



HANDBOOK

2026 - 2027 SCHOOL YEAR



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WHY CIVICS AND DEBATE?

THE OPENING ARGUMENT

Why Civics and Debate? The proud American tradition of respect – in personal and political interactions – for free and unencumbered speech continues to be a gift left to us by our Founders and remains a uniquely American civic tradition. In a world where we are constantly inundated with complex information, it is often easier and faster to accept the information and perspectives offered to us rather than to deeply examine the issue from a variety of sources. Simultaneously, we often seek to be heard without stopping to listen. The failure to engage in civil and respectful conversations with those whom we disagree with is unhealthy for our constitutional republic and the democratic values we hold dear.

THE MISSION

The Florida Civics and Debate Initiative (FCDI) seeks to expand and enhance civic knowledge and reinvigorate public debate and civil discourse. The FCDI is committed to developing knowledgeable and self-governing citizens who recognize and accept the responsibility to preserve and defend the blessings of liberty inherited from previous generations. The FCDI is committed to supporting the development of new debate teams with a focus on underserved areas as well as supporting established teams in their continued success and sustainability.

THE FOUR PRIORITIES OF CIVICS EDUCATION IN FLORIDA

- 1 Students study primary source documents to understand the philosophical underpinnings of the American Republic and the root foundation of American exceptionalism.
- 2 Students compare the success of the United States and the success or failure of other nations' governing philosophies to evaluate their past, present and likely future effects.
- 3 Students have a sense of civic pride and participate regularly in all levels of government.
- 4 Students reflect upon United States civic history, so they understand their rights and responsibilities as citizens, including the process of advocating properly with government officials.

BENEFITS OF SPEECH AND DEBATE

Speech and debate helps prepare students to be knowledgeable and engaged citizens. It builds upon the foundational civic knowledge that is established in the classroom and requires students to research and apply knowledge rather than remote memorization. In competitive debate, students are required to examine and defend both sides of any issue.

The topics and resolutions students will debate during competitions require an understanding of the function of government and the role of citizens in a republic, essential for understanding and crafting arguments on complex issues. Through this understanding, students are encouraged to cultivate innovative approaches to sides of an issue. Immersed in political philosophies, debate students grasp the art of framing arguments to realize the tangible consequences of abstract concepts and policies in everyday life.

Debate requires students to research primary and secondary sources to utilize as evidence in support of their arguments. Students will discover that the instruction in their academic classes such as civics, U.S. history, law studies and economics can serve as meaningful and relevant resources for speech and debate competition.

Debate builds a strong civic disposition. Students learn collaboration, compassion and respect. Additionally, speech and debate fosters positive student-teacher and student-student relationships.

Speech and debate creates a plethora of academic benefits for students. Participation builds skills in critical thinking, communication, collaboration and civic engagement. Studies have shown the positive impact of speech and debate on reading test scores, analytical skills, attendance and college admission rates.

CIVICS AND DEBATE IN THE CLASSROOM

Building Skills for Tomorrow's Leaders

Among the many subjects in education, two stand out as essential: civics and debate. They're not about memorizing dates or facts; they're about understanding how our society works and learning to speak up for what we believe in. Rooted in ancient philosophical discourses and exemplified through the annals of history, the study of civics and the practice of debate unveil a pathway to understanding societal structures, exercising critical thinking and actively participating in shaping the course of our collective future.

The echoes of Athenian democracy resound through the corridors of history, emphasizing the significance of civic engagement in the fabric of society. From Plato and Aristotle to the American Founders, writers and thinkers have extolled the virtues of an informed citizenry capable of deliberation and decision-making. In the American context, the Founders articulated the imperative of civic education. James Madison, architect of the U.S. Constitution, asserted, "A well-instructed people alone can be permanently a free people." In Federalist No. 10, Madison outlined the dangers of factionalism and advocated for a system that encourages reasoned debate and compromise - a sentiment echoed in contemporary classrooms where students engage in structured arguments and rebuttals.

Civics isn't just about knowing the rules; it's about knowing how to think critically and how to understand different points of view. It's like a puzzle where you must fit together the pieces of history, government and your own values. Debate takes this further, teaching us how to express our ideas clearly and respectfully, even when we disagree. Through the lens of civics and debate, students confront complex ethical dilemmas and grapple with divergent perspectives, honing their capacity for reasoned judgment - a skill indispensable in navigating the complexities of our modern political life.

In today's fast-paced world, information flies at us from all directions, but knowing civics is like having a compass. It helps us navigate through the noise and understand what's really going on. Debate, on the other hand, is like a superpower. It teaches us to speak confidently, listen carefully and make our voices heard. Whether we're engaging with national issues or local ones, these skills help us make a difference. As Justice Sandra Day O'Connor aptly noted, "Knowledge of our system of government is not handed down through the gene pool." In an increasingly interconnected world, where disinformation proliferates and echo chambers amplify partisan rhetoric, the ability to discern fact from fiction and engage in civil discourse cannot be overstated.

So, why study civics and debate? Because they're not just subjects in school - they're tools for life. They help us understand our past, navigate our present and shape our future.

As we learn about the world around us and practice speaking up, we're building the skills we need to be leaders, thinkers and active citizens in our communities. Participation in debate equips students with invaluable communication skills, fostering the articulation of ideas with clarity and persuasiveness. Whether advocating for policy reform or scrutinizing the actions of elected officials, the ability to construct clear and convincing arguments and engage in respectful dialogue empowers students to become agents of change within their communities.

Let's embrace civics and debate with enthusiasm and curiosity, knowing that they hold the key to unlocking our potential as informed and empowered individuals. As we navigate the complexities of an ever-evolving world, let us heed the wisdom of the past and impart to future generations with the tools necessary to safeguard the cherished principles of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

BRINGING IT TOGETHER

The Student Pathway

We hope we've shown that speech and debate is far more than just an extracurricular activity: it is a long-term educational journey that transforms students into more knowledgeable, thoughtful and articulate individuals capable of thinking critically and disagreeing civilly. Through the Florida Civics and Debate Initiative, students can begin benefiting from speech and debate as early as fifth grade.

Long term participation in speech and debate provides students with consistent opportunities to apply the skills developed during practice, competitions and in the classroom. This sustained participation creates a unique pathway for growth. Over the course of as many as eight years, students develop a broad understanding of the world, master effective communication and build the confidence and leadership skills needed to succeed.

The benefits of long-term participation also extend beyond personal development. Through the Florida Civics and Debate Initiative, students have access to meaningful scholarship opportunities that recognize excellence in speech and debate. Competitors compete for **\$145,000 in college scholarships awarded annually.**

From a student's first FCDI tournament in fifth grade to competing for a college scholarship as a graduating senior, the Florida Civics and Debate Initiative provides a comprehensive developmental pathway that equips students with the knowledge, character and communication skills to become informed citizens, confident leaders and lifelong proponents of civil discourse.

PARTNERSHIP WITH THE FLORIDA DEBATE INITIATIVE

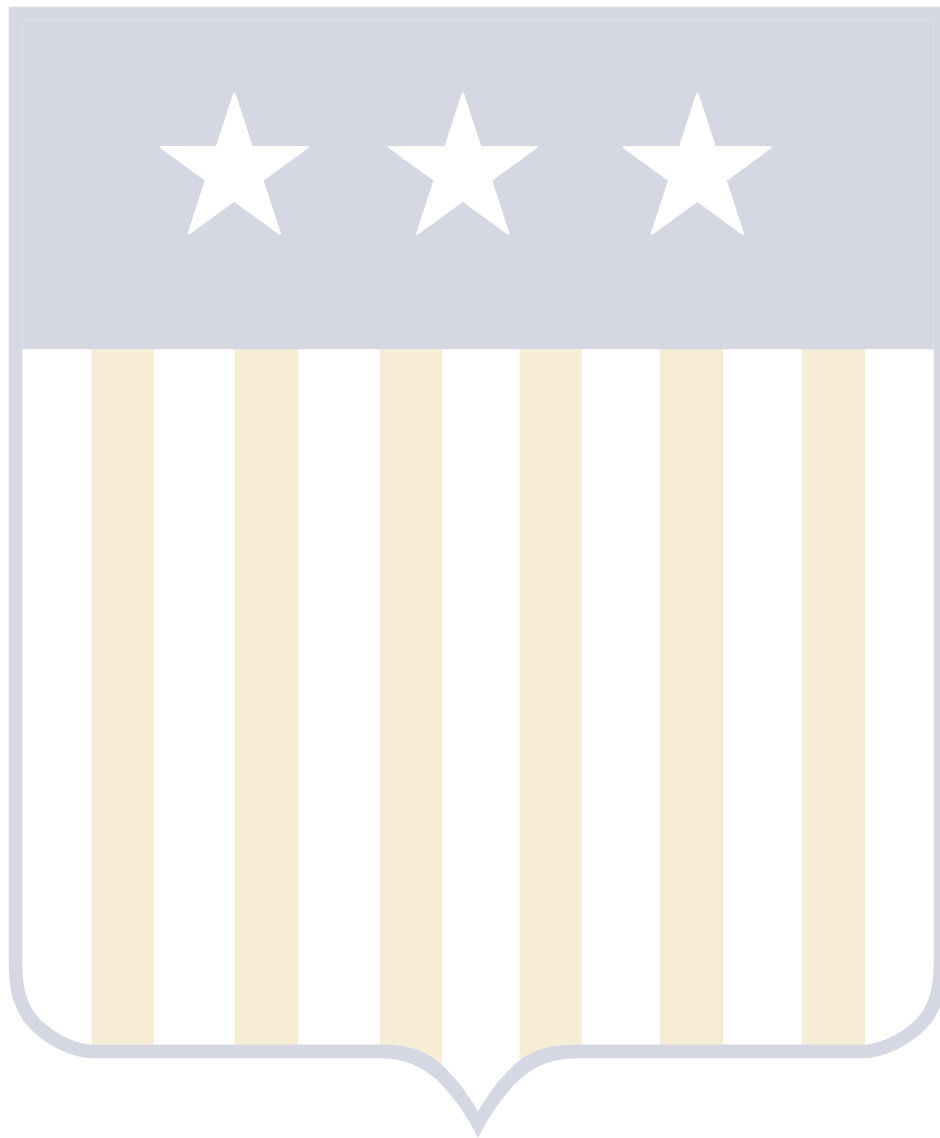
To accomplish our mission, the FCDI proudly partners with The Florida Debate Initiative (FDI). The FDI is a nonprofit educational organization committed to expanding access to competitive speech and debate in schools across Florida. Its mission is to empower emerging student leaders with essential communication, critical thinking and leadership skills through high-quality civics, speech and debate programming. In alignment with and in support of the Florida Civics and Debate Initiative (FCDI), FDI contributes both financial resources and programmatic support to help advance FCDI's statewide goals of increasing civic literacy, amplifying student voice and preparing the next generation of active, informed citizens.

As FCDI's educational support organization, FDI focuses on:

- ◆ educating and training coaches and students, training judges and volunteers;
- ◆ promoting educational competition opportunities; and
- ◆ leading training leadership development experiences and establishing competition standards.



GETTING STARTED



BUILDING A SPEECH AND DEBATE TEAM

Congratulations! As a new speech and debate coach you have embarked on what will undoubtedly be one of the most rewarding activities of your career. Building a speech and debate team is an exciting adventure and, with the support of FCDI, it does not have to be intimidating. The FCDI is committed to making it as easy as possible for you to get a successful program started and growing. Each team is different, but most successful programs follow the same general steps.

THE ROAD TO SUCCESS

The biggest hurdle for speech and debate coaches is the amount of information and the learning curve. However, you don't have to know everything about speech and debate to be successful! Knowledge will come over time, and as you work toward mastery, you can set reasonable goals for yourself and your team.

Our most successful coaches have followed these steps:

1. CREATING TEAM GOALS

Setting goals is an effective way to guide your team's growth and maintain focus throughout the year. Goals may be personal, team-based or both, and should be appropriately ambitious while remaining achievable. Consider creating a classroom poster or whiteboard where students can help establish and track team goals together. We encourage every coach to set annual goals that provide direction and purpose for the season.

2. CREATING YOUR TEAM TOURNAMENT CALENDAR

Which tournaments do you plan to attend? Visit the FCDI tournament calendar on <https://www.civicsanddebate.com/calendar>

3. CONSIDER FINANCES

Another important consideration is whether your team will incur expenses to attend any tournaments. While it is possible to attend a local or online tournament at no or little cost, common tournament expenses include:

◆ TEAM TRANSPORTATION

Plan how your team will travel to and from each tournament. There are many different options, and you may opt for different transportation at different tournaments:

- Carpool or parent volunteers driving personal vehicles (make sure to check your district's policies)
- Rental cars (some districts/schools have agreements and discounts with rental companies)
- District buses (be sure you are familiar with what bus companies you may use and their policies)

Your school administrators, bookkeeper and athletic director may be good resources for determining the best way to arrange transportation at your school.

◆ STUDENT AND/OR JUDGE MEALS

Lunch for students may be available for purchase at FCDI tournaments. Judges are typically provided with breakfast and lunch at no cost. Consult the SpeechWire general information page for each tournament and any information provided prior to a tournament for tournament-specific details.

◆ LODGING

If a tournament is multi-day or a long distance, you may want to consider arranging lodging for the team.

◆ MEMBERSHIP DUES

Starting in the 2026-2027 school year, the FCDI no longer requires membership dues to join. However, it is common for other speech and debate leagues to charge an annual membership fee to compete in their tournaments and/or access their resources.



Pro Tip: FCDI offers free resources on our website!

◆ REGISTRATION FEES

Starting in the 2026-2027 school year, the FCDI no longer charges registration fees to compete at FCDI tournaments for in-state teams or a fee to register with the FCDI for all teams.

- When developing a budget, consider that most other speech and debate tournaments require a fee to register.
- While competing in FCDI is free for in-state teams, FCDI charges fees for drops/withdrawals (see [Fees](#)).

Accessibility to speech and debate competition lies at the core of the FCDI's mission. Competition in FCDI tournaments is free for all in-state students. All in-state schools will have the opportunity to apply for financial assistance at the beginning of the school year. These funds will help offset the cost of attending FCDI tournaments and any other league membership dues.

SET UP AN ACCOUNT FOR YOUR TEAM

We recommend teams request that their school set up an account for their speech and debate team similar to a sports team. A solid relationship with your school bookkeeper is recommended. This will be a primary point of contact for you as you add and withdraw funds from your team account. It is essential to familiarize yourself with district policies and requirements as you add and remove money from the account.

TEAM FEES

If you are able, you can charge a team fee to your participating students to help cover costs. You could provide them with things like team shirts or a meal at the end of the year as team membership perks.

FUNDRAISING

Know your district/school policies. Soliciting donations from local businesses or hosting fundraising events can be successful. Hosting an FCDI tournament can be an effective means of raising funds for your team. Please reach out to FCDI@fldoe.org if you are interested in hosting a tournament at your school.

RESOURCES

There is a lot of important information to communicate to students, judges, parents, schools and others about speech and debate. **This handbook** is designed as your number one resource. Please make sure to use the many other free resources available to teams.

◆ Civicsanddebate.com

◆ Floridadebate.org

◆ NewsLit.org

The Florida Civics and Debate Initiative is a partner of the News Literacy Project (NLP). NLP advances the development and teaching of news literacy in K-12 education and offers many free resources and newsletters to help keep you informed. The NLP is a great resource for speech and debate coaches and students with lesson plans, newsletters, a virtual classroom and other great resources on news literacy, research, credibility, AI, misinformation and ways to best navigate the digital age of information.

Coaches are encouraged to subscribe to the NLP's The Sift® weekly newsletter:

NLP's The Sift®

The news and information world is changing fast. In just a few minutes, The Sift will catch you up on the week's biggest news literacy stories and give you ready-to-use tools to turn them into powerful lessons.

The Sift comes to your inbox every Monday during the school year. It covers the latest topics in news literacy — including social media, AI, journalism, misinformation and press freedom. Each issue is packed with classroom resources like guides, quizzes, slides, discussion questions and teaching tips.

It's made to save you time and help your students think more clearly and critically about what they read and watch online.

Visit <https://newsLit.org/subscribe/>

COMMUNICATION

You will need to frequently communicate with your team and the parents of the students on your team. It is important to find the easiest mode of communication. Utilize your school's existing learning management system (LMS) (Canvas, Schoology, Google Classroom, Blackboard, etc.). Post and send information regularly and communicate using the same platform parents and students are already used to using. You will want to foster relationships with your parents, as they will be valuable assets for your team throughout the year. Many teams depend on parent volunteers to help plan travel, organize team activities and attend tournaments. Most importantly, you will need to supply judges to cover all of your student entries – parents are one of the most commonly recruited groups to judge.



Pro Tip: If you are struggling to find judge(s) for tournaments, you may consider requiring that each student recruit one judge a semester (or month, year, quarter, etc. – whichever interval works best for your team’s specific needs) to compete. This could be a parent/guardian, grandparent, older sibling, aunt/uncle, favorite teacher, neighbor or a business or community leader.

TEAM CULTURE

Speech and debate is an academic exercise. By participating, students are gaining valuable skills that will help them throughout the rest of their lives. Competition is just a fun outlet for this activity - the true value of speech and debate is building the confidence and critical thinking skills necessary for good citizenship. You will need to encourage students to focus on the value of speech and debate as their number one priority, as there will inevitably be disappointing competitive results that distract from the true purpose of speech and debate.

Another critical but often overlooked aspect of team culture is mentorship and camaraderie between students. You will find that the time you have during class or practice outside of class is probably not enough for you to thoroughly coach each student in their competitive event. Encourage your more experienced varsity competitors to coach younger students during team practice sessions (or otherwise under appropriate supervision). The benefits of this are multi-fold: your younger students get the face time and feedback they need to improve, the varsity students build mastery as they teach others, students hold each other accountable for completing prep on time and you do not have to stretch yourself too thin.

