

RONALD REAGAN DEBATE SERIES

REAGAN 
EDUCATION

PARTICIPANT GUIDE



RONALD REAGAN DEBATE SERIES



Dear Participant,

Welcome to the Ronald Reagan Debate Series, hosted by the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute. We are excited to have you join a program that celebrates the values President Reagan championed.

This program gives students the opportunity to develop meaningful communication and leadership skills while engaging in a thoughtful civil discourse. Whether this is your first debate experience or you are a returning competitor, you will learn how to think critically and speak with confidence.

Coaches, parents, and guardians play an important role in this journey. Thank you for encouraging your student to engage in civic learning and leadership development.

We look forward to supporting you throughout the process and cheering you on at your regional competition.

Sincerely,

Reagan Education Team
The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute



RONALD REAGAN DEBATE SERIES



Competition Overview

The Ronald Reagan Debate Series is open to students in grades 9-12. It highlights:

- civility and respect
- clarity and persuasion
- warmth, humor, and storytelling
- real-world communication skills
- a focus on positive, audience-friendly engagement

Students compete for scholarship awards and the opportunity to advance from regional competitions to the national championship in the summer.

Participant Checklist

- Register for the competition
- Submit the media release form
- Create or access your Tabroom.com account
- Pay the \$15 competition fee
- Review the official rules and expectations
- Read and research the debate topic
- Prepare printed materials
 - talking points
 - supporting evidence or sources
 - note cards
- Practice
 - opening statement
 - main arguments
 - rebuttals
 - closing statement



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Media Release Form

This form must be completed by all participants and, if under 18, signed by a parent or guardian. By signing, you grant permission to the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute to use photographs, video recordings, and audio recordings of the student for educational purposes, promotional materials, social media and marketing, and event documentation and archival use.

Scan the QR code to access the media release form.



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Debate Topic

2026 Regional Competition Topic

Resolved: As the United States celebrates its 250th anniversary of self-governance, the Electoral College should be replaced by the popular vote in presidential elections.



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TYPICAL REAGAN DEBATE REGIONAL SCHEDULE

TIME	ROUND
8:00 AM - 9:00 AM	Registration & Q/A
9:00 AM - 10:00 AM	Round 1
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM	Round 2
11:00 AM - 12:00 PM	Round 3
12:00 PM - 12:30 PM	Lunch Break
12:30 PM - 1:30 PM	Round 4
1:30 PM - 2:30 PM	Quarter Finals
2:30 PM - 3:30 PM	Semi Finals
3:30 PM - 4:30 PM	Finals

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STRUCTURE	TIME
AFFIRMATIVE OPENING STATEMENT	5 MINUTES
NEGATIVE OPENING STATEMENT	5 MINUTES
CROSSFIRE	3 MINUTES
AFFIRMATIVE REBUTTAL	4 MINUTES
NEGATIVE REBUTTAL	4 MINUTES
MODERATOR QUESTIONING	3 MINUTES
AFFIRMATIVE CLOSING STATEMENT	3 MINUTES
NEGATIVE CLOSING STATEMENT	3 MINUTES
PREP TIME PER DEBATER THROUGHOUT DEBATE	2 MINUTES
TOTAL DEBATE TIME	30 - 40 MINUTES

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Competition Rules & Eligibility

Regional Competition Rules

- Competitors are allowed to compete in one geographic regional competition and/or the nationwide online regional competition.
- Each student at an in-person qualifying competition must be under the immediate supervision of an adult who may be their coach, parent, or other adult approved by the high school administration. Students competing online must have a supervising adult judging and/or otherwise immediately available.
- A contestant who does not appear at the scheduled time to speak will forfeit.
- Only students enrolled in grades 9-12 are allowed to compete. Middle school students are not eligible to compete.
- Competitors located in other regions of the world are welcome to compete, but the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute is only able to cover transportation expenses for travel originating within the 50 United States.
- After competing in the final round of debate at the regional level, one winner from each region will qualify for the National Championship. Each finalist will receive flight and hotel room for themselves and one chaperone.

National Championship

- If a contestant is unable to participate in the National Championship, it will be up to the discretion of the regional partner and the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute to determine an alternate participant for the national championship.
- Each student at the national championship must be under the immediate supervision of an adult who may be his/her coach, parent, or other adult approved by the high school administration and acceptable to the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute.



