



Online Tournament Guide

Welcome to the Massachusetts Speech and Debate League!

We've created this guide to facilitate your participation in online tournaments. Sometimes referred to as "e-tournaments", these events take the place of in-person competitions held at schools. We believe that e-tournaments can be a viable alternative when in-person gatherings are neither practical nor feasible.

We want to make the process as easy as possible for you. Please don't be intimidated by this guide - once you've started preparing for an online tournament, you'll find that the process looks more complicated than it actually is. We hope that you will enjoy the online tournament experience. We look forward to seeing you!

Acknowledgements

The information provided in this guide is heavily "borrowed" and adapted from various sources, including (but not limited to) the individuals and organizations named below. These folks have learned by trial and error, and they've generously shared their experiences and best practices with the entire speech and debate community. For that, we are grateful.

- ★ Matt Liu, University of Wyoming
- ★ National Speech and Debate Association, Des Moines, IA
- ★ Tournament of Champions, Lexington, KY



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Rules of Conduct

All participants shall observe standard rules of etiquette and professionalism at all times.

Remember where you are, and think before you act. All participants are expected to treat this experience as they would an in-person tournament. Accordingly, behaviors and activities that would be inappropriate in the classroom are also unacceptable here. No rules document can reasonably foresee every possible situation, but our goal is not to add to this list of prohibited activities. *Please do not do anything that would cause us to add to this list.*

Anyone engaging in any of these activities shall be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including removal from the tournament, notification of school officials, and / or referral to law enforcement as the circumstances may dictate. Individuals so removed shall take no further part in the tournament. Contestants shall be disqualified, and judges shall be expelled from the judging pool with a “missing judge” penalty fine assessed to the judge’s school.

1. Use or possession of drugs, alcohol, tobacco, or marijuana products. This includes vaping.
2. Use of video, audio, or other forms of communication to transmit or display sexually explicit or inappropriate material or behavior. “Inappropriate” in this context is defined as:
 - a. Unsuitable for sharing at a high school competition that includes minor children; or
 - b. Something that the average person, applying contemporary community standards, would perceive as creating a hostile environment.
3. Use of the electronic tournament platform for any unlawful purpose.
 - a. “Unlawful purpose” is anything that is prohibited by the laws of either the United States of America or the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.
4. Harassment in any form.
5. Doxxing, or the intentional public revelation of a participant’s private contact information or personally-identifying information.
6. Violation of security protocols in place to protect the orderly functioning of the tournament. This includes, but is not limited to, sharing personal login credentials (such as usernames and passwords) or publicly sharing links to electronic meetings and Zoom sessions that tournament staff have not designated for public viewing.
7. Knowingly acting in such a manner as to disrupt the operation of the tournament or the activities of participants therein.
8. Receiving competitive assistance in any form during a round.
 - a. This rule does not prohibit debate partners from collaborating with each other during rounds, but it does prohibit external assistance.
9. Recording in any form.



Online Tournament Etiquette

We encourage good citizenship at speech and debate tournaments. The Golden Rule - do unto others as you would have them do unto you - applies online as it does in-person. Follow these guidelines to help create a positive experience for everyone.

- ★ Observe the same level of *decorum* that you would at an in-person tournament.
 - *Be on-time* and ready to participate for all meetings and rounds.
 - *Communicate* if you must be late to a round or a judging assignment due to either double-entry or a previous round running overtime. We can't send someone to your home the way we would send someone to your competition room to check on you!
 - Follow the same dress and grooming standards as you would for an in-person tournament.
 - Be mindful of the fact that you will be on camera. No one wants to see someone lounging in bed while competing or judging.
- ★ Follow *naming conventions* to identify yourself during the tournament. This will ensure that we know who you are and that you don't get shut out of rounds inadvertently.
- ★ It is common courtesy to *listen with interest to all competitors*. Except as needed to share evidence, communicate with tournament officials, or ensure the smooth flow of the round, please refrain from the use of chat features while others are speaking.
- ★ *Mute your mic when you are not speaking*. Except during Crossfire or cross-examination in debate, questioning in Congress, or Group Discussion rounds, only the speaker(s) who have the floor should have their mics on.
- ★ *Be respectful*, both inside and outside of rounds. The common-sense advice against "bus talk" at in-person tournaments applies to online speech and debate tournaments as well.



General Judging Guidelines

Thank you for judging at this tournament. We could not run this tournament without you.

We're adapting to this new means of communication. Our students are, too. Because some things that we do in-person don't translate well to online competition, you'll likely see some changes. For example, contestants may choose to deliver their presentations while seated so as to optimize audiovisual capture. In literary interpretation and reading events, you may see less physical movement and a greater emphasis on facial expressions, tone of voice, and variation in volume.

That said, we believe that this experience can be extremely valuable because it teaches students to adapt to their audiences. Presenting in all types of environments is a skill that will benefit students throughout their lives.