Feel free to establish leadership roles within your team to help facilitate these relationships.

- ◆ Hold elections or select an executive board of students. Depending on the specific needs of the team, you may want any of the following student leadership roles:
 - President
 - Vice President
 - Treasurer
 - Secretary
 - Historian and/or Reporter
- ◆ Select “team captains” for speech, debate and Congressional Debate (or for each event – the structure is up to you!)
- ◆ Student committees (i.e. end of year banquet committee, fundraiser committee, debate prep committee, etc.)
- ◆ Combination of any of the above (recommended – the more structured a team is, the more successful)



Pro Tip: An executive board can help with other aspects of a speech and debate team – a historian or reporter can help maintain the team’s social media accounts, design a team shirt or draft a monthly team newsletter, a treasurer can research and plan fundraisers, a Vice President can coordinate team practices and student mentorships, a President can create committees of students to tackle specific team needs, etc. Remember - as much as your students learn from you, students can also make meaningful contributions to the team. With a goal and clearly defined guidelines, student leaders can have a transformative effect on a program.

CITIZENSHIP

The greatest benefit of speech and debate is learning to engage thoughtfully and respectfully with differing viewpoints. Respect in the debate community is everything. All programs should value education, personal growth and resiliency over competitive success. They know that when you focus on skills and leadership development, competitive success follows.

- ◆ Be aware that your students' behavior is a reflection on you as a coach, your team overall and your school. Teach and model positive, sportsmanlike behavior and communication.
- ◆ Offer "debrief" sessions during the week after a tournament. Set the expectation to wait to express complaints until then.

COACH RESPONSIBILITY

Ultimately, team culture starts with you, the coach. You must set a good example of leadership for your students to receive value from this activity. It is essential that you engage with your students with respect to foster growth.

Below are some of the key responsibilities of a speech and debate coach. A more compressive list can be found in [Coaching](#).

Deadlines: All deadlines are firm – no extensions will be granted. Please make sure to monitor your inbox and spam folder for emails from FCDI@fldoe.org and FCDI staff. Tournament registration deadlines will be posted on SpeechWire.

★ **Pro Tip:** Mark 48 hours before the registration deadline for each tournament on your calendar at the beginning of the year.

Speech Content: As the coach, you are responsible for the content of your team's speeches. It is essential that parents are aware of and approve of their students' speech and that you approve. Content in your students' speeches reflects on you as a coach, your team and your school. Please see Prohibited Content guidelines in [Tournament Rules](#).

Adherence to Rules: Coaches are responsible for ensuring students, judges and parents understand all tournament and event rules correctly as described by this handbook. It is imperative that every student and judge read the handbook.

- ◆ FCDI does NOT utilize NSDA rules or the rules of any other speech and debate league. The rules governing FCDI tournaments are contained in this handbook.
- ◆ Should uncertainty about FCDI rules arise, the appropriate response is to engage tournament staff. It is never appropriate to reference the rules of other leagues for an FCDI tournament.

CELEBRATING

Whether or not your team finds competitive rewards, your team is still successful and deserving of celebration. Participating in speech and debate is not easy, and it's important to ensure students' efforts and growth are acknowledged and celebrated throughout the school year.

You can plan small events during the year to celebrate any milestones that your team or a student achieves or plan a big event at the end of the year. If your team does find competitive success, you can share your team's success with your school and community. You can publish tournament results, display pictures on social media and reach out to local newspapers to see if they would be interested in featuring your successful students. You can also display trophies or medals in the classroom for a period before students take them home.

★ **Pro Tip:** Tag us in your social media posts and we may spotlight your post! Use @civicsanddebate on Instagram, X and Facebook.

RECRUITMENT

Many teams start small and grow larger through a natural process. Students' success and accomplishment in debate competition can become contagious. New students are motivated to join the team as they see speech and debate team students improve their communication skills, become more confident and enjoy their competition experience and success.

Common recruitment techniques include:

- ◆ Team identity (e.g., t-shirts, buttons, stickers).
- ◆ Adding team information to the school website.
- ◆ Distributing digital and hard copies of recruitment flyers.
- ◆ Participating in club rush or back to school nights.
- ◆ Taking recommendations from other teachers, coaches and counselors.
- ◆ Informal scrimmages.
- ◆ Starting a speech and/or debate elective class at your school.

BRIGHT FUTURES HOURS

Students may earn Bright Futures hours by participating in speech and debate tournaments as a competitor, volunteer or student judge.

- ◆ Coaches are responsible for verifying tournament hours and signing off on the required form(s).
- ◆ Students will only receive hours for time spent during round (1 round = 1 hour) either as a competitor or student judge. Non-judging student volunteers receive one hour for every hour of service rendered at a tournament.
- ◆ If a student does not have a coach, hours may be verified by contacting info@floridadebate.org.

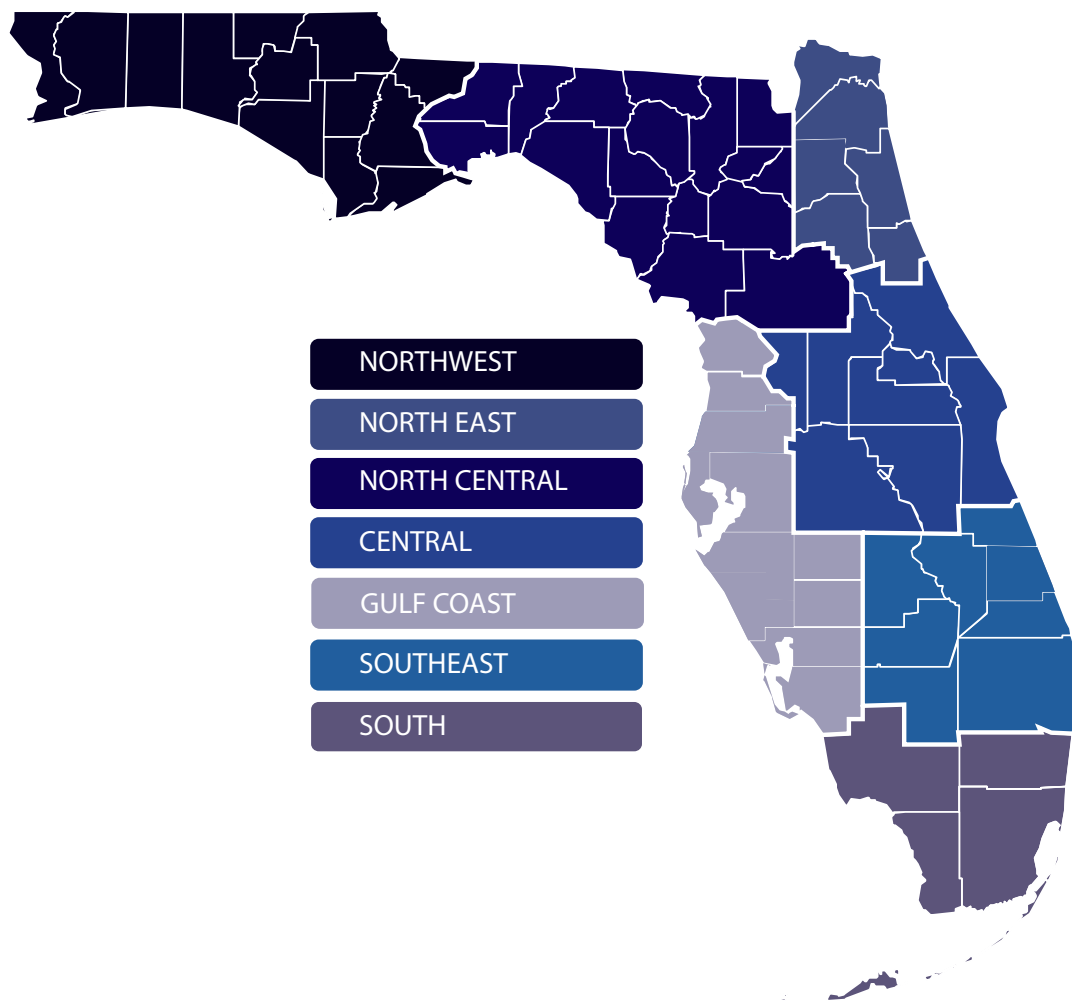


CONTACT FCDI

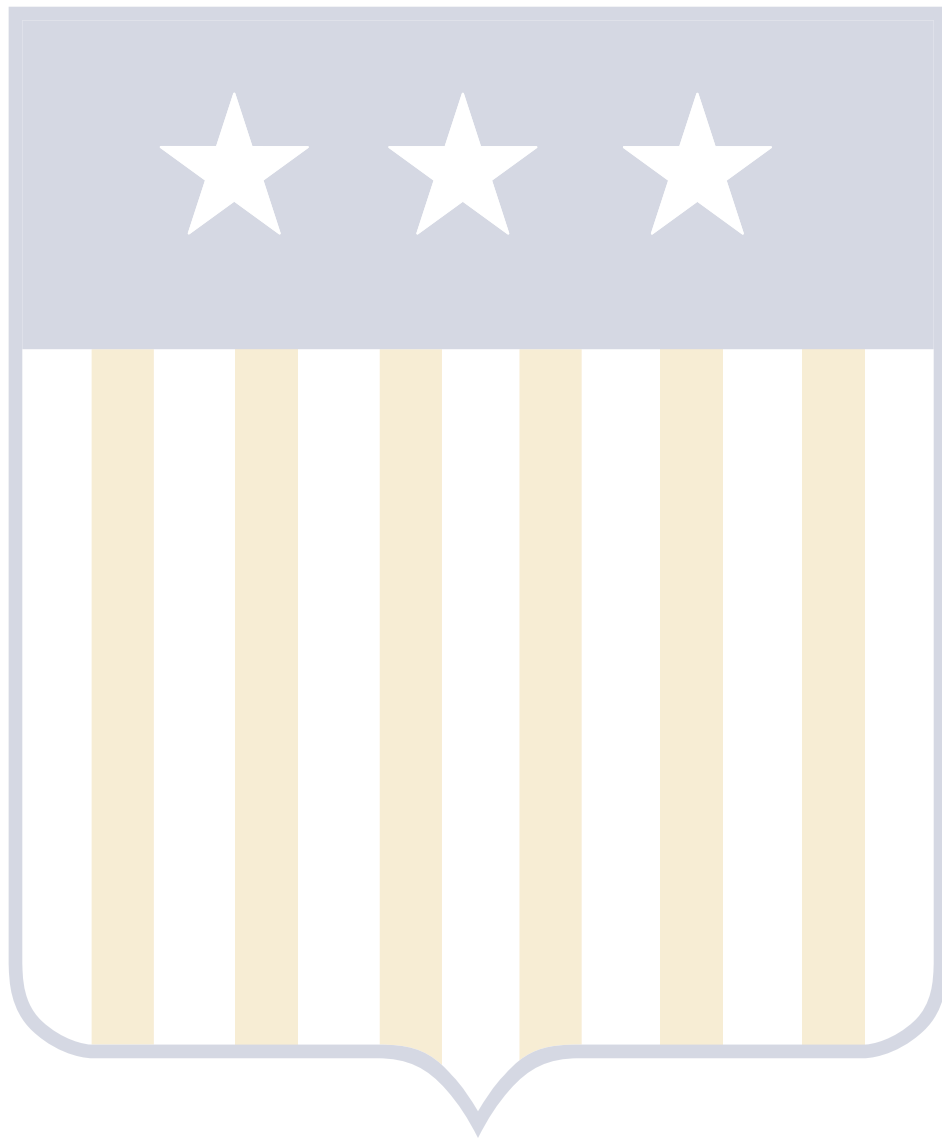
FCDI staff are committed to ensuring every coach has the support needed to succeed. Whether you're starting a team for the first time or you're a seasoned coach, please don't hesitate to reach out to FCDI staff for assistance at any time. Reach us at FCDI@fldoe.org.

Coaches should identify which FCDI region they are located in based on the district of their school. For independent/non-school teams, region is based on the address provided at registration.

While any team can compete in any region regardless of geography, knowing your region is important for connecting with regional support staff, such as tournament coordinators or directors.



FCDI MEMBERSHIP



FCDI MEMBERSHIP

TEAM REGISTRATION

At the beginning of each school year, the FCDI opens team registration. Team registration is required to compete in all FCDI tournaments, including the National Civics and Debate Championship (NCDC). FCDI membership and registration is free and open to all teams. Independent/non-school and out of state teams may register. During the initial registration period, coaches of in-state teams may apply for need-based funding to support their speech and debate team.

2026-2027 FCDI Team Registration can be found on our website:

<https://www.civicsanddebate.com>

The initial deadline for FCDI registration is October 2, 2026. Coaches of in-state teams must register their team by the initial registration deadline to be considered for financial assistance. Registration for the 2026-2027 school year will continue on a rolling basis until April 1, 2027.

It is important to carefully read all instructions below and on the registration page.

1. Team Registration: Provide basic information about your team.

- **2026-2027 Team Names:** Beginning this year, all team names must follow the naming convention below:

Traditional/School teams: use the official name of the school (no abbreviations) as the team name. Coaches will enter the name of their school as their team name at registration.

- Independent/non-school teams: Follow the naming convention "Student Last Name Independent" (for example, Lindsay Independent). Teams with multiple students should use "City or County Independent" (for example, Orange Independent). Please email Kendall.Lindsay@fldoe.org to confirm your team name before registering.
- The team name in SpeechWire will be automatically updated to the team name entered at registration (no action required).*

2. Coach Registration: Name an official head coach and assistant coach of record. At least one coach of record must be present at all FCDI tournaments the team participates in (see [Tournament Rules](#) section for more details). You may return to registration to update coaches as needed.

3. Student Roster: Coaches must enter each student competing in FCDI tournaments.

- All students must be fully entered into the student roster by the tournament registration deadline specified in SpeechWire for the first FCDI tournament they compete in during 2026-2027.
- Each student's name entered into the roster must match the student's name in SpeechWire registration.
- Coaches must upload a completed code of conduct and media release form and script (if applicable) for all students.

- You may return to add students or upload new scripts at any time.
- Students may only be entered into the student roster of one team.

**This will change the team name on your team account in SpeechWire.*

OPTIONAL STEPS

1. Apply for Financial Assistance [In-State Teams Only]: In-state teams demonstrating financial need may apply to receive a Team Support Stipend. Applications are due by the initial registration deadline of October 2, 2026. Teams must have a valid Florida address submitted through registration to be considered for the team stipend.

2. Direct Judges to the Judge Resource Page: This page contains important resources and a sign-up form for judges to receive an invitation to the 2026-2027 Speech and Debate Judge Training Course offered by the Florida Debate Initiative.

IMPORTANT GUIDELINES

Middle/High School Teams: A team unit and team name must reflect the official school. For example, if a school is K-12, the coach should only register one school for students of all grade levels using the school's official name. Both types of students, middle and high school, will then be entered into the school's roster.

- ◆ Teams may not receive more than one team stipend, but the size of the team and any additional expenses may be considered.

Coaches with Multiple Teams: Coaches with two teams will receive two coach stipend agreements and must provide a distinct email for each team.

- ◆ In order to receive a coach stipend for more than one team, both teams must have different practice/meeting sessions, expenses, SpeechWire accounts and independently satisfy the student roster requirements.

STIPENDS

COACH STIPENDS

Through FCDI's partner organization, the Florida Debate Initiative (FDI), new and v speech and debate coaches are eligible to receive a stipend. The FDI Coach Stipend Program recognizes and supports the time, commitment and leadership that coaches invest in building high-quality speech and debate programs across Florida. Stipends are intended to encourage active participation in the Florida Civics and Debate Initiative while promoting consistent engagement, professionalism and

NEW COACH	\$600 <i>Two eligible tournaments, at least one in person and one after winter break.</i>
RETURNING COACH	\$1,300 <i>Three eligible tournaments, at least one in person.</i> \$2,000 <i>Four or more eligible FCDI tournaments, at least two in person.</i>

COACH STIPEND GUIDELINES

- ◆ **Eligible Tournaments:** Only the following events count toward coach stipend eligibility:
 - FCDI Regional Qualifier Tournaments
 - FCDI Online Qualifier Tournaments
 - FCDI State Championship
 - FDI American Dream Tournaments (a maximum of one American Dream Tournament may count towards the coach stipend)
- ◆ The following do not count toward stipend:
 - National Civics Debate Championship (NCDC)
 - Funvitationals
 - Scrimmages
 - Practice tournaments
 - Non-FCDI/FDI tournaments
- ◆ **Attendance Requirements**
 - To receive credit toward a coach stipend, a coach must be physically present at each eligible tournament for the tournament to count. For online tournaments, the coach must be logged into Zoom and present in one of the Zoom rooms. Coach attendance is tracked and verified by the FDI/FCDI.
 - Only one coach per team may receive stipend credit for any individual FCDI tournament.
- ◆ **Coach Registration & Eligibility Requirements:** As a condition of receiving a coach stipend, coaches must:
 - Comply with all FCDI and tournament rules, policies and procedures.
 - Maintain accurate, complete and current FCDI coach, team and student registrations

- Ensure all team information remains accurate and up to date.
- Read and respond promptly to communications from the FDI and FCDI throughout the year, including periods when school is not in session.
 - While every effort will be made to minimize communications during school breaks, coaches are expected to remain reasonably available and responsive to ensure the smooth operation of league and tournament activities.
- Successfully complete the 2026-2027 Judge Training Course with a 100% on the mastery quiz.
- Provide a non-school email address during registration that will be used for year-round league communications.
- Remain in good standing with the FDI and the FCDI throughout the season, including compliance with all league policies, timely completion of required registrations and reporting, fulfillment of judging obligations, adherence to tournament rules and maintaining a professional standard of conduct consistent with the mission and values of the FDI and FCDI.
- The new coach stipend is available only to coaches new to FCDI (have never participated in an FCDI tournament). New coaches may receive the returning coach stipend if eligible (contingent upon the satisfaction of the returning coach stipend requirements).

