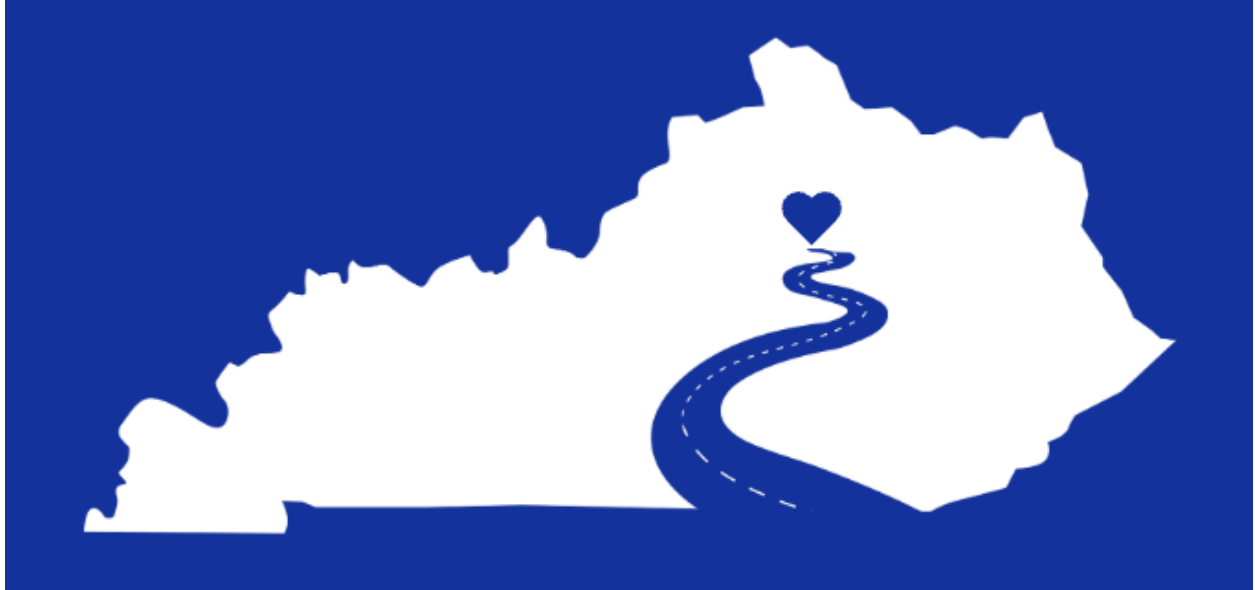


2025-2026 Road to the TOC



Procedures and Best Practices

Updated 12.1.25

Prior Update 8.22.25 for UKSO

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General/Tournament-Wide

Philosophical Principles for All Events

General Disclaimer on Rules

This document establishes the rules and procedures for operation of the Digital Speech and Debate Series Tournaments. It is impossible to predict every possible situation that may occur during the tournament. Any issue, problem or other instance not dealt with explicitly in this tournament procedures document will be considered and decided by the tab room for the event in which the question arises. All tab room officials will strive to make fair and transparent decisions to expeditiously resolve conflicts and avoid tournament delays that might jeopardize a timely tournament conclusion. Tab room officials will strive to consult with the Tournament Director when feasible, but given the size of the event, there may be situations in which the event tab room will make final decisions to resolve issues, problems or other instances not specifically addressed by this document.

Education and Openness Policy

While the Digital Speech and Debate Series Tournaments are a competitive event, we strongly believe that it is an educational endeavor. Persons, including coaches, debaters, speakers, parents, school officials, and members of the public, may observe and take notes in Digital Speech and Debate Series Tournaments debate and speech rounds, within the technological limits of the online platform (for example, rooms may only be open to observers designated by the participants' schools) and any public health protocols. Any sources read as evidence in round should be available to other competitors should they make a request for the citation after the evidence has been read.

All persons observing rounds should recognize the rights of others and communicate and act with respect for participants, competitors, colleagues, critics, tournament hosts, and audience members. Specifically, observers should in no way interfere with or disrupt the normal operation of rounds. Failure to abide by this may result in penalties, including fines and/or removal from the tournament. Communication or conduct which engenders ill-will and disrespect for forensics ultimately reduces the utility of forensics for all who participate in it and should, therefore, be avoided.

Each school understands that teams participating at the tournament may audio and/or visually record competitors during rounds. It is the responsibility of coaches to ensure that their debaters, speakers, and parents/guardians are aware of and understand that such tournament recording is permitted. It is also the responsibility of coaches to ensure their judges understand that such recording is permitted and that judges do not penalize recording. The Digital Speech and Debate Series Tournaments prohibits sharing and/or distribution of recordings without its express written permission.

Schedule Commitment

Participants are committed to being observant of times and time zones and will adhere to schedules for events they are participating in, understanding failure to do so may invoke fines and/or penalties, including disqualification. Tournament officials will consider granting exemptions only in cases of extreme emergencies (health, for example).

Conduct Policy

All debaters, speakers, judges, coaches, and guests attend the online and in person Digital Speech and Debate Series Tournaments at the invitation of the University of Kentucky and must abide by all rules established by the tournament invitation, the Digital Speech and Debate Series Tournament Rules & Procedures documents, and any rules set by the University of Kentucky for guests on campus.

Harassment Policy

Policy

All Digital Speech and Debate Series Tournament participants should recognize the rights of others and communicate and act with respect for opponents, colleagues, critics, tournament hosts, and audience members. Communication or conduct which engenders ill-will and disrespect for forensics ultimately reduces the utility of forensics for all who participate in it and should, therefore, be avoided.

The Digital Speech and Debate Series Tournaments follow the University of Kentucky's policies and procedures concerning harassment, bullying, and discrimination. If concerns or an issue involving allegations of harassment, bullying, or discrimination arises, we ask participants to contact the event tab to initiate the process with the Tournament Community Wellbeing and Belonging Office. The Community Wellbeing and Belonging Office will review the issue and consult with the Tournament Admin staff. As appropriate, the Tournament will consult with the UK Office of Equal Opportunity and the UK Office for Community Relations.

All debaters, speakers, coaches, judges, staff and all other individuals present at the Digital Speech and Debate Series Tournaments participating in activities associated with the Digital Speech and Debate Series Tournaments, are expected to know and are required to abide by this Policy. Digital Speech and Debate Series Tournaments participants should also adhere to the policies and procedures of their own educational institutions, and abide by all local, state and federal laws, avoiding discrimination, bullying, or harassment on any basis prohibited or regulated by law or applicable policies.

Coaches, program directors, judges, researchers and assistants must ensure their conduct complies with this Policy during the Digital Speech and Debate Series Tournaments avoiding, mitigating and preventing situations that may generate discriminatory, offensive, bullying, or harassment actions, including during a judge's post-round explanation of a reason for decision in a round.

Coaches and program directors are encouraged to discuss this Policy with all their school or program's participants prior to the Digital Speech and Debate Series Tournaments and are expected to take any reasonable and necessary actions to ensure compliance by participants who are affiliated with their respective schools or programs, **including hired judges**. By participating in the Digital Speech and Debate Series Tournaments or in activities associated with the Digital Speech and Debate Series Tournaments, each individual shall be deemed to have agreed to comport themselves in accordance with this Policy.

Resources

For more information regarding University policy and procedures on harassment please see:

- UK Discrimination & Harassment Policy –
 - <https://oeo.uky.edu/key-priorities/discrimination-and-harassment>
 - https://regs.uky.edu/sites/default/files/2022-03/ar_6-1_final_2016-07-01_update.pdf
- UK Title IX Policy - <https://oeo.uky.edu/key-priorities/title-ix-compliance>
- FAQs – <https://oeo.uky.edu/faqs>

Appeals and Ombuds Procedure

Any party seeking an appeal to any rule or regulation set forth in this document should follow these procedures, depending on the subject matter of any challenge or appeal:

- **Most evidence and ethics challenges** within the course of a debate are handled by the judge in the round. See the Evidence and Ethics Section below for each specific event.
- **Harassment, bullying, or discrimination complaints** are to be brought to the attention of the Community Wellbeing and Belonging Office. See the above Harassment and Discrimination Prevention Policy for those procedures.
- **Procedures for resolving all other complaints**, including outside assistance, and challenges or appeals not explicitly set out in this document will be conducted by the Ombuds Office **appointed by the Director of the Tournament.**

The Ombuds (in consultation with the Director when deemed necessary and feasible) will strive to make fair and transparent decisions to expeditiously resolve conflicts and avoid tournament delays that might jeopardize a timely tournament conclusion.

Appeals and/or protests must follow the following procedure:

Protests are filed with an official ombudsperson on duty appointed by the tournament director. The tournament will provide a form for filing protests:

- A. Name of coach filing the protest (a coach of record must file the protest) and school or program, city, state.
- B. Name of person being protested and their school or program.
- C. Event and 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. **Decisions of the Ombuds Office are final.** If a perceived violation occurs in a subsequent round, another protest may be filed.

