

HOW TO HOST A TOURNAMENT

Reserving the Date

The first step to hosting a tournament is to determine **potential dates** that your school facility is available. You will need to know approximately **how many rooms** will be available. You will also need common areas for the prep room, awards, and lunch.

Be sure to inquire as to any **school requirements** such as permits for use of the building or for selling food, custodial services, security services, etc. Since we now have online balloting as an option, be sure to determine whether the **wireless network** is sufficient in all rooms for judges to be able to complete their online ballots. You should also determine whether judges can use an open network or if passwords will be required. Any expenses associated with these services are the responsibility of the host and should be taken into consideration when setting registration and food table prices.

Complete the **MSDL sanctioning form** for your preferred and alternate dates. You will need to include the events you will be offering, including any special events. Once the League has sanctioned the tournament, you should formalize the date with your school administration.

Rooms

As the tournament date approaches, you will need to work with school administration and faculty to **confirm the rooms and spaces** you will have available for the tournament. In addition to competition rooms, a tab room, and common spaces, we ask that schools assign a **small space that can be used for prayer** throughout the day. If the school does not already have **gender-neutral bathrooms**, we ask that you designate a couple of bathrooms or faculty bathrooms as gender-neutral for the day. You can start planning the best uses for the spaces you have available. Some guidance on events that have specific requirements:

Small Rooms

Debate Events
Group Discussion
Extemporaneous Speaking
Radio Broadcasting

Larger Rooms

Multiple Reading
Student Congress

Food Table

With advance planning, the food table can be an excellent **fundraiser** for your team. When you are reserving the building, you should check with the administration as to any **school or town Board of Health requirements** that must be met in order to serve food.

Most teams find that a **parent committee** is useful to assist with the coordination and staffing of the food table. The MSDL Board can assist you with estimates of the number of people who may attend. Food tables typically sell a few breakfast items, water, lunch, miscellaneous beverages, and snacks.

Since students tend to finish their rounds and head to the cafeteria at the same time, it is important to have as many helpers as possible at peak hours.

Awards

Several weeks before your tournament, you will need to place an order for **awards**. Awards need not be fancy. They should be more substantial than a certificate; most schools offer a trophy or medal, but you may come up with other options.

Awards are provided to any student who makes it to a final round in speech or an elimination round in debate. A few notes on awards:

- If you are using trophies, the plate on each one usually indicates the tournament name, the event, and the placement.
- Speech final rounds will have **6 or 7 students**. While every event will not break at 7, you may wish to obtain a few extra awards for 7th place finishers.
- **Two awards** are provided to participants in **Duo Interpretation, Public Forum Debate, and Policy Debate** so that each student has one to take home.
- Only one award is provided for each Multiple team.
- If you plan to run **Semi-finals** in large categories, it is recommended that you have something – a medal or certificate – to present to the non-advancing semifinalists.

Awards are also offered to the **Top Novice** for each event (except Novice Extemporaneous Speaking), usually a medal or certificate. And awards or certificates are provided to students receiving an **Honorable Mention** (those with preliminary round rankings tied with advancing finalists or semifinalists). There may be several Honorable Mentions for each event, particularly if the event is large.

Awards may carry through the theme of your tournament if there is one.

Prepared Material

Extemporaneous Speaking, Impromptu and Radio Broadcasting all require materials that are prepared in advance. For both Extemporaneous Speaking and Impromptu, the MSDL has committees who can write the topics for your tournament. Please notify the MSDL Board at least one month prior to your tournament if you would like the committee to prepare materials for you.

Radio Broadcasting requires a different packet of material for each preliminary round and the final round. Each packet should contain an assortment of articles from different categories – national, international, and local news, sports, business, weather, etc. – so that students can arrange and deliver a 5-minute broadcast.

The MSDL Board can assist you with estimates so that you can have the right number of Radio packets ready.

For **Group Discussion**, you will need to identify a **topic area**. The MSDL Board will assist you with the questions for each round.

If you plan to offer any Special Events requiring prepared materials, you will need to add this to your list for the tournament.

Invitation

The invitation should include all of the necessary information about the tournament including:

- Date, Time, Location
- **Events Offered** including full description, **rules and time limits for any Special Events**

- Fees. Typical speech entry fees are \$6 with food available on an a la carte basis. Please note that some schools may be sensitive to entry fees that are significantly higher.
- Tentative Schedule. Judge Training and First Round Ballot Distribution should be listed at separate times so that experienced judges can just attend ballot distribution
- Breakfast and Lunch information
- **Group Discussion topic area**
- **Debate topics.** Although it is not required, debate resolutions are typically those posted by the National Speech and Debate Association (NSDA) for each period.

Please include the **MSDL statements on professional behavior and diversity** as follows:

Standard rules of professionalism, etiquette, and respect for our hosts and their school shall apply at all times.

The Massachusetts Speech and Debate League fosters a culture of diversity and inclusion. We expect all members of our community to treat one another with respect. Should you have any issues, please come to the TAB room and ask to speak with a member of the MSDL Board.

The invitation should be posted on Tabroom **one month prior to the tournament.**

Printing

If the tournament will be using paper ballots, you will need to print them in advance of the tournament. Ballot templates are available on the MSDL website. You will need to have ballot packets ready for each round of speech competition. Student Congress has not yet moved to online balloting; a **stack of individual ballots** will be required for **Student Congress**. Debate balloting is online, or individual ballots can be printed at the beginning of each round.

The MSDL Board can assist you with estimates of the number of ballots you will need if you'd like to get a head start on the copying.

Competition rounds occasionally have 7 students, so it is best if you staple ballots into packets of 7 ballots for each room. Multiple would only need 4 ballots in each packet. Congress ballots do not need to be stapled.

If you plan to offer any Special Events, you will need to create a ballot that includes a description of the event with its rules and time limits.

In addition to the ballots, you may wish to print **Judge Handbooks**. While the event rules do appear on each ballot, many judges like to have a handbook for quick reference. You can also include an insert to the handbook with rules for any special events. The Judge Handbook template is available on the MSDL website.

School Preparation

As you prepare the school building, you will need to determine if students and judges will need **maps of the school**. If so, make sure that you mark any special competition spaces that are being used.

If the school building is fairly easy to navigate, you may want to put up a few **directional signs** to assist with navigation.

You will also need to select an **area for postings**. Since students gather there in large groups, make sure that you select an area that is as open as possible with **multiple entrances/exits**.

Tab Room

You will need to designate a space for the Tab Room. Tab staff need access to wireless with logins (if needed) to the school network.

The **Ballot or Information Table** should be located near the Tab Room. Even with online balloting, it is important to have a table where judges can obtain information or assistance with their ballots. It would be helpful if you can provide one or two people with knowledge of the building to assist with staffing the ballot table and handling questions.

All questions with regard to rules and processes should be handled by MSDL Board staff in the Tab Room.

For paper speech ballots, if applicable, please provide blank ballot labels – Avery 8160 or the equivalent. The Tab Room also needs a ream of paper for postings and school results and large envelopes for school ballots at the end of the tournament.

Scheduling

Tournament scheduling is **managed in Tabroom**. If you are familiar with Tabroom, you can do the scheduling yourself. Or you can **ask for assistance from the MSDL Board**. They will need your full list of available competition rooms and spaces.