◆ **Compliance and Penalties**

- Coach stipends are contingent upon maintaining good standing with the league.
- The Florida Debate Initiative reserves the right to reduce, deny or revoke a coach stipend if a coach or team demonstrates repeated or significant noncompliance, including but not limited to:
 - Repeated violations of tournament or league rules.
 - Failure to fulfill required judge obligations.
 - A recurring pattern of noncompliance by students, judges, parents or other team-affiliated participants.
 - Failure to maintain required registrations.
 - Failure to respond to league communications in a timely manner.
 - Failure to comply with FDI/FCDI policies or administrative requirements.
- Any reduction, denial, or revocation of a coach stipend shall be determined by the FDI, in consultation with the leadership of the FCDI, when appropriate.

◆ **Co-Coaches**

- Each team is eligible for one coach stipend.
- The stipend may be divided between the Head Coach of Record and the Assistant Coach of Record, provided that:
 - Both coaches are listed on the team's official FCDI registration.
 - Both coaches are listed on the team's SpeechWire account.
 - Both coaches independently qualify for the stipend by attending different eligible FCDI tournaments.
- Only one coach per team may receive stipend credit for any individual tournament.

- The Florida Debate Initiative is notified of the intent to split the stipend no later than April 1, 2027, by emailing dfechtel@floridadebate.org.
- Requests submitted after April 1, 2027, will not be considered.
- ◆ **Coaching Multiple Schools:** A coach may earn stipends for multiple teams only when:
 - Each team represents a different and distinct school.
 - The coach maintains separate SpeechWire accounts for each team.
 - Each team practices independently (day, time, location).
 - Each team independently satisfies all eligibility requirements.
- ◆ **Funding:** Coach stipends are subject to the availability of funding and annual appropriations. The Florida Debate Initiative reserves the right to modify stipend amounts, eligibility requirements or program guidelines in future seasons based on available funding, participation levels, legislative appropriations or organizational needs.
- ◆ **Policy Interpretation:** The Florida Debate Initiative and the Florida Civics and Debate Initiative reserve the right to interpret, modify or make exceptions to these guidelines when necessary to preserve the integrity, fairness and effective administration of the Coach Stipend Program. Decisions regarding coach eligibility, tournament credit, stipend awards and policy interpretation are final.

TEAM STIPEND

The FCDI offers a Team Support Stipend for in-state teams demonstrating financial need during team registration before the initial registration deadline.

- ◆ Existing teams must register and enter at least six students into the student roster during initial registration to be eligible for the Team Support Stipend.
 - Existing teams are defined as teams that registered with FCDI in 2025-2026 and competed at least once.
- ◆ New teams must register and enter at least three students into the student roster during initial registration to be eligible for the Team Support Stipend.
- ◆ Teams must be affiliated with a school to receive team stipend funding.
- ◆ The head coach of a team granted funding must complete an agreement to receive the funds within the stipulated deadline. Late agreements will not be accepted.
- ◆ All funds must be used to cover the cost of attending FCDI/FDI tournaments (i.e. travel, lodging, meals, etc.), FCDI/FDI events or speech and debate league membership dues.
- ◆ Funds will be sent to teams via check. An official coach of record must deposit the check within one week of receipt. Coaches are responsible for following up if the check is not received at least four weeks after submitting the agreement.
- ◆ Teams must compete in at least one FCDI/FDI tournament to be eligible to receive future funding. Teams that do not compete may be asked to return the funds.
- ◆ Teams may roll unused funds over to future school years.
- ◆ Funding decisions are final and applications will not be reconsidered. Late applications or inquiries will not be considered.

FCDI TOURNAMENTS



FCDI TOURNAMENTS

TOURNAMENTS OVERVIEW

The FCDI hosts speech and debate tournaments open to all teams state and nationwide. These tournaments take place in many different locations across Florida. The FCDI tournament calendar for each school year will be posted at civicsanddebate.com.

DIVISIONS AND EVENTS

The FCDI offers several speech, debate and civics events:

◆ Debate

- Public Forum Debate
- Lincoln-Douglas Debate
- Ronald Reagan Presidential Debate
- Extemporaneous Debate

◆ Congressional Debate

◆ Speech

- Prepared Speech
 - Original Oratory
 - Informative Speaking
 - Oral Interpretation
- Impromptu Speech
 - Extemporaneous Speaking
 - Impromptu Speaking

◆ We The People: A Citizen Showdown

The FCDI offers two divisions at every tournament: Middle and High school.

◆ **Middle School:** Grades 5-8. If a student does not have a grade level (i.e. homeschool) students turning 10 on or before September 1, 2026 will be considered middle school.

◆ **High School:** Grades 9-12. If a student does not have a grade level, students turning 14 on or before September 1, 2026 will be considered high school.

A novice division for students new to speech and debate may be offered at the first online and regional qualifier tournaments. No qualifications to the State Championship will be given in the novice division.

- Only high school students who have never competed in a speech and debate tournament (FCDI or otherwise) before the 2026-2027 school year are considered novices.
- See the general information page on SpeechWire for tournament specific details.

★ **Pro Tip:** The Florida Debate Initiative (FDI) offers an elementary level debate program for students in grades 3-5. Read about the Super Speakers program here: www.floridadebate.org/super-speakers

TYPES OF TOURNAMENTS

The FCDI offers four types of tournaments:

- ◆ **Regional Qualifiers:** Four in-person tournaments held in each region (28 tournaments across 7 regions total). Students may qualify for the State Championship from these tournaments.
- ◆ **Online Qualifiers:** Four online qualifiers held between teams statewide. Students may qualify for the State Championship from these tournaments.
- ◆ **National Civics and Debate Championship (NCDC):** An annual nationwide competition wherein all students apply to compete in the same three speech and debate events.
- ◆ **State Championship:** Students qualifying through regional and online qualifiers advance to the State Championship, where they face the top competitors in their respective events.

WHAT TO EXPECT AT AN IN-PERSON REGIONAL TOURNAMENT

A speech and debate tournament is a day or multi-day academic competition where students compete in multiple rounds in a particular competitive event against students from other schools. A typical speech and debate tournament starts with check-in and a brief judge training review, then students are assigned to competition rooms and paired with judges and opponents.

During each round, students present speeches, arguments and rebuttals according to the rules of their event. A trained judge observes the debate, evaluates each competitor's performance and completes a ballot with rankings, scores and feedback.

Between rounds, students and judges gather in their respective lounges while tournament staff prepare the next set of pairings. Most tournaments consist of four or more rounds, and students will compete in the same event for the duration of the tournament (except NCDC).

At the conclusion of the tournament, results are tabulated and awards are presented. While awards are a great way to recognize student achievement, it's important to recognize that the true reward of this activity is strengthening public speaking, critical thinking, research and argumentation skills. Competition is simply an avenue to demonstrate and sharpen these skills.

Always refer to the SpeechWire general information page ([SpeechWire.com](https://www.speechwire.com) > Calendar & registration > Click on your tournament) before each tournament for important information (schedule, topics/legislation, announcements, etc.). All coaches, judges, competitors and others should fully review the handbook before participating in an FCDI tournament.

REGISTRATION AND DEADLINES

The FCDI uses SpeechWire Tournament Services to host tournaments. The dates and locations of FCDI tournaments are posted on SpeechWire and the FCDI website.

Starting in 2026-2027, teams must register for free at www.civicsanddebate.com to participate in FCDI tournaments, including the National Civics and Debate Championship.

The following timeline can be expected for regional and online qualifier tournaments:

- ◆ **2 months before a tournament:** Student-submitted legislation is due to FCDI@fldoe.org (see [Tournament Rules](#) for more information).
- ◆ **1 month before a tournament:** Registration for regional and online tournaments will open on SpeechWire. This is also a good time to create a team account in SpeechWire, connect student and judge SpeechWire accounts and register with FCDI if this is the team's first time competing this year.
 - ★ **Pro Tip:** See instructions for creating an account and registering for tournaments in SpeechWire at the end of this handbook.
- ◆ **At least ten days before a tournament:** Topic areas and legislation will be posted to SpeechWire and the FCDI website.
- ◆ **One week before a tournament:**
 - Tournament registration on SpeechWire will close at midnight on Friday the week before the tournament (i.e. if a tournament is on March 7, registration will close at midnight on February 27).
 - FCDI team registration and student roster for all students competing are due at the same time as SpeechWire registration for a tournament. Any changes to the coach of record and proxy coach letters are also due.
 - Judges must also be entered by the SpeechWire tournament registration deadline (you may make edits to judges as necessary after the deadline, but you must fulfill the judge obligation by the deadline).
 - Any drops (withdrawals) made after the registration deadline will result in a \$25.00 fine per drop ([See Fees](#)).

No exceptions will be made to deadlines. It is the responsibility of the coach to comply with all participation requirements and promptly communicate with FCDI staff when necessary.

TOURNAMENT RULES

Participating in speech and debate tournaments requires adherence to certain rules and guidelines to ensure fairness, professionalism and effective communication. FCDI/FDI staff may use their discretion to modify the rules as needed to maintain fairness and integrity. Here are some general rules followed in FCDI speech and debate tournaments:

GENERAL RULES

- ◆ All participants must be fully registered to participate.
 - Students must be registered in SpeechWire and entered into the student roster.
 - Judges must be registered in SpeechWire and complete the online judge course.
 - Coaches and teams must be registered on the FCDI website and letters for proxy coaches submitted by the registration deadline.
- ◆ All participants and attendees must adhere to the rules and policies stipulated in this handbook, including the code of conduct.
- ◆ FCDI tournaments adhere only to FCDI rules as described by this handbook. Contact tournament staff if any questions arise.
- ◆ Tournaments will adhere to the published schedule unless otherwise specified or announced. All participants are responsible for listening to tournament announcements and monitoring SpeechWire for updates.
- ◆ Competitors may not receive coaching, assistance, notes or any other communication from coaches, teammates (excluding PF partners), parents, spectators or anyone else while in a round.
- ◆ No student may enter a competition room before the judge enters. If a judge is missing from a round, tournament staff should be notified immediately.
- ◆ No person shall disrupt a round or distract competitors or judges.
- ◆ No person should enter or exit a competition room while a competitor is speaking.
- ◆ No student may be double entered (entered in more than one event except at NCDC).
- ◆ Costumes and props are not permitted. Manipulating clothing or objects as a part of the performance is not permitted.
 - Informative Speaking competitors may use visual aids.
 - The binder used in Oral Interpretation is an exception to this rule.
- ◆ All performances must only include the student(s) entered to compete. Competitors may not include other people or live animals in their performance. Service animals are permitted.
- ◆ Only a competitor's feet may touch the floor.
- ◆ Participants may not distribute flyers, food, gifts, promotional material or any items to competitors, judges or any other participants.
- ◆ All students must compete in the appropriate division (no "playing up").
- ◆ Students may compete in different regions but may not compete in more than one of the same regional tournaments, even if held on different days (i.e. a student may not compete in both FCDI #3 Northeast and FCDI #3 Central but may compete in FCDI #3 Northeast and FCDI #4 Central).

- ◆ Coaches must follow the standard procedure for reporting alleged rule violations (protests) and ethics complaints (see [Protests and Ethics Complaints](#)). The decision of the Appeals Committee is final.
- ◆ No person should request a room be cleared for competition.
- ◆ All local, state and federal laws must be adhered to. Any student found vandalizing, stealing or trespassing will be disqualified. If multiple members of a team are found vandalizing, stealing or trespassing, the entire team may be disqualified.

CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATION

Any competitor found in violation of a tournament or event rule may be subject to one or more consequences, depending on the nature and severity of the violation.

Consequences may include a warning, loss or forfeit of a round, rank or score reduction, disqualification from an event or the tournament, ineligibility for awards, referral to a coach or parent/guardian, suspension from future FCDI events or any other penalty deemed appropriate by tournament staff and/or the Appeals Committee (see [Protests and Ethics Complaints](#)).

Coaches, judges, observers and other attendees found in violation of tournament rules, policies or code of conduct may be subject to a warning, removal from a round, removal from the event, disqualification from tournament participation, ineligibility for future FCDI events, referral to a school or organization or other penalty as determined by tournament staff and/or the Appeals Committee (see [Protests and Ethics Complaints](#)).

SPEECH AND DEBATE TOPICS

Topics and resolutions may be announced prior to the tournament or just before the round or speech depending on the competitive event.

Resolutions, topic areas and legislation will be published on the FCDI website and the SpeechWire general information page no later than ten days prior to a tournament.

- ◆ Public Forum, Lincoln-Douglas and Ronald Reagan Presidential Debate resolutions will be released on a bi-monthly basis (one topic every two months). The topics used at each tournament will depend on the month (i.e. an FCDI #1 held in October will use the September-October topic).
- ◆ Legislation for Congressional Debate will be published on a per tournament basis (one packet per tournament, i.e. FCDI #1).
- ◆ Topic areas for each round of Impromptu Speaking and Extemporaneous Speaking will be published on a per tournament basis (one set of topic areas per tournament, i.e. FCDI #1).

SCORING AND RANKING

Scores and rankings from judges determine the results and placements within each event. Judge scores, rankings and decisions are final. See [Tiebreaking](#) for more details.

EVENT	TYPE OF SCORING
Debate (Public Forum, Lincoln-Douglas, Ronald Reagan Presidential Debate and Extemporaneous Debate)	The judge determines the winner of the round and assigns speaker points to each student. Win/loss record is used to determine final placements and/or advancement. Speaker points are used in tiebreaks.
Congressional Debate	Judges assign ranks to students (1 = best) and score individual speeches. Ranks determine final placements and/or advancement.
Speech (Oratorical Interpretation, Original Oratory, Informative Speaking and Impromptu Speaking)	Judges assign ranks to students (1 = best) and score each student's speech. Scores may be used in tiebreaks.
We The People	A score is calculated using the number of questions correct and incorrect. Score determines final placements and/or advancement.

JUDGING CRITERIA

Judges evaluate participants based on predetermined criteria, which may include clarity, organization, persuasion, evidence, refutation and adherence to time limits. Participants should understand these criteria and tailor their performances accordingly. All scores, ranks and decisions should be submitted by judges within 5 minutes of the conclusion of the round. Comments and "Reasons for Decisions" should be entered by the judge by 11:59pm local time on the day of the event.

★ **Pro Tip:** Many judges will input decisions, scores and ranks in the ballot immediately once the round concludes and finish comments later or after the tournament.

TIME LIMITS

Each competitive event has specific time limits for speeches, rebuttals and cross-examinations. Participants must strictly adhere to the time limits to avoid penalties (see [Event Rules](#)). Judges should keep and record the time for each speech or period of cross examination. The time recorded by the judge is the official time.

PHONES AND DEVICES

Appropriate use of cell phones, laptops and other electronic devices is very important in speech and debate. Certain competitive events permit the use of electronic devices during competition, while others do not. It is crucial that all participants are aware of the rules, particularly when it is and is not appropriate to use a device and how devices are permitted to be used. Appropriate use of devices depends on the participant's role and event:

◆ Cell phones and electronic devices:

- Must be silenced during rounds.
- May not be used by competitors during rounds of prepared speech events, Ronald Reagan Presidential Debate, Impromptu or We the People.
(A handheld timer should be used instead of a phone or computer.)
- May be used during prep for Extemporaneous Speaking (EXT).
- May be used by competitors during debate rounds, including Congressional Debate.
- May only be used in accordance with event-specific rules (see [Event Rules](#)).

◆ **Judges and tournament staff:** Have the right to request that a student pause and display their tabs or screen at any time during a tournament.

◆ **Judges:** May use electronic devices during any round.

◆ **Observers:** May not use electronic devices during any round.

◆ **Generative AI is not permitted in preparation for or during any FCDI tournament.**

EVIDENCE AND CITATIONS

In speech and debate, competitors are often required to support information and arguments with evidence from credible sources. Proper citation of sources is essential to maintain academic integrity.

Judges, opponents and tournament organizers may request to view evidence at any time to confirm legitimacy.

PROHIBITED CONTENT

Profanity, explicit or suggestive sexual content and the promotion, glorification or graphic depiction of violence, self-harm, illegal activity or drug/alcohol use are strictly prohibited in all speech and debate materials and performances. Content deemed inappropriate, vulgar or otherwise inconsistent with the educational mission and standards of the tournament may also be prohibited at the discretion of tournament officials. Violations of this rule will result in point deductions and may result in disqualification from the tournament.

VIDEOS/PHOTOS

Photos and videos in competition rooms are **not permitted**. Anyone found in violation of this rule will be removed from the tournament.

Event photographers and tournament staff may enter competition rooms to take photos and videos. Official photographers and tournament staff may be identified with a staff badge or similar cue.

ETIQUETTE AND SPORTSMANSHIP

Participants are expected to demonstrate professionalism, respect and sportsmanship throughout the tournament. This includes respecting opponents, judges and tournament officials, as well as following the rules.

DRESS CODE

All participants at FCDI tournaments are subject to a dress code requiring professional attire (see [Dress Code](#)).

DECORUM

Before participating in the FCDI, competitors, observers, judges, coaches and parents/guardians must read and understand the code of conduct. To ensure that the value of speech and debate is maximized in our league, the FCDI requires that all attendees conduct themselves in an appropriate manner. The FCDI reserves the right to remove participants if the code of conduct is not adhered to.

COACH ATTENDANCE

All teams must have either the head coach or assistant coach of record (listed on FCDI team registration and in SpeechWire) present at every tournament the team participates in (in-person and online) for the duration of the tournament.

