Online Tournament Guide

Lessons Learned from the 2020 Online National Tournament

Produced by the National Speech & Debate Association

Overview

In March of 2020, the National Speech & Debate Association began seriously considering shifting the 2020 National Tournament online in response to the global pandemic. The Board of Directors and office staff consulted with district leaders, other major tournament hosts, and past national finalists to evaluate the feasibility of shifting online. Our goals were threefold:

1.   Deliver the capstone tournament experience our members expect in a way that upheld the prestige of the tournament and enabled as many qualifying students to participate as possible.

2.   Provide an online experience that was equitable and safe for all attendees.

3.   Create an affordable tournament experience while generating the revenue necessary to ensure sustained member benefits and adequate tournament infrastructure for future years.

Converting tournaments to online events presents unique challenges, and this is still a very new arena for most of our community. This guide is designed to enable you to learn from our experience as you develop your own plans. We extend our sincere thanks to the tournament hosts, volunteers, and community members who advised us throughout the planning process.

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PRE-PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

SECTION 1: Choosing an Online Platform

The online infrastructure you use to run your event should be one of your first considerations, as it will constrain choices on the events, rules, and procedures you create.

Determine Event Needs

Consider what features are essential, nice to have, or unnecessary based on the following factors:

1. **Size of your event**: Some online tournament options scale better than others, largely depending on their level of automation. Ask about the size of the average tournament held on the platform, the largest tournament held on the platform, and the average number of events being held each weekend. Speak to other tournament hosts of events similar to your size to learn about their online platform experience.

2. **Events offered**: Are your events being held asynchronously or synchronously, and how does this platform support each? If live, do you need competition rooms to have features like event-specific timers or a built-in help ticketing system? If asynchronous, do you want students and judges to be in the same room to watch recordings, or are judges going to watch them on their own? Are you running events that could use special features like automated draw for Extemporaneous Speaking or a hand raise feature for World Schools Debate Points of Information (POIs)? How many people do you expect in one room (especially considering Congress chambers/observers), and can the platform support that many people in a virtual room with high quality audio and video? Do you need non-competition rooms for special groups to congregate, like judge pooling or an awards ceremony? All platforms have different features and different limitations, and many will have suggestions for work-arounds where features are not automated in their system. Know what is necessary and what you can live without.

3. **Support needs**: Just like at an in-person tournament where attendees have questions about directions, the schedule, and registration, an online tournament will require staff or volunteers on hand to assist with support. Know that tournament hosts likely still will need those people to facilitate the event, but knowing what support is offered from the platform you choose can help to plan the number of volunteers you need and focus their efforts. Understand what level of support, if any, will be available from the owners of the platform during the tournament set up process and during your event. Will they monitor that the platform is up and running during your event, and what control do they have to

fix a problem if the platform goes down? Will they provide a team to help answer user tech questions—e.g., "I can't get my camera to connect"? Are there training materials available for you to pass along to attendees? Can you run a test event on the platform to train your tournament support staff?

4. **Budget**: Each platform comes with a different cost, and many use different pricing models. If you hold a large one- or two-day event, then a platform that charges on a per room, per day basis may be more cost effective for you than for a smaller event spread out over a week. A tournament that encourages a large number of observers may avoid a platform that charges a per user fee. A tournament host who flights their debate rounds will want to ask whether rooms are charged on a per-flight or per-round basis. A tournament may find that it costs less to pay a larger number of tournament staff people to help run a more manual tournament through low-cost video conferencing software than to pay for a tournament platform. Of course, there are also free video conferencing platforms like Zoom that can be used with breakout room features to host a tournament as well.

5. **Security**: First, consider how accessible you want your competition to be to non-competitors. Will you allow observers to join competition rooms to watch? Will coaches or teammates be allowed to join? Do you want observers to pre-register before watching? Will you livestream or record rounds? Different platforms have different levels of access for non-competitors, ranging from "only the participants in that round and tournament staff can access a competition room" to "a link to the room can be shared with anyone who may anonymously observe." If you want any limitation on access to competition rooms, think about how secure you need the access to be. Some platforms require an account to login and access rooms, some have passwords on each room that can change per round, and some can limit access to rooms based on their level in the tournament—e.g., a judges only room. Finally, ask the owner of the platform about the security of the video conferencing platform that is used. Many schools have policies or school computers that limited access to Zoom, though Zoom has recently come out with additional security features. Some platforms are hosted on private servers that allow the owners to have additional control over who can access their platform. Be prepared to answer questions about participant security and privacy to tournament attendees.

6. **Participant experience**: If your tournament is later in the competition season, think about whether the typical attendees of your tournament will have extensive experience using one platform. Replicating their previous tournament experiences can help keep your tournament on schedule and ease the burden of learning a new system. It can also help you know where to anticipate bottlenecks and what improvements can be made. Additionally, if your attendees have more experience with one tabulation software over another, consider which online tournament platforms integrate with that software. For example, using a platform that integrates with Tabroom.com may be preferable for a circuit with experience using Tabroom.com so that students and judges do not need to create new accounts and coaches do not need to create new online institutions to register. Alternatively, if you know schools in your state have been using Zoom for online learning, consider using a Zoom-based platform that students and coaches will be

familiar with. Finally, look for a demo of the online tournament platform you plan to use and practice viewing the platform as a judge, coach, and student. Make sure the platform is intuitive, easy to access, and has the features needed for your attendees to have a good experience or the ability to customize the platform to make it what you need.

Explore Options

We are proud that speech and debate participants have come together to create innovative solutions for online tournaments, and we encourage you to check out all of your options!
- [This spreadsheet](#) compares several platforms, created by Roger Nix of the Boston Debate League.
- [This guide](#) provides an in-depth analysis of Classrooms.Cloud and the Zoom Room Manager method beginning on page 3, created by Adrienne Brovero, Lincoln Garrett, and Casey Harrigan of the University of Kentucky.

Pro Tip: Remember that your tournament does not need to be hosted all on one platform; many events may benefit from exploring the use of different platforms for different types of events!

How We Did It: First, we determined our event parameters. The National Tournament consisted of 20+ events with more than 8,000 students and judges. We needed a platform that could allow students and judges to easily navigate to their own competition rooms. We also wanted easy-to-access non-competition spaces for participants to access the Ombudsperson, Equity Office, and Tech Support Office as needed. Event schedules were staggered, with some held synchronously and others held asynchronously. It was important to us that the recording process for asynchronous events was as standardized as possible so that students' videos were of similar quality. We were grateful to have access to a larger-than-average support staff and budget for the event. Security and privacy was a paramount concern, especially as schools were just beginning to navigate online learning. Integration with Tabroom.com's login system to prevent unauthorized observers was an important factor. These factors led us to use the Classrooms.Cloud platform for debate and main speech, Speeches.Cloud to collect asynchronous speech recordings, and Tabroom.com's asynchronous speech feature to conduct supplemental speech preliminary rounds and middle school rounds.

Online Platform Features

This is a list of many online tournament platform features, though it is not comprehensive. Features are listed roughly in the order of importance we found them to be at the National Tournament.
- **Audio/video**: The most important features needed to run live events is high quality audio and video. Everything else was icing on the cake!
- **User navigation to rooms**: Students and judges being able to navigate to their own competition rooms was key to keeping us on schedule. We could not have run a tournament our size by manually adding individuals to breakout rooms or sending them individual links.

- **Account login**: The requirement that all students, judges, and coaches be linked to a Tabroom.com account that was connected to a school registered for the National Tournament was essential to securing the tournament. It would have been ideal if users' names or codes were automatically pulled from Tabroom.com when they entered a room instead of users needing to type their role and code, as many attendees did not follow the appropriate naming convention, and it was difficult to know if all participants were in a room ready to go.
- **In-room ticketing**: Giving attendees the ability to communicate with tournament officials without leaving the competition room was essential. It allowed us to triage support and meet them in one room rather than directing them elsewhere. It was also nice that attendees had to select their type of issue so that we could direct tickets to the right support staff immediately.
- **Non-competition rooms**: We needed the ability to create an Equity Office, Ombudsperson room, Tech Support Office, judge pooling rooms, tab rooms, registration rooms, and expo rooms in order to maintain the integrity of our event and provide immediate support. It was important that these rooms were easily accessible by attendees.
- **Testing**: It was essential to allow tournament staff access to the competition site prior to the competition beginning so they could practice accessing rooms. It was also nice to allow judges and students access to the site early so they could test their technology in the rooms and get a general feel for the layout of the tournament. Every day that the rooms were open early was a cost per room, per day, which did drive up the cost of the event. The most important aspect of testing for attendees was logging into the site using their Tabroom.com account information, which they often needed to reset because of forgotten passwords.
- **Judges watch asynchronous recordings alone**: In supplemental speech preliminary rounds and middle school rounds, we gave judges a week-long period to log into Tabroom.com and judge speech rounds at their leisure. When a judge clicked on their ballot, there were video icons next to each student's code that linked directly to their recording. Judges did not need to navigate to the competition site, and no students were present. This was a feature of Tabroom.com, not a feature of Classrooms.Cloud. This process worked well, although it did lose out on the live experience for students and did not allow students to see each others' recordings unless they were in finals.
- **Watch asynchronous recordings live**: In main speech events, we had judges and students (optional) report to a competition room at a set time where they individually watched the recordings of the competitors in that room. We wanted them to watch the asynchronous recordings live to simulate some of the camaraderie of being in round together, although much of that was lost because they watched the recordings on their own. We explored the option of having a judge screenshare the recording so everyone could watch it off the screen together in real time, but audio transmission during a screen share was very poor.
- **Recording rounds**: We did not want participants to be able to have a built-in feature to record their room for security reasons, but we did have the ability to record all rooms to a

secure central location. This allowed us to pull recordings in the case of protests, to have Extemp judges rewatch a full speech if their audio went out for a minute, and to post final round recordings publicly.

- **Gallery view**: The ability to see thumbnails of all participants in the competition room was important in some events. In Congress, it was key to being able to manage the chamber, in Extemp, it was necessary for proctors to see competitors, and in World Schools, it was necessary to accommodate non-verbal POIs. In other events, it was more of a preference based on whether judges and competitors would rather see everyone or see the person speaking larger on their screen.
- **Admin dashboard**: At the National Tournament, our tab staff received a link to one web page that allowed them to access any of their event's competition rooms directly without having to navigate there as a competitor or judge would. It also allowed us to see the names of the users in each room from this view, if they filled in their name correctly. This sped up the process of accessing rooms to check that rounds had started or assist with any issues. It would not have been necessary with a smaller number of rooms.
- **Customization**: Customization to add our branding, sponsor logos, and color scheme to the tournament platform was a nice touch to help make the online tournament feel like Nationals. We were also able to specify that we wanted recordings turned on for some rooms and not others, screen sharing enabled for some rooms and not others, and room caps on our non-competition rooms. This customization was helpful but may not be necessary for a smaller event.
- **Livestreaming**: We used a separate livestream application to run our livestream, so the ability to livestream directly from competition rooms to Facebook or YouTube was not essential, although we did use it to stream to YouTube for later debate elimination rounds. It was important for us to showcase as much competition as possible while still preventing non-competitors from accessing competition rooms for security. It did require one volunteer to sit in the competition room for the entirety of the round, making it only an option for later elimination rounds when staff became more available. Given that the separate livestream application we used did require a higher level of technical knowledge, the built-in ability to stream rounds is likely more important to other tournaments.
- **Automated Extemp draw**: Classrooms.Cloud had a feature that allowed students to select their question on the screen. It also started a countdown clock for all competitors at our determined time to time prep. This feature was a great add-on bonus, although we would have been able to manually list questions in the chat and have proctors time prep if this feature was not available.
- **Limiting rooms by role**: At the National Tournament, only users logged in with a judge's Tabroom.com account could access the judge pooling rooms, and only users logged in with a tournament administrator account could access the tab rooms. This was a nice security feature, although it may not be necessary at smaller tournaments as it is possible for tab staff to meet virtually outside of the competition platform.
- **Chat**: A basic chat function was helpful for debaters to start email chains or link to evidence, but did not appear to be widely used otherwise. Tournament staff did use the

chat a few times to troubleshoot with participants who were having issues with their audio.