These are general principles that apply across all competitive events. There are some category-specific rules and guidelines that will be covered in greater detail in the [Debate](#), [Speech](#), and [Student Congress](#) sections of this guide. Please don't hesitate to reach out to a tournament official if you need help or if you have any questions.

- ★ *This is a speech and debate competition, not a video contest.* Please remember that having the best technology is a privilege not equally shared by everyone. Base your decisions, ranks and scores on the factors that competitors can control, such as what they say and how they say it. Do not penalize competitors for things they can't control, such as Internet connection speed and video quality.
- ★ *Please disregard the background that you may see behind the contestant.* Every student's home situation is different, and we want everyone to have an equal chance to be seen and heard. We are striving for *access over perfection*.
- ★ *When in doubt, err in favor of the contestant.* If a speaker needs to mute for a period of time to address a sudden disturbance in their home, then it is perfectly acceptable to allow that speaker to pause and restart, or even to re-deliver the speech in its entirety when the issue has been resolved. We are all doing what we can with what we have where we are!
- ★ *Turn off messages and alerts on your device* while you are judging.
- ★ *Be flexible* and work with competitors to troubleshoot audio issues caused either by technology or the Internet.
 - If you can't hear someone because of a tech issue, then don't hesitate to pause the speaker mid-speech and troubleshoot the issue until it is fixed.
 - *Don't interrupt* for a few seconds of voice pixelation ("robot voice").
 - *Do interrupt* if you consistently cannot hear someone because of a tech issue.
 - Do not penalize a competitor who needs to suddenly switch to a new audio format.
 - If a connection drops:



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- Tournament staff will permit up to 15 minutes of “tech time” per round should individual competitors experience connection problems. After that time has elapsed, the event must continue, as we need to keep the tournament running on time.
 - In Speech rounds (except Group Discussion), please try to keep the round moving by asking the next competitor to speak. Once the original speaker re-establishes a connection, then you can work them back into the speaking order.
 - In Group Discussion, Congress, and Debate, the round is paused until the speaker comes back online. Once the speaker re-connects, have them either start from the beginning (if the speech was less than 15 seconds in) or restart from where they left off.



Tips and Suggestions

Here are some suggestions to help you make the most of your workspace. As you prepare for the tournament, you'll need to consider how you balance your participation against the needs of other members of your household. You'll also want to check your tech to ensure it's tournament-ready.

Creating a competition space in your home

- ★ Understand how your home environment can impact your participation in the tournament.
 - *Before the tournament*, discuss your participation with your parents, your siblings, and other members of your household. Explain that, during limited periods of the day (sometimes as short as 5-10 minutes, depending on your events), you will need to be able to speak or listen without distractions.
 - If your family understands that you are engaged in a live speech and debate competition, then they probably won't interrupt you.
 - Know who in your household is going to be doing what online.
 - You can't (and shouldn't) tell your parents not to have a business meeting on Zoom, but you need to understand what their needs might be.
 - Do other members of your household play online games or use streaming video services? Consider negotiating usage with them. Remember that some streaming services (such as Netflix and Disney+) allow you to download episodes in advance for viewing later.
 - Test your technology in the real-world worst-case scenario of bandwidth use before the tournament. Knowing how others' Internet usage affects your experience will help you to understand what steps you might need to take to optimize your setup.
 - Consider your work environment.
 - How close are you to your wireless router? Can you plug directly into it via Ethernet?
 - Will you have to share your workspace with others? If so, how? Can you negotiate with other members of your household to limit potential distractions while you are participating?
- ★ Understand what kind of technology will be best for you to participate.
 - A laptop is very helpful, but it is not required.
 - Tablets and smartphones are also viable options. The Zoom app allows you to connect to meetings the same as if you were attending on a laptop. You will want to test in advance and to determine which video layout works best for you (portrait or landscape).



Managing your communications

- ★ *Test your technology before the tournament.* This particularly applies if you are using something you have not used before. (Your first live round is not the place to test out your new microphone!) We may offer a pre-tournament tech check-in so that participants can both confirm that their tech works and troubleshoot any issues.
- ★ *Plug in if you can.* Wired Ethernet connections are inherently more reliable than wireless Wi-Fi connections. If this is not an option, then work as close to your router as you can.
 - Ethernet adapters are widely available for use with computers that do not have a dedicated Ethernet port. These usually fit a USB, Lightning, or similar port.
 - Ethernet cables can usually be plugged right into an open port on your access point (router or modem).
 - If you can't run Ethernet cable from your computer to your access point, then you may wish to consider options that use your home's electrical wiring to extend your wired network. These are widely available for purchase and are both safe and highly effective. You plug one box in next to your router and connect it via Ethernet cable to your access point; then, you plug another box elsewhere in your home and connect it via Ethernet cable to your computer. You have now extended your wired network with virtually no loss of speed or signal quality. Higher-end options not only include the Ethernet plug-in, but they also include Wi-Fi signal boosting so that you can extend your network to other areas of your home that aren't covered.
 - If you must use Wi-Fi, and if you are concerned about signal strength, then consider a Wi-Fi range extender or mesh Wi-Fi system. Some Internet Service Providers offer these devices for home use at additional cost.
- ★ *Close out of computer programs and apps that consume bandwidth.* These include game clients (Steam, Epic, Blizzard, League of Legends), excess browser tabs (particularly YouTube, Twitch, Netflix, or other streaming services) and possibly even VPN clients.
- ★ *Consider how you plan to communicate with teammates and coaches.* To preserve connection speed and reduce bandwidth usage, you may wish to use cellular data or an alternative wireless network for Messages, Slack, email and other forms of communication. Of course, you should stay within your school's guidelines for technology use.