Use of Technology in Rounds

Recording

Each school understands that teams participating at the tournament may audio and/or visually record competitors during rounds. It is the responsibility of coaches to ensure that their debaters, speakers, and parents/guardians are aware of and understand that such tournament recording is permitted. It is also the responsibility of coaches to ensure their judges understand that such recording is permitted and that judges do not penalize recording. Digital Speech and Debate Series Tournaments prohibit sharing and/or distribution of recordings without its express written permission.

Use of Technology in Policy, Public Forum, Lincoln Douglas, and Congressional Debate

Use of laptop computers, tablet computers, smartphones and other electronic devices able to access the internet is permitted during events. The use of computers during debates and congress sessions is permitted for both flowing and research purposes including retrieval of evidence stored on hard drives and accessing resources via the internet. Use of the internet for the purposes of participating in competition in the online Digital Speech and Debate Series Tournaments is permissible.

Students should not attempt to use electronic devices to initiate or respond to contact with outside parties during a debate or congress session. Communicating with their partner in PF and CX is permitted.

This rule is intended to restrict the debaters from initiating or responding to any outside contact during a debate round or congress session. Example: A student's cell phone ringing during a debate would not violate the rule. A student calling, emailing, chatting, text messaging or responding to any contact from their coach during a debate would violate this rule.

For adjudication and penalties, please see the section on Prohibitions on Outside Assistance.

Use of Technology in all Speech Events and in World Schools Debate

Use of the internet for the purposes of participating in competition in the online Digital Speech and Debate Series Tournaments is permissible.

World Schools Debate specific rules and expectations can be seen in the World Schools Debate Specific Details section.

Students should not attempt to use electronic devices to initiate or respond to contact with outside parties during a round.

This rule is intended to restrict the speakers and debaters from initiating or responding to any outside contact during a round. Example: A student's cell phone ringing during a debate would not violate the rule. A student calling, emailing, chatting, text messaging or responding to any contact from their coach during a debate would violate this rule.

Beyond that, please refer to the event specific rules.

For adjudication and penalties, please see the section on Prohibitions on Outside Assistance.

Prohibitions on Outside Assistance

Overview

The Digital Speech and Debate Series Tournaments appreciate concerns about potential misuse of the online format to facilitate cheating that might be more easily observed and deterred in a traditional brick and mortar context. The Digital Speech and Debate Series Tournaments take those concerns very seriously and are establishing these safeguards to promote the integrity of competition in an online venue.

This includes:

- Reinforcing prohibitions on outside assistance during rounds.
- Substantial penalties for participants and their schools or programs for cheating.
- All participants will be expected to sign and adhere to a code of conduct.
- Coaches should review that code of conduct, these rules, and their own school or program's honor and integrity policies with all their participants – coaches, judges, and squads.
- The tournament operates with an expectation that teams entering and participating have the requisite level of respect for speech and debate as an institution that will deter them from undermining the integrity of that institution.
- We are asking all competitors, judges, and coaches to participate and act in good faith to preserve the competitive integrity of the tournament.

Prohibitions

- Students are prohibited from seeking outside assistance during competition rounds, whether in-person or electronically.
- Coaches, including a school or program's judges as well as private coaches, and teammates are prohibited from providing outside assistance during competition rounds, whether in-person or electronically.
- Once a round starts, students should only be communicating with their partners, opponents, and/or judges, as appropriate to their event.
- A limited exception will be allowed for communications with Digital Speech and Debate Series Tournaments officials or tech assistance in situations that require such (for example, an in-round emergency, missing judge, and the like).

Process

- Infractions will be evaluated through the Appeals and Ombuds Procedures in this document.

Penalties

- Students found to have violated the above prohibitions will be removed from the tournament.
- Coaches, including a school or program's judges as well as private coaches, found to have violated the above prohibitions will have their entire school or program removed from the tournament.

Judging

Obligations

Minimum obligations:

- **Judges are expected to judge the round to which they are assigned. Each round MUST be judged by the actual judge assigned by tournament officials.** Only tournament officials are authorized to make judge substitutions. No one should judge a round that was not assigned to them, and no one should use someone else's Tabroom account to judge. When online, judges should leave their camera/video on during speeches except in the rarest of circumstances – a judge may only turn it off with express permission from the event administration. Unauthorized judge substitutions will incur penalties, including, but not limited to, financial penalties for missed rounds, removal of the judge from the tournament, and potential disqualification of the entries from the judge's school or program.
- **Judges are expected to give students their full attention when judging.**
 - When judging online, judges should leave their camera/video on during speeches except in the rarest of circumstances. A judge may only turn it off with express permission from the event administration.
 - It also means not conducting other activities when judging that would divert attention – e.g., driving or being in a moving vehicle, cooking, watching videos, judging another round, etc. If students notice their judge is judging with diverted attention, they should contact their coach and event staff immediately.
- **LD, PF, and Policy** judges are obligated through the first full elimination round and one round beyond the elimination of your team's last entry. All judges are additionally obligated one round past the school's elimination in elimination rounds. So, for example, if your school's last LD student is eliminated in quarterfinals, your LD judges must be available to judge the LD semifinal round. We are often short on judging towards the end of the tournament, so we greatly appreciate any volunteers willing to stick around for the late elimination rounds.
- **For Congressional Debate, World Schools Debate, and Speech Events** judges are obligated through Finals.

The tournament will assess a \$100 penalty for judges who miss a round when obligated in prelims, and \$150 in elims *per missed round*. This includes when a judge is obligated to the tournament for judging and fails to report to a scheduled round even if a replacement judge is secured. These penalties must be paid before a team is allowed to advance to the next stage of elimination debates (e.g., if a preliminary fine is incurred, the team will not be able to clear unless the fine is paid).

Expectations

Important Note

The tournament director reserves the right to approve any and all judges in all events.

General Expectations

- The primary role of judges is to serve as educators. All judges are expected to adjudicate their rounds fairly, limiting their evaluations to the arguments and speeches delivered by the students in the round before them.
- For Policy, Lincoln Douglas, Public Forum, and World Schools Debate the tournament encourages judge feedback and post-round discussion with the debaters, as appropriate.
- In Policy, Lincoln Douglas, Public Forum, and World Schools Debate, judges are expected to assign one winner and one loser per round, by the decision time communicated by the tab room. The tab room will flip a coin to determine the winner of any round where the judge is unable to render a decision in the time allotted.
- Debate judges must post a paradigm on Tabroom before judge preferences/strikes open.
 - We encourage World Schools Debate judges to post a paradigm but do not mandate one. We do **require** Worlds judges to attend the mandatory judge training per the tournament schedule.
- **Judges are expected to judge the round to which they are assigned. Each round MUST be judged by the actual judge assigned by tournament officials.** Only tournament officials are authorized to make judge substitutions. No one should judge a round that was not assigned to them, no one should use someone else's Tabroom account to judge, and judges should leave their video on during speeches except in the rarest of circumstances. Unauthorized judge substitutions will incur penalties, including, but not limited to, financial penalties for missed rounds, removal of the judge from the tournament, and potential disqualification of the entries from the judge's school or program.
- Judges should not enter themselves to judge at a different tournament during the tournament without the express written permission of the Tournament Directors of both tournaments.
- **Judges are expected to give students their full attention when judging.**
 - When judging online, judges should leave their camera/video on during speeches except in the rarest of circumstances. A judge may only turn it off with express permission from the event administration.
 - It also means not conducting other activities when judging that would divert attention – e.g., driving or being in a moving vehicle, cooking, watching videos, judging another round, etc.
 - Judges should not engage in vaping, smoking, drinking, or illegal drug use while judging.

Eligibility

Judge Philosophies

In Policy, Public Forum, and Lincoln Douglas, all judges are expected to have a judge philosophy posted on Tabroom. The penalty for any judge who fails to post a judge philosophy by the preference/strike deadline will be that the school the judge is representing will lose school judge preferences/strikes.

In World School Debate, we encourage all judges to have a judge philosophy posted on Tabroom. However, we do require Worlds judges to be present at the mandatory judge training per the tournament schedule.

Conflicts

All judges are expected to conflict themselves against any competitor with whom they have a coaching relationship, a close/personal relationship, or any other actual or perceived conflict of interest. Judges should preclude themselves from judging their alma mater for **two** years after graduating. Judges should preclude themselves from judging any school which they previously coached in the three years prior to the academic year. It is the judge's obligation to communicate any conflicts to the tournament director prior to the start of the tournament.

In the event a pairing is distributed, and a judge reports a conflict after the fact, resulting in a changing of the pairing, that school will be charged a \$500 fine.

Double-Flighted Event Details (When Applicable)

If judge commitments for LD and PF are considered “doubled-flighted” rounds of commitment, 3 double-flighted rounds of commitment really means 6 single-flights. For LD, the tab room may not always be able to schedule every judge in both the A and B flights of a round, given judge preference constraints.

