

MinneApple Debate Tournament

2026 - Apple Valley, MN/US
November 7-9, 2026

Welcome

The 41st Annual MinneApple Debate Tournament
November 7-9, 2026

The MinneApple is proud to offer in-person competition in Lincoln-Douglas, Public Forum, and Congressional Debate. Our commitment to providing an efficient tournament experience with exceptional hospitality, strong competition, and superior judging has made us one of the largest tournaments in the nation. We would be honored to have you as part of this event.

The MinneApple is a Tournament of Champions qualifier at the octofinals level in both LD and Public Forum, and offers a Tier 2 bid in Congressional Debate (top 16). We offer mutual judge preference in Varsity LD and judge strikes in Varsity PF.

All LD and PF divisions will complete six preliminary rounds. In Varsity LD and PF, all entries with 4-2 records or better will be eligible to compete in elimination rounds.

New for 2026:

- **The varsity divisions have moved to a Saturday-Monday, double-flighted schedule, with Monday elimination rounds held at the tournament hotel.** We made this change in recognition of the cost burden the judging obligation places on programs amid the rising costs of both judging and travel. Double-flighting reduces the varsity judging obligation to two rounds of judging per entry, with each round of judging covering both flights.
- We have a new tournament hotel ([Sheraton Bloomington Hotel](#)). It is very important that teams stay in the tournament hotel block. Monday elimination rounds will be held at the Sheraton Bloomington, and the new tournament format depends on teams being on-site at the hotel. A fee will apply to teams traveling to the tournament who choose to stay outside of our hotel block.
- Congressional Debate will feature scrambling chambers, with cumulative ranking determining advancement to elimination rounds.

The MinneApple is sponsored by the Apple Valley High School Speech & Debate Team, Apple Valley Speech & Debate Alumni Foundation, and American Legion Post 1776.

We look forward to welcoming you to Apple Valley!

Sincerely,
Nick Smith, Tournament Co-Director
Chris Theis, Tournament Co-Director
Scott Voss, Director of Debate

Tournament Communication Policy

Only coaches who are school employees should contact the tournament with questions. We will not respond to inquiries from students, parents (unless they are employed to assist the school's program), or private coaches. Please direct all questions to minneappledebate@gmail.com from your school email address.

Important Dates and Deadlines

Tournament Dates: November 7-9, 2026 (Saturday-Monday)

October 23, 2026

- Fees & Obligations Freeze
- Congress Legislation Due
- Hired Judge Requests Due

October 27, 2026

- Congress Legislation Released

November 2, 2026

- New Entries Due
- Judge Registration Due
- Congress Legislation Due
- Golden Apple Award Nominations Due
- Distinguished Alumnus Award Nominations Due
- Nuisance Fines Apply After This Date (fines for changes to a school's registration)

November 3, 2026

- Drops & Name Changes Due
- Final Judge and Competitor Names Entered
- Varsity LD Judge Paradigms Due on Tabroom

November 5, 2026

- Judge Preferencing Opens

November 6, 2026

- Judge Preferencing Closes (5:00 PM CST)

Registration

Entry Limits

Schools may enter up to ten (10) Varsity LD debaters, ten (10) Varsity PF teams, and twelve (12) Congressional Debate entries. Additional entries may be added to the waitlist. Varsity LD and Varsity PF are each capped at 180 entries.

Entry Fees

Entry fees include lunch and dinner on Saturday and Sunday for all competitors.

- Varsity Public Forum: \$150 per team
- Varsity LD: \$130 per debater
- Congressional Debate: \$100 per debater
- Novice Public Forum: \$50 per team
- Novice LD: \$40 per debater
- JV LD: \$40 per debater

Payment

To pay by credit card, please use [this link](#). Enter the amount you owe (refer to your Tabroom invoice) to complete payment.