Audio / sound optimization tips

- ★ *Microphone:* Proximity and consistency are more important than the latest technology. You should be consistently close to your microphone so that it clearly picks up your voice. You should test your mic setup with a human on the other end before using it. Based on what we have learned from others who have already done this, here are some options:
 - Headset with mic (example: gamer's headset)



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- External mic
- In-laptop mic
- ★ *Audio Playback:* Headphones are extremely helpful even if they do not include a microphone. Particularly in debate events, these will help you hear your fellow competitors.
- ★ *Prevent Reverberation (Echo):* If you're using a headset, make sure that it is set for both *input* and *output*. If your computer speakers are your audio output, then your mic will capture the sound from the speaker and transmit it again. This creates unpleasant sounds for everyone and annoys people, particularly judges.
- ★ *Ensure You're Using The Correct Mic:* If you're using a headset, make sure that you can both hear and be heard. If you can hear others, but they can't hear you, then you may need to adjust your settings. *As always, test before you get to the tournament!*

Video optimization tips

- ★ *Background:* Keep it clean and professional. Piles of laundry, papers strewn about, and questionable posters should be well away from camera view. A plain background is best.
- ★ *Attire:* Avoid wearing "busy" patterns and dots, as they may create distortion or static for those watching you. Stick to solid colors or pinstripes whenever possible.
- ★ *Check your camera angle before participating.* Judges and fellow competitors want to see more than just your forehead!
- ★ *Lighting:* Avoid having a super-bright light directly behind you.

Computer setup tips

- ★ If you have access to a *second monitor*, then you might consider practicing with it to see if you like using it. Otherwise, you should plan for how you will make the most of limited screen space depending on the event you are in.
- ★ Ensure your computer is set up so you can look directly at the camera and see your judge(s) and fellow competitors (opponents in debate events).
- ★ *Zoom Viewing Modes:* Use the one that's most appropriate for your event. For Debate, Congress, Group Discussion, Multiple, and Duo, you should use Gallery View (sometimes called "Brady Bunch View"). For other events, you should use Speaker View.
- ★ Look for examples as to how previous online tournament participants have used their tech. The Tournament of Champions in 2020 was an online tournament, and the organizers have generously shared a library of performance videos. You can watch the videos online at this location:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCoRygbe3MhUWHvT_uzxGSVQ/playlists



Troubleshooting problems

- ★ Standard IT solution: *Turn it off. Then, turn it back on.*
 - If they're external, then turn your mic and webcam off and back on. You might also try unplugging them and then plugging them back in.
 - Try leaving and re-entering the Zoom room if you need to.
- ★ Turn your laptop camera's *privacy switch* off if you have one.
- ★ Most problems are caused by an unreliable or unstable Internet connection. (Please see sections above about preferring wired to wireless connections, or being closer to the router instead of farther away.)
 - If other people are having problems with their Internet access, then this should not affect you except to the extent that you may have difficulty seeing and hearing them. In other words, if multiple people are on a call and one person is having connection trouble, then everyone else who is unaffected should still be able to see and hear each other. In some events, such as interpretation events, this will be mitigated by having everyone except the speaker performing and the judge(s) turn their video off.



Pre-Tournament Check-In Procedure

The tournament may offer participants the opportunity to check their technology to ensure it is working properly prior to tournament day.

- ★ Watch for messages from the tournament indicating pre-tournament check-in availability dates and times.
- ★ Follow instructions for joining pre-tournament check-in sessions.
- ★ Prepare your competition or judging space as you would for the tournament.
- ★ Wear similar colors or patterns as you would when competing in the tournament. The tournament staff can help you determine if those colors or patterns will work well in front of a camera.
- ★ Use the same audiovisual technology as you are planning on using on tournament day.
 - If you've acquired a new camera, headset, or microphone, then this is the time and place to test it.
- ★ Prepare 30 to 60 seconds' worth of speaking material - whether it be from your piece, or from a previous speech, or a rhetorical introduction. Speak at the rate you plan to speak at on tournament day.
- ★ Follow any suggestions made about what you can do to improve your audiovisual presentation. You may wish to join a follow-up session to test the changes you've made.