Judge Absences

All judges are obligated to adjudicate the round which the tab room assigns them. Any judge who fails to report to judge their debate before the forfeit time (15 minutes after the posted start time for the debate) faces sanction by the tab room, including fines and disqualification of the debate entries from the judge's school or program. Any judge who knows they will be late should make every attempt to inform the tab room if they have a legitimate time conflict (an emergency arises, illness, etc.).

Fines

Schools and programs will be fined \$100 per round for a preliminary round missed by one of their judges. For an elimination round this penalty is \$150. This includes when a judge is obligated to the tournament for judging and fails to report to a scheduled round, even if a replacement judge is secured.

These penalties must be paid before a team is allowed to advance to the next stage of elimination debates (i.e. if a preliminary fine is incurred, the team will not be able to clear unless the fine is paid).

Disclosure of Decisions and Oral Critique Policy

The Digital Speech and Debate Series Tournaments serve as both a competitive and educational forum for the nation's best debaters, coaches, and judges. As such, the Tournament encourages judge-debater interaction by making decision disclosures and giving oral critiques (time-permitting) in the Policy, Lincoln Douglas, Public Forum, and World School debate divisions. Please submit your ballot online **before** giving any post-round feedback.

Online Speech and Debate Tips & Tricks

Improving Home Internet Performance

The best way to improve your home internet is to use an ethernet and plug it into your router. This is better than Wi-Fi and has drastically improved performance in tests done thus far.

For most computers it requires an adapter like [this item from Amazon](#), and an ethernet cord (price depends on length).

The second-best way to improve your home internet is to ensure you are debating or speaking in the room where your router is and there are no objects between you and the router. This also stabilizes video greatly.

Other Recommendations for Improving Internet Quality

Reboot the Router

If you've experienced connectivity issues, you may want to reboot your router before your next video meeting, which flushes its stale connections. Admittedly, rebooting may not be the resolution, but it's still a good way to prevent problems (especially if the router is on 24/7 for months or years).

Adjust Your Position

To maximize signal quality, you must do one of two things: move the router or move yourself. The closer you are to your router, the better your signal quality. Just like any other radio device, Wi-Fi routers have a particular range. As you move further from it, you'll get choppy packet delivery (your video and audio could freeze).

Minimize Interference

An aspect of Wi-Fi connections that even the most well-versed people miss is obstruction. Since your packets basically float in mid-air to the router, avoid putting concrete structures, fingers, and other solid objects between your wireless antenna and the router. If you're communicating from a mobile device, hold it near the bottom, as most mobile wireless antennas are situated near the top of the device. If your phone's camera is off to one side, chances are that the antenna is on the opposite side. Keep this in mind when holding your phone in a landscape (horizontal) position.

Also, washing machines, microwaves, furnaces, and other electric appliances can interfere with your Wi-Fi transmissions. Everything that uses electricity (even a light bulb) emits small amounts of radiation that could interfere with radio-based communication. We're not telling you to stay in the dark and light some candles but at least keep high-energy appliances from sitting between you and the router.

Don't Crowd the Router

Think of your router as a railroad depot. Every connected device is a train that came to park there. Once all the shunts are occupied, the depot shines a red light signaling other trains that it's full. Your router doesn't have a red light, but it still gets overwhelmed.

If you connect more devices to it, you put pressure on its hardware and it eventually uses a “first-come, first-serve” packet management model to compensate. This is disastrous for people trying to converse through video. Typical home routers are meant to handle at most 9 or 10 connected wireless devices. They can theoretically handle up to 255, but we must stress the word “theoretically.” For the optimal video experience, a router needs minimal load in terms of both bandwidth and simultaneous connections.

By the way, running a service that hosts connections to multiple people also counts towards overwhelming the router. Anything you do on wired Ethernet will also have an impact on Wi-Fi.

Update Your Router

Routers don’t just magically come with perfect firmware straight out of the assembly line. Chances are your manufacturer is going to notice some bugs that impede your ability to communicate effectively. Wi-Fi suffers the most from this because its standards are always being revised and a vast number of features exist that are not present in Ethernet. Look through your device manufacturer’s website and ensure that you have the latest firmware for your router.

Enable WME/WMM

If you bought a router that advertises itself as being optimized for video and VoIP, you’ll likely find an option somewhere within its configuration interface that allows you to enable Wireless Multimedia Extensions (WME) or Wi-Fi Multimedia (WMM). These are two terms used to describe an interoperability feature within some routers that puts a higher priority on media transmissions than on other data. It means that your router will put aside transmission of other packet data in favor of your video and audio transmissions. For more information, refer to your router’s manual.

Use a Less-Crowded Channel

Wi-Fi networks are like big house parties. When the scene is getting too crowded, it’s time to take a breather at the balcony. In a large network with multiple Wi-Fi access points, your packets might be neglected when sent on a radio channel that’s too occupied. To mitigate this, configure the router to use another channel on the network.

Don’t know if your channel’s busy or not? Unsure of what channel you should use? Wireless network diagnostic tools like MetaGeek’s inSSIDer can help you find this information.

Go Dual-Band

Dual-band routers operate at two different frequencies: 2.4 GHz band (the more common of the two, which is prone to interference from other devices) and the 5 GHz band. The higher frequency really doesn’t offer many advantages, but it does decrease the likelihood that you’ll experience nasty interference and offers a dedicated SSID (wireless connection) that you can use strictly for VoIP and Zoom meetings. Buying a dual-band router gives you that flexibility. Call the 2.4 GHz network “Web” and the other one “Multimedia.” When joining or hosting a conference, connect to the “Multimedia” band and you’re set!

Recommended Technology

Important Note

The first thing to note about technology and online debate and speech is you need to practice with your existing laptop to establish a baseline. In early testing what comes in a laptop (in terms of webcam, audio and microphone) is sufficient for debates and speech rounds.

The main thing that will impact your video and audio is your internet connection, not your hardware.

There are some genres of technology that you can invest in that will noticeably improve performance (not such that “I can’t compete without this” but rather “this is nice to have”, like debating with and without a stand).

Ethernet and adapters

This is probably the most required piece of technology. Debaters and speakers should be ready to compete from their home and in that case, they should plan to do so plugged into their router.

If they don’t have an ethernet plug in on their laptop, they need an adapter.

And they need an ethernet cord; how expensive it is depends on how long you want it to be.

Online Speech & Debate Expectations

Pre-Round Check-In

The schedule for the Digital Speech and Debate Series Tournaments will include a pre-round check-in.

Within ten minutes of a pairing being released on Tabroom all participants and the judge need to check into their assigned room.

Everyone will turn their video and audio on and off and make sure all things are functioning properly. Email chains will be set up during this time as well. It is also strongly advised that when checking in, you engage in any necessary argument disclosure with your opponent in a timely fashion.

They will then mute their mic and turn off video but stay connected in the room. They can then prepare as normal. **Failure to complete the check-in on time may result in a forfeit.**

During a Round

1. The only person who should have their mic on is the active speaker. Everyone else should mute their mic during a speech.
2. Debaters should locally record in case of tech failures.
3. Be aware that during events with cross examination the risk of cross talk and degraded audio is the highest. Competitors will have to adapt from their experience in a live tournament and try to minimize crosstalk.
4. The active speaker should be occasionally checking to make sure that all participants' audio is still working/there have not been disconnections.
5. If a technology issue befalls someone during a round, the person impacted should communicate with the event tab helpline to help resolve the issue.

A useful guide to managing technology situations:

- A. The biggest culprit is likely your internet. You should compete plugged into your router via ethernet. You should think and talk with your family about minimizing disruptions during competition time in your home. You may consider buying a longer ethernet cord so you can occupy a quieter section of your home.
- B. No one should prepare during any tech downtime.
- C. If someone is the active speaker, they should take more care to ensure that someone does not lose connection mid-speech. Pausing a speech and then resuming after someone re-connects is the simplest way to resolve technology issues.
- D. If you are a non-active speaker, you should only attempt to pause the active speaker if you have suffered a significant degradation of audio that persists for more than mere seconds. 1 second of latency does not warrant pausing a speech. Losing all audio completely warrants alerting your partner to get the speech paused etc.
- E. Unplugging USB devices like microphones or cameras then plugging back in usually fixes most issues.
- F. Exiting and reentering the room fixes some issues.

Policy Specific Details

Topic

TOC/UK Debate hosted tournaments will use the 2025-2026 NFHS Policy Debate Topic. Details posted in the tournament invite.

Event Format

The tournament will host 6 preliminary rounds that follow the traditional “8-5-3” high school policy debate format for constructive, rebuttal, and cross-examination time. There will be a total of 8 minutes of preparation time for each team.

Tech Time – Online Competition Only

There will be a 10-minute timer for each team that will run in the event of technology failure. This timer will be managed by the judge. A team forfeits if their 10-minute allocation of time runs out and they have not resumed debating. Judges should immediately notify the tab staff if tech time is being invoked.