Make checks payable to: Apple Valley Speech & Debate Alumni Foundation

[Click here for our W9 form](#)

Mail checks to:
MinneApple Debate
400 S 4th St Ste 410 PMB 51858
Minneapolis, MN 55415-1419

If your entry changes after payment has been made, you can request a [refund using this form](#). Refunds will be processed after the tournament.

Independent Entries

The MinneApple will not admit any student without their school administration's explicit approval, knowledge, and consent. During the tournament, students must be under the supervision of a school employee, a parent, or an individual with written authorization from the school's administration to make decisions on behalf of students.

Unless a school employee registers entries, explicit written permission authorizing the registration must be sent to minneappledebate@gmail.com on school letterhead. Only adults approved by the school's administration, or parents/guardians, may register entries. Students may not register themselves.

The tournament does not allow "hybrid entries." Students competing in partnered events must attend the same school.

Violations of these policies will result in cancellation of registration or disqualification from competition without refund.

Judging

Judge Obligations

The MinneApple uses double-flighting for Varsity LD and Varsity PF, and single-flighting in the JV and Novice division. Obligations are stated in rounds of judging provided; in the varsity divisions, each round of judging includes both flights.

Varsity LD: 2 rounds of judging per debater (4 flights)

Varsity PF: 2 rounds of judging per team (4 flights)

JV/Novice LD: 3 rounds of judging per debater (these divisions are single-flighted, so each round of judging is a single debate)

Novice PF: 3 rounds of judging per team (single-flighted, so each round of judging is a single debate)

Congressional Debate: One qualified judge for every five entries or fraction thereof, available through the final session

Judge obligations cannot be split across divisions. For example, if you have entries in both Novice LD and Varsity LD, you will need separate judges for each division.

Judge Quality Requirements

In Varsity divisions, schools may not hire out their entire judging commitment. At minimum, one judge from each school must represent their school in the judging pool.

In Varsity LD, teams must provide qualified judges. We expect judges to be preferred by enough of the pool to fulfill their judging obligation effectively. We default to assuming that parent judges and those without significant competitive or coaching experience in circuit LD are not qualified; however, teams may request an exception if they believe it is warranted.

If a judge is conflicted from judging more than 20% of the pool (excluding their own school's teams), they may only cover up to two rounds of their school's obligation.

All judges in Varsity LD must submit a judging paradigm on Tabroom.com by November 3, 2026, 8:00 PM CST. Teams whose judges have not submitted paradigms will not be permitted to submit preference sheets.

Unless an exception is granted in advance, schools may not hire judges unless all on-site coaches are entered into the judging pool.

Elimination Round Obligations

Judges are obligated through the first full elimination round OR one round past their school's last team/debater elimination (whichever comes later). Congressional Debate judges are obligated through the final session, regardless of whether their students advance.

If judging obligations are not met, the tournament reserves the right to remove a school's entries to balance the student-judge ratio. This includes judges who miss the first round. Debaters may be re-entered into the schedule with losses for missed rounds.

Hired Judges

YOU MUST SPECIFICALLY REQUEST A HIRED JUDGE BY October 23, 2026. Leaving the judging commitment blank does not constitute a hired judge request. Requests are not guaranteed until confirmed by tournament staff.

We have a limited number of hired judges available. We will prioritize offering hired judging to more schools rather than providing multiple hired judges to fewer schools.

Hired Judge Fees:

- VLD and VPF: \$100 per uncovered round (a varsity round includes both flights)
- NLD, JVLD, and NPF: \$75 per uncovered round
- Congressional Debate: \$100 per uncovered entry

If you are interested in serving as a hired judge, please complete [this form](#).

Mutual Judge Preference and Strikes

In Varsity LD, teams may rate judges and strike a small portion of the field. Judge preferencing will open on November 4, 2026, and close at 5:00 PM CST on November 6, 2026.

Teams that have not fulfilled their judging obligation or whose judges lack online paradigms by the deadline will not be permitted to rate judges.

Any judge not listed on the preference sheet will become a free strike. Teams wishing to exercise free strikes must notify the tab room before the next round's pairing.