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Competition Expectations

- Debaters are expected to conduct themselves with civility and decorum; aggression is not tolerated.
- Judges are to assume the role of the average American voter. The scores of debaters' who use debate terminology will be lowered.
- No use of electronic devices (i.e. laptops, tablets, etc.) during rounds. Cell phones may be used for timing purposes only.
- All speech documents and research materials must be printed (i.e. paper documents, note-cards, handwritten notes, etc.).
- Judges are required to use the rubric provided to evaluate the round, assign speaker points to each competitor, and determine the winner.
- The debater with the highest scores wins the round; the debaters may not receive the same score.
- Debaters are allowed two minutes of optional preparation time, which may be used at their discretion, throughout the round.
- Debaters should keep their own time and state how much they have used and how much is remaining after each use.
- Any questions regarding rules or issues should be directed to the tournament administration.
- Please be aware that the tournament schedules and forfeit rules are subject to change at the discretion of the tournament administration.



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Moderator Questioning Guide

- Unique to the Ronald Reagan debate format, judges, also known as moderators, ask the debaters questions just like a real presidential debate!
 - The purpose of this period is an opportunity for debaters to show their breadth/ depth of knowledge or clarify their points.
 - There are no “gotcha questions,” questions that argue against, or criticize the debater.
 - Judges should ask each debater an equal number of questions.
 - Engaging questions encourage the debater to think critically about what they are arguing and apply their knowledge.
 - Judges can ask the same question to each debater.
-

Example Questions

- Could you further elaborate your point about _____?
- How would this impact you and me personally?
- How would this impact our community?
- What do you believe is your opponent’s strongest point?
- Why should I care about this issue?



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CATEGORY	1- POOR	2- FAIR	3- GOOD	4- VERY GOOD	5- EXCELLENT
LIKENESS TO RONALD REAGAN Much like President Reagan, competitors should present their ideas with a variety of ways including storytelling, humor, charisma. Debaters should aim to connect with their audience.	Debater showed no personality and uniqueness and/or was disrespectful.	Debater showed little personality and minimally incorporated Reagan.	Debater incorporated some but not all elements of Reagan's speaking style.	Debater incorporated all aspects of Reagan's speaking style, but can have a more polished style.	Debater excelled at incorporating the attributes of Reagan's speaking
ORGANIZATION AND CLARITY A successful debater communicates ideas with clarity, organization and eloquence. Competitors should appeal to the Average American voter and enunciating clearly.	It was impossible to follow the debater's speech and logic.	Only people with technical knowledge can understand the debater/ unreasonable speaking pace was used.	Debater was somewhat organized, but can greatly improve clarity	Debater was decently organized, and most people can understand.	Anyone could have understood this debater/well-organized.
KNOWLEDGE OF THE TOPIC Skilled debaters should demonstrate their knowledge of both the topic in both moderator and competitor questioning periods. They should be able to competently answer a question.	Debater demonstrated little to no topical knowledge/ was completely dependent on notes and speech documents.	Debater did not have a firm grasp on the topic and relied heavily on notes and speech documents.	Debater somewhat understood the topic but could have been less dependent on notes and speech documents.	Debater demonstrated subject competence and did not rely heavily on notes and speech documents.	Debater demonstrated a strong grasp of the subject at hand and was not dependent on notes.
PERSUASIVENESS Competitors should use a balance of storytelling, logic, and evidence to make their points. While quality evidence should be used, win/loss should not be determined by evidence alone.	Debater made no arguments/ had no balance of storytelling, logic, and evidence/ used flawed logic/evidence.	Debater used some but not all of the elements of persuasion/ ideas were limited in scope.	Debater used storytelling, logic, and evidence, but wasn't persuasive enough in doing so.	Debater was persuasive and effectively used all elements.	Debater was very persuasive and used all elements to present a better case.
REBUTTALS (RESPONSE TO OPPONENTS' ARGUMENTS) Rebuttals include all responses to opponents' logic. Debaters should respond to all major arguments given by opponent.	Debater did not address/ counter any of their opponent's main arguments.	Debater only minimally addressed/countered some of their opponent's main arguments.	Debater only addressed/countered some of their opponent's main arguments.	Debater addressed/countered most of their opponent's main arguments.	Debater successfully addressed/ countered all of their opponent's main arguments.
CONDUCT AND CIVILITY Debaters are expected to model the civility, respect, and courtesy exemplified by President Reagan throughout his life. This includes respectful engagement with opponents and judges and active listening, appropriate body language.	Debater was disrespectful, dismissive, or hostile toward their opponent or the judge: demonstrated poor sportsmanship or inappropriate behavior.	Debater had noticeable lapses in civility or professionalism; may have interrupted, rolled eyes, or demonstrated frustration.	Debater was generally respectful and professional, though some minor lapses in tone or demeanor may have been present.	Debater was consistently respectful, professional, and courteous, showing clear understanding of the competition.	Debater was a model of civility and sportsmanship, demonstrating respect, humility, and encouragement toward others.