Speaker Point Scale

The Digital Speech and Debate Series Tournaments will use a 30-point speaker point scale with tenths of a point allowed, with no ties between the debaters.

Start Times

Teams will be allowed at least 30 minutes of prep time from release of pairings until the official debate start time. Coaches should conclude their coaching 10 minutes before the debate. Judges should report to their rooms no later than 5 minutes before official debate start time. Teams and the judge will be required to check in to their room within 10 minutes of the pairing being posted to test connections and audio.

Decision Times

Decision time for judges to submit their decision will be 2 hours from the posted start time of the round. If the judge is unable to render a decision in the allotted time, the tab room will flip a coin to determine the winner of that debate/ballot. If Tech Time has been invoked, the judge should contact the appropriate tab to request an extension.

Forfeit Times

Any team arriving later than 10 minutes after the posted start time will be at the risk of forfeit imposed at the exclusive discretion of the event tab room staff. Any team experiencing what they believe to be a legitimate delay should make every attempt to communicate with the tab room if they are going to be late.

Maverick Debating Rules

A "debate team" entry in this event is a two-person partnership.

- "Maverick" entries (one person) are not allowed to enter prior to the tournament - an entry must be composed of two persons.
- Both partners must be present at the start of the first round or the entry will be dropped.
- **During the tournament:**
 - Maverick teams will forfeit the round unless the coach of record informs the appropriate Event Tab Helpline of the maverick status and provides a reasonable explanation.
 - If a team becomes a maverick due to an emergency, the entry may be "maverick" no more than 2 debates. The maverick can win the debate (i.e. the debate should happen and be decided on the merits - it is not an auto-forfeit).
 - A team cannot go maverick a third time - they will be removed from the tournament.
 - If a team has 2 maverick rounds, they are not eligible for elimination rounds.
 - Mavericks will not be permitted to debate in elimination rounds.

Forfeit Policy

- Forfeit times – Any debater arriving later than 10 minutes after the posted start time will be at the risk of forfeit by the tab room. Any debater experiencing what they believe to be a legitimate delay should make every attempt to communicate with the tab room if they are going to be late.
- If an entry forfeits twice due to late arrival, they may be removed from the tournament.
- If a debater becomes unable to debate due to an illness or serious emergency during the tournament, please see Maverick Debating Rules (above).
- An entry that forfeits 2 debates is not eligible for elimination rounds.
- An entry that forfeits for a reason other than illness or serious emergency approved by the tab room may be removed from the tournament.
- Speaker points in forfeit situations will be averaged.

Division Definitions

Please review the tournament's invite to see what the division definitions are.

Pairing Process

General

The first two rounds will be randomly preset. All power-matched rounds will be paired high-low within brackets as possible.

In elimination rounds, all rounds will be flip-for-sides, unless teams have previously met, in which case the teams will switch sides from the previous debate.

Judge Placement

In prelims, starting with round 3, judges will be placed: [A] first for teams in "break rounds" (considered as those teams with 2 losses), then [B] second for teams with 1 loss, then [C] third for teams with no

losses, then [D] finally for those teams already considered ineligible to clear to elimination rounds based on their record.

Automated Coin Flip & Elimination Rounds

Teams should be present in their competition room no later than 25 minutes prior to the scheduled start time for the debate to flip for sides.

Teams will be notified 5 minutes after release of pairing as to which team has won the Tabroom auto-coin flip (unless sides are locked). The team winning the flip will have 5 minutes to choose and report their side to Tabroom. After 5 minutes, the first team to report will get to choose their side. If neither team reports within 10 minutes of the flip result, Tabroom will assign sides for the debate.

Tiebreakers

1. Wins
2. High low points
3. Judge Variance
4. Opponent's Avg. Seed
5. Coin Flip

Debate Speaker Tiebreakers

1. High low points in prelims
2. Total points
3. Opponent's win average
4. Judge Variance

Judging

One Winner

Judges must vote for one and only one team within the allotted decision time.

Obligations

Judges are obligated through at least the first **full** elimination round plus one round after the team(s) from the school or program they represent is/are eliminated from the tournament. The tournament invite includes more specific details.

The tournament will assess a \$100 penalty for judges who miss a round when obligated in prelims, and \$150 in elims.

Philosophies

Judges are required to post a judge philosophy on Tabroom. No entry will be considered complete until all affiliated judges have submitted a judge philosophy. The penalty for any judge who fails to post a judge philosophy by the preference/strike deadline will be that the school or program the judge is representing will lose school or program judge preferences/strikes.

Evidence and Ethics Challenges

Evidence Challenges

If an entry believes an opponent committed an evidence or other ethics violation (except in the cases of prohibited outside assistance – see end of this section), **the accusing entry should stop the debate and ask the judge to adjudicate the challenge.**

This type of challenge includes, but is not limited to, the following situations:

An entry reads evidence that is fabricated.

An entry reads evidence that is meaningfully altered to change the author's original meaning.

An entry misrepresents how much evidence they have read in a debate, such as improperly highlighting their evidence, "clipping cards" (the team says they read more than they actually did by clipping a card short of the indicated end), or "cross reading" (the team skips words or sentences in the middle of the text, but indicates that they read all the highlighted words)

The accusing entry will explain to the judge what alleged violation is being asserted. The judge will evaluate the violation based on the evidence available to the judge. Prior to evaluating the challenge, the judge should inform both teams whether the round will continue after the challenge if the accusation is found to be false or if the judge cannot determine the challenge based upon the evidence available to the judge. After the judge informs both teams of the consequences of a failure to sustain the objection or challenge, the accusing team will be given an opportunity to withdraw the challenge. If the accusing team decides to pursue the objection or challenge, then the consequences announced by the judge for a failed or indeterminable objection or challenge will be binding on the teams.

If the judge finds that an ethics or evidence violation was committed, the offending team will be assigned a loss. If a single team member committed the violation, that debater will receive zero speaker points. The judge may assign speaker points to the non-offending debater.

If the violation occurs prior to the non-offending team member delivering a speech, the judge may award points based upon the cross-examination, if applicable. If the non-offending team member has not delivered a speech or participated in a cross-ex, then the tab room will assign the average of the non-offending debater's speaker points from prior debates.

Any decision to challenge evidence violations or unethical behavior must be made during the round in which the infraction occurred before the judge submits a decision to the tab room. No challenge can be made to conduct committed in any round after the ballot has been submitted to the tab room. The judge assigned to the round will decide the challenge made in the round based solely on the evidence submitted by the teams in the round. No appeal, modification or reversal of the judge's decision regarding the challenge or the consequences resulting from the challenge is permitted.

Outside Assistance Situation

The above type of challenge does **NOT** include an outside assistance situation (in which a team receives argument assistance or reads or responds to communications from a coach or other person after the

debate has commenced, whether verbal or electronic, including the transfer of evidence after the round starts).

In the event of an outside assistance situation, the provisions on Prohibitions on Outside Assistance and Appeals and Ombuds Procedure will be invoked. The outcome of the process will also determine the outcome of the debate.

In the event of this type of challenge, the accusing team should explain the alleged violation. The judge should inform the accusing team that invoking this process means it will go to the Ombuds, and it will also result in a binding outcome for the debate (i.e. if the accuser is found to be wrong or has not provided sufficient proof, they lose). The accusing team may have a brief moment to determine whether or not they wish to proceed. If they choose to do so, it gets directed to the event's tab room, which will begin the Ombuds process. If they choose not to, and withdraw the challenge, the round should promptly continue.

Lincoln Douglas Specific Details

Topic

TOC/UK Debate hosted tournaments will use the [National Speech and Debate Association's topics](#). Details posted in the tournament invite.

- UKSO is the September/October Topic
- DSDS 1 is the November/December topic.
- DSDS 2 is the January/February topic.
- DSDS 3 is the January/February topic.

Event Format

Speech constraints: 6-3-7-3-4-6-3 with 4 minutes of preparation time.

Tech Time – Online Competition Only

There will be a 10-minute timer for each debater that will run in the event of technology failure. This timer will be managed by the judge. A debater forfeits if their 10-minute allocation of time runs out and they have not resumed debating.

Speaker Point Scale

The Digital Speech and Debate Series Tournaments will use a 30-point speaker point scale with tenths of a point allowed, and no ties between the debaters.

Start Times

Debaters will be allowed at least 30 minutes of prep time from the release of the pairings.

If rounds are flighted, debaters will be allowed at least 30 minutes of prep time from the release of the pairings until the official start time of the A Flight debate. Coaches should conclude their coaching 10 minutes prior to the debate. Judges should report to their rooms no later than 5 minutes until start time. B Flight debates and judges should operate on the same timeline, with start time 61 minutes after the start of the A Flight.

Report Times

Debaters are eligible to forfeit a debate if they are not present in the room they are debating in 1 minute after the posted start time.

