2026-2027
High School Unified Manual

- ☐ **Chapter and Honor Society Guidelines for Speech and Debate Teams**
- ☐ **Tournament Procedures, Event Rules, and Judging Instructions**

Version 2027.1.2

The **National Speech & Debate Association** is the largest interscholastic speech and debate organization serving middle schools and high schools in the United States. The Association provides competitive speech and debate activities, high-quality resources, comprehensive training, scholarship opportunities, and advanced recognition to more than 140,000 students and coaches every year. For nearly 100 years, the National Speech & Debate Association has empowered two million members to become engaged citizens, skilled professionals, and honorable leaders in our society.

OUR MISSION: The National Speech & Debate Association connects, supports, and inspires a diverse community committed to empowering students through speech and debate.

OUR VISION: We envision a world in which every school provides speech and debate programs to foster each student's communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creative skills.

For membership or Honor Society questions not answered here:

- Visit www.speechanddebate.org/faq
- Email the national office at info@speechanddebate.org
- Call the office at (920) 748-6206

Editor's Note: *For quick reference throughout this document, new changes for the current year are highlighted in yellow. Other recent changes made within the past one or two years remain highlighted in gray.*

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SECTION 1: High School Chapter Manual

Honor Society Membership

I. School Membership

A. Standards for School Membership

a. An NSDA membership may be established at any high school, middle school, or virtual school recognized as an accredited public or private school by the state in which those schools compete. Prospective home school participants should reach out to their state speech and debate organizations to determine their eligibility as a school.

B. School Enrollment and Payment

a. Institutions that meet one or more of the criteria in section A are eligible to join or renew their NSDA membership each year by paying annual dues and completing an online renewal with the permission of their administration. Program advisors can visit www.speechanddebate.org and follow these steps to generate their school renewal invoice.

b. An adult contact approved by the school to serve as the advisor (primary contact) must be designated before the school membership can be purchased. If a school is joining for the first time, the advisor will be prompted to create their account and reach out to NSDA staff to help set up the school if necessary.

c. **Fees and Payment:** Annual school membership is $349. A school becomes active upon payment of this fee. Schools may pay online by credit card or remit a check or money order payable to National Speech & Debate Association. Membership invoices must be paid no later than 60 days after the creation of the invoice. Refund requests must be submitted within 72 hours of creating an invoice and are granted on a case-by-case basis.

C. Benefits Access and Eligibility for School Recognition

a. **Resources:** All coaches and students on a paid school's roster can access all NSDA resources.

b. **Degrees:** The National Speech & Debate Association's Honor Society recognizes middle school and high school students and coaches for participation in speech and debate activities. As students earn points for competition and service activities, students and coaches also receive new degrees in the Honor Society. Only coaches and students at paid schools are eligible for Honor Society recognition.

STUDENT AND COACH DEGREE	POINTS	SEAL or BADGE
Member	Less than 25 points	None
Merit	25	
Honor	75	
Excellence	150	
Distinction	250	
Special Distinction	500	
Superior Distinction	750	
Outstanding Distinction	1,000	
Premier Distinction	1,500	
COACH ONLY DEGREE	**POINTS**	**SEAL or BADGE**
Donus D. Roberts Coaching Excellence Award	10,000	
1st Diamond	15,000 and 5 years since Merit	
Additional Diamonds	each 30,000 and 5 years	

c. Access to the NSDA point recording site and instructional resources is immediate upon receipt of payment of school renewal dues.

d. A short time after joining, high schools are assigned to an NSDA district. Districts divide states or regions up into sections for qualifying competitions to the National Speech & Debate Tournament. District assignment, except for online-only schools and some home schools, is based on geographic location.

   i. **District Transfers:** Chapters wishing to transfer to a different district must complete the District Transfer Request Form, available each fall. Requests must be submitted by the school's official NSDA advisor by October 1 to be considered for the current competitive season.

      To be eligible, the requested district must be contiguous (sharing a border with the current district). The request must include a clear and specific reason for transfer, such as geographic, administrative, or school-affiliation considerations. Requests made solely for perceived competitive advantage will not be approved.

      All transfer requests are first reviewed by the national office. If initially approved, both the current and requested District Committees must agree to release and accept the chapter. Transfers take effect during the current competitive season once both committees approve.

      https://www.speechanddebate.org/request-district-transfer/

   ii. **District Creation:** To create a new district, a request must be submitted before April 1. Requests can be initiated by emailing info@speechanddebate.org. If approved, the new district will go into effect the following season. In order to split a district, the current district must have 40 or more chapters for two consecutive years.

e. Schools which join or renew prior to their established local district tournament dates for the year may register eligible students to compete and potentially qualify for the National Tournament, held annually in June.

f. Visit www.speechanddebate.org/school-membership for a full list of membership benefits to which coaches and students at member schools have access.

II. Instructor/Coach Membership

A. Standards for Coach Membership

a. There are two types of instructors at an NSDA school: advisor and coach.

   i. **Advisors** are the main contact for a speech and debate program at a school and serve as the school's account administrator. Advisors manage the team roster, manage payments, and vote on behalf of the school on topics and in elections.

While schools can have multiple advisors, one individual is designated as the **primary advisor** and is listed as such on the school's account page. This individual receives mail on behalf of the school, as well as advisor-specific communications.

ii. **Coaches** are any adult who has an account linked to their school but is not an advisor. Member coaches have access to all the same benefits as advisors, but fewer of the administrative powers.

iii. Advisors may designate specific permissions to other coaches at their school(s). To learn more, review the guide for Member Roles and Account Permissions.

b. Anyone creating an account on the NSDA website, including coaches and advisors, must indicate that they will adhere to the NSDA Code of Honor.

c. Coaches must ensure that all representatives of their team abide by our Expectations of Conduct.

B. Coach Enrollment and Payment

a. **Account Creation (New Member):** Instructors, including advisors, create a new account and follow the prompts to request to be linked to a school. New advisors may be approved at the point of joining or renewing. Midyear (post-renewal) advisor change requests must be accompanied by written approval from the school administration. Non-advisor coaches will be approved by their advisor after requesting linkage to the school. Step-by-step instructions »

b. **Account Creation (Former Student Member)**: An instructor who obtained membership as a student may have all of their points earned as a student transferred to their coaching record. Past competitor accounts can be located by opening the school's Coaches roster, selecting *Add Coach*, choosing *Add Existing Coach,* and searching for the name used while competing as a student or the ID number from the high school student record, then performing a transfer. An instructor who obtained membership as a student prior to 1996 should report that fact to the national office using info@speechanddebate.org for assistance with the points transfer. Step-by-step instructions »

c. **Transfer of Membership:** A coach may transfer from one school to another without loss of points. In the event that the school a coach transfers to is not currently a member, an additional school membership is required. A replacement certificate can be downloaded or purchased online from the NSDA Store if desired. Transfers may be done automatically using the points system or by emailing/calling customer service staff. Step-by-step instructions »

d. **School Affiliation:** Coaches may be linked to more than one school simultaneously and may accrue points at two levels (high school and middle school) simultaneously.

C. Benefits Access and Eligibility for Coach Recognition

a. All coaches on a school roster will have access to the school's online membership resources while the school membership is active.

b. All active coaches on a school roster may earn points during a season. Instructors receive points recorded for the designated students they coach. Multiple coaches on the team roster may earn points for the same student over the course of the year, but only one coach can be designated to receive points for a given student in a competitive event at each tournament. Coach A and Coach B may not both earn or divide the points between them for Student 1's HI points at a tournament.

c. Coaches qualify for advanced degrees like students, but expanded: after reaching 15,000 points and five years of membership since they earned the degree of Merit, the instructor will be entitled to wear a diamond-set Association key or pin; additional diamonds accrue at 30,000, 60,000, 90,000 and each 30,000 points thereafter, and the minimum time for each new diamond is five years as a member coach.

d. Visit the Coach Recognition section for more information and a complete list of coach recognition opportunities.

III. Student Membership

A. Standards for High School Student Membership

a. High school student membership is available to 9th-12th grade students at eligible member schools. Ninth grade students in a junior high school may be elected to membership by the high school they expect to attend and may, if local rules permit, participate as members of the high school squad. Students must compete under the school at which they are enrolled. Exceptions may apply for homeschool students. (Reference Section I A for details).

b. The applicant should have a real interest in speech and debate and should meet the standards of the Code of Honor.

c. All students who become members of the National Speech & Debate Association must affirm the Honor Society's Code of Honor. Member students pledge to uphold the highest standards of humility, equity integrity, respect, leadership, and service.

B. Student Enrollment and Payment

a. **Account Creation:** Like coaches, student members may create accounts at speechanddebate.org/join and ask to be linked to a school. Advisors also have the ability to add students directly to their school roster. Learn how students can create and link an account, as well as how advisors can accept linked account requests in our FAQ.

b. **Name Entry:** The student or coach must take care to enter the student's name, capitalizing appropriate letters, **exactly the way** the student would prefer their name be displayed on official membership and recognition materials.

   i. If a name is entered incorrectly, an advisor may change the name on the NSDA Account.

   ii. A digital membership certificate is available for students via their NSDA Account when they are added to a paid school's roster. The certificate will display the name provided on the student's account exactly as entered. Certificates may be printed on demand by members or physical certificates and/or seals can be ordered from the NSDA Store.

c. Transfer of Membership (Between High Schools): A student may transfer from one high school to another without loss of points. In the event that the school a coach transfers to is not currently a member, an additional school membership is required. A replacement certificate can be downloaded or purchased online from the NSDA Store. Transfers may be done automatically using the points system, or by emailing/calling customer service staff. Step-by-step instructions »

d. **Transfer of Membership (Middle to High School):** A high school student who previously obtained membership as a middle school student may have all of their points earned in middle school transferred. Past competitor accounts can be located by opening the school's Students roster, clicking *Add Student*, *Add Existing Student*, searching for the student's name or ID number from the middle school student record, then performing a transfer. Step-by-step instructions »

C. Benefits Access and Eligibility for Student Recognition

a. All member students on an active school roster will have access to the school's online membership resources.

b. All students on a school roster may earn points during a season. Points are recorded online for student participation in interscholastic contests or qualifying service activities. Once a student has earned 25 merit points (visit the section on Recording Merit Points), the student will earn their Merit degree in the Honor Society.

c. Visit the Student Recognition section for more information about recognition opportunities.

D. Student Induction

a. The national organization prescribes no ritual for the initiation of new members, inasmuch as such procedure might be contrary to local school regulations. In the absence of any school prohibitions, an appropriate ceremony for the induction of new members may be employed.

b. If an induction ceremony is viable at the school, ideas for hosting can be found on the NSDA website.

IV. Districts

A. District Tournament: Each district holds an annual district tournament series, which is the primary method for determining qualifiers to the annual National Speech & Debate Tournament. Schools which join or renew prior to their established local district tournament dates for the year may register eligible students to compete and potentially qualify for the National Tournament, held annually in June.

B. Student Eligibility: Students are district eligible if they are on the roster at a paid high school, they have earned at least the Merit degree, and they have a valid, unique email address on their NSDA account. Visit the District Tournament Operations Manual section for full details on district eligibility.

C. District Placement: A short time after joining, high schools are assigned to an NSDA district. Districts divide states or regions up into sections for qualifying competitions to the National Speech & Debate Tournament. District assignment, except for online-only schools and some home schools, is based on geographic location and/or district size equalization.

Code of Honor

"As a student or coach member of the National Speech & Debate Association, I pledge to uphold the highest standards of humility, equity, integrity, respect, leadership, and service in pursuit of excellence."

Humility: A member does not regard oneself more highly than others. Regardless of a person's level of success, an individual always looks beyond oneself to appreciate the inherent value of others.

Equity: A member shares the responsibility to uphold policies and practices that create conditions of fairness and respect in speech and debate—ensuring consistent access, treatment, and opportunity by reducing barriers and encouraging full participation.

Integrity: A member is honest, ethical, and adheres to the competition and conduct rules of the organization. A member follows the NSDA discrimination and harassment policy and abides by the rules of their schools, tournaments, and localities.

Respect: A member demonstrates civil discourse in their interactions with others. A member maintains and contributes to a safe space and welcoming environment for all**.**

Leadership: A member is aware their words and actions influence others. A member commits to thoughtful and meaningful words and actions that reflect NSDA core values.

Service: A member exercises their talents to provide service to peers, community, and the activity. At all times a member is prepared to work constructively to improve the lives of others.

(Adopted September 23, 2007 | Updated October 2025)

Points and Recognition

I. Recording Merit Points

A. General Guidelines for Earning and Recording Merit Points

a. **Authority to Enter Points:** Points can only be approved by an advisor or coach with designated permissions logged into their NSDA Account. Students may submit points for the advisor or coach with permissions to review and approve. Coaches are responsible for verifying participation in NSDA-approved tournaments and service activities.

b. **Merit Points:** Students earn *merit points* for participating in interscholastic speech and debate contests with two or more schools. If a tournament has middle school competitors, a high school student may only earn points for rounds against middle school competitors if the tournament has at least two high schools competing.

   i. Visit Recording Interscholastic Debates »

   ii. Visit Recording Interscholastic Speech Contests »

c. **Service Points:** Students earn *service points* in non-competitive speaking engagements and other acts of service. Visit Recording Non-Competitive/Service Speaking »

d. **Timing:** Please record points promptly after each event in which points were gained. Debate or speech contest points (merit points) may be recorded any time throughout a student's enrollment in grades 9-12 for speaking activities occurring during those grade levels. Advisors and coaches with permissions are able to enter merit points and service points through their accounts for the current and prior year only; to enter points dated further back, coaches must contact the national office. **Only the advisor of record may submit emails with changes/corrections to records.** Indicate the correct start and end date; separate recording is necessary for Congress, where there is a daily limit of 36 points.

e. **Tournament Location:** Under "Where Held," list the place of each contest. If a school, list the name of the city and the name of the school (e.g., Omaha-North HS). If a college, list the name and city (e.g., Central State Univ.–Edmund).

f. **Middle School Points:** Student members retain their points as they move from middle school to high school.

g. **Transfer Students:** Students transferring from one high school to another may transfer their points if their prior school was also an NSDA member and those points remain attached to the appropriate coach on record at their former school. Once a student has transferred, no additional points earned at their previous school may be added to the student's record.

h. **Deadline for Senior Points Entry:** Points may not be entered for graduated seniors after July 15 of their graduation year.

i. **Independent Entries:** Students may only earn NSDA points only if they compete while representing the school at which they are enrolled.

j. **Autoposting:** Points may be added via autoposting at participating tournaments using Tabroom.com or Speechwire to tabulate, or added manually. See the Points Entry guide for reference.

k. **Asynchronous Merit Points:** Students may earn NSDA merit points for asynchronous online competition. Students may only earn points for competing in one asynchronous competition per day. Tabulation software and the NSDA site will not regulate this; it will be the affirmative duty of coaches to ensure what is posted is in line with this rule.

l. **District and National Tournament Points:** Points earned at the district and national tournaments are automatically posted. Coaches must accept these points for them to appear on the record.

B. Recording Interscholastic Debates

The earlier "General Guidelines" apply to recording points for debates. This section offers additional debate-specific point recording information.

a. Public Forum, Lincoln-Douglas, Policy Debate, Big Questions, and World Schools Debate are recorded in the "Debate" category, and are worth 6 points per win and 3 points per loss or non-decision. **Only one win/loss is recorded *per round***, so for a panel of judges, the prevailing decision is entered.

b. Non-NSDA main debate events, such as Extemporaneous Debate, Mock Trial, Parliamentary Debate, or Spontaneous Argument are recorded in the "Debate" category, and are worth 4 points per win and 2 points per loss or non-decision.

c. Congressional Debate or other assembly speaking is recorded in the "Congress" category. No more than 36 points may be recorded per calendar day. An official scorer must be present. Students earn 1-6 points per speech or per complete hour of presiding (a panel of judge scores must be *averaged*). When a 6-pt. scale is not awarded, use the following conversion table:

8-pt. scale	30-pt. scale	60-100-pt. scale	Pts. to Record
8	28-30	97-100	**6**
6-7	23-27	90-96	**5**
4-5	18-22	84-89	**4**
3	13-17	77-83	**3**
2	8-12	70-76	**2**
1	1-7	60-69	**1**

Tourney Placement	Pts. to Record
1st	**24**
2nd	**23**
3rd	**22**
4th	**21**
5th	**20**
(and so forth)	

d. If an official scorer is present, Model UN team members may earn points according to the "Tourney Placement" chart for Congressional Debate. If no official scorer is present, Model UN participants who are in a leadership position can earn a maximum of 20 points per competition, and Model UN participants who are not in a leadership position can earn a maximum of 15 points per competition.

e. If there is no official scoring, Girls/Boys State participants may earn up to 24 total points (entered as Congress) per competition if they are a candidate for elected public office.

f. If a debate round is canceled or not held due to forfeiture or drawing of a bye, no points are recorded.

g. Wins or losses may not be recorded for debates against non-school entities, such as a civic organization. Public debates held before an audience of such an entity may be recorded under "Service," but cannot also be recorded with a win/loss under "Debate." Visit the section on Recording Non-Competitive/Service Speaking.

h. The International Public Policy Forum (IPPF) debate essay contest is recorded under Debate, either as Policy Debate or Public Forum Debate.

C. Recording Interscholastic Speech Contests

The earlier "General Guidelines" apply to recording points for speech contests. This section offers additional speech-specific point recording information.

a. Public address or interpretive events are recorded by their individual category name. Student ranks, or rank-equivalents (conversion for point totals or alternate systems) are used.

b. Only **one rank or round placing** may be entered for a panel of judges. For elimination rounds prior to a final round, an average of a panel's ranks may be used. For the final round, tournament placement is the rank.

c. NSDA main events may earn 6 points per 1st rank, 5 points per 2nd rank, 4 points per 3rd rank, and 3 points per rank of 4th or below. Those events include Extemporaneous Speaking, Original Oratory, Informative Speaking, and Humorous, Dramatic, Duo, and Program Oral Interpretation.

d. Non-main NSDA events may earn 5 points per 1st rank, 4 points per 2nd rank, 3 points per 3rd rank, 2 points for ranks of 4, and 1 point for ranks of 5 or lower. Use the appropriate category name, or a similar category name as appropriate.

e. Extrapolate what speech categories best match outside contests. For example, The American Legion Oratorical Contest's two speaking events are recorded as Original Oratory and Extemporaneous Speaking. Poetry Out Loud, Slam Poetry, and Spoken-Word Poetry are recorded as Poetry.

f. Use the following table to convert *non-rank* ***ratings*** to ranks for the purpose of online recording:

Non-Rank Round Rating	Grade	Points	Points	Rank to Input
Superior		25	95-100	1
Excellent		24	90-94	2
Good *or* Exceeds Expectations	A	20-23	71-89	3
Fair *or* Meets Expectations	B	15-19	42-70	4
Average *or* Does Not Meet Expectations	C	10-14	10-41	5
		0-9°	0-9°	None

°Severe deficiency, and therefore, not worth any points

D. Recording Non-Competitive/Service Speaking

Service point limits, points, and activities allowed were all modified in 2020.

a. **Limits:** Middle school and high school students can earn up to 20 service points per day and a maximum of 200 service points may be reported per year; service activities can be recorded retroactively for the current and immediate past school years only. *Students may not record points in both contest and service speaking for the same event* (this includes final rounds that may have an audience of more than five people). Advisors or coaches with designated permissions may determine what service activities qualify for service points and enter them for students manually within the following parameters.

b. **Point Value:** Points are entered in increments of one. Each approximate hour of activity should be treated as two points and each half hour treated as one point. Points fall under two categories, speaking (for an audience of 5+ adults) and non-speaking.

c. **Audience:** An audience of at least five people must be present for each service speaking activity. For non-speaking service activities, an audience is not required.

d. **Disallowed Activities:** Students may not record points for service activities done: 1) as part of a classroom requirement; 2) for competitive performances, whether at a summer institute or as part of a contest; or 3) as work, or for financial compensation of any type.

e. **Theatre performances** may be entered as speaking service. Each hour of performance of fraction thereof for an audience of at least five people should be treated as two points.

f. **Examples of Service Activities:**

- Coaching middle or elementary school students prior to a tournament
- Judging a round of middle school competition
- Judging a round of novice competition (Degree of Excellence and above)

- Participating in reader's theatre, one-act, or a choral reading group
- Giving a speech at a political rally
- Volunteering at a homeless shelter
- Doing a demo debate for new students on the team
- Recording an episode for a podcast
- Participating in a panel discussion or public debate
- Volunteering to help at the ballot table at an after school tournament
- Volunteering at a summer camp for middle or elementary school students
- Working at a team fundraiser
- Speaking as part of a religious service

II. Student Recognition

- **Membership Certificates:** A digital membership certificate is available for students when they are added to a paid school's roster. The certificate will display the name provided on the student's account exactly as entered. Certificates may be printed on demand by members or physical certificates and/or seals can be ordered from the NSDA Store.
- **Honor Society Degrees:** Advanced degrees provide constant incentive for further effort. Advisors should record or approve autoposted points earned by members as soon as possible. Doing so will give the school and district the fullest measure of recognition and ensure that students associate their participation and achievement with the subsequent recognition.


NATIONAL SPEECH & DEBATE ASSOCIATION
Certificate of Membership
Dawn Deneece Azbill-Smith
Cedar Park High School

    - Each degree adds a distinctive seal to the member's profile on the NSDA website and their digital membership certificate. Physical seals can also be ordered from the NSDA Store.
- **Speaking and Service Award:** To earn the Speaking and Service Award, students must earn the maximum 200 service points between August 1 and July 31 of the following year. No application process is required. Visit the section on Recording Non-Competitive/Service Points for more information on qualifying activities.
- **All American:** Each year, the Association recognizes the top 25 student point earners in the country. Standards are based on a combination of competitive points and service points, of which no more than 25% of the point total can include service. In order to qualify, a student must have competed once at Nationals. There is no application process for this award; it is determined automatically.
- **Diploma Seals:** Schools wishing to affix Association seals to the diplomas of their graduating members may obtain such seals from the national office. The seals are one inch in size and

designate the degree held by the member. Diploma seals are available for purchase online from the NSDA Store.

- **Student Honor Cords:** Where local rules permit, graduating seniors may wear official Association Silver and Ruby Honor Cords at Graduation ceremonies. The cords may be ordered online from the NSDA Store.
- **Student of the Year:** Schools may nominate graduating seniors as District Student of the Year using the designated form. The nominee must: be an NSDA member in their senior year of high school; demonstrate strong academic standards; actively engage their community through service and action; exhibit dedication to forensics and commitment to values of the Association. Each individual district determines the manner in which nominees are reviewed and selected. Each District Student of the Year who is nominated with the standard form and reported by the district chair before the deadline is eligible for consideration as National Student of the Year, determined through a review process coordinated by the national office.
- **Academic All American:** The Academic All American award recognizes students who have:
  - Earned the degree of Superior Distinction (750 points)
  - Completed at least 5 semesters of high school
  - Demonstrated outstanding character and leadership
  - Earned a GPA of 3.7 on a 4.0 scale (or its equivalent). If the GPA is between 3.5 and 3.7 on a 4.0 scale (or its equivalent), students also must have received an ACT score of 27 or higher, or a New SAT score of 1300 or higher. Weighted GPA scores will not be considered and must be converted before submission.
  - Advisors may apply for the award on behalf of eligible students using the designated form.
- **Student Service Plaques:** Each school may award Association service plaques to students who render service (conducting school affairs, running tournaments, judging, etc.). The 4.5" x 6.5" plaques feature the embossed NFL (National Forensic League, the original name of the NSDA) seal. Plaques may be ordered online from the NSDA Store.
- **Use of Publicity and Media:** Certificates, degrees, keys, and other forms of national recognition may be presented to the members at a school assembly, an awards day program, or other appropriate occasion. Both school and community media outlets should be given the names of the students honored and asked to give brief acknowledgment of the achievements the honor represents.
- **Optional Approaches to Recognizing Students:**
  - **Insignia:** The emblem of our organization is shaped like a key, symbolizing the unlocking of the powers of expression. The shape of the main part of the emblem is octagonal, which symbolizes the many angles from which a question must be studied. The eye symbolizes the light which study will throw upon all questions. The letters "NFL" stand for "National

Forensic League," the original name of the Association. The lamp designates knowledge. Silver is used instead of gold to distinguish the emblem from the collegiate honor keys. Gold insignia are for instructors only. Generations of students have proudly worn our insignia as a tangible sign of their success in mastering the techniques of effective communication. Any member may purchase a key or pin (plain or jeweled) to reflect progress in the Honor Society.

Tip: *Chapters may find it to be simpler, quicker, and cheaper to establish a small "bank" of insignia so members can trade their pins for jeweled pins as they qualify for them. These members release their plain pins for use by new members, who in turn will qualify for jeweled items later.*



Honorary insignia are available as either keys or pins. All items may be ordered either plain or with a designated jewel. To order, visit the NSDA Store.

Degree	Points	Strength	Certificate Seal	Pin Insignia Jewel
Merit	25	1	White	No jewel
Honor	75	2	Bronze	Emerald
Excellence	150	3	Silver on White	Blue Sapphire
Distinction	250	4	Metallic Gold on Gold	Ruby
Special Distinction	500	5	Silver on Pink	Double Ruby
Superior Distinction	750	6	Silver on Blue	Triple Ruby
Outstanding Distinction	1,000	7	Silver on Violet	Quadruple Ruby
Premier Distinction	1,500	8	Silver on Black	Quintuple Ruby

III. Coach Recognition

A. **Honor Society Degrees:** All coaches on a school roster may earn points during a season. Instructors receive points recorded for the designated students they coach. Multiple coaches on the team roster may earn points for the same student over the course of the year, but only one coach can be designated to receive points for a given student in a competitive event at each tournament. Coaches qualify for advanced degrees like students, but expanded: after reaching 15,000 points, the instructor will be entitled to wear a diamond-set Association key or pin; additional diamonds accrue at 30,000, 60,000, 90,000 and each 30,000 points thereafter, and the minimum time for each new diamond after the first is five years as a member coach.

   a. Coaches may also purchase pins and pendants to symbolize their progress in the Honor Society. Coach insignia is gold and can be ordered online from the NSDA Store by searching "insignia."

B. **Don Crabtree Distinguished Service Award**: A special gold key is granted to a coach member for 20 citations and a bronze plaque is given for each additional 50 citations for the following services:

Activity	*Citations Earned*
Recruiting a new school	2
Sponsoring a new school	2
Year as a district chair*	5
Year as member of a District Committee*	3
Year as member of the NSDA Board of Directors*	3
Year as member of the CR Leadership Committee*	5
District tournament tab staff (non-District Committee member)	1
Holding a tournament for 2+ schools	1
Tabbing a tournament for 2+ schools	1
Volunteering at the National Tournament	1
Serving in a tab room at the National Tournament	3
Chairing an event at the National Tournament	3
Serving on the National Tournament host committee	5
Curriculum/educational support for national office	1
Pre-approved speech and debate advocacy events	1
Worked as a Belonging and Inclusion Advocate	1

***NOTE:** Items marked with an asterisk will be automatically entered by NSDA national office staff at the end of each school year.*

To submit citations, coaches should:

1. Log in to their NSDA account on www.speechanddebate.org.
2. On their profile, select *Add* next to *Service Citations*.
3. Choose the appropriate category of service and provide a short description.
4. Select that the submission follows the NSDA Honor Code and then select *Add*.

C. **Hall of Fame:** Individuals with 25 years of coach membership in the National Speech & Debate Association, or who are retired from coaching and teaching, are eligible to be nominated for the Hall of Fame. Existing Hall of Fame members and all coaches with three or more diamonds elect each year's class to the Hall of Fame.

D. **Outstanding Coaching Awards (Nomination-based):** Each NSDA district can nominate coaches for three awards which annually honor high school coaches who exhibit outstanding leadership and commitment to speech and debate activities.

a. The awards are:

i. The James M. Copeland High School Coach of the Year award

ii. The New Coach of the Year award

iii. Assistant Coach of the Year award

b. Nominations for each award are collected using a set of standard forms available via the Coach Recognition page. Each NSDA district sets its own deadlines for the district-level award process, but the reporting deadline for chairs is April 16. These are district-to-national level awards; each district winner who is nominated with the standard forms and reported by the district chair before the deadline is eligible for consideration as the national winner of their award. The national recipient is determined through a review process coordinated by the national office.

IV. School Recognition

A. Charter Status: Charter status is a point of pride for many schools that represents years of work by coaches and students who contributed to the school's status through the degrees they earned. There is no application for this award; it is processed quarterly and awarded to eligible schools. Charter status is awarded once and does not require renewal.

a. To earn charter status, a school must:

b. Currently be a paid member school

c. Have been a member school for a minimum of one prior school year

d. Met the degree requirements in a three-year period:

e. Schools with a 9th-12th grade enrollment of 500 or more students must earn 50 degrees within a three-year period of membership.

f. Schools with 9th-12th grade enrollment of fewer than 500 students must enroll at least 25 degrees within a three-year period.

B. Leading Chapter Award: Each fall, the Association presents a Leading Chapter award to the school that has accumulated the highest total members and degrees in each district.

a. To be eligible in a given year, a school must:

- have at least five years of membership
- add new members and degrees during the award school year
- not have received the award in the prior five years
- be a charter school

- be from a U.S. based and district tournament-eligible district with a minimum of three schools that meet the aforementioned eligibility requirements

b. A tie is broken in favor of the school which enrolled the greater number of new members and degrees during that school year.

c. After winning the award, the school's accumulated total returns to zero and it begins a new record.

d. The standing of each school in the district is made available each Fall.

C. Club Awards: Club awards demonstrate outstanding commitment to teaching students essential life skills—including communication, research, listening, writing, and organization. Every fall, schools are awarded club awards for achieving degrees in the Honor Society. For example, The 100 Club recognizes a school that had a strength of over 100 points. The 200 Club honors a school that earned 200 strength points; and so on. A school's total strength is equal to the top three active coach degrees plus all the active student degrees. There is no application for this award; however, once added to a Club, schools may purchase the Club Award Plaque or Desk Award to recognize their achievement, available online from the NSDA Store.

D. Top 100 Schools: Each fall, the 100 schools with the largest number of new degrees receive the Top 100 Schools designation. There is no application for this award.

E. Honorary Membership: A member school may elect one Honorary member per year. Honorary members must be adults who have contributed in some significant way to the speech program of the local school, but have not earned Association membership as a student or instructor. Honorary memberships may be requested online via the designated form.

F. Administrator of the Year: The Administrator of the Year program recognizes outstanding school administrators who have succeeded in providing high-quality opportunities for students in speech and debate programming, as well as demonstrated exemplary contributions to the profession. Nominations are collected using a standard form. This is a district-to-national level award; each district winner who is nominated with the standard forms and reported by the district chair before the deadline is eligible for consideration as the national winner. Each NSDA district sets its own deadlines for the district-level award process, but the reporting deadline for chairs is April 16. The national recipient is determined through a review process coordinated by the national office.

Local and National Leadership

I. Local Leadership: District Committees

A. **Election:** Each district shall elect a district committee to provide stewardship and leadership to its chapters, conduct the district tournament, and perform other local duties including new member support and advocacy on behalf of the activity. In odd-numbered years, one advisor

at each active high school may cast an online ballot for members of the District Committee from a list of coaches affiliated with current member schools in the district. All active coaches at district schools will appear on the ballot; specific coaches do not identify themselves officially as candidates. The individual who earns the most votes will be designated as the district chair, and will be the Association's main contact for that district. The next four individuals with the most votes also shall be elected to the committee.

B. **Appointment:** After the election, the newly established District Committee may deliberate and, by majority vote, appoint one additional member for the purpose of inclusively representing the current and future community that the district should serve. The appointee will be submitted via the designated form to the NSDA for placement on the committee.

C. **Term:** District Committee members will be elected to serve a two-year term beginning August 1 of the election year and ending July 31, two years later. Appointed members will serve a term simultaneous with their elected term, or the portion thereof remaining at the time of their appointment.

D. **Duties:** District leaders are responsible for conducting the district tournament to determine qualifiers to the National Tournament and determining how district-level recognition honors (Student of the Year, Coach of the Year, etc) will be awarded and reporting the winners. District chairs are also provided as a local contact for coaches and schools new to NSDA membership.

E. **Recognition:** Recognition opportunities are provided for districts and district leaders. Awards vary and are based on chapter strengths, growth, degrees, nationals participation, and the specific contributions of individual district chairs or committee members. Learn more on our website.

F. **Details:** For more specifics on district committee election, terms, and processes, review the NSDA Bylaws.

II. National Leadership: Competition and Rules Leadership Committee

A. **Parameters:** The CR Leadership Committee will consist of a minimum of seventeen individuals, of which at least 75% will be active NSDA member coaches. Two appointed members of the Board of Directors will also serve on the CR Leadership Committee.

B. **Eligibility:** Any member coach with five years of Association coaching experience, who is listed as a member coach of record at a paid member school, may become a candidate for election or appointment to the Competition and Rules (CR) Leadership Committee.

   a. **Candidates seeking election** may submit an application, including a statement of 400 words or less and a high resolution photo, by the designated January date for their election year. Statements will be made available to voters leading up to the election.

      i. In total, eight active NSDA member coaches will be elected to represent eight regions throughout the United States. Representatives must coach at a member school within the region and reside in the region in which they represent. One

advisor per NSDA member school will be eligible to vote within the region assigned to that school to elect that region's representative.

ii. Every two years, an election will be held for half of the regions.