- **In-room timer**: This was a nice-to-have but not a need-to-have feature. Classrooms.Cloud had event specific timers, which may be nice for newer judges. Most competitors competed using the Zoom application rather than the integrated Zoom window in the browser, so they did not have access to the timer and used their own.
- **Integration with schematic**: We linked to the event's wing directly from the schematic in Tabroom.com to speed up the process of navigating to competition rooms. This eliminated one step of the process, but likely did not make a large difference in the time it took students and judges to arrive in their rooms. It would have been ideal if we could have linked directly to the competition room, although it would have taken a huge amount of time to directly link each individual room to their corresponding room in Classrooms.Cloud. This process was not possible at Nationals because Zoom links to rooms were not always stable in the Classrooms.Cloud system.
- **Hand raise and thumbs up/down**: These functions were built into Zoom and did not appear to be used by the majority of attendees. Some Congress and World Schools debaters used these functions to request to speak, vote, or offer POIs, but most found it easier to see and keep track of these actions by holding a physical placard in front of their screen or waving their hand in front of the screen.
- **Password protected rooms**: We used this feature at the National Tournament, although we felt that the need to be logged into a Nationals-connected Tabroom.com account provided the security we needed. Each room at the tournament had the same password required in order to enter. We would have found it necessary to do further, unique password protection of rooms if we did not have the ability to require an account login, though there would have been a concern about staying on schedule while tracking down passwords for attendees who forgot them, given the size of our event.
- **Breakout rooms**: We did not use breakout rooms at the National Tournament. Some platforms create breakout for partners from one team in a debate to go and speak privately to one another during prep time. This would have been a nice-to-have feature; however, students were creative in finding other solutions to speak to each other while muted in the competition room during prep. Other tournaments may also find it useful to move flight A debaters to a breakout room to finish the reason for decision (RFD) while the flight B debaters are getting set up.
- **Screen sharing**: Screen sharing was not a necessary feature for competition at the National Tournament, although we did enable it for presenters to use during the expo if they chose.
- **File sharing**: A built-in file sharing feature was not used at the National Tournament and not missed. Students in debate created email chains or shared links to Dropbox/Google Drive in the chat.

NSDA Campus is an online platform offering team practice space and tournament hosting space at a cost of $6 per room, per day. This is not the platform used at the National Tournament!

Cost: The cost is $6 per room, per day. A squad room for each school to meet is included free of charge. Utility rooms (to be used for any non-competition needs) are included at no limit, free of charge. Utility rooms access can be limited based on role (judge, student, tab staff, coach, etc.)

Who Can Use: NSDA Campus is available to members and non-members, but requires an adult representing an educational institution to purchase.

Practice: NSDA Campus offers free practice space for NSDA members, built into NSDA accounts. Setting up a test tournament in Tabroom.com allows tournament hosts to practice using the admin dashboard and accessing rooms.

Tournament Software: NSDA Campus rooms can be integrated with Tabroom.com or SpeechWire.com. Users can access competition rooms directly from the schematic and will be named automatically based on their Tabroom.com account information.

Features: Includes audio/video rooms, admin dashboard, non-competition rooms, squad rooms, chat, hand raise, in-room file sharing, in-room ticketing system, requires Tabroom.com account to access, does not allow observers, does not allow customization, does not have built-in record function, does not offer live event tech support (but happy to help you set up your tournament!).

We know that every tournament's needs are different, and we are proud of the number of online platforms that have been created to meet our communities' needs. We encourage you to check them all out to see what works best for you!

Learn more at www.speechanddebate.org/nsda-campus.

What features are essential?
Are your events being held asynchronously or synchronously, and how does this platform support each?
How many people do you expect in one room and can the platform support that many people in a virtual room with high quality audio and video?
Will you allow observers to join competition rooms to watch?
Will the typical attendees of your tournament will have extensive experience using a specific platform?

SECTION 2: Building a Tournament Schedule

Your tournament schedule will depend on how you want to run your event, but the most important thing is that it is detailed and it is public well in advance of your tournament! If applicable, include the time zone, schematic release time, coin flip time, round check in time, round start time, and decision time for each round.

Schedule of Days

The National Tournament was held over six days in June, but we know this is not possible for most tournaments throughout the year. It may be tempting to mirror your typical tournament schedule to your online schedule, but there are a few additional factors to consider. Do you have students or judges from multiple time zones competing? Have you added additional time for breaks and meals in your schedule since students will not be in one location with access to food on your campus? Is it possible to push your schedule so that students and teachers are missing less school? Does this schedule work with the home and work schedule of your key tournament volunteers? Do you have additional access or funds to hire judges in order to single flight your debates?

How Many Rounds Per Day

Many coaches, judges, and students are reporting that online competition is more draining than in-person competition, and it is important to take online fatigue into account when planning your daily schedule. On most days, we planned to do no more than four rounds, with PF and LD being double-flighted. The general infrastructure for our schedule (in Central Time) was 10:00 a.m., 1:00 p.m., 4:00 p.m., and 7:00 p.m. Three hours between rounds can feel like a lot, but remember that some rounds were double-flighted, attendees need meals and time away from their computers, and there is a check in time/coin flip time prior to each round. With double-flighted rounds including students in each U.S. time zone, it would not have been possible to accelerate this schedule while respecting attendees' time. Single-flighting rounds is a way to accelerate the schedule if possible given other trade-offs, but it is best to set aside time for meals and breaks and consider if it is reasonable to ask students and judges to do 5+ rounds in a day!

Examples:
- NSDA National Tournament schedule
- Sample schedules in different time zones, created by Brian Manuel of Edgemont Junior-Senior High School/Stanford University

Time Zones

Consider the time zones of your entries while you're building your schedule, and remind attendees of the time zone that your schedule is in more times than you think is necessary! Always include the time zone in your tournament emails/blasts, and consider publishing a schedule in each time zone. If you're using Tabroom.com, remind attendees that if they have selected the appropriate timezone in their Tabroom.com profile, Tabroom.com will list their round start times in both the tournament time zone and their personal time zone.

National Tournament rounds began each day at 10:00 a.m. Central Time, with a check in time of 9:30 a.m. CT. We assumed that many coaches would require their competitors to check in with them prior to round start time, and our goal was for no competitor in the U.S. to need to be anywhere online before 7:00 a.m. their local time. It is important to remember that you will likely begin email/text blasting attendees at least 30 minutes prior to round check in time with schematics and reminders, and you should build this into your schedule as well to avoid waking up west coast students at an unreasonable hour. We also aimed for rounds to start no later than 7:00 p.m. CT, which ended the day for most debaters by 11:00 p.m. their local time. Of course, if your tournament has international competitors, it may be hard to accommodate their time zones! Make sure to clearly communicate the time zones and check in times in advance so everyone can prepare. If possible, you may try to pair debaters in these time zones in a flight that works best for getting them to bed at a reasonable hour as well.

Double Entry

If your tournament allows double entry in live events, make sure you accommodate students getting from one event to another within your time requirements. Even though students no longer have to walk to the other end of a school, students now have to work within check in times and technology testing times. Just as you would an in-person tournament, communicate your policy for moving on to another speaker if a double-entered student has not arrived yet and have a person for judges to contact to check that a speaker is on the way. Consider whether it is important that students are able to attend asynchronous rounds and schedule your events in such a way that allows for it.

Round Zero

Having a round zero on the first day of main event debate and main event speech was the greatest decision we made in regards to scheduling at the National Tournament! Round zero was a required practice round for all competitors and judges who were participating in the first day of competition. It was a full-length round including check in time, tech testing, all speeches, and submission of ballots. Some rounds didn't even get started by the time the round zero time block was over, but it allowed us to troubleshoot major issues and talk attendees through any

questions they had so that round one started and finished on time. We highly recommend incorporating a round zero into your schedule if possible!

The National Tournament schedule had a comprehensive schedule of all round start times as well as event-specific schedules. Each event-specific schedule listed a time that judges and competitors must be in the room for check in, the coin flip time if applicable, and a round start time where students should begin speaking. If a judge was not assigned to a particular round, they were required to report to the judge pooling room by round check in time in case they were needed as a substitute. The round check in time was 30 minutes prior to the start time of each round. This 30-minute period was used to ensure that every participant was using the correct naming convention of Role - Code - Name - pronouns (optional), to test each participant's audio/video technology, and to start an email chain if needed.

Thirty minutes was not typically needed to accomplish these tasks, though there were a few sections each round that did take the full time to troubleshoot tech issues or track down their partner, and having that 30-minute window prevented a forfeit. As we got further into the tournament, students and judges needed less time and began to start rounds early.

In addition to giving participants enough time to get ready to begin the round right at round start time, this 30-minute window allowed tournament officials enough time to track down missing people. We instructed participants to contact us about missing people through the in-room ticketing system, and we also had tournament officials going into each room to mark them as ready to begin once each person was present. The 30-minute window gave us enough time to text blast any missing competitors/judges and make judge replacements and get the rounds started on time. We believe 30 minutes was a great window for required check in time, and we recommend having a clear policy on whether rounds can start early if they are ready.

Flighted Debates

Our schedule allowed for each flight of LD and PF to take 45 minutes and required that debaters from both flights check in 30 minutes prior to the start of flight A. A sample round's schedule looked like this:

12:00pm	Schematic released
12:30pm	Judges/competitors in both flights report to assigned competition room
12:30pm	Unassigned judges report to judge pooling room
1:00pm	**Round 1 Start Time Flight A**
1:45pm	**Round 1 Start Time Flight B**

Asking flight B debaters to show up 30 minutes prior to flight A allowed judges to report missing flight B debaters so tournament officials had a full hour to track them down. It also got all tech

issues resolved by the time flight B was supposed to start so that flight B could begin immediately at the conclusion of flight A.

Our tournament policy was that flight B debaters could not stay in the competition room while flight A was occurring; they were to check in and come back 45 minutes after the start of flight A. The rationale was that fewer people in the room meant there were fewer people to cause tech issues in the room. We definitely found that one person with a poor internet connection could bring down the quality of audio for everyone in the room, but it is unclear whether this policy caused additional stress on debaters by asking them to remember two different check in times for each round.

Forty-five minutes between each flight was optimistic, and flight B often did not start until one hour after the start time of flight A due to judges needing to make a decision and submit a ballot. However, we still recommend putting the flight B start time at 45 minutes past because it meant that flight B debaters arrived silently in the room ready to debate right after the flight A debaters finished speaking and were ready to go immediately when judges were ready.

Forfeit Times

Since we did not require speech students to attend their rounds, there was no forfeit time in speech, and student attendance did not affect judge rankings. The forfeit time for debates at the National Tournament has always been 15 minutes past round start time, even when we moved online. In debate, this meant that students checked in 30 minutes prior to round start time and had 15 minutes after round start time to arrive before they were forfeited. Tournament officials did their best to begin contacting missing students right at the 30-minute check in time if they were not present. Some attendees found this policy difficult to understand, and additional messaging prior to the event could have been beneficial. There were not many forfeits, and most of those that did happen were due to students who were unable to access the competition room 45 minutes after check in time due to troubles with technology.

Tech Time

There was no set aside "tech time" at the National Tournament, though other tournaments like the Tournament of Champions allotted each team 15 minutes of tech time to use at any point throughout the round. The judge was to start the tech timer as soon as a team needed to stop the debate due to technical issues.

At Nationals, most technical issues were able to be resolved in the 30 minutes prior to each round, and as soon as a student or judge got their audio and video working, they were set for the rest of the round. However, there were certainly cases where a debater lost internet access during the round for a few minutes, their microphone suddenly stopped working, etc. We left these situations up to the discretion of the judge, and most were resolved within a minute or two, and the round continued on. There were a few cases where a round was stopped and the

judge contacted tournament officials because it had been more than a few minutes and the issue had not been resolved. At that point, upper level tournament officials made a call on how the round would proceed, if at all, based on the recommendation of the Rules Adjudication Panel and Ombudsperson.

It would have been difficult to make pre-tournament policies that addressed what to do in these situations because each was so different: power outages, school wifi going down, a round had been stopped for 10 minutes but had started 15 minutes early, etc. Our answer was to have a set of adjudicators making recommendations to maintain consistency and fairness; however, another option could be to give each team 15 minutes of tech time to handle any issue and allow the judge to keep watch on that time. Either way, it is important to have some procedure in place for you to anticipate these issues.