In Varsity PF, limited judge strikes will be offered.

Judge Conflict Policy

The tournament follows TOC rules when evaluating judge conflicts. If a judge or competitor reports a conflict after a pairing is distributed, resulting in a pairing change, the associated school will be assessed a \$300 fine and risks losing judge preferences/strikes for the remainder of the tournament.

Chaos Control Fee

A 'chaos control' fee of \$100 will be assessed per missed round per judge. This fee must be paid before the end of the tournament.

Rules and Policies

Harassment and Discrimination Policy

This tournament upholds our school district's harassment and discrimination policy. Any instances of harassment or discrimination should be reported to the tab room or tournament ombudsperson immediately. Reports will be handled according to ISD 196 policy and adjudicated by Tournament Equity Officers or an Apple Valley High School administrator.

2026 Tournament Equity Officers:
Michelle Keohane
Tzitel Voss

JV/Novice Eligibility

At the MinneApple, a novice is defined as a student in their first year of debate competition, regardless of event.

A JV competitor is defined as a student in their second year of competition in a high school debate format, regardless of event. Any year of competition in events offered to high school students (LD, PF, Policy, etc.) counts toward eligibility, even if the student competed in a middle school division.

The novice definition is intentionally restrictive. Any previous season of experience in any debate format means the student is ineligible for our novice division. We believe the novice division should be reserved exclusively for true beginners at the MinneApple.

We recognize that norms vary across the country and the types of competition available to younger students differ significantly. If you believe this rule does not fit your circumstances, please contact us directly for a determination.

Time Limits and Resolutions

In LD, we will use NSDA 6-3-7-3-4-6-3 time limits with 4 minutes of preparation time. All LD divisions will debate the NSDA November/December resolution.

In PF, we will use NSDA rules and time limits. All PF divisions will debate the NSDA November resolution.

Pairing Protocols

Rounds one and two in all divisions will be randomly paired. Rounds three through six will be paired high-low within brackets. In the varsity divisions, a runoff round will be held if the number of entries with 4-2 or better records exceeds the size of the double-octofinal bracket; the lowest-seeded eligible entries will compete in the runoff for the remaining places in the bracket. Brackets will not be broken in elimination rounds.

Decision Times

Decision times will be enforced in LD and PF. This means there will be a deadline by which judges must render decisions. Each round's decision deadline is based on the Tabroom pairing start time. If a judge does not enter a decision by the deadline, the tab room has the authority to randomly assign the round's winner. We intend to enforce this policy but hope it will not be necessary.

Preliminary rounds: 75-minute decision time
Elimination rounds: 80-minute decision time

NSDA Rules

The MinneApple will use NSDA rules for all events. Enforcement of rules is left to judges in each round. If NSDA pilot rules are available for an event, they will be in effect at the tournament.

Tournament Location

All preliminary rounds, and all Saturday and Sunday elimination rounds, in Lincoln-Douglas, Public Forum, and Congressional Debate will be held at:

Apple Valley High School
14450 Hayes Road
Apple Valley, MN 55124

Shuttle service will not be provided.

Monday elimination rounds in Varsity LD and Varsity PF will be held at the tournament hotel, the Sheraton Bloomington (see Hotel Information below).

Hotel Information

We have arranged a hotel block at the Sheraton Bloomington.

Sheraton Bloomington Hotel
5601 West 78th Street
Bloomington, MN 55439

Room Rate: \$109 per night for double queen or king rooms.

[Book your room in the MinneApple block using this link.](#)

It is very important that teams stay in the tournament hotel block. Monday elimination rounds will be held at the Sheraton Bloomington, and the new tournament format depends on teams being on-site at the hotel.

[View hotel details on Marriott.com](#)

Hotel Fee

A \$300 hotel fee applies to schools not staying in the host hotel. We have worked diligently to secure the best possible rate for our tournament block. If the block is not filled, the cost of attrition and meeting spaces will be unaffordable for the tournament. To ensure we can continue offering competitive rates in future years, we request that teams utilize the tournament hotel whenever possible. Because Monday elimination rounds are held at the hotel, staying in the tournament block is especially important in 2026.