- The coaches of record may be updated at any time (effective for tournament attendance if submitted by the SpeechWire tournament registration deadline).
- If an FCDI registered coach cannot attend the tournament, coaches may designate a proxy coach on a per tournament basis. Coaches may submit a request for a proxy coach by providing a letter from the principal stating that the proxy coach is approved to supervise the students at a particular tournament to FCDI@fldoe.org. Letters requesting a proxy coach must include the name of the tournament, location, date and name of the proxy coach on official school letterhead due by the tournament registration deadline.

Any team found in violation of this rule will be asked to leave and the school will be notified.

MINIMUM ENTRIES

- ◆ Each competition grouping (an event and division, i.e. middle school Public Forum Debate) must have at least four entries by the tournament registration deadline to be offered at the tournament.
- ◆ Groupings of Congressional Debate must have at least eight entries to be offered.
- ◆ The middle and high school divisions cannot be combined, except in Congressional Debate. Tournament staff will notify coaches of any combined divisions in Congressional Debate.
- ◆ If there are not enough entries in the novice division during the first regional or online qualifiers, the novice division will be automatically combined with high school division (and no novice awards will be given).
- ◆ If there are not enough entries in a grouping to offer it at a tournament, coaches will be notified as soon as possible before the tournament, and the students will have the option to switch events.

TIEBREAKING

◆ Debate:

Placements at regional and online qualifiers are first determined by a competitor or team's win-loss record across all rounds. Advancements from the preliminary rounds at the State Championship are determined by the win-loss record from all preliminary rounds, and advancement to subsequent elimination rounds is determined by the win or loss in the preceding elimination round.

If there is a tie between competitors or teams, the following tie-breaking methods will be applied in the order listed below:

1. Highest adjusted speaker points (drop lowest speaker points)
2. Highest total speaker points
3. Head-to-Head

◆ Speech:

Placements at regional and online qualifiers are determined by a competitor's ranks across all rounds. Advancement from the preliminary rounds at the State Championship is determined by the ranks received from all preliminary rounds. Advancements to subsequent elimination rounds are determined only by the ranks received in the preceding elimination round.

If there is a tie between competitors, the following tie-breaking methods will be applied in the order listed below:

1. Highest reciprocal fraction of all ranks combined
2. Head-to-Head
3. Highest total speaker point
4. Lowest adjusted total ranks (drop highest and lowest ranks)

◆ Congressional Debate:

Placements at regional and online qualifiers are first determined by a competitor's ranks across all sessions. Advancements from the preliminary rounds at the State Championship are determined by the ranks received from all preliminary rounds. Advancement to subsequent elimination rounds uses only the ranks received in the preceding elimination round.

If there is a tie between competitors, the following tie-breaking methods will be applied in the order listed below:

1. Judge's preference (head-to-head)
2. Highest reciprocal fraction of all ranks combined
3. Lowest adjusted total ranks (drop highest and lowest ranks)
4. Highest total reciprocal fraction of adjusted total ranks

POWER MATCHING

Power matching occurs high-low within brackets. The following debate rounds at FCDI tournaments will be power-matched:

- ◆ Regional and online qualifiers: Round 3 and 4.
- ◆ State Championship: Preliminary rounds 3 and 4.
- ◆ National Civics and Debate Championship: Round 3 of Extemporaneous Debate.

PROTESTS & ETHICS COMPLAINTS

As in any competitive activity, situations may arise in speech and debate that warrant review by tournament officials. To ensure competitive integrity and fairness, the head coach of a team may report concerns through either a protest or an ethics complaint.

- ◆ A **protest** is a report of a violation of rules by an opponent or other participant.
Example: A student uses generative AI during a round to help write a rebuttal speech.
- ◆ An **ethics complaint** is a report of disruptive, bullying, unsportsmanlike or otherwise unethical behavior.
Example: A student makes an inappropriate joke about another student's appearance.

Participants, coaches, judges and observers are strongly encouraged to familiarize themselves with the process for reporting protests and ethics complaints:

- ◆ A team's head coach of record, or an approved proxy coach, must be notified and must report to the tournament tab room to initiate the protest and ethics complaint process as soon as possible.
- ◆ Protests concerning a round should be reported **immediately**.
 - If the head coach of record cannot be immediately reached to make the report, non-coach attendees should notify tournament staff about the incident in the meantime. The head coach must report to the tab room as soon as possible to complete the official procedure for submitting a protest.
 - It is important that protests and ethics complaints are brought to the attention of tournament staff in a timely manner. Delayed reports may limit the tournament staff's ability to investigate and resolve the issue.
- ★ **Reports made about the preceding round may not be actionable once the next round starts.**
- ◆ Judges who observe a violation during an assigned round should report the matter directly to tournament staff in the tab room and/or via the judge hotline as soon as possible.

Tournament staff take all protests and ethics complaints seriously. Once a protest or ethics complaint is submitted, an appeals committee consisting of at least three tournament coordinators, FCDI/FDI staff members and/or experienced coaches unaffiliated with the parties involved will be formed. The committee will conduct an investigation, review the relevant information, deliberate and issue a final decision regarding any action to be taken.

Before submitting a protest or ethics complaint, coaches should exercise thoughtful judgment. Because tournament staff are committed to carefully reviewing every submission, each review requires officials to step away from managing rounds and supporting students, coaches and judges. As a result, **this process is reserved for genuine rule violations or significant ethical concerns** rather than routine disagreements, strategic decisions or matters that do not materially affect the integrity, fairness or safety of the tournament.

FORFEIT

If a competitor/team is missing from a round, the judge should contact tournament staff immediately.

- ◆ **In a speech event**, a competitor who does not appear at the scheduled time to speak shall be ranked last.
- ◆ **In a debate event**, a competitor more than 10 minutes late shall forfeit the round. The Appeals Committee may waive these penalties for valid reasons.

If a student/team competes in the wrong contest section or room, against the wrong opponent or prepares the wrong side of the resolution, at no fault of their opponent or the tournament officials, that student/team will automatically receive a loss for the round.

AWARDS AND BIDS

Awards at regional and online qualifier tournaments will follow the scheme below based on the number of entries:

NUMBER OF ENTRIES	PLACES AWARDED
4-5	1ST PLACE
6-10	1ST AND 2ND PLACE
11-15	1ST, 2ND, 3RD PLACE
16-20	1ST, 2ND, 3RD, 4TH PLACE
21-25	1ST, 2ND, 3RD TROPHIES, 4TH, 5TH PLACE
26+	1ST, 2ND, 3RD TROPHIES, 4TH, 5TH, 6TH PLACE

A bid is awarded to any student placing at a regional or online qualifier tournament. Students must receive **at least two** bids in the same event to qualify to compete at the State Championship at the end of the year.

Additional Guidelines

- ◆ If there are multiple chambers of Congressional Debate, awards and bids will be given for each chamber separately. If Congressional Debate is combined, one award to the best middle schooler will be given, regardless of their overall placement. This award will count as a bid for the middle school division of the State Championship (but will not count as two bids if the student also placed overall).
- ◆ If at the first qualifiers a novice division is offered, students will be eligible to receive awards but not bids to the State Championship.
- ◆ Bids reset each school year.
- ◆ If a student receives two or more bids in more than one event, a preferred event for the State Championship must be selected. No double entry is permitted.
- ◆ A student must compete in the event and division the bids were received in.
- ◆ Each partner in Public Forum Debate must earn two bids but may do so independently of each other.

ONLINE TOURNAMENTS

Online qualifiers are a great way to compete without having to worry about in-person logistics. Online qualifiers are synchronous, meaning that students compete in front of judges and other students live through Zoom. Online tournaments are designed to mimic in person competition as closely as possible, complete with the same tournament spaces (as breakout rooms) and nearly the same rules for each event.

Attendance at online tournaments

- ◆ A coach of record is required to attend, just like at an in-person tournament.
- ◆ If a student or judge is registered for an online tournament, that means they must have a thorough understanding of how to participate in an online tournament, have full access to the technology necessary (functional camera, microphone and WiFi) and they must attend for the full duration of the tournament. The withdraw/drop fee will be strictly enforced. Teams with more than three no-show or withdraw/drop students and/or judges may forfeit the ability to participate in online tournaments.
- ◆ If a student or judge must withdraw/drop after the registration deadline or on the day of the tournament, tournament staff must be clearly and promptly notified.
- ◆ **Online tournaments are not informal.** All participants should treat online tournaments just like in person tournaments.
 - **Participants cannot leave until the tournament is over.**
 - Participants should regulate their conduct and conversations in the common areas and competition spaces.
 - The dress code is in effect. All participants must dress professionally and turn on their camera and microphone when appropriate.
 - Backgrounds should be professional and distraction-free.
- ◆ **A mock online tournament and webinar will be held once a semester starting spring 2027.** Tournament staff will review the guidelines for online competition and hold one round. All coaches with students competing in online tournaments must attend at least once a year. It is crucial that students, judges, potential judges and parents/guardians also attend. Find more details at civicsanddebate.com.

Online tournaments differ from in person tournaments in a few keyways. Below are general guidelines and event specific guidelines for online tournaments.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

All Events

- ◆ All participants will enter the Zoom link provided at the scheduled tournament start time then enter the corresponding breakout room for the judge or student lounge.
- ◆ Round assignments are sent out, and students and judges move to the breakout room they are assigned to. It is crucial that all participants have access to the email address associated with their SpeechWire account and that email notifications are turned on.
- ◆ Participants must report to their respective lounge between rounds. Extemporaneous Debate and Extemporaneous Speaking competitors should report to their designated prep breakout room in between rounds.

General Guidelines (cont.)

- ◆ Students deliver their speeches and debate in front of their computer or device camera. Students must remain in frame at all times during rounds and prep (if applicable).
- ◆ Participants should mute themselves when not speaking and take care to avoid causing distractions. Students must remain in the competition room for the duration of the round (except Extemporaneous Speaking).
- ◆ Should a student experience technical difficulties, the coach should be notified to help troubleshoot. Participants have 5 minutes to rectify the situation before forfeit.
- ◆ Students may request time signals and time themselves, but the judge is the official timekeeper.
- ◆ All events are offered online except We the People.
- ◆ Participants should dress as they would for an in-person tournament. The code of conduct applies equally to online tournaments.
- ◆ Participants should identify a quiet space where they will not be interrupted or distracted. There is no award ceremony for online tournaments, but results will be posted and medals will be shipped to the team for distribution to students by the coach.

EVENT SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

Prepared Speaking Events

- ◆ Students and judges will enter the breakout room for their round assignment with mics muted.
- ◆ The judge will take attendance and call upon the first speaker to unmute and begin their speech.
- ◆ If a student is having technical difficulties, they may be skipped in the order of speakers. If the student is not ready to speak after all other students have spoken (for a minimum of 5 minutes), the student forfeits the round.
- ◆ If a student is late, they may speak after all other students have spoken as long as it does not delay the round.
- ◆ **Informative Speaking:** Students should use the same visual aids used for an in-person tournament and ensure all visual aids are completely captured in the frame. Electronic/virtual presentation aids (i.e. slides or video) are not allowed in-person or online.

Limited Preparation Speaking Events

Extemporaneous Speaking: Students will be called individually and provided with three topics via direct message in Zoom. The student has 20 seconds to select a topic and send it back via the same direct message chat. Prep time for the student will begin, and they will report to their assigned competition room after 30 minutes of prep. Students may leave the room after speaking (as they would in person).

Impromptu Speaking: Students will report to their assigned competition room at the scheduled round start time. The judge will call each student individually to select a topic, prep and speak as they would in person. The judge will send three topics through direct message and the student will respond in the direct message chat with the topic they've selected within 20 seconds. The timer starts and the student prepares and gives their speech within the time allotted (7 minutes with 30 seconds grace).

Students are required to keep mics off and cameras on during prep time.

Debate (PF, LD, RPD, & EXD)

- ◆ Both competitors/teams must enter the assigned competition space for the round no later than 5 minutes after the scheduled start time.
- ◆ **Public Forum Debate:** Under judge supervision, a student may flip a physical coin or use a coin flipping app and show the result to the camera.
- ◆ **Ronald Reagan Presidential Debate:** No device may be used for any purpose other than participating via Zoom (camera, microphone or any other Zoom function like chat or hand raising). Students are not permitted to use search engines, AI, cite or read speeches/content or use the Internet in anyway other than to participate in the Zoom. Any Internet/device use that would not be permitted in person is also not permitted during online tournaments (except use of Zoom).
- ◆ **Extemporaneous Debate:** Students report to the prep room and will be given the topic for the upcoming round. Students will prep their assigned side for 30 minutes, then enter the competition room (breakout room) listed in their round assignment.

Congressional Debate

- ◆ The Presiding Officer (PO) should explain their preferred procedures for acknowledging competitors (i.e. the hand raising function in Zoom, raising physical placards, etc.), handling technical difficulties, gaveling/time signals and other processes/rules applicable online or otherwise for the session.
- ◆ The PO may need to remind competitors to mute and unmute before/after each speech or questioning period.

Online Spaces

Most of the spaces typically found at in-person tournaments can be found during online tournaments as well. Participants should familiarize themselves with the following spaces and their uses:

- ◆ **Main Lobby:** This is the main room (non-breakout room) all participants will enter upon clicking the link to join the Zoom meeting for the tournament. Participants will enter a breakout room from this space.
- ◆ **Student Lounge:** Just like an in-person student lounge, students are required to report here in between rounds.
- ◆ **Judge Lounge:** Just like an in-person judge lounge, judges are required to report here in between rounds. This is important to hear announcements from tournament staff.

- ◆ **Extemporaneous Prep Room:** Students in Extemporaneous Debate and Extemporaneous Speaking will report to the corresponding prep room in between rounds. Here, they will be provided with topics and given the appropriate prep time.
- ◆ **Coach Check-In:** This is where coaches will check the team in for the tournament.
- ◆ **Competition Rooms:** These are breakout rooms that correspond to round assignments. Rounds will commence in these rooms.

TECHNOLOGY GUIDELINES

- ◆ Participants must confirm (many days in advance) that their camera, microphone and internet connection are fully functioning.
- ◆ Students should conduct practice rounds through Zoom to test equipment, connection, camera angle and room set up.
 - Students should experiment with camera angles that show at least the torso and above, preferably the entire body while speaking.
 - Students should confirm that they can be seen and heard clearly, even standing a few feet away.
 - All backgrounds should be neat, professional and presentable.
 - Students should test and practice with the same WiFi/internet connection, camera, microphone, competition space and background that will be used for the competition.
- ◆ The participant's full name should be entered as their name on their Zoom presence. Immediately before their name, please type "S" for student: Ex. (S) Jane Davis. Judge = (J), Coach = C and Observer = O. Coaches who are both judges and coaches, please include both letters (CJ).
- ◆ Participants should download and confirm they have the latest version of Zoom installed on the computer/device they plan to use (accessing Zoom through the website alone may prevent participants from joining breakout rooms).
- ◆ If at any point the camera, microphone or Internet connection fails, and the student cannot rectify the situation within 60 seconds, the student should immediately notify their coach. If the coach cannot be reached, the student should contact tournament staff. Students should be prepared to provide their name, coach's name and a way to communicate (phone, email, etc.). Five minutes is allocated for technical difficulties before the student must forfeit.
- ◆ Students should confirm they know how to receive round assignments (SpeechWire schematics).
- ◆ Silence any notifications for apps/services not needed during a tournament (i.e. social media). Ensure all students and judges receive round assignment notifications.
- ◆ Avoid the use of filters and frames as they may compromise the quality of the camera or connection.
- ◆ Close any other app or function that uses a camera or mic for your device.
- ◆ Keep Speechwire.com and the schematics (round assignments) page for the tournament open as a separate tab. Refresh it as needed to update.

NATIONAL CIVICS AND DEBATE CHAMPIONSHIP

Students from across the nation will have the opportunity to apply to compete in the 2027 National Civics and Debate Championship. The application will include questions about students' academic standing and competitive history.

Invited teams are responsible for completing registration requirements, including judge registration, hotel arrangements and payment as well as applying for financial assistance (if applicable) by the published deadlines.

Coaches will receive updates and detailed instructions throughout the process and will be notified of all application decisions.

IMPORTANT DATES AND DEADLINES FOR 2026-2027

August 31, 2026: Student applications for NCDC open.

October 2, 2026: Applications due.

October 19, 2026: Students and coaches notified of application statuses.

November 6, 2026: Deadline to apply for financial assistance to attend NCDC and complete FCDI team registration and student roster.

November 30, 2026: Deadline to withdraw students without penalty (\$50 after) and enter judges into SpeechWire.

December 7, 2026: Deadline for coaches to submit hotel reservations, payment, room list and tax-exempt certificate to the hotel.

January 8, 2027: Deadline to withdraw with the \$50 fee; competitors withdrawing after January 8th are required to reimburse/pay the full cost of attendance (lodging, meals, transportation, etc.).

JUDGING AT NCDC

The 2026-2027 Speech and Debate Judge Training course required to judge at FCDI tournaments is not required to judge at NCDC. However, all judges must attend required in person training on Friday evening of the tournament weekend. Judge training will occur at the event venue before competition. Please see the schedule and tournament information for more details and updates.

The judge obligation for NCDC is one judge for every two students or portion thereof (i.e. if a school has three students participating, they must supply two judges).

TOURNAMENT INFORMATION

A thorough tournament information packet will be provided to teams prior to the tournament, and important information, including topic areas and legislation, will be posted on the SpeechWire general information page for the tournament. It is important for coaches to carefully monitor their email and the SpeechWire general information page for important tournament details.

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

Each year, FCDI hosts a State Championship to celebrate the season and bring together top competitors. Qualification is earned through participation in regional and online qualifier tournaments held throughout the year (see [Awards and Bids](#)).

