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Parent Judging

Judging tournaments is the biggest impact you can make on this team!

We spend hundreds of dollars every weekend for paid judges and several thousand on the weekend of our home tournament, the Trojan Classic. These expenses are a significant portion of our fundraising dollars. Parent judges significantly reduce these costs and free up booster funds for other important team needs.

Actions are required to become a judge for Anderson:

1. Complete an AISD background check at this website:

<https://austinpartners.formtitan.com/origin/volunteerportal/origin/#/>

If you have any issues completing the online background check, you can reach Austin Partners in Education at 512-637-0900

2. Set up an account with Tabroom. Tabroom is used by all parents to follow (in real-time) how their child is doing at any given tournament. More importantly, Tabroom is the platform used for judging virtual tournaments. Once registered with Tabroom, you will receive text updates regarding your judging times, your ballots, and assistance with everything related to judging.

[Step-by-step instructions for creating your Tabroom Account](#)

3. Sign up to judge tournaments on blend, when Contreras posts the volunteer signup link, or through the booster club sign-ups!
4. Once you have been assigned an event to judge at the tournament, review the 4-5 minute training video for your assigned event.
5. Review the Frequently Asked Questions at the bottom of the page.

Training Guides:

A description of the various speech and debate events [HERE](#):

Note: 99% of the time, parents will judge one of these speech events listed below. Contreras would never put a new judge into a debate round.

Speech:

Extemporaneous Speaking (Extemp): [TRAINING](#) (4 minutes)

Original Oratory (OO): [TRAINING](#) (4 minutes)

Interpretation: [TRAINING](#) (4.5 minutes)

Informative Speaking: [TRAINING](#) (2.5 minutes)

Oral Interpretation: [TRAINING](#) (4 minutes)

Impromptu: [TRAINING](#) (2 minutes)

Summary: In speech, a typical round will contain six to eight different contestants, although this number can fluctuate depending on how many students are entered in the event. Before the start of the round, the judge will receive **ballots** on their tabroom page. These **ballots** are where judges will record their thoughts on each performance, suggestions for improvement, and general feedback for the performer. At the end of the tournament, each school will receive all the **ballots** written about their competitors so contestants can use your feedback to improve!

The judge will meet the students in the assigned room and watch the entirety of the round, which usually lasts for one hour. During each speech, the judge will make notes on the **ballot**, keep the contestant's time, and ensure the round runs smoothly.

Students will occasionally ask for **time signals**, it is up to you whether or not you would like to honor that request. **Time signals** are a simple system that lets competitors know how much time they have used throughout the speech. The most common **time signals** are to alert the student when they have two minutes remaining by holding two fingers in the air, like a peace sign, and to alert them when they have one minute remaining by holding one finger in the air.

In speech, it is common for competitors to enter in more than one event for the tournament, this is called being **cross-entered**. Students who are **cross-entered** should be allowed to speak earlier in the round if they have another event to go to, and should be excused for entering the round late if they were competing in a different event in the same round.

At the end of the round, the judge will evaluate the speakers and rate them on a scale from one to six, with the best performance receiving the one ranking. Depending on the tournament, you may be asked to assign competitors speaker points, typically on a scale from 90-100, with 100 being outstanding. After the rankings are complete, judges should submit their ballots on tabroom.com.

Debate:

Public Forum Debate (PF): [TRAINING](#) (5.5 minutes)

Lincoln Douglas Debate (LD): [TRAINING](#) (6 minutes)

Cross-Examination/Policy Debate (CX): [TRAINING](#) (4.5 minutes)

In debate, each round will have two debaters, or two teams, depending on the event. Before the start of the round, the judge will pick up a **ballot** via Tabroom. The **ballot** is where judges will record their thoughts on each performance, suggestions for improvement, and general feedback. At the end of the tournament, each school will receive all the **ballots** written about their competitors so contestants can use your feedback to improve!

There are two sides to every debate, one side supports the resolution being debated, and the other side negates the resolution. In *Cross-Examination/Policy Debate* (CX) and *Lincoln-Douglas Debate* (LD), the contestants will be told which side they will debate before the round. In *Public Forum Debate* sides are determined by a coin flip at the beginning of the round.

All debate events have a unique order to the round, divided into three parts: **speeches**, **cross-examination**, and **prep time**. **Speeches** are where the bulk of the debating is done, with each team presenting and reinforcing their arguments while refuting their opponents. It is common for judges to **flow** a debate, which means the judges will take notes about the speeches to keep track of the debate.