The fee is removed automatically for local Minnesota teams. Teams staying in the tournament hotel block should request removal of the fee by emailing minneappledebate@gmail.com as soon as possible. In either case, please do not include this fee in your payment.

Airfare Discount

We have secured a discount on airfare for schools traveling on Delta Air Lines to the MinneApple. If possible, we kindly ask that you book using our reservation code. If enough teams utilize the discount, we will likely secure even better rates in future years.

Delta Air Lines is pleased to offer special discounts for Apple Valley Speech and Debate.

[Please click here to book your flights.](#)

You may also call Conferences and Events® at 1.800.328.1111 Monday–Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. (EST) and refer to Meeting Event Code **NY52E***

**Please note there is not a service fee for reservations booked and ticketed via our reservation 800 number.*

Tournament Meals

Lunch and dinner will be provided on both Saturday and Sunday for all competitors, judges, and coaches. Meals will not be provided on Monday; teams competing in Monday elimination rounds should plan to provide their own meals. Meal details and options will be announced closer to the tournament date.

While we strive to provide menu options mindful of various allergies and dietary restrictions, it is each school's responsibility to accommodate their group's specific dietary needs and allergy restrictions.

Tournament Schedules

All times are Central Standard Time. Varsity rounds are double-flighted; times listed are the start of the first flight, and the second flight begins immediately after the first concludes.

Varsity Lincoln-Douglas

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2026
Apple Valley High School

9:00 AM - Round 1
11:30 AM - Round 2
2:15 PM - Round 3
5:15 PM - Round 4

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2026
Apple Valley High School

9:00 AM - Round 5
12:00 PM - Round 6
3:00 PM - Partial Triple-Octofinal (if needed)
5:00 PM - Double-Octofinals

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2026
Sheraton Bloomington Hotel (Tournament Hotel)

9:00 AM - Octofinals
12:00 PM - Quarterfinals
2:00 PM - Semifinals
4:00 PM - Finals

Varsity Public Forum

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2026
Apple Valley High School

9:00 AM - Round 1
11:30 AM - Round 2
2:15 PM - Round 3
5:15 PM - Round 4

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2026
Apple Valley High School

9:00 AM - Round 5
12:00 PM - Round 6
3:00 PM - Partial Triple-Octofinal (if needed)
5:00 PM - Double-Octofinals

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2026
Sheraton Bloomington Hotel (Tournament Hotel)

9:00 AM - Octofinals
12:00 PM - Quarterfinals
2:00 PM - Semifinals
4:00 PM - Finals

JV/Novice Lincoln-Douglas

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2026
Apple Valley High School

9:00 AM - Round 1
10:30 AM - Round 2
1:00 PM - Round 3
3:00 PM - Round 4
5:00 PM - Round 5

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2026
Apple Valley High School

9:00 AM - Round 6
11:00 AM - Octofinals (If needed)
1:00 PM - Quarterfinals
3:00 PM - Semifinals
5:00 PM - Finals

Novice Public Forum

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2026
Apple Valley High School

9:00 AM - Round 1
10:30 AM - Round 2
1:00 PM - Round 3
3:00 PM - Round 4
5:00 PM - Round 5

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2026
Apple Valley High School

9:00 AM - Round 6
11:00 AM - Octofinals (If needed)
1:00 PM - Quarterfinals
3:00 PM - Semifinals
5:00 PM - Finals

Congressional Debate

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2026
Apple Valley High School

9:00 AM - Optional judge e-ballot troubleshooting available
9:20 AM - Standby judges to judge lounge
9:30 AM - Round 1

1:00 PM - Standby judges to judge lounge
1:10 PM - Round 2
4:00 PM - Standby judges to judge lounge
4:10 PM - Round 3
6:40 PM - Adjourn prelims

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2026
Apple Valley High School

9:00 AM - Optional judge e-ballot troubleshooting available
9:10 AM - Standby judges to judge lounge
9:20 AM - Semifinals
1:00 PM - Standby judges to judge lounge
1:10 PM - Finals
4:30 PM/ASAP after finals - Awards Ceremony

Important: ALL JUDGES ARE OBLIGATED FOR THE FINAL SESSION OF CONGRESS, REGARDLESS OF WHETHER THEIR STUDENT ADVANCES.

