

Signing Up For Speech and Debate

Due to the increasing number of questions about signing up for speech and debate I have written up this simple primer. Please address any other questions to conolynb@vhcs.us.

Step 1: Tell your counselor you would like to sign up for speech and debate. Pick one of the types of speech and debate that most appeals to you. You can find more details on the debates in this application packet.

Step 2: Fill out a speech and debate application found online at the school website. You can fill it out and scan/email it back to conolynb@vhcs.us or bring it to the main office of the high school, to the attention of Nate Conoly. These are due for rising 9th-12th graders by February 28, 2025.

Step 3: Wait and hear back from Mr. Conoly. Applications will be competitive this year so everyone might not get in.

Only Public Forum Debate (8th period) will be offered for Freshman. You will be bussed over after 7th period to have 8th period at the main campus. If on the team, you will need to be picked up from the main campus every day.

The primary question I get has to do with the various classes. Here are brief descriptions for each class:

Basic Activity Info

Lincoln-Douglas Debate

Lincoln-Douglas involves the philosophical analysis and debate of a resolution that has no definite answer. Two debaters argue in opposition to each other in a round, with one representing the affirmative side and the other representing the negative side. The affirmative must prove the resolution true; the negative must simply prevent the affirmative from achieving this goal, although this is also somewhat debatable. This style of debate focuses on values and morality, often times debating a topic of what one should or ought to do. The Lincoln-Douglas Debate format is named for the 1858 Lincoln-Douglas Debates between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas.

Public Forum Debate

Public Forum Debate is a style of debate that can be compared to a nationally-televised debate, such as Crossfire in which the debaters argue a topic of national importance in terms that a common person would understand. The debate in Public Forum Debate is conducted by teams of two people, alternating speeches for their side. It is far more dependent on the speaking presentation of the debater as well as using evidence to persuade. This style of debate focuses on current event topics.

Individual Events/Speech

Individual events is a type of speech competition characterized by individuals competing in a variety of different events. These events span the areas of public speaking, acting, reading and interpretation. Sometimes confused with competitive Debate, Individual Events is actually a unique form of competition, often referred to simply as Speech. Organized competition takes place both on the high school and collegiate level. Speeches range from interpreting dramatic or humorous works of literature to original persuasive speeches.

FAQ

1. What are the requirements if I am to make the team?

First, we will be hosting two tournaments a year (dates TBD) that you are required to attend and work. Additionally, we require you compete in at least 2 tournaments throughout the year. This past year we competed at 15 tournaments, so 2 should be easily attainable.

2. Will joining the team cost money?

Unfortunately yes. Our program is mostly self-sufficient and speech and debate is a rather expensive activity. In order to join the team, we require a \$250 deposit. Additionally, tournaments that are out of town cost around \$150 per person because of traveling expenses. If you choose to compete at local tournaments, there is no cost for you for that tournament, because it is covered from the dues.

3. How much work do you do?

In order to be good at speech and debate, you must put in significant work. There is a lot of research and preparation that is required. You are expected to spend class time working and even put in considerable time outside of class whenever you are about to compete at a tournament. Failure to prepare for a tournament and a lackadaisical approach to this class will result in a removal from the team.

4. What is the difference between I.E. and debate?

Individual Events (Speech) encompasses a variety of topics and choices that are open to interpretation. While debate is typically centralized on one main topic, speech allows competitors to choose their own personal topics and perform a speech about it. Speech is composed of many events that are available for a competitor to choose, thus allowing for more creative and interpretive aspects of competition. Debating is debating.

5. How does a debate round work?

Students representing two sides will enter into a classroom and debate in front of a judge. On a typical weekend students will do this five times in preliminary rounds and a few more times if they make it to elimination rounds.

6. How does an I.E. round work?

Students will enter into a room with a judge and perform their speech in a set order. Typically, you will compete in multiple speech events and perform numerous times throughout a tournament.

7. What events are offered in I.E.?

Since I.E. spans a variety of themes, multiple events are offered at every tournament. Events typically offered are Original Oratory, Dramatic Interpretation, Humorous Interpretation, Prose, Poetry, Impromptu, Informative, Program Oral Interpretation, Duo Interpretation, and Extemporaneous Speaking. Some tournaments may offer other events not listed, but these 10 events are options competitors may choose from. To read more about what each event has to offer, visit the VHHS Speech and Debate website for more information.

8. Where do you get to go?

All over! Most tournaments are in the Southeast. However, we do have big trips reserved for varsity members. We have gone to Chicago, Dallas, New Orleans, Harvard, and Atlanta in the past.

9. What if I have scheduling problems? / What if I am in other activities?

We believe that debate should be an important activity in your life if you choose to join. However, we realize you do many things and we like our debaters to be well rounded. That being said, we find that activities that take place on the weekends (football, marching band) can be problematic. Also, some debate classes are scheduled during some advanced classes. We will work with you to resolve these problems if you are interested, but we do ask that you treat debate with the same respect that you do the other activities.

10. How competitive is it making the team?

In the past, if you completed an application you were on the team. However, the number of people applying has been increasing over the past couple of years, and we only anticipate a larger number of students registering. Because of this, not everyone will be allowed on the team. There will be many factors that we take into consideration to make our decisions.

Speech and Debate Application

The Vestavia Speech and Debate Team is nationally recognized and being a participant is an honor. Please think about this as you fill out the following application. Applications are due February 28, 2025. If you have any questions, email me at conolynb@vhcs.us

Name _____ Parent/Guardian Name _____

Grade level for the next year _____ Phone: _____

Email where I can reach you, the student (please print neatly) _____

What style would you like to participate in? *and remember, Freshman can only choose PF* (circle one) PF, LD, or IE.

Please read the following and sign below if you agree:

Membership on the Vestavia Hills High School speech and debate team involves time, money, and effort. My parents and I agree to take up this challenge.

Student Signature _____

Parent Signature _____

In 50 words or less, explain why you want to join the speech debate team:

Speech and Debate Application (cont.)

On another sheet of paper (or in an attached word document), answer one of the following questions depending on what type of debate you would like to do. You need to agree or disagree and give reasons why, as well as evidence supporting your response.

Public Forum: On balance, the benefits of genetically modified foods outweigh the harms.

Lincoln-Douglas: A just society ought to presume consent for organ procurement from the deceased.

Individual Events: What is one of your pet peeves and why? How would you fix it? (give this some thought and elaborate) OR

Write a book report on your favorite book. Describe the major characters and the plot. What is the climax? What is the theme?