Cross-examination is a period of time where debaters can ask each other questions. There are some differences between kinds of debate, but, the purpose of **cross-examination** remains the same; asking questions that will allow the debater to make stronger arguments. It is up to you whether or not to **flow** this part. Typically, this is not a time for debaters to make arguments, instead, it is to clarify their opponents' positions.

Each event gives debaters a set amount of **prep time**, where competitors can take a moment to prepare for the next part of the debate. Competitors can take **prep time** between speeches and should notify the judges when they begin and end prep.

The judge will watch the entirety of the debate and then decide which side won. Depending on the tournament, judges can give an **oral critique** or **disclose** the results of the round. An **oral critique** is when the judge provides the debaters with immediate feedback by talking with both sides after the debate. Similarly, a **disclosure** is when the judge reveals which side won the debate right after the round. Neither of these are necessary, and, be sure to check with the tournament organizer before giving **oral critiques** or **disclosing**. When filling out the **ballot**, you may be asked to assign competitors speaker points, typically on a scale from 20-30, with 30 being outstanding. After the decision has been made, judges should submit the ballot on Tabroom.

Frequently Asked Questions:

What is the time commitment to judge?

Once the tournament approaches, Coach Contreras will send out an inquiry regarding which day you might be available so that you are not committing to an entire weekend. On Fridays, you must be available in the evening. On Saturday, judging general wraps up (for volunteers) by mid-afternoon. Unfortunately, you cannot volunteer for “half” of a day.

What if I am only available for part of the day?

Unfortunately, you cannot volunteer for “half” of a day. The judging is fluid, based on how many participants, whether rounds run late, etc. However, you will not be judging constantly for the entire day. You will have lots of breaks. So for virtual tournaments, you can be at home and get things done in between your judging assignments. For in-person tournaments, there is a hospitality room with tons of yummy food and other Anderson parents for you to get to know.

I've signed up in advance, on the Google form, to judge an upcoming weekend. How will I know if I am actually scheduled to judge and when?

Coach Contreras will send the judge assignments a couple of days in advance of the tournament.

Will I be able to select which event I want to judge, or will I be assigned an event?

On the Google sign-up sheet, you will be able to choose Speech or Debate. Beyond that, the coaches will assign you a specific speech or debate event based on your experience and comfort level.

Are parent judges needed for every tournament on the schedule or only for the Trojan Classic?

The greatest need for parent judges is at the Trojan Classic. It is also the best one to judge as there will be no conflict of interest with any of the events as none of the Anderson Students will compete.

Am I required to set up a Tabroom account?

Yes. Tabroom is critical at a virtual tournament and your only means of communication. Tabroom is also used for in-person tournaments, to alert you to your rounds, what room they will be located in, and what teams are competing.

On the day of the tournament, how much advance notice will I receive about my judging assignment?

At both in-person and virtual tournaments you will receive a text/email from Tabroom, alerting you of your next judging round. The info on your first round will come in advance. However, as the tournament continues, you may receive the text/email even 10 minutes before the round, so keep your phone close. Sometimes we won't have good reception at a school, so checking your tabroom account is also crucial.

For a virtual tournament, can I run errands or be away from my computer during my judging day?

Please remember that rounds can run long and the schedule gets behind. At an in-person tournament, relax, and hit the hospitality room for some snacks and a drink. Bring some reading material for any downtime. For a virtual tournament, please do not leave your house. The text from Tabroom might arrive just 10 minutes before the round, so you need to be at home and available.

What if the tournament runs late, past the time that I stated I was available to judge?

In the case of the Trojan Classic, our coaches can reassign a judge, because they are in control of the tournament. However, for other tournaments, this will be more difficult. If the tournament has reserves, or paid judges that are available, you should be okay.

The coaches understand that parent volunteer judges are less experienced, and they therefore use Parent judges for the preliminary rounds when all of the kids are competing. As the tournament progresses and people are eliminated, the judges rely more on the paid judges. So it is highly unlikely you will have to cancel Saturday afternoon plans. But this time, the tournament hosts are usually using only coaches and paid judges, as the stakes are much higher.

Is it possible to volunteer to judge and then not get to judge?

Yes. If several schools offer parent volunteers, you may just be backup. Any host school is going to use the parent judges from the other team because they want to be polite. For the Trojan Classic, our coaches will use parent judges from the other schools. Host parents are generally more forgiving if they come to a tournament at their school and don't get to judge. But remember, there is a hospitality room full of yummy food and drinks, and lots of fun parents to get to know. Additionally, for a virtual tournament, just plan something that needs to get done at home and be patient.

How will I know when the round is supposed to begin?

