexander Arnold