

2025 TOC Procedures

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Most Recent Changes

Guide to finding changes

Sections of these procedures which have changed this year are noted at the beginning of the section with asterisks and YELLOW highlighting – for example “***Revised 2025 – Evidence Policy.”

It might be helpful to use the Navigation Pane feature on the left (if not already visible, click “View” on the Word ribbon, and then make sure the “Navigation Pane” box is checked). It should show you each section by header on the left-hand side of the screen. Then, right click on the Navigation Pane and click “Expand All” so that all the headers are viewable. Ones that are noted with asterisks contain changes.

General/Tournament-Wide

Philosophical Principles for All Events

General Disclaimer on Rules

This document establishes the rules and procedures for operation of the Tournament of Champions. It is not possible 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 TOC is a competitive event, we strongly believe that it is an educational endeavor. All debates and speech rounds at the TOC are considered open to registered participants, within the capacity limits of the venue or platform. 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 any competitor during rounds. It is the responsibility of coaches to ensure that their competitors and parents/guardians are aware of and understand 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 TOC prohibits sharing and/or distribution of recordings without its express written permission.

Schedule Commitment

Participants are committed to being observant of times (and when relevant, 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 competitors, coaches, judges, and guests attend the TOC at the invitation of the University of Kentucky and must abide by all rules established by the tournament invitation, the TOC Tournament Rules & Procedures document, and any rules set by the University of Kentucky for guests on campus.

Media Policy

Every competitor and judge entered in the judge pool must have a media release form on file. This is required to facilitate live streaming of the event, post recordings of rounds to third party platforms like YouTube and to incorporate the footage of the Tournament of Champions in future educational materials.

If a person is under 18 years of age, then a parent or guardian must also sign the form.

All forms will be collected and submitted electronically via Tabroom.

Honor Code

Every competitor and judge entered in the judge pool must have a signed honor code on file. All forms will be collected and submitted electronically via Tabroom.

The purpose of this Honor Code is to communicate the meaning and importance of competitive integrity to all members of the Tournament of Champions community and to articulate and support the interest of the community in maintaining the highest standards of conduct in the tournament environment.

All persons participating in the Tournament of Champions need to review the TOC procedures documents that will be posted to Tabroom.

Coaches should review this Honor Code, TOC Procedures documents, and their own school'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. Participants should neither seek, nor encourage others to seek, unfair assistance or advantages in competition rounds.

The Tournament of Champions expects all participants – competitors, judges, and coaches – to participate and act in good faith to preserve the competitive integrity of the tournament.

Pledge

As a participant in the Tournament of Champions, I pledge not to lie, cheat, steal, or otherwise undermine the fairness of the tournament. I pledge to actively contribute to a climate of fair competition. I understand that competitive integrity and fairness are important to all tournament participants, and I promise to uphold the highest standards of honesty and integrity in competition.

Observers

All observers must submit a signed TOC Honor Code in advance of the tournament, electronically via Tabroom.com, and adhere to the TOC Entourage Rule.

When using online platforms, additional limitations may apply. For example, NSDA Campus limits observers to a maximum of 2 coaches per entry in LD, PF, & Policy Debate; observers are prohibited in Congressional Debate & Speech Events. Observer restrictions extend to elimination rounds and all non-coaches (e.g., teammates), who are prohibited from accessing competition rooms on NSDA Campus.

Harassment and Discrimination Prevention Policy

Policy

All TOC 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 TOC follows 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 room to be put in touch 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 Institutional of Equal Opportunity and the UK Office for Community Relations.

All debaters, coaches, judges, staff, and all other individuals present at the TOC, or participating in activities associated with the TOC, are expected to know and are required to abide by this Policy. TOC 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 TOC, 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's participants prior to the TOC and are expected to take any reasonable and necessary actions to ensure compliance by participants who are affiliated with their respective schools, *including hired judges*. By participating in the TOC or in activities associated with the TOC, 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](#)
- [UK Regulations](#)
- [UK Title IX Policy](#)
- [FAQs](#)

Petitions and Ombuds Procedure

Types of Petitions

Any party seeking to petition regarding to an infraction of rules or procedures set forth in this document should follow these procedures, depending on the subject matter of the petition/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.
- **Equity, 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 an **Ombudsperson (or committee of Ombudspersons) appointed by the Director of the Tournament.**

Procedure

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.

Petitions must follow the following procedure:

- Petitions are initiated by a coach contacting the relevant event tab room.
- Petitions are filed via form and directed to an ombudsperson on duty appointed by the Tournament Director. The tournament will provide a link to a form to be completed by a coach.

In filing a petition, the coach should be prepared to provide, at minimum, the following information:

- a. Name of coach filing the petition (a coach of record must file the protest) and school, city, state, as well as their contact information.
- b. Name of students/parties petitioning.
- c. Name of person(s) alleged to have violated rules.
- d. Details about the round (what round, room, persons involved).
- e. Section/room and speaker number of person/team being protested.
- f. Specific relevant procedure and the infraction alleged, described with supporting detail.
- g. A requested remedy.

After the infraction has been observed/discovered, the petition must be filed in a timely matter. The Ombuds Committee may speak with additional witnesses, including the accused party. **Decisions of the Ombuds Committee are final.** If a potential violation occurs in a subsequent round, another protest may be filed.

Use of Technology

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 competitors, parents/guardians, judges, and coaches are aware of and understand 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 TOC prohibits 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 is permitted for both flowing and research purposes including retrieval of evidence stored on hard drives and accessing resources via the internet.