- The first region includes:
  - California Region (all CA)
  - East/Northeast Region (CT, DE, MA, MD, ME, NH, NJ, NY, OH, PA, RI, VT, WV)
  - Northern Midwest Region (IA, IL, IN, KS, MI, MN, WI)
  - Northwest/Northwest Central Region (AK, ID, MT, ND, NE, OR, SD, WA, WY)
- The second region includes:
  - Texas Region (all TX)
  - Southeast Region (FL, GA, KY, NC, SC, VA)
  - Mountain/Southwest Region (AZ, CO, HI, NM, NV, UT)
  - Southern Midwest Region (AL, AR, LA, MO, MS, OK, TN)

b. **Candidates seeking appointment** by the Executive Director may submit an application, including a statement of 400 words or less and a high resolution photo, by the designated January date each year. Appointments will be made as needed on an ongoing basis.

i. At least one coach will be appointed to serve as an international representative.

ii. At least one coach will be appointed to serve as a middle school coach representative.

iii. Additional individuals will be appointed by the Executive Director to fulfill the greatest needs of the committee at the time. There is no cap on the number of individuals the Executive Director can appoint; however, at least 75% of the CR Leadership Committee must remain populated by active NSDA member coaches.

C. **Terms:** All CR Leadership Committee member terms will be three years in length. CR Leadership Committee members will be permitted to be appointed and/or elected to two consecutive terms and then a third term after completing a full-term hiatus.

D. **Duties:** The CR Leadership Committee's scope of influence will include:

a. Assessing student, coach, and school stakeholder needs through personal solicitation and by evaluating surveys and other feedback mechanisms.

b. Evaluating and providing input on NSDA products, services, and programs related to middle and high school speech competition, recognition, and resources.

c. Evaluating and establishing official rules and procedures for NSDA contests.

d. Evaluating other student-centric offerings for educational merit, value alignment, competitive integrity, and diversity, equity, and inclusion.

e. Assessing the NSDA's ability to successfully support diverse approaches to speech and debate programming across regions and state boundaries and in partnership with other national organizations.

f. Interpreting the NSDA to local and regional communities.

E. **Details:** For more specifics on the CR Leadership Committee election, terms, and processes, view the NSDA Bylaws.

III. National Leadership: Board of Directors

A. Parameters: The Board of Directors is a 100% appointed Board of no less than eleven members. The Board will be populated with a minimum of four active NSDA coach members from active NSDA member schools and one current secondary school or school district administrator. The remaining seats on the Board will be appointed based on the greatest needs to meet the mission and vision of the organization. NSDA member coach representatives will never represent less than 30% of Board membership.

B. Selection: A Board-appointed nominations committee will accept nominations for upcoming Board seats between August 1 and January 1 of the year prior to the availability of the vacancy. Self-nominations will be allowed. The nominations committee will vet and interview nominees and bring forward a recommendation of individuals for Board consideration. The full Board will determine all final appointments to the Board of Directors. These appointments will take place at a special selection meeting, which will occur between January and March of any given year.

C. Terms: All Board terms will be three years in length. Board members will be permitted to be appointed to two consecutive terms and then a third term after completing a full-term hiatus. Terms and seats will be staggered as to limit the number of vacant seats in any given year as much as possible. At its discretion, the Board may determine by 2/3 majority vote to extend a term by no more than a year to accommodate for unexpected vacancies resulting in too large of a transition in membership.

D. Duties: The Board of Directors supervises and controls the business, property, and affairs of the Association. The Board conducts its business by establishing officers and roles, ensuring strategic planning takes place, hiring the Executive Director, and setting up standing committees to provide routine oversight as well as strategic input on financial, development, marketing, membership, and operational objectives.

E. Details: For more specifics on the Board of Directors selection, terms, and processes, view the NSDA Bylaws.

SECTION 2: High School Event Rules Manual

The following rules should be interpreted literally and followed exactly. All members are entitled to assurance that points were earned and reported strictly according to the rules. The national office will check all reports critically and strike out incomplete or questionable entries.

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

Main Event Rules

Policy Debate (CX)

1. **Resolution**: The resolution will be one requiring a policy judgment. The current national question will be used. Refer to www.speechanddebate.org/topics for the current topic.
2. **Entries**: An entry is comprised of two students from the same school; each debating both sides of the resolution and advancing on its own record. No substitution is permitted once the tournament has begun. A Policy team with only one debater may not compete. No mavericks are permitted.
3. **Order of Speeches**: Each debater must give one and only one constructive speech, one period of questioning, one period of answering, and one rebuttal speech, in the following order:

Policy Debate Time Limits	
Affirmative Constructive Speech	8 Minutes
Negative Cross Examines Affirmative	3 Minutes
Negative Constructive Speech	8 Minutes
Affirmative Cross Examines Negative	3 Minutes
Affirmative Constructive Speech	8 Minutes
Negative Cross Examines Affirmative	3 Minutes
Negative Constructive Speech	8 Minutes
Affirmative Cross Examines Negative	3 Minutes
Negative Rebuttal	5 Minutes
Affirmative Rebuttal	5 Minutes
Negative Rebuttal	5 Minutes
Affirmative Rebuttal	5 Minutes
Prep Time	8 Minutes per Team

4. **Prompting Philosophy**: Oral prompting, except time signals, either by the speaker's colleague or by any other person while the debater has the floor, is discouraged though not prohibited and may be penalized by some judges. Debaters may, however, refer to their notes and materials and may consult with their teammate while they do not have the floor.
5. **Use of Electronic Devices**: The use of internet-enabled devices and internet is permitted at the National Tournament. The use of internet-enabled devices and internet at the qualifying

tournament will be the autonomous decision of each district. Laptop use must comply with the Guidelines for Use of Internet-Enabled Devices in Debate Events.

6. **Timing**: Judges will determine how time will be kept in the round. Prep time for each team is eight minutes.

Public Forum Debate (PF)

1. **Resolution**: Specific resolutions for district tournaments held during certain months and the National Tournament topic are available online at www.speechanddebate.org/topics. Public Forum Debate focuses on advocacy of a position derived from the issues presented in the resolution, not a prescribed set of burdens.
2. **Entries**: An entry is comprised of two students from the same school; each debating both sides of the resolution and advancing on its own record. No substitution is permitted once the tournament has begun. A Public Forum team with only one debater may not compete. No mavericks are permitted.
3. **Procedure and Order of Speeches**: Prior to EVERY round, a coin is tossed virtually or by one of the teams. The team that wins the flip may choose one of two options: EITHER the SIDE of the topic they wish to defend (pro or con) OR the SPEAKING POSITION they wish to have (begin the debate or end the debate). The remaining option (SIDE OR SPEAKING POSITION) is the choice of the team that loses the flip. Once speaking positions and sides has been determined, the debate begins (the con team may lead, depending on the coin flip results). Following the first two constructive speeches, the two debaters who have just given speeches will stand and participate in a three-minute "crossfire". In "crossfire" both debaters "hold the floor." However, the speaker who spoke first must ask the first question. After that question, either debater may question and/or answer at will. At the conclusion of the summary speeches, all four debaters will remain seated and participate in a three-minute "Grand Crossfire" in which all four debaters are allowed to cross-examine one another. The speaker who gave the first summary speech must ask the first question. The speakers from each team will continue to ask and answer questions. Teams should alternate asking and answering questions rather than allowing one team to dominate so that a balance between teams is achieved. All speakers are encouraged to participate in the Grand Crossfire. Speakers should listen respectfully to opponents' questions and answers.

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

4. **Plans/Counterplans**: In Public Forum Debate, the Association defines a plan or counterplan as a formalized, comprehensive proposal for implementation. Neither the pro or con side is permitted to offer a plan or counterplan; rather, they should offer reasoning to support a position of advocacy. Debaters may offer generalized, practical solutions.
5. **Prompting Philosophy**: Oral prompting, except time signals, either by the speaker's colleague or by any other person while the debater has the floor, is discouraged though not prohibited and may be penalized by some judges. Debaters may, however, refer to their notes and materials and may consult with their teammate while they do not have the floor and during the Grand Crossfire.
6. **Use of Electronic Devices**: The use of internet-enabled devices and internet is permitted at the National Tournament. The use of internet-enabled devices and internet at the qualifying tournament will be the autonomous decision of each district. Laptop use must comply with the Guidelines for Use of Internet-Enabled Devices in Debate Events.
7. **Timing**: Judges will determine how time will be kept in the round. Prep time for each team is three minutes.

Lincoln-Douglas Debate (LD)

1. **Resolution**: The resolution will be one requiring a value judgment. Districts must use the current Lincoln-Douglas topic for the month in which the competition occurs. Refer to www.speechanddebate.org/topics for the current topic.
2. **Entries**: Each contestant will debate both sides. No substitution is permitted once the tournament has begun.
3. **Order of Speeches:**

Lincoln-Douglas Debate Time Limits	
Affirmative Constructive	6 Minutes
Negative Cross Examination	3 Minutes
Negative Constructive	7 Minutes
Affirmative Cross Examination	3 Minutes
Affirmative Rebuttal	4 Minutes
Negative Rebuttal	6 Minutes
Affirmative Rebuttal	3 Minutes
Prep Time	4 Minutes per Debater

4. **Timing:** Judges will determine how time will be kept in the round. Prep time for each debater is four minutes.
5. **Use of Electronic Devices**: The use of internet-enabled devices and internet is permitted at the National Tournament. The use of internet-enabled devices and internet at the qualifying tournament will be the autonomous decision of each district. Laptop use must comply with the Guidelines for Use of Internet-Enabled Devices in Debate Events.

Current Guidelines for Use of Internet-Enabled Devices in Debate Events

These rules apply to Policy Debate, Public Forum Debate, Lincoln-Douglas Debate, Big Questions Debate, and Extemporaneous Debate. **These rules are used at the National Tournament.** These rules are required for any district tournament whose debate events are held online. If a district tournament does not state otherwise, these guidelines will govern their contest. Districts may choose to use the Previous Guidelines for Use of Internet-Enabled Devices in Extemporaneous Speaking provided they notify their district 60 days in advance. The rules regarding use of generative artificial intelligence at the 2027 National Tournament can be found in the National Tournament Operations Manual section.

A. Contestants may use electronic devices (including laptop computers, tablets, and/or cell phones) to access the internet during debate rounds with the following conditions:

1. Computers or other electronic devices may not be used to receive information for competitive advantage from non-competitors (coaches, assistant coaches, other non-competing students) inside or outside of the room in which the competition occurs. Information that would be restricted would include but not be limited to coach/non-participating competitor generated arguments, advice on arguments to run, questions to ask during cross examination, and other information not generated by the participating competitors in your round.
2. Internet access may be used to retrieve files, exchange evidence and/or arguments, research arguments, and partner to partner communication, and communication between other participants in the round. These electronic device guidelines do not limit communication between debate partners during the debate round.

B. **Penalty:** Contestants found to have violated these provisions will be disqualified from the tournament and will forfeit all rounds and merit points in that event.

C. **Availability of Evidence:** Contestants electing to use computers have the responsibility to promptly provide a copy of any evidence read in a speech for inspection by the judge or opponent. Printers may be used. Evidence may be printed in the round or produced electronically but must be provided in a format readable by the opposing team and the judge.

D. Contestants electing to use computers are responsible for providing their own computers, batteries, extension cords, and all other necessary accessories. Tournament hosts will not be responsible for providing computers, printers, software, paper, or extension cords for contestants. Host schools may provide wireless internet access, but will not guarantee that contestants will be able to gain access when needed.

E. Contestants choosing to use laptop computers and/or related devices accept the risk of equipment failure. Judges and/or contest directors will give no special consideration or accommodation, including no additional speech time or prep time, should equipment failure occur.

F. By choosing to use electronic devices in the round, debaters and other relevant parties are consenting to give tournament officials the right to search their devices in the event of a protest. The device may only be searched by tournament officials and must be restricted to files and/or electronic exchanges relevant to the protest. Failure to comply would result in the upholding of the protest. Debaters and coaches should be present as their device is searched. Debaters who do not wish to consent should not use electronic devices in the round.

Previous Guidelines for Use of Internet-Enabled Devices in Debate Events

Below are the previous guidelines for laptop use in debate events. **These rules will no longer be used at the National Tournament**. If the district tournament is held in person, districts may choose to use these guidelines, provided 60 days advance notice is given to the district. If a district tournament does

not state otherwise, the Current Guidelines for Use of Internet-Enabled Devices in Debate Events will govern their contest.

A. Computers equipped with removable wireless cards must have the cards removed before the beginning of any round of competition. It is the responsibility of the contestant to disengage the equipment.

B. Computers with built-in wireless capability may be used only if the wireless capability is disabled. It is the responsibility of the contestant to disable the equipment.

C. Wired connections (Ethernet or phone) during rounds of competition are not permitted.

D. Computers or other electronic devices may not be used to receive information from any source (coaches or assistants included) inside or outside of the room in which the competition occurs. Internet access, use of email, instant messaging, or other means of receiving information from sources inside or outside of the competition room are prohibited. (This does not prohibit non-electronic communication between debate partners during prep time.)

E. **Penalty**: Contestants found to have violated provisions A through C above will forfeit the round of competition and receive zero merit points. Contestants found to have violated provision D (above) will be disqualified from the tournament and will forfeit all rounds and merit points.

F. **Availability of Evidence**: Contestants electing to use computers have the responsibility to promptly provide a copy of any evidence read in a speech for inspection by the judge or opponent. Printers may be used. Evidence may be printed in the round or produced electronically, but must be provided in a format readable by the opposing team and the judge.

G. Contestants electing to use computers are responsible for providing their own computers, batteries, extension cords, and all other necessary accessories. Tournament hosts will not be responsible for providing computers, printers, software, paper, or extension cords for contestants.

H. Because public speaking decorum remains an important element of debate, all debaters are expected to stand at the front of the room facing the judge while speaking.

I. Contestants choosing to use laptop computers and related equipment accept the risk of equipment failure. Judges and/or contest directors will give no special consideration or accommodation, including no additional speech time or prep time, should equipment failure occur.

By choosing to use laptop computers in the round, debaters are consenting to give tournament officials the right to search their files. Debaters who do not wish to consent should not use computers in the round.

Evidence Rules for Policy, Public Forum, Lincoln-Douglas, and Big Questions Debate

Evidence is one of the important components of arguments in debate rounds. All debaters involved are expected to act in an ethical manner that is in accordance with the rules. In keeping with the National

Speech & Debate Association Code of Honor, all participants are expected to use and interpret evidence, evidence rules, and procedures in good faith.

The rules regarding use of generative artificial intelligence at the 2027 National Tournament can be found in the National Tournament Operations Manual section.

7.1. Responsibilities of Contestants Reading Evidence

A. **Evidence defined.** Debaters are responsible for the validity of all evidence they introduce in the debate. Evidence includes, but is not limited to: facts, statistics, or examples attributable to a specific, identifiable, authoritative source used to support a claim. Unattributed ideas are the opinion of the student competitor and are not evidence.

B. **Oral source citation.** In all debate events, contestants are expected to, at a minimum, orally deliver the following when introducing evidence in a debate round: primary author(s)'name (last) and year of publication. **Any other information such as source, author's qualifications, etc., may be given, but is not required.** Should two or more quotations be used from the same source, the author and year must be given orally only for the first piece of evidence from that source. Subsequently, only the author's name is required. Oral citations do not substitute for the written source citation. The full written citation must be provided if requested by an opponent or judge.

C. **Written source citation.** To the extent provided by the original source, a written source citation must include:

1. Full name of primary author and/or editor
2. Publication date
3. Source
4. Title of article
5. Date accessed for digital evidence
6. Full URL, if applicable
7. Author qualifications
8. Page number(s)

D. **Paraphrasing, authoritative source versus general understanding.** If paraphrasing is used in a debate, the debater will be held to the same standard of citation and accuracy as if the entire text of the evidence were read. Paraphrasing may be used to shorten or clarify one specific portion of an original source. It should not be confused with general summary of an entire book, chapter, study, etc., which may only be used for information that is widely considered to be common knowledge. Paraphrasing focuses on a single idea, while summary focuses on a general concept. For example, if a debater references a specific theory by a specific author, the debater must also be able to provide an original source as well as the specific text from the

original source which is being paraphrased. If a debater were to reference social contract theory in general, that would not be an authoritative source that would require citation. However, if the debater references "John Locke's Social Contract," evidence would need to be available.

E. **Ellipses prohibited.** In all debate events, the use of internal ellipsis (…) is prohibited **unless it is a replication of the original document**. Debaters may omit the reading of certain words; however, the text that is verbally omitted must be present in the text of what was read for opposing debaters and/or judges to examine. The portions of the evidence read including where the debater begins and ends must be clearly marked (as outlined in 7.1.G.2.).

F. **Availability of evidence.**

1. In all debate events, for reference, any material (evidence, cases, written citations, etc.) that is presented during the round must be made available to the opponent and/or judge during the round if requested. When requested, the original source or copy of the relevant (as outlined in 7.1.F.2.) pages of evidence read in the round must be available to the opponent in a timely fashion during the round and/or judge at the conclusion of the round.
2. **Original source(s) defined.** Understanding that teams/individuals obtain their evidence in multiple ways, the original source for evidence may include, but is not limited solely to, one of the following:
    a. Accessing the live or displaying a copy of a web page (teams/individuals may access the internet to provide this information if requested).
    b. A copy of the page(s) the evidence is on, the page preceding, and the page following, or the actual printed (book, periodical, pamphlet, etc.) source.
    c. Copies or electronic versions of published handbooks (i.e., Baylor Briefs; Planet Debate, etc.).
    d. Electronic or printed versions or the web page for a debate institute or the NDCA sponsored Open Evidence Project or similar sites.
3. Debaters, even if they have acquired the evidence other than by original research, are responsible for the content and accuracy of all evidence they present and/or read.

G. **Distinguishing between which parts of each piece of evidence are and are not read in a particular round.** In all debate events, debaters must mark their evidence in two ways:

1. Oral delivery of each piece of evidence must be identified by a clear oral pause or by saying phrases such as "quote/unquote" or "mark the card." The use of a phrase is definitive and may be preferable to debaters. Clear, oral pauses are left solely to the discretion of the judge.
2. The written text must be marked to clearly indicate the portions read or paraphrased in the debate. See 7.2.B.3 for the penalty for failing to clearly indicate paraphrased text. In the written text the standard practices of underlining what is read, or highlighting what is read,

and/or minimizing what is unread, is definitive and may be preferable to debaters. The clarity of other means of marking evidence is left to the discretion of the judge.

H. **Private communication prohibited.** Private, personal correspondence or communication between an author and the debater is inadmissible as evidence.

7.2. Definitions of Evidence Violations

A. "Distortion" exists when the textual evidence itself contains added and/or deleted word(s), which significantly alters the conclusion of the author (e.g., **deleting 'not'**; **adding** the word **'not'**). Additionally, failure to bracket added words would be considered distortion of evidence.

B. "Non-existent evidence" means one or more of the following:

1. The debater citing the evidence is unable to provide the original source or copy of the relevant pages when requested by their opponent, judge, or tournament official.
2. The original source provided does not contain the evidence cited.
3. The evidence is paraphrased but lacks an original source to verify the accuracy of the paraphrasing. If a student paraphrases from a book, study, or any other source, the specific lines or section from which the paraphrase is taken must be highlighted or otherwise formatted for identification in the round.
4. The debater is in possession of the original source, but declines to provide it to their opponent upon request in a timely fashion (as outlined in 7.4.C.).

C. "Clipping" occurs when the debater claims to have read the complete text of highlighted and/or underlined evidence when, in fact, the contestant skips or omits portions of evidence.

D. "Straw argument"
A "straw argument" is a position or argumentative claim introduced by an author for the purpose of refuting, discrediting or characterizing it. Reliance on a straw argument occurs in a debate round when a debater asserts incorrectly that the author supports or endorses the straw argument as their own position.

Note: A debater who acknowledges using a "straw argument" when verbally first read in the round, would **not** be misrepresenting evidence. However, if the debater fails to acknowledge the use of a "straw argument" and their opponent questions the use of such an argument, then that debater has committed an evidence violation.

7.3. Procedures for Resolving Evidence Violations

A. Judges are responsible for resolving disputes between debaters regarding oral citations (7.1.B.); written source citations (7.1.C.); distinguishing between what parts of each piece of evidence are and are not read in a particular round (7.1.G.). When the judge(s) have such a dispute in the round, they must make a written note on the ballot or inform the tabulation committee of the

dispute. They must do so particularly if it impacts the decision in the debate. **These decisions may not be appealed.**

B. An appeal can only be made if the issue has been raised in the round with the exception of the issues listed in 7.3.C. Appeals may only be made if judge(s) have misapplied, misinterpreted, or ignored a rule.

C. A formal allegation of violation of the evidence rules is permitted during the round only if the debater(s) allege a violation of 7.2.A. (distortion); 7.2.B. (nonexistent evidence); 7.2.C. (clipping). If a formal allegation of violation of these rules is made during a round, the following procedures must be followed: (see section 7.3.D. for procedures for making a formal allegation after the conclusion of the round):

   1. The team/individual alleging a violation must make a definitive indication that they are formally alleging a violation of an evidence rule.
   2. The team/individual alleging the violation of the evidence must articulate the specific violation as defined in 7.2.A.; 7.2.B. and/or 7.2.C.
   3. The judge should stop the round at that time to examine the evidence from both teams/individuals and render a decision about the credibility of the evidence.
      a. If the judge determines that the allegation is legitimate and an evidence violation has occurred, the team/individual committing the violation will be given the loss in the round. Other sanctions may apply as well as articulated in 7.3.E.
      b. If the judge determines that the allegation is not legitimate and that there is no violation, the team/individual making the challenge will receive the loss in the round.

   Note: Teams/individuals may question the credibility and/or efficacy of the evidence without a formal allegation that requires the round to end. Teams/debaters may make in-round arguments regarding the credibility of evidence without making a formal allegation or violation of these rules. Such informal arguments about the evidence will not automatically end the round, and will be treated by the judge in the same fashion as any other argument.

D. The tabulation committee is authorized to hear: (1) appeals, pursuant to 7.3.B., claiming that a judge ignored, misinterpreted or misapplied rules other than those from which no appeal is permitted pursuant to 7.3.A.; (2) appeals from a judge's decision, pursuant to 7.3.C., on a formal in-round allegation of distortion or non-existent evidence (note: **judge decisions regarding clipping may not be appealed**); and (3) a formal allegation of distortion or nonexistent evidence that is made for the first time after conclusion of the debate.

E. The procedures for making an appeal or post-round formal allegation are as follows:

   1. A coach or school-affiliated adult representative from the school(s) competing in the debate or a judge for the round must notify the tabulation committee of intent to submit an appeal

or formal post-round allegation within 20 minutes of the end of the debate round. The 20-minute time period begins once the last ballot from all rounds (if flighted, both flights) has been collected by the tabulation committee.

2. The coach must submit the post-round formal allegation to the tabulation committee within 10 minutes of the formal notification of the intent to appeal. The allegation must be in writing and articulate the specific evidence violation that is being challenged. The challenged contestant and coach will then be notified.
3. If the tabulation committee determines that the original protest has merit, the coach or school affiliated adult and contestant(s) being challenged will be given 20 minutes to provide evidence denying, or to the contrary of the claim. If such evidence cannot be offered, the challenged debater(s) will be given the loss in the round and may be subject to additional penalties. If the tabulation committee determines that the allegation is not legitimate and that there is no violation, the team/individual making the challenge will receive the loss in the round.
4. The tabulation committee has the discretion of extending the time limits for these actions if circumstances do not allow a coach or school-affiliated adult to be available within the prescribed time limits.

F. The tabulation committee's decision to disqualify a student can be appealed by the coach or school affiliated adult. The following procedure should be followed:

1. The appeal must be submitted in writing to the tabulation committee within 10 minutes of the notification to disqualify.
2. The tabulation committee will then submit the appeal to the national office referee(s). The committee will contact the national office referee once the written appeal has been received. Both sides will be able to provide written explanations and supporting evidence to defend their individual side.
3. A decision will be rendered in a timely manner. The decision of the national office shall be final and cannot be appealed.
4. No more than one round may occur between the round being protested and the decision of the national office referee.
5. If the appeal is successful and the contestant(s) may now continue in the tournament, they will be put into the appropriate bracket for pairing the debates.

G. If appeals are made in rounds in which multiple judges are being used, normal procedures should be followed to ensure each judge reaches their decision as independently as possible. Judges will be instructed not to confer or discuss the charge and/or answer to the potential violation. It will be possible for one judge to determine that an evidence violation has occurred and the other judge(s) to determine no violation has occurred. The tabulation committee will

record the panel's decision in the same fashion as a normal win or loss; the outcome is thus tabulated in the same fashion as a round in which an evidence violation has not occurred. If the majority of the panel finds an evidence violation did not occur, no sanction may be applied to the team/individual charged with the violation. If the majority finds a violation has occurred, the appropriate penalties will be administered.

7.4. Penalties for Evidence Violations

A. If the judge determines that an entry has violated one of the rules listed in 7.3.A. and 7.1.H. (oral citation, written citation, indication of parts of card read or not read, use of private communication), the judge may at their discretion disregard the evidence, diminish the credibility given to the evidence, take the violation into account (solely or partially) in deciding the winner of the debate, or take no action.

B. If a debater(s) commits an evidence violation for “clipping” (7.2.C.), the use of a “straw argument” (7.2.D.), or the use of “ellipses” (7.1.E.), it will result in a loss for the debater(s) committing the evidence violation. The judge should award zero speaker points (if applicable), and indicate the reason for decision on the ballot.

C. If debater(s) commits an evidence violation of “distortion” (7.2.A.) or have used “non-existent evidence” (as defined by 7.2.B.) the offending debater(s) will lose the debate and be disqualified from the tournament. However, if a debater(s) loses a round due to “non-existent evidence” (7.2.B.) violation during an in-round formal allegation, but can produce it after the round within 20 minutes to the tabulation committee, the committee may decide not to disqualify the entry. The loss that was recorded by the judge may not be changed. If a post-round protest is levied against a debater for not providing evidence or an original source in round (non-existent evidence), and the judge confirms they in fact did not provide the evidence in a timely fashion when requested in round, the debater(s) will lose the round and be disqualified from the tournament. However, if a debater(s) produces the evidence within the post-round challenge period, that debater(s) may avoid disqualification.

D. Evidence infractions violate the Code of Honor. Depending on the severity, an offense may result in notification of said offense to the contestant’s high school administration and chapter advisor, loss of all District and/or National Tournament merit points, including trophy and sweepstakes points for the offending student(s), and/or revocation of Association membership. These decisions would be left to the national office, and not the individual District Committee.

7.5. Tournament Adjustments

A. Under no circumstance will a tournament or part of a tournament be re-run because of a violation of these rules.

B. In the case of a disqualification of a debater(s), all ranks and decisions of other debater(s) made prior to the start of the round being protested stand and no revision of past round ranks will take place. Penalties listed in 7.4. will be applied.

C. When a round has been held between the round being protested and a final decision regarding the protest, the result of that round will be recorded as follows:

1. If the protest is upheld, and a debater is disqualified, the opponent of the disqualified debater will receive a forfeit win.
2. If the protest is overruled, and the protesting debater won the protested round, no revision of the result on the ballot will take place.
3. If the protest is overruled, the protesting debater lost the protested round, and had no previous losses, no revision of the result on the ballot will take place.
4. If the protest is overruled, the protesting debater lost the protested round, and had a previous loss, the opponent will receive a forfeit win regardless of the result on the ballot.

Congressional Debate (CD)

1. A **session** is defined as including:
   A. Minimum of three hours.
   B. 18-20 students as the optimum number for a three-hour session; otherwise, a session should be lengthened by ten minutes per each additional student beyond 20. Chambers may not be larger than 30 students.
   C. Election of a presiding officer. The presiding officer must be elected with a majority of the vote. If one candidate does not receive a majority of votes, eliminate the candidate with the fewest votes and vote again. If candidates are tied for the fewest number of votes, vote to determine which of the tied candidates should remain in contention. Repeat this process until one candidate receives a majority of votes.
   D. New seating chart (necessary accommodations for students with special needs may be made).
   E. Resetting of precedence/recency. See 'Recognizing Speakers' below.
   F. New legislation that has not been debated in a previous session at that tournament.
   G. Optional rule for districts: Time for debate per legislation item should last no more than one-third of a session's floor time. It will not be used at the National Tournament.
2. **Recognizing Speakers**
   A. When more than one speaker seeks the floor, the presiding officer must follow the precedence/recency method:
      1. First recognize students who have not spoken during the session.
      2. Next recognize students who have spoken fewer times.
      3. Then recognize students who spoke earlier (least recently).
   B. If a tournament is not using preset recency, before recency is established, the presiding officer should recognize speakers fairly and consistently. They may not link recognition of speakers to previous recognition of students asking questions, moving motions, or longest standing (standing time). Before precedence is established, the presiding officer should explain their recognition process and it must be fair, consistent and justifiable.
   C. Preset, randomized recency will be used in every round of Congressional Debate at the National Tournament. All district tournaments must use preset, randomized recency in Congressional Debate.
   D. During any session, precedence/recency should not reset, to ensure that all students in a chamber have an equal opportunity to speak and receive evaluation from scorers. When a new session begins, precedence/recency will be reset along with a new seating chart, and election of a presiding officer.

E. Scorers will include answers to questions when evaluating speeches.

F. A speaker may yield time on the floor during debate (for questions or clarifications) but that speaker will remain in control of their three minutes (see #6 below regarding questioning).

3. **Speeches introducing legislation** are allotted up to three minutes, followed by two minutes of questioning by other delegates. A student from the school (or at the national level, the district) who wrote the legislation gets the privilege of recognition (called *authorship)*, regardless of precedence; otherwise the presiding officer may recognize a "sponsor" from the chamber, provided this recognition follows the precedence guidelines above. Regardless, this speech of introduction must be followed by two minutes of questions. Should no student seek recognition for the authorship/sponsorship, the chamber will move to lay the legislation on the table until such time that a student is prepared to introduce it.
4. **The first negative speech** must be followed by two minutes of questions.
5. **Following the first two speeches** on legislation, the presiding officer will alternately recognize affirmative and negative speakers, who will address the chamber for up to three minutes, followed by one minute of questioning by other delegates. If no one wishes to oppose the preceding speaker, the presiding officer may recognize a speaker upholding the same side. When no one seeks the floor for debate, the presiding officer may ask the chamber if they are "ready for the question," at which point, if there is no objection, voting may commence on the legislation itself. There is no "minimum cycle" rule; however, if debate gets "one-sided," the chamber may decide to move the previous question.

   A. In the event a student speaks on the wrong side called for by the presiding officer and the error is not caught, the speaker shall be scored and the speech shall count in precedence, but the speaker must be penalized at least three points for not paying close attention to the flow of debate.

   B. In the event a student speaks on an item of legislation *not currently* being debated, said speech shall count in precedence, but zero points shall be awarded.

6. **The presiding officer fairly and equitably recognizes members to ask questions** following each speech. The presiding officer starts timing questioning periods when they have recognized the first questioner, and keeps the clock running continuously until the time has lapsed. There are two different questioning methods.

   A. **Traditional questioning:** Speakers are encouraged to ask brief questions, and may only ask one question at a time. Two-part/multiple-part questions are not allowed. There is no formal "permission to preface," however; presiding officers should discourage students from making statements as part of questioning, since that is an abusive use of the limited time available.

B. **Direct questioning:** The presiding officer will open the floor for questions following each speech. The presiding officer will recognize questioners for a cross-examination period of no more than 30 seconds. Questioners will be chosen according to a separate questioning recency.

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

7. The presiding officer will pause briefly between speeches to recognize any motions from the floor; however, they should not call for motions (at the beginning of a session, the presiding officer should remind members to seek their attention between speeches).
8. **Amendments** must be presented to the presiding officer in writing with specific references to lines and clauses that change. This must be done in advance of moving to amend.
   A. The parliamentarian will recommend whether the amendment is "germane"—that is, it upholds the original intent of the legislation—otherwise, it is considered "dilatory." The title of the legislation may be changed.
   B. A legislator may move to amend between floor speeches. Once that motion is made, the presiding officer will read the proposed amendment aloud and call for a second by one-third of those members present, unless they rule it dilatory.
   C. Should students wish to speak on the proposed amendment, the presiding officer will recognize them as per the standing precedence and recency, and the speech will be counted toward their totals, accordingly.
   D. Simply proposing an amendment does not guarantee an "author/sponsor" speech, and any speeches on amendments are followed by the normal one minute of questioning.
   E. Amendments are considered neutral and do not constitute an affirmative or negative speech on the original legislation.
   F. If there are no speakers or the previous question is moved, the chamber may vote on a proposed amendment without debating it.
9. **All major voting** (such as the main motion/legislation) which a congressperson's constituents should have a record of, shall be done with a counted vote. Secret balloting is used when voting for presiding officer.
10. Students should ask permission to leave and enter the chamber when it is in session (move a personal privilege). However, do not interrupt a speaker who is addressing the chamber.
11. **Use of Evidence (also see the section on Congressional Debate Evidence Rules)**
    A. Visual aids are permitted in Congressional Debate, provided they do not require electronic retrieval devices in the chamber.