Debate Events

Welcome to Debate! Debate events include Big Questions (BQ), Policy (CX), Lincoln-Douglas (LD), and Public Forum (PF). We're adapting to the circumstances of online debate, but we believe that we can provide a high-quality educational and competitive experience for everyone.

Naming conventions for Debate

- ★ *All participants must properly identify themselves.* Tournament staff shall not admit, and shall remove, individuals who do not follow naming conventions. The goal is to ensure the smooth flow of the competition by confirming that only legitimate participants have access. It also will ensure that tournament staff can place participants in the correct breakout rooms where they are scheduled to debate or judge.
 - Judges should use the format *Judge - [Judge Code] - [Full Name]*. The code can be omitted at tournaments where judge codes are not used.
 - Example: Judge - 2002 - Christopher Sheldon
 - Example: Judge - Adam Nir
 - Contestants should use the format *[Code] - [First Name and Last Name Initial]*.
 - Example (LD or BQ solo): Newton South JC - Joshua C.
 - Example (CX, PF, or BQ duo): Natick DP - Sarah D.

Getting to your rounds

Debaters shall be assigned and distributed to competition rooms in a manner to be determined by the Tournament Director and to be laid out in advance of the tournament.

Prep time changes

Prep time is expanded in online debating to account for challenges arising out of the medium.

- ★ Big Questions Debate (BQ): 4 minutes per entry (a two-debater team counts as one entry)
- ★ Policy Debate (CX): 10 minutes per team
- ★ Lincoln-Douglas Debate (LD): 5 minutes per entry
- ★ Public Forum Debate (PF): 4 minutes per team

Working with a debate partner (BQ, CX, PF)

Messaging clients (such as Slack) are great. If you want an audio connection, then consider a separate video chat on a different program (ex: FaceTime) that is not connected to the Wi-Fi and therefore not draining your bandwidth. (For instance, you may choose to use cellular data rather



than your home network.) Regardless of how you choose to manage your communication, you should stay within your school's guidelines for acceptable technology use..

Sharing evidence in online debates

Prepare for how you will share evidence with your opponents and judges. Remember that, in an online debate, you can't hand a piece of paper to someone who wishes to review your evidence.

- ★ The best thing to do is to start an email chain before the round so all evidence is shared just before it's read into the debate. This reduces time spent during cross-examination and Crossfire on the tasks of gathering and exchanging evidence. Email chains also make it possible to look up files and arguments to prep against after the debate has ended.
 - Download or make a PDF copy of all *paywall evidence*; that is, articles that are not freely accessible by everyone. This ensures that everyone can actually read your evidence. MSDL Rule 3.3.3.6 states, "A team that is unable to provide their evidence upon request is assumed not to have that evidence."
 - You may wish to create a free email account (yourdebatercode@gmail.com, for example) so you don't have to share your personal or school email address.

General guidelines for debaters

- ★ *Mute your mic* when you are not speaking or asking questions.
- ★ *Do not attempt to talk over another debater.* Wait until the speaker is finished speaking. Electronic communication has limitations that the human ear does not have - it does not do a good job handling multiple people who attempt to speak at the same time. Cross-talk creates audio distortions that are annoying to everyone, especially your judges.
- ★ Speak efficiently. The idea is *word economy*. Think of ways to say the same thing, but in a shorter period of time.
- ★ *Watch your speed and enunciation.* Speak in a manner that considers the limitations of both electronic transmission and human hearing as well as the judge's expressed preferences. Judges do not have to consider what they cannot understand!

Instructions for Debate judges

- ★ The judge should actively troubleshoot audio issues caused by technology or the Internet.
 - *Don't interrupt* for a few seconds of voice pixelation ("robot voice").
 - *Do interrupt* if you consistently cannot hear someone because of a tech issue.
- ★ The judge should keep track of "tech time", or interruptions where the debate stops because a competitor has been disconnected.
 - After 15 minutes per round, the debate must move on so the tournament isn't delayed.



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- ★ If a call drops during a speech, and a speaker is less than 15 seconds into the speech, then they should just re-give the entire speech. Otherwise, simply figure out the last part that everyone heard and resume from that point.



Speech Events

Welcome to Speech! We offer a wide variety of competition categories across multiple disciplines, including performance, reading, public address, and limited preparation. Online Speech is certainly an adaptation for us, but we aim to make the most of the opportunity with what we have.

Our goal today is to determine which competitor best communicated their ideas. That said, this competition may look different from our normal in-person events. We are encouraging competitors and judges to appreciate performances for what they are and not what they think they should have been. What a competitor says and how they say it are more important than audiovisual quality.