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BALLOT

JUDGE NAME

ROUND/FLIGHT

ROOM NUMBER

TOPIC

AFFIRMATIVE SPEAKER

SPEAKER NAME:

LIKENESS TO
RONALD REAGAN

1

2

3

4

5

ORGANIZATION
AND CLARITY

1

2

3

4

5

KNOWLEDGE OF
THE TOPIC

1

2

3

4

5

PERSUASIVENESS

1

2

3

4

5

REBUTTALS

1

2

3

4

5

CONDUCT AND
CIVILITY

1

2

3

4

5

TOTAL SCORE:

WRITE 1-2 AREAS WHERE THE
SPEAKER COULD IMPROVE:

NEGATIVE SPEAKER

SPEAKER NAME:

LIKENESS TO
RONALD REAGAN

1

2

3

4

5

ORGANIZATION
AND CLARITY

1

2

3

4

5

KNOWLEDGE OF
THE TOPIC

1

2

3

4

5

PERSUASIVENESS

1

2

3

4

5

REBUTTALS

1

2

3

4

5

CONDUCT AND
CIVILITY

1

2

3

4

5

TOTAL SCORE:

WRITE 1-2 AREAS WHERE THE
SPEAKER COULD IMPROVE:

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Tabroom Account



Directions

- Create an Account

1. Go to Tabroom.com and click sign up/ register.
2. Choose your role (coach/ student) and enter name, email, and a secure password.
3. Verify your email if prompted.
4. Complete your profile (school affiliation, phone number).

- Find & View a Tournament

1. From the homepage, use the search box or browse upcoming tournaments by state/ date.
2. Click the tournament name to open its tournament page.
3. Read the tournament info: dates, events offered, entry deadlines, fees, and contact information.

- Register your School/ Team for a Tournament

1. On the tournament page, click registration or enter tournament.
2. Choose your school (or create it) and select the number/ type of entries you will register.
3. Add students and assign them to events (one student per entry slot or pairings for team events).
4. Add judge(s) if required - provide judge name ,contact information, and judge category.
5. Review your entries and click submit (or save).
6. Pay tournament fees using the payment option provided.

- Add or change entries

1. Return to the tournament registration page and log-in.
2. Click manage entries for your school.
3. Edit student names, swap events, add new entries, or withdraw entries before deadlines.
4. Resubmit/ save changes and confirm payment adjustments if nece

- For Competitors/ Coaches: View Schedules & Rooms

1. Log in and navigate to the tournament page.
2. Click schedules/ rounds or assignments.
3. Find your competitor or entry and click the current round to see room, judges, and opponents.
4. Arrive at the room on time and bring any required materials (copies, timepieces, proof of eligibility).



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Resources

- Website: www.reaganfoundation.org/debate
- Judges Video: <https://vimeo.com/1146680404/a68f59d680?share=copy&fl=sv&fe=ci>
- Ronald Reagan Debate Series Championship:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jzToLC8VlvQ>
- Tabroom: <https://www.tabroom.com/index/index.mhtml>
- How to Set Up a Tabroom Account Training Video:
<https://reaganeducation.box.com/s/4xzxu6lcp7oc9e9gkpypc88dezs7mx29>
- Other leadership development opportunities & scholarships:
<http://www.reaganfoundation.org/education>