When the competition platform is online, use of the internet for the purposes of participating in online competition is permissible.

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

This rule is meant to restrict the debaters from initiating or responding to any outside contact during a debate 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.

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

Use of Technology in all Speech Events

When the competition platform is online, use of the internet for the purposes of participating in online competition is permissible.

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

This rule is meant to restrict the debaters from initiating or responding to any outside contact during a debate 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, specifically for Extemp Speaking.

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

World Schools Debate

Please see event-specific procedures.

Exceptions

Participants are permitted to contact tournament officials (such as tab staff, or if the tournament is online, tech support) if tournament assistance is needed.

Prohibitions on Outside Assistance

Overview

Outside assistance is prohibited in in-person, hybrid, and online competitions. The Tournament of Champions appreciates 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 Tournament of Champions takes those concerns very seriously and is 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 for cheating.
- All participants will be expected to sign and adhere to the honor code.
- Coaches should review that code of conduct, these rules, and their own school'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'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 TOC tournament 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 Petitions 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's judges, as well as private coaches, found to have violated the above prohibitions will have their entire school 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.
- **Judges are expected to provide the students with their full attention when judging.**
 - This means judges should not conduct other activities when judging that would divert attention – e.g., driving, cooking, watching videos, texting, judging another round, etc. When judging online, judges must keep their camera/video on.
- LD, PF, Policy, and WSD Debate: All judges in LD, PF, Policy and World Schools Debate are obligated through *at least the first elimination round scheduled on Monday*, then one round beyond the elimination of your program's last team.
- All judges are obligated also 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 always very 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 and Speech Events, judges are obligated *through the final round on Monday*.

Judges who are obligated but fail to appear on time for an assigned elimination round will be assessed a \$500 fine per round, and their school may be barred from participation in future tournaments.

Eligibility

Important Note

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

Judging Qualifications (who counts to meet a judging obligation)

- Unless the judge is the Director of Debate or an Assistant Debate Coach officially employed by that school, the Tournament Director and/or Tab Room Staff have the right to refuse any judge who is not qualified in the event in which they are entered.
- High school and middle school students are not eligible to serve as judges.
- Judges should not enter themselves to judge at a different tournament during the TOC without the express written permission of the Tournament Directors of both tournaments.
- Judges cannot be entered to judge in more than one division of the TOC (in-person or online).
- Any violation of the judge eligibility policy will result in a \$500 fine to your school, loss of your judge preferences and/or strikes, and potential sanctions at future TOC events.
- **For Congressional Debate**, any judge who has judged at a TOC bid tournament this season will be considered a qualified judge. Any judge who has not met this qualification may ask for an exception on a case-by-case basis. Such exceptions would be granted only to people who have significant prior experience with the event.
- **For LD**, any judge who has judged at a tournament this season in the event they wish to enter the pool at the TOC will be considered a qualified judge. Any judge who has not met this qualification may ask for an exception on a case-by-case basis. Such exceptions would be granted only to people who have significant prior experience with the event. In all other cases, judges who wanted to be added to the pool will be added as free strikes.
- **In LD**, judges who are constrained from judging 20% of the competitors or more may not count for more than 4 rounds of a school's judging obligation.
- **For Policy Debate** – For judges to count toward the commitment, they must have judged at least four rounds during the regular season at varsity high school tournaments. Exemptions will be made for those that have made a good faith effort to fulfill the requirement, e.g., putting yourself in for a full commitment at a tournament. Judges who do not meet the requirement are considered a free strike and do not count toward the commitment.
- **For Speech** – For judges to count toward the commitment, they must have judged at one speech tournament during the season. Any judge who has not met this qualification may ask for an exception on a case-by-case basis. Such exceptions would be granted only to people who have significant prior experience with the event.
- **For World Schools Debate** – Judges must have judged at one tournament during the season in WSD.

Judge Philosophies

For Policy, Lincoln-Douglas, and Public Forum all judges must submit a judging philosophy to Tabroom. No Policy, LD, or PF entry will be considered complete until all affiliated judges have submitted a judge philosophy.

First-Year-Out Judges

Policy First-Year-Out Judges

First-year-out judges **count** in policy debate. They are **not** free strikes and can provide rounds for a school's judging obligations.

Lincoln Douglas & Public Forum First-Year-Out Judges

First-year-out judges are free strikes and **DO NOT** count toward a school's judging obligation. They must be entered for the same minimum of two rounds like all other judges.

Congressional Debate First-Year-Out Judges

First-year-out judges only count toward a school's judging obligation for PRELIMINARY SESSIONS. In compliance with the Entourage Rule, such judges must be entered in the pool.

Speech First-Year-Out Judges

First-year-out judges **DO NOT** count toward a school's judging obligation. In compliance with the Entourage Rule, such judges still must be entered in the pool.

World Schools Debate First-Year-Out Judges

First-year-out judges **DO NOT** count toward judging obligations. In compliance with the Entourage Rule, such judges must still be entered in the pool.

