



Online Debate at Fairmont:
Checklist & Best Practices

Practical Tech & Setup Checklist

- ❑ **[Connecting to NSDA Campus And Guide For Use](#)**
- ❑ **Internet Speed & Connection**
 - ❑ Time to check your connectivity. Have a student, parent, or coach record a speech or conversation at a different location and IP address.
 - ❑ How would you rate the clarity of video and audio? Follow the troubleshooting guide below. Note: Recording your own speech on the cloud or on your local hard drive may not guarantee an accurate reflection of actual clarity. The same may be true for the recorder. For best results repeat with more than one person.
 - ❑ Check your current internet speed here. Does your speed match what your ISP is guaranteeing you?
 - ❑ How close are you to your router? Move as close as possible.
 - ❑ If you are at a significant and fixed distance from your router explore purchasing a wifi signal booster. There are a variety of options.
 - ❑ Can you connect your electronic device via an ethernet cord?
 - ❑ Have you toggled between video quality to test clarity?
 - ❑ Does your phone or electronic device have a hotspot option as a connection failsafe? Is it turned on and ready to go if needed?
 - ❑ Do you have a backup device ready to go in case your laptop or PC crash? Note: iPads and other tablets are notorious for feedback and “echo” problems in electronic debates thus far.
- ❑ **Audio Performance**
 - ❑ You cannot guarantee if your opponents or judges will have suitable devices to minimize feedback and “echo.” For best practice use comfortable headphones or at the very least have them on hand.

- ❑ If you are using a headset ensure you are either muted or the microphone is away from your mouth whilst others speak. Breathing is picked up on audio fairly easily.
- ❑ If you are using airpods or other bluetooth headphones are they fully charged?
- ❑ **Debate Space**
 - ❑ Are you located in a space with little traffic and noise? Closets and basements may have less noise but tradeoff in natural light and connectivity.
 - ❑ Is the chair you are using designed for long hours of stationary work?
 - ❑ What's in the background of your space? You want to balance professionalism and minimalism. Too much white space or sheets can be equally and subconsciously distracting as clutter.
 - ❑ Balance lighting that is near you and natural light.
 - ❑ Take breaks. Virtual debate fatigue is real. There are already apparent and unique harms from extensive exposure.
- ❑ **In-Round Tech Pointers**
 - ❑ Confirm with your judge prior to the round upon a signal to indicate a potential disruption. A visual cue like two hands in the air may be less jarring than an audio interruption. Confirm with everyone a thumbs up gesture means a speech can proceed.
 - ❑ Get confirmation of a thumbs up from all screens before starting a speech.
 - ❑ After each speaker gives their first respective speech, confirm that everyone's connectivity and reception was ok.
 - ❑ If your round is using an online platform like Zoom, Hangouts, or Skype try to configure what viewing options are optimal for you:
 - ❑ *Gallery view* allows you to see all parties at once though trades off from close ups of all parties. *Speaker view* will automatically switch between speakers but means you will not see the judges face for the majority of the round. If you are in *speaker view* a judge will have an even closer view of your face than usual. Now more than ever it's important to maintain your debate poker face in round.
 - ❑ Have you turned on offline mode in your google drive or dropbox? Even if there is a disruption this would minimize downtime.

❑ **Further Reading Virtual Tech Tips:**

❑ **TOC Online Best Practices**

❑ **The WSJ's Joanna Stern and her eBook,**