Decision Times

There were no official, published decision times at the National Tournament, or hard deadlines for judges to submit a ballot each round before tabulation software randomly chooses a winner. Instead, tournament officials were told what time to go into each of their assigned rooms and gently remind judges that it was time to submit their ballots and get ready for their next round. We did repeatedly remind judges that they were to submit their decisions (ranks in speech or winner/speaker points in debate) immediately and then write comments and feedback after submitting their decision, which is possible using online Tabroom.com ballots. This worked for us, especially given the amount of time between rounds. However, we had preset preliminary rounds which means we are less dependent on timely judges for most rounds, so it may be worthwhile to consider using decision times at your tournament.

Questions to Consider

Have you added additional time for breaks and meals in your schedule since students will not be in one location with access to food on your campus?

Do you have additional access or funds to hire judges in order to single flight your debates?

Can you build in a round zero?

Will you add a check in time to the schedule?

How will you consistently and fairly address tech issues in a round?

SECTION 3: Participant Security

Tournament Policy

We asked for customization through the Classrooms.Cloud platform (a Zoom-based platform) to limit Zoom features that were commonly abused for "Zoom-bombing." The ability to use Zoom

backgrounds was turned off, and the ability to share screens and file share through the chat was limited where possible. Additionally, we widely published the NSDA Privacy Policy that both Tabroom.com and Classrooms.cloud abided by, as well as the Code of Honor, Coaches Code of Ethics, and the Harassment and Discrimination Policy. Any violations of the Harassment and Discrimination Policy could be reported to the NSDA Equity Office, which was continuously staffed by trained professionals during the event. We encourage tournament hosts to adapt or use these documents to make tournament expectations and enforcement clear. Be sure to check your school policies, too. We also recommend that tournament hosts prepare a document on the steps they are taking to ensure participant security for coaches to share with their administration. Here is an example of the document we created for the National Tournament.

Media Release Form

All students were required to upload an NSDA Image and Media Release Form to Tabroom.com as a condition of participation in the tournament. This form obtained permission for photographing, taking videos, and publishing photos of students. The high school National Tournament form can be found online here, and the middle school National Tournament form can be found online here. There is also a Google doc that shares the language used by the International Thespian Festival. We encourage tournament hosts to adapt forms to their own use to protect themselves and their participants.

Tabroom.com Integration

Students and judges used their Tabroom.com account info to log in to the competition site. Only Tabroom.com accounts associated with the National Tournament were permitted entry to the competition site. All virtual classrooms also required an additional password for participants to enter before they could join a competition room. The password was the same for each room. This dual level of account and password protection ensured that we had close to zero issues with unauthorized persons in any competition room.

Naming Convention

All judges and competitors were instructed to use a naming convention when they entered any room of the tournament—e.g., Judge - J104 - Lauren - she/her (pronouns optional)—so that all round participants may be easily identified. Any participant not using that naming convention was asked to rename themselves, and if they did not comply, tournament officials removed them from the room and sent them to the Ombudsperson to learn appropriate procedure. Knowing who was in competition rooms at all times allowed us to enforce our observer policy and ensure participant safety.

Observers

During the competition, observers within online competition rooms were prohibited to protect participants' privacy and security from online disruption. Because of the Tabroom.com account integration, it was not possible for a non-Nationals affiliated account to access the competition site. However, our widely communicated policy was that if an observer was in the room and refused to leave, the judges would contact the tournament office through the helpline so a tournament official could remove them. Limiting the number of participants in these rounds was the best way to protect the privacy and security of our students, and thus, help to secure schools' ability to participate in the event. We had very few instances where a competitor in a different event tried to go to a round to observe, and no instances where a non-tournament affiliated person gained access to the event.

Tournament Officials

Tournament staff and volunteers had a small, dedicated number of rooms that they were responsible for monitoring. They constantly rotated through rounds and were able to quickly remove anyone violating tournament policy. Participants also had the ability to report disruptions to the tournament helpline, where staff was prepared to send volunteers into the room to handle the problem immediately. Make sure that you train your tournament officials on proper procedure for responding to a disruption in round, and widely communicate your policy for removing anyone who violates tournament policy.

Questions to Consider

Will you require a password for rooms? If so, how will that be communicated?

Will you use a naming convention?

How will you train tournament officials on proper procedure for responding to a disruption in round?

SECTION 4: Tech Equity Considerations

In considering moving the tournament online, one of our major questions was how we could write our rules and guidelines to create a level playing field for all participants.

Tournament Policy

An Online National Tournament Equity Committee was created in the lead up to the tournament to discuss online tournament rules and policies and ensure that we were providing an equitable experience for attendees. Though many items were discussed, there were three main take-aways from this committee:

1. The committee assisted the staff and Board of Directors in creating language to add to every ballot at the National Tournament. This language served two purposes. First, it defined implicit bias and asked judges to reflect on their implicit biases that negatively impact students who are traditionally marginalized and disenfranchised. Second, it reminded judges to consider students' different levels of access to technology and that judges should make decisions and feedback solely based on the performance rather than the quality of the technology that enabled it. That language appears below:

   "We are all influenced by implicit bias, or the stereotypes that unconsciously affect our decisions. When judging, our implicit biases negatively impact traditionally marginalized and disenfranchised students. Before writing comments or making a decision, please take a moment to reflect on any biases that may impact your decision making.

   Please remember that the video quality of a student's performance or speech may be impacted by lighting, internet, access to equipment, and other family members' presence in the home. To ensure a more equitable experience for our participants, please be sure your decision-making process and comments are related only to the content and quality of the presentation or speech itself."

   We also created rules that prohibited students from using professional-level technology to record their speech performances with the purpose of leveling the playing field. Read more about those rules in the [Asynchronous Speech Judged Live](#) section.

2. The committee helped define our policy regarding student attendance in recorded speech rounds where performances were not held live. Ultimately, they decided that in a time when students' schedules and access to reliable technology were in flux, a requirement that students attend their recorded speech rounds would put unnecessary stress on students. The committee determined that students in speech rounds should be welcomed to attend, but not required.

3. The committee strongly recommended that we create an online competition guide to help students understand what technology was necessary to compete, how to troubleshoot that technology, and some ideas to consider regarding setting up their competition space. We created an [online competition guide](#) to share tech and internet best practices with attendees under our event rules. We also created several opportunities for students to practice on the platform to become comfortable with the technology they have available prior to competition. Read more about our process for setting up [student practice times](#).

Support Mechanisms

Every year, the William Woods Tate, Jr., Fund provides financial assistance annually to teams attending the National Tournament with a demonstrated need. In an online environment, we adapted the fund to provide financial assistance to students so that they could purchase

technology, pay for internet access, or acquire other resources that will allow them a more equitable experience. We offered coaches the opportunity to apply on behalf of students in most need of funds. Consider what your tournament can do to support students in need of assistance. Does your district have extra funds available that could be reallocated? Could you offer schools the option to pay slightly higher entry fees at the tournament to support a dedicated fund?

Questions to Consider

Do your rules create an environment where all students have an equal opportunity to succeed? Are there ways your tournament or district could provide support to students in need of assistance?

SECTION 5: Training Coaches, Students, and Judges

Coach Information

In early April, we released a [Procedures Document](#) that listed what students and coaches could expect for National Tournament competition. This document was written with the purpose of answering standard questions about how a certain event will work, the schedule, and parameters for participation. This document was updated continuously, with all updates and additions being highlighted in yellow as clarifications were made or coaches asked questions. We also released a new version of the [National Tournament Operations Manual](#), adopted for the online format. There was a lot for attendees to keep track of, and a lot of documents to reference. We collected all documents and updates on [one website](#) and communicated changes through the NSDA newsletter system. Getting information out early and creating a hub could cut down on confusion.

Student Training

Students had general information on how their events would work, the schedule for their events, and the rules for their events from NSDA documents found on the National Tournament website. However, it was important that students also had a chance to see and test the competition site where online competition would be held.

First, we created a website with a series of short video tutorials on using the competition site to participate in their type of event. The videos were split up by event category so that students only needed to watch the tutorials that applied to them. You can view the [student training website](#) here. We also created a [short tutorial video](#) on recording their asynchronous speech in Speeches.Cloud and an [online competition guide](#) for using technology during the tournament. If it is not possible for you to open access to your competition site prior to competition for student practice, it is helpful for students to see what their screen will look like, and we recommend screen recording yourself walking through the site. Getting this out early and sending consistent

reminders to coaches increases the chance that students watch the tutorials and be comfortable when competition begins.

Next, we purchased 10 rooms on the competition site and made them available for students to reserve and use for practice. We used Slottr to create a form for teams to sign up for 90-minute time slots, and encouraged students to go into the rooms, test their technology, and practice giving a speech. We assigned one tournament volunteer to be in charge of notifying participants of the room passwords and helping them troubleshoot once in the rooms by creating a troubleshooting guide. Giving students advance access to competition rooms so they can become comfortable with the online platform helps increase their confidence and reduce the need for troubleshooting during the event.

Finally, we purchased a limited number of competition rooms in each event type and opened them up to all student participants on two days prior to the tournament: one day was the week before the tournament, and the other day was the day before the tournament. We invited students to practice logging into the site, navigating to a competition room, and testing their technology in those rooms. This open "test whenever and however you'd like" option was most popular amongst students.

Judge Training

First, we created a website with a series of short video tutorials on using the competition site to judge their type of event. The videos were split up by event category so that judges only needed to watch the tutorials that applied to them. You can view the judge training website here. Judges were required to watch the relevant videos and then complete the Self-Paced Judge Training to test what they learned. After they completed the training on the competition site, they signed the confirmation form. Requiring that judges gain experience navigating the site meant that they had already practiced logging in and going to a room, which decreased the number of help requests we received on the first day of the tournament.

All judges in the National Tournament were also required to complete the Cultural Competence Training Videos and read through the supplemental handout. This training is aimed at ensuring that judges provide culturally competent and inclusive feedback and decisions that meet students where they are and help create healthy competition. We highly recommend requiring or adapting these materials for judges at any speech and debate tournament. Judges who are new to judging their event were also invited to take the full NFHS Judge Training course.

Questions to Consider

Can you develop a one-stop-shop for all attendee information?

Will you create training videos on the platform, or are there existing ones you can share?

How will you train judges?

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

SECTION 1: Setting Rules in Debate

Round Procedure

This was the published round procedure for the National Tournament. Tournament officials were also checking to be sure everyone was present during this 30-minute window.

> "Thirty minutes prior to each round, students and judges will report to their room on the schematic from Tabroom.com. Judges will do a roll call to make sure each student is present, everyone will test their audio and video, judges will ensure the naming convention has been followed, and an email chain will be created if that is how students agree to do evidence exchange. Any tech issues should be resolved in this 30-minute period. The first speaker must begin speaking promptly at the round start time. Judges will submit their decision via Tabroom.com immediately after each debate. To keep rounds on time and ensure students and judges finish each day at a reasonable hour, judges should not disclose or explain their decisions. Instead, judges will be encouraged to write a reason for decision and comments on the online ballot after their decision has been submitted."

Video Policy

The general expectation was for speakers and judges to have their video turned on to maximize visual and audio cues for listeners and viewers. However, should bandwidth or other technical issues occur, judges were encouraged to accommodate to maximize participation of all involved. We did find that participants in the round turning off their video if audio quality was bad helped. We also found that most judges did not turn on their video unless prompted, so you should emphasize it in your messaging if it is important to you that videos remain on.

Internet Rules

The pilot rules for debate, Congress, and Extemp were used at the 2020 National Tournament. These rules allowed debaters to access the internet during the round to pull up evidence, actively research, communicate with their partner, etc. These rules were well received and will remain in place for future National Tournaments.

Flighted Events

See the section on Tournament Scheduling.

For all rounds of Public Forum, we used the automatic coin flip in Tabroom.com. There were a few questions about how the flip worked before the first round, but there were almost zero issues with the coin flip after round one. For your tournament, the coin flip can also be used in elim rounds where debaters flip for sides.

For your tournament set up:
1. In Tabroom.com, go to Settings » Events and select your event.
2. From the Online tab, toggle "Online Event."
3. Click the Tabulation tab and toggle the setting that says "Use Online Coinflips."

Auto-flip *(minutes post publication)*
This feature tells Tabroom.com what time to text/email blast teams about who won the coin flip, giving you full control over how long it takes for a coin flip to occur and the round to start. The number you put here determines the delay time between the publishing of the round and the time that debaters begin the coin flip process. For example, if you set it for "5," debaters will be notified five minutes after the round has been published whether they won or lost the flip.