Debaters should check into the room with the judge within 10 minutes of a pairing getting posted to check connections and audio.

If rounds are flighted:

1. Flight A debaters are eligible to forfeit a debate if they are not present in the room they are debating in 1 minute after the posted start time.
2. Flight B debaters need to be present in the room they are debating in 61 minutes after the posted start time of a debate (i.e. start time for Flight A). This is true regardless of whether the flight A debate decision is in. Failure to comply will result in a forfeit.

3. For online debates – Both Flight A and Flight B debaters should check into the room with the judge within 10 minutes of a pairing getting posted to check connections and audio.

Decision Times

- The decision time deadline for preliminary rounds is 1 hour and 10 minutes after a debate begins in its respective flight.
- The decision time deadline for elimination rounds is 1 hour and 15 minutes after a debate begins in its respective flight.

Forfeit Policy

- Forfeit times – Any debater arriving later than 10 minutes after the posted start time will be at the risk of forfeit by the tab room. Any debater experiencing what they believe to be a legitimate delay should make every attempt to communicate with the tab room if they are going to be late.
- If a debater forfeits twice due to late arrival, they may be removed from the tournament.
- If a debater becomes unable to debate due to an illness or serious emergency during the tournament, they may miss no more than 2 debates to be able to return and continue debating.
- An entry that forfeits 2 debates is not eligible for elimination rounds.
- An entry that forfeits for a reason other than illness or serious emergency approved by the tab room may be removed from the tournament.
- Speaker points in forfeit situations will be averaged.

Division Definitions

Please review the tournament's invite to see what the division definitions are.

Pairing Process

General

The first two rounds will be randomly preset. All power-matched rounds will be paired high-low within brackets as possible.

In elimination rounds, all rounds will be flip-for-sides, unless debaters have previously met, in which case the debaters will switch sides from the previous debate.

Judge Placement

In prelims, starting with round 3, judges will be placed: [A] first for debaters in “break rounds” (considered as those debaters with 2 losses), then [B] second for debaters with 1 loss, then [C] third for debaters with no losses, then [D] finally for those debaters already considered ineligible to clear to elimination rounds based on their record.

Automated Coin Flip & Elimination Rounds

Debaters should be present in their competition room no later than 25 minutes prior to the scheduled start time for the debate to flip for sides.

Debaters will be notified 5 minutes after release of pairing as to which debater has won the Tabroom auto-coin flip (unless sides are locked). The debater winning the flip will have 5 minutes to choose and report their side to Tabroom. After 5 minutes, the first debater to report will get to choose their side. If neither debater reports within 10 minutes of the result of the flip, then Tabroom will assign sides for the debate.

Tiebreakers

1. Wins
2. High low points
3. Judge Variance
4. Opponent's Avg. Seed
5. Coin Flip

Debate Speaker Tiebreakers

1. High low points in prelims
2. Total points
3. Opponent's win average
4. Judge Variance

Judging

One Winner

Judges must vote for one and only one debater within the allotted decision time.

Obligations

Judges are obligated through at least the first **full** elimination round, plus one round after the team(s) from the school they represent is/are eliminated from the tournament. The tournament invite has more specific details.

The tournament will assess a \$100 penalty for judges who miss a round when obligated in prelims, and \$150 in elims.

Philosophies

Judges are required to post a judge philosophy on Tabroom. No entry will be considered complete until all affiliated judges have submitted a judge philosophy. The penalty for any judge who fails to post a judge philosophy by the preference/strike deadline will be that the school or program the judge is representing will lose school or program judge preferences/strikes.

Evidence and Ethics Challenges

Evidence Challenges

If an entry believes an opponent committed an evidence or other ethics violation (except in the cases of prohibited outside assistance – see end of this section), **the accusing entry should stop the debate and ask the judge to adjudicate the challenge.**

This type of challenge includes, but is not limited to, the following situations:

An entry reads evidence that is fabricated.

An entry reads evidence that is meaningfully altered to change the author's original meaning.

An entry misrepresents how much evidence they have read in a debate, such as improperly highlighting their evidence, "clipping cards" (the team says they read more than they actually did by clipping a card short of the indicated end), or "cross reading" (the team skips words or sentences in the middle of the text, but indicates that they read all the highlighted words)

The accusing entry will explain to the judge what alleged violation is being asserted. The judge will evaluate the violation based on the evidence available to the judge. Prior to evaluating the challenge, the judge should inform both teams whether the round will continue after the challenge if the accusation is found to be false or if the judge cannot determine the challenge based upon the evidence available to the judge. After the judge informs both teams of the consequences of a failure to sustain the objection or challenge, the accusing team will be given an opportunity to withdraw the challenge. If the accusing team decides to pursue the objection or challenge, then the consequences announced by the judge for a failed or indeterminable objection or challenge will be binding on the teams.

If the judge finds that an ethics or evidence violation was committed, the offending debater will be assigned a loss and zero speaker points.

Any decision to challenge evidence violations or unethical behavior must be made during the round in which the infraction occurred before the judge submits a decision to the tab room. No challenge can be made to conduct committed in any round after the ballot has been submitted to Tabroom. The judge assigned to the round will decide the challenge made in the round based solely on the evidence submitted by the debaters in the round. No appeal, modification or reversal of the judge's decision regarding the challenge or the consequences resulting from the challenge is permitted.

Outside Assistance Situation

The above type of challenge does **NOT** include an outside assistance situation (in which a debater receives argument assistance or reads or responds to communications from a coach or other person after the debate has commenced, whether verbal or electronic, including the transfer of evidence after the round starts).

In the event of an outside assistance situation, the provisions on Prohibitions on Outside Assistance and Appeals and Ombuds Procedure will be invoked. The outcome of the process will also determine the outcome of the debate.

In the event of this type of challenge, the accusing team should explain the alleged violation. The judge should inform the accusing debater that invoking this process means it will go to the Ombuds, and it will also result in a binding outcome for the debate (i.e. if the accuser is found to be wrong or has not provided sufficient proof, they lose). The accusing debater may have a brief moment to determine whether or not they wish to proceed. If they choose to do so, it gets directed to the event's tab room, which will begin the Ombuds process. If they choose not to, and withdraw the challenge, the round should promptly continue.

Public Forum Specific Details

Topic

TOC/UK Debate hosted tournaments will use the [National Speech and Debate Association's topics](#). Details posted in the tournament invite.

- UKSO is the September/October Topic
- DSDS 1 is the November/December topic.
- DSDS 2 is the January/February topic.
- DSDS 3 is the January/February topic.

Event Format

Public Forum will use the National Speech & Debate Association format and rules. For more details see pages 31-32 for format and rules information and pages 35-42 for evidence rules in the [Unified Manual for 2025-2026 updated September 3, 2025](#).

Automated Coin Flip

Teams will be notified within 5 minutes after release of pairing as to which team has won the Tabroom auto-coin flip.

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 have been determined, the debate begins (the con team may lead, depending on the coin flip results).

The team winning the flip will have 5 minutes to choose and report their choice to Tabroom. The team that loses the flip will then be able to report their choice. If the winner does not report their choice within 5 minutes, the first team to report will get their choice, leaving the other option choice to the latter reporter. If one or neither team reports within 10 minutes of the result of the flip, then Tabroom will assign outstanding sides and/or speaking positions for the debate.

If rounds are flighted, Flight B flip happens 60 minutes after the Flight A flip.

Tech Time – Online Competition Only

There will be a 10-minute timer for each team that will run in the event of technology failure. This timer will be managed by the judge. A team forfeits if their 10-minute allocation of time runs out and they have not resumed debating.

Start Times

Teams will be allowed at least 20 minutes of prep time from the release of the pairings until the official start time of the debate. Coaches should conclude their coaching 5 minutes before the debate. Judges should report to their rooms no later than 5 minutes until start time. For online competition, all participants and judges should check into their rooms within 10 minutes of the pairing being posted to check connections and audio.

If rounds are flighted, teams will be allowed at least 20 minutes of prep time from the release of the pairings until the official start time of the A flight debate. Coaches should conclude their coaching 5 minutes before the debate. Judges should report to their rooms no later than 5 minutes until start time. For online competition, all participants in **both flights and judges** should check into their rooms within 10 minutes of the pairing being posted to check connections and audio.

Forfeit Times

Any team arriving later than 10 minutes after the posted start time will be at the risk of forfeit by the tab room. Any team experiencing what they believe to be a legitimate delay should make every attempt to communicate with the tab room if they are going to be late.

Maverick Debating Rules

A "debate team" entry in this event is a two-person partnership.