For both in-person and virtual tournaments, you will receive a text and an email stating when the round will start and the room (in-person room or virtual room). You will also be told who the teams are. When you receive this notification, called a **blast**, you should open tabroom.com and hit "Start Round" on the ballot so the tournament knows you're ready and available for the round. 10 minutes before the start of the round, please head to your room.

Will I be told if I am not needed for the rest of the day?

At an in-person tournament, you could go to the judge's table and ask. Unfortunately, you will not have a way to know if during a virtual tournament. Remember, our Coaches judge rounds all day, with very few breaks, so they are not available for these sorts of inquiries. Always ask Coach Contreras or the tournament hosts before leaving. If you have an emergency, please let the tournament hosts know so they don't put you into a round.

What if I have an issue and can't be there for some or all of my appointed time?

You have the option of contacting a Coach at least 48 hours before a tournament - this means Wednesday. On the day of an in-person tournament, you may inquire at the judge's table to see if they can find coverage for you. If the tournament is virtual and it is the day of the tournament, there is no way to alert someone that you cannot judge. You've got to be there.

What if I have computer or online tournament access issues on the day of the tournament?

Let the tournament coordinator know.

What if a team or a debater is not there at the round start time?

Send a text or email to Tabroom stating that you are "missing a team". Wait 10 minutes and they will direct you.

Are the competitors required to be on video or can they use audio only?

Competitors must be on video. They must fix the problem unless it is absolutely un-fixable. Contact Tabroom.

Do I need to discuss speed or other speaking styles before the round?

We strongly suggest that when you create your Tabroom account (required for both virtual and online tournaments), you set up your "Paradigm" (see #1 above, the link to instructions on how to set up your Tabroom account). Competitors will look at your Paradigm before they enter the round, to understand what you are looking for and how they can best succeed with you as their judge. Whether you have done this or not, you are welcome to introduce yourself and your experience level. You may tell them what you're looking for, whether you would like them to speak slowly or whether you are comfortable with speed. If something will sway your decision, speak up! You should absolutely include that you're a parent judge on your paradigm.

Do I need to keep time?

For a novice round, you should know how to do so. Tabroom has a column to do this, and the NSDA videos posted above will show you how to use this feature. However, students with experience will NOT expect you to do this. Generally, teams are considered responsible for their and their opponent's time.

May I ask questions or get clarification from the competitors during or at the end of the round?

No. Absolutely not. During the round, you may not say anything. If you would like, before the round begins you may show them a hand signal that you will give if they are speaking too fast. That is all. Never interrupt a speech and after the students are finished, you will not often give verbal feedback

either, unless you're judging a debate round. Just tell the students they did great and that they can leave the room.

What if at the end of the round, I still haven't decided who I believe won?

This depends on timing. At a virtual tournament, Tabroom will want your ballot immediately. Always submit your ballot before leaving the room.

Do I have to verbally disclose my decision to the debaters at the end of the round?

You do not have to state your decision at the end of the round, however, the students will want you to do so. Some tournaments might ask you not to **disclose** after the round for the sake of time.

Am I required to write a "Reason for Decision" (RFD)?

Yes. Even if it is short, you need to substantiate your decision. You will not have to defend this decision, but you need to provide it. This is how students get feedback, and it helps them to improve. With good reason, Coaches get very frustrated if a judge does not provide the RFD.

What if I haven't finished my RFD before the next flight or round begins?

The tournament wants your decision immediately. So you will have to submit that right away. If you would like to go back later and add more comments to your RFD, you may do so on the virtual ballot.

What are the acceptable increments for Speaker Points?

You must award speaker points to all of the speakers for a debate event. Why? Because there may be a tie at the end of the tournaments, speaker points are a way to determine a winner. So it is very detrimental to competitors if you don't award speaker points.

Can I award two debaters the same speaker point amount?

This depends on the tournament. The virtual ballot will say for sure either way.

Who do I contact if I have questions during the tournament, and how do I reach them?

It is important to realize that our coaches are often EXTREMELY busy during tournaments. There are a few events that parent judges are not qualified to judge, so they must be judged by paid judges or coaches. In order to save money, our coaches judge these events all day long, back to back. At an in-person tournament, go to the judge's table (not the tabroom). There are judges or senior officers there at all times, and they will be able to answer your questions. If there is no judge's table, head to the tab room and ask.

Did you know? Several companies in town "pay" their employees for their volunteer hours by making a donation to the volunteer organization based on the number of volunteer hours served. Please investigate whether your company provides this benefit. Here is a list of companies that we know offer this, as well as a Booster parent employee who can walk you through the process of submitting your hours for donation.