Flip deadline *(minutes post flip publication)*
This is the amount of time each entry has to make their selection after being notified it's their turn to choose a flip side. For example, if you set it to "10," the winner of the coin flip will have 10 minutes to make a selection after they receive notification that they won or lost the flip. If it's a Public Forum event then, the loser of the coin flip will then have 10 minutes to make the other selection after the winner has registered their side or speaker position preference. If neither team makes the selection, sides/order will be randomly determined and locked after the deadline has passed.

Winner chooses side or order (PF)
If you do not select this setting, the winner will only get to choose the side. The losing team will not make a selection unless the winning team fails to meet their deadline for selection. Toggle this setting if you would like the winning side to choose either side or order and the losing side to pick the opposite selection.

Anyone chooses after deadline
If this setting is toggled, the winner of the coin flip will get their set amount of time to make a decision about which side they choose. If the winner does not make a selection within that time limit, then either team may choose their side. NOT toggling this button would mean that the losing team gets dedicated time to make a choice, and if they do not make their choice within the time limit, then Tabroom.com will choose for them. Toggling this button makes it so that if the coin flip winner does not make a choice, the first team to choose their side wins.

Flip separately for 2nd flights

This setting applies to flighted events. If you want your flight A and B coin flip to occur at the same time X minutes after you publish the round, do NOT toggle this setting. If you would like the flight A coin flip to happen X minutes after you publish the round and the flight B coin flip to happen Y minutes after the flight A coin flip, toggle this button. You can determine how much time you would like between the flight A coin flip and the flight B coin flip by entering a number in the "Flight length in minutes" section at Settings > Events > select event > Tabulation. If you enter that you want the auto-flip (minutes post publication) to be 5 and the Flight length in minutes to be 60, then your flight A flip will happen 5 minutes after you publish the round, and the flight B flip will happen 60 minutes after your flight A flip (or 65 minutes after you publish the round).

How to monitor the coin flip

From the Schematics screen, you will see a button at the top labeled "Actions". Here, you can see the time the flips were performed and when they were blasted. If something happened and flips were not performed or blasted upon publishing, you can manually push through the flip and blast on this page. You can also manually flip the flights separately from this page or change the deadline across the board for the flip selections.

Additionally, clicking on the room number of a particular section and scrolling to the bottom, you will see "Flip Status" that lists whether the flip was performed for those students, who made which selection, and if a selection was not made, which team missed their deadline. You can also manually redo flips for individual sections from this page.

Flip Status

Flip Winner	No flip performed (Resets flip) ▾	Side Choice Locked	☑
Choice Status	Flip Done ▾	Order Choice Locked	☑
Choice Deadline	Sat 6:43 PM		Save

Blast Flips

These were the settings used for the coin flip at the National Tournament.

Use Online Coinflips	Y
Auto-flip (minutes post publication)	
Flip Deadline (minutes post flip publication)	5
Winner chooses side or order (PF)	Y
Anyone chooses after deadline	N
Flip separately for 2nd Flights	N

This was the published coin flip policy for Nationals:

"Tabroom.com will automatically flip a coin for the two teams where applicable. Thirty minutes prior to the round when teams are to report to their competition room for check-in, teams in both flights will be notified via text and email from Tabroom.com which team won the coin flip. In BQ and WS elimination rounds, the winner of the coin flip will choose their side in Tabroom.com. The students or any adult added as a coach on their school in Tabroom.com may make this selection. In PF, the winner of the coin flip will choose either their side or speaker position in Tabroom.com. Once chosen, the other team will make the remaining selection in Tabroom.com. If the winner of the coin flip does not make a selection after 5 minutes, the choice will revert to the other team. If no one makes a decision after 5 minutes, Tabroom.com will randomly assign sides and speaking position. These choices will be locked on the judges' ballots; judges will no longer need to tell Tabroom.com which debaters are on which sides in what order. All participants will be able to practice in round zero. The purpose of automating this coin flip is to avoid confusing procedures about who conducts the coin flip on video and guarantee that the judges' ballots are always correct based on student decisions."

Preparation Time

Policy Debate preparation time was increased to 8 minutes to align with community norms at other online tournaments, and this did help to reduce confusion at the National Tournament. Lincoln-Douglas, Public Forum, and Big Questions prep time each increased by one minute. The purpose was to accommodate for the difficulty of online preparation and evidence exchange. However, the increase did not seem to make a noticeable difference for debaters or judges.

Evidence Exchange

There was a new procedure regarding evidence exchange and preparation time introduced at the National Tournament. The purpose was to ensure that we stuck to the schedule and avoided keeping students and judges in competition longer than their commitment. It seemed that this change got lost in communication, and many debaters and judges were unaware of the change, though many believed it was a good change in theory. We do not believe this rule was widely enforced. This is the text of the changed procedure for evidence exchange, as published:

> "NSDA evidence rules require that all students have evidence immediately ready to go when requested. If evidence is paraphrased, it is required that the competitor has the specific text from the original source which is being paraphrased clearly indicated and immediately available. If it takes teams more than one minute to find and send evidence that is requested, the team looking for the evidence must take preparation time to find it. Any reading of evidence produced at a team's request must be done within the requesting team's preparation time. These requirements are to ensure that we stick to the schedule and avoid keeping students and judges in competition longer than their commitment."

We also specified the method by which evidence exchange may occur. While not widely known, it did seem that these procedures were in line with what students were already doing. This is the text of the procedure outlining methods for evidence exchange:

> "Debaters must send original sources via PDF or Word document; no links directly to online articles may be shared due to paywalls, subscription restrictions, and the inability to highlight the sections read or paraphrased. Evidence must be shared as a PDF or Word document through a link in the virtual room chat box or through an email chain. Students who plan to use the email option are recommended not to use their personal email address, and instead, to create a Nationals-only account to use. The email chain must be created in the 30 minutes prior to the debate in order to be used. Judges should be added to the email chain if they so request."

Partner to Partner Communication

In partner events, partners were permitted to either compete together in the same room or from two different locations. Partners were permitted to share a device or use two separate devices. We did not find that partners being together during competition created any significant competitive advantage, and we believe that students should be encouraged to use their school equipment and internet if that is their best option. We recommend that all competitors follow local guidelines for social distancing at the time of the tournament.

Debaters were creative about how they communicated with their partners if they were not in the same physical location (using instant messaging, a phone call, a Google doc, etc.), and we did not believe it was prudent to over legislate how they may do so. Debaters should not plan to use a separate communication platform that requires computer video or computer audio as that will disrupt the online debate round.

Outside Assistance

Participants in the National Tournament were reminded of their commitment to the NSDA Code of Honor and that during the course of a round, receiving outside assistance from any non-participant in the round, including coaches, teammates, and family members, was strictly prohibited. Any allegations of a rule violation could be submitted through the online protest form and were handled through the adjudication panel process. Students found to have violated tournament policy could have faced loss of round, disqualification from the tournament, and/or removal from the Honor Society and notification to school administration. We have found that while this was a major concern of many coaches when tournaments began moving online, it is not a major concern in practice. Tournament hosts should have a published procedure for addressing rule violations.

World Schools Debate

Points of Information (POIs) were done most effectively when students created a placard using a piece of paper that said "Point of Information" and held it in front of the screen. We found that verbal interruptions for POIs made it difficult to understand the speaker. We did not require World Schools debaters who were not competing in that round to be present in the competition room, though most did attend.

We also held only three prepared motions, and each entry debated those three motions on both sides. Having debaters debate both sides of a prepared motion made the amount of pre-tournament preparation more manageable since World Schools debaters are asked to prepare speeches for several different motions already. There were no impromptu motions because we were unable to fit prep into a reasonable schedule. However, we believe impromptu

motions are a great, unique feature of World Schools Debate and encourage smaller tournaments to try doing online impromptu prep if they are up for a challenge.

SECTION 2: Extemporaneous Speaking

Tournament Policy

USX and IX were the only speech events performed live. Cross examination was not used in Extemp to minimize logistical and technological challenges, and that change did minimize the number of things that students needed to worry about in round. Competitors were instructed that they could determine how close or distant the camera was as they were speaking in order to maximize both verbal and nonverbal communication. Judges were instructed to judge a student's performance, not whether they were sitting, standing, or walking. We found that most students stood in place while delivering their speech.

Internet Rules

The pilot rules for debate, Congress, and Extemp were used at the 2020 National Tournament. These rules allowed Extemp students to access the internet during prep to pull up evidence, actively research, etc. Students still could not use pre-prepared notes or outlines. These rules were well received and will remain in place for future National Tournaments.

Extemp Draw Procedure

Prep rooms were split by speaker order. All of the first speakers reported to USX or IX Speaker 1 Prep, all of the second speakers reported to USX or IX Speaker 2 Prep, etc. There were very few instances of speakers reporting to the wrong room, as their speaker position was listed on the public schematic in Tabroom.com.

All students reported to their prep room 30 minutes prior to draw start time for speaker 1. If the round started at 10:00 a.m., students were to report to their prep room at 9:00 a.m., regardless of their speaker position. Students used an automatic draw system built into Classrooms.Cloud. A countdown timer showed students how much time there was until draw time. Once it was time to draw, students saw three questions on the screen and chose the one they wanted. Students were given two minutes to make a selection. Once they chose a question, they began prepping with a running 30-minute timer on the screen. Students were instructed to mute themselves, leave their videos on, and keep their speakers on in case the proctor needed to speak to them. If a student was late to draw, they could still choose their question, but time would have begun to count down. Students were permitted to use different devices to prep and speak. After prep was over, the proctor released everyone in the prep room to their competition room to speak. Prep was staggered by 10 minutes for each speaker position. Judges were instructed to give time signals as usual, though competitors were warned to time themselves because issues with

time signals were not grounds for protest. We asked speakers to leave the room after they had spoken to minimize the number of people in the virtual room, which could cause audio/video quality issues.

What worked: Staggering prep by 10 minutes for each speaker position was a great amount of time to ensure judges heard each speaker, the next speakers weren't entering the room as the previous competitor was speaking, and short delays to fix audio were easy to make up. We could have gone down to seven or fewer minutes in later elimination rounds. Additionally, splitting prep rooms by speaker order worked really well for us. It allowed proctors to focus on one thing at a time since they only needed to keep track of one time period at once. With seven students per section, this did require a minimum of 14 proctors for IX/USX each monitoring their own prep room, which can be tough if you are short on volunteers. It would have worked to have the first and second speaker proctors move to the last speakers' prep rooms, if needed. The automatic draw system in Classrooms.Cloud worked great, and the times were customizable. We had someone on standby to do manual draw if students were unable to work the automatic draw system, and there was only one student per division who needed to use this option after round one.

If we did not have the option to use an automatic draw system, we would have designated one person to be in charge of draw. We would have staggered USX and IX draw start times by a few minutes to enable them to facilitate draw for both divisions. That person would have posted three unique questions in the chat of the prep room for each speaker position. Speakers would have chosen one and silently begun prep. Proctors would have begun timing after two minutes and released all speakers after an additional 30 minutes had passed. This would require additional questions (3 per speaker position, per division for each round) and one additional staff person.

Judge Tech Issues

Because of the rigid timing required in order to keep Extemp on schedule, judge and student tech issues were our priority to resolve. We also prioritized judge replacements in Extemp for any judge who was having difficulty hearing speakers in the round. If a judge had to come in for the second speaker on, we would pull the competition room's recording and have the judge watch the recording of the speech they missed. This was also an option for a judge who lost connection for just a minute of a speech and then was able to come back into the room and finish judging.

SECTION 3: Asynchronous Speech Judged Live

Main event speech rounds, excluding Extemp, consisted of students pre-recording their performances and judges adjudicating those performances live. Competitors submitted one recording of their performance through Speeches.Cloud prior to the competition. This one

recording was judged throughout preliminary rounds, elimination rounds, and finals, if applicable.

Asynchronous Recording Rules

We created a set of standards that students must follow while recording their asynchronous performances. On top of every ballot at the National Tournament, judges were asked to consider our value of equity and not take video quality into account while judging. This is part of the language found on top of ballots:

> "Please remember that the video quality of a student's performance or speech may be impacted by lighting, internet, access to equipment, and other family members' presence in the home. To ensure a more equitable experience for our participants, please be sure your decision-making process and comments are related only to the content and quality of the presentation or speech itself."