- "Maverick" entries (one person) are not allowed to enter prior to the tournament - an entry must be composed of two persons.
- Both partners must be present at the start of the first round or the entry will be dropped.
- **During the tournament:**
 - Maverick teams will forfeit the round unless the coach of record informs the appropriate Event Tab Helpline of the maverick status and provides a reasonable explanation.
 - If a team becomes a maverick due to an emergency, the entry may be "maverick" no more than 2 debates. The maverick can win the debate (i.e. the debate should happen and be decided on the merits - it is not an auto-forfeit).
 - A team cannot go maverick a third time - they will be removed from the tournament.
 - If a team has 2 maverick rounds, they are not eligible for elimination rounds.
 - Mavericks will not be permitted to debate in elimination rounds.

Forfeit Policy

- Forfeit times – Any debater arriving later than 10 minutes after the posted start time will be at the risk of forfeit by the tab room. Any debater experiencing what they believe to be a legitimate delay should make every attempt to communicate with the tab room if they are going to be late.
- If an entry forfeits twice due to late arrival, they may be removed from the tournament.
- If a debater becomes unable to debate due to an illness or serious emergency during the tournament, please see Maverick Debating Rules (above).
- An entry that forfeits 2 debates is not eligible for elimination rounds.
- An entry that forfeits for a reason other than illness or serious emergency approved by the tab room may be removed from the tournament.
- Speaker points in forfeit situations will be averaged.

Division Definitions

Please review the tournament's invite to see what the division definitions are.

Strike Policy

Each team will be permitted to strike a set number of judges as determined by the tab room.

Tiebreakers

1. Wins
2. High low points
3. Judge Variance
4. Opponent's Avg. Seed
5. Coin Flip

Debate Speaker Tiebreakers

1. High low points in prelims
2. Total points
3. Opponent's win average
4. Judge Variance

Judging

One Winner

Judges must vote for one and only one team within the allotted decision time.

Obligations

Judges are obligated through at least the first elimination round on Sunday and then one round after their team is eliminated in the elimination debates.

The tournament will assess a \$100 penalty for judges who miss a round when obligated in prelims, and \$150 in elims.

Philosophies

Judges are required to post a judge philosophy on Tabroom. No entry will be considered complete until all affiliated judges have submitted a judge philosophy. The penalty for any judge who fails to post a judge philosophy by the preference/strike deadline will be that the school or program the judge is representing will lose school or program judge preferences/strikes.

Evidence & Ethics Challenges

Evidence Challenges

If an entry believes an opponent committed an evidence or other ethics violation (except in the cases of prohibited outside assistance – see end of this section), **the accusing entry should stop the debate and ask the judge to adjudicate the challenge.**

This type of challenge includes, but is not limited to, the following situations:

An entry reads evidence that is fabricated.

An entry reads evidence that is meaningfully altered to change the author's original meaning.

An entry misrepresents how much evidence they have read in a debate, such as improperly highlighting their evidence, "clipping cards" (the team says they read more than they actually did by clipping a card short of the indicated end), or "cross reading" (the team skips words or sentences in the middle of the text, but indicates that they read all the highlighted words)

The accusing entry will explain to the judge what alleged violation is being asserted. The judge will evaluate the violation based on the evidence available to the judge. Prior to evaluating the challenge, the judge should inform both teams whether the round will continue after the challenge if the accusation is found to be false or if the judge cannot determine the challenge based upon the evidence available to the judge. After the judge informs both teams of the consequences of a failure to sustain the objection or challenge, the accusing team will be given an opportunity to withdraw the challenge. If the accusing team decides to pursue the objection or challenge, then the consequences announced by the judge for a failed or indeterminable objection or challenge will be binding on the teams.

If the judge finds that an ethics or evidence violation was committed, the offending team will be assigned a loss. If a single team member committed the violation, that debater will receive zero speaker points. The judge may assign speaker points to the non-offending debater.

If the violation occurs prior to the non-offending team member delivering a speech, the judge may award points based upon the cross-examination, if applicable. If the non-offending team member has not delivered a speech or participated in a cross-ex, then the tab room will assign the average of the non-offending debater's speaker points from prior debates.

Any decision to challenge evidence violations or unethical behavior must be made during the round in which the infraction occurred before the judge submits a decision to the tab room. No challenge can be made to conduct committed in any round after the ballot has been submitted to the tab room. The judge assigned to the round will decide the challenge made in the round based solely on the evidence submitted by the teams in the round. No appeal, modification or reversal of the judge's decision regarding the challenge or the consequences resulting from the challenge is permitted.

Outside Assistance Situation

The above type of challenge does **NOT** include an outside assistance situation (in which a team receives argument assistance or reads or responds to communications from a coach or other person after the debate has commenced, whether verbal or electronic, including the transfer of evidence after the round starts).

In the event of an outside assistance situation, the provisions on Prohibitions on Outside Assistance and Appeals and Ombuds Procedure will be invoked. The outcome of the process will also determine the outcome of the debate.

In the event of this type of challenge, the accusing team should explain the alleged violation. The judge should inform the accusing team that invoking this process means it will go to the Ombuds, and it will also result in a binding outcome for the debate (i.e. if the accuser is found to be wrong or has not provided sufficient proof, they lose). The accusing team may have a brief moment to determine whether or not they wish to proceed. If they choose to do so, it gets directed to the event's tab room, which will begin the Ombuds process. If they choose not to, and withdraw the challenge, the round should promptly continue.

Evidence Policy

Evidence Format & Exchange ****NEW FALL 2025**

Evidence presented in speeches should be in full “card” form - i.e. complete text from a source with full citation. It is not sufficient to present evidence that is the full source or a hyperlink. It should be in the form of a card, even if it is delivered in paraphrase form.

Prior to speeches, as in the norm in Policy and LD, debaters should distribute to their opponents and judge(s) any evidence intended to be used in that speech - i.e. a speech document. It does not need to be the full text of the speech, but it should include, in card form, all evidence intended to be read, fully cited.

Evidence should be exchanged with the participants via email (or using Tabroom’s evidence exchange system). An email chain (or alternate electronic exchange system) should be established prior to the debate.

Evidence Citation and Paraphrasing

For evidence used in Public Forum debates, we recommend as a best practice that all evidence be cited using one of the prominent citation styles (MLA, Chicago, APA, or the standard Policy debate citation style). Failure to do so is not itself a violation of the rules set forth in this document, but following these norms constitutes an educational and ethical citation practice. The UK Digital Speech & Debate Series Tournament will also utilize NSDA rules for evidence paraphrasing. For more details see page 36-37 in the [Unified Manual for 2025-2026 updated September 3, 2025](#).

Tab Discretion

- The tab room will only remove a judge for an operational failure to follow tournament instructions and procedures.
- An official complaint of discrimination/harassment must go to the Community Wellbeing and Belonging Office for review in consultation with the Tournament Director and if appropriate, the UK Office of Equal Opportunity and the UK Office for Community Relations.
- The content of debates and decisions will not be re-litigated by tab or the tournament, and judges will not be removed or otherwise sanctioned for the way they voted or decided a debate except in the event of an official complaint of discrimination/harassment (above).

Congressional Debate Specific Details

Legislation

A legislation packet will be available on Tabroom by the date indicated in the invite.

Event Format

Congressional Debate will use the National Speech & Debate Association format and rules, including recent changes to direct questioning and recency. For more details see pages 43-46 for format and rules information and pages 49-54 for evidence rules in the [Unified Manual for 2025-2026 updated September 5, 2025](#).

Tournament tab staff will aim for chamber sizes no larger than 15 competitors for an online tournament.

Acknowledgement, Precedence and Recency in an Online Tournament

The Presiding Officer can call on two methods for other competitors to become recognized to speak. They should announce to the chamber the method they are employing during the session:

- By a show of name placards. This involves a competitor making their name placard visible and prominent on their screen.
- By raised hand reaction. Most online video chat programs have a button that can be pressed that puts a symbol on the competitor's screen.

The Presiding Officer will keep track of precedence and recency as they normally would (generally with pen and paper).

Voting for Bills in an Online Tournament

This will be done visually, by show of name placards.

Tiebreakers

The Digital Speech and Debate Series Tournament will utilize the National Speech and Debate Association tiebreakers for Congressional Debate. Each individual chamber is tabulated independent of others. Legislators with the lowest cumulative rank total advance to the next level of competition using the tiebreakers. The Digital Speech and Debate Tournaments *do not* employ the student rank option.

1. Judges' preference
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)

Judges and Parliamentarians

Ranking

Scorer (Judge) and parliamentarian ranks are required to be inputted by the end of each round, with no competitor receiving the same score as another. Example: Scorer A cannot give both Competitor 1 and Competitor 2 a rank of 1.

Obligations

Judges and parliamentarians are obligated through the final round.

The tournament will assess a \$100 penalty for judges who miss a round when obligated in prelims, and \$150 in elims.

Speech Specific Details

Event Format

All speech events, except Oral Interpretation (also known as Prose and Poetry), will follow National Speech & Debate Association rules and procedures. Oral Interpretation will use National Catholic Forensic League rules and procedures.

All events will be run synchronously.

There will be two patterns. Students can be in a total of 3 events, but no more than 2 per pattern.