Congressional Debate

Legislation

Schools must use CongressionalDebate.org legislation templates and submit up to four (4) pieces of legislation per school via the Tabroom registration site. Only Microsoft Word, Apple Pages, or Rich Text Format (RTF) file types will be accepted. PDFs will not be accepted.

Legislation may be rejected if it does not meet standards for legislation within the jurisdiction of the United States Congress. If we receive numerous submissions, we will select the best proposals from each school for the overall tournament docket. If insufficient legislation is submitted, items from recent NSDA dockets will be added.

Legislation Due: October 23, 2026
Legislation Released: October 27, 2026

Rules and Procedures

The MinneApple uses NSDA rules, with exceptions/additions noted in this document.

Priority will be given to fostering equal speaking opportunities for all students over strict adherence to time limits. Rounds may be extended slightly if necessary, provided no more than 10 minutes of recess are taken per round (excluding additional time required by judges).

Sectioning, Advancement and Finals

Chambers will be re-sectioned each round to distribute students with different contestants, with lowest cumulative rank totals across all chambers, after dropping the worst rank, determining the contestants who advance to the next level of competition. Beyond this, NSDA standard rank tabulation tie-break protocols will be used, advancing approximately one-third of the preliminary field to semifinal chambers of 9-14 students, followed by a final round of 16 students, all of whom will earn TOC bids. Round length is adjusted based on chamber size.

Awards and TOC Bids

The top six students will receive MinneApple apple awards. Non-placing final session participants will also receive awards. The top Presiding Officer from each preliminary chamber and the final session PO will receive a gavel.

All final session participants earn one bid/leg to the University of Kentucky Tournament of Champions. Additional bids will be awarded to the highest-rated non-advancing semifinalists until a total of sixteen (16) bids have been awarded.

Student Leadership Award

While student voting will not determine tournament rankings, a special Student Leadership Award (modeled after the NSDA National Tournament leadership award) will be conferred upon the final session debater ranked most highly by their peers.

A Note Concerning Novice LD

Dear Colleagues,

A point of pride for the MinneApple is that we offer one of the only novice divisions in the country featuring national competition. We believe the opportunity for our youngest students to compete against peers from across the nation has the unique ability to inspire a lasting love for debate from the very start.

Unfortunately, this division has been consistently shrinking over the past decade. After consulting with colleagues about why they are no longer sending novices, the most common reason is that their students cannot successfully compete unless they are prepared for arguments far too advanced for their experience level. Many coaches report that preparing novices for the MinneApple negatively affects their students by disrupting curriculum pacing, decreasing morale, and forming habits detrimental to success at most other novice tournaments. This is especially true for our local schools, where most Minnesota students have only been debating for about four weeks by the time of the MinneApple.

In light of this feedback, we ask teams to prepare novices with these concerns in mind. In the spirit of good sportsmanship, we strongly request that when preparing novices for the tournament, teams focus on fundamental debate skills and core stock arguments that first-semester students should reasonably be expected to handle.

We understand there are legitimate disagreements about what novices should be learning and when. We are simply asking that you use your best judgment and be as reasonable as possible when preparing your students. In other words, please play (Minnesota) nice!

We will include ballot instructions to this effect. Those instructions will read:

"In the novice division, debaters are expected to make arguments appropriate for their experience level. Judges should consider only arguments that, in their best judgment, are explained and packaged in a way that a first-semester novice could reasonably be expected to understand and effectively engage."

If you feel that debating on these terms would not be in the best interest of some or all of your first-year debaters, we respectfully ask that you enter those students in the JV or Varsity division instead.