Though we reminded judges not to take video quality into account, we know it may be impossible to fully remove implicit bias from their decision-making process. As an additional attempt to level the playing field, we created standards for video recording to prevent students with access to professional-level technology or resources to purchase professional-level technology from receiving a competitive advantage with their videos. We found that these rules were well-received, and while it was impossible to create a comprehensive list of what was permitted/not permitted, we encouraged members to reach out and ask questions if they felt that any of their recording technology may not be within the rules. These were the standards created:

> "Competitors may not use green screens, virtual backdrops, on-screen text, or professional equipment enhancements such as professional lighting kits or professional grade camera recording and audio devices (including things like softboxes or using an auditorium's lighting system) during their performance in any event. Students must use the official NSDA Recording Site, Speeches.Cloud, to film and submit their performances; performances cannot be submitted as a separate video file. Submissions or recordings may not be edited using any software; all submissions must be non-stop footage of the entire performance done through the permitted submission platform. The camera being used must remain stationary throughout the entire performance, and no zooming or panning is permitted. Other individuals may be present while filming, but audience interaction (laughing, applause, etc.) must not be included in the performance. Competitors may determine how close or distant the camera is set up in order to maximize both verbal and nonverbal communication. If possible, it is recommended that students and judges remove items that may be distracting in the background. Backdrops of a solid color with no special markings may be used by competitors and judges. No rule changes will be made to accommodate virtual visual aids."

The most common questions we received related to these rules were about whether lavalier microphones and ring lights were permitted, as well as whether students could record their performance in their school's auditorium. When students had questions about specific technology, we asked them to send us a description or link to the equipment they intended to purchase. Lavalier microphones and ring lights are typically under $50 and many are readily available to students from their school's newspaper or journalism department. We allowed this technology. We also allowed students to record their performance in their school's auditorium as long as they did not use stage lighting. We found that the biggest change in making a video look "professional" was the use of a professional lighting kit, most of which cost several thousands of dollars. Disallowing the use of professional lights, such as those found in a school auditorium, helped to level the playing field for students without access to professional lighting kits.

Overall, the most important thing was that we created a list of all questions asked, all equipment that we allowed and disallowed, and remained consistent and transparent in our rulings.

Asynchronous Recording Process

[Here is a short video](#) showing the Speeches.Cloud site with instructions for students to submit recordings. Students had a two and a half week recording window to submit their performance through our secure portal called Speeches.Cloud. Students were required to use Speeches.Cloud to film and submit their performances. Students logged into Speeches.Cloud using their Tabroom.com login information. Competitors logged into Speeches.Cloud, recorded their performance, watched the recording, and could re-record their performance as many times as they liked. However, once the performance was submitted, that recording was considered the official tournament entry for the contestant and could not be re-recorded and submitted. The recording system was set to stop all recordings at a preset time limit of 10 minutes and 30 seconds. However, some smartphone operating systems (iphones and Apple tablets, in particular) prevented recording beyond the set time limit of 10 minutes. We put a big note about this limitation on the top of the recording site. Competitors were instructed to test and use the systems that best fit the length of their performance and audio and visual quality. Submitted performances were saved by code in a database within our competition site. Students received a confirmation email that their recording has been submitted, and that confirmation email also included a link to view the recording that was submitted. We did ask competitors to share that link with no one but their coach.

What Worked

1. **Security**. Because competitors in the National Tournament were required to have a linked Tabroom.com account prior to submitting a recording, Speeches.Cloud was able to pull their exact information (name, school, event, code) from Tabroom.com rather than relying on everyone correctly remembering and typing out their information. This meant

that there were no videos submitted from students that were not entered in the tournament, and we had contact information for everyone who submitted a video through the site. This also saved us a lot of headaches while trying to get the recordings moved over to the competition site, and we highly recommend looking into using Speeches.Cloud or another platform integrated with your tabulation software if you are running a large, asynchronous tournament. Speeches.Cloud is owned by the NSDA and available for purchase through Classrooms.Cloud. If we had fewer entries, we could have gotten away with creating a Google form or something similar and reaching out to coaches of entries whose information did not match their Tabroom.com entry.

2. **Organization**. The way the recordings were stored in Speeches.Cloud after submission made it very easy to troubleshoot, audit, edit mistakes, and eventually upload into Tabroom.com and the competition site. We could search Speeches.Cloud by any field (code, name, school, email, etc.), and the process for getting the submissions into the competition rooms after they had been collected was a breeze. Collection of the video submissions was by far the most difficult part of this process.

3. **Flexibility**. Speeches.Cloud allowed for manual upload of videos. If we had a video file saved to our computer, we could manually enter the student's name, code, email, event, etc., and upload the video file to Speeches.Cloud in the same format as other recordings. Although 98% of students were able to get their files uploaded directly to the Speeches.Cloud system, there were a few students who, despite our extensive troubleshooting, could not get their videos uploaded. Almost always, this was a result of students with poor access to the internet who did not have anywhere else to go to get a better connection. We worked with these students and their coaches to get their recordings manually uploaded into the system.

4. **Standardization**. Requiring students to submit their videos through the same recording site helped provide an additional safeguard against students submitting professional videos. The recording site meant that students had no ability to edit their videos, splice together scenes from different recordings, or remove anything about the performance they did not like. The recording site also meant there was a maximum level of quality that could be submitted through the site. Though the site did accept HD videos, the quality of video captured with an expensive, high-level camera would look of similar quality as most other recordings once submitted.

Challenges

1. **Deadlines**. Students were given a two and a half week period to submit their videos. We determined how much time staff found necessary to audit the videos, pair rounds, move videos over to the competition site, and drop entries who did not submit videos. We set the deadline at midnight on Friday before the tournament started on Sunday. Our

intention was to give students as much time as possible to practice on the site and submit their best version of their performance. We do not recommend setting the deadline that close to the tournament start date. More than 90% of students' videos were uploaded after 5:00 p.m. on the day the recordings were due. This not only put a strain on the recording site's servers, but also left our staff overwhelmed with requests for technical support all at once. Of course, we want every student who qualified to have a chance to participate in the tournament, so we worked well past the deadline to help students get their videos submitted. This meant that a significant portion of staff time the days before the tournament started was spent helping get late videos submitted. We suspect busy students will always wait until the last minute to submit videos, and thus, we suggest that tournaments set their deadline for submissions well in advance of the tournament and be prepared to work with students after that deadline.

2. **Audit Process**. Although we published that students were ultimately responsible for the video that they submitted and there would be no audit or opportunities to fix problems with recordings, we saw several issues with submitted videos and did our best to have those students' best performances showcased at the tournament. Our staff opened every video submitted and watched it in three different spots to ensure that it was submitted correctly, was not cut off prematurely, the audio could be heard, and the video could be seen. When videos were not usable, we flagged the video and asked the student to re-submit their performance. Staff went through all submitted videos one week before the deadline, one day before the deadline, and the day the recordings were due. Each time, they emailed coaches and students who missed videos reminding them of the deadline. This process took more than five staff members 100+ hours. We found it to be an overwhelming task, but ultimately, it was important to us that every student had the opportunity to have their best performance showcased at the National Tournament.

3. **Cost**. The cost of uploading videos to the Speeches.Cloud system was expensive because it required that we host the videos on the Classrooms.Cloud servers. Given the number of videos and need for standardization and security, we found this cost to be worth it, but tournaments with smaller budgets may consider having students submit videos through a Google form, YouTube, or another platform if those features are less necessary.

4. **Difficulties in Getting Recordings Submitted**. The Speeches.Cloud system could accept both SD and HD video recordings, HD recordings required good internet access and often took a significant time to load before they were submitted. Many students and coaches reported issues getting their recording to submit, and almost every time, the issue was that the student did not have access to internet speeds fast enough to get their video size submitted. Often, this was solved by moving closer to the router, plugging in an ethernet cable, etc., and other times, this was solved by using a lower quality camera. 4K cameras typically captured large videos that standard internet was

unable to handle in the submission process. However, it is difficult to troubleshoot home internet problems with students.

5. **Lack of Coach Oversight**. The way Speeches.Cloud is set up, a student logs in to the site and records and submits their video. It is not a platform that allows coaches to be in the video site at the same time and coach students through their recording process. Some coaches expressed frustration over our suggestion that they practice with their students on a different video conferencing site. Additionally, the way that students confirmed that their video was submitted correctly was by seeing a confirmation on the screen that included a link to review their performance, as well as an email to the student with confirmation and a link to review their performance. This meant that only students had confirmation that their recording had been captured, and many coaches wished that they had some kind of knowledge that the students had completed their recording as well.

Student Attendance in Live Rounds Using Asynchronous Recordings

Students were welcome to attend the rounds in which their recorded performance was being judged, but they were not required to attend. Judges were instructed in both pre-tournament judge training and on the online ballot not to penalize or advantage students based on their attendance in the round. This was the recommendation of the Online National Tournament Equity Committee. We did find that a majority of students did attend their rounds, especially as we moved into elimination rounds.

The goal of inviting students and judges to be in the same virtual room while recordings were being played was to simulate some of the camaraderie and learning experience that takes place at in-person tournaments. Students were great at congratulating each other on qualification, complimenting each other on their pieces, and they received the opportunity to see the amazing performances of their peers. Although nothing can compare to the experience of performing live in front of judges and peers, giving students the opportunity to build some of that community by attending live Zoom rooms together did make the experience feel more like Nationals. Our recommendation always will be that you should try to hold as many events live as you can. Looking back, we do believe it would not have been possible to run a speech tournament of this size live, and live judging of asynchronous recordings was our next best option. Some coaches also have expressed interest in allowing students who make it to a certain level of the tournament to submit a new recording based on feedback from judges. Other tournament directors have expressed the intent to try moving to live performances at a later stage of the tournament when there are fewer students for which to provide technical support. These are both great ideas to consider!

When a judge entered the room for their speech round, they saw a video player at the top with six to seven tabs, each representing a student's recording. The tabs were listed in order of their speaker position so that judges could click through each tab in order and watch the recorded speeches. Underneath the video player, there was a Zoom window that judges (and students, if they chose to attend) would enter so that the judges could facilitate the round and all round participants could watch the videos around the same time.

If this is the method you choose to use, remember to consistently remind judges that they MUST join the Zoom window under the video player. Tournament officials check that judges are present by taking note of who appears in that Zoom window, so if a judge did not join the Zoom room and merely began watching the recordings, tournament officials would assume that they did not show up to the round and replace them as a judge. We did have a few judges in early rounds report to tech support that their ballot had disappeared on them when they tried to submit; this was a consequence of those judges not joining the Zoom window and being replaced as the judge. Their ballot disappeared at the end of the round because it was the first time they had refreshed their page since that ballot was given to someone else.

Judges were to meet in the competition room 30 minutes prior to round start time to allow us time to replace any missing judges. Many judges arrived early and were ready to begin right away. We asked judges to wait until round start time to begin watching videos in case students showed up to the round to watch as well. This was a very common question, and you should widely message whether early starts are permitted.

Judges in recorded speech events needed the most instruction and assistance about how to judge than other events' judges. We believe this is because the round procedure was much different than they were used to; debate judges were able to pretty closely simulate an in-person tournament online. If you run speech rounds that are judged live with recorded speeches, make sure you provide detailed, step-by-step instructions for what judges are expected to do once they arrive in the room. We provided a short script:

> "Check that both judges are in the room, have clicked 'Start Round' on Tabroom.com, and are ready to begin. Pick one judge to be the facilitator for that round. That person will welcome any students who have come to watch recordings and congratulate them on qualifying to the National Tournament. Instruct everyone in the room to mute their microphone in the Zoom room. Instruct them to click play on the video in the first tab, student ____. Everyone will watch the round silently on their own computer. After the facilitator has finished watching the first speaker, they should unmute their microphone, thank that speaker for sharing their performance, and instruct everyone in the room to click play on the video of the second student, ____."

We did explore the option of having a judge screenshare the recordings so everyone could watch it on the screen together in real time, but audio transmission during a screenshare was very poor.

After watching all of the students' performances, the judges congratulated the competitors and completed their ballots. The ballot gave judges the option to write a reason for decision (RFD) explaining their ranks, as well as the option to leave individual feedback for the competitors. Judges were instructed to submit their ranks before writing any optional comments in order to get decisions in as soon as we could.