B. All evidence used is subject to verification. Honesty and integrity are of utmost importance in legislative debate. Falsification or deliberate misuse of evidence may result in the legislator being suspended by tournament officials.

12. Since the rules above ensure fairness for competition, they may not be suspended; the presiding officer should rule such motions out of order; except to extend questioning and allow for open chambers provided the tournament staff permits doing so.

Current Guidelines for Use of Internet-Enabled Devices in Congressional Debate

These rules will be used at the National Tournament. These rules are required for any district tournament whose Congressional Debate events are held online. If a district tournament does not state otherwise, these guidelines will govern their contest. If a district holds their Congressional Debate qualifying events in person, they may choose to use the Previous Guidelines for Use of Internet-Enabled Devices in Debate Events provided the decision is announced 60 days in advance of the event.

The use of internet enabled electronic devices is permitted. Students may not use the internet to gain help from coaches, other students, or any person, such that it would prevent the speech from being the original work of the competitor. Electronic device use must comply with the "Current Guidelines for Use of Internet-Enabled Devices in Debate Events."

The rules regarding use of generative artificial intelligence at the 2027 National Tournament can be found in the National Tournament Operations Manual section.

Previous Guidelines for Use of Internet-Enabled Devices in Congressional Debate

These rules will no longer be used at the National Tournament. If the district tournament is held in person, districts may choose to use these guidelines, provided 60 days advance notice is given to the district. If a district tournament does not state otherwise, the Current Guidelines for Use of Internet-Enabled Devices in Congressional Debate will govern their contest.

Congressional Debate Legislation Guidelines

Most legislation should have a national/domestic focus that the U.S. Congress would have *jurisdiction* over, taking the form of a **bill**. A bill establishes details behind *how* a particular law must work, including when it takes effect, how much tax levy would be appropriated (if applicable), how infractions/violations will be dealt with, etc. A bill may answer the who, what, when, where—and most specifically how—but it will never answer "why. "Legislators explain rationale behind bills in their speeches, and how a bill implements its solution can spark deeper, more meaningful debate.

Students should consider what the U.S. Congress has jurisdiction over. Since the Executive Branch runs most of the agencies that enforce federal laws, understanding those helps; for more information, visit www.usa.gov/Agencies/Federal/ Executive.shtml. While foreign affairs often fall under the jurisdiction of the Executive Branch, funding efforts such as USAID can have an impact on the success or failure of United States involvement in other countries, and therefore, can be framed as a bill. Inspiration for legislative ideas can be found at thomas.loc.gov.

Writing an effective **bill** involves more time and research than researching one written by someone else. Students must ask themselves what the legislation does, who is involved (government agencies), where it happens, when it is feasible to take place and how much time is needed for implementation, and how it should be carried out (a plan of action). All of these questions must be answered in writing the sections of the bill, with thoughtful consideration as to how thoroughly each section explains its plank of implementing the overall bill's plan of action.

A Bill to Establish a Specific Policy

BE IT ENACTED BY THIS CONGRESS THAT:

SECTION 1. State the new policy in a brief declarative sentence, or in as few sentences as possible.

SECTION 2. Define any ambiguous terms inherent in the first section.

SECTION 3. Name the government agency that will oversee the enforcement of the bill along with the specific enforcement mechanism.

SECTION 4. Indicate the implementation date/timeframe.

SECTION 5. State that all other laws that are in conflict with this new policy shall hereby be declared null and void.

Introduced by Name of School

Resolutions are simply position statements on issues Congress does not have jurisdiction over (such as a foreign issue, although a bill can suggest foreign aid), or further action (such as amending the Constitution). Resolutions lack the force of law, and never establish enforcement.

A Resolution to Urge Further Action on a Specific Issue

WHEREAS, State the current problem (this needs to be accomplished in one brief sentence); and

WHEREAS, Describe the scope of the problem cited in the first whereas clause (this clause needs to flow logically from the first); and

WHEREAS, Explain the impact and harms allowed by the current problem (once again, the clause needs to flow in a logical sequence); now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By this Congress that: state your recommendation for addressing the problem (this resolution should be a clear call for action); and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That (an *optional* additional recommendation; if not used, end the previous clause with a period).

Introduced by Name of School

Appropriate **topics** exhibit seriousness of purpose. The action proposed should be feasible, and such that the actual United States Congress might debate it. Topics should be debatable, meaning substantive argumentation exists on both sides. Legislation should be typed and double-spaced with line numbers, ***not exceeding one page***. Capitalizing the words "WHEREAS" and "RESOLVED" in resolutions, and "SECTION" in bills, as well as inverse-indenting each clause or section helps to distinguish between ideas and concepts.

The samples above show proper formatting. In the resolution, note the semicolon, and how it precedes the word "and" at the end of each "whereas" clause, and the phrase "now, therefore, be it" at the end of the last "whereas" clause.

Note: Legislation that is submitted for consideration at the district and/or national tournament may be rejected if serious issues exist with the adherence to these guidelines.

Templates for bills, resolutions, and resolutions to amend the Constitution are available online at www.speechanddebate.org/legislation-templates/.

Congressional Debate Evidence Rules

7.1. Responsibilities of Contestants Reading Evidence in Congressional Debate

A. **Evidence defined.** Debaters are responsible for the validity of all evidence they introduce in the debate. Evidence includes, but is not limited to: facts, statistics, or examples attributable to a specific, identifiable, authoritative source used to support a claim. Unattributed ideas are the opinion of the student competitor and are not evidence.

B. **Oral source citation.** In all debate events, contestants are expected to, at a minimum, orally deliver the following when introducing evidence in a debate round: primary author(s)'name (last) and year of publication. **Any other information such as source, author's qualifications, etc., may be given, but is not required.** Should two or more quotations be used from the same source, the author and year must be given orally only for the first piece of evidence from that source. Subsequently, only the author's name is required. Oral citations do not substitute for the written source citation. The full written citation must be provided if requested by an opponent or judge.

C. **Written source citation.** To the extent provided by the original source, a written source citation must include:

1. Full name of primary author and/or editor
2. Publication date
3. Source
4. Title of article
5. Date accessed for digital evidence
6. Full URL, if applicable
7. Author qualifications
8. Page number(s)

D. **Paraphrasing, authoritative source versus general understanding.** If paraphrasing is used in a debate, the debater will be held to the same standard of citation and accuracy as if the entire text of the evidence were read. For example, if a debater references a specific theory by a specific author, the debater must also be able to provide an original source. If a debater were to reference social contract theory in general, that would not be an authoritative source that would require citation. However, if the debater references "John Locke's Social Contract," evidence would need to be available.

E. **Ellipses prohibited.** In all debate events, the use of internal ellipsis (…) is prohibited **unless it is a replication of the original document**. Debaters may omit the reading of certain words; however, the text that is verbally omitted must be present in the text of what was read for

opposing debaters and/or judges to examine. The portions of the evidence read including where the debater begins and ends must be clearly marked (as outlined in 7.1.G.2.).

F. **Availability of original source.**

1. When challenged, the original source or copy of the relevant (as outlined in 7.1.F.2.) pages of evidence read in round must be available to the student making the challenge within two speeches. In all debate events, for reference, any evidence that is presented during the round must be made available to the opponent during the round if requested.
2. **Original source(s) defined.** Understanding that teams/individuals obtain their evidence in multiple ways, the original source for evidence may include, but is not limited solely to, one of the following:
    a. Accessing the live or displaying a copy of a web page (teams/individuals may access the internet to provide this information if requested).
    b. A copy of the page(s) the evidence is on, the page preceding, and the page following, or the actual printed (book, periodical, pamphlet, etc.) source.
    c. Copies or electronic versions of published handbooks (i.e., Baylor Briefs; Planet Debate, etc.).
    d. Electronic or printed versions or the web page for a debate institute or the NDCA sponsored Open Evidence Project or similar sites.
3. Debaters, even if they have acquired the evidence other than by original research, are still responsible for the content and accuracy of the evidence they present and/or read.

G. **Distinguishing between which parts of each piece of evidence are and are not read in a particular round.** In all debate events, debaters must mark their evidence in two ways:

1. Oral delivery of each piece of evidence must be identified by a clear oral pause or by saying phrases such as “quote/unquote” or “mark the card.” The use of a phrase is definitive and may be preferable to debaters. Clear, oral pauses are left solely to the discretion of the judge(s) and parliamentarian.
2. The written text must be marked to clearly indicate the portions read in the debate. In the written text the standard practices of underlining what is read, or highlighting what is read, and/or minimizing what is unread, is definitive and may be preferable to debaters. The clarity of other means of marking evidence is left to the discretion of the judge.

H. **Private communication prohibited.** Private, personal correspondence or communication between an author and the debater is inadmissible as evidence.

7.2. Definitions of Evidence Violations in Congressional Debate

A. “Distortion” exists when the textual evidence itself contains added and/or deleted word(s), which significantly alters the conclusion of the author (e.g., **deleting ‘not’**; **adding** the word **‘not’**). Additionally, failure to bracket added words would be considered distortion of evidence.

B. “Non-existent evidence” means one or more of the following:

1. The debater citing the evidence is unable to provide the original source or copy of the relevant pages when requested by their opponent, judge, or tournament official.
2. The original source provided does not contain the evidence cited.
3. The evidence is paraphrased but lacks an original source to verify the accuracy of the paraphrasing.
4. The debater is in possession of the original source, but declines to provide it to a student who challenges, the chair, or the parliamentarian upon request.

C. “Clipping” occurs when the debater claims to have read the complete text of highlighted and/or underlined evidence when, in fact, the contestant skips or omits portions of evidence.

D. “Straw argument”

A “straw argument” is a position or argumentative claim introduced by an author for the purpose of refuting, discrediting or characterizing it. Reliance on a straw argument occurs in a debate round when a debater asserts incorrectly that the author supports or endorses the straw argument as their own position.

Note: A debater who acknowledges using a “straw argument” when verbally first read in the round, would **not** be misrepresenting evidence. However, if the debater fails to acknowledge the use of a “straw argument” and their opponent questions the use of such an argument, then that debater has committed an evidence violation.

7.3. Procedures for Raising Evidence Questions During a Congressional Debate Session

The procedures for making an In-round evidence question are as follows:

A. Congressional Debate entries must rise to a point of information after a speech to formally request a copy of the evidence cited, the citation, or the original source of evidence. When requested during the point of information, the presiding officer will instruct the debater being challenged to produce the copy of the evidence, citation, or original source. The debater being challenged must produce the requested materials in a timely fashion. Should a debater feel they are not receiving the information they requested in a timely fashion, they may rise to another point of information for the presiding officer and parliamentarian to address the situation.

B. Debaters who request the information may receive the evidence from the presiding officer within a period of two speeches. The round would not be put on hold for the request to be completed. For example, if a debater rises to a point of order after speech #4, then by the conclusion of speech #6, the requested evidence should be presented to the presiding officer.

C. If after reviewing the evidence in question, a debater feels that an evidence violation has occurred, they may submit a formal allegation by completing an evidence challenge form (see Appendix) and, after making a motion to approach the chair, the debater will present the form to the presiding officer and parliamentarian.

7.4. Penalties for Resolving Evidence Violations During Congressional Debate

A. All evidence challenges must occur during the session of Congressional Debate where an alleged violation took place, and should happen before a vote on the pending legislation. If the concern arises during the last cycle of speeches, the parliamentarian may grant a challenge after the vote, prior to the first speech on a new piece of legislation.

B. Parliamentarians are responsible for resolving disputes between debaters regarding oral citations (7.1.B.); and written source citations (7.1.C.). When the parliamentarian has such a dispute in the round, the parliamentarian must submit the protest form to the tabulation committee. All protest forms will be submitted to the tabulation committee.

1. The parliamentarian will determine the legitimacy of the challenge, and if the parliamentarian considers the request justified, the debater making the allegation will move a point of order to address the allegation to the chamber.
2. The debater being challenged will be recognized by the presiding officer for a response to the evidence violation.
3. The parliamentarian will evaluate the legitimacy and severity of the charge and make a recommendation to the presiding officer for action. The recommendation may be charged against either student involved in the dispute. Depending upon the severity of the offense, the parliamentarian may opt to censure the debater(s). Refer to section 7.5. for an outline of the severity of offenses and corresponding actions.
4. The presiding officer will announce the parliamentarian's decision and recognize either/both debaters for consequent action.

C. Procedures for Appealing the Parliamentarian's Decision

1. An appeal can only be made if the issue-in-question has been raised, by a student, in the round. Appeals may only be made if the parliamentarian has misapplied, misinterpreted, or ignored a rule.
2. A coach or school-affiliated adult representative must notify the tabulation committee of intent to submit an appeal of the parliamentarian's ruling within 20 minutes of the end of session as recorded by the Parliamentarian for that chamber.
    a. The coach must submit the post-round appeal to the tabulation committee within 10 minutes of the formal notification of the intent to appeal. The allegation must be in writing and articulate the specific evidence violation and ruling that is being challenged.

b. If the tabulation committee determines the appeal has merit, both parties involved in the original dispute will be given 20 minutes to respond.

c. The tabulation committee will make a decision and has the discretion of extending the time limits for these actions if circumstances do not allow a coach or school-affiliated adult to be available within the prescribed time limits.

3. At the district tournament level, the tabulation committee's decision to disqualify a student's rankings for that session can be appealed by the coach or school- affiliated adult. The following procedure should be followed:

a. The appeal must be submitted in writing to the tabulation committee within 10 minutes of the notification to disqualify.

b. The tabulation committee will then submit the appeal to the national office representative(s). The committee will contact the national office representative once the written appeal has been received. Both sides will be able to provide written explanations and supporting evidence to defend their individual side.

c. A decision will be rendered in a timely manner. The decision of the national office representative shall be final and cannot be appealed.

d. No elimination session may occur before a ruling is made by the national office.

e. If the appeal is successful, any student(s) involved will receive the appropriate rank as if the evidence challenge was never called into question.

f. At the National Tournament, the appeal will go directly to the Rules Protest Panel, and accepted procedures and practices will be followed.

7.5. Penalties for Evidence Violations in Congressional Debate

A. If the parliamentarian determines that an entry has violated one of the rules listed in 7.1(A-D, F-H) (oral citation, written citation, indication of parts of card read or not read, use of private communication), the parliamentarian must notify the judge(s) of the violation. The judge(s) and parliamentarian may at their discretion disregard the evidence, diminish the credibility given to the evidence, take the violation into account (solely or partially) in the ranking of chamber participants, or take no action. These offenses are considered minor and a parliamentarian sanction is the only prescribed penalty.

B. If a debater(s) commits an evidence violation of "distortion" (7.2.A.), uses "nonexistent evidence" (7.2.B.), uses a "straw argument" (7.2.C.) or the use of "ellipses" (7.1.E.) such action will result in the debater(s) committing the evidence violation not being ranked by the judge(s) and parliamentarian. These offenses are considered major and censure by the parliamentarian would be applied.

C. Evidence infractions violate the Code of Honor. Depending on the severity, an offense may result in the notification of said offense to the contestant's high school administration and chapter

advisor, loss of all District and/or National Tournament merit points, including trophy and sweepstakes points for the offending student(s), and/or revocation of Association membership. These decisions would be left to the NSDA national office, and not the individual tabulation committee.

7.6. Tournament Adjustments in Congressional Debate

A. Under no circumstance will a tournament or part of a tournament be re-run because of a violation of these rules.

B. In the case of censure, all ranks and decisions made prior to the start of the round being protested stand and no revision of past session ranks will take place. Penalties listed in 7.4. will be applied.

C. When a session has been held between the session being appealed and a final decision regarding the protest, the result of that session will be recorded as follows:

1. If the protest is upheld, all ranks and scores will remain as recorded. The evidence violation would apply only to the session in which it occurred and not affect prior or subsequent sessions.
2. If the appeal is upheld, the judge and/or parliamentarian will restore any ranks and scores that were earned by that debater.

Original Oratory (OO)

1. **Purpose:** The general purpose of the speech is to persuade. Any other purpose such as to inform or entertain shall be secondary.
2. **Contest:** This contest comprises only memorized orations actually composed by the contestants and not used by them during a previous contest season. No visual aids are permitted.
3. **Subject:** Any appropriate subject may be used, but the orator must be truthful. Any non-factual reference, especially a personal one, must be so identified.
4. **Length:** The time limit in Original Oratory is ten minutes with a 30-second “grace period.” If there are multiple judges in the round, all must agree that the student has gone beyond the grace period. Should a student go beyond the grace period, the student may not be ranked 1st. There is no other prescribed penalty for going over the grace period. The ranking is up to each individual judge’s discretion. Judges who choose to time are to use accurate (stopwatch function) timing devices. No minimum time is mandated.
5. **Quotation:** Not more than 150 words of the oration may be direct quotation from any other speech or writing and such quotations must be identified in a printed copy of the oration supplied prior to registration. Extensive paraphrasing from other sources is prohibited.
6. **Script:** The orator's script must identify the 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. It is the responsibility of the contestant to have a script ready upon request should the speech be challenged. At the National Tournament, all quarterfinalists in OO are required to turn in a printed, typed copy of their manuscript, including a works cited page, to the tournament official before noon on the third day of competition.

7. **Re-Use:** A student may not use an oration the student used in district or national competition in any previous contest year.

Informative Speaking (INF)

1. **Purpose:** An informative speech is an original speech designed to explain, define, describe, or illustrate a particular subject. The general purpose of the speech is for the audience to gain understanding and/or knowledge of a topic. Any other purpose such as to entertain or to convince shall be secondary. The use of audio/visual aids is optional. (See # 4 on Aids.)
2. **Contest:** This contest comprises only memorized speeches composed by the contestants and not used by them during a previous contest season.
3. **Subject:** Effective speeches provide new information or perspectives on a topic, including those that are widely known. The responsibility for choosing a worthwhile topic rests with the contestant. A fabricated topic may not be used. Any non-factual reference, including a personal reference, must be so identified.
4. **Aids:** Audio/visual aids may or may not be used to supplement and reinforce the message. If used, the audio/visual aids should enhance or support the message rather than distract from the overall effectiveness of the presentation. During the presentation, no electronic equipment is permitted. Electronic equipment is defined as any object requiring an electrical cord, battery, or solar power to operate it (projectors, cell phones, radios, iPads, computers, etc.). The use of live animals or any additional people as visual aids is not allowed during the speech. Items of dress put on and/or removed for illustration during the course of the presentation are considered costumes and may not be part of the contestant's presentation. Visual aids may not violate policies as dictated by local and state law (weapons, drugs, etc.) Contestants may not distribute items to the judges or audience before, during, or after the round. This includes but is not limited to food, objects, handouts, flyers, and promotional merchandise. The host school is not responsible for providing any facilities, equipment, including tables, chairs, or easels, or assistance in a contestant's use of visual aids. In order to facilitate the video recording of the final round at the National Tournament, one table will be provided for use by the contestants. This provision is only for the final round. Expedient set up and take down of aids is expected. If a visual aid displays published pictorial material, the source must be included in the work-cited page but does not need to be cited orally.
5. **Length:** The time limit is 10 minutes with a 30-second "grace period." If there are multiple judges in

the round, all must agree that the student has gone beyond the grace period. Should a student go beyond the grace period, the student may not be ranked 1st. There is no other prescribed penalty for going over the grace period. The ranking is up to each individual judge's discretion. Judges who choose to time are to use accurate (stopwatch function) timing devices. No minimum time is mandated.

6. **Quotation:** Not more than 150 words of the speech may be direct quotation and such quotations must be identified orally and in a printed copy of the speech supplied prior to registration.
7. **Script:** 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 the quoted materials, state the number of quoted words, include a work-cited page in APA or MLA format, and both the speaker and the coach must attest by signature that the speech is the original work of the contestant. At the National Tournament, all competitors are required to turn in a typed copy of their manuscript, including a works cited page, during the online registration process.
8. **Re-Use:** A student may not use an informative speech the student used in district or national competition in any previous contest year.

Program Oral Interpretation (POI)

1. **Purpose:** POI is a program of oral interpretation of thematically-linked selections chosen from two or three genres: prose, poetry, drama (plays). At least two pieces of literature that represent at least two separate genres must be used. Unlike the other interpretation events, Program Oral Interpretation may use multiple sources for the program. The title or author of all selections must be verbally identified in either the introduction and/or transitional phrases. The title may identify the primary source (e.g., book, anthology, journal, magazine, newspaper, approved website, etc.) or the specific title within the primary source (e.g., a poem, a play, a short story, a journal/magazine article, a newspaper article, etc.). If more than one author is attributed to the source, at a minimum, the primary author should be verbally cited. A Works Cited of all sources must be available to tournament officials upon request. Competitors are encouraged to devote approximately equal times to each of the genres used in the program. This distinction pertains to these two or three genres as a whole, not types of literature within a genre (such as fiction/nonfiction). Prose expresses thought through language recorded in sentences and paragraphs: fiction (short stories, novels) and non-fiction (articles, essays, journals, biographies). Poetry is writing which expresses ideas, experience, or emotion through the creative arrangement of words according to their sound, their rhythm, their meaning. Poetry may rely on verse and stanza form.
2. **Contest:** The use of a manuscript during the performance is required. Common practices include the use of a binder or folder. The student will have the full text of their manuscript in the binder or

folder. Reading from a book or magazine is not permitted. The intact manuscript may be used by the contestant as a prop, so long as it is in the contestant's control by remaining in contact with the body at all times. No costumes or props other than the manuscript are permitted. Pictures, graphics, and/or illustrations are considered a visual aid, even if included in the original manuscript, and may not be displayed. Intentionally displaying words in the manuscript is considered using a visual aid and is not permitted. The contestant must address the script; however, introduction and transitional material may be memorized.

3. **Length:** The time limit is 10 minutes with a 30-second "grace period." If there are multiple judges in the round, all must agree that the student has gone beyond the grace period. Should a student go beyond the grace period, the student may not be ranked 1st. There is no other prescribed penalty for going over the grace period. The ranking is up to each individual judge's discretion. Judges who choose to time are to use accurate (stopwatch function) timing devices. No minimum time is mandated.
4. **Publication Rules:** All literature performed must meet the publication rules of the Association.
5. **Adaptations** to material may only be used for the purpose of transition. Any word changes (to eliminate profane language) and/or additions (for transition) must be indicated clearly in ink. Failure to clearly indicate the addition of words will be subject to disqualification. Changes to the script may only be used for the purpose of transition or to eliminate profane language. The voice of a script may not be changed. For example, changing "She moved to California when she was 13" to "I moved to California when I was 13" is not permitted. Combining small fractions of sentences or singular words to create humorous or dramatic dialogue, scenes, moments, and/or plot lines not intended in the original literature is prohibited. For example, it is not permitted to take one word from page 13 (e.g. home), a phrase from page 211 (e.g. ran away from), and a name, (e.g. Tyler) from page 59 to create dialogue between characters or events that do not exist in the script. Example: adding "Tyler ran away from home." when this did not occur and was not said in the script is not permitted. Transitions only may be used to clarify the logical sequence of ideas. They are not to be used for the purpose of embellishing the humorous or dramatic effect of the literature.

Interpretation (DI, HI, DUO)

This includes categories of individual (solo) performance of dramatic (serious) and humorous literature, as well as duo performance of either emotive appeal, with selections drawn from published, printed: novels, short stories, plays, poetry, or other printed, published works, PDFs, e-books, as well as limited online and recorded works as provided for in the rules below.

1. **Divisions:** Contests are conducted in Dramatic, Humorous, Duo, and Program Oral Interpretation. See additional rules for the supplemental interpretation events of Poetry, Prose, and Storytelling.
2. **Length:** The time limit in Interpretation Main Events (Dramatic, Humorous, Duo, and Program Oral Interpretation) is ten minutes with a 30-second "grace period." If there are multiple judges in the round, all must agree that the student has gone beyond the grace period. Should a student go beyond the grace period, the student may not be ranked 1st. There is no other prescribed penalty for going over the grace period. The ranking is up to each individual judge's discretion. Judges who choose to time are to use accurate (stopwatch function) timing devices. No minimum time is mandated.
3. **Material:** Selections used in the oral interpretation main events of Dramatic, Humorous, and Duo Interpretation must be cuttings from a single work of literature (one short story, play, or novel), unless poetry is used, in which case cuttings may come from one or more poems from a single source. If the source is an anthology collection of short stories, plays, or novels, each selection of literature is independent and only one selection can be used, even if it is from the same author. If the source is an anthology which includes poetry, multiple poems may be used from this single source by one or a variety of authors. Unlike the other oral interpretation main events, Program Oral Interpretation may use multiple sources for the program. Song lyrics may be used if the performer has an original, hard copy of the lyrics such as sheet music or a CD jacket or if they can be found from online sources that meet the digital source rules below. See specific rules for Program Oral Interpretation and Supplemental interpretation events.

   Any source material is permitted as long as it meets the standards outlined below:

   A. Original source material must not be written by the competitor who is performing it.

   B. Original source material must be publicly accessible throughout the duration of the tournament. Digital printed publications such as web pages and PDFs retrieved or purchased from web pages are permitted as long as the web page is publicly accessible throughout the duration of the tournament. Digital unprinted publications such as videos, audio files, and films are permitted as long as the original source is publicly accessible throughout the duration of the tournament and the competitor can obtain an official transcript of the original source.

      1. **For print publications** such as novels, short stories, plays, or poetry, the original source is the physical book or e-book. Photocopies of original literature are not acceptable. Presenting the physical book or e-book is sufficient to prove that a printed publication is

publicly accessible.

2. **For digital printed publications** such as web pages, original source material is no longer required to come from online publishing sources listed on the NSDA Approved Websites List. The original source must be publicly accessible for viewing or purchase by a simple internet search or by a URL not requiring passwords or access codes. Competitors must also present a printed manuscript to be used in the case of a protest, but presenting a printed copy of a website is not alone sufficient to prove that a digital printed publication is publicly accessible.
3. **PDFs** are permitted as long as the website from which the PDF is retrieved or purchased is publicly accessible for viewing or purchase by a simple internet search or by a URL not requiring passwords or access codes. Competitors must also present a printed copy of the PDF to be used in the case of a protest, but presenting a printed copy of the PDF is not alone sufficient to prove that a PDF is publicly accessible.
4. **For non-English print material that a competitor will perform in English,** the original source material in its original language must be publicly accessible. Competitors must present an official English translation to be used in the case of a protest. An official translation must be obtained in one of two ways:
    a. An official translation is obtained through the original source's producer, licensing agent, or copyright holder.
    b. Or, an official translation is obtained through a translation service which uses non-automated, manual translation. Then, the competitor receives approval to perform the translation by the original source's producer, licensing agent, or copyright holder.
5. **For digital unprinted publications** such as videos, audio files, and films, the original source must be publicly accessible for viewing or purchase by a simple internet search or by a URL not requiring passwords or access codes. Competitors must also present a printed official transcript of the original source to be used in the case of a protest, but presenting an official transcript is not alone sufficient to prove that the original source is publicly accessible. An official transcript must be obtained in one of two ways:
    a. An official transcript is obtained through the original source's producer, licensing agent, or copyright holder.
    b. Or, an official transcript is obtained through an official transcription service such as TranscribeMe, Scribie, or iScribed, which use non-automated, manual transcription. Then, the competitor receives approval to perform the transcription by the original source's producer, licensing agent, or copyright holder.

If the digital unprinted source is not in English and the competitor wishes to perform it in English, an official transcription and an official translation of the transcription (see #4 above)

are required.

C. **Source Verification:** It is the affirmative duty of each coach and each student entered in Interpretation contests to determine absolutely that the cutting being performed meets all rules for material. Interp source material 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. At the National Tournament, all competitors are required to turn in the following items during the registration process unless officially notified otherwise by the National Tournament director. Any contestant failing to produce the following items will not qualify for the semifinal rounds of competition.

1. The original published source of any selection used must be immediately available at the tournament. When requested by tournament officials, access to the source material upon demand, either in electronic or print form, must be presented.
    a. For print publications, the original source is the physical book. Photocopies of original literature are not acceptable.
    b. For PDFs, an original, unaltered PDF via flash drive, email, or on an electronic device (e.g., laptop) must be presented. Manipulation of a PDF script outside the scope of the rules will be subject to disqualification.
    c. PDF publications from an online source that meets the above standards and e-books are permitted. Competitors may turn in an e-book via flashdrive, email, or e-reader. For e-books, an original, unaltered e-pub or other recognized e-book format via flash drive or email must be presented; however, as some e-book formats are exclusive to their specific apps or electronic readers, students must provide the required technology and/or internet access to verify the material performed for tournament officials.
    d. For non-English publications that are being performed in English, both the original non-English source and the official English transcript must be provided.
    e. For a digital publication, a printed manuscript will be turned in as the original source. Only the printed manuscript shall be considered adequate proof of authenticity.
        i. The material the competitor performs must presently appear on the website if questions arise in competition. The website and online version of the digital publication need to be available for comparison if challenged. Online access is the fundamental responsibility of tournament officials and/or individual filing the protest. NOTE: If tournament officials cannot gain online access and the above requirements have been met, the piece is considered legal for use.
        ii. Manuscript items to be printed directly from the screen for digital printed materials:
            a. The first page in the website (the home page)
            b. All other linked pages needed to navigate to the literary text selected for

competition shall be printed out and the link must be highlighted in the manuscript

c. All web pages upon which the cutting appears

iii. Each page must have printed in the header and/or footer including:

a. Date the page was printed

b. Web address

2. A photocopy or printed screenshot of every page of the original source from which any line of the cutting was taken. The photocopy will be kept for evaluation during the semifinal round.

a. Pages are to be placed in the order in which they are performed (e.g., if text from one page is used more than once within the cutting, that page should be copied again with those words highlighted and re-inserted where it is used in the cutting). Students are not required to photocopy or print pages that are not used in their cutting.

b. All words used from the script should be highlighted (any words/lines not used should be left unmarked).

c. Any word changes (to eliminate profane language) and/or additions (for transition) must be indicated clearly in ink. Failure to clearly indicate the addition of words will be subject to disqualification. Changes to the script may only be used for the purpose of transition or to eliminate profane language. Transitions may be used to clarify the logical sequence of ideas. They are not to be used for the purpose of embellishing the humorous or dramatic effect of the literature.

3. A printed, typed copy of the cutting. This must be the final cutting that the student is using for the tournament, and it must match the copy of the cutting uploaded during registration.

4. Quarterfinalists in POI, OO, and INFO must also turn in a works cited page of all sources used. Please note that competitors in POI must turn in original sources and photocopies for every source used.

4. **Performance:** The presentation may not use physical objects or costuming. During the presentation, the contestant/team must name the author and the book or magazine from which the cutting was made. Additionally:

A. **Adaptations** to material may only be used for the purpose of transition. Any word changes (to eliminate profane language) and/or additions (for transition) must be indicated clearly in ink. Failure to clearly indicate the addition of words will be subject to disqualification. Changes to the script may only be used for the purpose of transition or to eliminate profane language. The voice of a script may not be changed. For example, changing “She moved to California when she was 13” to “I moved to California when I was 13” is not permitted. Combining small fractions of sentences or singular words to create humorous or dramatic dialogue, scenes, moments, and/or

plot lines not intended in the original literature is prohibited. For example, it is not permitted to take one word from page 13 (e.g. home), a phrase from page 211 (e.g. ran away from), and a name, (e.g. Tyler) from page 59 to create dialogue between characters or events that do not exist in the script. Example: adding "Tyler ran away from home." when this did not occur and was not said in the script is not permitted. Transitions only may be used to clarify the logical sequence of ideas. They are not to be used for the purpose of embellishing the humorous or dramatic effect of the literature.

B. Humorous, Dramatic, and Duo Interpretation selections must be presented from memory. Program Oral Interpretation must use a manuscript.

C. In Duo Interpretation, each of the two performers may play one or more characters so long as performance responsibility in the cutting remains as balanced as possible.

D. Monologues, prose, and poetry selections are acceptable in Dramatic, Humorous, and Program Oral Interpretation. In Duo Interpretation, if the selection is prose or poetry and contains narration, either or both of the performers may present the narration.

E. **Artistic Plagiarism:** Videos of previous final round performances and/or other video media are intended to provide educational examples for coaches and students. They are not intended to serve as a model to directly imitate or duplicate in performance. Although universal human emotions may lead to similarities in portrayal of characters, wholesale impersonation, including cutting, blocking, and/or interpretation (verbal and/or nonverbal portrayal of characters and text) of material of previous semifinal round, final round, and other video media performances is prohibited and grounds for penalty. Wholesale impersonation of performances found in NSDA video media is prohibited regardless of whether the performance was coached by the same individual. Given the extent of the artistic plagiarism, the performance penalty may range from lowering the ranking in the round to disqualification (page 135). It is the burden of proof of the individual filing the protest to provide documented evidence of the artistic plagiarism demonstrated in the performance. This includes providing access to the plagiarized video material and written verification of examples to substantiate the complaint.