The Entourage Rule

- For **Policy, Public Forum, Lincoln-Douglas, and World Schools Debate** anyone that contributes to the competitive debate effort for a school **must be entered into the judge pool** for a minimum of **two** rounds (or 4 flights if applicable).
- For **Speech and Congressional Debate**, anyone that contributes to the competitive effort for a school **must be entered in the judge pool for all rounds.**
- This includes any volunteers contributing debate or speech work.
- Parents/guardians (who are not also coaches) and chaperones do not need to be in the pool.
- **Any violation of the Entourage Rule will result in a \$500 fine to your school, potential removal of preferences, and potential sanctions at future TOC events.**

Expectations

General

- The primary role of judges is to serve as educators. All judges are expected to adjudicate their rounds fairly. Judges should base their decisions on their own evaluations of arguments, and they should limit their evaluations to the arguments delivered by the students in the round before them. The TOC encourages judge feedback and post-round discussion with the debaters, as appropriate.
- In Policy, LD, PF, and WSD, 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.
- **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. Judges in online or hybrid formats should leave their video on during speeches except in the rarest of circumstances (and only with written permission of the event's tab). 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.

Double-Flighted Event Details

If scheduled as double flights, judge commitments for LD and PF are considered "doubled-flighted" rounds of commitment (so 4 double-flighted rounds of commitment are really 8 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 Conflicts

Please indicate on the tournament entry website **all preclusions for all judges**. Judges should preclude themselves from any competitor who they have previously coached, had a close, personal relationship with, or for any other reason the judge believes they cannot be objective towards them if assigned. This includes any judge who has done any paid or volunteer coaching, even if conducted digitally or otherwise-remotely. Any college debater or coach should preclude themselves from any debater whom they have seriously recruited to attend their school. Judges should preclude themselves from judging their alma mater. Judges should preclude themselves from judging any school which they previously coached in the three-years prior to the 2024-2025 academic year. It is the **judge's obligation** to communicate any conflicts to the tournament administration **prior** to the start of the tournament.

Judges are also expected to adhere to Event-specific Rules regarding Judge Conflicts.

In the event a pairing is distributed, and a judge reports a conflict after the fact, resulting in a changing of the pairing, the associated school will be assessed a \$500 fine and risks losing judge preferences/strikes for the remainder of the tournament.

Judge Absences

All judges are obligated to adjudicate the round which the tab room assigns them. Any judge who fails to report to their round in a timely manner according to tournament schedules (Check-in, Report, Start times) faces sanction by the tab room, including disqualification of the debate entries from the judge's school. 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 will be fined \$500 per round missed by one of their judges.

Disclosure of Decisions and Oral Critique Policy

The Tournament of Champions serves 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 in the Policy, PF, LD, and World Schools debate divisions. Please submit your ballot before giving any post-round feedback.

FAQs

Can I judge an event other than the one my student qualified for?

Yes, on a case-by-case basis, which **must be approved IN ADVANCE by the Tournament Director** and not merely through private communication with the tab room.

What if I can only arrive to the tournament late?

If you can cover your commitment, the tournament will try to accommodate your schedule. If you cannot cover your commitment, the school you represent will need to secure additional judging to fully cover the school commitment.

Event-Specific Rules

Policy

Event Rules

Topic

The TOC will use the annual NFHS policy debate topic.

Event Format

The tournament will host 7 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 10 minutes of preparation time for each team.

Tech Time

Tech Time – ***If debates occur utilizing an online platform***, each team shall be allotted up to ten total minutes of “Tech Time”. This time is exclusively for resolving uniquely online tech-related problems (e.g., internet connection, audio/video issues). Tech time should not be used as additional standard prep time. If the time elapses before the team can resolve the issue within the official tournament platform, they will forfeit the debate. In the event a speech needs to be redelivered entirely or in part, the time for that should count as tech time for the team experiencing the problem, if their tech time runs out while giving the speech, the remaining time should be deducted from prep time. Judges should notify tab staff immediately if Tech Time is invoked.

Speaker Point Scale

The TOC 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. Debaters need to report to the room at Check-in Time and debaters and judges need to report to the room at Report Time. Coaches should conclude their coaching 10 minutes prior to the debate.

Decision Times

For preliminary rounds, decision time for judges to submit their decision will be 2:15 hours from the posted start time of the round. For elimination rounds, the decision time is 2:30 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 is invoked (notify tab immediately), tab will have the discretion to extend decision time.

*****Revised 2025 - 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. Speaker points in forfeit situations will be averaged.

Number of Clearing Teams

We will clear all teams with a 5-2 win-loss record or better. There will be a runoff round to complete a full octafinal bracket if necessary.

Tiebreakers

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

*****Revised 2025 - Maverick Debating Rules**

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

- "Maverick" teams are not allowed to enter prior to the tournament - an entry must be composed of two persons.
- If a team becomes a maverick (one person) during the tournament 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.
- In maverick situations, speaker points for the person who is not debating will be averaged.

Hybrid Teams

No hybrid teams are allowed to compete at the tournament. Each entry must be comprised of two students from the same school.

Pairing Process

- All power matched rounds will be paired high-low within brackets as possible.
- The field will be ranked prior to the tournament in order to balance the preset rounds. A member of the tournament administration will do this ranking and will include a variety of variables including TOC bids and overall performance at TOC qualifying tournaments.
- Sides in Round 7 will be randomly assigned by the tabulation program.

Judge Placement

Prelims

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.

Strike Cards

Starting with the quarterfinals, teams will be given strike cards to assemble the panels, when possible, with the number of judges on the card and the number of strikes allowed to be determined by the number of judges available for that round based on MPJ. We will be using Tabroom’s online strike card feature to facilitate this process.

Elimination Rounds

Bracket

The elimination round bracket will be released the night before the final day of elimination rounds.

Side Assignment

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.

*****Revised 2025 - Coin Flip**

Teams should report to the room immediately after the release of the pairing.