SECTION 4: Asynchronous Speech Judged Asynchronously

All middle school events and preliminary rounds of supplemental speech events consisted of students pre-recording their performances and judges adjudicating those performances at their leisure in the week prior to the National Tournament. Competitors submitted one recording of their performance through Speeches.Cloud prior to the competition using the process described in the Asynchronous Speech Judged Live section. This one recording was judged asynchronously throughout preliminary rounds, and if students broke to elimination rounds of supplemental speech events, that same recording was judged live through finals.

Asynchronous Judging Process

Judges were given five days to complete their judging assignments. No judge was assigned more than four rounds to adjudicate within this five day period. When a judge logged in to Tabroom.com, they saw all of their assignments. When they clicked "Start Round," they saw video icons next to each student's code and were instructed to watch the videos in order and complete their ballots. Here is a short video with instructions for judging asynchronously that shows how the ballots appear.

This process worked well, and judges found it easy to understand. Make sure you blast judges who have not completed their assignments prior to the deadline. We had many judges who did not complete their assignments, and we had to find several judges to fill in and judge those rounds on a short timeline. Have backup judges ready to step in after the deadline has passed!

Setting Up Asynchronous Judging in Tabroom.com

Note: Deadlines for asynchronous ballots to be turned in are set based on the round's time slot at Settings » Schedule. If you set your round 1 to be on Friday from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m., ballots will disappear for judges at 8:00 p.m.
   1. **To set up your tournament settings for asynchronous rounds:**

Before registration opens for your tournament: In Tabroom.com, go to Settings > Events and select your event. On the Online tab, toggle "Online event" and select the setting "Asynchronous links to online videos". Do this for each event that will be held asynchronously. This setting will create a space for coaches to copy/paste a link to a video in the entry details of any student entered in an asynchronous event during the registration process. Use this option if you would like competitors to record their video on an external platform and submit the link to you via Tabroom.com. This is what coaches will see on their entry:

If you are comfortable with coaches adding links to student videos directly into Tabroom.com, step one is the only step you need to follow!

2. **(If Applicable) Uploading Videos from Outside Tabroom.com to Tabroom.com**
   Skip this step if you are collecting links from coaches within the Tabroom.com registration process using the step above. If you have students submit videos to you outside of Tabroom.com (using Speeches.Cloud recording site, submitting videos via Google form, etc.), additional steps will need to be taken to get these video links into Tabroom.com. You will still need to complete step 1 first. Then, create a CSV (must be in .csv format!) of the entries' video links in each event. For example, you should have a Humorous Interpretation CSV with one column representing the student's full name as entered in Tabroom.com and a second column representing a link to the student's video.

   a. In Tabroom.com, go Entries > Data and click "Import CSV/Excel. Under "Import Video Links", select your file, the event, and click Upload.
   b. Next, go to Entries > Events and select the event you uploaded videos for. Clicking on an entry's name and selecting "Piece/Quals" will show you a link to the video that was uploaded.
   c. Tabroom.com will automatically drop any entries that it does not find a matching name for in your CSV. This is helpful to automate the drop process for students

who do not submit videos, but we recommend going through the students who were auto-dropped (Entries > Events > select event > Drops) and confirming that they did not submit videos.

Tip: If a student's name has characters like hyphens or apostrophes, the system may struggle to match it to the upload. Make sure you double check that entries were not erroneously dropped due to these characters. Additionally, it is important that students upload their videos under the exact name they are listed under in Tabroom.com in order for the matching process to work. A student submitting a recording under a nickname or shortened name would not match in Tabroom.com. Always check the drops!

3. Set up your schedule

Only do this step after you have completed step 1. In your tournament, go Settings > Schedule. The time blocks you assign to each round will control how long ballots are visible for judges. For example, if you set Dramatic Interpretation round 1 to run from 8:00 a.m. on Monday to 8:00 p.m. on Tuesday, ballots will automatically close at 8:00 p.m. on Tuesday. This is also the deadline that will show up on judges' ballots.

Note that you will have to publish your rounds (On the Schemats page, publish full schematic under Share & Enjoy. Or, go Paneling > Web Publish to publish all of your schematics at once.) before the ballots show up at all; they will not automatically publish at the time block start time. They will automatically shut down at the time block end time.

Next, check your general tournament settings by going Settings > Tournament > Dates. Check your tournament start and end time. Make sure your time slots on your schedule do not happen outside of your general tournament start time/date and end time/date. For example, if you wanted ballots to open on Monday but had your general tournament start time to be Tuesday, ballots would not publish. Additionally, check the "Script Info and Uploads by" deadline on this page. When this deadline has passed, coaches will no longer be able to submit a link to their video through Tabroom.com's registration process.

4. Day of your tournament

Make sure you publish your schematics to make ballots show up! On the Schemats page, publish full schematic under Share & Enjoy. Or, go Paneling > Web Publish to publish all of your schematics at once. Ballots will automatically disappear from judges at the time block end time you set up in your schedule.

This is how round assignments will appear on a judge's Tabroom.com account after you publish the round.

Current Rounds

Round	Room	Starts	Entries			
EXP Round 1	Videos on Ballot	Due by: Fri 4:00 PM CDT	1: E218 4: E172	2: E234 5: E127	3: E134 6: E133	START

This is what judges will see after they click "Start Round" next to a ballot. They will click video icons to watch the recordings.

Video	Speaker	Code	Rank
🎥	1st	† E218	
🎥	2nd	E234	
🎥	3rd	† E134	
🎥	4th	E172	
🎥	5th	†† E127	
🎥	6th	†† E133	

SECTION 5: Congressional Debate

Chamber Size

We created chambers of around 12 students at the National Tournament. We believe that smaller chambers are better for debate, in general, but it is essential to have smaller chambers in an online format. Having no more than 15 or so people in a room allowed presiding officers and parliamentarians to be able to best manage the chamber, and it allowed us to limit the schedule to around 2.5-hour long sessions. It also helped us to limit the number of technical issues in one room. We found that even one person having internet troubles brought down the audio and video quality of all participants in a round, so fewer students in a chamber meant fewer issues with technology.

Congress Norms

The Opening Ceremony was livestreamed on Monday morning prior to rounds beginning. Students and judges were instructed to watch the Opening Ceremony from www.speechanddebate.org/live. The ceremony provided congratulations, a welcome, and instructions on what to expect throughout the week. The oath was conducted in the chamber prior to the start of the first session. Parliamentarians were asked to be flexible and adapt to students as they created norms for moving to the online format. Many of these norms were created organically, and we encourage tournament directors to avoid over-legislating norms in Congress to allow students to lead their chambers. Some presiding officers used the yes/no or thumbs up/down functions in Zoom to vote; others found that students raising placards in front of their camera was best. We did provide a placard template for students to print at home and use. Points of privilege and amendment documentation was handled through the built-in chat function. Time was called through hand signals or visual time cards instead of gavel taps. We recommended that Congressional Debate participants use the Zoom app instead of the built-in Zoom window in the browser because it enabled gallery view, which was essential to viewing all of the members of a chamber at once.

Judge Instruction

We held the parliamentarian meeting on Sunday evening, one day prior to competition beginning. View the PowerPoint used for parliamentarian instruction, as well as the Parliamentarian Instruction Sheet. The meeting was held on the competition site so that parliamentarians gained practice utilizing Zoom functions and navigating rooms prior to competition beginning. Congress scorers were also provided with an instructional handout.

Tournament Official Procedure

Tournament officials moved from room to room to verify judges were present and answer any questions prior to the round start time. Like other events, Congressional Debate participants were asked to report to their rooms 30 minutes prior to round start time. The tournament officials promoted the parliamentarian as a host or co-host so they had the ability to privately chat with members in the room and mute/unmute speakers. Tournament officials checked with the parliamentarian to see if the PO Election record was completed and the PO Advancement form was submitted. At the end of a session, they reminded scorers to provide two scores for the PO and consider the PO when ranking.

STAFFING

SECTION 1: Tournament Office

The competition site had a series of buttons in the menu at the top of the page. One of those buttons was labeled "Tournament Office." There were three rooms available within the tournament office for all attendees to join at any time when they needed assistance: The Ombudsperson Office, the Equity Office, and the Tech/Tabroom Support Office.
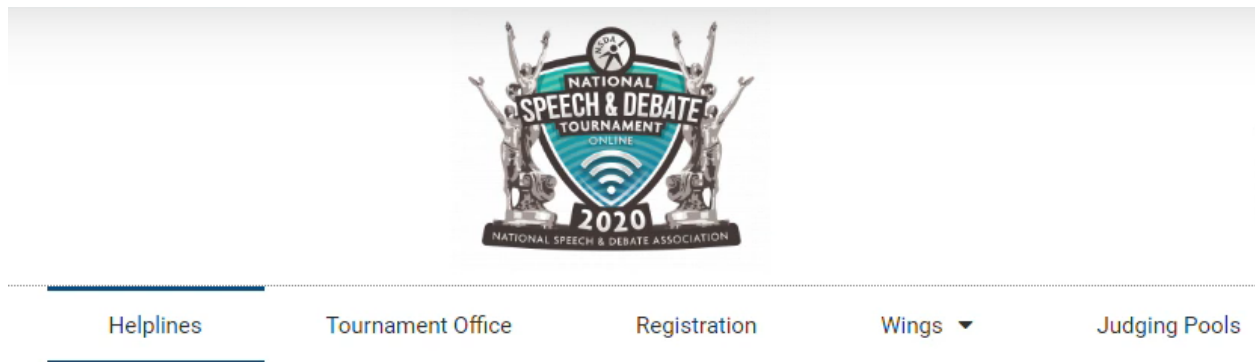
Ombudsperson Office

At the National Tournament, the Ombudsperson Office is the go-to space for answers related to the tournament. It also serves as the intake area for any formal rules protests. Though attendees were given the means to submit help request tickets via email throughout the event, we believed it was important to create a space for attendees to be able to speak face-to-face to a tournament official to ask questions or report concerns. We labeled the Ombudsperson Office as "Ombudsperson (General Questions)" so that new tournament participants understood the purpose of the office. We encourage tournament hosts of online events to create the ability for attendees to speak to a knowledgeable tournament official face to face if needed. Even if it is just a place for you to pull coaches who are new, confused, or frustrated into a private room and resolve an issue, we found that the face-to-face interaction often resolved concerns in a way that left everyone involved feeling more satisfied.

There were often several tournament attendees in the Ombudsperson at once, so it was important that we had more than one person in the room. One person typically worked to help answer questions by talking aloud to a participant and the other helped manage the queue and solved as many questions as possible through the chat. This strategy worked well for all rooms in which we had multiple attendees needing assistance with different issues at once.

The Ombudsperson Office also housed the Adjudication Panels. NSDA Adjudication Panels are made up of three people, typically Board members. Depending on the volume of protests, we

had one or more Adjudication Panel on standby to adjudicate incoming protests. To initiate a protest, we asked the protesting adult to report to the Ombudsperson and explain the issue. The Ombudsperson confirmed that this was an issue regarding a violation of the rules manual and directed the protesting adult to fill out our online protest form. Once the protest form was received, the Ombudsperson looked it over and asked for any additional information the Adjudication Panel may need, and then they passed it onto the Adjudication Panel. The Adjudication Panel deliberated, spoke to any witnesses if needed, and made a decision to uphold or deny the protest, writing out a rationale to be shared with involved parties. One unique factor at the online tournament was that it was possible to pull a recording of any round where the alleged violation occurred and watch back what happened. This was a unique feature to the online space that made adjudication more efficient, and sometimes more accurate, though the normal method of interviewing involved parties would have also sufficed.

We created a series of password-protected rooms labeled "Private Rooms" in the tournament office that the Adjudication Panels, Ombusperson, Equity Office, and Tech/Tabroom Support Office could use to have private conversations on sensitive issues or longer conversations that would free up their office to hear from additional participants. These private rooms were essential to answering a large volume of questions, as well as ensuring participant privacy.

Equity Office

The addition of Equity Officers to the National Tournament began in 2018 as a way to provide accountability for our [harassment and discrimination policy](), as well as to provide a safer place for attendees to report violations of that policy at our tournament. We encourage all tournament directors to check if your school or school district has a harassment and discrimination policy that applies to your tournament and work with your school administration to create a mechanism for reporting violations of that policy.