Naming conventions for Speech

- ★ *All Zoom users must properly identify themselves.* Tournament staff shall not admit, and shall remove, individuals who do not follow naming conventions. The goal is to ensure the smooth flow of the competition by confirming that only legitimate participants have access. It also will ensure that tournament staff can place participants in the correct breakout rooms where they are scheduled to speak or judge.
 - Judges should use the format *Judge - [Judge Code] - [Full Name]*.
 - Example: Judge - 2002 - Christopher Sheldon
 - Contestants should use the format *[Code] - [First Name and Last Name Initial]*.
 - Example: 201 - Greg C.
 - Cross-entered contestants may need to update their code numbers when traveling from one event to another. If a contestant appears to be in the wrong room, then the judge should simply confirm that the contestant is in the correct place. Most likely, the contestant is cross-entered and simply needs to update their code number.

Getting to your rounds

- ★ Contestants and judges will be placed in competition rooms through Zoom.
 - Zoom room assignments will be distributed in advance. At least 15 minutes prior to the scheduled start time, all participants should join their assigned Zoom room.
 - The Zoom Room Manager (ZRM) assigns contestants and judges to breakout rooms based on the round schematic.
- ★ Duo Interpretation and Multiple Reading shall perform with one entry in the breakout room with the judge(s). This will allow optimal use of the multiple-screen capabilities of the video platform. The judge(s) will use Gallery View (sometimes called “Brady Bunch View”) to see all of the competitors on the screen at the same time.



General guidelines for contestants

These guidelines are meant to cover all events. Event-specific guidelines are laid out below.

- ★ *Turn your mic off* when you are not speaking.
- ★ *Headsets or mics are to be used for speech capture only.* They may not be used as props or to make non-vocal sound effects.
- ★ *Props and costumes are prohibited* the same way they are at in-person tournaments.
- ★ *Contestants may speak either from a standing or a sitting position, but not both.* The contestant must remain standing or seated from the beginning to the end of the speech. If seated, the contestant may not use the chair as a prop or to make non-vocal sounds. Changing positions during the speech shall be regarded as using the chair as a prop, and this shall be penalized accordingly.
- ★ *Virtual backgrounds, if used, must either be a single solid color with no pattern or “blurred”* so as to obscure the speaker’s background. No other virtual backgrounds may be used.
- ★ *Only one camera may be used, and the camera must remain in-place throughout the entire performance* with no use of panning, zooming, green screens, on-screen text or graphics, or professional enhancements such as lighting kits. If others are present at the contestant’s location, no audience reactions such as applause or laughter should be audible.
- ★ It is not necessary for a contestant to pretend that an audience is present at their location by making sustained eye contact with different points in the room.
- ★ *Keep your own time.* Given the limitations of the platform, *time signals will not be provided.* The judge’s time is official.

Instructions for Speech judges

These guidelines are meant to cover all events. Event-specific guidelines are laid out below.

- ★ Competitors may time themselves. However, *the judge maintains the official time for the round.*
- ★ The contestant may deliver the presentation either while standing or while seated, but not from both positions. (The exception to this will be Multiple Reading, where positions may be changed as in an ordinary tournament.) A contestant who chooses to remain seated may not use the chair as a prop to make non-vocal sounds.
- ★ Judges should actively troubleshoot audio issues caused by technology or the Internet.
 - *Don’t interrupt* for a few seconds of voice pixelation (“robot voice”).
 - *Do interrupt* if you consistently cannot hear someone because of a tech issue.
- ★ It is recommended to have the speaker test their audio before they speak.
 - For example, have the contestant state their code and the title or topic.
 - Any time for audio testing is “off the clock” and is neither scored nor ranked.



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- ★ Use Speaker View for events other than Group Discussion, Duo, or Multiple. Otherwise, use Gallery View (sometimes called “Brady Bunch View”).



Memorized Events

Memorized events include Declamation (DEC), Duo Interpretation (DUO), Dramatic Performance (DP), Informative Speaking (INFO), and Original Oratory (OO). As with in-person tournaments, the performance must be delivered from memory without the use of a manuscript.

Duo Interpretation (DUO) special instructions

- ★ Only one entry at a time (two contestants) and the judge(s) shall be in the breakout room.
- ★ Each contestant in an entry must enter the breakout room independently, even if both contestants are present in the same household. Put another way, *both contestants cannot share the same camera.*
- ★ Once one entry has completed its presentation, then the contestants should leave the breakout room so the next contestants may enter and present.
- ★ Judges and competitors should use Gallery View (“Brady Bunch View”) for this event. Given the limitations of the platform, it is not possible to guarantee placement of individual competitors’ video feeds. Judges should not hold this limitation against competitors.

Informative Speaking (INFO) special instructions

- ★ Electronic visual aids, such as slide shows, are prohibited.
- ★ Contestants may manipulate visual aids as they would during an in-person performance.
- ★ Contestants may modify visual aids to make them suitable for performance on video.