If the tournament is using an automated coin flip, teams should follow the instructions and time limits for completing the flip.

In the event there is a manual coin flip, teams should be present in their competition room immediately after the release of the pairing in order to flip for sides. If one team is not present at the scheduled time for conducting the flip for sides, then the team which is present will be allowed to choose their preferred side. If both teams are not present at the scheduled time for conducting the flip, then the tab room will assign sides for the debate.

Judging

Eligibility

For judges to count toward the commitment, they must have judged at least four rounds during the regular season at varsity high school tournaments. Exemptions will be made for those that have made a good faith effort to fulfill the requirement, e.g., putting yourself in for a full commitment at a tournament. Judges who do not meet the requirement are considered a free strike and do not count toward the commitment.

One Winner

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

Entourage Rule

The “entourage rule”- All qualified individuals at the tournament contributing to any school’s competitive effort must be in the judge pool for a **minimum of 2 rounds**.

Any school found violating this rule will be issued a \$500 fine and teams from the school will have their judge preferences removed. Schools may also face potential sanctions at future TOC events.

First-Year-Out Judges

As of 2019, these judges are now **eligible to count** towards a school’s judging obligation in Policy and are **no longer** considered “free strikes.”

Obligations

Judges are obligated through at least the first elimination round on Monday, plus one round after the team(s) from the school they represent is/are eliminated from the tournament.

The tournament will assess a \$500 penalty for judges who miss a round when obligated.

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. For examples, please peruse the judge philosophy website. The penalty for any judge who fails to post a judge philosophy before the tournament starts will be that the school the judge is representing will lose school judge preferences.

Judge Conflicts

- Please indicate on the tournament entry website **all preclusions for all judges**.
- Judges should preclude themselves from any debater who they have previously coached, had a close, personal relationship with, or for any other reason the judge believes they cannot be objective towards them if assigned.
- This includes any judge who has done any paid or volunteer coaching, even if conducted digitally or otherwise-remotely.
- Any college debater or coach should preclude themselves from any debater whom they have seriously recruited to attend their school.
- *Judges should preclude themselves from judging their alma mater until 10 years after they have graduated and/or worked with the team, whichever comes later.*
- Judges should preclude themselves from judging any school which they previously coached in the three seasons/years prior to the 2024-2025 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, the associated school will be assessed a \$500 fine and risks losing judge preferences/strikes for the remainder of the tournament.**

Mutual Preference Judging Procedures

We utilize mutual preference judging based on a category system, using a round count system, with the size of each category defined by the tab room prior to the tournament based on the total number of rounds of judging.

Preference sheets will be due prior to start of the tournament at a time announced by the tab staff.

Evidence and Ethics Challenges

Evidence & Ethics Challenges

If a team 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 team should stop the debate and ask the judge to adjudicate the challenge.

This type of challenge includes the following situations:

- a team reads evidence that is fabricated.
- a team reads evidence that is meaningfully altered to change the author’s original meaning.
- a team 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 team 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 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 moment to determine whether 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

Event Rules

Topic

The TOC topic for LD will be the January/February LD topic selected by the National Speech and Debate Association.

Event Format

Speech constraints: 6-3-7-3-4-6-3 with 5 minutes of preparation time.

Tech Time

Tech Time – ***If debates occur utilizing an online platform***, each debater shall be allotted up to ten total minutes of “Tech Time”. This time is exclusively for resolving uniquely online tech-related problems (e.g., internet connection, audio/video issues). Tech time should not be used as additional standard prep time. If the time elapses before the debater can resolve the issue within the official tournament platform, they will forfeit the debate. In the event a speech needs to be redelivered entirely or in part, the time for that should count as tech time for the debater experiencing the problem, if their tech time runs out while giving the speech, the remaining time should be deducted from prep time. Judges should notify tab staff immediately if Tech Time is invoked.

Speaker Point Scale

The TOC will use a 30-point speaker point scale.

Start Times

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. Both debaters and judges need to report to the room at Check-in Time and Report Time. Coaches should conclude their coaching 10 minutes prior to the debate.

*****Revised 2025 - Forfeit Policy**

- 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.
- 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.
- 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 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.

- If a debater forfeits twice due to late arrival, they may be removed from the tournament.
- 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.

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.
- In online competition, if Tech Time is invoked (and the judge notifies tab immediately), tab will have the discretion to extend decision time.

Number of Clearing Teams

We will clear all teams with a 4-2 win-loss record or better.

Tiebreakers

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

Pairing Process

- All power matched rounds will be paired high-low within brackets as possible.
- The field will be ranked prior to the tournament to balance the preset rounds. A member of the tournament administration will do this ranking and will include a variety of variables including TOC bids and overall performance at TOC qualifying tournaments.

Judge Placement

Prelims

In the prelims, starting with round 3, judges will be placed first for debaters in “break rounds”, considered as those with 2 losses, then those with 1 loss, then no losses, then those already considered ineligible to clear to elimination rounds based on their record.

Strike Cards

Starting with the quarterfinals, debaters will be given strike cards to assemble the panels, when possible, with the number of judges on the card and the number of strikes allowed to be determined by the number of judges available for that round based on MPJ.

Strike cards for elimination rounds must be returned to the tab staff within a specified time after their release. Failure to do so will result in the tab room selecting a three-judge panel for the given debate.

Elimination Rounds

Bracket

The bracket will be released the night before the final day of elimination rounds.

