



MASSACHUSETTS SPEECH & DEBATE LEAGUE

The Board of the Massachusetts Speech & Debate League (MSDL) invites you
to the twenty-first annual

2026 MSDL All-Novice Tournament

Saturday, October 24, 2026

at Catholic Memorial, 235 Baker Street, West Roxbury, MA 02132

The purpose of the MSDL All-Novice Speech and Debate Tournament is to give new students a chance to compete in a less intimidating, solely educational environment (i.e., with no awards to win) prior to the start of the regular MSDL season. Students may compete in only one event. While the tournament will be run by the MSDL Board, students may not use their participation or results to meet qualification requirements for the end-of-year State Championship tournaments.

For the purposes of this tournament, a novice competitor is defined as any student who has not competed in high school forensics (any speech or debate event) in a previous school year. A student who competed in two or fewer high school tournaments while in middle school retains novice status; but if a student has competed in more than two high school tournaments, that student cannot be considered a novice. This tournament is essentially for first-year high school forensic students; those returning high school forensics students, who may be eligible to compete in novice extemp or novice debate at subsequent tournaments this season, should not plan to attend this tournament.

Students with two or more years of experience in high school forensics (and for debate events, also have 200+ NSDA points) are invited to judge; however, each school with participating students **must have at least one identified responsible adult in attendance**. Extra judges are always welcome and will receive assignments.



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Individuals interested in learning to judge **debate** may attend this tournament and shadow judges in order to learn the judging process. Do not register these individuals as judges, but please notify the Tab Room during registration if there are individuals from your school in need of a debate judge shadowing partner.

Individuals interested in learning to judge **speech** may participate in an extended judge training during the morning of the tournament. We will also cover an introduction to judging congressional debate. Interested parents and friends should be signed up through Tabroom under Speech Judge Training. Please note that the session will only be held if we have sufficient interest. In addition, please remember that these trainees do not count toward the school's judge requirement for this tournament.

We look forward to seeing you on October 24th!



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GENERAL INFORMATION

Parking at Catholic Memorial - All vehicles will enter the campus via the new one-way entrance on Brother Joseph P. Heeran Way (approximately 100 feet closer to Spring Street). This will lead to the Donahue Hall parking Lot and the Back Parking Lot, next to the Football Stadium.

Coaches/Designated Responsible Adults should report to the registration table to pick up a nametag and to pay entry fees. (If you have to forward payment afterward, you should also stop by to share that information.) Please also see us at the end of the tournament to pick up a commemorative button for each of your participating students!

Unique to This Tournament: Because the purpose of the All-Novice event is entirely educational, students will participate in rounds of friendly competition without awards or recognition of final standings. An exhibition round featuring varsity students demonstrating various events will follow. Rounds will simulate regular competition, but there will be no final round to which students can advance. Novices who compete and their coaches will receive their Tabroom ballot comments after the tournament so that they can review judge feedback as they prepare for future tournaments.

Competitors in **memorized events** (OO, DEC, DP, DUO, INFO) will not be penalized for using manuscripts at this tournament.

The tournament will offer standard MSDL events. If there are six or fewer entries in any event, we may combine it with a similar event. Please visit www.msdlonline.org/competitive-events for descriptions and rules for each event.

Lunch will be available for purchase and served by the Catholic Memorial dining services team.

We ask that all competitors, judges, and coaches abide by standard rules of professionalism and etiquette at all times.



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MSDL Community Standards

The Massachusetts Speech and Debate League fosters a culture of diversity and inclusion.

We affirm and upholds the following values and standards and expects those who take part in our tournaments--as coaches, competitors, judges, observers, chaperones, and drivers--to do the same:

Inclusivity and Equity

We, the MSDL community, welcome people associating with any intersection(s) of identity and uphold that all members of our community deserve respect. We are made stronger by embracing the differences of our members.

Dignity and Safety

We believe that the welfare and dignity of our community members must be protected and preserved. In practice, this means that all community members will be mindful of the impact and consequences of their words and actions. We share responsibility to act with the intention to protect the well-being of others, even when engaging with conflicting ideas and opinions.

Integrity and Honesty

All members of our MSDL community must conduct themselves honorably, and must scrupulously compete within the rules of our events while promoting our community standards.

Collegiality and Fun

We aim to support each other and create camaraderie even while being serious about competition.

Should you have any issues during the tournament, please come to the Tab Room and ask to speak with our equity team.



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Event Specific Information

- **CONGRESSIONAL DEBATE.** Congressional Debate will run separately from the rest of the tournament schedule. The day will begin with a brief exhibition round. Here, the novices will watch varsity competitors demonstrate how a Congressional Debate chamber operates. Then, there will be some instruction followed by a practice round in which the novices will participate. After lunch, there will be a training session on writing legislation.

Legislation for Congressional Debate will be posted on Tabroom approximately one week prior to the tournament. While student-written legislation for the Novice Tournament is not expected, coaches may submit proposals to Joe Bowden, Chair of Congress, at joe.bowden@gmail.com by October 16th for review and potential inclusion in the packet.