One of the rooms in the tournament office was labeled "Equity Office" and was staffed with our Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. There were also two password-protected additional rooms labeled for the equity office for private conversations.

A staff person was stationed in this main equity room and anyone could come in. When an individual arrived to the main equity room, the staff person then spoke to the person and routed them either (a) to speak to an equity officer immediately in one of the private rooms or (b) provided them the online equity form to complete to begin an incident report.

An alternative version of this would be to configure the Equity office as a Zoom waiting room that alerted Equity Officers when an attendee was trying to enter. The importance is to have a strategy that optimizes privacy for individuals wishing to have conversations with Equity Officers and balances the need for expediency in seeing people.

If your tournament adds an Equity Office, we recommend keeping access to that room in a highly visible place, staffing it at all times that students or judges must be available for your tournament, and creating some mechanism for having private conversations.

In addition to the NSDA Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, the National Tournament had a total of 8 Equity Officers work in shifts throughout the tournament. Equity Officers were chosen with previous experience on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in relation to Human Resources or education settings. They further were chosen to reflect the diversity of our student population. You may wish to speak with your school district about the availability of school counselors, human resource professionals, and diversity, equity, and inclusion professionals. We have also paired individuals that had complementary skill sets and, whenever possible, try to have Equity Officers work together as a team to ensure multiple perspectives are heeded.

Attendees could enter the Equity Office at any point throughout the tournament, and the Ombudsperson Office and Adjudication Panels referred issues to the Equity Office whenever they felt it was necessary. When an attendee came to the Equity Office, they were asked to complete the intake form. The intake form asked for identifying information, coach contact information, a description of the violation of the harassment and discrimination policy, and whether there was a parent, guardian, coach, or other adult they would like contacted about the situation. The intake form described that an Equity Officer will conduct an informal discussion about the reported incident, investigate allegations, and provide the complainant with a conclusion of the investigatory findings and applicable resolutions. It also explains the Equity Officers will keep information as confidential as possible, but ethically, Equity Officers are required to notify authorities if there is a report of behavior that presents clear and imminent danger to themselves or others, if there is a case of known or suspected child abuse or neglect, or in the case of known or suspected sexual violence. Equity Officers must dial 911 in an emergency. It is important that your tournament's Equity Officers understand their legal and ethical obligations under the law, and it is also important that any potential course of action is made clear to the person filling out the form so they know what actions may occur as a result of their reporting their concern. Clear, transparent information about the process helps to protect both the tournament and the attendee reporting an issue.

After the intake form is completed, Equity Officers available at that time conferred to determine which Equity Officer was most appropriate to take the lead in that matter. Tournament directors were kept apprised of all new reports. Equity Officers sought to have all conversations with a student have a supervising adult present. Students were asked if they felt comfortable with their supervising adult being contacted. If the student was not comfortable, if the report concerned actions by their supervising adult, or if the supervising adult was unreachable, the Equity Officers contacted a parent or guardian. Parents/guardians were given the option to have the Equity Officer inform the supervising adult at the tournament of the situation. This was the case for any contact that the Equity Office had with a student, whether that student was the complainant, a witness to the allegation, or the alleged offender.

Equity Officers spoke to the complainant and their supervising adult, if applicable, and then worked to contact any available witnesses privately to discuss the allegation. If applicable, the Equity Officers also conducted meetings with the alleged offender separately and privately. After hearing from all parties and witnesses, the Equity Officers determined an appropriate course of action. These resolutions depended on the circumstances, and often ranged from finding no violation of our policies to an apology to removal from the tournament to contacting authorities. Anything that affected administrative action regarding the tournament was signed off on by the tournament director. All parties were notified of the approved action step.

In 2020-2021, the NSDA is creating a committee dedicated to developing resources on implementing an effective Equity Office for your tournament to deal with violations of your harassment and discrimination policy and to facilitate a safer and more equitable speech and debate environment. We encourage you to keep an eye on NSDA newsletters and check out our [Diversity and Inclusion website](#) where the resources will be posted after completion.

Questions to Consider

How can you offer a safe, private place for attendee discussions?
What is your harassment and discrimination policy?
How can you effectively market the existence and policies of the Equity Office to all attendees, in particular student attendees?
How will you resolve protests online?
What process can you develop to ensure an equitable experience for all at your event?
What requirements for reporting does your school or school district have? Do attendees know these requirements prior to entering the Equity Office?

Tech Support Office

One of the rooms in the tournament office was labeled "Tech/Tabroom Support." At our online Senior Open tournament in May, we had asked all attendees with tech support questions to report to the Ombudsperson for assistance. For the National Tournament, we found that it was easier to split our technology-knowledgeable staff into a separate room. This allowed us to manage a greater volume of questions and staff those rooms with people who had specific knowledge. If you are running a smaller tournament, it may work to have one "Tournament Questions" office where your tournament staff is answering both general tournament questions and providing tech support. We had two coach volunteers staff our Tech/Tabroom Support office, both of which had extensive experience with technology and Tabroom.com.

If tournament staff was alerted to a problem in a room related to a tech issue, we had them do their best to answer the question. If the problem was in the middle of a round, a member of our Tech/Tabroom Support Office came to the room if possible to help troubleshoot. We found it was best to keep everyone in the competition room if the issue was time sensitive, i.e. a round had stopped. If the problem was before or after a round had started, tournament staff asked the

person with the tech issue to report to the Tech/Tabroom Support office to receive help. It was not uncommon for a judge to be replaced due to inability to hear in a room, and we asked those judges to report to speak to our tech support staff immediately so that their issue was resolved prior to the next round. Having attendees with a bit more time to spare report to the Tech/Tabroom Support office also helped us diagnose the issue; often, one person in a room with poor internet connection would bring down the audio/video quality for everyone in the room, and it was hard to diagnose which user needed assistance. Having each individual report to the tech support office helped to isolate the issue.

Finally, there were a few (less than 10) issues with students who were unable to use Zoom. This was solved each time by switching devices. Where that was not possible, we created free Jitsi rooms for the rounds to be held. These rooms could be created on the fly, and if there's a bit more time, they could be embedded into the competition site to be accessed securely like any other room. If needed, you could lock a user to a particular Jitsi room in Tabroom.com and ensure that they compete in that space each round. For the most part, Zoom was not an issue for our 8,000+ users, but we are glad that we had a back-up option ready to go.

Support Systems

Technical issues will arise. Build the systems you'll use to communicate with attendees in advance. If your tournament is smaller, you would be able to use a single email account or Google phone number as the point of contact. Larger tournaments may need a more robust system. Whatever you decide, begin communicating to attendees several weeks in advance how they will reach out for help. Include a reminder in every email you send out about the tournament. Prompt coaches to share instructions with students and note it in blasts about pairings.

At the National Tournament, we received more than 5,000 support tickets. We set up dedicated email accounts for tech and each competitive event that forwarded support tickets into the related channel in Slack. Each helpline had a manager to triage incoming support tickets and support volunteers and tab staff who were assigned types of issues in advance (missing person, tech issue in room, etc). Helpline managers would monitor incoming messages and @mention volunteers and tab staff when necessary. When an individual was working on a support ticket, they reacted with a check mark to indicate someone was on it.

Volunteers and tab staff would typically make first contact with attendees via text or an email to the attendee, unless there was an urgent issue in the room, in which case they would use the admin tools to pop in and troubleshoot. We used personal emails and phone numbers for the most part, but you could use Google numbers. Most things could be resolved with some simple troubleshooting from the guides below or a visit to the Tech Support Office, but for more advanced issues, our support team would jump on the phone with the user.

Do what you can to give attendees the tools to solve problems themselves. Put together a list of the most frequent issues with your chosen platform and how the user can solve them. Some of these you'll identify yourself as you navigate the platform, but you can also ask your provider if they have any help guides. You can also have students or other coaches do a bit of practice around and see what issues arise, or look through any existing support boards for your platform. We prepared a public facing tech troubleshooting document to help users resolve issues themselves when possible and shared it in all our tournament communications. As you consider what to include, remember the most common solutions are often the simplest. Restart the device, clear the cache/cookies, move closer to your internet router, sign out and sign back in.

We had dozens of people communicating with attendees requesting support at any given time. To increase efficiency, we created an internal tech troubleshooting document to enable volunteers to copy/paste frequent solutions whenever possible to save time. Keep track of issues as they arise and add to the guide as you go. This will keep everyone on the same page.

Questions to Consider

What issues are users likely to encounter on your chosen platform? What are the solutions? How will you share that info?
Who in your tab room could support attendees experiencing technical issues?
How will you deal with unresolvable technical issues?

SECTION 3: Tabulation Staff Procedure

The National Tournament would be impossible without the efforts of more than 300 dedicated volunteers. We are so grateful for their commitment to undertaking the monumental task of providing a National Tournament experience for more than 6,000 students this summer! This section is specifically about the tournament volunteers that served on competition event teams.

Training Opportunities

We found that providing training opportunities for our tournament volunteers to learn the online competition platform was key to the tournament running successfully. We provided one pre-tournament training with debate, one with speech, and one with Congress tabulation staff to talk through high level tournament procedures and to give a tour of the competition site. We also asked all individual event teams to meet on Sunday prior to competition beginning to talk more specifically about their team's procedure throughout the tournament. Finally, we invited tournament officials to run the Senior Open tournament a few weeks before the National Tournament to learn the platform and create best practices for their event.

Tabulation Staff Duties

We had separate tabulation staff for LD, CX, PF, BQ, WSD, Speech, Extemp, Congress, Supplemental Speech, and Extemp Debate. Each tabulation staff had a chair or co-chairs that were primarily responsible for creating their event staff's process as it worked best for them. This year, every tabulation staff was split into two teams: a small team that worked the computer, and a larger team that worked with event logistics. The computer team was responsible for pairing rounds, replacing judges, and results. The event logistics team was responsible for going into assigned competition rooms to check that participants had arrived, answer questions, and report any issues to the team that replaced judges or helped solve technical problems.

Members of the event logistics team were assigned a certain number of rooms, typically no more than eight, and were responsible for making sure that those rounds start and end on time with the appropriate people. These team members checked their assigned rooms at the 30-minute prior to round start time mark and continued checking them until the rounds had started.

Internal Communications

With pairing blasts, tournament emails, room checks, protests, and inevitable tech issues, there can be a lot to keep track of. Planning for how your tab staff and volunteers communicate with each other and your attendees is crucial.

Online Rooms: Join an online meeting room together to quickly resolve issues, clear rooms, and chat between rounds. Smaller tournaments could get away with one room for all officials. Larger tournaments should consider separate rooms for different event teams. Our tab staffs used online tab rooms built into the platform with restricted access to communicate quickly and connect when rounds got going. All our staff communicated via Slack, and the computer team stayed in a live video conferencing room on the competition site where other tournament officials could talk to them if needed.

Group Messaging System: Our helpline tickets automatically fed into Slack and event teams used Slack messages to track issues. A helpline manager coordinated volunteers to resolve the more frequently occurring problems or tagged in event staff in Slack to help check rooms or connect with missing people. Decide what level of sophistication you need based on your tournament size and pick any group messaging system that will deliver that functionality.

Tracking Room Status: Teams kept track of a room's status and communicated the need for judge replacements using a shared Google sheet that the computer team had access to as well. We recommend creating some kind of shared document for your volunteers checking rooms to keep track of room status and communicate with the volunteers replacing judges. This communication would have become too hard to sort through if it had been done via chat or Slack.

Pro Tip: Take advantage of free trials! Some of the functionalities you'll consider, like Slack email integration, require a paid plan. Explore what free trials are available to save your resources.

How many tab staff do you need?
How will you train them?
How will they communicate with users and/or each other?
What are your tab staff best suited for? (e.g., who is most tech savvy, who is best with the tabulation software, etc.)
How will you contact missing students and judges?
How will you divide up incoming requests for help?

SECTION 2: Online Registration

With anything new, there is a great deal of uncertainty. An online registration period can accomplish four things.
1. Replicate in-person registration in resolving outstanding issues with entries or payments.
2. Provide an opportunity to communicate expectations and reminders to attendees and answer any questions.
3. If you're using the same system for registration that you will for competition (which is recommended) attendees can get some experience accessing the system before competition begins.
4. Connect with people! One of the best parts of tournaments is getting the chance to see colleagues and friends.