5. **Focus:** In Dramatic, Humorous, and Program Oral Interpretation, use of focal points and/or direct contact with the audience should be determined by the requirements of the literature being interpreted. In Duo Interpretation, focus may be direct during the introduction [the performers may look at each other] but must be indirect [off-stage] during the performance itself.

6. **Re-Use:** A student may not use a cutting from a work of literature the student used in National Speech & Debate Association district or national competition, including the Middle School National Tournament, in any previous contest year. A student entered in two events may not use the same selection of literature in both events.

7. **Suggested Websites List:** The NSDA maintains a list of websites as a resource for assisting coaches and students with finding materials for use in competition. Students are no longer required to use

only digital sources found on this list. The list can be found on the NSDA website.

Extemporaneous Speaking (USX, IX)

1. **Divisions:** Two divisions of Extemporaneous Speaking will be held at the district and national level:
   A. **United States Division:** Questions will cover U.S. domestic and U.S. foreign policy.
   B. **International Division:** Questions will cover the domestic affairs of foreign countries and the foreign affairs of all countries, including the United States.
2. **Topics:** The district chair will obtain a list of questions phrased for contest use and based on subjects discussed in periodicals during the current school year. The contents of the list must not be disclosed except as contestants draw questions. A new subject area will be used for each round with no duplication of questions between the divisions.
3. **Entry:** At the National Tournament, no student is allowed to enter both divisions in a single contest year. Each district has the autonomy to determine whether double entry in Extemporaneous Speaking events is allowed. The decision of the District Committee is final.
4. **Drawing:** Thirty minutes before the contest is to begin, the first speaker draws three questions and chooses one. Depending on tournament policy, they may return the other two questions or they may have a unique set of questions for each speaker position. At the National Tournament, each speaker position will receive a unique set of three questions to choose from. The other contestants draw in like manner, in the order of speaking, at intervals of seven minutes. A contestant drawing a question on which they have spoken previously in the tournament must return it and draw again.
5. **Preparation:** As soon as a question is chosen, the contestant will prepare a speech without consultation and without references to prepared notes. Students may consult published books, magazines, newspapers and journals or articles, provided:
   A. They are originals or copies of whole pages.
   B. Provided those originals or copies are uncut.
   C. There is no written material on that original or copy other than citation information.
   D. Topical index without annotation may be present.

   No other material will be allowed in the Extemp prep room other than stated above. Extemp speeches, handbooks, briefs and outlines are prohibited from the Extemp prep room. Underlining or highlighting in Extemp will be allowed if done in only one color on each article or copy. The National Tournament permits use of internet during Extemp prep per the Current Guidelines for Use of Internet-Enabled Devices in Extemporaneous Speaking. Printed copies of information from online computer services may be used. Electronically retrieved evidence used in any Association Extemp competition must conform to the citation standard of the Modern Language Association [consult the current edition of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*].
6. **Notes:** Contestants may make notes during the preparation time, but the use of notes, cards, briefs or other aids is prohibited during the speech. New in 2024-2025, District Committees may choose

to pilot the following rule in International Extemp and United States Extemp at their district tournament: Competitors may use the front and back of a 4 x 6" or smaller notecard while speaking. The notecard must be prepared during the preparation period; notes may not be pre-written or re-used from round to round. This pilot rule will not be used at the 2026 National Tournament.

7. **Time:** The time limit in both Extemporaneous Speaking events is seven minutes with a 30-second "grace period. "If there are multiple judges in the round, all must agree that the student has gone beyond the grace period. Should a student go beyond the grace period, the student may not be ranked 1st. There is no other prescribed penalty for going over the grace period. The ranking is up to each individual judge's discretion. Judges who choose to time are to use accurate (stopwatch function) timing devices. No minimum time is mandated.
8. **Recuse:** Contestants may not leave the preparation area until dismissed by the Extemp proctor. Consultation with any person other than the Extemp proctor between the time of drawing and time of speaking is prohibited.
9. **Cross-Examination:** Each district has the autonomy to determine whether cross-examination will be used in the final round of Extemporaneous Speaking events at the district tournament. The National Tournament will utilize an open-cross examination period of two minutes for both the semifinal and final rounds. If cross-examination is used, the district must use the National Tournament final round format. The decision of the District Committee is final. *Procedure:* Each speaker shall be assigned a speaker order position. Drawing shall take place at 12-minute intervals. Thirty minutes after speaker first has drawn, speakers first and last shall enter the contest room. Speaker first shall give a speech and speaker last shall listen and may take notes. At the conclusion of speaker first's speech, speaker last shall question speaker first for two minutes. Speaker last shall return to the prep room and speaker first shall stay and question speaker second. Speaker second will question speaker third, etc. Unless it is unavoidable, students from the same school shall not cross-examine one another. Speaker order should be adjusted accordingly.
10. **Observation:** Students in Extemporaneous Speaking are encouraged, but not required, to stay and watch the remaining speakers after they deliver their speech. Students who are double entered may be able to observe as time permits.

Current Guidelines for Use of Internet-Enabled Devices in Extemporaneous Speaking

These rules will be used at the National Tournament. They also apply to Extemp Commentary at the National Tournament. These rules are required for any district tournament whose debate events are held online. If a district tournament does not state otherwise, these guidelines will govern their contest. Districts may choose to use the Previous Guidelines for Use of Internet-Enabled Devices in Extemporaneous Speaking provided they notify their district 60 days in advance. The rules regarding use of generative artificial intelligence at the 2027 National Tournament can be found in the National Tournament Operations Manual section.

A. **Preparation:** As soon as a question is chosen, the contestant will prepare a speech without consultation and without references to prepared notes. Students may consult published books, magazines, newspapers and journals or articles, including internet enabled devices either used in the draw or those materials published from internet sources, provided:

   1. They are originals or copies of whole pages.
   2. Provided those originals or copies are uncut.
   3. There is no written material on that original or copy other than citation information.
   4. Topical index without annotation may be present.
   5. Files stored either on a computer or electronic device hard drive or cloud storage system. All files in this format must meet the same guidelines as printed sources.
   6. Active research from the internet during the round that meets the established criteria found in the "Guidelines for Use of Internet Enabled Devices."

B. No other material will be allowed in the Extemp prep room other than stated above. Extemp speeches, handbooks, briefs and outlines, including those stored on cloud storage systems or published on websites created for that purpose, are prohibited from the Extemp prep room. Students may not use the internet to gain help from coaches, other students, or any person, such that it would prevent the speech from being the original work of the competitor. Students are prohibited from accessing outlines and speeches that have been written prior to their draw time. Underlining or highlighting in Extemp will be allowed if done in only one color on each article or copy. **Electronic device use must comply with the "Guidelines for Use of Internet-Enabled Devices in Debate Events."** Printed copies of information from online computer services may be used. Electronically retrieved evidence used in any Association Extemp competition must conform to the same citation standards as evidence used in debate events as described in the Unified Manual.

Previous Guidelines for Use of Internet-Enabled Devices in Extemporaneous Speaking

These rules are no longer used at the National Tournament. If the district tournament is held in person, districts may choose to use these guidelines, provided 60 days advance notice is given to the district. If a district tournament does not state otherwise, the Current Guidelines for Use of Internet-Enabled Devices in Extemporaneous Speaking will govern their contest.

The use of laptop computers in Extemporaneous Speaking is permitted.

1. Extemporaneous Speaking contestants may make use of electronic retrieval devices to store and to retrieve their subject files at tournaments (district or national). Students can retrieve extemporaneous files to read, but cannot write speeches or organize their thoughts on the computers. **This rule in no way prevents students from still utilizing traditional paper copy files to enable the competitor to successfully compete in Extemporaneous Speaking. The Association takes no position on which form of file storage is preferable for use at tournaments (district or**

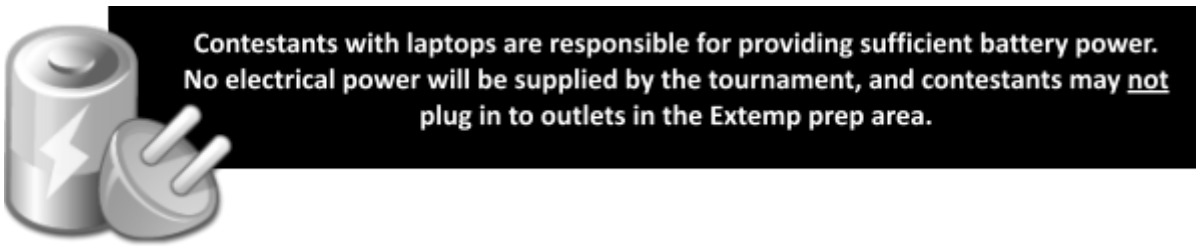
national).

2. The use of electronic retrieval devices at the district competition will be the autonomous decision of each individual district committee.
3. Electronic retrieval devices are defined as laptop computers, netbooks, iPads, or other portable electronic retrieval equipment. Secondary devices such as flash drives or external hard drives are allowed as well. Cell phones or smartphones are prohibited from being used while preparing or before speaking at tournaments (district or national).
4. **Source Materials:** Students may consult published books, periodical articles, newspaper articles, think tank articles, government reports or journal articles saved on their electronic retrieval device or present in hard copy form provided:
    a. There are no notations made within or on the saved article other than citation information.
    b. Any highlighting or underlining of the articles is done in only one color within each article. Bolding, italicizing, or any other manipulation of the original text of sources (other than highlighting or underlining as previously stipulated) is prohibited.
5. No other source materials will be allowed in the Extemporaneous prep room other than stated above. Pre-written Extemporaneous speeches, handbooks, briefs or outlines are prohibited from the prep room, whether stored electronically or present in hard copy form.
6. **Power Source:** Power plugs or outlets may not be used in the prep room at any time. All computers used in the prep room must be battery operated at all times.
7. Competitors are responsible for making certain their electronic retrieval devices are fully charged at the start of each competition day and for proper power management ensuring that their device remains functional throughout the competition day. Contestants may not use external power sources in the prep room, such as wall outlets and/or extension cords.
8. **Internet:** Extemporaneous Speaking contestants shall not access the internet or communicate electronically with any other individual while in the prep room at any Association tournament (district or national). All computers must comply with the following provisions:
    a. Computers equipped with removable wireless cards must have the cards removed before the beginning of any round of competition. It is the responsibility of the contestant to disengage the equipment.
    b. Computers with built-in wireless capability may be used only if the wireless capability is disabled. It is the responsibility of the contestant to disable the equipment.
    c. Wired connections (Ethernet or phone) during rounds of competition are not permitted.
    d. Computers or other electronic devices may not be used to receive information from any source (coaches or assistants included) inside or outside of the room in which the competition occurs. Internet access, use of e-mail, instant messaging, or other means of receiving information from

sources inside or outside of the competition room are prohibited.

e. **Penalty:** Contestants found to have violated provisions i through iii above will be ranked last in the round and receive zero points. Contestants found to have violated provision iv (above) will be disqualified from the tournament and will forfeit all round credits and points. At district tournaments, the district committee will make the final decision concerning disqualification. In case of a serious dispute or critical question, the acting tournament referee (representing the national office) may be contacted for a ruling.

9. **Liability:** Extemporaneous Speaking competitors accept full responsibility for the safety and security of their electronic retrieval devices throughout the entire course of any Association tournament (district or national). *The Association may put stickers and/or tape on computers to ensure they are not opened or used, or to ensure appropriate owners take their own machines. The Association does not assume any liability for the computers. Students are welcome to use Kensington locks or other such devices to secure their computers in the prep room. Students, parents, and coaches should be aware that the students are bringing and using the computers at their own risk. The Association is not responsible for lost, stolen, or broken computers.*
10. **File Monitoring:** The Association retains the right to view and search any electronic retrieval devices to ensure compliance with any and all rules at any Association tournament (district or national).
11. Devices should be muted in the prep room. Contestants should not play games or engage in other distracting activities on their electronic devices in the prep room. Tournament officials may ask a student to power-off the device if it becomes distracting.
12. Students from the same school may share computers during preparation. However, communication among contestants during preparation time is strictly prohibited.



Supplemental Event Rules

Extemporaneous Commentary (COM)

1. **Topics**: Topic areas for Extemporaneous Commentary at the National Tournament will be announced on the Association's website on May 1. Topics within topic areas will not be disclosed except as contestants draw topics therefrom.
2. **Drawing**: Twenty minutes before the round is to begin, the first speaker shall draw three topics, choose one, and return the other two. Depending on tournament policy, they may return the other two topics or they may have a unique set of topics for each speaker position. At the National Tournament, each speaker position will receive a unique set of three topics to choose from. The other contestants shall draw in like manner, in the order of speaking, at intervals of six minutes. A different topic area will be chosen each round.
3. **Preparation**: As soon as a topic is chosen, the contestant shall withdraw and prepare a speech without consultation and without references to prepared notes. Students may consult published books, magazines, newspapers and journals or articles therefrom, provided:
   A. They are originals or photocopies of originals.
   B. Original articles or copies are intact and uncut.
   C. No written material is on originals or copies.
   D. Topical index without annotation is allowed.

   No other material shall be allowed in the Commentary prep room other than stated above. Speeches, handbooks, briefs, and outlines shall be barred from the prep room. Underlining or highlighting will be allowed if done in only one color on each article or copy. Source citations of such materials must meet MLA standards. The National Tournament permits use of internet during Extemporaneous Commentary prep per the Current Guidelines for Use of Internet-Enabled Devices in Extemporaneous Speaking.
4. **Recusal**: A contestant may not leave the prep area without first checking out with the proctor.
5. **Notes**: No notes are allowed during the presentation.
6. **Time**: The maximum time limit is 5 minutes with a 30-second "grace period." If there are multiple judges in the round, all must agree that the student has gone beyond the grace period. Should a student go beyond the grace period, the student may not be ranked 1st. There is no other prescribed penalty for going over the grace period. The ranking is up to each individual judge's discretion. Judges who choose to time are to use accurate (stopwatch function) timing devices. No minimum time is mandated.
7. **Presentation**: The commentary **must** be delivered seated behind a table or desk.

Prose (PRO)

1. **Prose**: Prose expresses thought through language recorded in sentences and paragraphs: fiction (short stories, novels) and non-fiction (articles, essays, journals, biographies).
2. **Selections**: **Any source material used must meet the Interpretation Source Rules for PDFs, e-books, and online material**. No plays or other dramatic materials may be used. In Supplemental Prose, if the source is an anthology collection of short stories or novels, each selection of literature is independent and only one selection can be used, even if it is from the same author.
3. **Reuse**: In the events of Supplemental Prose and Poetry, a student may not use the same source they used in the main events of Duo, Dramatic, Humorous, or Program Oral Interpretation or Supplemental Prose or Poetry at any district or national Association tournament. In the event of Supplemental Prose, if the source is an anthology collection of short stories or novels, the same anthology may be used; however, the same selection performed in a previous district or national Association tournament in the main events of Duo, Dramatic, Humorous, Program Oral Interpretation, or Supplemental Prose, may not be used. See general interpretation rules for additional guidance.
4. **Time**: The maximum time limit is 5 minutes with a 30-second "grace period." If there are multiple judges in the round, all must agree that the student has gone beyond the grace period. Should a student go beyond the grace period, the student may not be ranked 1st. There is no other prescribed penalty for going over the grace period. The ranking is up to each individual judge's discretion. Judges who choose to time are to use accurate (stopwatch function) timing devices. No minimum time is mandated.
5. **Presentation**: Performances must be from a manuscript (which may be in a folder). The student will have the full text of their manuscript in the binder or folder. Reading from a book or magazine is not permitted. Intentionally displaying words in the manuscript is considered using a visual aid and is not permitted.

Poetry (POE)

1. **Poetry**: Poetry is writing which expresses ideas, experience, or emotion through the creative arrangement of words according to their sound, their rhythm, their meaning. Poetry may rely on verse and stanza form.
2. **Selections: Any source material used must meet the Interpretation Source Rules for PDFs, e-books, and online material**. No plays or other dramatic materials may be used. In 2022, the Board of Directors voted to remove the requirement that Supplemental Poetry selections must be cuttings from a single source. Beginning in 2022-2023, a Poetry piece may come from one or multiple sources. A Poetry piece may consist of one entire poem, a cutting of a single longer poem, or a collection of short poems or cuttings from one source or several sources arranged in a program.
3. **Reuse**: In the events of Supplemental Prose and Poetry, a student may not use the same source they used in the main events of Duo, Dramatic, Humorous, or Program Oral Interpretation or Supplemental Prose or Poetry at any district or national Association tournament. In the event of Supplemental Poetry, if the source is an anthology collection of poems, the same anthology may be used; however, the same poems performed in a previous district or national Association tournament in the main events of Duo, Dramatic, Humorous, Program Oral Interpretation, or Supplemental Poetry, may not be used. See general interpretation rules for additional guidance.
4. **Time**: The maximum time limit is 5 minutes with a 30-second "grace period." If there are multiple judges in the round, all must agree that the student has gone beyond the grace period. Should a student go beyond the grace period, the student may not be ranked 1st. There is no other prescribed penalty for going over the grace period. The ranking is up to each individual judge's discretion. Judges who choose to time are to use accurate (stopwatch function) timing devices. No minimum time is mandated.
5. **Presentation**: Performances must be from a manuscript (which may be in a folder). The student will have the full text of their manuscript in the binder or folder. Reading from a book or magazine is not permitted. Intentionally displaying words in the manuscript is considered using a visual aid and is not permitted.

Extemporaneous Debate (XDB)

1. **Resolutions**: Tournament officials will post the resolution that will be debated for each round 30 minutes prior to the start of flight A.
2. **Sides**: Contestants will be assigned sides by the tab room.
3. **Evidence**: Students may conduct research prior to the debate and use authoritative references within their speeches, but are not required to do so. Students may use the internet to conduct research between the posting of the topic and the start of the debate. If using authoritative sources, students are expected to act in accordance with the Association's "Evidence Rules for Policy, Public Forum, and Lincoln-Douglas Debate."
4. **Expectations of Debaters**: Contestants must debate the topic that was assigned for the debate round. Students may use materials they create during the preparation time before their rounds, including but not limited to research they have completed, pre-written blocks, and flows. Contestants should directly clash with their opposition in the rebuttal speeches and provide clear organizational schemes throughout the debate.
5. **Expectations of Judges**: Judges should decide the round as it is debated, not based on their personal beliefs.
6. **Structure of the Round**: All speeches are two minutes in length and all speech times are protected; a speaker may not be interrupted by the other speaker or by the judge. The Proposition debater must affirm the resolution by presenting and defending a sufficient case for that resolution. The Opposition debater must oppose the resolution and/or the Proposition debater's case.

Extemporaneous Debate Time Limits	
Proposition Constructive	2 Minutes
Cross-Examination of Proposition	1 Minute
Opposition Constructive	2 Minutes
Cross-Examination of Opposition	1 Minute
Mandatory Prep Time	1 Minute
Proposition Rebuttal	2 Minutes
Opposition Rebuttal	2 Minutes
Mandatory Prep Time	1 Minute
Proposition Rebuttal	2 Minutes
Opposition Rebuttal	2 Minutes

7. **Decisions**: At the conclusion of the round, the judge(s) will determine which debater won the round. Judges will not make any oral or written comments to the debaters.

Expository (EXP)

1. **Purpose**: Expository speeches are original compositions of the contestant. The Expository speech is a speech to inform, not a performance. It should describe, clarify, illustrate, or define an object, idea, concept, or process. A fabricated topic/subject may not be used. In Expository, a student may not use any portion of their original oration or informative speech entered at any district or national Association tournament.
2. **Time**: The maximum time limit is 5 minutes with a 30-second “grace period.” If there are multiple judges in the round, all must agree that the student has gone beyond the grace period. Should a student go beyond the grace period, the student may not be ranked 1st. There is no other prescribed penalty for going over the grace period. The ranking is up to each individual judge’s discretion. Judges who choose to time are to use accurate (stopwatch function) timing devices. No minimum time is mandated.
3. **Aids**: No note cards, audio and/or visual aids are allowed. NO animals or other person(s) may be used as aids or aides. Items of dress put on and removed during the course of the presentation are considered visual aids and may not be part of the contestant's presentation.

Impromptu (IMP)

1. **Topics**: Topics will include proverbs, abstract words, events, quotations, and famous people.
2. **Drawing***:* A judge in each section/room shall be provided an envelope containing a uniform set of topics, with a different subject area used for each round. Once the first speaker is called, the other speakers shall leave the room, and wait outside the door. Each speaker will draw three topics, choose one, and return the other two to the envelope.
3. **Preparation and Delivery**: The speaker has seven minutes in which to prepare a response and present a speech without consultation of prepared notes. Students may consult published books, magazines, newspapers and journals or articles therefrom, provided:
   A. They are originals or photocopies of originals.
   B. That original article or copy is intact and uncut.
   C. There is no written material on original or copy.
   D. Topical index without annotation is allowed.
4. No other material shall be allowed in the room other than stated above. Speeches, handbooks, briefs, and outlines shall be barred. Underlining or highlighting in materials will be allowed if done in one color on each article or copy. No electronic retrieval device may be used, but printed materials from online computer services may be used.
5. **Recuse**: Once a speaker has spoken, they may listen to other speakers in that round.
6. **Notes**: No notes shall be used during presentation.
7. **Time**: The maximum time limit is 7 minutes with a 30-second "grace period," which includes both preparation *and* speaking. If there are multiple judges in the round, all must agree that the student has gone beyond the grace period. Should a student go beyond the grace period, the student may not be ranked 1st. There is no other prescribed penalty for going over the grace period. The ranking is up to each individual judge's discretion. Judges who choose to time are to use accurate (stopwatch function) timing devices. No minimum time is mandated.

Storytelling (STO)

1. A single published, printed story, anecdote, tale, myth, or legend must be *retold* without notes or props. Any theme/topic area may be used.
2. **Time**: The maximum time limit is 5 minutes with a 30-second "grace period." If there are multiple judges in the round, all must agree that the student has gone beyond the grace period. Should a student go beyond the grace period, the student may not be ranked 1st. There is no other prescribed penalty for going over the grace period. The ranking is up to each individual judge's discretion. Judges who choose to time are to use accurate (stopwatch function) timing devices. No minimum time is mandated.
3. The student may not tell a story they have used previously in any Association tournaments (district or national).
4. The delivery must be extempore, not read. No book or script may be used. The story may be delivered standing or seated. If a chair is used, students may choose the original position of the chair. Use of the chair is not considered a prop as long as: 1) Once the performance begins, all legs of the chair remain stationary on the ground and do not move from their original position, and 2) Competitors do not kneel or stand on the chair.
5. Gestures, pantomime and characterization, may be used with restraint but the focus must be on the narrative.
6. The retelling must be true to the original tale. The contestant may *not* add original material or materially change the content of the story.

Pro Con Challenge (PCC)

1. **Topics:** Students may select that tournament's topic for CX, LD, or PF or one piece of legislation in the Congressional Debate Docket. The pro and the con speech must be on the same topic. At the National Tournament, students may select the National Tournament topic for CX, LD, or PF or one piece of legislation in the National Tournament Congressional Debate Docket.
2. **Speech**: Competitors will write and present a 3-5 minute affirmative speech and a 3-5 minute negative speech on that topic. Judges will evaluate the structure, arguments, evidence, and speaking abilities of each competitor and rank them against each other.
3. **Time:** The total recording time limit is 10 minutes and 30 seconds. This is a hard limit, and time spent walking to and from the camera counts toward the recording time if the performance is recorded. Both the affirmative and the negative speeches will be read within this time limit. If the performance is recorded, students may take recorded "prep time" in between speeches to pull up files or take a short break, but their two speeches must be submitted as one recording that is no longer than 10 minutes and 30 seconds. If there are multiple judges in the round, all must agree that the student has gone beyond the grace period. Should a student go beyond the grace period, the student may not be ranked 1st. There is no other prescribed penalty for going over the grace period. The ranking is up to each individual judge's discretion. Judges who choose to time are to use accurate (stopwatch function) timing devices. No minimum time is mandated.
4. **Delivery**: Students may read from pre-written text during the speech as if they were presenting a constructive speech in a round. Speeches should not be memorized.

Original Spoken Word Poetry (OSW)

1. **Material:** Students will write and perform original poetry. Original Spoken Word Poetry is poetry written for performance to express ideas, experience, or emotion through the creative arrangement of words according to their sound, their rhythm, their meaning.
2. **Quotation:** No more than 150 words of the original poetry may be direct quotation from any other speech or writing, and such quotations must be identified in a printed copy of the speech. An introduction is permitted, but not required.
3. **Delivery:** The delivery must be memorized, and no book or script may be used.
4. **Time:** The maximum time limit is 5 minutes with a 30-second grace period. Time spent walking to and from the camera counts toward the recording time if the performance is done via recording. If there are multiple judges in the round, all must agree that the student has gone beyond the grace period. Should a student go beyond the grace period, the student may not be ranked 1st. There is no other prescribed penalty for going over the grace period. The ranking is up to each individual judge's discretion. Judges who choose to time are to use accurate (stopwatch function) timing devices. No minimum time is mandated.

Big Questions Debate

Big Questions is a debate format supported by the John Templeton Foundation. Each district has the opportunity to qualify students to Nationals in Big Questions, and competition begins on Monday of the National Tournament. Please visit www.speechanddebate.org/big-questions/ for a complete look at the event as well as resources to help coaches and students prepare.

Big Questions Debate (BQ)

1. **Resolution:** The topic will be one that addresses deeply held beliefs that often go unexamined concerning the intersection of science, philosophy, and religion. The affirmative will defend the resolution, while the negative should view themselves as defending the inverse of the resolution and thus will present arguments that the resolution is actively false. The same topic is used all school year. Refer to www.speechanddebate.org/topics for the current topic.
2. **Entries:** Big Questions Debate is a debate format that allows students to debate with a partner or as an individual. Debates may be one-on-one, two-on-two, or two-on-one. If a partnership, the teammates must alternate speeches throughout the debate. **Note:** At the district tournament series and National Tournament, entries must be individual; no partnerships are allowed.
3. **Order of Speeches:**

Big Questions Debate Time Limits	
Affirmative Constructive	5 minutes
Negative Constructive	5 minutes
Question Segment	3 minutes
Affirmative Rebuttal	4 minutes
Negative Rebuttal	4 minutes
Question Segment	3 minutes
Affirmative Consolidation	3 minutes
Negative Consolidation	3 minutes
Affirmative Rationale	3 minutes
Negative Rationale	3 minutes
Prep time	3 minutes per side

4. **Topicality:** Students' arguments must stick to the specific topic of the debate. Regardless of personal judging preferences, judges must not evaluate any arguments that are outside of the topic, and debaters who run a position that is not about the topic should lose the debate.
5. **Use of Electronic Devices**: The use of internet-enabled devices and internet is permitted at the National Tournament. The use of internet-enabled devices and internet at the qualifying tournament will be the autonomous decision of each district. Laptop use must comply with the Guidelines for Use of Internet-Enabled Devices in Debate Events.
6. **Timing**: Judges will determine how time will be kept in the round. Prep time for each side is three minutes.
7. **Judging:** All judges are asked to complete a short judge training prior to the tournament. Judges will be given a topic primer to become more acquainted with the topic and format. Judges will also be asked to identify their initial bias on the topic; judges are then asked to evaluate a debate only on the arguments presented by the competitors in the round.

USA World Schools Debate Invitational

World Schools Debate features a dynamic format combining the concepts of “prepared” topics with “impromptu” topics, encouraging debaters to focus on specific issues rather than debate theory or procedural arguments. This highly interactive style of debate allows debaters to engage each other, even during speeches. This challenging format requires good teamwork and in-depth quality argumentation.

Please consult the **2027 USA World Schools Debate Invitational Manual** for official debate rules, procedures, and protocols governing this event.

The 2027 USA World Schools Debate Invitational Manual can be found at www.speechanddebate.org/rules-forms-manuals.

The District Tournament Operations Manual will be updated for the 2026-27 season by September 15, 2026. Review the changes here.

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 or call (920) 748-6206.

*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.

*Beginning with the 2025–2026 season and continuing in 2026-2027, districts may apply to the national office to participate in an alternative qualification method pilot. Participation in the pilot requires prior approval from the national office. Applications are due by October 1.

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

Districts have the autonomy to determine whether each competition event in their district tournament series will be held online or in person. At least ¾ 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, ¾ 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**: A district with at least eight paid member schools may hold a district tournament. 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. 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. in order to count as an entry. Students must participate for the entirety of the preliminary rounds of the competition to be counted as an entry at the district tournament. In Congressional Debate, students must give at least one speech in each preliminary round to be counted 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. **Student Eligibility**: 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 for districts that have 8-14 paid member schools. All level 1 districts will be placed on a two-year growth plan that must be passed in order to continue earning national qualifiers.

1.2 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:

1.2.1 If there are at least 16 entries in an event, that event is allowed 2 qualifiers.

1.2.2 If there are at least 30 entries in an event, that event is allowed 3 qualifiers.

1.2.3 If there are at least 50 entries in an event, that event is allowed 4 qualifiers.

National Qualification: Level 2

2.1 Qualification Level 2 is for districts that have 15-29 paid member schools. A district that meets this requirement in the previous school year is allowed **two** entries to the National Tournament in **every** speech and debate event as long as the event meets the four entry minimum.

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 Qualification Level 3 is for districts that have 30 or more paid member schools. A district that meets this requirement in the previous school year is allowed **two** entries to the National Tournament in **every** speech and debate event as long as the event meets the four entry minimum.

3.2 If the district qualifies for Level 3, that district may:

3.2.1 Earn a third qualifier in any event with 10 entries

3.2.2 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	30 entries	50 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

At the National Tournament, any entry who places in the top 14 in any main event or top 16 of Big Questions and 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 paid 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:** All active member schools will be allowed to enter up to four entries in all NSDA district speech and debate events, regardless of their school strength. In Congress events, each school may enter up to 10 entries in the House and two in the Senate. Registration deadlines are set by the District Committee and 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 the series.
2. **Entry Limit per Event:** Each school may enter up to four entries in each event. In Congress events, each school may enter up to 10 entries in the House and two in the Senate.
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. **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 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. Only students officially registered as a member user on the NSDA website (www.speechanddebate.org) may compete in district competition. Each school may enter up to four entries in each event. In Congress events, each school may enter up to 10 entries in the House and two in the Senate.
   A. Students must be 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.

Judge Eligibility

1. Current high school students may not judge any portion of the district tournament series.
2. Judges in their first year out from high school are permitted at the discretion of the District Committee.
3. District Committees may determine what constitutes requirements for “clean” or “dirty” judges. It is no longer a requirement by the national office that Congress judges must be unaffiliated.
4. All judges in every event are expected to adhere to the Code of Honor and recuse themselves from judging any round in which there is a conflict of interest per the NSDA Conflict of Interest Policy.

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

Districts have the autonomy to determine whether each competition event in their district tournament series will be held online or in person. At least ¾ 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, ¾ 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 unconscious bias or stereotypes that, when unchecked, may influence our ability to judge impartially. Before writing comments or making a decision, please reflect on any preconceived notions you may hold.
>
> 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 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 while recording their performances. Rulings (answering questions or hearing protests) about this language will be made by the District Committee.

1. 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.
2. Recordings may not be edited using any software; all submissions must be non-stop footage of the entire performance.
3. Students recording split-screen Duos may not record their performances separately and edit them together.
4. Students may not trim a recording, even to remove the seconds that they walk to and from the recording device to push start/stop.
5. The length of the recording must not exceed the time limit with the grace period.
6. Competitors may not use green screens, virtual backgrounds, or on-screen text.

7. The camera being used must remain stationary throughout the entire performance, and no zooming or panning is permitted.
8. 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.
9. The use of lighting tricks like shadow puppets are not permitted.
10. Students may move closer to and further from the camera to simulate zooming, though the camera must remain stationary.
11. Students may cover the camera with their hands or body.
12. Students may move out of frame during the recording.
13. Other individuals may be present while filming, but audience interaction (laughing, applause, etc.) must not be included in the performance.
14. Competitors may determine how close or distant the camera is set up in order to maximize both verbal and nonverbal communication.
15. 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 find 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.

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. Please note that Big Questions has separate requirements for entry/school minimums.

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. Seeding for these run-off rounds will be determined by 1) Points dropping the highest and lowest, 2) Total points, 3) Coin flip.

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's decision.

Methods 2 and 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, LD, and BQ 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, CX, and BQ, 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 who have previously debated. In side-locked (even rounds in CX, LD, and BQ), 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, LD, and BQ

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, CX, and BQ, 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 national office contact on duty if you run into this scenario for assistance.

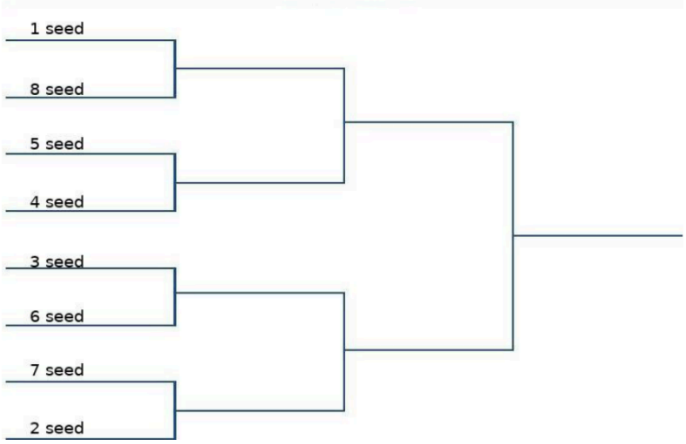
If your district is using the single elimination bracket, proceed with the "Method 2: Single Elimination Bracket" rules found below. If your district is using the double elimination bracket, skip to "Method 3: Double Elimination Bracket" to finish your tournament.