- **GROUP DISCUSSION.** The topic area will be: **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** with a focus on data centers, the Hugging Face incident, AI dominance, and the use of AI in schools. The first round will be a tutorial.
- **EXTEMPORANEOUS SPEAKING.** Rounds will focus on these areas: National, International, or Economic news.
- **RADIO.** Copy will come from wire services and/or newspapers.
- **BIG QUESTIONS.**
 - **Resolved: Technological progress has surpassed humanity's ability to use it ethically.**
- **LINCOLN-DOUGLAS.**
 - **Resolved: In a democracy, voting ought to be compulsory.**
- **PUBLIC FORUM**
 - **Resolved: The United States federal government should enact a moratorium on hyperscale data center construction.**



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Judging

Students with two or more years of experience in high school forensics are invited to judge, as are qualified adults. For debate, student judges should have two years of competitive debate experience and have earned at least 200 NSDA points; an adult is qualified if they debated in high school or have judged at a high school debate competition at least once before.

Congressional Debate: Judges will serve for the novice practice round. In addition, they will be “competitors” in the exhibition and assist with instruction.

Debate events: Schools must provide one judge for every two entries, or fraction thereof. New programs that may have difficulty meeting this requirement should contact the Chair of Debate, Josh Cohen, at jcohen1964@gmail.com. **Please note that debate rounds will be double-flighted.** This means that a judge may be assigned to two debates within the same round (e.g., Round 2, Flights A and B). Please remind your judges to pay attention to the flight designation on each assignment, as well as the round start time and room location.

Speech events: Schools must provide one judge for every five entries or fraction thereof. New programs for which this requirement poses a challenge should contact the Chair of Speech (Joyce Albert - jbalbert78@gmail.com).

Judges in all categories should be available to judge all time slots. There will be a \$50 fine for each missing judge. This fee is not to be used in lieu of providing required judges.

*Please note that judging requirements are finalized at the time online registration closes on Wednesday, October 21 at 5:00 pm. **If you have drops after online registration closes, it does not reduce the number of judges you are required to bring.** If you register EXTRA judges, we are going to be depending on them to come. You therefore cannot drop them after the online registration deadline.*



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Registration Information

- **Registration Fees:** The fee is \$10 per student. A Duo Interpretation entry or Public Forum Debate (PFD) team therefore costs \$20.
- **Online Registration:** Registration opens on September 22, 2026, at [Tabroom.com](https://www.tabroom.com). If you have trouble with the online registration system, email Joyce Albert at jbalbert78@gmail.com.
- **Online Registration Deadlines:**
 - **Student entries:** Wednesday, October 21, 2026, at 5:00 PM.
 - **Judges:** Thursday, October 22, 2026, at 5:00 PM.
- All entries and judges must be registered through Tabroom by their respective deadlines.

Drops

- **Until Thursday, October 22, at 5:00 PM:** Coaches may drop entries and judges directly through [Tabroom.com](https://www.tabroom.com).
- **After Thursday at 5:00 PM and until Friday at 8:00 PM:** Email Joyce Albert (jbalbert78@gmail.com) and Josh Cohen (jcohen1964@gmail.com) with any drops. Include (1) your school, (2) the name of each student or judge being dropped, and (3) their event.
- **After Friday at 8:00 PM:** Report any additional drops by texting 508-397-5143 between 7:30 and 8:00 AM on Saturday morning. Include your school name, the names of the affected students or judges, and their events.
- **Reminder:** If you drop a judge after Thursday at 5:00 PM, you must identify a replacement.



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Saturday Morning Check-in before arriving at the tournament

All schools must check in by text between 7:30 and 8:00 AM on Saturday morning. Text **508-397-5143**, even if your school has no changes. We need to hear from every school before we can finalize tournament assignments.

- **If you have no changes:** Text your school name and “No changes”.
- **If you have changes:** Text your school name, the names of the affected students or judges, and their events.
- **If you must drop a judge:** You must identify a replacement.

Be sure to include your school name in your message.

Checking in by 8:00 AM allows us to begin re-paneling rounds, if necessary, and to start the tournament on time. MSDL rules permit a \$25 penalty fee for schools that fail to check in during the designated period.

Saturday Morning In-Person Registration

Between 8:15 and 8:45 AM, the coach or adult in charge of each school should check in at the registration desk in the front lobby. Other members of the school do not need to check in at the desk.

As indicated in the schedule below, there will be separate briefings for judges and competitors before competition begins.



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Tentative Schedule

7:30-8:00	Check-in Texts (see instructions, above)
8:15-8:45	In-person registration (entry fees, coach check-in, and nametag pickup) - Front Lobby
8:30	Speech and Debate Judge briefings
9:00	General Opening Meeting for competitors - Cafeteria
9:15-3:15	Debate Rounds (lunch during free flight)
9:30-2:00	Speech Rounds & Congressional Debate Session
9:30-12:30	Speech Judge Training Session
2:30	Exhibitions and Congressional Debate Bill Writing Session
4:00	Estimated Departure Time

Please note that we will provide a final schedule once registration is complete.