Staffing

If you intend to run through a few reminders with all attendees, check their entry status, and have time to answer questions, a single person can register about 20 people per hour. Work backwards from your entry numbers and volunteer numbers to determine the ideal length of your registration period.

Reminders
A few FAQs it may be worth mentioning to attendees at registration.
1. Room password, if applicable.
2. How to contact tab staff for help.

3. Troubleshooting guide, if created.
4. Process for posting breaks and/or livestreaming outrounds.

We registered roughly 150 people per hour. We divided entries up by state and assigned each state a designated two hour window in which to register. We used eight registration rooms for teams with no known registration issues and four solutions rooms for teams with outstanding issues (payments, missing scripts, etc.) Each room had two volunteers, one to check Tabroom registration and one to keep a tally of folks as they entered and run through reminders. We trained volunteers a few weeks in advance and created a loose script for the reminders and answers to FAQs. Teams found their school name on this public list and visited their online room.

Questions to Consider

Will registration be mandatory?
What reminders do you need to share with attendees?
If your tournament is large and you'll be assigning specific registration times, can you offer a makeup registration time for those who miss theirs?

RECOGNITION

SECTION 1: Livestream

There are many aspects of an in-person tournament that you may want to replicate with your online tournament's livestream. Even though teams can't gather in a physical space to watch rounds, postings, or awards ceremonies, you can create virtual spaces that drum up excitement and allow attendees to feel a sense of connection at your online event. Your livestream doesn't need to be complicated, and small touches can go a long way toward making your attendees feel like they're part of something special.

Livestream Rounds

The most important part of any tournament livestream are the rounds themselves. You may be using any number of video platforms to exhibit speech and debate performances, but they all require some extra attention in order to run smoothly.

Reasons to Livestream

You've probably heard of "Zoom-bombing" by now or even experienced it yourself, where someone not involved in the virtual meeting interrupts the meeting and hijacks the proceedings.

If your tournament involves a great deal of students, we highly recommend that you stream rounds when possible instead of keeping rounds open to interruption, and that you set passwords or other restrictions in order to keep the possibility of unwelcome interruptions low. Similarly, we recommend that you turn off the ability to comment on your tournament's livestream pages, because it's logistically unrealistic to monitor a comment section for inappropriate content.

There are many platforms and programs available with the capability to stream, but most tournaments should consider streaming to YouTube. YouTube simply cannot be beat for its video player quality and ease of discovery, and most attendees of your tournament will already be familiar with finding and watching videos on YouTube. Anyone with a free Youtube account can livestream for free and some video applications, like Zoom, offer built-in Youtube streaming directly from their app. Other video applications and competition platforms can be configured to stream to YouTube--or any number of live video services--from within their advanced/administrator settings, but every application is different and the landscape is constantly changing, so be sure to do some research to make sure your app supports YouTube streaming.

If your tournament's video software doesn't have livestream capabilities, an advanced option is to use a livestream program to directly broadcast your screen. OBS (Open Broadcaster Software) is a popular and free encoder that can be configured to broadcast your computer screen directly to YouTube Live or any other livestream video platform. Other programs, such as Livestream Studio, vMix, DaCast, and Wirecast come with specialized features or interfaces but can cost serious money. If you choose to use a livestream program for your tournament, understand that they are intensive computer programs and should be run on a fast computer with a steady internet connection by a tech-savvy individual. Many students have experience with livestream programs (especially OBS) due to the popularity of video game streaming, so it's possible that a member of your team would be able to help set up a livestream encoder.

For rounds before Finals of live events (Debate, Extemp) we set up several events in YouTube, made sure to disable comments, then used our conferencing application's built-in Stream to YouTube Live option so that anyone who wanted to watch those rounds could find the round on our website, social media, or directly on YouTube. For Final rounds, we made our own manual stream by using a livestream encoder (Livestream Studio) with a team of video technicians so we could display title cards before events, post notices for technical difficulties and delays if needed, and play videos and advertisements from sponsors.

Unlike an in-person tournament, where it's quicker to confirm the judges and students are ready and prepare a room for the start of a round, for a livestream round you must give yourself and

everyone in the room extra time to set up. We've all had "technical difficulties" during video meetings, and you have to assume that you'll be dealing with at least one technical issue that could prevent the round from starting on time. Have a member of tournament staff tasked with individually testing the competitors' and judges' sound and video. Can they hear you? Can you hear them? Can they see everyone and can they see them? A good rule of thumb is to have everyone involved in the round show up to the room with enough time before the round is scheduled to start to test everyone's tech and troubleshoot any issues. For example, a round of Lincoln-Douglas Debate may need fifteen minutes to check technology for everyone, but a round of Congressional Debate could take longer than half an hour due to the volume of participants.

Another challenge is internet connection speed. Not everyone has access to a fast, reliable internet connection, and many people will be attending the tournament from a location that either has slow internet or several other people using the internet at the same time. In these situations, one slow connection can impact the entire meeting. Video conferencing applications attempt to sync the audio and video coming from every source present in the meeting, which means if just one participant is experiencing heavy drops in internet connectivity, it will appear as if everyone in the meeting is suffering from a slow connection. In many cases a lapse in connection speed is unavoidable--even places with the latest and greatest internet their service provider has to offer will suffer from occasional local outages--but be sure to share tips on how to ensure the best possible connection for folks' devices with everyone attending your tournament. For public facing tips, see the Tech Guides section above.

Making Online Events Exciting

Attending an online tournament can be an isolating experience, but it doesn't have to be! You can help alleviate some of the feelings of disconnection by holding livestream events and ceremonies, and by giving tournament attendees the opportunity to contribute.

Postings / Breaks / Next Round Qualifiers
Tournaments have all kinds of ways of announcing the qualifiers to the next round of competition. Instead of simply blasting the results, consider holding a virtual event to announce them. Since many attendees will be eagerly awaiting the results, you will have a high likelihood of many people watching the stream, which makes a virtual postings party the perfect opportunity to directly address and recognize the attendees of your tournament, as well as share important tournament information and reminders.

Do you have any special awards or acknowledgements that you usually share at your tournament? Do you have anyone who you would like to publicly thank? Make some of these things a part of your virtual event, or consider adding some new ones specially for these unprecedented times. Student and Coach testimonials also make great additions to online events. Before and during the tournament, collect short video clips from tournament attendees--thanks to specific teammates, coaches, or family members; words of

encouragement; charges from seniors--and your tournament attendees will feel seen and appreciated. For the announcement of postings, display results in a scrolling list or a series of presentation slides to preserve the suspense of an in-person announcement. You could also consider going live on Instagram or Facebook from a team or event page to announce postings!

How we did it: As our results were being prepared, we held postings parties where we shared experiences from the course of the day, recognized award winners, and exhibited messages that were sent by students and coaches. We shared important information about the upcoming days of the tournament, and built suspense for the announcement of round qualifiers, which resulted in some great social media posts of students reacting to the live scrolling list.

ProTip: Make it clear to any students or coaches who will be on screen that the event is livestreamed! Some students may want to adjust their backgrounds or may feel comfortable sharing their pronouns within closed rounds, but not on publicly streamed ones that can be watched more broadly.

Guidance on Enabling Captions

Closed captions are a great way to help your online tournament accommodate participants and viewers with auditory processing difficulties. Depending on the platform you use for running your tournament, there are several ways to add captions to your tournament's videos.

The easiest way to generate captions post-event is by uploading your videos to YouTube, where YouTube's automated services will automatically create a caption file using auto-dictation software. Dictation services are much less accurate than a human, especially with names, but YouTube Studio makes it easy to modify the automatically generated captions manually, removing errors and correcting the spelling of names. Then, when you have a corrected caption file prepared, YouTube lets you export the caption file in a variety of formats that other video services can ingest, most commonly the SubRip (.srt) file format. If you use Facebook Live, it's also possible to generate captions on Facebook, though you have to manually select the "auto-generate captions" option in your video's Subtitles & Captions settings. Similarly, Zoom is capable of generating captions for videos saved in the cloud, though this requires a paid tier of Zoom's plans and the enabling of several account settings.

While all the options above deal with the recordings of your event after it has concluded, there are options for live captioning, though they can be costly. Human caption providers can be hired and integrated into most live video services, though the steps are different based on your video provider. Zoom allows you to assign a meeting attendee as a caption provider, so a participant of your Zoom meeting can type out captions for the meeting as it occurs. There are also AI-powered live dictation services that may be cheaper than a human operator, though the same caveats regarding speech-to-text and name errors will apply to the live transcription.

SECTION 2: Awards Ceremony

Choosing a Type of Ceremony

Tournament award winners deserve their moment in the spotlight! Depending on your tournament timeline and platform, there are two options:

Standard ceremony: In this version, an emcee (likely the tournament director) conducts the ceremony via livestream.

Advanced ceremony: This version still features an emcee, but also features award winners on screen, either for recognition, or for a live announcement of placements. This takes a bit of coordination, but is a more fun experience for all!
- Award winners will join the livestreamed ceremony by video in advance of the ceremony beginning with their cameras and microphones turned off.

- When their event is called, award winners will turn their camera on, wait for their name/place to be announced, then turn their cameras off.

- To facilitate this going smoothly, either gather award winners for a practice session 15 minutes or so before your awards ceremony starts, or send them detailed instructions (see How we did it section).

Pronunciation of Names: Tabroom.com features a phonetic pronunciation field for users. Encourage your attendees to utilize this feature so your emcee can pronounce award recipient names correctly! Pronunciations can be added by clicking into an individual student from the Competitors tab on Tabroom.com

Sample Ceremony Outline
1. Welcome (1-2 minutes).
    a. Emcee introduction
    b. Thank tab staff
    c. Thank volunteers
2. Awards by event (3-4 minutes per event)
    a. Introduce each event (in advanced ceremony, students turn on cameras at this point)
    b. Announce finalists
    c. Name champion
3. Speciality awards (tournament specific)
4. Concluding remarks (3-5 minutes)
    a. Thank you

b. Tease next year's tournament

We begin our ceremony with the finalists in INFORMATIVE SPEAKING!
(pause for students to turn on cameras)

Your winners in INFORMATIVE SPEAKING:

In 6th place
Student Name
from *School*
in *State*
Coached by *Coach Names*
(Sixth place student celebrates, turns off camera, and leaves the meeting room)

In 5th place
Student Name
from *School*
in *State*
Coached by *Coach Names*
(Fifth place student celebrates, turns off camera, and leaves the meeting room)

In 4th place
Student Name
from *School*
in *State*
Coached by *Coach Names*
(Fourth place student celebrates, turns off camera, and leaves the meeting room)

In 3rd place
Student Name
from *School*
in *State*
Coached by *Coach Names*
(Third place student celebrates, turns off camera, and leaves the meeting room)

In 2nd place
Student Name
from *School*
in *State*
Coached by *Coach Names*

(Second place student celebrates, turns off camera, and leaves the meeting room)

And the champion in INFORMATIVE SPEAKING is:

Student Name
from *School*
in *State*
Coached by *Coach Names*
(Livestream manager pins student's video to fill screen, first place student celebrates, turns off camera, and leaves the meeting room)

How we did it: The timeline of our tournament allowed us to hold a practice session with most award winners in advance. We also emailed [instructions](#) to students and coaches.

Watch a video version for our Senate awards at https://vimeo.com/430923527/4d898ae97f

SECTION 3: Delivering Trophies and Awards

Recognizing success is still important with online tournaments. If possible, it's great to recreate what you traditionally do for your tournament!

Certificate Options

If your tournament is large and with your entry fees it isn't feasible to ship trophies across the country, consider other recognition options for students, like online certificates. See our [Middle School Speech Challenge certificates](#) for inspiration to create your own or use this [editable tournament certificate](#) as your template.

Award Shipping

If you're planning to ship out awards, create a simple Google form for schools to fill out and indicate where trophies should be sent. Include:
School
Coach Name
Phone Number:
Email:
Address
Award 1:
- Event
- Place

Award 2:
- Event
- Place

Etc.

Conclusion

Every tournament will be different, but we hope these tips and tools will help you navigate hosting online tournaments. We know it can be challenging, we've been there! But your work to continue to provide speech and debate opportunities to students around the world is more important now than ever before. At a time when school activities are limited, you are providing a creative outlet and a platform for student voices. On behalf of students everywhere, thank you!