We strive to have at least 6 entries in each event; fewer than 6 entries will result in possible cancellation of the event.

Speech Patterns

Pattern A	Pattern B
Extemporaneous Speaking	Dramatic Interpretation
Humorous Interpretation	Duo Interpretation
Informative Speaking	Impromptu Speaking
Poetry	Original Oratory
Program Oral Interpretation	Prose

Rules Documents

1. [Unified Manual for 2025-2026 updated September 3, 2025](#) (speech events start page 54)
 - a. The Digital Speech and Debate Tournaments host the following events (pending entry numbers)
 - i. Dramatic Interpretation
 - ii. Duo Interpretation
 - iii. Extemporaneous Speaking
 - iv. Humorous Interpretation
 - v. Impromptu
 - vi. Informative
 - vii. Original Oratory
 - viii. Program Oral Interpretation
2. [National Catholic Forensic League Bylaws](#) (oral interp starts on page 6)
 - a. The Digital Speech and Debate Tournaments host Prose and Poetry as two different events with TOC bids going towards Oral Interpretation.
 - i. Competitors can choose to do Prose AND/OR Poetry AND/OR Both at the Digital Speech and Debate Series

Extemporaneous Speaking

Topic Areas

Topic areas will be released on Tabroom by the date specified in the invite. Rounds will be a mix of United States/Domestic topics and International topics.

Preparation

Competitors will enter virtual prep rooms that correspond to their speaker order number. For example, the first speaker of each section would go into the prep room labeled for Speaker 1; the second speaker for each section would go into a prep room labeled for Speaker 2; and so on. Every prep room is monitored by a tournament proctor.

Extemp speakers cannot use outside assistance during prep time. See the section on Prohibitions on Outside Assistance earlier in this document.

The TOC DSDS tournaments will not be using the National Speech and Debate Association's optional piloted rules regarding speaking with a 4x6 note card. Competitors using any notes while speaking will get the lowest rank in their section.

Speaking Rooms

The tournament proctor will release competitors to their assigned virtual speaking room at the appropriate time. Competitors should avoid going to their speaking room until they're released to avoid possible interruptions to the previous speaker. Competitors are allowed to remain in the speaking room *after* they are done speaking to watch others in their round; competitors cannot be in the speaking room *prior* to speaking. Judges will alert the tab room if any competitor listens to speakers before their speaking time.

Timing

Judges are expected to use a timing device and provide time signals to all competitors. Judges must explain their time signals to each competitor before they begin speaking. The time limit is 7 minutes with a 30 second grace period. If a competitor goes over 7:30, they cannot receive the 1 in the round.

Competitors are allowed to time themselves. Competitors and judges can compare times, if necessary, but the judge time is official.

Cross-Examination

The Season Opener and DSDS tournaments do not utilize cross-examination in any round.

Impromptu Speaking

Topic Areas

Topic areas will be a variety of names, objects, and quotations. Topics will not be released prior to the tournament.

Preparation and Timing

Competitors have 7 minutes with a 30 second grace period to prepare a response and present a speech. If a competitor goes over 7:30, they cannot receive the 1 in the round.

Competitors present the speech with no notes. Competitors are allowed to take notes while prepping, though.

Judges are expected to use a timing device and provide time signals to all competitors. Judges must explain their time signals to each competitor before they draw their topic.

Competitors are allowed to time themselves. Competitors and judges can compare times, if necessary, but the judge time is official.

Speaking Rooms

Competitors cannot listen to other competitors until *after* they have spoken. Judges must release any speakers in the room before the first speaker is called. Competitors may stay in the room after they have spoken to listen to other competitors if they choose.

Judging

Ranking

Judges will rank each competitor 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (or whatever the number of contestants is; 1-5 for 5 contestants, 1-7 for 7 contestants). A one signifies the best performance, a two signifies the next best performance, etc. Speakers cannot be tied. The Digital Speech and Debate Series Tournaments do not utilize speaker points (sometimes called rating points).

Judges are expected to leave feedback on ballots; a minimum number of words will be required to ensure all competitors are getting feedback. This is an educational activity, and judge feedback is one of the best ways for competitors to learn and grow.

Rankings are due at the end of the round, but the ability to write and revise ballot comments will be open until the end of the tournament.

Obligations

Judges are obligated through the final round.

Technology Reminder

All judges are reminded to judge the performance and to ensure their ballot feedback is focused on the performance. Judges should not be influenced by a competitor's video or audio quality or other factors outside of a competitor's control. Remember, not all students are able to perform in quiet, neutral settings.

Tabulation

Preliminary Rounds

- Two judges in every prelim.
- Drop high/low scores from the prelim judges in determining breaks.
- Breaks determined by:
 1. Total ranks minus high/low
 2. Total reciprocals minus high/low
 3. Total ranks from prelims
 4. Total reciprocals from prelims

Elimination Rounds

- Elims will start with a clean slate.
- All rounds will have an odd number of judges.
- All rounds are sudden death with these tiebreakers:
 1. Cumulative rank in round
 2. Judges' preference
 3. Reciprocals

World Schools Debate Specific Details

Updated April 17, 2025

Adapted from the NSDA World Schools Debate Invitational Manual

World Schools Debate features a dynamic form of debate 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.

The following manual outlines the debate rules, procedures, and protocols for the Digital Speech and Debate Series Tournaments World Schools Debate division.

1. The Status of These Rules

1.1 These rules govern the Digital Speech and Debate Series Tournaments held by the University of Kentucky.

2. Eligibility of Participant

2.1 Teams

2.1.1 A team shall have at least three (3) and no more than five (5) members.

2.1.2 Each team must furnish one judge. The judge may not be entered into any other judging pool at the tournament. This judge must be available for the entirety of the tournament.

3. Format

3.1 Teams in a Debate

3.1.1 In a debate there are two teams.

3.1.2 One team proposes the motion for debate; the other team opposes it.

3.2 Speakers in a Team

3.2.1 For each debate, there are three speakers.

3.2.2 Before a debate begins, each team must inform the chairperson of the names of their three speakers, the reply speaker, and the order in which they will be speaking.

3.2.3 The only persons who may speak in a debate are the three speakers for each team announced by the chairperson at the start of that debate.

3.2.4 Each speaker gives only one constructive (substantive) speech.

3.2.5 After each speaker has spoken, the first or second speaker for each team gives a reply speech, with the opposition reply going first and the proposition reply second.

3.3 Timing of Speeches

3.3.1 The speaking time for substantive speeches is 8 minutes. Reply speeches are 4 minutes.

3.3.2 The judge shall provide time signals for each speech.

3.3.3 In addition to the time signals provided by the judge, team members may give time signals to a speaker provided that the signals are discreet and unobtrusive.

3.3.4 Speakers may also keep their own time, but the timing of the judge is the official time.

3.4 Interruptions

3.4.1 During a substantive speech (an 8-minute speech) a competitor from the opposite team may rise or verbally interrupt to indicate that they wish to offer a Point of Information. There are no Points of Information during reply speeches.

3.4.2 A Point of Information may be a question or a statement.

3.4.3 The first full minute of a substantive speech and the last full minute of a substantive speech are considered protected time. No Points of Information may be given during this time.

3.4.4 The speaker may choose to accept a Point of Information or to reject or waive down a Point of Information.

3.4.4.1 Rejection can take the form of an obvious hand gesture or a verbal comment from the speaker.

3.4.5 Speakers are discouraged, though not prohibited from:

3.4.5.1 Offering Points of Information that exceed 15 seconds.

3.4.5.2 Rising more frequently than every 20 seconds during unprotected time to offer Points of Information.

3.4.6 There are no other interruptions in the flow of debate. Teams have no preparation time once the debate begins, nor is there any time dedicated to questioning speakers or providing cross-examination.

3.5 Communication

3.5.1 During a debate, speakers may not communicate with their coach, other team members who are not speaking in that debate, or any person in the audience.

3.5.2 Debaters who are speaking in that debate may communicate with one another quietly.

4. The Schematic

4.1 Preliminary Rounds

4.1.1 Every team shall debate six other teams in the preliminary rounds.

4.1.2 In the event that there are too few entries to guarantee six preliminary rounds, a decision may be made to shift to a round robin format. In the event that the division becomes a round robin, students will debate each team in the field (including their own school if there are multiple entries from the same school).

4.1.2.a Students will still be able to debate the opposite side of the motion in Round 1 & 2.

4.1.3 The remaining four preliminary debates shall be determined by a computer program using a traditional high/low pairing procedure system.

4.1.4 In the preliminary rounds, one team may not hit another team more than once.

4.1.5 If there are an odd number of teams, a team may receive a bye.

4.1.5.1 In the preset rounds, the bye is randomly assigned by the computer.

4.1.5.2 In the powermatched preliminary rounds, the bye is awarded to the lowest ranked team that has not already received the bye.

4.1.6 Unless unavoidable, all teams will compete on the Proposition and Opposition side an equal number of times in the preliminary rounds.