Method 2: Single Elimination Bracket

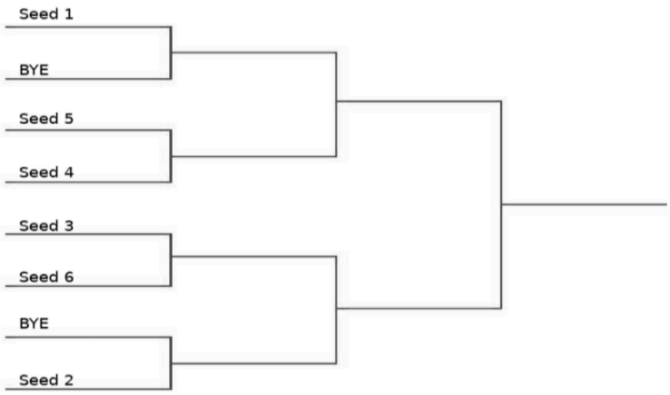
Advancing entries will be placed in a single elimination round bracket. The best seeded entry debates the worst seed, the second-best seed debates the second worst, and so on. If the number is not a power of two, then the top seeded debaters are given byes until the bracket is

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, CX, and BQ debate where the entries have not previously debated. If LD, CX, and BQ 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 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

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 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

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

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.

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 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.).

   B. Beginning in 2023, it is no longer a requirement that Congress judges and parliamentarians must be unaffiliated. All judges at the district tournament are expected to adhere to the Code of Honor and recuse themselves from judging any round in which there is a conflict of interest per the NSDA conflict of interest policy.

   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.

      1. For each round, scorers:

         a. Rate 1-8 points per speech, considering answers to questions

         b. Rate 4-8 points per full hour of presiding (fractions of an hour are not scored)

         c. Rank their 8 most preferred legislators (which may include POs)

         d. Assign up to eight (8) points per speech, considering answers to questions in the awarding of points.

      2. 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 online from the NSDA Store), 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 a Belonging and Inclusion Station 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. All district tournaments must use preset, randomized recency in Congressional Debate.

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

The preset, randomized recency chart is reset for each new session using the preset recency supplied by tournament officials. The preset recency chart should be used in order for speeches and in reverse order for questioning.

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.
4. **Extemporaneous Speaking:** New in 2024-2025, District Committees may choose whether to pilot the following rule in International Extemp and United States Extemp at their district tournament: Competitors may use the front and back of a 4 x 6" or smaller notecard while speaking. The notecard must be prepared during the preparation period; notes may not be pre-written or re-used from round to round. This pilot rule will not be used at the 2026 National Tournament.

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/Weaving Sections

Elimination rounds are snaked/weaved: 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/WEAVED ELIMINATION ROUND

Section 1	Section 2	Section 3	Section 4
Seed 1	Seed 2	Seed 3	Seed 4
Seed 8	Seed 7	Seed 6	Seed 5

Seed 9	Seed 10	Seed 11	Seed 12
Seed 16	Seed 15	Seed 14	Seed 13
Seed 17	Seed 18	Seed 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.

District Merit Points

Points earned from the district tournament will be calculated as follows:

1. Debate (CX, LD, and PF):

Win	= 8 points
Loss	= 5 points

2. Speech:

Rank	Points
1	= 8 points
2	= 7 points

3	= 6 points
4	= 5 points
5/6/7	= 4 points

3. Congress: Points are awarded by official scorers, on a scale of 1-8 points per speech and complete hour of presiding.

   Note: These points are calculated and posted by the national office. If there are any questions about the points earned, contact info@speechanddebate.org.

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. Big Questions Debate and Congressional Debate are 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
1st Place	6	7	7	8	8	9
2nd Place	5	6	6	7	7	8
3rd Place	4	5	5	6	6	7
4th Place	3	4	4	5	5	6
5th Place	2	3	3	4	4	5
6th Place	1	2	2	3	3	4

Example:

	Team A		**Team B**	
PF 2 Qualifiers	1st Place 3rd Place	12 points	2nd Place	6 points
DUO				
Policy 2 Qualifiers	2nd Place 4th Place	10 points	5th Place	3 points
LD 3 Qualifiers	4th Place	5 points		
IX 2 Qualifiers	6th Place	1 point	2nd Place	5 points
USX 2 Qualifiers	4th Place 6th Place	4 points		
DI 2 Qualifiers			1st Place	6 points
HI 2 Qualifiers			2nd Place	5 points
OO 2 Qualifiers			1st Place 3rd 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 (not including Big Questions entries), 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 below. If a preliminary and a final session are held, only the final session will count.

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

District Cumulative Sweepstakes Award

What it is:

- The District Cumulative Sweepstakes Award is a traveling trophy (plaque) that awards a school's sustained participation in the district tournament series. The previous year's winner should pass the plaque on to the current year's winner.

When it's awarded:

- The District Cumulative Sweepstakes Award winner is not determined at the district tournament.
- Instead, the national office tabulates results and announces the previous year's District Cumulative Sweepstakes Award winner in August following your district tournament season. Coaches will find the winner on the districts section of their NSDA account.
- In August, the District Committee should communicate the results to their district and arrange for the plaque to be passed to the new winner.

How it's calculated:

- The award is determined by totaling all rounds your school's entries compete in at the current district tournament, plus all rounds from previous district tournaments since your school's last

time winning the District Cumulative Sweepstakes Award. Once a school wins, its total resets, and the award is held for one year.

- 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.
- The trophy will become the permanent possession of the school winning it three (3) times. A district needing a replacement traveling trophy due to a school winning it for a third time or loss should contact info@speechanddebate.org for assistance.

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 the 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. 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 the 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 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 tournament contact 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 unconscious bias or stereotypes that, when unchecked, may influence our ability to judge impartially. Before writing comments or making a decision, please reflect on any preconceived notions you may hold."

  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 the 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 matter**. 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.

District Committees may determine consequences based on the circumstance and magnitude of the infraction. Options for speech penalties can be found in the Speech Rules Infraction section. District Committees can learn more about penalty options in the Alternate Penalties at District Tournaments Training.

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.

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.

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 the 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.
- All judges are expected to adhere to the Code of Honor and recuse themselves from any round in which there is a conflict of interest per the policy below.

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 themself 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 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 themself 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 aid 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. The District Committee has the autonomy to decide whether students must compete in the district tournament to be eligible for participation on the World Schools Debate 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 seniors, 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.

If a District Committee would like to select alternates for their World Schools teams using a method different from the one described above, approval from the national office is required.

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. The District Committee has the autonomy to decide whether students must compete in the district tournament to be eligible for participation on the World Schools Debate Team.

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.speechanddebate.org/big-questions.

Entries/Qualification Process

- The two top-placing students at each district's Big Questions division will qualify to the National Tournament.
- 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.
- 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.

SECTION 4: National Tournament Operations Manual

The National Speech & Debate Tournament is the largest academic competition in the world. To attend, students must place among the top competitors at one of the Association's district tournaments. The National Speech & Debate Association is committed to providing every student a fair and impartial competition experience. All rules established in the Events Rules Manual guide the specific rules for each event. This document provides the specific procedures established by the Board of Directors. Tournament directors are available to answer questions and field protests regarding infraction of rules herein enumerated.

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

The National Tournament will allow for supplemental debate and supplemental speech entries to be split into two groupings, if needed, to ensure that competitors have adequate space and a reasonable schedule for competition.

At the 2026 National Tournament, supplemental speech will not be split into two groups. In Extemp Debate, entries will begin in different buildings, but merge into one division on the second day of competition. The final round will be composed of the top two competitors.

Entry Requirements

Official Notice: All schools must register ONLINE for the National Speech & DebateTournament at nationals.tabroom.com. You must read all information below before beginning online registration. Please direct all questions to the national office by calling (920) 748-6206 or by emailing info@speechanddebate.org.

REMINDER: The NSDA no longer accepts mailed scripts or speeches. Advisors must UPLOAD the digital files during online registration instead.

Instructions for Registering

1. **Registration:** National Tournament registration is available online beginning **March 15**. The deadline is **May 15**. Although the entire registration process does not have to be completed in one sitting, coaches must complete the online process and pay ALL appropriate fees to the national office before the entry is considered official.
2. **Community Standards:** Prior to registering online for the National Tournament, 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. **Supervision:** To compete in the National Tournament, each student must be supervised by an adult approved by the principal. The adult supervisor must be the student's coach, a school district faculty member or administrator, or the child's own guardian(s). The supervising adult must stay at the same lodging with student(s) under their supervision. Students without an accredited supervisor staying in the same lodging will not be permitted to participate in the tournament. Coaches from other school districts may not be the adult supervisor without prior written permission of both school district superintendents submitted to the NSDA before the entry will be accepted.
4. **Fees:** An annual fee will be charged per entry and can be found on the National Tournament website. Payment must accompany your registration materials. Schools staying within the NSDA hotel block receive a discount on entry fees. Schools must select the hotel they are staying at in their Tabroom.com registration, and this discount will be automatically applied.

   A refund in full is available upon cancellation in writing received by the national office before **May 15**, and 50% upon cancellation before **May 22**. No refunds thereafter.
5. **Deadline:** The ENTIRE online entry MUST be completed and required payment postmarked via certified mail by May 15. Only registrations complete with respect to every essential item will be accepted. Late or incomplete entries risk removal from the tournament. Alternates have seven (7) days to commit to entry once notified, or they will forfeit their qualification. Deadline for registration of alternates is **June 1**. Alternates will no longer automatically be pulled up after June

1.

6. **Main Event Congressional Debate:** High school and middle school NSDA member students may submit legislation for consideration by February 5. The submitted legislation must be the original work of the student. Legislation is reviewed to ensure it adheres to Association guidelines, and blindly vetted by a committee who rates and selects legislation. Students who qualify to the National Tournament in Congressional Debate will have the opportunity to rank legislation between April 28-May 1 on Tabroom.com to determine which items make the national docket. **The national docket will be released on the Association's website by May 15**. Judges interested in adjudicating Congress should select "prefer Congress" and/or "Qualified Parliamentarian" in their National Tournament registration.
7. **Original Oratory and Informative Speaking: Entrants must UPLOAD a copy of their manuscript and works cited page during online registration, signed by the contestant and the coach**, certifying the speech is the student's original work. **Note:** No more than 150 words may be quoted from other sources. Extensive paraphrasing from other sources is prohibited. ***The document MUST include a complete work cited page in MLA or APA format***. Something must be uploaded in the Nationals registration system by the May 15 deadline, but script uploads may be edited and completed by the Saturday prior to the tournament.
8. **Interpretation (HI, DI, Duo, and POI):** Entrants must UPLOAD the typed copy of their cutting with any word omissions or additions identified in ink AND the highlighted manuscript of the original source used during online registration. The photocopy of the original source includes the cover, publication page, and all original pages in the order in which they are performed with spoken words highlighted and additions or deletions clearly marked. All POI entries must include a works cited page with their upload. Something must be uploaded in the Nationals registration system by the May 15 deadline, but script uploads may be edited and completed by the Saturday prior to the tournament. Refer to "Source Verification" in the Interpretation Event Rules for details.
9. **No Double Entry:** A contestant may enter only one main event category.
10. **Supplemental Event Entry:** Students may be pre-registered for in-person supplemental events beginning March 15. All students entering supplemental events are required to pre-register with the national office before **May 15**. Re-registration will take place online through Tabroom.com on Tuesday during the National Tournament. If a student chooses not to compete after re-registration has been confirmed, the school may be assessed a drop fee.
11. **Non-Qualifier Supplemental Competition:** Each member school may register up to two districts-eligible member students who did not qualify to Nationals into supplemental events. Students and schools are not required to go to the district tournament to be eligible.
12. **World Schools Debate**: All NSDA districts are allowed to qualify **up to two teams** of three to five students using the procedures outlined in the *High School Unified Manual*. The deadline for the district chair to officially name a team is May 15. Each district must provide a full-time judge per

team available for the entirety of the competition. Districts that do not provide a full-time judge per team will not be permitted to enter.

13. **Big Questions Debate**: All NSDA districts are allowed to qualify **two entries** using the procedures outlined in the *High School Unified Manual* as long as the event occurs before May 1. Only entries composed of individual debaters may compete at Nationals. Each school with 1-2 entries must provide a full-time judge available for the entirety of the competition.
14. **Entry Release Forms:** It is the fundamental responsibility of the coach to acquire a signed Entry Release Form for each competitor before the first day of National Tournament competition. These signed forms must be retained by the coach through December 31, and tournament officials may request this signed form at any point during and immediately following the competition. Failure to produce these forms may result in disqualification from competition. Coaches do NOT need to upload a copy of this form to their online registration in Tabroom.com like previous years, though they are welcome to upload them to Tabroom.com for records-keeping. Coaches will agree to a disclaimer certifying that they will acquire and retain these forms before they are permitted to begin the online registration process. Please note that electronic signatures are only permitted if all students participating from your school are ages 13 or over.
15. **Mailing:** Send the required fees via certified mail **postmarked** no later than **May 15**, to: **National Speech & Debate Association, 6600 Westown Parkway, Suite 270, West Des Moines, IA 50266**. *NOTE: Nothing needs to be mailed except payment if paying by check.*
16. **Lodging:** Information concerning the hotel block and tournament activities is available online at www.speechanddebate.org/nationals. All attendees are encouraged to stay at one of the NSDA recommended properties.
17. **Pre-Order Nationals T-Shirts** Guarantee you and your students get the shirts sizes you need! Sizes tend to sell out quickly, so pre-purchasing is a great option. T-shirts may be pre-ordered in your school's Tabroom.com online registration OR by visiting the NSDA Store. T-shirts will be available for pick up at the National Tournament site.
18. **Judging Information**: All judges must be available to judge every round of the day they are assigned. All judges are eligible to be assigned to judge supplemental events on Wednesdays through Friday, even if their school does not have any entries competing in supplemental events.
    A. **Minimum Judge Requirement Per School**: Each school is required to cover a minimum of two judge days with a judge as a condition for entry to the National Tournament. Schools that do not furnish a judge will be assessed a minimum penalty of $700.
    B. **Judge Eligibility**: One judge may cover a maximum of 3 days of judging. Judges must have graduated or left high school before July 31, 2025. Judges must have a Tabroom.com account before they may be registered. Ineligible judges being entered into the judging pool will result in a penalty of $700 per ineligible judge.

C. **Policy Debate**: 2 days per entry. A school with one team registered owes 2 days, two teams owes 4 days, 3 teams owes 6 days, etc. Policy Debate judge days may not be bought out; schools must provide qualified judges to cover their obligation. All Policy Debate judges must complete a paradigm card through the Tabroom.com Nationals registration system by May 15. Each judge will be notified which of these days they are judging in Tabroom.com when the Judge Swap Window opens on the Thursday before the tournament starts.

D. **Public Forum Debate**: A school with one team entered owes 2 days. A school with two teams entered owes 3 days. A school with three teams entered owes 4 days. A school with four teams entered owes 5 days. Public Forum Debate judge days may not be bought out; schools must provide qualified judges to cover their obligation. Each judge will be notified which of these days they are judging when the Judge Swap Window opens on the Thursday before the tournament starts.

E. **Lincoln-Douglas Debate**: A school with one entry owes 2 days. A school with two entries owes 3 days. A school with three entries owes 4 days. A school with four entries owes 5 days. Lincoln-Douglas Debate judge days may not be bought out; schools must provide qualified judges to cover their obligation. All Lincoln-Douglas Debate judges must complete a paradigm card through the Tabroom.com Nationals registration system by May 15. Each judge will be notified which of these days they are judging when the Judge Swap Window opens on the Thursday before the tournament starts.

F. **Speech**: Each speech entry accrues one day of judging owed. A school with one entry owes 1 day, two entries owes 2 days, three entries owes 3 days, etc. Speech judge days may be bought out for $120 per day. Each judge will be notified which of these days they are judging when the Judge Swap Window opens on the Thursday before the tournament starts.

G. **Congressional Debate**: Each Congress entry accrues one day of judging owed. A school with one entry owes 1 day, two entries owes 2 days, three entries owes 3 days, etc. Congress judge days may be bought out for $120 per day. A judge covering one day of a Congress obligation should expect to judge two sessions. Judges who prefer to judge Congress should mark it as their preference in the Nationals registration system. Each judge will be notified which of these days they are judging when the Judge Swap Window opens on the Thursday before the tournament starts.

H. **World Schools Debate**: Each district team must supply one full-time judge per team that is available for the entirety of the tournament from Monday through Thursday. This judge may not be bought out.

I. **Big Questions Debate**: Each school must provide one full-time judge per two entries or fraction thereof. Judges must be available for the entirety of the tournament from Monday through Thursday. This judge may not be bought out.

J. **Supplemental Events**: A school that pre-registers 1-2 entries owes one day. A school that pre-registers 3-4 entries owes 2 days. A school that pre-registers 5-6 entries owes 3 days. A school that pre-registers 7-8 entries owes 4 days, etc. One student entered in three events counts as three distinct entries. Supplemental judge days may be bought out for $120 per day. Each judge will be notified which of these days they are judging when the Judge Swap Window opens on the Thursday before the tournament starts.

K. **Judge Bond**: If all judges from a school complete all judging assignments, including semifinal and final round judging assignments, the $200 judge bond will be returned by July 31—either in the form of a mailed check OR as a credit applied to the school account, per your selection made through the online registration process on Tabroom.com. You can log in to your Tabroom.com account to view your selection (mailed check or school credit). Failure to report for a judging assignment or pooling assignment will forfeit your judge bond of $200 for the first round missed, and a $100 per judge per round penalty will be assessed thereafter. A school will not be permitted to renew membership or compete the following year until all outstanding fees are paid. Schools that want to appeal loss of judge bond or fees are invited to complete the online appeal form at www.speechanddebate.org/fee-appeal-form. Review of appeals will begin on **July 10**. The deadline to appeal is **September 30**. For other judge bond questions, please contact info@speechanddebate.org.

L. All judges at the National Tournament are required to write feedback on ballots.

General Rules

Eligibility and Qualification

1. **Events**: The tournament shall consist of main event contests in Policy Debate, Public Forum Debate, Lincoln-Douglas Debate, Congressional Debate–Senate, Congressional Debate–House of Representatives, International Extemporaneous Speaking, United States Extemporaneous Speaking, Original Oratory, Informative Speaking, Dramatic Interpretation, Humorous Interpretation, Duo Interpretation, Program Oral Interpretation, and World Schools Debate. Supplemental and other contests may be conducted. Fees and judging requirements are established each year by the Board of Directors.
2. **Qualification**: National qualification shall be determined by district National Qualification Levels enumerated in the District Tournament Operations Manual section.
3. **Auto-Qualification:** At the National Tournament, any entry who places in the top 14 in any main event, top 16 in World Schools, or top 16 in Big Questions, 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.
4. **Double Qualification**: A student may not qualify for, or enter in, more than one main event.
5. **Alternates**: If qualifier(s) do not register for the National Tournament by the established and published deadline date, alternate(s) may, in order of finish at the district tournament, register and attend the tournament. The top 14 contestants (teams) in order of finish in each event at the district tournament shall be designated as qualifiers and/or alternates.
6. **Eligibility**: Any student who has attended a secondary school more than nine semesters cannot be entered into the National Tournament. Any student who is not an Association member cannot be entered into the National Tournament. No student may participate in the National Tournament who has not met the age and eligibility requirement of their state activities association. If a student has already qualified to come to the National Tournament before they graduate, they will be allowed to attend the National Tournament, but no student may return from college and participate in a district tournament. Graduation is defined as the receiving of a diploma or its equivalent, or notice

of a passing GED test score. Students who compete for a post-secondary institution while they are in high school are ineligible to compete at the district and National Tournament.

Overarching Competition Rules

1. **Forfeit**: A contestant who does not appear at the scheduled time to speak shall be marked last. A debate team more than 15 minutes late shall forfeit the decision. The Rules Protest Panel may waive these penalties for valid reasons.
2. If a student/team competes in the wrong contest section or against the wrong opponent, at no fault of their opponent or the tournament officials, that student/team will automatically receive last or will receive a loss for that particular round.
3. **Tabroom.com Account:** Every participant and attendee at the National Tournament is required to create a Tabroom.com account. No student or judge will be able to compete in the tournament without a Tabroom.com account with valid contact (phone/email) information.
4. **Judges**: Main event preliminary debates and speech events shall be judged by two judges; elimination rounds by three judges; semifinals by five. World Schools and Big Questions Debate will have one judge in preliminary debates. **In final rounds of debate, any odd number 9 or greater judges will be assigned by the tournament director in consultation with the local host and Board of Directors. In final rounds of speech events, at least 13 judges will be assigned by the tournament director in consultation with the local host and Board of Directors, with a minimum of one high and low rank dropped to allow for 11 final round ballots to be counted. Judges must have graduated or left high school before July 31, 2025 to be eligible. Ineligible judges' schools will incur a $700 fine.** The first ballot missed by a judge from a school will result in the loss of the judge bond. A $100 per judge per round penalty is assessed when a judge misses each subsequent judging assignment. Judges assigned by the tournament committee shall be final unless protested in writing for cause.
5. **Judge Process:** Judges who are obligated to judge on a particular day should remain available for each round that day. Judges may wait in the judge pooling room or check Tabroom.com to determine if they have been assigned a round to judge; however, judges must not rely on Tabroom.com notifications and should check their Tabroom.com account or with the judge pooling room to ensure they do not have an assignment. The first time a judge fails to show up to a round on time, their school will lose their judge bond. For each subsequent round a judge fails to be present for a round, a $100 per judge per round penalty is assessed. Judges assigned by the tournament committee shall be final unless protested in writing for cause.
6. **Ballot Feedback:** At the National Tournament, judges are required to leave written feedback on online ballots.

7. **Internet Rules:** Review the Current Guidelines for Use of Internet Enabled Devices in debate, Congress, and Extemp. These guidelines permitting the use of internet will be used at the National Tournament. The internet rules for debate do not apply to World Schools Debate.

    a. Once the chamber is called to order, competitors in the chamber shall not engage in electronic communication with anyone inside or outside the chamber until the session is adjourned. This prohibition includes, but is not limited to, electronic messaging, email, group chats, shared live documents like Google Docs, or any platform that permits real-time or delayed communication with another person. Should students request to examine evidence, the evidence exchange shall be done through the Presiding Officer and Parliamentarian via a point of information as per National Tournament policy. Shared electronic access of official chamber resources, including the Unified Manual, is permitted. This prohibition does not apply during recesses.

8. **Generative Artificial Intelligence:** At the 2027 National Tournament, in events in which speeches must be the original created work of a competitor (OO, INF, IX, USX, SW, EXC, IMP, EXP) students are prohibited from quoting or paraphrasing text directly from generative AI sources. Generative AI should *not be cited as a source*. The exception is that a student delivering a speech about the topic of AI may quote AI to illustrate their points about AI, in accordance with existing quoted word limits. While generative AI may be used to guide students to articles, ideas, and sources, the original source of any quoted or paraphrased evidence must be available if requested.

    In debate events, generative AI should *not be cited as a source;* while generative AI may be used to guide students to articles, ideas, and sources, the original source of any quoted or paraphrased evidence must be available if requested.

    In Interpretation events, students are prohibited from performing material created by generative AI sources. Generative AI should *not be used as a source of material;* while generative AI may be used to guide students to articles, ideas, and material, the original source of any material that is performed must be available if requested.

9. **Video/Audio Recording:** No recording (audio or visual) of rounds is allowed at the National Speech and Debate Tournament without the written consent of the Association.

10. **Protests**: Protests are filed using the online protest form. The form includes:

    A. 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.

    B. Code of person/team being protested.

C. Round being protested.

D. Section/room and speaker number of person/team being protested.

E. Specific infraction being protested described with supporting detail.

After the infraction has been observed/discovered, the protest must be filed in a timely manner. After filing a protest, the coach must report to the Rules Protest Panel holding room. For coaches initiating protests, **decisions of the Rules Protest Panel are final**. Coaches may not appeal the decision of the Rules Protest Panel. If a perceived violation occurs in a subsequent round, another protest may be filed.

11. The National Tournament Director and Rules Protest Panel may reduce the prescribed penalty for a rule violation in speech and debate based on the severity of the infraction.
12. **Disqualification:** In case of a disqualification of a contestant in the National Tournament, all previous ranks and decisions of other contestants stand and no revision of past round ranks will take place.
13. **Cumulative Trophy Points:** Each time a student appears in a debate or a main event contest, their school shall receive one trophy point. Trophy points shall accumulate from year to year, and the participating school with the largest total at the conclusion of each tournament shall receive the Bruno E. Jacob award sponsored by Pi Kappa Delta.
14. **Interpretation Material:** The interpretation cutting performed in the first round of competition must be used throughout the entirety of the tournament in that event (DI, HI, Duo, POI, Prose, Poetry, Storytelling). If a main event (DI, HI, Duo, POI) cutting is changed between the date it is submitted online and registration, a new cutting must be reported and submitted to the national office prior to the end of registration.
15. **Harassment and Discrimination Policy:** The National Speech & Debate Association is committed to providing its participants, judges, coaches, and staff the opportunity to pursue excellence in their endeavors. This opportunity can exist only when each member of our community is assured an atmosphere of mutual respect. The NSDA prohibits all forms of harassment and discrimination. Accordingly, all forms of harassment and discrimination, whether written or oral, based on race, color, religion, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, marital status, citizenship, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, or any other characteristic protected by any applicable federal, state, or local law are prohibited, whether committed by participants, judges, coaches, or observers. Individuals who are found to have violated this policy will be subject to the full range of sanctions, up to and including removal from the tournament premises.
16. **Tournament Adjustments:**

    A. Under no circumstance shall a tournament or part of a tournament be re-run because of a violation of these rules.

B. In the case of a disqualification of a contestant, all previous ranks and decisions of other contestants stand and no revision of past round ranks will take place.

17. **Tabulation Errors:** If a tab room error in speech events at the National Tournament results in a contestant being incorrectly eliminated from the tournament, that contestant will be reinstated to the tournament at the earliest possible time once the error has been discovered. If the final round is completed, the contestant will be placed at a point one round beyond their elimination. Any awards that might have been earned at that point will be given. If a tab room error prevents contestants from participating in the final round because of a tab room error in the semifinal round, their final placement will be based on their accumulated ranks prior to the final round. If a tab room error at the National Tournament results in an announcement at the awards assembly of an incorrect placement in an event, no contestant's place will be lowered. Contestants whose ranks justify a higher position will be awarded the correct place and award. Ties may result.

18. **Merit Points**:

A. In preliminary rounds:

1. Main Debate Events with 2 Judges:

Win (2-0)	= 10 points
Split (1-1)	= 8 points
Loss (0-2)	= 7 points

2. Main Debate Events with 1 Judge:

Win	= 10 points
Loss	= 7 points

3. Speech:

Two judge totals of 2 or 3	= 10 points
Two judge totals of 4 or 5	= 9 points
Two judge totals of 6 or 7	= 8 points
Two judge totals of 8 or 9	= 7 points

Two judge totals of 10+	= 6 points

B. In elimination rounds:

1. Debate Events:

Win	= 10 points
Loss	= 7 points

2. Speech and Supplemental Events:

Events	**1st Place**	**2nd Place**	**3rd Place**	**4th Place**	**5th/7th Place**
Speech	= 10 points	= 9 points	= 8 points	= 7 points	= 6 points
Supplemental	= 6 points	= 5 points	= 4 points	= 3 points	= 2 points

C. In Congress: average of points awarded by official scorers, on a scale of 3-9 points per speech and complete hour of presiding.

D. Bonus (to national winners):

1st Place	= 15 points
2nd Place	= 10 points
3rd Place	= 5 points

Tournament Procedures for Debate Events

The following rules apply to Public Forum, Lincoln-Douglas, and Policy Debate events.

General Rules and Instructions

1. **Entries:** An entry is defined as a team of two Policy or Public Forum debaters, or an individual Lincoln-Douglas debater. No substitution is allowed. A Policy or Public Forum team with only one debater may not compete. No mavericks are permitted.
2. **Codes:** Entries are identified by a random numerical code.
3. **Advancement/Elimination:** Entries are guaranteed six preliminary rounds; those who have won 8 or more ballots compete in rounds 7 and 8. Beginning with round 7, an entry is eliminated as soon as it loses two debates.
4. **Prompting Philosophy:** Oral prompting, except time signals, either by the speaker's colleague or by any other person while the debater has the floor, is discouraged, though not prohibited, and may be penalized by some judges. Debaters may, however, refer to their notes and materials and may consult with their teammate while they do not have the floor or during Public Forum Grand Crossfire.
5. **Timing:** Timekeepers are an option but not required. If no timekeeper is used, debaters may time for their partners or the judge may keep time. See rules for each event, particular to preparation time.
6. **Reading Case and/or Plan:** An entry may decide, when asked by the opponent entry for a copy of their case and/or plan, whether or not to provide it; if the team refuses they will not be penalized in any way. Entries must share evidence if requested; review the Evidence Rules in the *High School Event Rules Manual*.
7. **Oral Critiques:** No debate ballot may be submitted without a written reason for decision. Oral commentary is not considered a substitute for the written ballot. The Association strongly discourages judges from disclosing decisions in the preliminary round of competition. Comments made by a judge (orally or written) should be constructive and professional.
8. **Judges:**
   A. Two computer-assigned judges will be used in all preliminary rounds; three judges in elim rounds prior to semifinals.
   B. In semifinals, five judges are assigned who have been nominated for late elimination rounds by district chairs, the tournament director, or self-nomination. The semifinal is any round that may result in the finalists being determined upon its conclusion.
   C. In the final round, any odd number 9 or greater judges will be assigned by the tournament director in consultation with the local host and Board of Directors.

D. Judges will be permitted to adjudicate students from their state in the final round. However, judges will continue to be prohibited from adjudicating students from their district in finals.

9. **Conflicts:** Contestants in any debate event who are about to be judged by someone who has taught them at any time must report that fact immediately to the tournament office. Failure to comply may result in disqualification. Judges **must** recuse themselves from judging a student under the following conditions:

   A. 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:

      1. 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 the Rules Protest Panel 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.
      2. The judge has a paid or unpaid coaching, consulting, or judging relationship with the student or school during the same academic year. **NOTE:** Serving as a tournament-hired judge does not constitute a conflict of interest.
      3. The judge has received or provided expressed or implied offers to provide future coaching, consulting, or judging to a school or student.
      4. 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 themself 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.

   B. 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:

      1. 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.
      2. The judge and the student are or have been in a familial, physical, or emotional relationship.
      3. The judge and the student have communications of a personal nature over email, telephone, or the internet including social networking sites that go beyond casual 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.

C. The judge does not believe they are able to fairly and impartially adjudicate a competition involving a particular student for whatever reason.

D. 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 aid 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.

Protocol for States with Seven or More Districts

For the purposes of better facilitating pairing and judge placement procedures at the National Tournament, any state that has seven (7) or more NSDA districts will be as evenly divided as possible into two separate groups. The districts will be divided by the national office based on geographic location and district size equalization.

Debate Pairing Instructions

1. Pairing Priorities Rounds 1-2

These take absolute precedence over pairing methods. Priorities are more important than side alternation.

A. The first priority is the drawing of byes.

B. The second priority is to avoid the pairing of entries from the same school.

C. The third priority is to avoid the pairing of entries who have met previously in the tournament, except to avoid the pairing of entries from the same school.

D. The fourth priority is to avoid the pairing of entries from the same state except to avoid pairing entries from the same school or entries who met earlier (waived after round 11).

2. Drawing of Byes

A. Once a bye has been correctly drawn, it cannot be changed.

B. All entries eligible for a bye must be included in the drawing.

C. Until three entries remain, byes shall first be drawn from entries losing to a team still undefeated. If no remaining entries have lost to an undefeated or if team(s) losing to an undefeated have had previous bye(s), a blind draw shall take place among once defeated team(s) which have had no bye.

D. When only 3 entries remain and only one is undefeated, that team must get the bye, even if it has had a previous bye.

E. No team may refuse a bye.

3. Steps in Pairing Rounds 1-2

When pairing debate rounds at the National Tournament, the following order of business should be followed unless they violate the pairing priorities above.

A. The first step is the drawing of byes.

B. The second step is the pairing of undefeated entries.

C. The third step is the selection of a once-defeated team to meet an undefeated team, if necessary.

D. The fourth step is the pairing of once-undefeated entries.

4. Pairing of Rounds 1-2

A. A preset schedule for the first two preliminary rounds of the National Tournament will be prepared by the computer.

5. Pairing Priorities for Power Matched Rounds 3-6

A. The first priority is to avoid the pairing of entries from the same school.

B. The second priority is to avoid the pairing of entries who have met previously in the tournament, except to avoid the pairing of entries from the same school.