Side Assignments

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

*****Revised 2025 - Coin Flip Policy**

Teams should report to the room immediately after the release of the pairing.

If the tournament is using an automated coin flip, teams should follow the instructions and time limits for completing the flip.

In the event there is a manual coin flip, teams should be present in their competition room immediately after the release of the pairing in order to flip for sides. If one team is not present at the scheduled time for conducting the flip for sides, then the team which is present will be allowed to choose their preferred side. If both teams are not present at the scheduled time for conducting the flip, then the tab room will assign sides for the debate.

Judging

Qualification

Any judge who has judged at a tournament this season in the event they wish to enter the pool at the TOC will be considered a qualified judge. Any judge who has not met this qualification may ask for an exception on a case-by-case basis. Such exceptions would be granted only to people who have significant prior experience with the event. In all other cases judges who wanted to be added to the pool, will be added as “free strikes”.

One Winner

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

Entourage Rule

The “entourage rule”- All qualified individuals at the tournament contributing to any school’s competitive effort must be in the judge pool for a minimum of 2 rounds.

Any school found violating this rule will be issued a \$500 fine and teams from the school will have their judge preferences removed. Schools may also face potential sanctions at future TOC events.

First-Year-Out Judges

Judges who are only one year removed from high school competition will not count towards any school’s judging obligation; they are considered “free strikes.” They must still be entered in the judge pool.

Obligations

Judges are obligated through at least the first Monday elimination round, plus one round after the team(s) from the school they represent is/are eliminated from the tournament.

The tournament will assess a \$500 penalty for judges who miss a round when obligated.

Philosophies

Judges are required to post a judge philosophy on Tabroom. *If a judge has a coaching relationship with competitors beyond the school they are identified as judging for, those competitors need to be identified at the top of the judge’s philosophy. For information about coaching relationships, please see the Judge Conflict Policy below.*

Mutual Preference Judging Procedures

We utilize mutual preference judging based on a category system, using a round count system, with the size of each category defined by the tab room prior to the tournament based on the total number of rounds of judging. Preference sheets will be due prior to start of the tournament at a time announced by the tabulation staff.

Judge Conflict Policy

Judges should constrain themselves, *and* competitors should mark judges as conflicts/constraints, in the following instances:

1. The judge attended the same school as the competitor;
2. The judge and the competitor are related;
3. The judge worked for the competitor's school as a coach or judge, paid or unpaid, during the past two years. This does not apply if the judge was only hired to judge at the school's tournament;
4. The judge attends a school that has offered to hire the competitor to coach or judge in the future, or the competitor attends a school that has offered to hire the judge to coach or judge in the future;
5. The judge has been a primary instructor, e.g., a school coach or personal coach, to the competitor;
6. The judge and competitor have, or have had in the past, a personal friendship or romantic relationship or have socialized in non-debate settings;
7. The judge is being provided transportation or housing by the competitor's school at this tournament;
8. The judge has offered the competitor a job, e.g., an institute position or a coaching position;
9. The judge's coach (current or within past two years) coaches the competitor or a competitor's teammate(s). Examples:
 - a. Judge A graduated last year from School B. Judge A's coach has moved from School B to another team, School C. Judge A should not judge any competitors from School B or School C.
 - b. Judge D is coached in college by Coach E. Coach E also provides coaching to a student at School F. Judge D should not judge any competitors from School F.
10. The judge works for a school that is recruiting the competitor, or which the competitor is planning to attend;
11. The judge has, or in the past has had, a romantic relationship with any member of the competitor school's coaching staff;
12. The judge coaches other students from the competitor's school or the judge coaches *with* other members of the coaching staff of the competitor's school;
13. Coach and Prep Sharing

With the exception of summer workshop participation, student competitors and judges who coach or share debate preparation under the aegis of the same school, private coach, or private company should mark each other as a conflict.

- If a student is coached by Individual A, they should mark as a conflict all judges representing students coached by Individual A.
- If a judge coaches Competitor A, they should mark as a conflict all individuals with whom Competitor A shares preparation, and all individuals with whom Competitor A shares a coach.
- If a student receives coaching or shares preparation through School A, they should mark as a conflict all judges who work for School A.
- If a judge works for School A in a coaching capacity, they should mark as a conflict all students receiving coaching from or sharing preparation with School A.
- If a student receives coaching or shares preparation through Company A, they should mark as a conflict all judges who work for Company A.

- If a judge works for Company A, they should mark as a conflict all students receiving coaching from or sharing preparation with Company A.

A coaching relationship exists if a person has worked with that debater on arguments, ideas, drills, research, strategies, or any other element of their debate performance. This includes relationships that are short term and long term, and formal or informal. There are two exceptions to this policy:

- A coaching relationship does not arise as a result of a judge providing feedback to a student competitor after adjudicating a tournament debate round in which the student participated. However, adjudicating practice debates outside of the context of a competition does create a coaching relationship that should be marked as a conflict by both the judge and student competitor.
- Judges do not need to mark as a conflict competitors who attended a summer workshop at which the judge was employed unless an additional coaching relationship continued beyond the workshop context. Students do not need to mark as conflicts judges who taught at a summer workshop they attended unless an additional coaching relationship continued beyond the workshop context.
- Any other relationship between a judge and competitor that might reasonably be thought to compromise the judge's impartiality as a judge. To determine whether a relationship meets this test, you might ask yourself, "If I were a competing student and knew nothing about my judge except that they bore the relationship in question to my competitor or my competitor's coach, would I have any doubts about their impartiality?" If the answer is "yes," you should mark judges or competitors to whom you bear that relationship as constrained.