Instructions for memorized event judges

- ★ When ranking and scoring contestants, consider how effectively they made use of the audiovisual platform. Contestants are encouraged to adapt their performances for online presentation within both the MSDL rules and the guidelines of this document.
- ★ Judges should actively troubleshoot audio issues caused by technology or the Internet.
 - *Don't interrupt* for a few seconds of voice pixelation (“robot voice”).
 - *Do interrupt* if you consistently cannot hear someone because of a tech issue.
- ★ It is recommended to have the speaker test their audio before they speak.
 - For example, have the contestant state their code and the title or topic.
 - Any time for audio testing is “off the clock” and is neither scored nor ranked.



Reading Events

Reading events include Children’s Literature (KL), Multiple Reading (MULT), Play Reading (PL), Poetry (PO), Program Oral Interpretation (POI), and Prose (PR). As with in-person tournaments, the performance requires the use of a manuscript. The manuscript must be at least partially visible on the camera.

Multiple Reading (MULT) special instructions

- ★ Only one entry at a time and the judge(s) shall be in the breakout room.
- ★ Each contestant in an entry must enter the breakout room independently, even if two or more contestants in the same entry are present in the same household. Put another way, *two or more contestants cannot share the same camera.*
- ★ Once one entry has completed its presentation, then the contestants should leave the breakout room so the contestants for the next entry may enter and present.
- ★ Judges and competitors should use Gallery View (“Brady Bunch View”) for this event. Given the limitations of the platform, it is not possible to guarantee placement of individual competitors’ video feeds. Judges should not hold this limitation against competitors.

Program Oral Interpretation (POI) special instructions

- ★ “Binder tech” must be visible on camera.
 - This is defined as actions taken with the manuscript to produce sound effects as part of the performance.

Instructions for reading event judges

- ★ When ranking and scoring contestants, consider how effectively they made use of the audiovisual platform. Contestants are encouraged to adapt their performances for online presentation within both the MSDL rules and the guidelines of this document.
- ★ Judges should actively troubleshoot audio issues caused by technology or the Internet.
 - *Don’t interrupt* for a few seconds of voice pixelation (“robot voice”).
 - *Do interrupt* if you consistently cannot hear someone because of a tech issue.
- ★ It is recommended to have the speaker test their audio before they speak.
 - For example, have the contestant state their code and the title or topic.
 - Any time for audio testing is “off the clock” and is neither scored nor ranked.



Extemporaneous Speaking

Extemporaneous Speaking is a limited-preparation event wherein contestants prepare and present a speech on a topic of current interest. This section explains how the event will flow from prep time to speech time.

Prep room procedures

Contestants and judges shall report to a Zoom-based prep room for instructions, draw, and dispatch.

- ★ Drawing shall take place at eight-minute intervals.
- ★ The prep room proctor shall coordinate the drawing and choosing of questions upon each contestant's turn.
- ★ Contestants must prep with *video on* and *audio off*.
- ★ When prep time has elapsed, the proctor shall dispatch competitors to speak in breakout rooms where their judges will be waiting.

General guidelines for Extemporaneous Speaking contestants

- ★ *Turn on your mic* when you get to your breakout room to speak.
- ★ *Confirm that the judge can hear you clearly* before you begin.
 - This can be done as easily as reading back the question to the judge.
- ★ Keep track of your own time. You will not be able to see time signals. The judge maintains the official time, so you should coordinate with the judge on starting simultaneously.
- ★ Exit the breakout room when you are finished so the next contestant can enter and speak.

Instructions for Extemporaneous Speaking judges

- ★ Contestants may time themselves. However, *the judge maintains the official time for the round*.
- ★ Judges should actively troubleshoot audio issues caused by technology or the Internet.
 - *Don't interrupt* for a few seconds of voice pixelation ("robot voice").
 - *Do interrupt* if you consistently cannot hear someone because of a tech issue.
- ★ It is recommended to have the speaker test their audio before they speak.
 - For example, have the contestant state their code and the title or topic.
 - Any time for audio testing is "off the clock" and is neither scored nor ranked.



Group Discussion

Group Discussion is a structured round-table discussion event wherein contestants discuss a topic revealed by the judge at the start of the round. Topics revolve around areas published by the Tournament Director prior to the tournament.

Round procedures

- ★ The judge shall reveal the question / topic / discussion area at the beginning of the round.
- ★ During preparation times, contestants are to prep with *video on* and *audio off*.
- ★ Both contestants and judges should use Gallery View (“Brady Bunch View”) instead of Speaker View in Zoom.

General guidelines for Group Discussion contestants

- ★ *Do not attempt to talk over another contestant.* Wait until the speaker is finished speaking. Electronic communication has limitations that the human ear does not have - it does not do a good job handling multiple people who attempt to speak at the same time. Cross-talk creates audio distortions that are annoying to everyone, especially your judges.
- ★ Speak efficiently. The idea is *word economy*. Think of ways to say the same thing, but in a shorter period of time.