5. The Break

5.1 Preliminary Round Break

5.1.1 All teams with a 4-2 record or better shall advance to the elimination debates and be seeded in rank order. If the tournament is a round robin, the top two teams will compete in a final round.

5.1.2 At the end of the preliminary rounds, teams shall be ranked according to the number of wins.

5.1.3 If teams are tied on the same number of wins, they shall be separated by tiebreakers on the following priority:

- a. The sum of the judges' scores for the team less the sum of the highest score and the lowest score for that team.
- b. The sum of the judges' scores for the team.
- c. The sum of the number of wins by the preliminary opponents of the team.
- d. The sum of the judges' scores for the team less the sum of the two highest scores and the two lowest scores for the team.
- e. The sum of the judges' scores for the preliminary opponents of the team.
- f. Coin flip/random number

5.2 Elimination Debates

5.2.1 Bracket

5.2.1.1 The teams ranked according to rule 5.1 shall debate using a traditional bracketing system.

5.2.1.2 Brackets will not be broken to avoid same-school conflicts.

5.2.2 Type of Debate

5.2.2.1 Preliminary and elimination rounds will be a mix of impromptu and prepared motions. The motion types are announced on the schedule.

5.2.3 The Final Round

5.2.3.1 The winners of the semifinals shall debate in the Final round.

5.2.3.2 The motion for the final round shall be a motion announced at the same time as the motions for the preliminary rounds.

5.3 Low Entry Numbers

5.3.1 The tournament may run the tournament in a round robin format.

5.3.2 If entry numbers are too low to feasibly run the event, it will be canceled.

6. Motions

6.1 Motion Format

6.1.1 Motions shall take the format befitting debate in a House of Parliament, always beginning with the phrase “This House,” which will often—but not exclusively—be followed by the verbs “would,” “believes that,” or “regrets.”

7. Language

7.1 All debates shall be in English.

8. Prepared Debates

8.1 Prepared Debates Definition

8.1.1 This part of the rules applies to any prepared debates.

8.2 Preliminary Rounds

8.2.1 At the discretion of the Digital Speech and Debate Series Tournaments, no fewer than one half of the debates for any team in the preliminary rounds will be prepared debates.

8.3 Preparation

8.3.1 From the release of the prepared motions, teams may use as much or as little time to prepare for the prepared motions as they choose.

8.3.2 All team members may participate in preparation of prepared motions.

8.3.3 Coaches, team managers, parents, fellow students, and other interested parties may assist in preparing for prepared motions.

8.4 Materials

8.4.1 During preparation, any materials may be used that are conducive to their education and preparation.

8.4.2 During the debate, students may bring prepared notes with them into the round. However, **no electronic retrieval devices** (except the use of cellular phones for timing outlined in 8.4.3), including tablet and laptop computers, are permitted in the round.

Notes should be in paper form. Rules in the National Speech and Debate Association’s [*High School Unified Manual*](#) concerning the use of internet-enabled devices do not apply to the World Schools Debate Division.

8.4.3 The use of hand-held cellular phones is permitted as a timing device only. The cellular phone must be kept in airplane mode during the debate. Use for any purpose other than timing may result in the loss of a round.

8.4.4 If the competition is conducted online, use of computers, tablets, or smartphones to access the online competition platform or an online team meeting space (Zoom, NSDA Campus...) is permitted.

8.4.5 During the debate, students are permitted to bring with them an English language dictionary or a bilingual dictionary and a single-volume encyclopedia or almanac. Other printed or published materials, including documents referred to during the course of prepared speeches, may also accompany a team into the room.

9. Impromptu Debates

9.1 Impromptu Debates Definition

9.1.1 This part of the rules applies to any impromptu debates.

9.2 Preliminary Rounds

9.2.1 At the discretion of the National Speech & Debate Association, up to one half of the debates for any team in the preliminary rounds may be Impromptu Debates.

9.2.2 If impromptu debates are included in the preliminary rounds, every team must have the same number of impromptu debates as every other team, with the exception of byes.

9.3 Preparation Time and Procedure

9.3.1 Both the team supporting the motion and the team opposing the motion shall have one hour from the time the motion is released until the beginning of the impromptu round.

9.3.2 All members of the team—both those who will be speaking in the round and any other members who may speak in other rounds—may participate in preparation. Up to five members of a team may participate. Team members may not consult coaches or anyone other than the five members.

9.4 Materials

9.4.1 Teams may **not** bring any handwritten, printed, or published materials with them into their preparation room (or area) for impromptu debates, with the exception of a published English language dictionary or a published bilingual dictionary and a published single-volume encyclopedia or almanac per team. No digital resources are permitted.

9.4.2 Teams may **not** use any electronic storage and retrieval devices, including tablet or laptop computers or hand-held cellular telephones in the preparation room (or area) for impromptu debates (except the use of cellular phones for timing—see 9.4.3 below.) **Notes should be in paper form.**

9.4.3 The use of hand-held cellular phones is permitted as a timing device only. The cellular phone must be kept in airplane mode during preparation and the debate. Use for any purpose other than timing may result in the loss of a round.

9.4.4 During the debate, students are permitted to bring with them hand-written notes prepared during the preparation period, an English language dictionary or a bilingual dictionary and a single-volume encyclopedia or almanac. **No other** printed or published materials are permitted. No digital resources are permitted.

9.4.5 Use of the Internet during preparation time may result in the loss of the round.

9.4.6 Any communication with someone who is not one of the five team members during preparation time may result in the loss of the round.

9.4.7 If the competition is conducted online, use of computers, tablets, or smartphones to access the online competition platform or an online team meeting space (Zoom, NSDA Campus...) is permitted.

10. Judging

10.1 Number of Judges

10.1.1 All preliminary rounds shall be judged by a single judge.

10.1.2 Elimination rounds through quarterfinals shall be judged by a panel of three judges per debate who shall make their decision independently of one another.

10.2 Affiliation

10.2.1 A judge shall not judge a team from their own school or program.

10.2.2 A judge shall not judge a team where to do so would lead a reasonable person to believe that the judge could not judge the team impartially.

10.3 Judging Repetition

10.3.1 A judge will not judge the same team more than once during preliminary rounds.

10.3.2 A judge who has judged a team in the preliminary rounds may judge that team during elimination rounds.

10.4 Winning a Debate

10.4.1 In preliminary rounds, a debate is won by the team who receives the highest team score from the judge. There are no low-point wins or tied team points.

10.4.2 In elimination rounds or any rounds with a panel of judges, the debate is won by the team who receives a winning ballot from a majority of judges in the round. The highest team score from each judge determines their winning ballot. There are no low-point wins or tied team points.

10.5 Judging Criteria

10.5.1 The decision of who won a debate shall be the sole discretion of the judge(s) of the debate.

10.5.2 Judges will use electronic ballots available through Tabroom.com.

10.5.3 Judges will use the following scoring criteria as outlined on the official ballot:

- a. Style: 40% of total score. Speakers should communicate clearly using effective rate, pitch, tone, hand gestures, facial expressions, etc. The use of notes should not be penalized unless it hinders delivery; however, speakers should not read their speeches. Notes are to be used only for reference.
- b. Content: 40% of total score. This portion of the score should focus on the argumentation used by the speaker, divorced from the style. Weak arguments should be marked accordingly, even if the other team does not expose a weak argument. Judges should not be influenced by their own personal beliefs or specialized knowledge when making this decision.
- c. Strategy: 20% of total score. Strategy consists of whether or not the speaker understands the importance of the issues in the debate and the structure/timing of the speech. Debaters should identify the most substantive issues and allocate their time to covering issues based on the relative importance. Strategy may also consider answers to points of

information and choosing when/how to address them. Strategy is not content: a speaker who answers the critical issues with weak responses should get poor marks for content but good marks for strategy.

10.5.4 A judge's scoring decisions using the above criteria are at the sole discretion of the judge(s) in the round and cannot be protested.

11. Evidence and Argumentation

11.1 Use of Evidence

11.1.1 The assessment of the quality and appropriate use of evidence as it relates to the scoring of the debate is the sole discretion of the judge(s) in the round. This assessment cannot be protested.

11.2 Validity of Evidence and Argumentation

11.2.1 The adjudication of the validity of evidence and argumentation used in a debate and its effect on scoring is the sole responsibility of the judge(s) in the round. This assessment by the judge cannot be protested.

12. Protests/Complaints

12.1 All complaints and/or protests should be made through the official ombuds petition process, which can be initiated through the event tab.

12.2 No protests will be adjudicated until a formal protest form has been completed and filed.

12.3 Protests must be filed within 15 minutes of the end of the round in which the proposed violation occurred to be considered.

13. Penalties

13.1 Failure to arrive within 10 minutes of the stated start time of a debate round may result in forfeiture of the round.

13.2 Penalties for violations of any rules will be determined by the Ombudsperson and/or Tournament Director. This decision shall be final.