C. The third priority is to avoid the pairing of entries from the same state except to avoid pairing entries from the same school or entries who met earlier (waived after round 11).

B. The fourth priority is to ensure that each team shall uphold three affirmatives and three negatives unless byed, except Public Forum rounds that always flip to determine sides.

D. The fifth priority is bracket integrity.

6. Pairing of Rounds 3-6

A. After round 2, entries are ordered or seeded by the following:
   1. Highest ballot count
   2. 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)
   3. Highest total entry speaker points
   4. Lowest average opponent seed
   5. Coin flip/random number

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

C. Pull up entries, if needed, beginning with the top bracket. 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. Pull up entries from the brackets below according to the following priorities:
   1. Pull up entries only if they are due to debate the short side in a side locked 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

D. 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. SOP scores are calculated by adding the seeding of the entry together with their average opponent seed up to that point in the tournament. The following priorities should be used in pairing powermatched debates:
   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 as a previous round in sidelocked rounds
   4. Pair entries according to their position in the bracket as determined by SOP scores

E. The bye will be assigned in a way that creates the best pairing according to the priorities. The bye must go to an entry that cannot advance to elimination rounds 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. 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.

7. Qualification for Elimination Rounds

A. Each debate in the six preliminary rounds will be judged by two judges.

B. Each team will count ballots cast in its favor [byes count as two ballots; receiving a forfeit win counts as two ballots].

C. Any team who wins eight ballots or more qualifies for elimination rounds 7 and 8.

8. Rounds 7 and 8

A. The qualifying entries shall begin rounds 7 and 8 with a clear record (0-0). Each team shall be affirmative in one round and negative in the other, unless byed.

B. Pairings shall be made at random, but:

1. No team shall be paired against its own school.
2. Entries who have met previously shall not be paired.
3. Entries from the same state shall not be paired.

C. After round 8, those entries losing both rounds 7 and 8 are eliminated. The remaining entries continue until losing a second time or reaching the final round.

D. No team shall be eliminated before losing twice or losing the final round.

9. Pairing Methods for Subsequent Elimination Rounds

Philosophy: A team is an independent unit and shall be paired and assigned sides based upon its own record. The opponents debated, sides debated, or byes drawn by other entries from its school are irrelevant and must NOT be used when pairing or assigning sides.

A. Pairing the Undefeated Bracket

1. Pair undefeated entries against undefeated entries.
2. Entries should alternate sides, if possible; however, alternation of sides is not one of the core priorities.
3. Pairing Procedure in Lincoln-Douglas and Policy Debate:
    a. The computer will first pair the undefeated bracket, alternating sides where possible.
    b. If there is an odd number of undefeated entries, one randomly-chosen once-defeated team who is due to uphold side opposite the odd undefeated team will be assigned to that round. If this pairing creates a conflict in pairing priorities, the computer will randomly choose a different once-defeated team who is due the appropriate side.
    c. If there are no once-defeated entries who are due to uphold the side opposite the odd undefeated team, a randomly-chosen once-defeated team who is not due will be assigned to the round. If this pairing creates a conflict in pairing priorities, the computer will randomly choose a different once-defeated team.

d. Entries who have debated an unequal number of affirmative and negative debates **are considered *due*** the side in which they have participated in the least, these side constraints **CANNOT** violate the priorities listed above in pairing priority rule 1 which are substantially more important. When a team has debated an equal number of affirmative and negative debates, the team is considered eligible for either side in the next round, and side alternation from the previous round is ***NOT A PRIORITY*** and should not be considered in pairing.

4. Pairing Procedure in Public Forum Debate: The computer will first pair the undefeated bracket. If there is an odd number of undefeated entries, it will assign a randomly-chosen team from the once-defeated bracket to that round.
5. Entries from the same school shall not be paired in the undefeated bracket unless,
   a. They are the last two undefeated entries, or
   b. The last three undefeated entries, or
   c. Three of the last four undefeated entries, or
   d. A majority of the undefeated entries (after a bye, if any,) has been drawn.

B. Pairing the Once-Defeated Bracket.

1. Pair once-defeated entries (except that one once-defeated team may be drawn to meet an undefeated) against once defeated entries.
2. Entries should alternate sides, if possible.
3. Pairing Procedure in Lincoln-Douglas and Policy Debate:
   a. The computer will randomly pair the remaining once-defeated entries. The computer will attempt to give entries the side they are due to uphold.
   b. If there is an uneven number of entries due to debate one side, the computer will randomly choose entries not to uphold the side they are due.
   c. Every effort should be made to adhere to pairing priorities as listed in Section I.
4. Pairing Procedure in Public Forum Debate: The computer will randomly pair the once defeated bracket.
5. Entries who have met previously should not be paired unless too few entries remain. Too few entries shall be deemed to remain when no combination of pairings can be constructed where all entries are meeting for the first time without leaving the bracket.
6. Entries from the same school shall not be paired unless,
   a. They are the last two once-defeated entries, or
   b. They are the last 3 once-defeated entries.
   c. Two of the last three once-defeated entries and the other team draws a bye.

d. Three of the last 4 once-defeated entries, or

e. Three of the last 5 once defeated entries and one of the other two entries draws a bye.

10. Assignment of Sides in Elimination Rounds

Sides are assigned in Policy and Lincoln-Douglas Debate. Each team operates as an independent unit. Side assignments are NOT based on sides debated by other entries from its school. *Side assignment is less important than other pairing priorities.*

A. No team should be assigned to debate three times in succession on the same side unless *pairing priorities* force this to happen.

B. Byes in elimination rounds:

1. Until three entries remain, byes shall first be drawn from entries losing to a team still undefeated. If no remaining entries have lost to an undefeated or if team(s) losing to an undefeated have had previous bye(s), a blind draw shall take place among once defeated team(s) which have had no bye.
2. When only 3 entries remain and only one is undefeated, that team must get the bye, even if it has had a previous bye.
3. No team may refuse a bye.

C. If entries meet a second time, they must reverse sides.

D. If entries meet a third time:

1. If both have had an unequal number of "affirmatives" and "negatives" and the less debated sides are opposite, each shall be assigned the less debated side.
2. If one team has an uneven number of "affirmatives" and "negatives," and the other team an equal number, the team with the uneven number shall be assigned its less debated side and the other assigned the opposite side.
3. If both entries have an equal number of "affirmatives" and "negatives" and are, therefore, due to uphold the same side, or if both entries have an unequal number, and both have debated more on the same side and less on the other, then sides shall be assigned by blind draw.

Note: Sides are not assigned in Public Forum Debate. Every round is a flip round.

11. Elimination and Final Round

A. Beginning with round 7, double elimination shall be in effect until there are two entries remaining.

B. When two entries remain, they shall be assigned to a final round. The decision of that round shall determine the national debate champion.

C. Determining 3rd - 14th place:

1. Placement shall be determined by the most number of rounds. Byes and forfeit wins count as rounds debated.
2. When contestants are eliminated in the same round, placement shall be determined by total ballot count throughout the elimination rounds. Byes shall count as many ballots as judges in each debate in the round where the bye occurred. Forfeits shall not count toward ballot count.
3. If still tied, placement shall be determined by total ballot count throughout the preliminary rounds. Byes and forfeits shall count as many ballots as judges in each debate in the round where the bye or forfeit occurred.
4. If still tied, placement shall be determined by the winner of a previous meeting between the two entries in the elimination rounds.
5. If the tied entries did not meet in the elimination rounds, placement shall be determined by the winner of previous meeting in the preliminary rounds, if one of the entries won both ballots.
6. If still tied, both contestants will receive the same placement and the same award.

12. Tabulation of Speaker Points (Policy Debate and Lincoln-Douglas Debate only)

A. Each ballot is to be recorded. If ballots are submitted with incomplete information, every attempt should be made to get information in order to complete ballot tabulations. Averages will be used if ballots remain incomplete.

B. Determination of the top speakers shall proceed as follows:
   1. Drop high and low ballots from 12 total ballots of 6 preliminary rounds.
   2. Add up total speaker points from the remaining ballots of the guaranteed rounds (10 ballots).

C. Tie-breaking procedures:
   1. Use total speaker points (12 ballots)
   2. Drop a second set of high-low ballots (8 ballots).
   3. The debater or the team advancing the furthest in the tournament.

Tournament Procedures for Main Speech Events

General Rules and Instructions

1. **Codes**: Entries are identified by a random numerical code.
2. **Judges**:
   A. Two computer-assigned judges will be used in all preliminary rounds; three judges will be used in elim rounds prior to semifinals.
   B. In semifinals, five judges are assigned who have been nominated for semifinals.
   C. In the final round, at least 13 judges will be assigned by the tournament director. A minimum of one high and low rank will be dropped to allow for eleven ballots to be counted for the final round.
   D. Judges will be permitted to adjudicate students from their state in the final round. However, judges will continue to be prohibited from adjudicating students from their district in finals.
   E. Judges must abide by the Conflict Policy section.
3. **Scripts**: Competitors in Interpretation events, Original Oratory, and Informative Speaking must upload appropriate materials during Nationals registration, found in the Instructions for Registering section. It shall be the affirmative duty of each coach and each student entered to determine absolutely that the cutting or manuscript being performed meets Association rules. Refer to "Source Verification" in the Interpretation Event Rules for details about the script turn-in.
4. **Time Signals:** Competitors are permitted to time themselves and are encouraged to do so. Time signals will not be grounds for protest.

Speech Sectioning Instructions

1. Guaranteed Preliminary Rounds

Sectioning: Guaranteed rounds will be randomly paired by computer:

A. *Pairings*: No student is placed in a section with another student from their same school, Association district, or state.
B. *Opposition*: Each student will meet different opposition in each round.
C. *Order:* Speaker position will be diversified throughout the preliminary rounds.

2. Elimination Rounds:

A. Elimination Process:
   1. After preliminary rounds, each main event will be reduced to the top 60 contestants determined on the basis of low total ranks in the six preliminary rounds. Ranks are not truncated based on section size in preliminary or elimination rounds. Ties will be broken using the priority system.

2. The top 60 contestants in each individual event will be guaranteed competition through rounds 7 and 8, known as the octafinals.
3. At the conclusion of octafinals, each individual event will be reduced to the top 30 contestants determined by the total of judge ballots in the octafinals ***only***. Ties will be broken using the priority system.
4. The top 30 contestants in each individual event will be guaranteed competition through quarterfinals. Rounds 9 and 10 shall be known as the quarterfinals.
5. At the conclusion of quarterfinals, each individual event will be reduced to the top 14 contestants determined by the total of judge ballots in octafinals and quarterfinals *only*. Ties will be broken using the priority system.
6. The top 14 contestants in each individual event will be guaranteed competition through round 12. Rounds 11 and 12 shall be known as the semifinals.
7. At the conclusion of the semifinals, each individual event will be reduced to the top six contestants determined by the total of judge ballots in elimination rounds. Ties will be broken on the basis of the priority system.
8. The top six contestants in each individual event will compete in the final round.
9. At the conclusion of the final round, the final placement of contestants will be determined on the basis of the low cumulative total of all judge ballots in octafinals, quarterfinals, and semifinals plus eleven ballots from the final round after dropping at least one high and low rank for each contestant in the final round only.

B. *Paneling*:

1. *Number*: The number of panels in each event shall be as follows:
   a. Octafinals: 10 panels of six contestants each.
   b. Quarterfinals: five panels of six contestants each.
   c. Semifinals: two panels of seven contestants each.
   d. Finals: one panel of six contestants
2. *Procedures*: Total each speaker's ranks. Then organize the contestants in order from low total to high total. Determine the number of panels. Section contestants in a back and forth (snake/weave) pattern (Example 1).

Example 1
5 panels (1 has the lowest total, 30 the highest total)

A	B	C	D	E
1	2	3	4	5
10	9	8	7	6

11	12	13	14	15
20	19	18	17	16
21	22	23	24	25
30	29	28	27	26

3. *Balance*: Pairing in the elimination rounds shall be balanced. The sum of contestant ranks in each section shall be equal or be close to equal.
4. *Adjustment*: Contestants should be changed from one panel to another to avoid (in the precedence listed):
    a. Contestants from the same school in the same panel.
    b. Contestants from the same state in the same panel (through octafinals).
    c. Contestants with the lowest cumulative ranks total in the same panel.
    d. Contestants who have competed against each other in preceding rounds.

    In later rounds, some of these conditions become unavoidable; however, each and every one should be avoided whenever possible.

3. Speaking Order

A. *Philosophy*: Speaking order for contestants should be varied throughout the tournament.
    1. In the six guaranteed rounds, best efforts shall be made such that no contestant is given a speaking position twice.
    2. In *all* elimination rounds speaking positions should be varied. A speaker should not repeat a speaking position until it becomes unavoidable.

B. *Procedure:* To determine speaking order, total the speaker's positions in previous rounds on each speaker's card, and then arrange the cards in each section high to low. The higher numbers will speak in the top half of the round, and the lower numbers will speak in the bottom half. Adjust the cards within the framework so that a student speaks in a new position, if possible (Example 2).

Example 2

Note that G, F, B, have the same total, yet speak 2, 4, 5 as adjustments are made to give them a new position.

Speaker	Position				Total	Comment	Position
	Rd. 1	Rd. 2	Rd. 3	Rd. 4			Rd. 5
A	1	3	5	2	11	Low total; never 7	7
B	4	1	7	3	15	Never 5	5
C	2	6	7	4	19	High total; never 1	1
D	7	1	6	2	16	2nd high; never 3	3
E	5	3	2	4	14	Never 6	6
F	6	2	5	2	15	Never 4	4
G	3	7	4	1	15	Never 2	2

C. *Priority*: New positions for several speakers take priority over exact high to low placement order (Example 3).

Example 3

Speaker	Position			Total	Comment	Position
	Rd. 1	Rd. 2	Rd. 3			Rd. 4
A	2	5	3	10	2nd highest; has been 2, 3	4
B	3	2	4	9	Middle; never 5	5
C	4	1	4	9	Never 3	3
D	4	3	1	8	Low; but never 2	2
E	6	3	2	11	High; never 1	1

D. In Extemporaneous Speaking events, unless it is unavoidable, students from the same school shall not cross-examine one another. Speaker order should be adjusted accordingly.

E. Speaking order in the final round of speech events shall be determined by random placement.

4. Elimination Round Selection

A. *Octafinals Selection*: On a low cumulative basis, totaling all judges' ballots in the preliminary rounds, octafinals shall be composed of the top 60 contestants divided into 10 panels of six each. If ties in cumulative scores bring the number to over 60, the priority system shall break ties:

1. Greatest number of firsts, then seconds, then thirds, etc., in an individual judge's rankings.
2. If ties cannot be resolved by the above method, those tied shall be included in the octafinals.

B. *Quarterfinals Selection*: Using only the individual judge's ballots from elimination rounds, quarterfinals shall be composed of the top 30 contestants divided into five panels of six each. If ties in cumulative scores bring the number to over 30, the following procedure shall be employed.

1. In a two-way tie if the participants have met, the tie is resolved in favor of the winner. If there is a multiple tie or the opponents have not met, then
2. Greatest number of judges' firsts, seconds, thirds, etc., in elimination rounds only.
3. Greatest number of firsts, seconds, thirds, etc., in elimination round re-rankings.
4. If still tied, both (all) participate.

C. *Semifinals Selection*: On a low cumulative basis, considering the individual judge's ballots from rounds elimination rounds, semifinals shall be composed of the top fourteen contestants divided into two panels of seven each. If ties in cumulative scores bring the number to over 14, the procedure used above (for determining quarterfinalist contestants) shall be employed.

D. *Finals Selection*: The final round shall be composed of the top six contestants selected on a low cumulative basis. If ties bring the number over six, the following shall be considered in the order listed to break ties:

1. Low cumulative judges' ballots counted in semifinals only (speakers need not have been in the same panels).
2. Greatest number of firsts in both semis.
3. Greatest number of individual judge's firsts, seconds, etc., awarded in *all* elim rounds.
4. If ties cannot be resolved by the above methods, those tied are to be included in the finals.

E. *Final Score*: The winner in each event shall be determined on the basis of low total cumulative score, counting the individual judges' ranks in octafinals and quarterfinals and the ranks of all judges in semifinals, and eleven individual judge's ranks in the final round, after dropping at least one high and one low rank for each contestant in the final round. IN ALL ROUNDS, ACTUAL JUDGES' RANKS SHALL BE RECORDED AND ADDED.

F. *Breaking Ties in Final Scores:* If ties exist, the following shall be considered in order listed to break ties (Example 4):

1. Low total in the final round only, after dropping high and low ranks for each speaker.
2. Judges' preference in the final round only, after dropping high and low ranks for each speaker.
3. Low total of all ranks in the final round.
4. Greatest number of firsts in the final round only.
5. Judges preference or reciprocals from all final round judges.
6. If ties still exist, duplicate awards will be given.

Example 4						
Speaker	**Rd. 7 Ranks**	**Rd. 8 Ranks**	**Rd. 9 Ranks**	**Rd. 10 Ranks**	**Rd. 11 Ranks**	**Rd. 12 Ranks**
A	1 2 3	1 4 1	1 5 2	1 1 1	1 5 2 2 1	2 3 2 1 4
B	1 1 1	2 2 2	3 3 3	2 4 3	3 1 1 4 2	1 1 3 2 2
C	2 3 3	1 1 1	1 2 2	2 1 1	2 2 3 1 5	3 2 1 4 1

Speaker	**Judge Ranks**													**Cumulative Total**
A	(1)	4	1	3	3	1	2	1	2	2	(5)	3	2	70
B	4	(5)	2	2	2	3	(1)	2	3	5	2	2	3	77
C	2	3	3	1	(1)	2	(5)	2	4	1	1	4	5	70
** Two high and two low ranks dropped. Speakers A and C tie at 70 cumulative total. Speaker A wins with 24 in the final round. Speaker C has 28.*														

5. Ties in Elimination Rounds

A. *Two-Way Ties:* Two-way ties shall be broken in elim rounds (Example 5).

Example 5					
Speaker	**Judge 1**	**Judge 2**	**Judge 3**	**Cume**	**Place**
A	1*	3	2*	6	1st
B	2	1*	3	6	2nd
Speaker A is preferred by two of the three judges.					

B. *Three- and Four-Way Ties:* Three- or four-way ties shall not be broken in any panel (Examples 6 and 7). Each contestant involved in a three- or four-way tie in a panel shall be awarded the better middle position for which the speakers are tied. For other contestants in the panel, eliminate the next position(s) after the tie ranking.

Example 6					
Speaker	**Judge 1**	**Judge 2**	**Judge 3**	**Cume**	**Place**
A	1	2	3	6	2nd
B	2	3	1	6	2nd
C	3	1	2	6	2nd
The next rank in the round would be fourth.					

Example 7					
Speaker	**Judge 1**	**Judge 2**	**Judge 3**	**Cume**	**Place**
A	1	3	4	8	2nd
B	2	5	1	8	2nd
C	3	2	3	8	2nd
D	5	1	2	8	2nd
The next rank in the round would be fourth.					

6. Tabulation of Results

A. In Preliminary rounds:
After each round, the two judges' ranks for each student in that round should be recorded in the computer.

B. In Elimination rounds:

All judges will use online ballots through Tabroom.com. The computer will then total the judges' decisions and give a rank to each contestant, low cumulative ranking first, etc.

7. Speech Rules Infractions

Rules infractions at the National Tournament will result in consequences based on the circumstance and magnitude of the infraction. The following options are listed progressively according to their level of severity. Each may be utilized independently.

A. *Level 1*: Issue a warning with the instruction to correct the infraction for the next round. If not corrected, the competitor will be penalized accordingly.

B. *Level 2*: Cannot receive a rank of 1 from any judge in the round. All competitors' scores will be re-adjusted accordingly (e.g., over the grace period, etc.).

C. *Level 3*: Drop 2 ranks from all judges in the round (e.g., 1 to 3, 2 to 4, etc.). All competitors' scores will be re-adjusted accordingly.

D. *Level 4*: Change ranks to last or a loss from all judges in round. All competitors' scores will be re-adjusted accordingly. (e.g., a student competes in the wrong contest section or against the wrong opponent at no fault of their opponent or tournament officials, etc.).

E. *Level 5*: Disqualify the entry. All competitors' scores will be re-adjusted accordingly. (e.g., plagiarism, exceeding transitional material guidelines, using non-existent evidence in extemporaneous preparation events, misrepresenting the content of the script submitted with what is actually presented in the round, using internet to communicate with outside sources during extemporaneous preparation events, etc.). If an entry is disqualified, one or more of the following may happen:

1. If in a final round, any placings or points earned by that student will be vacated. All competitors ranked lower than the disqualified competitor will be moved up one placement in that round. If multiple violations in the same event have occurred, competitors will be advanced accordingly. If the violation is discovered during the semifinal round, the offending competitor will be ranked last in the semifinal round. If the student still qualifies for the final round with that ranking, their place in the final round will be vacated, and the next place competitor will be placed in the final round. If re-ranking is necessary, it is only applicable to the round in which the violation occurred, not previous rounds in the tournament.
2. If the violation occurs in a final round and the violation would result in a new champion, the championship will be vacated. Potential scholarships may be forfeited.
3. All coaching points earned for all of the school/chapter's competitors for the entire tournament will be removed.
4. The offending school/chapter may lose up to four entry slots for the next year's district tournament. The school/chapter will not be eligible for any bonus entries for the district tournament.
5. All rounds in which the competitor participated will not be included in the count toward eligibility for School of Excellence and Bruno E. Jacob awards.
6. The contestant's high school administration and chapter advisor may be notified of the violation of the Honor Code.
7. The offending student(s) may have their Association membership revoked.

8. National Tournament Audit Procedures

The national office may perform an audit of all semifinal round speech to confirm that no egregious violations of the rules has occurred. An auditor will follow along during each performance, as well as

capture an audio recording of the round. Their role is to observe, listen, and make notations as needed. They are not there to be a test of perfect script memorization, but rather, to record any overt concerns such as written material being added to scripts to enhance the performance. The auditor will not lodge protests, make any adjudications, or share their concerns with anyone but the members of the Rules Protest Panel; they will simply report any concerns for consideration. The Rules Protest Panel will collect any information from the auditor and determine if further action needs to be taken. In Extemporaneous Speaking, auditors will record and check source citations. In Original Oratory and Informative Speaking, auditors will record source information and observe visual aids if applicable.

National Congressional Debate Procedures

I. **National Legislation**

A. Any high school and middle school NSDA member students may submit legislation for consideration by February 5. The submitted legislation must be the original work of the student.

B. Legislation is reviewed to ensure it adheres to Association guidelines, and blindly vetted by a committee who rates and selects legislation.

C. Students who qualify to the National Tournament in Congressional Debate will have the opportunity to rank legislation between April 28-May 1 on Tabroom.com to determine which items make the national docket.

D. The national docket will be released on the Association's website by May 15.

E. Legislation will not be tied to its author at the National Tournament; no authorship speeches will be given.

II. **Internet Use** – The Current Guidelines for Use of Internet Enabled Devices will be used at the National Tournament. Once the chamber is called to order, competitors in the chamber shall not engage in electronic communication with anyone inside or outside the chamber until the session is adjourned. This prohibition includes, but is not limited to, electronic messaging, email, group chats, shared live documents like Google Docs, or any platform that permits real-time or delayed communication with another person. Should students request to examine evidence, the evidence exchange shall be done through the Presiding Officer and Parliamentarian via a point of information as per National Tournament policy. Shared electronic access of official chamber resources, including the Unified Manual, is permitted. This prohibition does not apply during recesses.

III. **Opening Assembly** – includes the Pledge of Allegiance and Oath of Office, and general announcements. All participants and officials are expected to adhere to start and end times, accordingly.

IV. **Preliminary Chambers** – in the Senate and House of Representatives, there are chambers of approximately 16-21 students each.

A. Preliminary rounds are split into three sessions of about three hours apiece; each session:

1. Begins with electing a presiding officer.
2. Features a new seating chart, with necessary accommodations made for students with special needs.
3. Resets precedence and recency.
4. Begins with debate on new legislation not debated in a previous session.

B. A parliamentarian will be assigned to a chamber for all preliminary sessions. Parliamentarians call their chambers to order and will:

1. Announce they shall remain in the background but will not hesitate to step forward firmly when their presence is required. They will impress upon members of their chambers that their purpose is to debate legislation; no misuse of the parliamentary procedure will be tolerated. They will announce that in questions of procedure, priority is as follows:
    a. Association rules and procedures.
    b. Rulings by the tournament director's designee, who will consult *Robert's Rules of Order* and other Association officials if necessary.
    c. The parliamentarian may not add guidelines or suggestions that are not approved by Association rules and/or the tournament director's designee.
2. When each session begins, conduct a single-ballot election for presiding officer. Unless one candidate receives a majority of votes cast, the person with the fewest votes is dropped. If combined votes of the two lowest candidates do not equal votes of the next lowest candidate, both are eliminated. Once a candidate receives a majority, they will serve for the session immediately following the election and receives an engraved gavel. Note: a student may run for presiding officer each session, but once they are elected and serve, they may not be considered for future preliminary sessions unless no other student wishes to serve.
3. Once elected, the presiding officer will conduct business of the chamber. At the beginning of session 1, the chamber will establish an agenda. Tournament staff may debrief the first session presiding officers while chambers determine agendas.
4. While chambers determine agendas, tournament staff will debrief the first session presiding officers, including sharing the preset precedence for speeches and questioning.
5. Parliamentarians should familiarize themselves with Association rules and procedures (furnished with chamber materials) and become acquainted with names of students in the chamber as placed on the seating chart.
6. Since different districts and leagues use their own rules, legislators frequently believe local rules are synonymous with national rules. The parliamentarian must be well versed with the *national* rules and willing to consult tournament staff when necessary. They must be firm but fair at all times.
7. Ensure that each session, the chamber reaches as close to three hours of floor debate as possible (not counting recesses or presiding officer elections).
8. Ensure proper speech times: up to three minutes for speaking. Direct questioning will be used for all rounds. The presiding officer will recognize questioners for a cross-examination period of no more than 30 seconds according to the preset questioning precedence.
9. Ensure the precedence/recency chart is reset for each new session using the preset recency supplied by tournament officials. Contestants should keep a record of how many speeches

they have given and may confirm with the parliamentarian. The preset recency chart should be used in order for speeches and in reverse order for questioning.

10. Keep a record of all amendments, proposed and passed, using amendment forms.
11. Keep a list of speakers and the total number of speeches each gives, making notes of the strengths and weaknesses of each, but without consulting scorers. At the end of the preliminary session, parliamentarians will preferentially *rank* all of the students, with the top eight ranks tabulated with the other judges' as part of the cumulative rank total.

C. Two scorers are assigned each session in rotation between sessions to various chambers. They will:
    1. Award three (3) to nine (9) points per speech without consulting each other regarding their evaluation. A speaker's *answers* during the questioning period *should* weigh in the scorers' evaluation.
    2. Award the presiding officer three (3) to nine (9) points per complete hour of service.
    3. Rank their eight (8) more preferred students in each session they evaluate.
D. There should be little consultation between Congress officials concerning the chamber when it is in session. The parliamentarian *should* consult with scorers to confirm the number of speeches actually given by each student.
E. Debate on legislation shall commence as follows:
    1. Legislation will not be tied to its author at the National Tournament; only sponsorship speeches will be given.
    2. Any amendment must be presented to the presiding officer in writing on the appropriate form before being moved and presented. In consultation with the parliamentarian, the amendment will be ruled either germane or dilatory. Any legislator may seek the floor to defend or oppose the amendment, recognized in order according to precedence/recency.
F. After each preliminary session, the presiding officer (PO) will be presented a gavel and must either agree or decline to serve as a PO if they advance to semifinals. This choice, once made in writing on the official form, is binding, and a PO who has agreed to further service may not withdraw until that round of service has been completed.
G. At the end of the preliminary session, the top students in each chamber will advance. Each chamber will advance an equal number of students.
    1. At the end of each scorer's and parliamentarian's judging commitment, they will rank their eight (8) most preferred students in the chamber; the parliamentarian also will complete a ballot ranking all students in the chamber. Students with the lowest cumulative rank total will advance to the next level of competition. Ties will be broken in order of the following priorities:

a. Judges' preference
b. Reciprocal fractions
c. Adjusted cumulative rank total after dropping highest and lowest ranks
d. Judges' preference of adjusted cumulative rank total
e. Reciprocals of adjusted cumulative rank total
f. Rank by the parliamentarian

V. **Quarterfinal and Semifinal Sessions**

A. Students are assigned to chambers in the priority listed:
1. Seed (mathematical progression; "snaking/weaving")
2. Avoid district conflict
3. Equal distribution of presiding officer nominees.
4. Equal state distribution.

B. Three scorers and one parliamentarian will be assigned to each chamber.

C. The quarterfinal and semifinal rounds are split into two sessions of three hours apiece; each session:
1. Begins with electing a presiding officer.
2. Features a new seating chart, with necessary accommodations made for students with special needs.
3. Resets precedence and recency.
4. Begins with debate on new legislation not debated in a previous session.

D. Only preliminary session presiding officers may be considered as candidates for presiding the quarterfinal, semifinal, and final sessions.
1. A student may decline nomination in writing at any time, but once they do so, they may not be considered for presiding officer in later sessions. Once a student agrees to nomination, they must serve in the next level of advancement, if designated.
2. The top four presiding officer candidates will advance in nomination for the next level of presiding, using a priority system as follows:
a. Points awarded *for presiding* in the preliminary session.
b. Cumulative rank total.
c. Adjusted cumulative rank total.
d. Parliamentarian's ballot.

E. At the beginning of each quarterfinal and semifinal session, conduct a single-ballot election for presiding officer from among the candidates supplied by tournament staff, following the same

procedures as in the preliminary session (II.B.2). In the event there is no student in a chamber wishing and/or eligible to preside, an adult official will be assigned to preside. The winner receives an engraved gavel. There is no longer an audition period.

F. At the end of the House quarterfinal session, the top legislators in each chamber advance to the semifinal House session. At the end of the semifinal session of the House and Senate, the top legislators in each chamber advance to the final session. Advancement procedures will be described at the Opening Ceremony.

   1. At the end of each scorer's and parliamentarian's judging commitment, they will rank their eight (8) most preferred legislators in the chamber; the parliamentarian also will complete a ballot ranking all legislators in the chamber. Legislators with the lowest cumulative rank total will advance to the next level of competition. Ties will be broken in order of the following priorities:

      a. Judges' preference

      b. Reciprocal fractions

      c. Adjusted cumulative rank total after dropping highest and lowest ranks

      d. Reciprocals of adjusted cumulative rank total

      e. Rank by the parliamentarian

   2. Students not advancing to the final session may claim a Senator Karl E. Mundt Medallion.

VI. **Final Session**

A. Judges will be permitted to adjudicate students from their state in the final round. However, judges will continue to be prohibited from adjudicating students from their district in finals.

B. Eight (8) scorers and one parliamentarian will be assigned to each chamber.

C. Students will be randomly assigned seats on a seating chart randomly generated on computer by the tab room, with necessary accommodations made for students with special needs.

D. Presiding officer nominees will be selected from those that served as a presiding officer in the semifinal session, with the same caveats enumerated in IV.D.1. The top four will be placed on the list of nominees, based on the following criteria:

   1. Points awarded in the semifinal session *for presiding*.

   2. Points awarded in the preliminary session *for presiding.*

   3. Semifinal cumulative rank total.

   4. Adjusted semifinal cumulative rank total.

   5. Parliamentarian's ballot in the semifinal round.

E. Before electing the presiding officer, an audition period of approximately 30 minutes will be used, and candidates' names shall be drawn randomly to determine the order of auditioning.

The audition is not scored, nor will it count in precedence (for recognition purposes). In the event there is no student in a chamber wishing and/or eligible to preside, an adult official will be assigned to preside.

1. Following auditions, the parliamentarian will conduct an election for the final session Speaker of the House and President of the Senate. These students will be recognized at the awards assembly and each presented a presentation gavel, engraved accordingly.
2. The final session presiding officer is eligible to be ranked among the speakers in the session.
3. All speeches given by the four presiding officer candidates will be scored, and merit points shall be recorded, accordingly. The elected presiding officer also will receive points for presiding, per hour, following the election. Auditioning time shall not count toward merit points.

F. Final Ranking:

1. At the end of each session, scorers will rank their top eight (8), and at the end of the segment, parliamentarian's will rank all members, with their top 8 counting towards initial ranking. Final placement will be determined by adding up all of the ranks and determining the order based upon the lowest cumulative rank. Ties will be broken in the following priorities:
   a. Judges' preference
   b. Reciprocal fractions
   c. Adjusted cumulative rank total after dropping highest and lowest ranks
   d. Reciprocals of adjusted cumulative rank total
   e. Rank by the parliamentarian

VII. **Leadership Award*:*** At the end of the preliminary session, the quarterfinal House session, the semifinal session, and the final session, the students in each chamber shall preferentially rank a number of students in the chamber. The student who advances to the final round in the Senate and in the House with the lowest cumulative rank total will earn the leadership bowl, with ties broken:

A. Dropping the highest and lowest ranks
B. Reciprocal fractions
C. Most first place ranks
D. Placement by the judges, with any applicable tie-breakers factored

VIII. **Trophies and Awards**

A. Each presiding officer will receive a gavel.
B. Non-advancing semifinalists will receive the Senator Karl E. Mundt Medallions.
C. All final session contestants will receive the Representative John Lewis Medallions.