Instructions for Group Discussion judges

- ★ Contestants may time themselves. However, *the judge maintains the official time for the round.*
- ★ Judges should keep track of “tech time”, or interruptions where the round stops because a competitor has been disconnected.
 - After 15 minutes per round, the discussion must move on so the tournament isn’t delayed.
- ★ Judges should actively troubleshoot audio issues caused by technology or the Internet.
 - *Don’t interrupt* for a few seconds of voice pixelation (“robot voice”).
 - *Do interrupt* if you consistently cannot hear someone because of a tech issue.



Impromptu

Impromptu is a limited-preparation event wherein speakers have only six minutes to both prepare and present a speech on a topic drawn at random. Ordinarily, both drawing and speaking occur in the competition room. However, in online tournaments, a centralized prep room is used for the drawing of topics. Speakers are then dispatched to breakout rooms with their judges. This section explains how the event will flow.

Prep room procedures

Contestants and judges shall report to a Zoom-based prep room for instructions, draw and dispatch.

- ★ Drawing shall take place at seven-minute intervals.
- ★ Contestants waiting to draw should leave their *video on* and their *audio off*.
- ★ The prep room proctor shall coordinate the drawing and selection of topic at each contestant's turn.
- ★ Once the topic has been selected, the proctor shall immediately dispatch the contestant to a breakout room where the judge will be waiting.

General guidelines for Impromptu contestants

- ★ *Turn on your mic* when you get to your breakout room to speak.
- ★ *Confirm that the judge can hear you clearly* before you begin.
 - This can be done as easily as reading back the topic to the judge.
- ★ Keep track of your own time. You will not be able to see time signals. The judge maintains the official time, so you should coordinate with the judge on starting simultaneously.
- ★ Exit the breakout room when you are finished so the next contestant can enter and speak.

Instructions for Impromptu judges

- ★ Timing begins as soon as the contestant enters the breakout room.
- ★ Contestants may time themselves. However, *the judge maintains the official time for the round*.
- ★ Judges should actively troubleshoot audio issues caused by technology or the Internet.
 - *Don't interrupt* for a few seconds of voice pixelation ("robot voice").
 - *Do interrupt* if you consistently cannot hear someone because of a tech issue.
- ★ It is recommended to have the speaker test their audio before they speak.
 - For example, have the contestant state their code and the title or topic.
 - Any time for audio testing is "off the clock" and is neither scored nor ranked.



Radio Broadcasting

In Radio Broadcasting, the judge listens to, but does not watch, the performance. This is similar to how in-person tournaments operate. This section explains how the event will flow from prep time to speech time.

Prep room procedures

Contestants and judges shall report to a Zoom-based prep room for instructions, draw, and dispatch.

- ★ Drawing shall take place at seven-minute intervals.
- ★ The prep room proctor shall send material for each round to each contestant at draw time.
- ★ Contestants must prep with *video on* and *audio off*.
- ★ When prep time has elapsed, the proctor shall dispatch competitors to speak in breakout rooms where their judges will be waiting.

General guidelines for Radio Broadcasting contestants

- ★ *Turn on your mic* when you get to your breakout room to speak.
- ★ *Turn off your video* when you are speaking.
- ★ *Confirm that the judge can hear you clearly* before you begin.
- ★ Keep track of your own time. You will not be able to see time signals. The judge maintains the official time, so you should coordinate with the judge on starting simultaneously.
- ★ Exit the breakout room when you are finished so the next contestant can enter and speak.

Instructions for Radio Broadcasting judges

- ★ Contestants must only use material in the packet provided in the prep room.
 - The prep room proctor can send you a copy of the packet.
 - Notify a tournament official immediately after the round if the material in one speech sounds significantly different from that of the other speeches.
- ★ Contestants may time themselves. However, *the judge maintains the official time for the round*.
- ★ Judges should actively troubleshoot audio issues caused by technology or the Internet.
 - *Don't interrupt* for a few seconds of voice pixelation (“robot voice”).
 - *Do interrupt* if you consistently cannot hear someone because of a tech issue.
- ★ It is recommended to have the speaker test their audio before they speak.
 - For example, have the contestant state their code and the title or topic.
 - Any time for audio testing is “off the clock” and is neither scored nor ranked.



Student Congress

Welcome to Student Congress! This is a unique event that simulates the workings of the United States Congress. Contestants debate and vote on legislation, elect a presiding officer, and use standard parliamentary procedure (*Robert's Rules of Order, Revised*).

Student Congress online poses unique challenges, but we believe that becoming acquainted with the technology will help us all to overcome those challenges.