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT THE STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

- ◆ The 2027 FCDI State Championship will be held at New College of Florida and State College of Florida - Bradenton from April 24-25, 2027.
- ◆ The 2027 State Championship is a two-day event. **This year, participating teams are required to remain both days for the full event.** All judges are obligated to judge from round 1 to the final Round of the tournament (no exceptions).
 - **Not all students compete in elimination rounds.** The tournament will start with preliminary rounds where every student is competing in every round (except in byes or forfeits). After the last elimination round, “breaks” are posted. Breaks are the list of students advancing to the elimination rounds.
 - Tournament staff always work diligently to release breaks as soon as possible and will announce when and where postings are available.
 - Participants can view breaks by reading at the round posting (the schematic pairing of students in SpeechWire) for the first or subsequent elimination round, a separate announcement of a list of students without round pairings (i.e. LinkTree) or both.
 - Participants can view subsequent breaks (to more advanced elimination rounds) through schematics on SpeechWire (unless otherwise announced).
 - **Pay attention to the number of judges in an elimination round.** The number of judges assigned to an elimination round may be more than in a preliminary round. The number of judges to expect in each round will be clearly posted and communicated. Ensure the full panel of judges is present before a round begins.
- ◆ **Note the number of elimination rounds on the schedule.** The tournament schedule will show how many elimination rounds there will be for each event. Which elimination round an event starts with depends on the number of entries. Not all events will start with the same elimination round, but they all will follow the same progression:
Triple Octofinals Double Octofinals Octofinals Quarterfinals Semifinals Finals
- ◆ Information on how to register for the 2027 State Championship will be published on the FCDI website no later than April 1, 2027.
- ◆ A detailed information packet will be provided and available on the SpeechWire general information page prior to the tournament. All coaches, judges, competitors, parents and other attendees must read the full information packet.

FEES

Although team registration is free for all teams and tournament registration is free for all in-state teams, the FCDI imposes the fees below:

◆ **Entry withdrawal: \$25 per entry dropped (withdrawn or no-show)** after the registration deadline. This fee applies to all tournaments unless otherwise specified in the tournament-specific information provided.

◆ **Untrained or missing judge: \$100 per round missed (per judge).**

Untrained judge: A judge that does not attend the required judge training session scheduled for the tournament (typically held the morning of the tournament before round 1 in the judge lounge but may vary) and/or a judge that does not complete the self-paced, virtual judge training course (see [Judging Requirements](#) below).

Missing judge: A judge that does not show up to or is more than 10 minutes late to an assigned round at a tournament.

◆ **Out of State entries:** \$25/entry at any regional or online qualifier and the State Championship.

Starting in 2026-2027, teams may not pay a fee for failing to meet the judge obligation before a tournament—the team will be ineligible to compete if the obligation is not met. This is to ensure that tournaments run on time and that the competition is fair and equitable for all participants.



Pro Tip: The judge obligation and training requirements for FCDI tournaments is described in this handbook (see [Judging Requirements](#)) and on the SpeechWire general information page for each tournament.

To be eligible to participate in FCDI tournaments or apply for team financial assistance, all fees must be paid in full.

SUBMITTING PAYMENT FOR FEES

Please make checks payable to and mail to:

The Florida Education Foundation

Attn: Florida Civics and Debate Initiative
325 West Gaines Street Suite 1524
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400

JUDGING REQUIREMENTS

FCDI JUDGING REQUIREMENTS

It is the coach's responsibility to recruit and coordinate the required number of judges for all tournaments attended by their team. Judges are essential to the success of speech and debate competitions, and tournaments depend on each team meeting their judge obligation. Without the appropriate number of judges, rounds become delayed, scheduling is disrupted and an unfair burden is placed on other participating judges and teams. **Coaches should ensure that judges are available, trained and that attendance is confirmed before each tournament so that events can run efficiently, fairly and on time.**

Judging Obligation Guidelines:

- ◆ The FCDI divides judges into two pools or types: speech and debate. Speech judges judge all speech events. Debate judges judge all debate events.
 - Congressional Debate is included in the debate events for 2026-2027 and We the People is included in speech.
 - Should a tournament be short judges of a specific type, judges may be assigned to judge a different event type.
- ◆ A team must provide one judge for every two debate entries or portion thereof (including Congressional Debate).
 - "Portion thereof" means one judge is obligated if a team has only one debate entry or an additional judge for an odd number of debate entries (i.e. 3 judges are required for 5 debate entries).
- ◆ A team must bring one judge for every five speech entries or portion thereof (including We the People).
 - "Portion thereof" means an additional judge is obligated for every five entries or fraction of five (i.e. 2 judges are required for 6 entries).
- ◆ The judge obligation for speech and debate is calculated separately and cannot be combined.
- ◆ The judge obligation is *firm*. All teams must meet their judge obligation at every tournament to ensure fairness.
 - Judges must be entered in SpeechWire by the tournament registration deadline.
 - If a team arrives at a tournament without the necessary number of judges, **entries will be dropped** and the missing judge fee will apply.
 - If a judge misses a round, the team they are representing will be charged a \$100 fee (see [Fees](#)).
- ★ *Notify tournament staff immediately if a judge is no longer present or if a judge must withdraw/drop.*

- ◆ Coaches may serve as a judge and are expected to do so, particularly if the tournament requires it.
- ◆ **All judges and coaches must complete the online, self-paced judge training course offered by the Florida Debate Initiative (2026-2027 Speech and Debate Judge Training Course).** A sign-up form for judges will be provided on the FCDI website and the SpeechWire general information page of every FCDI tournament. The course takes approximately 90 minutes to complete.
 - The 2026-2027 Speech and Debate Judge Training Course is not required to judge the National Civics and Debate Championship but may not substitute the required in-person judge training at NCDC (see [National Civics and Debate Championship](#)).

★ **Pro Tip:** Give new judges a heads-up about the required training course early and check up on their progress. Confirm completion at least 72 hours before a tournament.

Student Judges:

- ◆ Students in grades 11 and 12 with at least two years of experience actively competing at the high school level may judge middle school rounds at regional and online qualifiers.
- ◆ Student judges may only cover (count toward) the judge obligation for middle school entries.
- ◆ Like a competitor, student judges must be supervised by an adult while at the tournament. The FCDI is not responsible for the supervision of student judges.
- ◆ Student judges may be permitted for NCDC and the State Championship. Student judges may only cover (count toward) the judge obligation for middle school entries. If there are two separate locations for middle school competition, student judges must report to the middle school location, and teams must arrange proper adult supervision. More information will be provided in the tournament specific information provided for NCDC and the State Championship.
- ◆ Student judges must satisfy the same judge training requirements as regular judges.
- ◆ Students may receive Bright Futures Hours for competing in and judging FCDI tournaments. See [Bright Futures Hours](#) for more information.

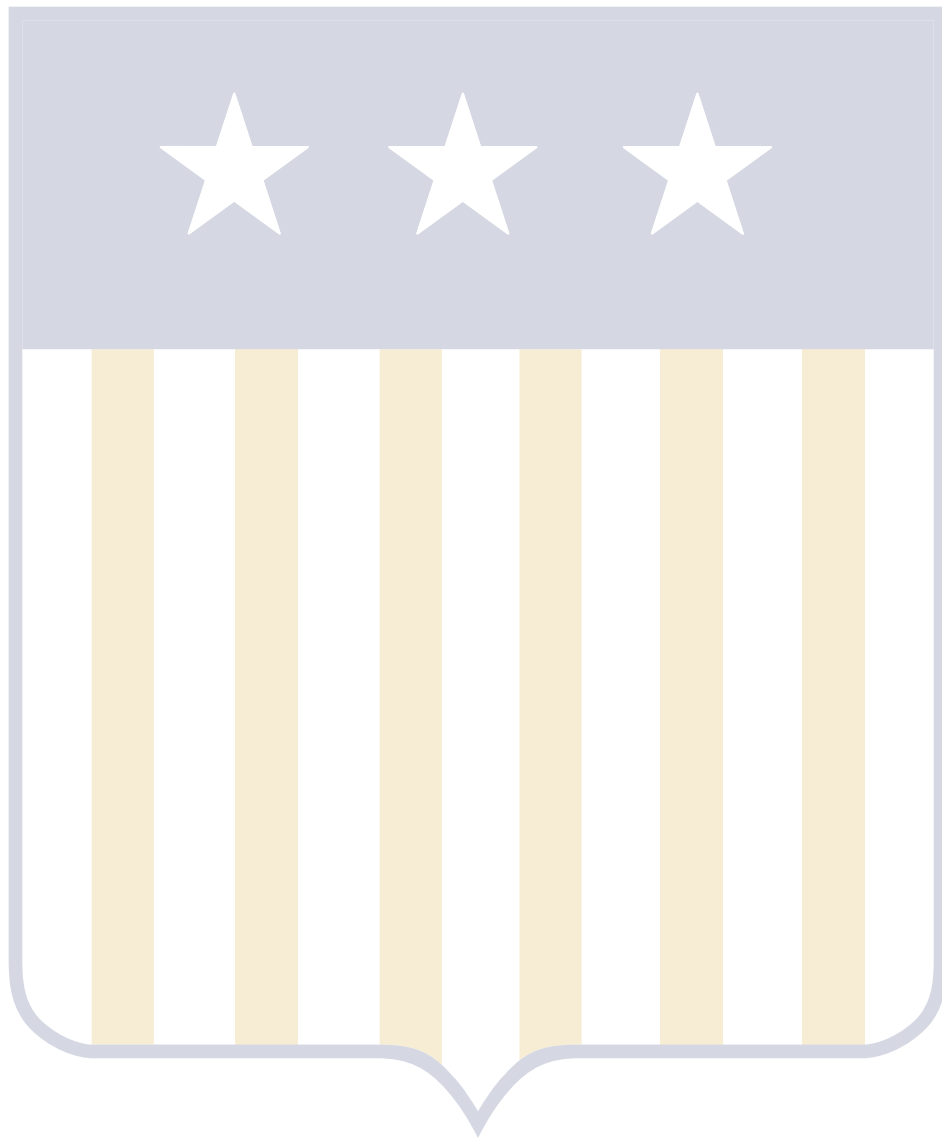
HOSTING A TOURNAMENT

FCDI tournaments are hosted by schools across Florida, providing students with opportunities to compete locally. Host schools receive a stipend to help offset tournament expenses.

To host successfully, schools should have reliable internet access, adequate classroom and gathering spaces, sufficient parking, volunteer support, custodial services and administrative involvement.

Interested in hosting an FCDI tournament? Coaches are encouraged to contact FCDI@fldoe.org to learn more.

JUDGING



JUDGING

Anyone can judge at a speech and debate tournament! We welcome educators, volunteers, alumni, parents and other community members. FCDI and FDI provide training, resources and support before and throughout tournaments to help judges feel prepared, comfortable and confident in their role.

Judges, thank you for your time. Your generosity allows us to provide this opportunity to students. Without your help, tournaments would be impossible.

Judging provides immense value and reward, but it also requires preparation. To ensure a smooth and fair tournament experience for every participant, we kindly ask that judges come prepared to judge before the start of each tournament. Please review the following important information about judging:

TRAINING

- ◆ All judges are required to complete an online, self-paced judge training course. Judges can sign up at civicsanddebate.com/judges
- ◆ Before the first round at every FCDI tournament, tournament staff will present a mandatory judge briefing, including an event overview and Q & A. On-site support will always be available to any judge requiring assistance in the judge lounge during a tournament.
 - Both the in-person judge briefing on the day of the tournament and the online judge training course are required. Neither may substitute for the other.
- ◆ Tournament-specific judge training information will be available on the SpeechWire general information page for each tournament.

PREPARING TO JUDGE

DEVICE REQUIREMENT

All judges must bring an electronic device and charger with them to all FCDI tournaments. Although completing a ballot is easiest on a laptop or tablet, a phone may also suffice. Judges will need access to a device at all times during the tournament to receive round assignments and to complete ballots (input round results and feedback).

SPEECHWIRE

Judges will complete ballots online at live.speechwire.com. When a coach registers a judge for a tournament, the judge will receive an email from SpeechWire Account Services notifying them that their judge account has been created and they will be given a password to use for their judge account. Judges must have access to this judge account and should ensure they can log in to SpeechWire.com prior to the day of the tournament. It is also important for judges to confirm the email address associated with their account can receive external emails from FCDI (FCDI@fldoe.org) and Speechwire.com. This email address will receive notifications for round assignments during a tournament and may receive communications from the FCDI. Judges should also know that they can find important tournament information, such as resolutions/topics, legislation, tournament schedule and additional information on the SpeechWire general information page for the tournament (SpeechWire.com).

JUDGE RESOURCES

Tournament resources are available for judges online at www.civicsanddebate.com/judges.

Judges will be provided with judge guides for each competitive event and other resources at the tournament. Judges should familiarize themselves with the resources provided prior to the day of the tournament.

JUDGE GUIDELINES

Events: Judges are entered into one of two pools: speech and debate. Prior to a tournament, judges should review the rules of the events they could be assigned to judge (i.e. speech or debate). Judges should become familiar enough with the events that they could confidently judge a round with a quick reference guide for the event as soon as a ballot is received.

- ◆ A ballot is a form used by a judge to submit results and feedback for the speech or debate round.
- ◆ If necessary to keep the tournament running, judges may be assigned a ballot in an event from the other pool. The required judge training addresses all speech and debate events.
- ◆ It is crucial to keep in mind that some events have specific rules that may not align with other, often similar events. Competitors, coaches and judges are responsible for an accurate understanding of tournament and event specific rules.

Rules: Judges are rule keepers. Report any suspected rule violations, prohibited content and other concerns to the tournament staff in the judge lounge as soon as possible. Use the judge hotline for the tournament to alert staff without having to travel across the competition site or exit the competition room, if provided. Document violations resulting in penalties in ranks or scores.

- ◆ Tournament staff is on call at all times and can come to rounds and different locations as necessary to address any issues.
- ◆ Do not discuss rule violations or prohibited content with students. Instead, immediately report it to tournament staff.
- ◆ Even experienced judges should double check the rules before making any decisions about rule violations on the ballot. If something is uncertain, please contact tournament staff as soon as possible prior to making a decision.

Evaluation criteria: Use the proper published evaluation criteria and rubrics to assess various aspects of competitors' performances. Judges should apply these criteria consistently and fairly across all competitors.

Confidentiality and professionalism: Judges must not disclose round results, provide feedback (other than in the official ballot) or discuss rounds, rankings or student performances with anyone. Judges should remain neutral, supportive and contribute to a positive competitive environment.

- ◆ Judges should conduct themselves professionally at all times.
- ◆ Judges should maintain positive and encouraging facial expressions and nonverbal communication.
- ◆ Avoid remarks, suggestions or reactions that could be perceived as favoritism, criticism or unfair.
- ◆ Oral feedback is not permitted.
- ◆ When judging alongside other judges (i.e. Congressional Debate), do not confer. Decisions must be made independently.

Bias: Judges must determine rankings and scores objectively by carefully considering all factors of a performance or debate and the established evaluation criteria for the event. Assess student performance without bias or favoritism and focus solely on the debate or speech itself. Never make judgments based on a student's ideology, background or appearance. Judges should not ask competitors for personal information (grade level, school, etc.).

Tabula Rosa: Debate judges should consider a principal called tabula rosa as they determine a winner. In layman's terms, this is the idea that you should not regard arguments or information as false because you believe that it is—rather, it is the responsibility of the competitor's opponent to prove it false for you to treat it as such in your decision.

Ballots and feedback: Judges are responsible for providing thorough, constructive written feedback through the official ballot and making fair, informed decisions based on competitors' performances using the evaluation criteria. Written feedback should identify strengths, note areas for improvement and offer suggestions for future growth. Clear, complete ballots ensure that decisions are communicated transparently to competitors and tournament officials while supporting the educational development of students.

- ◆ Document if the student's rank was penalized for violating the rules and be specific – i.e. "The student spoke over the grace period, so they could not be ranked first."
- ◆ Do not comment on a student's appearance unless it refers to a violation of the rules.

Start round: Immediately upon receiving a round assignment, click to "start the ballot" and make your way to the competition room. Begin the round in a timely manner. Notify tournament staff of any issues as soon as possible.

Conflicts of interest: Any conflicts or potential conflicts or of interest should be reported to tournament staff immediately upon discovery—before starting the round. Tournament staff are not always automatically aware of conflicts and must rely on members of the community to report situations that cannot be identified through existing safeguards.

- ◆ Conflicts of interest occur when a judge is assigned to a round containing a student they know or coach or whom they may not be able to fairly adjudicate.
- ◆ Conflicts of interest may also occur when a judge is assigned to an advanced elimination round with an affiliated student in a different section of the same event and division.
- ◆ It is the shared responsibility of judges and coaches to identify and report conflicts of interest in a timely manner so that tournament staff may make the necessary adjustments.

Competition rooms: Students should never enter a competition room until invited to do so by a judge or tournament staff. Judges should never be alone in a closed room with a single student. Judges in Extemporaneous Speaking should prop the door ajar.

Observers: Observers are permitted in competition spaces but may not use electronic devices, take photos or video or in any way distract the competitor(s) or judge(s). Students are not permitted to require observers to exit a competition room.

Questions: If there are concerns or questions about how to judge an event, please ask. Tournament staff are always available to help in the judge lounge.