Sincerely,
The MinneApple Tournament Staff

Specialty Awards

The Golden Apple Award

Presented by the Apple Valley Speech & Debate Alumni Foundation, the Golden Apple Award recognizes outstanding achievement and dedication in the debate community. This prestigious award may honor a head coach, assistant coach, judge, tab room worker, friend of the debate community, or any individual who has made significant contributions to the growth and betterment of debate.

Nominations are due November 2, 2026.

[Submit nominations using this form](#)

Presented by the Apple Valley Speech & Debate Alumni Foundation, the Golden Apple Award recognizes the outstanding achievement and dedication of an individual in the debate community. This prestigious award may honor a head coach, assistant coach, judge, tab room worker, friend of the debate community, or any individual who has made significant contributions to the growth and betterment of debate.

Please submit nominations using this form. Nominations are due October 10th,

Previous Recipients

2000 - Wayne Brinton, Apple Valley High School (MN)
2001 - Steve Fetzik, Austin High School (MN)
2002 - Scott Wunn, Iowa City West High School (IA)
2003 - Judy Olson, West Des Moines Valley High School (IA)
2004 - Mike Burton, Eastside Catholic High School (WA)
2005 - Cindi Timmons, Colleyville Heritage High School (TX)
2006 - Paul Bellus, University of Iowa (IA)
2007 - Doug Springer, New Trier Township High School (IL)
2008 - Dave McGinnis, West Des Moines Valley High School (IA)
2009 - DJ Brynteson, Robbinsdale Cooper High School (MN)
2010 - Jo Russel, Edmond North High School (OK) (Retired)
2011 - Tom Fones, St. Paul Academy (MN)
2012 - Aaron Timmons, The Greenhill School (TX)
2013 - George Clemmons, Lake Highland Preparatory School (FL)
2014 - Dan Meyers, Presentation High School (CA)
2015 - Zach Prax, Eastview High School (MN)
2016 - Bob Shurtz, Hawken School (OH)
2017 - Greg Malis, Isidore Newman (LA)
2018 - Sandra Berkowitz, The Blake School (MN)
2019 - Chetan Hertzig, Harrison (NY)
2020 - Courtney Coffman, Northland Christian (TX)
2021 - Joe Vaughan, Scarsdale (NY)
2022 - Shane Stafford, Blake School (MN)
2023 - Sheryl Kaczmarek, Lexington (MA)
2024 - Adam Torson, Marlborough (MN)
2025 - Joe Schmitt, Edina (MN)

Distinguished Alumnus Award

Presented by the Apple Valley Speech & Debate Alumni Foundation, this award was introduced in 2005 during the MinneApple's Twentieth Anniversary. Each year, we recognize an alumnus of the Apple Valley Debate and Speech Team for their contributions, achievements, and service after graduating from AVHS.

Any Apple Valley alumnus is welcome to submit nominations by November 2, 2026.

[Submit nominations using this form](#)

Previous Recipients

2005 - Shannon (Brinton) Heim ('90)
2006 - Douglas Anderson ('90)
2007 - Peter Nikolai ('91)
2008 - Andrea Singh ('94)
2009 - Angela (Zurick) Miller ('95)
2010 - Reuben Advani ('90)
2011 - Cherian Koshy ('97)
2012 - Andy Poker ('98)
2013 - Rachel Poker ('03)
2014 - Beena Koshy ('99)
2015 - Lindsey (Andersen) Poker ('04)
2016 - Caitlin Reikowski Moore ('06)
2017 - Chris Theis ('09)
2018 - Pat Nichols ('04)
2019 - Kathy Brumbaugh Gamble ('06)
2020 - Susan (Gerbensky) Klammer ('07)
2021 - Chris Bentley ('04)
2022 - Ann Kim ('91)
2023 - Sally Koering Zimney ('95)
2024 - Michelle Keohane ('09)
2025 - Tessa Dahlgren ('15)