During the tournament, if it is determined that this policy has been violated, all competitors coached by the judge(s) that should have been constrained will have their judge preferences removed immediately.

When filling out the mutual preference system teams have an affirmative obligation to select as "conflicts/constrained" those judges they know will be required to conflict themselves as identified in the "Judge Conflict Policy" portion of this document.

The tab room will "correct" mistakes in preferences by randomly moving judges up categories to ensure the requisite percentages are met. Judges will all be ranked as A+ for teams not turning in a preference sheet.

Coaches should put all conflicts into the Notes box on Tabroom for each of their judges. It is the coach's affirmative obligation to discover and report all conflicts. ***Judges should also identify (at the top) in their published judge philosophies those competitors with whom they have a coaching relationship as described above.***

Judges who are constrained from judging 20% of the competitors or more may not count for more than 4 rounds of a school's judging obligation.

Failure by judges and/or competitors to properly identify conflicts may result in sanctions, including removal of preferences for the school(s) involved.

Evidence and Ethics Challenges

Evidence & Ethics Challenges

If a debater 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 debater should stop the debate and ask the judge to adjudicate the challenge.

This type of challenge includes the following situations:

- a debater reads evidence that is fabricated.
- a debater reads evidence that is meaningfully altered to change the author's original meaning.
- a debater misrepresents how much evidence they have read in a debate, such as improperly highlighting their evidence, "clipping cards" (the debater says they read more than they actually did by clipping a card short of the indicated end), or "cross reading" (the debater skips words or sentences in the middle of the text, but indicates that they read all the highlighted words)

The accusing debater 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 debaters 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 debaters of the consequences of a failure to sustain the objection or challenge, the accusing debater will be given an opportunity to withdraw the challenge. If the accusing debater 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 debaters.

If the judge finds that an ethics or evidence violation was committed, the offending debater 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 tab room. 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 debater 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

Event Rules

Topic

The TOC will use the April Public Forum topic chosen by the National Speech and Debate Association.

Event Format

Public Forum will use the National Speech & Debate Association format and rules for speech times, Crossfire format, and preparation time. For more details see pages 31-32 in the National Speech and Debate Association High School Unified Manual.

TOC-specific coin flip and evidence policies are detailed below.

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, and 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.

Flight B flip will happen 60 minutes after the Flight A flip.

Tech Time

Tech Time – If debates occur utilizing an online platform, each team shall be allotted up to ten total minutes of “Tech Time”. This time is exclusively for resolving uniquely online tech-related problems (e.g., internet connection, audio/video issues). Tech time should not be used as additional standard prep time. If the time elapses before the team can resolve the issue within the official tournament platform, they will forfeit the debate. In the event a speech needs to be redelivered entirely or in part, the time for that should count as tech time for the team experiencing the problem, if their tech time runs out while giving the speech, the remaining time should be deducted from prep time. Judges should notify tab staff immediately if Tech Time is invoked.

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 A flight debate. Coaches should conclude their coaching 10 minutes prior to the debate. Judges should report to their rooms no later than 10 minutes until start time.

***Revised 2025 – Forfeit Policy

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- If a team forfeits twice due to late arrival, they may be removed from the tournament.
- 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.

Decision Times

- The decision time deadline for preliminary rounds is 1 hour and 5 minutes after a debate begins in its respective flight.
- The decision time deadline for elimination rounds is 1 hour and 10 minutes after a debate begins in its respective flight.
- In online competition, if Tech Time is invoked (and the judge notifies tab immediately), tab will have the discretion to extend decision time.

Number of Clearing Teams

We will clear all teams with a 5-2 win-loss record or better. In the Gold Division, there will be a runoff round to complete a full double bracket if necessary.

Tiebreakers

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

***Revised 2025 - Maverick Debating Rules

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

- "Maverick" teams are not allowed to enter prior to the tournament - an entry must be composed of two persons.
- If a team becomes a maverick (one person) during the tournament 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.
- In maverick situations, speaker points for the person who is not debating will be averaged.

Hybrid Teams

No hybrid teams are allowed to compete at the tournament. Each entry must be comprised of two students from the same school.

Strike Policy

Each team may strike up to ten percent of the judges in the pool.

Pairing Process

Preliminary Rounds

- The presets will be random.
- All power-matched rounds will be paired high-low within brackets as possible.

Judging

One Winner

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

Entourage Rule

The “entourage rule”- All qualified individuals at the tournament contributing to any school’s competitive effort must be in the judge pool for a minimum of 2 rounds.

Any school found violating this rule will be issued a \$500 fine and teams from the school will have their judge preferences removed. Schools may also face potential sanctions at future TOC events.

First-Year-Outs

In Public Forum, judges who are in their first year of judging **may not count** towards covering an entry’s judging obligation; first-year judges are considered “free strikes.” They must still be entered in the judge pool.

Obligations

Judges are obligated through at least the first Monday elimination round, plus one round after the team(s) from the school they represent is/are eliminated from the tournament.

The tournament will assess a \$500 penalty for judges who miss a round when obligated.

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.

Judge Conflicts

- Please indicate on the tournament entry website **all preclusions for all judges**.
- Judges should preclude themselves from any debater who they have previously coached, had a close, personal relationship with, or for any other reason the judge believes they cannot be objective towards them if assigned.
- This includes any judge who has done any paid or volunteer coaching, even if conducted digitally or otherwise-remotely.
- Any college debater or coach should preclude herself or himself from any debater whom they have seriously recruited to attend their school.