QUICK REFERENCE

EVENT NAME & ABBREVIATION	DESCRIPTION	NOTES?	DEVICE?	TIME LIMIT
ORIGINAL ORATORY (OO)	Competitors deliver an original speech from memory.	No	No	10 minutes with 30 seconds of grace.
INFORMATIVE SPEAKING (INF)	Competitors inform the audience on a topic of their choice with visual aids.	No	No	10 minutes with 30 seconds of grace.
ORAL INTERPRETATION (OI)	Competitors perform selected passages from a work of prose or poetry, alternating between poetry and prose programs each round.	Yes; binder	No	10 minutes with 30 seconds of grace.
IMPROMPTU SPEAKING (IMP)	Competitors have 7 minutes to prepare and give a speech on a provided prompt.	Provided card only	No	7 minutes with 30 seconds of grace.
EXTEMPORANEOUS SPEAKING (EXT)	Competitors are given 30 minutes to prepare a speech answering a real-world or policy question provided.	Provided card only	During prep time	7 minutes with 30 seconds of grace.
LINCOLN-DOUGLAS DEBATE (LD)	Competitors debate a resolution using values.	Yes	Yes	See event format.
PUBLIC FORUM DEBATE (PF)	Competitors debate a resolution in teams of two. A coin toss determines side and speaking order.	Yes	Yes	See event format.
RONALD REAGAN PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE (RPD)	Competitors appeal to a broad audience simulating a presidential debate.	Yes	No	See event format.
EXTEMPORANEOUS DEBATE (EXD)	Competitors have 30 minutes to prepare a case on a resolution provided.	Yes	Yes	See event format.

SUBSCRIBE

Judges can subscribe to receive round assignments via texts and email. Judges may use this feature to receive round assignments to an email address not associated with the SpeechWire judge account if desired.

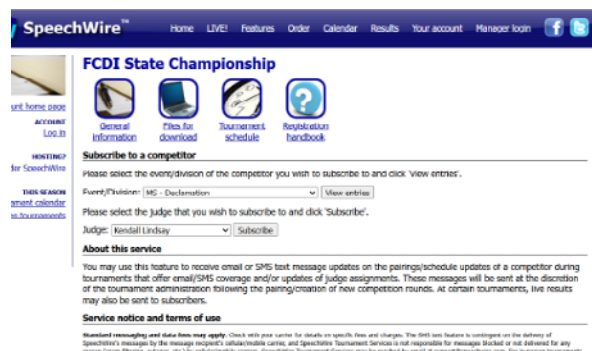
Step 1: Visit the tournament at SpeechWire.com



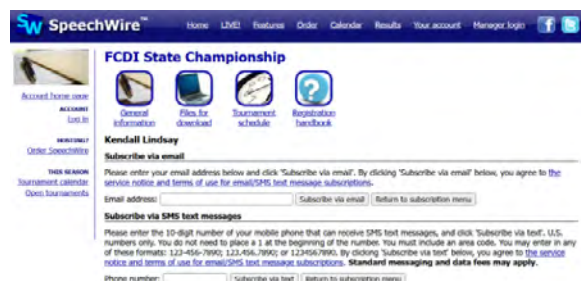
Step 2: Click Subscribe



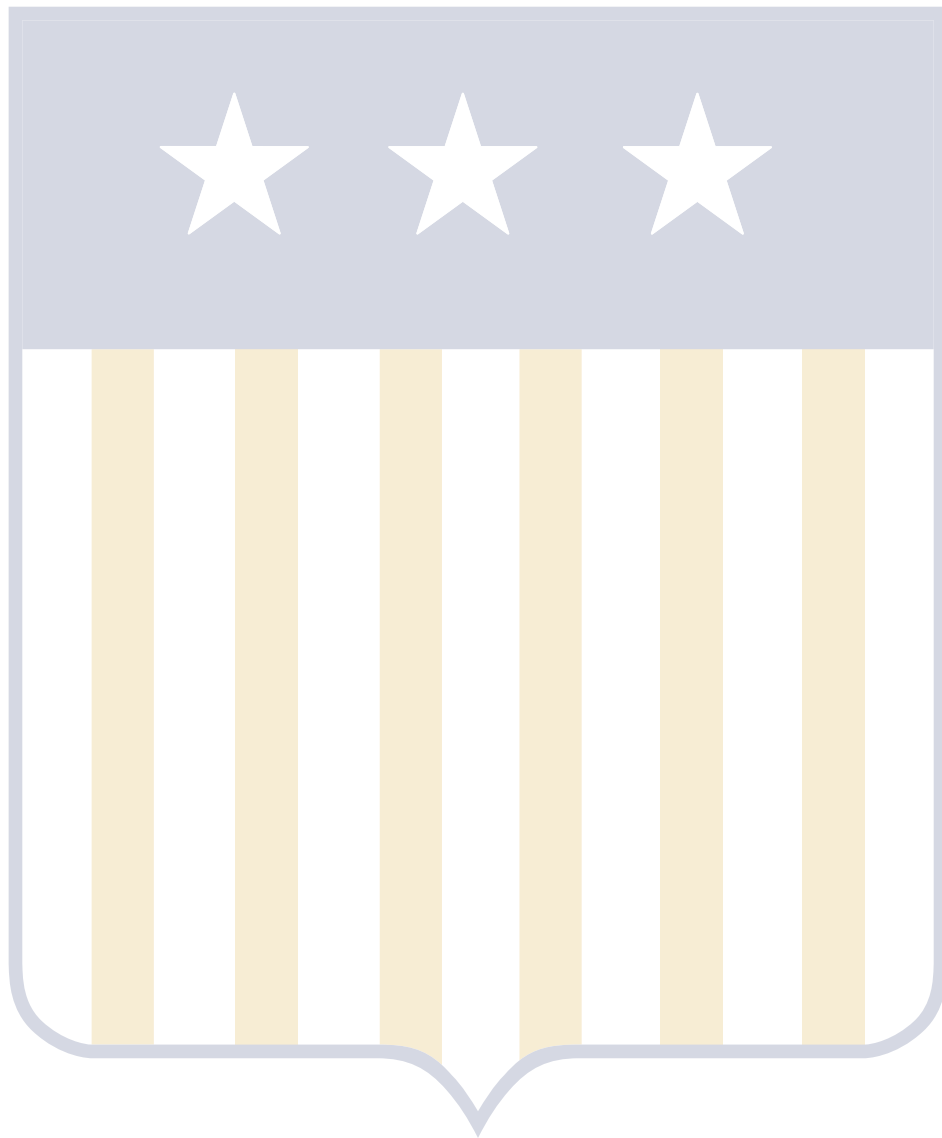
Step 3: Find Your Name & Click Subscribe



Step 4: Enter Contact Information



CODE OF CONDUCT



All participants are expected to uphold the Code of Conduct at all times during FCDI tournaments, events, team activities and any interactions representing speech and debate. These standards promote a respectful, constructive and professional environment that reflects the values of ethical competition, personal responsibility and civil discourse.

ETHICS AND VALUE

- ◆ **Respect:** Treat all team members, coaches, judges and competitors with respect at all times.
- ◆ **Integrity:** Maintain honesty and integrity in all interactions, including research, argumentation and competition. Avoid plagiarism, fabrication and cheating of any kind.
- ◆ **Sportsmanship:** Embrace fair play, both in victory and defeat.
- ◆ **Professionalism:** Present oneself professionally in appearance, speech and conduct, reflecting positively on the team and the activity as a whole.
- ◆ **Collaboration:** Foster a supportive and collaborative team environment, where members work together to improve skills, share knowledge and enhance each other's performance.

CREATING TEAM CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP

Coaches and students must work together to establish a strong team culture. Strong team cultures include:

- ◆ **Collective goal setting:** Coaches and students work together to set and accomplish goals.
 - Realistic and collaborative goal setting and check-ins
 - Specific plan and timeline set to accomplish goals
 - Regular/planned student-to-student mentorship or
 - Present and organized student leadership
- ◆ **Regular and thorough communication:** All team members and parents/guardians are responsive and communicate regularly on all aspects of participation in speech and debate – the calendar, competitions, prep, expectations, rules, requirements, applications or forms, fees, due dates/deadlines, etc.
- ◆ **Commitment to integrity:** All team members demonstrate a thorough understanding of the rules and serve as advocates for ethical conduct.
- ◆ **Growth oriented mindset:** The mindset the team promotes and the goals the team creates focus on education and personal growth over competitive success.
- ◆ **Team advocacy:** Champion the interests of the team and actively promote the mission, values and impact of speech and debate.

TOURNAMENT CONDUCT

PREPARATION

Students must arrive to each tournament fully prepared to compete and engage. This includes conducting research, crafting speeches, refining arguments and rehearsing performances to ensure effectiveness.

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

During the tournament, students must actively participate in their event according to the corresponding event and tournament rules. Students are also responsible for monitoring the tournament schedule and any updates and reporting to the appropriate locations at the required times.

TEAM REPRESENTATION

Students should represent their team with pride and integrity through positive conduct, performance and sportsmanship.

CIVIL DISCOURSE

Speech and debate provides students with opportunities to develop critical thinking skills while engaging thoughtfully with complex issues and differing perspectives. Students must analyze contrasting viewpoints, construct well-supported arguments and communicate their ideas with clarity, respect and consideration for others. Personal attacks, insults or derogatory language have no place in a constructive debate. This includes nonverbal communication.

ADAPTABILITY

Students must demonstrate adaptability and flexibility in responding to different topics, formats and opponents throughout the tournament with decorum, composure and emotional maturity.

FEEDBACK

The feedback students receive from judges, coaches and peers should be used to improve. Students should be receptive to constructive feedback and use it to identify areas for growth, refine techniques and enhance performance.

DRESS CODE

Speech and debate tournaments are professional academic environments where all attendees are expected to present themselves in a manner that reflects the sophistication and values of the activity. While coaches and judges are not required to wear business professional attire, all participants should maintain a polished, neat and professional appearance.

Students are expected to dress in professional attire, typically business casual or business professional clothing. Attire must be clean, well-fitted, free of wrinkles or stains and appropriate for a school-related event. Apparel and accessories should provide appropriate coverage and adhere to typical school dress code standards, including appropriate hemlines and necklines.

Participants should remember that they represent their school and team, and their attire, as well as any visible messages, images or logos on clothing, laptops, cases, water bottles, pins or other items, should reflect positively on the activity and its values.

While professionalism is important, participants should also select attire that allows for comfort and ease of movement during competitions, including the ability to walk between rounds and competition locations. Participants should avoid wearing clothing that prominently displays school or team names or logos.

★ **Pro Tip:** Many tournaments will require walking to different locations on large campuses and up/down flights of stairs. Students should feel free to bring an additional pair of shoes to change into between rounds.

ETHICAL PRACTICES IN RESEARCH AND ARGUMENTATION

Several key principles guide ethical research and argumentation practices. Maintaining ethical conduct is essential in speech and debate to ensure that competition is conducted with fairness, integrity and respect. The following considerations outline important expectations for responsible research, preparation and argumentation:

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN ARGUMENTATION

Students should support arguments with relevant and credible evidence, consider the consequences of arguments and demonstrate tolerance towards different viewpoints. Careful word choice and respectful language help create constructive discussions while avoiding misinformation and personal attacks. Ethical argumentation encourages responsible research and meaningful engagement with important issues.

HONESTY AND INTEGRITY

Students should always strive to present information that is truthful and accurate. They should avoid intentionally misleading or misrepresenting evidence or arguments.

RESPONSIBLE USE OF DATA

Students should use data responsibly by presenting statistics and results accurately, properly citing sources and following ethical guidelines. Responsible use of data strengthens credibility and supports fair, trustworthy arguments.

AVOID PLAGARISM

Competitors should never present someone else's ideas or words as their own without proper attribution. Competitors should understand what constitutes plagiarism and how to paraphrase and cite sources effectively.

CITING SOURCES

Properly citing sources is essential to give credit to the original authors and to allow others to verify the information presented.

GENERAL TIPS

- ◆ **Introduce your source:** Cite your source before presenting their information, unlike traditional in-text citations.
- ◆ **Presenting quotations:** Avoid phrases like "quote, unquote" for direct quotations. Use brief pauses instead to indicate quotations.

- ◆ **Source information:** Provide sufficient details about each source so your audience can locate it with minimal effort. This includes the author's name, their credentials, the work's title and its publication date.
- ◆ **Establishing credibility:** If your source may be unfamiliar to the audience, give enough context to establish credibility and relevance.

INTRODUCING SOURCES

Students should present the publishing organization and/or author (source) of the information with the date (preferably month and year) and any other relevant information supporting the relevance of the evidence (article or website page title, type of study or data, how the data was gathered, additional context on the publishing organization, etc.).

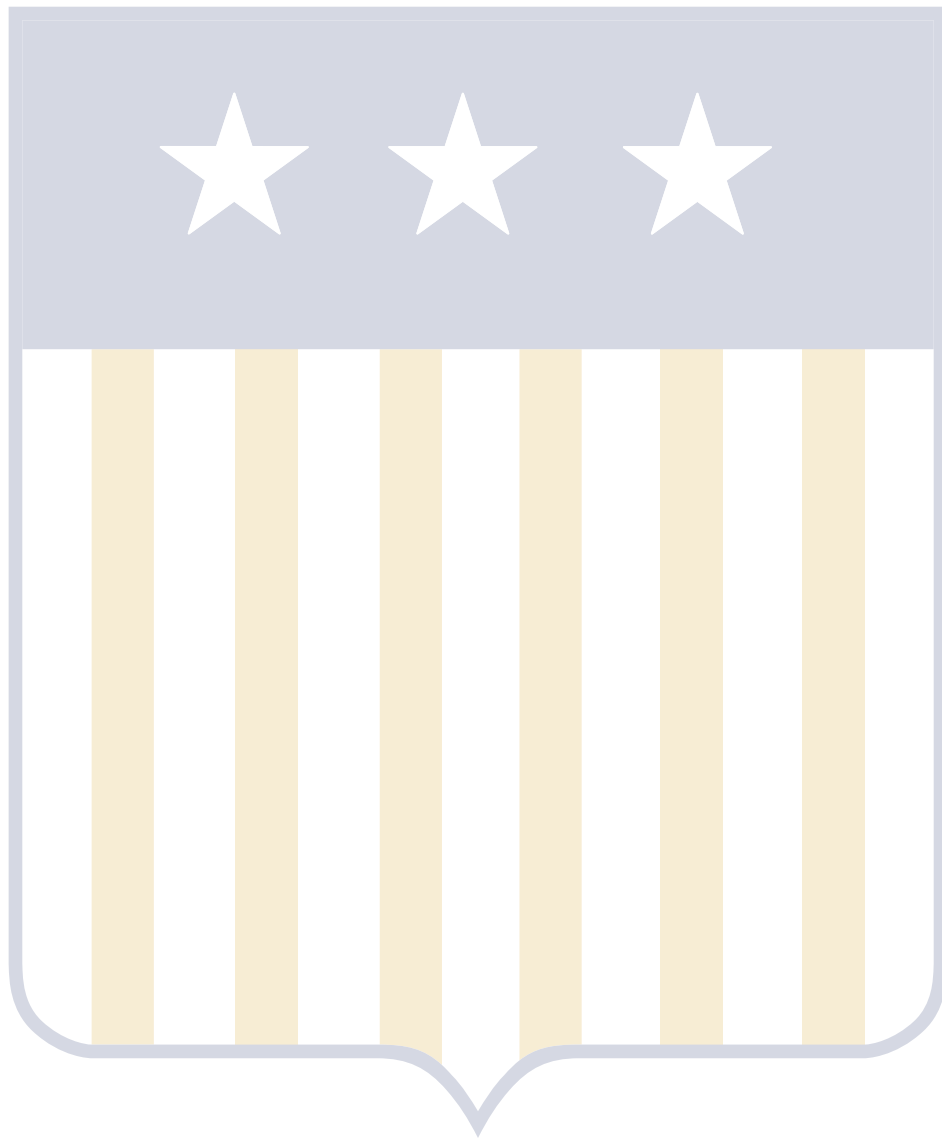
The type of source will determine the information the student should present to cite it properly. This information should provide all the context required to adequately support the evidence's relevance to the argument.

Some general guidelines for the information to present when citing different types of sources:

- ◆ **Academic research publications:** At a minimum, provide the university and/or academic journal the work was published in and the date. Students are also encouraged to provide the author and their credentials and title of the study. If relevant, the student may also provide the type of study (i.e. meta-analysis or review) or provide context about how the study was conducted.
 - "A 2026 report published by the Harvard Chan School of Public Health quantified that..."
 - "A September 2023 meta-analysis by Dr. Sendurai A. Mani, Director of the Cancer Stem Cell Center at Brown University, explains that..."
 - A 2026 review published by world renowned microbiologist Edward Holmes in *Nature* finds that..."
- ◆ **Website articles and reports:** At a minimum, provide the name of the organization/website and the date. The title of the webpage or article, author or additional context can help support the relevance of the evidence.
 - "The Freedom House, a bipartisan nonprofit that assigns a freedom score to each country, explains in their 2026 Freedom in the World Report that..."
 - "A June 2026 public health bulletin from the CDC entitled 5 Things to Know About Diabetes states..."
 - "Jane Doe, a political columnist for the Washington Post, argues in a 2024 article..."
- ◆ **Books:** Provide the title, author and date.
 - "In the 1979 edition of the *Elements of Style*, noted grammarians and composition experts Strunk and White advise writers to 'make every word tell.'"

- ◆ **Periodicals/Magazines:** Include the title and date.
 - "According to Time, March 28, 2005..."
- ◆ **Interviews/Lectures/Personal Communication:** Provide the name and credentials of the source.
 - Alice Smith, professor of Economics at the University of Southern Mississippi, commented in a 2025 interview that..."
- ◆ **Examples of organizations you may cite:**
 - Specific agencies or departments in state or federal governments
 - Only use acronyms when widely understood (i.e. USDA, FBI, DOJ,
 - Local governments
 - International governments practice
 - Nonprofit organizations
 - News outlets
 - Thinktanks and policy centers (although be clear about context and biases)
 - Colleges/universities and research institutes
 - Academic journals or publications (you may cite the academic journal, university or college and/or author)
 - Peer-reviewed scholarly articles
 - Systematic reviews and meta-analyses
 - Dissertations or theses
 - Textbooks, lectures and other academic sources of information
 - Competitors may also cite primary source documents (founding documents, laws, court opinions, treaties, speeches and archival materials) and reference works (encyclopedias, almanacs, handbooks, dictionaries, etc.).