D. Contestants finishing 7th through 14th will be recognized with a trophy at the Nationals Awards Ceremony.

E. Contestants finishing 1st through 6th will be recognized with a trophy at the National Awards Ceremony.

F. *Karl E. Mundt National Congress Trophy* – This honor (awarded since the first National Congress in Wooster, Ohio, in 1938) is presented each year to the school represented at that year's National Congress whose students have accumulated the most participation points, awarded as follows:

   1. One point for each session (finals counts as two sessions, since it is so long)
   2. Two points for advancing, or for being elected presiding officer in a session
   3. Three points for placing 4th, 5th, or 6th
   4. Four points for placing 2nd or 3rd place
   5. Five points for the national champion in the Senate and House
   6. Upon earning this award, a school's total resets to zero

Supplemental Event Procedures

Supplemental Events

Eligibility: Any student who qualified to the National Tournament in a main event is eligible to be pre-registered in supplemental events. Additionally, each member school may register up to two member students that did not qualify for the National Tournament into supplemental events. Non-qualifying students entered in supplemental events do not need to have attended the district tournament.

Re-registration: Contestants eliminated from competition before the allotted time may re-register to participate in any supplemental event they were pre-registered in on Tuesday, June 15. Contestants only competing in supplemental events must also re-register on Tuesday, June 15.

Entry Limits: Students may be re-registered in up to two supplemental speech events. Students may only re-register in one event per pattern. Students cannot enter both Extemp Debate and any other supplemental speech event.

Pattern A: Extemp Commentary, Original Spoken Word Poetry, Prose, Expository

Pattern B: Impromptu, Poetry, Storytelling

OR Extemporaneous Debate

Sectioning and Tabulation for Supplemental Speech

1. **Preliminary Rounds**: Three preset rounds of sections of 5, 6, or 7 will be evaluated by a single judge. All ranks above 6 will be truncated to 6 in preliminary rounds.

2. **Break:** If an event has more than 600 re-registered entries, a minimum of 204 total entries will advance to elimination rounds. If an event has 250-599 re-registered entries, a minimum of 120 total entries will advance to elimination rounds. If an event has fewer than 250 re-registered entries, a minimum of 60 total entries will advance to elimination rounds. The exact number of students that break will be based on wherever there is a clean break in ranks (preferable) or reciprocals that breaks as close to, but not under, the preferred number of entries.

3. **Elimination Round Judging:** Three judges will evaluate each section until the round of 14. Five judges will judge the round of 14. Seven judges will judge the final round. Judges will be permitted to adjudicate students from their state in the final round. However, judges will continue to be prohibited from adjudicating students from their district in finals. All ranks above 6 will be truncated to 6.

4. **First Elimination Round:** After preliminary rounds, students will be ranked in order based on the following factors:

    a. Lowest cumulative ranks

b. Highest reciprocals

c. Lowest opponent ranks

d. Highest total points

5. **Second Elimination Round:** After the first elimination round, the remaining students will be ranked in order based on the following factors:

    a. Lowest cumulative ranks from the first elim round and prelim rounds dropping the worst rank

    b. Highest reciprocals of ranks from the first elim round and prelim rounds dropping the worst rank

    c. Lowest cumulative ranks from the first elimination round

    d. Judges preference from the first elimination round

    e. If entries are still tied, both will advance.

6. **Third Elimination Round:** After the second elimination round, the remaining students will be ranked in order based on the following factors:

    a. Lowest cumulative ranks from elim rounds and prelim rounds dropping the worst prelim rank

    b. Highest reciprocals of ranks from elim rounds and prelim rounds dropping the worst prelim rank

    c. Lowest cumulative ranks from the second elimination round

    d. Judges preference from the second elimination round

    e. If entries are still tied, both will advance.

7. **Fourth Elimination Round:** After the third elimination round, the remaining students will be ranked in order based on the following factors:

    a. Lowest cumulative ranks from elim rounds

    b. Highest reciprocals of elim ranks

    c. Lowest cumulative ranks from the third elimination round

    d. Judges preference from the third elimination round

e. If entries are still tied, both will advance

8. **Fifth Elimination Round (if needed):** A fifth elimination round will only be held if an event had more than 600 re-registered entries. If held, after the fourth elimination round, the remaining students will be ranked in order based on the following factors:

    a. Lowest cumulative ranks from elim rounds

    b. Highest reciprocals of elim ranks

    c. Lowest cumulative ranks from the fourth elimination round

    d. Judges preference from the fourth elimination round

    e. If entries are still tied, both will advance

9. **Finals**: The final round shall be composed of six total students. The top six contests are determined based on the following factors:

    a. Lowest cumulative ranks from elims

    b. Highest reciprocals of elim ranks

    c. Lowest cumulative ranks from the previous elimination round

    d. Judges preference from the previous elimination round

    e. Lowest cumulative ranks from elims dropping the highest and the lowest ranks

    f. Highest reciprocals of elim ranks dropping the highest and the lowest ranks

    g. Continue dropping the highest and lowest ranks to determine lowest cumulative elim ranks, then highest reciprocals of elim ranks, until the tie is broken.

10. **Determining final round placement:** Finalists shall be ranked based on:

    a. Lowest cumulative ranks from elims

    b. Lowest cumulative ranks from finals

    c. Judges preference from finals

    d. Lowest cumulative ranks from elims dropping the highest and the lowest ranks

    e. Lowest cumulative ranks from elims dropping two highest and two lowest ranks

Extemporaneous Debate

Extemporaneous Debate Building Split: Entries in Extemp Debate will be split into two groupings. Roughly half of the entries in the event will compete in Building A, and half will compete in Building B. Schools will learn whether their entries will compete in Building A or B in late May. Entries competing in Building A will compete against other Building A entries in rounds held on Wednesday of the National Tournament; entries competing in Building B will compete against other Building B entries in rounds held on Wednesday of the National Tournament. On Thursday, all remaining entries will merge into one division and compete against each other at one building. The top two competitors will compete together in the final round to determine the national champion.

The grouping of entries will be done randomly based on geography with the following guidelines:

A. The number of pre-registered entries in each building will be roughly equal.

B. All pre-registered entries from a district will be placed in the same building. All Extemp Debate entries from a district will compete at the same building.

C. States with 4+ districts will have half of their districts placed in Building A and half of their districts placed in Building B.

D. We will strive for geographic diversity within the two groups while balancing the need for numbers to be close to equal in both.

Sectioning and Tabulation for Extemporaneous Debate

1. **Preliminary Rounds:** All Extemp Debate entries will compete in four guaranteed preliminary rounds. The first two preliminary rounds will be randomly paired, and rounds 3 and 4 will be power-matched.
2. **Break**: After round 4, all entries with a 3-1 or 4-0 record will advance to round 5.
3. **Advancement**: Starting with round 5, after a competitor loses two rounds, including losses in round 1-4, they are eliminated from the tournament.
4. **Determining finalists**: Each building will run elimination rounds until each building has their top competitor. The top competitor from each building will compete in the final round to determine the national champion.

Determining 3rd through 14th place in Extemporaneous Debate:

The overall top 14 competitors in Extemp Debate receive awards. If ties exist in determining placings, the following shall be considered in the order listed to break ties:

1. Placement shall be determined by the most number of rounds. Byes and forfeit wins count as rounds debated.

2. When contestants are eliminated in the same round, placement shall be determined by total ballot count throughout all rounds. Byes shall count as many ballots as judges in each debate in the round where the bye occurred. Forfeits shall not count toward ballot count.
3. If still tied, placement shall be determined by total ballot count from rounds 6 to round eliminated. Byes shall count as many ballots as judges in each debate in the round where the bye occurred. Forfeits shall not count toward ballot count.
4. If still tied, placement shall be determined by the winner of a previous meeting between the two debaters in any round.
5. If still tied, both contestants will receive the same placement and the same award.

World Schools Debate Procedures: USWSDI

Basic Overview

Please consult the USA World Schools Debate Invitational Manual for official debate rules, procedures, and protocols governing this event.

All judges and competitors will be required to attend a training session on Sunday (registration day).

Entries

- World Schools teams are comprised of three to five students. A team with two or fewer debaters may not compete.
- The cost of travel and lodging is the responsibility of the participants.
- Each NSDA district may enter **up to two teams** to the National Tournament, provided they offer a second judge to cover the commitment for the second team.
- Guest nations may enter teams. Please reach out to info@speechanddebate.org for more information.

Judges

- Each team must furnish one judge. The judge may not be entered into any other judging pool at the National Speech & Debate Tournament.
- There are no hired judges available.
- Judges must attend judge training on Sunday.

Motions

- There will be a mixture of prepared and impromptu motions for the competition.
- Prepared motions will be announced by May 1.

Participation in Supplemental Events

- Teams who do not advance to competition on Wednesday are eligible to enter in supplemental events if pre-registered. Coaches must re-register online.

Big Questions Capstone Event Logistics

For additional information about debate rules and access to resources and judge training, visit the Big Questions website at www.speechanddebate.org/big-questions.

Entries

- The two top-placing students at each district's Big Questions division will be invited to participate at Nationals. (For details, refer to the District Qualification Process for Big Questions Debate section of this manual.)
- Only entries composed of individual debaters may compete at Nationals.

Judges

- Each school with one or two entries must provide a full-time judge available for the entirety of the competition. The judge may not be entered into any other judging pool at the National Speech & Debate Tournament.
- There are no hired judges available.

Topic

- Students will debate the current year's topic.

Participation in Supplemental Events

- Students who are eliminated from competition early are eligible to enter in supplemental events if pre-registered. Coaches must re-register online through Tabroom.com.

Big Questions Debate Procedures

1. **Eligibility:** The two top-placing students at each district's Big Questions division will be invited to participate at the National Tournament. Only entries composed of individual debaters may compete at Nationals.
2. **Rules:** Rules in the Big Questions format manual will be used.
3. **Judges:** Each school with one or two entries must provide a full-time judge available for the entirety of the competition. That judge may not be entered into any other judging pool at the National Tournament.
4. **Sectioning and Tabulation:**
    A. **Preliminary Rounds:** All debaters are guaranteed six preliminary rounds with one judge. The first two rounds are preset. The following four rounds are power-matched using the SOP (Seed + Opp Seed) method. All pairing and tabulation is done in Tabroom.com. Sides are pre-assigned, and if possible, each debater will debate three affirmative rounds and three negative rounds. Judges will assign a win and loss (no ties permitted) and speaker points on a 30-point scale. When possible, judges should not judge competitors from the

same state in the preset rounds. When possible, judges from the same district should not judge competitors from their district in the preliminary rounds.

B. **Pairing Preset Rounds:** Preset rounds are paired with the following priorities in order:

1. Avoid two entries debating each other more than once
2. Avoid any entry debating on the same side of the topic more than once
3. Avoid any entry drawing a bye (due to uneven numbers) more than once

C. **Pairing Powermatched Rounds:**

1. After round 2, entries are seeded by the following:
   a. Highest number of rounds won
   b. Highest total speaker points with highest and lowest scores dropped
   c. Highest total speaker points
   d. Lowest average opponent seed
   e. Coin flip
2. Debates are assigned within brackets. All entries with the same win count are grouped in the same bracket.
3. Entries will be pulled up to a bracket with a higher win count if the number of entries due one side is uneven or to avoid scheduling a debate between entries who have previously debated. The pull up should not force a debate between entries that have previously debated. The pull up should come from the nearest bracket possible and have the highest average opponent seeding in that bracket. Entries may be pulled up more than once.
4. Within each bracket, the computer will schedule entries according to the following priorities:
   a. Avoid entries debating more than once
   b. Avoid any entry debating on the same side as the previous round in sidelocked rounds
   c. Pair entries so that the entry with the lowest SOP (Seed + Opp Seed) score debates the entry with the highest SOP score.
5. The bye will be assigned in a way that creates the best pairing according to the priorities. The bye must go to an entry that cannot advance to elimination rounds 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. 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.

D. **Breaking to Elimination Rounds:** Entries will be ranked by the computer based on the same seeding rules used for powermatching. All competitors with four or more wins in the preliminary rounds will advance to a single elimination round bracket. The best seeded entry

debates the worst seed, the second best debates the second worst, etc. If the number is not a power of two, then the top seeded debaters are given byes until the bracket is complete. Debaters will use the Tabroom.com coin flip in any debate where the entries have not previously debated. If entries have previously debated, they should debate on the opposite sides of the topic from the previous round.

E. **Elimination Rounds**: Each elimination round will have a minimum of a three judge panel. 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.

National Tournament Awards

Team Awards

Pi Kappa Delta/Bruno E. Jacob Trophy

Each time a student appears in a main event round, their school shall receive one trophy point. Trophy points shall accumulate from year to year and the participating school with the largest total at the conclusion of each tournament shall receive the Bruno E. Jacob Award, sponsored by Pi Kappa Delta.

School Awards

Coaches who believe their team has qualified for one of the following School Awards (next page) may visit the tournament office on Friday to view a list of qualified schools. One coach from each qualified school should attend the National Awards Assembly Friday evening to accept the award on behalf of their school. Big Questions, World Schools Debate, and supplemental events do not count toward school awards.

Formula for Determining School Awards

Speech		
Octafinals (Rounds 7/8)	+ 3 points	(Total 3
Quarterfinals (Rounds 9/10)	+ 3 points	(Total 6)
Semifinals (Rounds 11/12)	+ 3 points	(Total 9)
Finals (Round 13)	+ 6 points	(Total 15)

Debate		
Rounds 7 through 14	+ 3 points per round	(Total up to 24)
Top 6 Place Winner	+ 6 points	(Total 30)

Congress		
Semifinalist	+ 5 points	(Total 5)
Finalist	+ 10 points	(Total 15)

Ties will be broken in favor of the school that has a greater number of total counted entries.

Schools of Outstanding Distinction

- Top 10 schools after combining both debate and speech points (must score points in both divisions).

Speech Schools of Excellence

- Top 20 schools in total speech points that did not win a School of Outstanding Distinction Award.

Debate Schools of Excellence

- Top 20 schools in total debate points that did not win a School of Outstanding Distinction award.

Speech Schools of Honor

- Top 21-40 schools in total speech points that did not win a School of Outstanding Distinction award.

Debate Schools of Honor

- Top 21-40 schools in total debate points that did not win a School of Outstanding Distinction award.

Outstanding School Achievement

- School administrators of the top six individuals or teams in each main event will be sent an Outstanding School Achievement plaque within two weeks of the end of the National Tournament. The plaques will be personalized with students' names, school, event, place, and year.

Individual Awards

1. Main speech event contestants eliminated after double octafinals (excluding Top 14) may claim plaques.
2. Main debate event contestants eliminated after round 8 (excluding Top 14) may claim plaques.
3. Congressional Debate contestants in the final session receive a Stennis Medallion in chamber; presiding officers receive award gavels in chambers; Congress semifinalists may claim a Senator Karl E. Mundt medals.
4. Supplemental event contestants eliminated in the semifinal round (non-advancing semifinalists) may claim plaques.
5. The students earning the most merit points in Debate and in Speech during the current year's National Tournament will receive national recognition.
6. The winners of the final United States Extemporaneous Speaking, International Extemporaneous Speaking, and Original Oratory round will each receive a President's Bowl. The winners of the final round in Humorous, Dramatic, and Duo Interpretation will each receive an Interp Bowl. The final

round bowl for Duo will be named in honor of Sandra Silvers. The bowls will be awarded to the student with the lowest cumulative ranks in finals. Ties for winners of the final round will be broken based on judge's preference in the final round, then ranks in the final dropping the best and worst scores, then ranks in the final dropping the two best and worst scores, then ranks in the final dropping three best and worst scores, then reciprocals of all ranks in the final round.

7. The top 14 main event contestants and top 6 supplemental event finalists are awarded trophies.
8. In Policy Debate and Lincoln-Douglas Debate, the top 14 debaters based upon preliminary round speaker points (dropping high and low) will receive speaker awards. The Phyllis Flory Barton Trophy will be presented to the top speaker in Policy Debate. The LD top speaker awards will be presented in memory of Tina Wang. The Dale Lauder McCall Trophy will be presented to the top speaker in Lincoln-Douglas Debate.

APPENDIX A: Debate Event Time Limits

Policy Debate	
Affirmative Constructive Speech	8 Minutes
Negative Cross Examines Affirmative	3 Minutes
Negative Constructive Speech	8 Minutes
Affirmative Cross Examines Negative	3 Minutes
Affirmative Constructive Speech	8 Minutes
Negative Cross Examines Affirmative	3 Minutes
Negative Constructive Speech	8 Minutes
Affirmative Cross Examines Negative	3 Minutes
Negative Rebuttal	5 Minutes
Affirmative Rebuttal	5 Minutes
Negative Rebuttal	5 Minutes
Affirmative Rebuttal	5 Minutes
Prep time, per team	8 Minutes

Lincoln-Douglas Debate	
Affirmative Constructive	6 Minutes
Negative Cross Examination	3 Minutes
Negative Constructive	7 Minutes
Affirmative Cross Examination	3 Minutes
Affirmative Rebuttal	4 Minutes
Negative Rebuttal	6 Minutes
Affirmative Rebuttal	3 Minutes
Prep Time, per debater	4 Minutes

Public Forum Debate	
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, per team	3 Minutes

Congressional Debate – *applies to each new legislation*	
Sponsor Speech	3 Minutes
Questioning of Sponsor	2 Minutes
First Negative Speech	3 Minutes
Questioning of First Negative	2 Minutes
All subsequent speeches	3 Minutes/each
Questioning of all subsequent speakers	1 Minute/each

Extemporaneous Debate	
Proposition Constructive	2 Minutes
Cross-Examination of Proposition	1 Minute
Opposition Constructive	2 Minutes
Cross-Examination of Opposition	1 Minute
Mandatory Prep Time	1 Minute
Proposition Rebuttal	2 Minutes
Opposition Rebuttal	2 Minutes
Mandatory Prep Time	1 Minute
Proposition Rebuttal	2 Minutes
Opposition Rebuttal	2 Minutes
World Schools Debate	
Proposition Team Speaker 1	8 Minutes
Opposition Team Speaker 1	8 Minutes
Proposition Team Speaker 2	8 Minutes
Opposition Team Speaker 2	8 Minutes
Proposition Team Speaker 3	8 Minutes
Opposition Team Speaker 3	8 Minutes
Opposition Rebuttal	4 Minutes
Proposition Rebuttal	4 Minutes

APPENDIX B: Speech Event Time Limits

Event	*Preparation Period*	*Maximum Time*	*"Grace Period"*
Extemporaneous Speaking	30 minutes	7 minutes	30 seconds
Original Oratory		10 minutes	30 seconds
Dramatic Interpretation		10 minutes	30 seconds
Humorous Interpretation		10 minutes	30 seconds
Duo Interpretation		10 minutes	30 seconds
Informative Speaking		10 minutes	30 seconds
Program Oral Interpretation		10 minutes	30 seconds
Extemp Commentary	20 minutes	5 minutes	30 seconds
Expository		5 minutes	30 seconds
Poetry or Prose		5 minutes	30 seconds
Impromptu	7 minutes to prepare *and* speak		30 seconds
Storytelling		5 minutes	30 seconds
Pro Con Challenge		10 minutes	30 seconds
Original Spoken Word Poetry		5 minutes	30 seconds

APPENDIX C: Evidence Rules Scenarios

The following casebook questions were adopted at the 2016 Spring Board Meeting to help clarify the evidence rules in Lincoln-Douglas, Public Forum, and Policy Debate.

Question: **A team/individual reads evidence in a round that comes from a) a purchased handbook, b) the Open Evidence Project sponsored by the NDCA, or c) a debate institute evidence packet. The other team calls for the original source of their evidence. The team/individual a) shows the original page from the handbook, b) shows either the original electronic or printed version of the OEP download or shows the web page from which the evidence was procured, or c) shows the electronic or printed version of the institute evidence. Is this sufficient proof for the original source?**

Answer: Yes. The team/individual has met the burden of demonstrating the original source of the evidence. However, if the team/individual uses any of these sources, they are still responsible for the validity of the evidence.

Question: **A team calls for the original source of evidence read by a team/individual. What are the choices that the challenged individual/team has to produce the original source?**

Answer: The team/individual may provide the original source of evidence in several acceptable ways:

1. The original source in an electronic or print version
2. Printed photocopies of the original source
3. Online versions of the original source that can be accessed at the conclusion of the round
4. The full text of the evidence from the original source with a full citation that can then be used to get the original source

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Question: **A team/individual reads evidence from a book. The opposing team asks to see the original source of the book. Must the team/individual produce the actual book as the original source?**

Answer: If evidence is quoted from a book, the debater is not expected to carry the entire book with them. Instead, they would be required to have either a printed or electronic copy of the page on which the evidence appears, the page preceding, and the page following the evidence in question.

Question: **A team/individual uses a "straw argument" (defined as a hypothetical statement made by an author which is later disproven by the same author which is used by the team/individual as the real position of the author). May that team/individual use such an argument?**

Answer: Debaters may use a "straw argument" if they explicitly cite, when the argument is first presented, that it is a straw argument and the author does not draw this conclusion.

Question: **A team/individual reads a philosophy text, agrees with one or more arguments advanced by the author, but disagrees with the author on what conclusions those arguments best justify. Is this an acceptable use of this evidence?**

Answer: If the team/individual clearly establishes that it is their analysis, the conclusion of the author is not being altered, and therefore, would be an acceptable use of evidence.

Question: **A team/individual reads a piece of evidence in the round. The opposing team/individual claims that the team/individual has removed the word "not" from the evidence and is, therefore, misrepresenting the evidence. The team/individual making the claim does not have a copy of the original source to substantiate their claim. Is this a legitimate and substantive challenge?**

Answer: The challenge is not a substantive one. The team making the challenge must have evidence that the team they are challenging has misrepresented the evidence. They must provide the original source as described in Question #2. Failure to do so would render the challenge illegitimate.

Question: **A team/individual uses a narrative to describe a condition on which arguments are based. The opposing team/individual claims that narratives are a violation of the evidence rules. Is this a legitimate violation claim?**

Answer: The definition of evidence does not restrict sources that can be cited by debaters. Nontraditional or nonacademic sources may be used to support claims. The definition is not intended to limit the range of material debaters can rely upon to support their arguments in rounds, nor does it merely define the types of material to which the rules apply. It does not favor traditional academic sources at the expense of organic intellectualism and other nontraditional sources. The judge's discretion may be used to determine the validity of the evidence and claim.

Question: **The team/individual reads only the name and year of the source when presenting evidence. Is this adequate to allow for the finding of a source?**

Answer: Reading only the name and year of the source is a commonly accepted cite format. This format can often determine the most basic level of validity/credibility from a quoted cite. The full cite information has to be available if there is a question.

Question: **A team/individual reads evidence by the same author from two different works by that author. May the team/individual only use the author's name or must they again cite author name and year as required for oral citation?**

Answer: Since the team/individual has used two different works, both would need to be cited separately. Failure to do so would be a violation of the oral citation requirement.

Question: **Common academic practices require the use of the either MLA or APA citation when doing academic work. Why aren't our evidence guidelines following those same requirements?**

Answer: MLA and/or APA requirements are not consistent with traditional expectations for various forms of debate. Teams/individuals should adhere to the requirements listed in the NSDA guidelines.

Question: **A team/individual paraphrases an author in the following manner(s): 1) In referring to the author's work/concept, the team/individual uses the specific author's name; 2) In referring to the general theory, the team/individual refers to the concept/work in general terms without specific reference to a specific author or person. What are the evidence citation requirements?**

Answer: In the first instance, the team/individual should be held to the same evidence citation standards as if they had actually read evidence from that author/person. In the second circumstance, they are using the "general understanding" concept and would not be required to offer a full source citation. However, they are still accountable for the accuracy and validity of the claim they are making.

Question: **A team/individual uses "ellipses" in evidence by doing the following: 1) The team/individual uses evidence from the same paragraph of a work, but uses the first part of the paragraph as one piece of evidence and the last part of the paragraph as a second piece, omitting the sentence(s) between the two parts of the paragraph; 2) The team/individual paraphrases the evidence they are citing, omitting parts of the evidence they are paraphrasing. Are these violations of the evidence guidelines?**

Answer: In both instances, the team/individual must be able to produce the original source of the evidence that would include the entire language of the quoted material being used. Failure to do so would be a violation of the evidence guidelines.

Question: **A team/individual is charged with not having read particular parts of evidence that they claimed to have read. How is that dispute to be resolved?**

Answer: The team must give some clear oral cue as to the end of the piece of evidence they have read and clearly indicate in the written text the portions of the evidence that have been read. If the judge determines that these standards have not been met, then they may render their decision accordingly. If they choose to ignore the challenge and fail to follow prescribed procedures, then that decision may be appealed to the tournament committee.

Question: **A team/individual uses private correspondence as evidence in a round. Is such correspondence allowed to be used in that manner?**

Answer: Teams/individuals may not use private correspondence as evidence. The reasons are many. First, other teams do not have the same access to the evidence that the team/individual might have. Corroboration and verifying the authenticity of the evidence/correspondence is difficult, as well. For academic reasons, teams/individuals may be encouraged to contact sources of evidence directly. However, they should do so only for their own education and ability to better explain publically accessible evidence by that author/person.

Question: **A team/individual challenges the evidence used or presented by their opponent. The judge determines that the challenge is legitimate and an evidence violation has occurred. What should the judge do at this point?**

Answer: In most cases the rules are very clear. In most cases, the team/individual is given a loss with no speaker points awarded (if applicable). The judge(s) should then note on the ballot the reason for the loss and the lack of speaker points. Judge education may need to take place to assist judges in such

situations. Unless the judge has misinterpreted or failed to follow a rule, their decision is final and binding. It may not be appealed.

Question: **A team/individual issues an evidence challenge by 1) merely questioning the validity of the evidence with little or no explanation or support; 2) producing the original source indicating that the opposing team has violated one or more of the evidence requirements. Are these legitimate evidence challenges?**

Answer: The second challenge is indeed legitimate and should be considered by the judge and/or tabulation committee. The first is not a legitimate challenge. If such a challenge is offered, the judge has two choices. They may choose to merely ignore the challenge and proceed with the round. They may also choose to pause the round, and ask the team making the challenge if they would like to issue a formal challenge, with the understanding being that the round would then be over once the challenge had been decided. The team would then choose to either proceed or make the formal challenge. Challenging teams must meet particular criteria. The challenging of evidence is a serious charge and should not be taken lightly.

Question: **A team/individual questions the legitimacy of evidence in the round, but does not issue a formal evidence challenge. Once the decision is made, and the team/individual finds out that they have lost the round (or believes that they have lost the round), they choose to file a protest with the tab room. Is this considered to be a legitimate evidence challenge?**

Answer: Any team or individual may protest the legitimacy of evidence at the completion of a round. However, the allegation must meet the same burdens as if the challenge were made in the round. Failure to meet any of the burdens required would render the challenge moot. The tabulation committee would follow the same procedures as a judge would in the round to determine if the allegation is legitimate. The same consequences would apply as if the judge were rendering the same decision.

Question: **A team/individual makes a formal allegation that a team/individual has distorted evidence, which could result in a loss for that team. The team/individual being charged now makes a counter allegation that the team/individual is using non-existent evidence. How should the judge(s) proceed in this situation?**

Answer: The judge(s) should address each allegation separately and in the order in which they were presented. In this case, the judge(s) should address the allegation of distorted evidence first. If the

allegation is found to be legitimate, the judge(s) would give the loss to the team found to have violated the evidence rules. If the allegation had no merit, the judge(s) would give the loss to the team making the allegation. The judge(s) would then address the second allegation. The same procedures would be followed. If the allegation had no merit, the judge(s) would now be affirming the previously awarded win. If the allegation had merit, the judge(s) would then give each team a loss in the round. Subsequent penalties (7.3.B) would then apply to both teams.

Question: **A team/individual makes a formal allegation that a team/individual has distorted evidence. The team being accused does not respond, but allows the judge to render a decision. The judge upholds the allegation and votes against the team/individual accused of distorting evidence. Once the ballot has been turned in, the team/individual and/or their coach file a protest of the round, alleging that their opponent has violated the evidence rules. What should the tabulation committee do at this point?**

Answer: The allegation must be treated just as any other post round protest should be handled. The persons protesting must do so within the prescribed time frame, with the same requirements to bring the protest. The team/individual being protested has the right to respond. The tabulation committee would then rule in the same manner they would with any other protest. If they choose to deny the protest, the decision in the round would stand. If they decide that a violation has occurred, both teams/individuals would be given a loss in the round, depending on the violation that had occurred.

APPENDIX D: Congress Evidence Challenge Form

To be submitted to the Parliamentarian for consideration. *(Please PRINT.)*

Student:		Code:	

School:		State:	

Please detail the specific piece of evidence that you are challenging, including any cited source information and where in the speech the evidence was used.

Please explain your reasoning and/or proof for challenging this piece of evidence. Please include whether you are in possession of the source and can produce it upon request.

I understand that alleging a violation without merit or to be found inaccurate could lead to a censure by the parliamentarian.

Student's Signature:	State:

APPENDIX E: Change Log

This section highlights revisions made to this document. Overarching modifications are indicated by a change in the second digit (e.g., 2.1.0), while minor edits or revisions to the current document are indicated by a change in the third digit (e.g., 2.0.1). The following are updates to the original versions.

Editor's Note: *For quick reference throughout this document, new changes for the current year are highlighted in yellow. Other recent changes made within the past one or two years remain highlighted in gray.*

SECTION 1: High School Chapter Manual Updates

Date	Version	Change Description
01/31/2011	2.0.2	Point recording chart for non-ranked evaluation in speech events added; chart for service point recording added; conversation of ranks vs. points in Congressional Debate added. Added graphics to clarify the individual application/enrollment process.
09/15/2011	2.0.3	Release for the 2011-12 school year. District committee information updated to reflect abolishment of the alternate position, as well as online voting. Minor document formatting.
01/05/2012	2.0.4	Stipulation added that candidates for district committee members must be active coaches (affiliated with a school) in the district. Congressional Debate point recording conversation table added for when 6-pt. scoring is not used. Reference to automatic point recording added.
02/24/2012	2.0.5	Clarified that only one score can be entered per round for interscholastic competition (p. 4-5). Speech ranks are averaged for panels, except for final rounds, where the overall tournament placement is used. Note added on quick reference. Added rule prohibiting retroactive point recording for service speaking projects beyond one year prior. Clarified that changes to online points database records must be submitted by the chapter advisor of record. Added information about the new Student Service Citations.
01/07/2013	2.0.6	Clarified changes in Recording Merit Points, including non-competitive/service points.
12/10/2013	2.1.0	Noted change to quarterly *Rostrum* publication cycle. A minimum of four schools must be present at a tournament for Association merit points to be earned in all events. Added new procedures for Student Website Registration. Updated the National Qualification Levels, which replace the red, yellow, green status system previously in place.
8/22/2014	3.0.0	Updated branding to reflect the organization's name change (National Forensic League to National Speech & Debate Association).

		Updated website and email contact information throughout: www.speechanddebate.org / info@speechanddebate.org. Updated procedures for Student Website Registration.
11/17/2015	2016.0.0	Release for the 2015-2016 school year: Adapted formatting to create unified manual—content combined with *High School Event Rules Manual*, *District Tournament Operations Manual*, and *National Tournament Operations Manual*. Added notice about school-based membership for 2016-2017. No district will be allowed to split into two districts unless they establish 40 chapters for two consecutive years.
10/19/2016	2017.0.0	Release for the 2016-2017 school year: Clarified student website registration procedures with the launch of the Association's new website. With the passing of the Constitutional Referendum in April 2016, each active member school shall have one vote in district and national matters.
02/13/2017	2017.1.0	Added the Coaches Code of Ethics, adopted in December 2016.
01/08/2018	2018.0.0	Release for the 2017-2018 school year: Student membership begins upon payment of the enrollment fee. High school students no longer need to earn 25 points first to be considered a member. Adopted more inclusive language within the student Code of Honor. Updated the frequency of *Rostrum* magazine, which is now mailed five times per year with the addition of the *Nationals Chronicle* tournament edition in mid-August. Clarified the procedures used annually in determining the Leading Chapter Award for each district.
10/01/2018	2019.0.0	Release for the 2018-2019 school year: Renamed the service citation award for coaches after Don Crabtree. The honor will now be referred to as the Don Crabtree Distinguished Service Award.
2/12/2019	2019.3.2	Clarified that participants in Girls/Boys State may earn up to 24 total points if they are a candidate for an elected position.
5/6/2019	2019.4.0	Updated the District Committee election procedure to reflect the ranked voting and requirement that individuals on the ballot are affiliated with an active school. Clarified that in POI, keeping the manuscript in the contestant's control means keeping the manuscript in contact with the body at all times. Reorganized the "Source Verification" requirements for Interpretation events and clarified that Original Oratory and Informative Speaking quarterfinalists will turn in their manuscripts and works cited pages at the National Tournament.
10/05/2020	2021.0.0	Release for the 2020-2021 school year: Changed the student service point system that allows coaches autonomy to determine the merit of events and reduces the number of people in a required audience.