- *Judges should preclude themselves from judging their alma mater until 10 years after they have graduated and/or worked with the team, whichever comes later.*
- Judges should preclude themselves from judging any school which they previously coached in the three-years prior to the 2024-2025 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, the associated school will be assessed a \$500 fine and risks losing judge preferences/strikes for the remainder of the tournament.**

Tab Discretion

- The tab room will only remove a judge for an operational failure to follow tournament instructions and procedures.
- 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). An official complaint of discrimination/harassment must be submitted in accordance with the Harassment and Discrimination Prevention Policy.

Evidence and Ethics Challenges

Evidence & Ethics Challenges

If a team 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 team should stop the debate and ask the judge to adjudicate the challenge.

This type of challenge includes the following situations:

- a team reads evidence that is fabricated.
- a team reads evidence that is meaningfully altered to change the author’s original meaning.
- a team 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 team 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 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 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.

*****Revised 2025 - Evidence Policy**

Debaters may request evidence from the opposing team. Debaters reading evidence must **immediately** present **full carded evidence with full citations** to the requesting team.

Evidence should be exchanged with the participants **immediately** via email (or using Tabroom's evidence exchange system). An email chain (or alternate electronic exchange system) should be established prior to the debate in anticipation of such situations, such that all that is necessary is attaching and sending.

Prep time for the requesting team will not start until evidence has been turned over to the debater requesting said cards. Teams may prep during this evidence request time, this should encourage teams to have their evidence ready and available to present immediately. Judges should discourage teams from attempting to "game the system" if evidence requests become overly burdensome or create excessive delays in the debate.

It is strongly recommended that teams avoid delays by simply sending evidence prior to speeches, as is practice in other forms of debate.

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 TOC will also utilize NSDA rules for evidence paraphrasing.*

Online Format Evidence Exchange Expectations

If the event is held using an online platform, there will be some requirements to allow what has traditionally occurred in a face-to-face public forum round to occur online.

1. Evidence exchange will ONLY occur in the Tabroom evidence exchange system or an email chain established at the beginning of the round. The judge should be included on the email chain.
2. Evidence is sent in the email chain when requested.
3. Be specific about the evidence you are requesting and what you want
 - a. A cut card, then the team can send the cut card inside of an email or in attached Word document.
 - b. A cut card and the PDF - send the cut card in the email body and attach the PDF.
 - c. If you paraphrase then you send an email with the paragraph you are paraphrasing in the body of the email and the attached PDF.
 - d. NSDA evidence rules indicate you must point to the specific words you are paraphrasing -- "The new language forces teams to point to specific lines from the original source from which the paraphrased argument is pulled, in contrast to the old language that would allow a team to point to an entire book or article as their original source".
4. Sending website links – This doesn't work. Paywalls stop students from accessing evidence. Links are not copied correctly or wrong. You should attach the PDF to the email or if the PDF is too big for an email then you should save it in a Google Drive and send a link to the article in a Google Drive.
5. Students are not required to use their personal email addresses. It might be a good idea to set up a team Gmail account - for example KentuckyBT@gmail.com that partners can share for the purposes of the tournament.

Congressional Debate

General Event Procedures

Legislation

A legislation packet will be available on Tabroom by the date stated 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 2024-2025 updated February 19, 2025.

In online tournaments, tournament tab staff will aim for chamber sizes no larger than 15 competitors.

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 in their screen.

By raised hand reaction. Most online video chat programs have a button that can be pressed that puts a symbol in 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 TOC 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 TOC *does 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 on Monday.

The tournament will assess a \$500 penalty for judges who miss a round when obligated.

Judge Conflicts

- Please indicate on the tournament entry website **all preclusions for all judges**.
- Judges should preclude themselves from any debater who they have previously coached, had a close, personal relationship with, or for any other reason the judge believes they cannot be objective towards them if assigned.
- This includes any judge who has done any paid or volunteer coaching, even if conducted digitally or otherwise-remotely.
- Any college debater or coach should preclude herself or himself from any debater whom they have seriously recruited to attend their school.
- ***Judges should preclude themselves from judging their alma mater until 10 years after they have graduated and/or worked with the team, whichever comes later.***
- Judges should preclude themselves from judging any school which they previously coached in the three-years prior to the 2024-2025 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, the associated school will be assessed a \$500 fine and risks losing judge preferences/strikes for the remainder of the tournament.**

Tech Time

These policies only apply if the event is held using an online platform.

- If a competitor gets disconnected from the online tournament platform while speaking, they will have up to ten minutes of Tech Time to reconnect. Judges should notify tab staff immediately if Tech Time is invoked.
 - Upon reconnecting, they may continue from where they left off, or restart their speech.
 - If they are unable to reconnect within ten minutes, the debate will continue from that point.
 - If the competitor was not recognized to speak when disconnected, it should be considered a point of personal privilege.
- If the presiding officer gets disconnected from the online platform, they will have up to ten minutes of Tech Time to reconnect. Judges should notify tab staff immediately if Tech Time is invoked.
 - If they are unable to reconnect within ten minutes, the chamber will select a new presiding officer. If there was a contested election for presiding officer, the next highest vote getter should serve as the new presiding officer. If the replacement presiding officer serves more than half of the session, they shall be considered eligible for presiding officer advancement.
- If a judge gets disconnected from the online tournament platform, the chamber should pause and notify the tab staff immediately.
- In all instances, those who get disconnected should endeavor to utilize the tech support system provided by tournament platform for assistance in resolving connection issues.