COMPETITIVE EVENTS



LINCOLN-DOUGLAS DEBATE (LD)

PUBLIC FORUM DEBATE (PF)

**EXTEMPORANEOUS DEBATE
(EXD)**

**RONALD REAGAN PRESIDENTIAL
DEBATE (RPD)**

CONGRESSIONAL DEBATE (CD)

ORIGINAL ORATORY (OO)

INFORMATIVE SPEAKING (INF)

ORAL INTERPRETATION (OI)

IMPROMPTU SPEAKING (IMP)

**EXTEMPORANEOUS SPEAKING
(EXT)**

**WE THE PEOPLE: A CITIZEN
SHOWDOWN (WTP)**

WHAT IS DEBATE?

Competitive debate involves two students or teams (two students) debating a resolution provided to them. One of the students or teams will be arguing in favor of the resolution (the affirmation) and the other student or team will be arguing against the resolution (the negation).

Each competitive debate event follows a specific format of speaking times and cross examination (questioning) periods. All debates begin with constructive speeches, in which each side presents its main arguments and supporting evidence. Depending on the format of the particular event, the students will then cross-examine each other and give rebuttal speeches in which they will address their opponent's arguments and counter arguments. The round concludes with final speeches, where students summarize the major arguments made in the debate (also known as voters, clash or clash points) and make their final appeal to the judge.

It's important to remember that academic debate is an intellectual activity. It is not about personal advocacy, the judge or the student may or may not agree with the points being made—but this does not matter. The winner of a debate is the student or team who debates the best, regardless of personal worldview. The student or team who debates the best is the student or team who most effectively defends their arguments while disproving those of their opponent. In fact, the students will likely debate both sides of a resolution at a tournament, and they may not have picked their side for the debate either.

The "Flow"

Competitors and judges should closely follow all arguments, rebuttals, counterarguments and evidence presented. To successfully track, a specific style of notetaking called "flowing" is used. At the end of a debate, the flow should contain all major arguments made by both sides, how each side responded and which side ultimately won on each point or argument brought up in the debate. Students should use their flow to formulate rebuttal speeches and responses, and judges should use their flow to determine the winning side based on the outcome of all major arguments or points made.

It may be helpful to view a debate round as a game of shuffleboard: when each side presents their initial arguments (called constructive arguments), they are putting pucks on the board. The opponent will also give constructive arguments and spend their rebuttal speeches providing counterarguments to knock their opponent's "pucks" (arguments) off the "board" (flow). Students may also spend time explaining why their opponents counterarguments do not hold up to get their arguments "back" on the flow (note: in practice, you never really erase an argument from the flow, but you consider it lost/won by a side – think chess pieces).

At the end of the "game" (round), the judge reviews the flow to see which constructive and counterarguments remain on the board for each side and which have been effectively refuted or neutralized. To determine the winner, the judge must decide whether certain arguments or responses were effectively countered or not and the relative importance of each remaining argument. Students may use speeches at the end of the round to explain why they won the major clash points of the debate and why their remaining arguments are more impactful and should carry greater weight in determining the outcome.

When flowing, it is helpful to know what to look for and document about each argument. Every effective argument must include a **claim** or short description of the argument, a **warrant** or reasoning that explains why the claim is true and an **impact**, which are the effects of the resolution on stakeholders (people) as proven by the argument. Evidence helps reinforce the truth of the warrant and analysis ties the components together and to the resolution, but the focus when flowing arguments should be on the warrants. Warrants are where most of the clash should be, so it's a good idea to know how to identify and track them.

Reason For Decision

Also known as an RFD, the reason for decision is the specific argument(s) or clash made by the winning or losing side that the judge based their decision on. For example, an RFD could be that the winning team made a particularly effective argument that neutralized the main arguments of their opponent, or that the losing team did not respond sufficiently to an important point made by their opponent (note: a comprehensive RFD usually cites multiple arguments made).

The ballot will include a space to enter an RFD. Judges are encouraged to be as specific as possible when writing an RFD.

RESULTS

Results in debate are determined by win-loss record. Speaker points may be used in tiebreaks (see [Tiebreaking](#)).

RESOLUTIONS

The resolution is the topic that the students are debating. Resolutions may come in the form of a statement of fact (i.e. all is fair in love and war), a value judgement (i.e. privacy outweighs safety) or a policy (i.e. a healthcare public option). Different kinds of topics require the use of different skills and strategies. Students should be prepared to debate all types of topics.

- ◆ The resolutions for Public Forum, *Lincoln-Douglas* and *Ronald Reagan Presidential Debate* are available on the SpeechWire general information page for each tournament and on the FCDI website (see [Tournament Rules](#) for more details).
- ◆ The topic areas for Extemporaneous Debate are available on the SpeechWire general information page for each tournament and on the FCDI website. Students will receive the topic and their side 30 minutes before each round. Unlike in other debate events, competitions in Extemporaneous debate will debate a different resolution each round.

ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES

- ◆ Students may use devices and internet during debate rounds, except in Ronald Reagan Presidential Debate (no electronics permitted, only timers). The use of AI is never permitted.
- ◆ Speeches and cross-examination periods must adhere to the time limits.

- ◆ Debate events include prep time. Prep time is time each debater can use to pause the debate between speeches (similar to a time out). Students may allocate prep time throughout the round as desired for the maximum time permitted by the event (except Extemporaneous Debate— prep time is pre-scheduled in the format). Competitors must communicate to the judge when taking prep time. Both the judge and competitors should track speech and prep times.
 - When requesting prep time, a competitor may ask for a specific amount be “deducted from their bank of time” or ask for “running prep”, meaning they would like the clock to run down until it’s empty or the competitor is ready — whichever comes first.
- ◆ Judges and opponents may request to review evidence sources to verify authenticity. Competitors should be prepared to quickly provide links/access to all evidence. These requests should not delay the round for more than 5 minutes total.
- ◆ In most debate events, students are assigned a side (affirmation or negation) prior to the round. In PF, students will toss a coin to determine which team selects their side and speaking order (see [Public Forum](#)).
- ◆ Students must debate the resolution as intended. Kritiks and tricks (or other forms of evasion) are not permitted.
- ◆ Spreading (speaking very fast as a competitive strategy) is not permitted.
- ◆ New arguments or information should not be introduced after the first rebuttal speeches.
- ◆ During periods of cross examination, competitors have the opportunity to ask each other questions directly.
- ◆ Competitors must time themselves (competitors in RPD must do so with a timer, not a phone or computer).

VOCABULARY

Debaters may use the following terms throughout the debate:

Definition: An explanation of how a key word or phrase in the resolution should be understood.

Advantage or disadvantage: A benefit that supports a debater’s position or a harm that results from the opposing position.

Burden: What each debater must prove in order to win the debate.

Plan (or model) or counterplan (or countermodel): A specific proposal for how the resolution should be implemented, or an alternative proposal offered by the opposing side.

Framework: A structure a debater proposes to explain how the judge should evaluate the round, including what standards or criteria matter most and how contrasting arguments should be weighed.

Weighing: Debaters often explicitly or implicitly ask judges to “weigh” arguments. This means to evaluate the significance of arguments by comparing their impacts on the world.

- *Example:* The affirmation argues that the policy in the resolution would save lives. The negation argues that it would cost a lot of money. The affirmation may ask the judge to consider their argument as more important by arguing that lives are more important than money.

JUDGING

Judges will determine the winner of the debate based off the flow and assign speaker points for each student. Speaker points are awarded based on the combined score of the five criteria in the rubric. Further explanation for each criterion is included below the rubric.

DEBATE SPEAKER POINT RUBRIC

Speaker Points (1-5)	1 POOR	2 BELOW AVERAGE	3 AVERAGE	4 ABOVE AVERAGE	5 EXCELLENT
Delivery	Vocal delivery and physical presence interfere with understanding and persuasion (i.e. rate, volume, eye contact, movement or nonverbal communication are distracting or ineffective.	Delivery occasionally impedes understanding. Vocal and nonverbal communication are inconsistent, with limited use of eye contact, vocal variety, emphasis or purposeful movement.	Delivery generally supports understanding. Rate, volume, pronunciation, eye contact and nonverbal communication are adequate, with some effective use of vocal variety.	Delivery consistently enhances communication. Clear, confident vocal delivery. Eye contact, purposeful posture and movement, reinforces arguments and improves audience understanding.	Polished, delivery–engaging and highly effective. Vocal and physical communication maximizes clarity, credibility, persuasion and audience engagement, enhancing the arguments.
Organization	Organization is unclear. Constructive speeches lack structure and key argument components. Rebuttals and summaries lack roadmap or clear structure.	Organization is inconsistent. Structure of constructive speeches and arguments lack clarity. Roadmap for rebuttals and summaries unclear or not followed.	Organization is generally clear. Arguments include claim–warrant–impact structure. Rebuttals and summaries follow explicit roadmap but may lack consistent adherence.	Organization is clear and consistent. Arguments are well-structured with claim, warrant and impact. Rebuttals and summaries follow a clear and effective structure.	Organization is highly clear and strategic. Arguments have a distinct claim, warrant and impact. Structure of rebuttals and summaries enhances clarity.
Argumentation	Arguments are unclear, underdeveloped or unsupported. Claims lack logical warrants or meaningful impacts. Missing or inaccurate use of evidence. Little analysis of the resolution or misinterpretation of resolution.	Arguments are inconsistently developed. Some claims include warrants or impacts, but analysis is incomplete or uneven. Evidence is limited, weakly explained or inconsistently applied. Poor attempt at resolution analysis.	Presents well-supported arguments. Demonstrates an understanding of the resolution and develops offensive arguments that address issues in the round. Lacks sophistication of weighing arguments or presenting compelling framework.	Develops well-supported arguments with strong warrants, meaningful impacts and powerful evidence. Demonstrates critical analysis of resolution. Challenges opponent's claims. Clearly presents a framework for judge.	Consistently advances compelling, strategic arguments–exceptional reasoning, impactful analysis and persuasive evidence. Demonstrates sophisticated understanding of the resolution and generates tight framework.
Rebuttal & Questioning	Rarely responds to opposing arguments or questions. Refutation is minimal, inaccurate or off-topic. Cross-examination and questioning is ineffective or unproductive.	Addresses some opposing arguments but responses are incomplete. Questioning or rebuttal identifies a few weaknesses but often misses significant opportunities.	Effectively responds to major opposing arguments through rebuttal and questioning. Demonstrates sound defensive strategy by identifying weaknesses, answering attacks and maintaining responsiveness.	Skillfully refutes opposing arguments through well-reasoned responses, strategic questioning and effective defense. Identifies logical flaws, evidentiary weaknesses and inconsistencies.	Consistently demonstrates exceptional rebuttal and defensive strategy. Questions and refutations expose critical weaknesses, neutralize attacks. Outstanding responsiveness throughout.
Conduct	Conduct is inappropriate or disrespectful. Negative interactions with opponents, partners or judges detract.	Conduct is occasionally inappropriate or unprofessional. Respect for others or event procedures is inconsistent.	Conduct is generally respectful and professional. Interactions are appropriate and follow event expectations.	Conduct is consistently respectful, professional and courteous. Demonstrates good sportsmanship throughout.	Conduct exemplifies outstanding professionalism, respect and sportsmanship. Contributes positively and serves as a model.

DELIVERY

Delivery evaluates how effectively a speaker communicates through vocal and physical communication. Rate, volume, pronunciation, eye contact, posture, movement and other nonverbal communication should support clarity, credibility and audience understanding. Strong delivery enhances audience engagement by reinforcing the speaker's ideas and increasing the overall effectiveness and persuasiveness of the speech.

ORGANIZATION

All speeches are structured, and organization is clear throughout. Constructive speeches include a brief introduction that may contain definitions, framework, burdens or other key components. Constructive speeches also contain the main or constructive arguments, each including a claim, a warrant (reasoning that explains why the claim is true) and an impact (effects of the resolution on stakeholders as proven by the argument). Analysis connects the components of an argument into a coherent reason for or against the resolution, though the elements are usually implicitly stated. Most constructive speeches will contain between two and four constructive arguments. Rebuttal and summary speeches follow a clear, explicitly stated structure that often includes extending and responding to key arguments.

General Organization of a Constructive Speech

- ◆ **Introduction** - Context, framework, summarize definitions, etc.
- ◆ **Constructive Arguments** - *Claims*: What happens/is happening
Warrants: Why claim is true
Impact: Who is affected and how
- ◆ **Conclusion** - Briefly summarize arguments and clash

General Organization of a Rebuttal, Summary or Final Focus Speech

There are different ways to organize rebuttal, summary and final focus speeches, but the method chosen by the speaker should be explicitly stated during a roadmap at the beginning of the speech.

- ◆ **Line by line**: The competitor responds to arguments chronologically using the flow/record of exchanges. The debater refutes arguments and counterarguments "line by line". Frequently used for mid-round rebuttal speeches.
- ◆ **Voters or key clash**: The competitor organizes the main points of contention or disagreement (called voters) and presents them one at a time to the judge. Frequently used for late-round final focus or summary speeches.

ARGUMENTATION

Competitors should effectively develop, support, compare, extend and defend arguments throughout the round. Claims should be supported by reasoning, analysis and, when appropriate, evidence that is accurately represented and properly cited (see [Code of Conduct](#)). Effective debaters explain how evidence and analysis support claims. Questioning should be used strategically to clarify, challenge or develop arguments. Strong debaters engage directly with the warrant or reasoning behind opposing arguments and explain why certain arguments should be preferred.

★ **Pro Tip:** It is important to distinguish that judges are not evaluating the quality of arguments from their perspective. Judges are evaluating the quality of interactions between arguments made by the competitors.

REBUTTAL AND QUESTIONING

Evaluates the speaker's ability to effectively challenge opposing arguments, respond to rebuttals and cross-examine their opponent. Competitors should identify and explain the significance of logical flaws, evidentiary weaknesses, inconsistencies and poorly supported claims. Effective rebuttal and questioning strengthen the speaker's case by undermining their opponent's arguments and reinforcing the credibility and persuasiveness of their own.

CONDUCT

Competitors should exhibit professionalism, decorum and respect for opponents, partners, judges and the activity itself. Debaters should engage in civil discourse, demonstrate good sportsmanship and contribute to a positive competitive environment. Strong conduct includes active listening, respectful disagreement, appropriate questioning and adherence to event rules and procedures. Students should advocate assertively for their position while treating others with courtesy and respect.

DEBATE EVENTS

- ◆ Lincoln–Douglas Debate: A one-on-one debate focused on values, ethics and philosophical considerations.
- ◆ Public Forum Debate: A two-versus-two team debate designed for a general audience.
- ◆ Ronald Reagan Presidential Debate: A one-on-one debate that simulates a U.S. presidential debate.
- ◆ Extemporaneous Debate: A one-on-one debate with limited time to research and build a case.

Specific rules and guidelines for each event are outlined below.

LINCOLN-DOUGLAS DEBATE

Lincoln-Douglas Debate (LD) is a one-on-one format that emphasizes the ethics and moral aspects of a topic or issue. LD focuses heavily on the competing principles presented by each debater and how they should be considered when evaluating the resolution. Lincoln-Douglas debates often include the terms below:

- 1. Value:** A principle that the debater uses to support or oppose the resolution. For example, utilitarianism, liberty or equality of opportunity.
- 2. Criterion:** This is how the debaters ask the judge to measure the values presented.

FORMAT

Speech	Goal	Time Limit
Affirmation Constructive Speech (1AC)	Provide affirmation constructive arguments	6 minutes
Negation Cross Examination	Negation cross examines (questions) affirmation	3 minutes
Negation Constructive Speech (1NC)	Provide negation constructive arguments; may offer initial rebuttals	7 minutes
Affirmation Cross Examination	Affirmation cross examines (questions) negation	3 minutes
Affirmation Rebuttal (1AR)	Affirmation responds to negations constructive counterarguments	4 minutes
Negation Rebuttal (NR)	Negation responds to affirmations constructive and counterarguments; summarizes debate	6 minutes
Second Affirmation Rebuttal (2AC)	Negation responds to affirmations constructive and counterarguments; summarizes debate	3 minutes
Prep Time	Both students may pause for prep for up to 4 minutes.	

JUDGING

Judges should rely on the flow to form an RFD that highlights the specific arguments that won or lost the round for each competitor, including arguments on the value and criteria proposed. Make sure to compare each side's value framework and determine which debater more effectively justifies their value and best meets the criterion when weighing the contrasting arguments in the round.

PUBLIC FORUM DEBATE

Public Forum Debate (PF) is a two-on-two team event in which competitors debate current events and policy issues before a general audience. The focus is on clear communication and persuasive arguments rather than the technical aspects of debate.

TEAMS

- ◆ PF teams must consist of two students from the same speech and debate team (students may not form/join a team for this purpose).
- ◆ Maverick entries (a competitor without a partner) are not allowed.
- ◆ PF partners must belong to the same division.

COIN TOSS

Under judge supervision, the students will toss a coin (or use coin toss software) to determine the sides and speaking order for the debate. The team who wins the coin toss chooses either the side of the resolution they will argue (affirmation or negation) or whether their team will speak first or second. The team that loses the coin toss then makes the remaining determination.