		Policy Debate preparation time is eight minutes per team. Points may not be entered for graduated seniors after July 15 of their graduation year. Clarified that four schools must be present for points to be awarded for any event. Students may only receive points for one asynchronous competition per day. Suggest that tournament hosts use the Inclusive Tournament Checklist.
11/10/2020	2021.0.1	The NSDA is piloting a rule for 2020-2021 that allows students to earn up to 75 merit points for intrasquad and intersquad competitions that do not have the required four schools participating. Tabulation software and the NSDA site will not regulate this; it will be the affirmative duty of coaches to ensure what is posted is in line with this rule. All districts in 2020-2021 must be online unless they receive special dispensation from the Executive Director. Clarified that districts may do asynchronous Duo at their district tournament even if the rest of their speech events are held live. Clarified that districts may do a hybrid synchronous/asynchronous speech model at their district tournament as long as it is consistent among speech events, with the exception of Duo and Extemp.
03/29/2021	2021.2.2	Made clarifications to the daily limit of service points (20 points), how to estimate the number of service points a student has earned, and the way in which service points are entered.
04/27/2021	2021.2.3	Explained the procedure for breaking ties in District Committee elections.
09/01/2021	2022.0.0	The Board of Directors voted to permanently implement the rule that students may earn up to 75 merit points for intrasquad and intersquad competitions that do not have the required four schools.
02/15/2022	2022.0.1	Clarified that students who compete for a post-secondary institution while they are in high school are ineligible to compete at the district and National Tournament.
09/22/2023	2024.1.0	Clarified points earned by students who compete in Model UN competitions.
03/20/2024	2024.2.0	Converted to Google Doc format.
08/29/2024	2025.1.1	Congressional Debate daily point limit increased to 36 points per day.
08/07/2025	2026.1.0	The Board of Directors approved a change to Honor Society merit points earned for main speech events that students who receive a rank of 4 or worse in any round will receive three points for participation. This change will go into effect in August 2025. The Board of Directors has approved a change to lower the minimum school requirement for earning Honor Society points at competitions from four schools to two schools. Removed Scrimmage points. The Board of Directors clarified that students are not eligible to earn points for practice rounds against their own teammates.

09/11/2025	2026.1.2	Clarified that the 2025 Spring Board Meeting decision to change main event points did not impact point values earned for non-main events.
10/22/2025	2026.1.3	Clarified and simplified the district transfer process. Updated the simplified requirements for honorary membership. Changed the definition of equity.
01/09/2026	2026.1.4	Revised charter status to a one time, permanent award rather than a status up for renewal based on points.
08/01/2026	2027.1.0	Updated language throughout to reflect the new NSDA membership model structure and terminology. Removed "High School" from the Administrator of the Year award to expand eligibility to administrators at all educational levels.

SECTION 2: High School Event Rules Manual Updates

Date	Version	Change Description
11/17/2015	2016.0.0	Release for the 2015-2016 school year: Adapted formatting to create unified manual—content combined with *High School Chapter Manual*, *District Tournament Operations Manual*, and *National Tournament Operations Manual*. Added pilot event rules for Informative Speaking and Program Oral Interpretation.
10/19/2016	2017.0.0	Release for the 2016-2017 school year: Updated the rules for Informative Speaking and Program Oral Interpretation, which were adopted as official main events beginning in 2016-2017. Updated the rules for Interpretation events regarding online publishing sources: PDF downloads, e-books, and websites with editorial review. Clarified the source verification rules in Interpretation events. Clarified the transitions rule in Interpretation events. Modified the Website Approval Submission Process for online publishing sources. Updated the rules for Prose/Poetry to reflect use of PDFs, e-books, and online material. In Original Oratory, the general purpose of the speech is to persuade. Any other purpose such as to inform or entertain shall be secondary. Adopted casebook questions for clarifying evidence rules in debate (see Appendix C). Added pilot evidence rules for Congressional Debate. Added provisions for direct questioning in Congressional Debate. Added the Congress Evidence Challenge Form (see Appendix D).

02/13/2017	2017.1.0	Updated the Informative Speaking rules for parity with other event rules: “A student may not use an informative speech the student used in district or national competition in any previous contest year.”
01/08/2018	2018.0.0	Release for the 2017-2018 school year: Clarified that distribution of items before, during, or after a round of Informative Speaking is prohibited. Noted that one table will be provided for use by the contestants during the National Tournament final round in Informative Speaking. Added language about the proper identification of sources in Program Oral Interpretation (POI). Clarified manuscript use in Prose and Poetry to bring these rules into alignment with manuscript use in Program Oral Interpretation. Updated the Prose and Poetry rules to better define anthology and re-use of material. Officially adopted the 2016-2017 piloted evidence rules in Congressional Debate. Extended the pilot for district questioning in Congressional Debate.
10/01/2018	2019.0.0	Release for the 2018-2019 school year: Updated pilot language about laptop use in Policy, Lincoln-Douglas, Public Forum, Congressional Debate, and Extemporaneous Speaking. Clarified that, in POI, even visual aids found within the manuscript itself may not be shown to the audience during a performance.
01/03/2019	2019.3.1	Updated pronoun usage to gender inclusive “they” instead of “he/she.”
02/18/2019	2019.3.3	Changed oral citation requirement for POI so that the title or author for all selections must be verbally identified. Clarified that the title cited in a POI may be the primary source or the specific title within the primary source. Added a requirement that a Words Cited for POI sources must be available to tournament officials upon request.
09/05/2019	2020.0.0	Release for the 2019-2020 school year: Added the new term limits and organizational structure for members of the Board of Directors Updated language to reflect the integration of middle school students into the NSDA Honor Society Added the Public Forum pilot rules about adding one minute to the summary speeches and preparation time Added the Congress pilot rule about limiting time for debate per item of legislation Changed the national qualification levels requirements Changed the definition of “active” status to “paid member”

		Added the ability for District Committees to penalize a student in speech who is 15 minutes late for their round Added the ability for a District Committee to appoint a member Clarified the ability to use anthologies in Supplemental Prose and Supplemental Poetry Updated the number of service citations a coach receives per item
09/30/2020	2021.0.0	Release for the 2020-2021 school year: Policy Debate preparation time is eight minutes per team. Public Forum preparation time and summary speech times were both permanently increased by one minute. The Current Guidelines for the Use of Internet-Enabled Devices in Debate, Congress, and Extemp events are now the default rules that govern district contests. They are required for any online district event. The Previous Guidelines for Laptop Use may be used for in-person districts if explicitly stated 60 days in advance of the district contest. The debate evidence rules also apply to Big Questions. The Board of Directors is piloting new rules regarding what sources may be used in Interpretation events, including removal of the requirement that digital sources be found on the Approved Websites List. Clarified how original sources may be adapted for competition.
02/15/2021	2021.1.2	Updated the Code of Honor.
03/29/2021	2021.2.2	Added event rules for the 2021 National Tournament Supplemental Events.
04/27/2021	2021.2.3	Clarified that an introduction is permitted but not required in Original Spoken Word Poetry.
07/01/2021	2022.0.0	Release for the 2021-2022 school year: Added Interpretation source rules for non-English material that a competitor will perform in English. Added that artistic plagiarism is prohibited and grounds for penalty. Districts may choose to limit time for debate per legislation item in Congress.
09/01/2022	2023.0.0	Release for the 2022-2023 school year: Removed the requirement that Poetry selections must be cuttings from a single source. Clarified Extemp draw procedures for the National Tournament. Clarified how the chair may be used in Storytelling.
01/31/2023	2023.1.0	Clarified how the chair may be used in Storytelling.
11/27/2023	2024.1.1	Added Big Question event rules.
03/20/2024	2024.2.0	Converted to Google Doc format.
08/01/2024	2025.1.0	Districts may choose to pilot the usage of a notecard in United States and International Extemporaneous Speaking.

10/22/2025	2026.1.3	Extemporaneous Commentary (COM) and Original Spoken Word (OSW) event abbreviations updated for clarity.
04/21/2026	2026.1.4	Clarified that competitors in Program of Oral Interp (POI), Poetry (POE), and Prose (PRO) must have full text of their manuscript in the binder or folder.
08/26/2026	2027.1.1	Clarified in team debate styles (CX, PF, WS) the minimum number of students needed for an entry. Clarified that competitors in Program of Oral Interp (POI), Poetry (POE), and Prose (PRO) that intentionally displaying words from the manuscript to the audience is considered a visual aid and not permitted. Clarified artistic plagiarism rules. Clarified the reuse rule in interpretation events.

SECTION 3: District Tournament Operations Manual Updates

Date	Version	Change Description
12/01/2011	4.0.0	In interpretive events (DI, HI, Duo), the same selection of literature entered at on-site registration should be used for the duration of the tournament. Congressional Debate judges affiliated with a particular school must not judge a student from that school.
01/16/2012	4.0.2	Added reminder to district tournament officials to check all judge/parliamentarian ballots in Congressional Debate *before* tabulation begins to ensure that names are completed correctly. Added clarification of rules for discarding student ballots that are completed incorrectly for tabulation of student ranks in Congressional Debate. Clarified that chairs using Joy of Tournaments software must still send a signed copy of the Qualifiers and Alternates form following the district tournament.
12/06/2012	5.0.0	All references to the former website have been updated. Added new, uniform district standards for qualifying to Nationals. Reminder that Congress judges may not personally know students in the chamber. Added new rule that speaker recognition by student presiding officers may not be tied to previous recognition of students asking questions, moving motions, or longest standing/standing time. Noted that legislation by each district for the National Tournament must be submitted online via the Points Application. Added new rules pertaining to online sources for literary material for interpretation. Please note that merely finding material from an approved site does not make it legal; it must also meet the criteria outlined in that section.
01/04/2012	5.0.1	Revised name of the District Cumulative Sweeps Award to more accurately describe it, since the award used to be a trophy, and is now a plaque. Also, clarified tournament entry form requirements.

02/28/2013	5.0.2	Revised Absolute Pairing Priorities for debate to clarify that entries from a school should not be paired against each other, unless they are the only two remaining undefeated entries, or 3 of 4 undefeated entries, or 4 of 5 undefeated entries. Previously the rule said two or a majority of undefeated entries, which implied that if 2 of 3 are from the same school, they could be paired against one another, which was not the intention of that rule. Added a table to clarify district qualifying levels.
03/06/2013	5.0.3	Clarified rules for published in print as well as online sources for Interp material.
12/02/2013	6.0.0	Added minimum school entry requirement. Outlined website registration requirement for new student members. Clarified the "Partnership Event Exception" explanation. Added pilot "Evidence in Debate Rules," which were optional in 2013-2014. Clarified procedures regarding district tournament Interp source material and Oratory manuscript submissions. Added disclaimer about final round video performances. Updated the list of Approved Websites for online sources of literary material. Clarified observation of other Extemporaneous Speaking competitors.
09/24/2014	7.0.0	Updated branding to reflect the organization's name change (National Forensic League to National Speech & Debate Association). Updated website and email contact information throughout: *www.speechanddebate.org* / *info@speechanddebate.org*. Added revised standards for evidence in debate, which tournaments could choose to pilot in 2014-2015. Coaches are encouraged to check with local tournament officials to see which set of rules will be used in their area. Clarified rules pertaining to the "grace period" in speech events.
11/17/2015	2016.0.0	Release for the 2015-2016 school year: Adapted formatting to create unified manual—content combined with *High School Chapter Manual*, *District Tournament Operations Manual*, and *National Tournament Operations Manual*. Clarified that a district tournament may not be held after May 1, 2016. No part of a district contest may begin on or after May 1, 2016. Added pilot events for 2015-2016: Informative Speaking and Program Oral Interpretation. Added the section entitled "District Audit Procedures." Clarified that a list of 14 alternates must be determined in events with 30 entries or more. In events with 29 entries or fewer, no entry that finishes in the bottom half of the field may be listed as an alternate.
02/03/2016	2016.1.0	In World Schools Debate, each Association district is allowed to qualify ONE team of three to five students. Districts will not be allowed a second team.
10/19/2016	2017.0.0	Release for the 2016-2017 school year:

		Adopted required community standards statement that coaches must affirm prior to District and National Tournament competition. As new main events, Program Oral Interpretation and Informative Speaking count toward the Speech Sweepstakes Award and Cumulative Sweepstakes Award. Adjusted the district entry quota formula in light of POI and INF. When using the California Plan, District Committees in speech events with 14 or fewer entries may determine to hold two preliminary rounds of competition. When using the California Plan, District Committees in speech events with 14 or fewer entries are not required to hold a semifinal round and students may advance directly to the final round. In World Schools Debate, each Association district may enter up to two teams to the National Tournament, provided they offer a second judge to cover the commitment for the second team.
12/02/2016	2017.0.1	Removed the principal signature requirement for district tournament registration.
02/13/2017	2017.1.0	Outlined the district qualification procedures for Big Questions Debates.
01/08/2018	2018.0.0	Release for the 2017-2018 school year: Beginning with the 2017-2018 competition year, all NSDA districts will be required to use either The Joy of Tournaments or Tabroom.com system for the registration of their NSDA district tournament. Beginning with the 2018-2019 competition year, all NSDA districts will be required to use either Tabroom.com or The Joy of Tournaments for the registration and tabulation of their NSDA district tournament. Eliminated the mandatory seven-day (168 hour) district tournament entry deadline to allow each District Committee to determine an appropriate district tournament entry deadline for each event in their competition series. Removed the college-age semester restrictions for judging at the district tournament. As a reminder, current high school students may not judge any portion of the district tournament series. Removed the Congressional Debate tiebreaker procedure involving judges' preference of adjusted cumulative rank total (or student's preference for the student rank option). It is no longer used at the National Tournament, and this change brings the district tournament rules into alignment for tabulation purposes. District chairs must verify that Congressional Debate legislation submitted to the national office for consideration is the original work of the student(s) in their district.
10/01/2018	2019.0.0	Release for the 2018-2019 school year: Removed the restriction that prohibits the hosting of non-qualifying tournaments alongside the district tournament series (such as a novice division). Eliminated the language about the district chair not serving any other role but general supervision at the district tournament. During the 2018-2019 school year, the NSDA will pilot an alternative district qualification system featuring streamlined rules that, among other changes, eliminate the traditional up/down system. Districts that wish to pilot the new rules for speech and/or debate will have

		the opportunity to indicate that when submitting district dates. Please refer to the separate manual titled, “District Tournament Pilot Speech and Debate Manual.”
11/30/2018	2019.1.0	Made district language consistent with updated rules and the requirement that districts must use approved tabulation software. Added a link to our guide on understanding your team’s strength and why it matters. Updated pronoun usage throughout to gender inclusive “they” instead of “he/she.”
12/06/2018	2019.2.0	Updated the district qualification procedures for Big Questions.
01/02/2019	2019.3.0	Clarified that districts may hold a qualifying World Schools Debate tournament to determine the teams that will attend Nationals.
02/12/2019	2019.3.2	Clarified the materials that districts need to send to the national office after the conclusion of their district tournament series.
09/05/2019	2020.0.0	Release for the 2019-2020 school year: Changed the national qualification levels requirements. Added the ability for District Committees to penalize a student in speech who is 15 minutes late for their round.
01/02/2020	2020.1.0	Clarified that in the up/down debate model, an undefeated only receives a bye if it is the sole undefeated remaining. Changed that the Parliamentarian must rank all students in the round to serve as a tiebreaker. Clarified that Big Questions does not count against the triple entry policy at districts.
10/07/2020	2021.0.0	Release for the 2020-2021 school year: The pilot Congress rules are now the permanent rules governing district tournaments beginning in 2020-2021. The pilot speech and debate rules will go into effect as the permanent rules governing district tournaments beginning in 2021-2022. Changed the chamber size requirements. District Committees who have completed the training may use Alternate Penalties for Speech Infractions at their district tournament. Added additional requirements for any district tournament held online. Added requirements that district tournaments utilize the NSDA Harassment and Discrimination Policy. Encouraged districts to utilize the Inclusive Tournament Checklist. Added that schools may appoint an in-person adult representative to file protests on a school’s behalf.
01/05/2021	2021.1.0	Updated the district qualification entry requirements for 2021 only. Added new rule for 2021 only that schools may enter up to two non-qualifying students in supplemental events at the National Tournament. Each district may qualify up to three World Schools Debate entries for the 2021 National Tournament only. Changed the requirement from 8 schools to 6 schools to seat a Senate.

03/29/2021	2021.2.2	Clarified that a House of Representatives with exactly 16 entries may hold one chamber.
07/01/2021	2022.0.0	Release for the 2021-2022 school year: Districts may choose whether their tournament is online or in-person on a per-event basis as long as ¾ of coaches attending that portion of the tournament agree Updated the rules to reflect that the pilot qualification rules for speech, debate, and Congress are now permanently in effect as the only rules permitted for use at district qualifying tournaments Updated the district qualification entry requirements table Changed the Senate minimum requirement to eight schools participating Districts now earn two qualifiers in Big Questions Debate Clarified the procedure in debate if fewer entries clear than qualify Updated district audit procedure requirements for District Committees and coaches Districts may choose to limit time for debate on legislation items in Congress
02/15/2022	2022.0.1	Continued the policy that schools may enter up to two non-qualifying students in supplemental events at the 2022 National Tournament. Direct questioning will be the required questioning method used in Congressional Debate for all districts beginning in 2022-2023. 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. Clarified that students who compete for a post-secondary institution while they are in high school are ineligible to compete at the district and National Tournament. Described how the bye is assigned in powermatched rounds of the district single or double elimination brackets in debate.
03/15/2022	2022.1.0	Added that each school may ALSO enter up to two non-qualifying students in online supplemental events at the 2022 National Tournament (must be different than the two non-qualifiers entered in in-person supplemental events). Clarified that if a partnership qualifies for the 2022 National Tournament and one partner is unable to attend, the partner that can attend may participate in in-person supplemental events without counting towards a school's two non-qualifier slots.
09/01/2022	2023.0.0	Release for the 2022-2023 school year: Districts may continue to choose whether their tournament is online or in-person on a per-event basis as long as ¾ of schools attending that portion of the tournament agree To seat a Senate, at least 10 entries from six schools must participate All districts must use direct questioning and preset, randomized recency in Congressional Debate Competitors may now double enter in two partner events at the district tournament Partnerships may now vacate their qualification or alternate slot in a partner event and then compete and qualify in an individual event on a later date

		Elimination and final round ranks are no longer multiplied by two in district speech rules Removed the second tiebreaker in district speech rules (highest total reciprocal of all ranks, dropping the worst prelim rank, and multiplying elimination and final reciprocals by 2) Added a tie breaking procedure for a three-way tie in a district debate round robin Clarified how the loser's bracket is seeded in double elimination debate brackets Clarified how and when the bye is assigned in powermatched prelims of single and double elimination debate methods
01/31/2022	2023.1.0	Removed the requirement that Congress judges must be unaffiliated for districts. District Committees may determine what a clean or dirty judge is, and all judges must abide by the conflict of interest policy. Auto-qualification has been expanded to the top 16 in Big Questions and World Schools beginning with the 2023 competitors who qualify to the 2024 National Tournament. Added instructions for seeding entries in a three-way tie in a district debate round robin
09/22/2023	2024.1.0	Updated rules regarding World Schools Debate Team participation. District Committees have the autonomy to determine how students qualify for the district team.
03/20/2024	2024.2.0	Clarified the merit points earned by students at the district tournament by category. Converted to Google Doc format.
08/01/2024	2025.1.0	Districts may choose to pilot the usage of a notecard in United States and International Extemporaneous Speaking.
02/19/2025	2025.1.5	Added clarification that Big Questions has different entry/school minimum requirements at the district tournament, found in the District Qualification Process for Big Questions Debate section. Clarified that pairing priorities related to side equalization and rules regarding flipping for sides in elimination rounds apply to Big Questions.
08/07/2025	2026.1.0	Updated bias statement.
09/3/2025	2026.1.1	Clarified methods for district World Schools Debate Team selection process.
10/22/2025	2026.1.3	Clarified process for determining alternates in debate. Clarified that Big Questions entries do not count toward district sweepstakes trophy calculations. Clarified the District Sweepstakes Award
08/26/2026	2027.1.1	Clarified District Committee discretion to use college-aged judges at the district tournament.
09/01/2026	2027.1.2	Updated the manual to reflect the new district level structure, entry limits for district tournaments, and the number of national qualifiers earned at each level. Updated to reflect that the alternative qualifying method pilot would continue for the 2026-27 school year.

SECTION 4: National Tournament Operations Manual

Date	Version	Change Description
05/24/2012	2012.0.0	Release for the 2012 National Tournament. New for 2012: Auto-qualification extended from top 6 to top 14 students in each main event from the previous year's National Tournament. Regarding protests, only the accused may appeal the decision of the ombudsperson. The complainant may not appeal, but may protest subsequent rounds. For interpretation material, the cutting performed in the first round of competition must be used throughout the entirety of the tournament in that event. Speech event points unified (previously, points earned in Interp. events were less than in speech events). In Congressional Debate, the final round seating chart will be generated by computer (rather than drawn by random number at the beginning of the session). Also, speeches given by presiding officer candidates will be scored with merit points, but auditioning periods for presiding will not be scored.
03/28/2013	2013.0.0	Release for the 2013 National Tournament. New for 2013: Added Congressional Debate to Debate Evidence Rules and penalties. New Congressional Debate speaker recognition rule, disallowing "activity," and "longest standing"/"standing time" added. In Congressional Debate, the semifinal session presiding officer audition period has been cut to allow equivalent presiding time during the two separate sessions for the separate judge panels. New rules for online source material and verification in Interpretation. New rules for Impromptu added. There no longer will be a separate prep room; students will have a combined seven minutes to both prepare and speak in the same room with the judge.
05/31/2013	2013.1.0	Clarified the number of judges in final rounds; and in speech, dropping at least one high and one low rank to ensure eleven. Clarified speaking order for final rounds of speech events.
06/06/2013	2013.1.1	When the previous update was released, the sentence pertaining to college-age judges was erroneously omitted. It has been placed back, with additional clarification.
06/11/2013	2013.1.2	Clarified the number of Representatives that break in the House.
06/19/2013	2013.1.3	Corrected the reference bullet point on Impromptu time limit, referencing time to prepare *and* speak.
05/01/2014	2014.0.0	Release for the 2014 National Tournament. New for 2014:

		Updated “Instructions for Registering.” Coaches must UPLOAD digital files of Interp and Oratory scripts during online registration rather than mailing hard copies to the national office. Clarified tie-breaking procedures for Supplemental Speech and Extemporaneous Debate. Updated web link to list of Approved Websites for Digital (Online) Publishing Sources. New rules for Extemporaneous Debate added. Due to the extemporaneous nature of this supplemental debate event, debate topics will not be released in advance, instead requiring a 30-minute prep period.
06/10/2014	2014.1.0	Clarified the number of contestants in each Congress semifinal chamber. This adjustment allows the tournament director to adjust for available space and varying contestant fields. Updated the formula and description of the School Awards given out at the National Tournament.
09/24/2014	2015.0.0	Release for the 2015 National Tournament. New for 2015: Adjusted the National Tournament entry fees. Changed the judging requirement owed per supplemental event pre-registration. Changed the judging requirement owed per consolation event pre-registration. Adjusted the per round-hired judge fee. Clarified rules pertaining to the “grace period” in speech events.
11/17/2015	2016.0.0	Release for the 2016 National Tournament. New for 2016: Adapted formatting to create unified manual—content combined with *High School Chapter Manual*, *District Tournament Operations Manual*, and *National Tournament Operations Manual*. Added pilot events for 2015-2016: Informative Speaking and Program Oral Interpretation. Entrants in INF and POI must UPLOAD a copy of their speech during online registration. Clarified final ranking in the Final Session of Congressional Debate. Clarified the number of final round judges to be used in Supplemental and Consolation Events.
02/03/2016	2016.1.0	In World Schools Debate, each Association district is allowed to qualify ONE team of three to five students. Districts will not be allowed a second team.
06/04/2016	2016.1.1	Updated the names of main event speech final round bowls to reflect current sponsorship.
10/19/2016	2017.0.0	Release for the 2016-2017 school year: Adopted required community standards statement that coaches must affirm prior to District and National Tournament registration. Added new main events for 2016-2017: Informative Speaking and Program Oral Interpretation.

		In World Schools Debate, each Association district may enter up to two teams to the National Tournament, provided they offer a second judge to cover the commitment for the second team. Outlined National Tournament Audit Procedures.
02/13/2017	2017.1.0	Updated the mailing address for the national office: 401 Railroad Place, West Des Moines, IA 50265-4730. Advisors now have the option to indicate how they would like their judge bond applied during online registration. All judge bonds must be claimed by July 31, 2017. If you do not claim your bond at the tournament or by July 31, it will be applied as school credit. Clarified that all POI entries must include a works cited page with their script upload during online tournament registration. Added an overview of logistics for the Big Questions Capstone Event, which will be held in conjunction with the National Tournament. Signed "Participant Release Forms" should be uploaded during online tournament registration, NOT mailed. Outlined prescribed penalties for Speech Rules Violations, adopted in December 2016.
01/08/2018	2018.0.0	Release for the 2017-2018 school year: Updated the 2018 National Tournament entry fees. Those teams that elect to stay within the National Tournament hotel block will save $25 per entry fee per student. Beginning with the 2018 National Tournament, re-registration for supplemental and consolation events will take place online. Coaches will verify that their students are eligible and will participate in the event. If a student chooses to not compete after re-registration has been confirmed, the school will be assessed a drop fee. Updated contestant sectioning and judge placement protocols for states with seven or more districts. Codified the reinstatement of speech contestants at various points of the tournament when those students are eliminated at the fault of the tournament.
06/08/2018	2018.1.0	Clarified that the use of laptop computers is permitted in Extemporaneous Commentary at the National Tournament. Laptop use must comply with the "Guidelines for Laptop Use in Extemporaneous Speaking."
10/01/2018	2019.0.0	Release for the 2018-2019 school year
5/6/2019	2019.4.0	Updated the NSDA Harassment and Discrimination Policy A range of penalty options were created to better address varying levels of rules infractions I speech events at the National Tournament. These penalty options will be piloted at the 2019 National Tournament and administered by the Rules Adjudication Panel. At the 2019 National Tournament, there will be a quarterfinal round in the House. Updated the National Congressional Debate Procedures, schedule, and formula for school awards to account for the new House quarterfinal.

		Changed the role of the ombudsperson. The ombudsperson will provide tournament information, help resolve problems, and facilitate script turn-in. All formal protests will be handled by a Rules Adjudication Committee. Decisions of the Rules Adjudication Committee are final and may not be appealed. Clarified the materials that quarterfinalists in Interp, Original Oratory, and Informative Speaking must turn in to the ombudsperson to qualify for the semifinal round. Updated the pairing procedures for debate to accommodate for the use of a computer tabulation system. Registration for the National Tournament opens online on March 1. Judge bond checks will be mailed to the school or applied as credit to the school's NSDA account by July 31. Log in to Tabroom.com to view how you selected you would like the bond returned.
2/11/2020	2020.1.1	Added the registration requirements and entry patterns for supplemental events at the 2020 National Tournament. Clarified that "entries" refers to both partner and solo entries in the table that describes the number of entries necessary to gain additional national qualifiers at districts.
10/07/2020	2021.0.0	Release for the 2020-2021 school year: Added changes from the 2020 Online National Tournament Manual, including the new LD speaker awards, new judge requirements, and new supplemental tournament structure.
01/05/2021	2021.1.0	Added the 2021 rule that schools may choose to enter two non-qualifying students in supplemental events. Adjusted entry fee for supplemental events.
02/15/2021	2021.2.1	Updated to accommodate 2021 Online National Tournament rules.
03/29/2021	2021.2.2	Coaches are no longer required to upload entry release forms to Tabroom.com registration Coaches must receive permission from their school administration to have students compete in the same physical room. That permission does not need to be uploaded to Tabroom.com registration. Split-screen Duos do not need to upload their recordings to a Google form; they will add links to Tabroom.com registration like other main events. However, split-screen Duo recordings must be embeddable and the competitors must retain the original files.
04/27/2021	2021.2.3	Added tiebreaks for the bowl awards in speech.
06/10/2021	2021.2.4	Adjusted points for school awards to take into account the new double octafinal in speech and additional rounds in debate. Added tiebreaks for the double octafinal in supplemental speech. Clarified district/state constraints in Big Questions elimination rounds.
07/01/2021	2022.0.0	Release for the 2021-2022 school year: Updated language in the *National Tournament Operations Manual* to reflect rules of a typical in-person National Tournament. A full 2022 National Tournament update should be expected in February 2022.

02/15/2022	2022.0.1	Added that the National Tournament Director and Adjudication Panels may reduce the prescribed penalty for a rule violation in debate at the National Tournament based on the severity of the infraction. Updated the National Tournament Congressional Debate legislation collection process to state that any member student may submit legislation until February 15. Qualifiers in Congressional Debate will get to vote on which legislation is debated prior to the tournament. 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. Adjusted school award point allocations in speech to account for the 2022 National Tournament not holding a double octafinal in speech events. In all events at the 2022 National Tournament, judges will be permitted to adjudicate students from their state in the final round. However, judges will continue to be prohibited from adjudicating students from their district in finals. All judges at the 2022 National Tournament are required to write feedback on ballots. Preset, randomized recency will be used in every round of Congressional Debate at the National Tournament beginning in 2022. A full 2022 National Tournament Operations manual will be released by March 15, 2022.
03/15/2022	2022.1.0	2022 National Tournament Release: Updated deadlines, fees, and supplemental event eligibility. Clarified that the preset recency chart in Congressional Debate should be used in reverse order for questioning recency. Included information about the in-person and online supplemental event opportunities.
05/31/2022	2022.2.0	Added rules for powermatching main event debate rounds 3-6. Adjusted the school awards point allocation to account for fewer entries clearing in debate due to powermatching. Clarified tiebreak procedures for online supplemental events.
10/13/2022	2023.0.1	In 2023, each member school will have the opportunity to enter two non-qualifying students into supplemental events. It is not a requirement that these students attended their district tournament. Online divisions of supplemental events will not be offered at the 2023 National Tournament. Students may be re-registered in up to two events (one per pattern) in supplemental speech at the 2023 National Tournament.
01/31/2023	2023.1.0	Initial release of the 2023 National Tournament Manual. Updates include: Schools receive a discount on entry fees if they stay within the hotel block. New tiebreaker for school awards.

		Auto-qualification has been expanded to the top 16 in Big Questions and World Schools. Forfeits count toward ballot count in elimination rounds.
02/24/2023	2023.1.1	Clarified that auto-qualification has been expanded to the top 16 in Big Questions and World Schools beginning with 2023 National Tournament entries who are auto-qualifying to the 2024 National Tournament.
04/20/2023	2023.1.2	Added rules regarding use of generative artificial intelligence for the 2023 National Tournament. Clarified that same-state judging in final rounds of the National Tournament will continue to be permitted. Judges must leave written feedback on ballots to the 2023 National Tournament.
05/3/2023	2023.1.3	Clarified that in elimination rounds of main event speech at the National Tournament, the snake/weave will be adjusted to avoid students from the same state competing in the same section through octafinals.
06/11/2023	2023.1.4	Added a note that the advancement procedures for Congressional Debate will be described at the Opening Ceremony.
9/22/2023	2024.1.0	Clarified rules regarding use of generative artificial intelligence for the 2024 National Tournament.
9/22/2023	2024.1.0	Added new procedures for supplemental events restructuring.
03/20/2024	2024.2.0	Updated Big Questions judging obligation for Capstone Event. Added sectioning and tabulation rules for supplemental events. Clarified tie break procedures in Congressional Debate. Converted to Google Doc format.
3/25/2024	2024.2.0	Clarified video/audio recording during rounds needs permission from the Association.
6/4/2024	2024.2.1	Clarified that the supplemental speech break at the National Tournament will go from the top 14 to the top 7 to ensure there is a clear 1-14 final placement for each supplemental speech event.
6/16/2024	2024.2.2	Clarified that internet use is permitted during the round in Extemp Debate and during prep of Extemp Commentary.
8/28/2024	2025.1.1	Updated elimination round judging procedures. Clarified that students are encouraged to time themselves in speech rounds. Clarified that ranks are not truncated based on section size in preliminary or elimination rounds of speech events. Updated Congressional Debate competitors that place 7-14 in their event will be recognized during the National Awards Ceremony.
9/25/2024	2025.1.2	Removed the line that "scouting is strongly discouraged."
10/16/2024	2025.1.3	Updated the name "Rules Adjudication Panel" to "Rules Protest Panel" for clarity
01/23/2025	2025.1.4	Updated language regarding the building split procedures for Extemporaneous Debate.

10/22/2025	2026.1.3	Clarified the drawing of a bye in Big Questions Debate.
03/10/2026	2026.1.5	Updated sectioning and tabulation rules for supplemental speech events for the 2026 National Tournament because all events will be held at one location.
5/29/2026	2026.1.6	Clarified how internet rules in Congressional Debate apply to electronic communications within the chamber.

Questions?

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