World Schools Debate

General Event Procedures

Event Format

World Schools Debate will follow an adapted form of the 2025 USA World Schools Debate Invitational Manual Debate Rules/Procedures/Protocols published by the National Speech & Debate Association.

Rules Documents

- [2025 TOC World Schools Debate Policies and Procedures.](#)

Entourage Rule

The “entourage rule” – All qualified individuals at the tournament contributing to any school’s competitive effort must be in the judge pool. This includes any volunteers contributing debate or speech work. Parents/guardians and chaperones not contributing to your program’s competitive effort are excluded from this requirement.

Any violation of the Entourage Rule will result in a \$500 fine to your school and potential sanctions at future TOC events.

Speech

General Event Rules

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.

For Extemp Speaking, the TOC does not allow notes of any kind to be used during the speech. Notes may not leave the Extemp Prep space. The TOC will use cross-examination in the final round.

Rules Documents

- [National Speech and Debate Association HS Unified Manual](#) (speech events start on page 54)
- [National Catholic Forensic League](#)

Scripts

- **Original Oratory and Informative Speaking:** per the NSDA Unified Manual, the TOC also requires that “The script must identify the quoted materials, state the number of quoted words, include a work-cited page in APA or MLA format, and both the speaker and the coach must attest by signature that the speech is the original work of the contestant” (p. 56). The TOC recommends having the speaker and coach sign the first page of the script to indicate it is the original work of the contestant.
- **Dramatic Interp, Humorous Interp, Program Oral Interp, and Duo:** per the NSDA Unified Manual, the TOC also requires that “It is the affirmative duty of each coach and each student entered in Interpretation contests to determine absolutely that the cutting being performed meets all rules for material” (p. 60). Interp source material must be available in the event of a protest. For details on Interp Source Material, please see the NSDA Unified Manual on pages 58-59.
- **Oral Interpretation of Literature:** per the [NCFL Bylaws](#), the TOC also requires that “It is the affirmative obligation of all [TOC] coaches to ensure that all materials presented in interpretation events must be available and readily accessible to all members of the league. At the [TOC] tournament, coaches should bring an original script with an ISBN, ISSN, or IFFN, or eBook Number and Library Name. If the script does not have an ISBN, ISSN, or IFFN, or eBook Number and Library Name, the coach or supervising adult must be able to show that the script was purchased or obtained commercially; ie. from a literary agent or publisher or bill of sale or that the manuscript is publicly accessible by a simple internet search or by a URL not requiring passwords or access codes and the retrieval date” (p. 6).

Judging

Expectations and Ranking

Judges must serve as the official timekeeper in the room. Competitors are encouraged to time themselves; however, students should not be keeping time for other students. Time signals (mistaken or lack thereof) are not a means for protest.

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 TOC does 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. The TOC does ballot checks and will contact judges who don't provide feedback for competitors.

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 for the entire tournament, through the final round on Monday. Unlike debate judges who are obligated to a specific number of rounds, speech judges are obligated to be available to judge the entire tournament.

Entourage Rule

The "entourage rule" – All qualified individuals at the tournament contributing to any school's competitive effort must be in the judge pool. This includes any volunteers contributing debate or speech work. Parents/guardians and chaperones not contributing to your program's competitive effort are excluded from this requirement. **Any violation of the Entourage Rule will result in a \$500 fine to your school and potential sanctions at future TOC events.**

Judge Conflicts

It is the affirmative responsibility of the coach/school to confirm all conflicts are listed when judge details are due on Tabroom. Please indicate on the tournament entry website **all preclusions for all judges.**

- Judges should preclude themselves from any [competitor](#) who they have previously coached, had a close, personal relationship with, or for any other reason the judge believes they cannot be objective towards them if assigned. This includes any judge who has done any paid or volunteer coaching, even if conducted digitally or otherwise-remotely.
- Any college competitor or coach should preclude herself or himself from any competitor whom they have seriously recruited to attend their school.
- Judges should preclude themselves from judging their alma mater.

- Judges should preclude themselves from judging any school which they previously coached in the three-years prior to the 2024-2025 academic year.
- Judges must communicate any conflicts to the tournament administration prior to the start of the tournament.
- It is the affirmative responsibility of the coach/school to confirm all conflicts are listed when judge details are due on Tabroom.

In the event a pairing is distributed, and a judge reports a conflict after the fact, resulting in a changing of the pairing, the associated school will be assessed a \$500 fine and risks losing judge preferences/strikes for the remainder of the tournament.

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

Tech Time

Tech Time is only available when the tournament is conducted using an online competition platform.

Competitors

If a competitor gets disconnected from the online tournament platform during a round, the student should immediately seek tech support assistance to reconnect and rejoin the competition room. Additionally, the judge should immediately notify the tab room that a student has dropped from the room. When this occurs, the student should be moved down in the speaking order. The student will be allowed to restart their speech if it begins within the window of time allocated for the round.

Judges

If a judge gets disconnected from the online tournament platform during a round, the judge should immediately seek tech support assistance to reconnect and rejoin the competition room. Additionally, competitors should immediately notify the tab room that the judge has dropped from the room. When the judge reconnects, the competitor should restart their speech.

If the judge has made a good faith effort with tech support to reconnect and is unable to return to the competition room, the tab room will replace the judge and the entire round will restart.