Naming conventions for Student Congress

- ★ *All Zoom users must properly identify themselves.* Tournament staff shall not admit, and shall remove, individuals who do not follow naming conventions. The goal is to ensure the smooth flow of the competition by confirming that only legitimate participants have access.
 - Judges should use the format *Judge - [Judge Code] - [Full Name]*.
 - Example: Judge - 2001 - Sheryl Kaczmarek
 - Parliamentarians should use the format *Parli - [Judge Code] - [Full Name]*.
 - Example: Parli - 2002 - Joe Bowden
 - Legislators should use the format *Senator - [Full Name] - School*.
 - Example: Senator - Abraham Lincoln - Illinois State HS.

Legislation

- ★ Legislation must be submitted by the date and time indicated in the Tournament Invitation. The Chair of Congress is not obligated to consider legislation submitted after the deadline.
- ★ The legislative docket shall be published prior to the tournament via Tabroom.com..
- ★ Both competitors and judges should download the legislation on the docket for reference.

Chamber size

- ★ We will make every effort to reduce chamber sizes. Because of the limitations of audiovisual technology, we will try to impanel no more than 12 competitors per chamber.

Rules Committee and agenda-setting

- ★ The Parliamentarian shall oversee a Rules Committee meeting with one contestant from each school in the chamber. This will be done via Zoom conference before the first session.
 - Rules Committee members shall set the agenda for the chamber in accordance with MSDL rules governing placement of legislation authored by legislators competing in the chamber. Once the agenda for the chamber has been set, it may only be changed by a motion to suspend the rules upon the agreement of the legislative author(s).



- Rules Committee members shall also identify the legislators who shall serve as Presiding Officer (PO) for each piece of legislation. If more than one legislator wishes to serve as PO on a particular agenda item, then the Parliamentarian shall supervise an election for the position.
- ★ The Parliamentarian shall maintain a shared public document containing the legislative agenda, the PO for each piece of legislation, and the voting record.

Recognition, timing, precedence and recency

- ★ The PO shall explain their recognition procedure for speeches, questioning periods, and motions. The PO shall recognize legislators either by the “raise hand” feature in Zoom or by raised paper placards displayed on cameras.
- ★ The PO may use hand signals, cards, or other means to communicate elapsed time. Speakers are encouraged to time themselves; however, the PO shall maintain the official time.
- ★ The PO may enforce time limits by interrupting when the time for speaking or questioning has elapsed. This is because using a gavel is ill-suited to online Congress sessions.
 - *This is not rude*; instead, it is to ensure both competitive equity and that the debate keeps moving.
- ★ The Parliamentarian shall maintain a precedence and recency chart for consistency through all preliminary sessions. POs should maintain their own charts; however, where charts may conflict, the Parliamentarian’s shall be deemed controlling.

Voting procedure

- ★ To simplify procedures, the PO shall *call for objections* on motions (“Objection!”) where a voice vote (“All in favor...”) would ordinarily be used. If there are no objections, then the PO may assume unanimous consent and proceed.
 - Example: After the motion and second, ask “Are there any objections?”
- ★ Counted votes, such as votes on the legislation or when a legislator calls for a division of the chamber on a voice vote, shall be done based on raised name placards displayed on cameras.

General guidelines for contestants

- ★ *Mute your audio* when you are not speaking or asking questions.
- ★ *Do not use the chat feature in Zoom* except to communicate with the Parliamentarian.
- ★ During questioning, *do not try to talk over the other person*. This is not only good etiquette, but it also prevents important points from being lost in electronic transmission.



Tech troubleshooting

- ★ The Parliamentarian should actively troubleshoot audio issues caused by technology or the Internet.
 - *Don't interrupt* for a few seconds of voice pixelation (“robot voice”).
 - *Do interrupt* if you consistently cannot hear someone because of a tech issue.
- ★ The Parliamentarian should keep track of “tech time”, or interruptions where the session stops because a competitor has been disconnected.
 - After 15 minutes per session, the debate must move on so the tournament isn't delayed.
- ★ If a call drops during your speech, and you're less than 15 seconds into the speech, then just re-give the entire speech. Otherwise, simply figure out the last part that everyone heard and resume from that point.

Instructions for Student Congress judges

- ★ Competitors may speak either while standing or while sitting, but not both. Chairs may not be used as props.
- ★ Save scores after each speaker. For a Presiding Officer, *do not use Tabroom's PO toggle*. Instead, set the topic to “Presiding Officer” and choose For the bill.
- ★ During questioning periods, stalling for time, either on the part of the questioner or the speaker, is strongly discouraged and may be considered in your scoring and ranking. We have encouraged legislators not to try to talk over each other; however, this is not a license to “hem and haw” or to avoid giving straight answers to simple questions.
- ★ *Account for limited screen size*. Unless you have a second monitor, you may wish to take notes by hand and then fill out the Tabroom.com ballot after the session. The alternative is shrinking both Tabroom and Zoom to half your screen size, which may not allow you to pay careful attention to both the session and every speaker.



Revision History

Date Revised	Revised By	Revision Details
5/3/2020	Joe Bowden	Initial release.
5/4/2020	Joe Bowden	Fixed links with conversion to PDF in Word.