FORMAT

Speech	Goal	Time Limit
First Speaker (Team A)	Provide Team A's constructive arguments	4 minutes
First Speaker (Team B)	Provide Team B's constructive arguments; may offer initial rebuttals	4 minutes
Crossfire Between First Speakers	The first speakers exchange questions	3 minutes
Second Speaker (Team A)	Provide counterarguments/rebuttal	4 minutes
Second Speaker (Team B)		4 minutes
Crossfire Between Second Speakers	The second speakers exchange questions	3 minutes
Summary (First Speaker, Team A)	Summarize key arguments/clash	2 minutes
Summary (First Speaker, Team B)		2 minutes
Grand Crossfire (All Speakers)	All speakers exchange questions	3 minutes
Final Focus (2nd Speaker, Team A)	Final appeal: Offer final rebuttals, weigh key arguments	2 minutes
Final Focus (2nd Speaker, Team B)		2 minutes
Prep time	Both teams may pause to prep for up to 4 minutes.	

JUDGING

Judges should evaluate a round of PF like any debate round: rely on the flow to form an RFD that highlights the specific arguments that won or lost the round for each team.

RONALD REAGAN PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

Ronald Reagan Presidential Debate (RPD) is a one-on-one debate event that simulates a U.S. Presidential debate. It focuses on civil discourse, rhetorical appeal, engaging delivery and persuasive discussion of public policy inspired by President Reagan's communication style.

FORMAT

Speech	Goal	Time Limit
Affirmation Opening Statement	Provide affirmation constructive arguments	5 minutes
Negation Opening Statement	Provide negation constructive arguments	5 minutes
Crossfire	Students exchange questions	3 minutes
Affirmation Rebuttal	Respond to arguments and rebuttals	4 minutes
Negation Rebuttal		4 minutes
Moderator Questioning	Judge asks both debaters questions	3 minutes
Affirmation Closing Statement	Final responses and summary of clash	3 minutes
Negation Closing Statement		3 minutes
Prep Time	Both students may pause to prep for up to 2 minutes	

JUDGING

While judges should adjudicate RPD as they would in any debate round (rely on the flow to form a specific RFD) RPD also places emphasis on effective public communication. Judges should consider the extent to which:

- ◆ Word choice, tone, body language and communication style are used to appeal to a broad audience
- ◆ Competitors use rhetorical appeal effectively and cite relevant founding documents, historical events or figures and contemporary news sources.
- ◆ Competitors discuss public policy in the context of American values.

RPD also includes a period of questioning from the moderator (judge). The judge should ask both competitors more than one question based on their opening statements, rebuttal and/or crossfire. Below are a few question stems to help brainstorm moderator questions. More resources are available on our website: civicsanddebate.com/judges.

MODERATOR QUESTION STEMS

◆ WHO

- Who benefits from this?
- Who is this harmful to?
- Who makes decisions about this?

◆ WHAT

- What is the problem?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses?
- What is another perspective?
- What is the alternative?
- What are the obstacles?
- What role has this played in our society?

◆ WHERE

- Where in the world is this a problem?
- Where can we go for answers?
- Where in the world are they successful?
- Where are there similar solutions?
- Where are the best examples of this?

◆ WHEN

- When did this problem start?
- When would this benefit our society?
- When would this cause a problem?
- When is the best time to take action?
- When has this played a part in our history?
- When could we put a solution in place?

◆ WHY

- Why is this a problem?
- Why is this relevant?
- Why is this the best/worst?
- Why have we allowed this to happen?
- Why has it been this way for so long?
- Why is there a need for this today?

◆ HOW

- How is this similar or different to _____?
- How does this improve things?
- How do we see this in the future?
- How can we change this for the good?
- How does this hurt us or help us?
- How do we approach this safely?

EXTEMPORANEOUS DEBATE

Extemporaneous Debate (EXD) is a one-on-one debate with the resolution and the competitor's side (proposition or opposition) provided 30 minutes before each round. Due to the limited preparation time, this event emphasizes brief, logical arguments rather than robust evidence. Some resolutions for EXD are designed to facilitate more logic-based argumentation rather than arguments relying on traditional evidence.

★ **Pro Tip:** In EXD, "Proposition" is often used instead of "Affirmation" and "Opposition" instead of "Negation," but the meaning is the same.

FORMAT

Speech	Goal	Time Limit
Proposition (Prop) Constructive	Provide Prop constructive arguments	2 minutes
Opposition (Opp) Cross Examination	Opp cross examines (questions) Prop	1 minute
Opposition Constructive	Provide Opp constructive arguments	2 minutes
Proposition Cross Examination	Prop cross examines (questions) Opp	1 minute
Mandatory Prep Time	The debate pauses for prep	1 minute
Proposition Rebuttal	Respond to arguments and rebuttals	2 minutes
Opposition Rebuttal		2 minutes
Mandatory Prep Time	The debate pauses for prep	1 minute
Proposition Rebuttal	Provide final rebuttals and round summary	2 minutes
Opposition Rebuttal		2 minutes

JUDGING

Rely on the flow to form an RFD that highlights the specific arguments that won or lost the round for each competitor. Be cognizant of the short amount of time students have to speak. Students may speak fast but may not spread (speed read) and speeches must be intelligible. Most arguments should be based on logic, not evidence.

CONGRESSIONAL DEBATE

Congressional Debate (CD) is much different from the other forms of debate. Instead of following a round format consisting of different speeches given by the same students, CD involves a group of students speaking on legislation alternating between affirmation and negation speeches. Congressional Debate is a simplified simulation of the federal legislative branch and Florida's state legislature; therefore, it borrows from the parliamentary procedure described by Robert's Rulebook of Order.

PRESIDING

In CD, the parliamentary motions made and sequence of speeches given are managed by the Presiding Officer (PO). The PO is a competitor elected by their peers to run the session. The PO does not give speeches or engage in the debate, but the judge may rank the PO among the speakers and must provide two speech scores for the PO based on performance.

The Pro Tempore (or Pro Temp) is responsible for running the session before the PO is elected. The Pro Temp is either a judge, tournament staff or a volunteer competitor. The Pro Temp will call the session to order, conduct the election for PO, then yield the floor once the PO is elected. In the second or third session, the PO from the previous session may serve as Pro Temp.

LEGISLATION

A docket containing state and/or federal legislation will be published before the tournament. At the beginning of the first session of the tournament, the competitors will select an agenda that lists the order of bills to be debated. **An agenda must contain two pieces of legislation per session.** A PO should rule any agenda out of order if it does not contain two pieces of legislation per session. Students will set an agenda for the duration of the tournament (for qualifiers and NCDC) or for each round (prelims, semifinals and finals) at the State Championship.

ROUND PROGRESSION

Congressional Debate involves lots of procedures to manage the debate. There are steps required to start, stop and progress a session:

Starting the Session:

- ◆ Pro Tempore calls the session to order and conducts the election for PO (see [Elections](#) below).
- ◆ The PO is elected, takes a seat at the front of the room (facing the judges and competitors) and briefly explains procedures (gavel time signals, precedence/recency, requesting personal privileges, etc.).
- ◆ The PO opens the floor for agenda nominations, records nominations and conducts a vote.
- ◆ The PO begins debate on the first piece of legislation on the newly adopted agenda by asking if the author is present (if the legislation is student authored). If the author is not present, the PO calls for a sponsor. If no competitor wishes to sponsor, the PO calls for a first affirmative speaker.

- ◆ Once the first speaker gives a speech, the PO opens the floor for questions from the other competitors. The questioning period for speeches during first cycle (first 2 speeches) on a piece of legislation is two minutes and one minute for all remaining speeches.
- ◆ After the questioning period, the speaker takes a seat. The PO calls for a speech on the opposite side and repeats until all competitors have spoken on the legislation (who want to).

Continuing Debate:

- ◆ As debate on a piece of legislation progresses, other motions may be made:
 - **Motion to Recess:** A break, usually between legislation, when debate pauses participants may exit the room. A recess may be in-house (participants may not exit). A recess may not exceed 10 minutes.
 - **Motion to Amend:** Competitors may submit amendments to a bill while it is being debated.
 - **Personal Privilege:** A personal privilege is when a competitor makes a request. This is most commonly made when the competitor needs to exit the session briefly but may also be made for other reasons (i.e. approach the chair with an amendment, ask the PO a question about information the PO is responsible, etc.).
 - **Point of Order:** A point of order is made when a competitor believes that the PO has made a mistake. This does not mean that the PO has, but a competitor may use a point of order to challenge a ruling or decision made by the PO. The other competitors should keep track of speaking order to ensure precedence and recency are being followed.
- ◆ Competitors take turns giving speeches and asking questions until all competitors (excluding the PO) have given a speech on the legislation being considered.
- ◆ The PO may unilaterally move to previous question (end debate and vote on the bill) if all competitors have given a speech. A competitor may also motion to previous question.
- ◆ After previous question is called, the chamber will vote on the legislation and typically motion for a recess. After the recess (or the previous legislation is voted on), the PO will transition the debate to the next piece of legislation on the agenda.

Ending the Session:

- ◆ Once debate on a bill has ended and the previous question has been called, the PO will conduct a standing vote on the legislation. If a full quorum (all competitors excluding the PO) is not reached, the PO will call for any abstentions. The chamber will vote until a full quorum is reached.
- ◆ If debate has ended on the second bill, the PO may adjourn before dismissing the chamber. Important tournament reminders or information and the number of speeches and questions given may be provided by the PO at this time.
- ◆ Competitors should exit the competition room immediately once adjourned. Competitors may briefly thank the judges but should not interfere with adjudication.

SPEECH CYCLES

A cycle refers to one affirmation and one negation speech. Two complete cycles are required before speeches on the same side as the previous speech are permitted. Otherwise, any number of sequential speeches on the same side is permitted (but frowned upon).

SESSION LENGTH

There is no specified session length. Students will debate until every competitor has spoken once on two pieces of legislation (if desired).

The Presiding Officer may not allow debate on a piece of legislation to end until every competitor has given a speech (if desired) even if a motion to the previous question receives the vote required. The PO should update tournament staff when there are about 2-3 cycles remaining in a session.

SPEECHES

- ◆ Judges will score speeches individually 2-6. The PO will receive one speech score for each legislation debated. This score will reflect their performance as a PO during the debate. A PO may not step down to speak.
- ◆ Speeches may not exceed three minutes with a grace period of 15 seconds. The PO should explain gaveling procedures before debate begins. Recommended gaveling procedures are 1 tap at 2 minutes, 2 taps at 2 minutes and 30 seconds and 3 taps at 2 minutes and 55 seconds. The PO may stand at 3 minutes and begin to gavel down at 3 minutes and 10 seconds. At three minutes and 15 seconds, the PO should cut the speaker off and remind the chamber of the grace period.
- ◆ A student may not speak twice on the same legislation, including amendment speeches.

SELECTING COMPETITORS FOR SPEECHES AND QUESTIONS

Presiding Officers must recognize competitors for speeches and questions using randomness, precedence and recency.

Randomness is used first when precedence and recency have not yet been established. To achieve this, a PO may create a preset recency chart, use a random name generator or select a speaker/questioner at random from those standing.

Precedence is the number of speeches or questions given in a round (kept separately). The competitor with the lowest number of speeches (or questions) given is preferred.

Recency is the order of speeches or questions given in a round. When precedence is equal, the competitor who spoke (or asked a question) least recently is preferred.

Competitors in the high school division must use both recency and precedence for selecting competitors for speeches and questions. Competitors in the middle school division may use only precedence (and randomness) for questions if preferred. Combined chambers must use both.

Additional Guidelines:

- ◆ Precedence and recency will reset after every session unless otherwise clearly communicated by tournament staff.
- ◆ Speech and question recency and precedence are kept separately. All participants are encouraged to track speech recency and precedence.
- ◆ If a PO recognizes the wrong speaker according to recency/precedence, the speaker must agree to yield the floor to another competitor.
- ◆ If a PO is not recognizing competitors for speeches and questions according to the proper procedure, notify tournament staff immediately.

QUESTIONING

Students will use direct cross style questioning in CD. The PO will recognize a competitor to ask a question, and the questioner and speaker may exchange (speak back and forth) for up to thirty seconds. Prefacing (introducing new information) is permitted, but students should only do so strategically.

- **Time Limit:** There are two minutes of questioning after a speech in the first cycle and one minute of questioning for every speech following. The PO may end the period early if there are no questioners remaining, but no questioning period may be extended.
- **Recognition:** Once the PO signals for questioners to rise, students wishing to ask a question should remain standing until the last questioner has been recognized (or sit if they no longer wish to ask). The PO should use their gavel to point to the competitor to be recognized for a question next.
- **Selection:** To select competitors for questions, students in the middle school division should use precedence (select the competitor with the fewest number of questions, independent of speech precedence) at a minimum. Competitors in the high school division will be expected to use both precedence and recency to select competitors for questions (just as you would for speeches but separate for questions).
- **Gaveling Procedures:** POs should tap the gavel once 20 seconds into each cross examination, then twice after 30 seconds. After the second gavel tap, the PO should recognize another questioner (or end the period).

PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

Congressional debate operates on a modified version of parliamentary procedure. All participants should become familiar with the following:

- ◆ **Legislation may not be put on the table.** If debate on a piece of legislation has begun during a session, it must end during the same session.
- ◆ Competitors may not motion to suspend the rules except to establish direct cross in the middle school division.
- ◆ Students may not move to previous question (end debate and vote) on a piece of legislation unless all students who desire to speak on the legislation have spoken once, regardless of any vote.
 - If a chamber is about to move to previous question and a competitor (non-PO) has not had the chance to speak yet, the competitor may object. The PO must then rule the motion to previous question out of order and continue calling speakers according to normal procedure.
 - If a student objects, the PO will be disqualified if he/she allows the chamber to move to previous question regardless.
- ◆ Recesses may be in-house, but no recess may exceed 10 minutes.
- ◆ The chamber may not impeach or remove the PO. If there are concerns, contact tournament staff immediately.

MOTIONS

This table represents all motions that can be made by competitors in Congressional Debate at FCDI tournaments. While other motions exist, they are not permitted for use at FCDI tournaments.

Motions should be addressed in order of precedence as noted in the table.

	Motion	Description	Second? ¹	Vote to Pass
	Incidental Motions	Arise incidentally and addressed immediately (no order of precedence).		
10	Adjourn	End the session and dismiss participants	Yes	Majority ²
9	Recess	To take a break for a specified amount of time (no longer than 10 minutes; may be in-house)	Yes	Majority
8	Question to Personal Privilege	To make a personal request (i.e. exit chamber, approach chair, etc.)	No	No
7	Appeal the Decision of the Chair	To overrule a decision made by the chair	Yes	Majority
6	Point of Order	To ask a question, clarify procedure or correct a mistake made by the chair	No	No
5	Division of Chamber	Verify a voice vote with a standing vote	No	PO's discretion
4	Suspend the Rules	To establish direct cross questioning (in MS chambers)	Yes	2/3rds
	Subsidiary Motions	The motions below are listed in order of precedence. To be considered, a motion must be higher on the chart than the pending motion. ³		
3	Previous Question	Call an immediate vote on the main motion	Yes	2/3rds ²
2	Amend ⁴	To modify a motion (most commonly legislation or the agenda)	1/3rds	Majority
1	Main Motion	The primary question before the chamber; to adopt bills and resolutions	Yes	Majority

1. A second is made when another competitor says "second" aloud after a motion is made.
2. The PO may unilaterally move to Previous Question or Adjourn if no speakers or business remain.
3. If a motion with lower precedence than the pending motion is made, the PO must rule it out of order.
4. See additional guidelines for amendments in [Amending](#).

To determine the numerical thresholds required to pass motions using different proportions of the quorum (i.e. 1/3rd, a majority or 2/3rds), round down and do not include the PO. The PO may serve as a tiebreaking vote.

Motions to open and close the floor for PO and agenda nominations must be made before all other motions. These are motions that do not require a vote (the chair may move unilaterally).

ELECTIONS

The Pro Temp should direct the chamber through the process of electing a Presiding Officer. The Presiding Officer then directs the chamber through the process of setting an agenda from the docket of legislation released by tournament staff.

Electing a Presiding Officer

- ◆ **Open the floor, nominate, then close the floor.** The Pro Temp will start by calling the session to order and asking the chamber for motions (or someone from the chamber will make a motion). Once the motion to open the floor for PO nominations receives a second, the Pro Temp will recognize and record nominations. Self-nominations are permitted. After all nominations have been made, a motion to close the floor is made and seconded.
- ◆ **Candidacy speeches.** The Pro Temp restates the names of all nominees. If more than one, the Pro Temp will yield the floor to each nominee for a 30 second candidacy speech in the reverse order of nomination.
- ◆ **Voting.** After speeches, the Pro Temp should direct all competitors to rip a small piece of paper out and write the last name of the competitor they wish to vote for on it. The Pro Temp collects the slips, counts the votes and announces the winner. The winner must receive a majority of the votes.
 - **No majority.** If a candidate does not receive a majority, the candidate receiving the lowest number of votes is eliminated, the remaining candidates give another speech and the chamber votes again. If there is a tie for the candidate with the lowest votes, the chamber votes again.

Setting an Agenda

- ◆ **Open the floor, nominate, then close the floor.** The PO will call for a motion, and the competitors will motion to open the floor for agenda nominations, make nominations, then the floor will be closed.
- ◆ **Voting.** The PO rereads each agenda and conducts a standing vote. The chamber votes until one agenda receives a majority. If no agenda receives a majority after the first round of voting, the agenda receiving the lowest number of votes is eliminated. If there is a tie for the agenda with the lowest votes, the chamber votes again.

Debate begins on the first piece of legislation on the agenda immediately after adoption.

AMENDING

Competitors may amend legislation and agendas in Congressional Debate. Amending main motions requires a subsidiary motion to amend.

Amending Legislation

- ◆ **Question of Personal Privilege.** The speaker wishing to amend the legislation must rise to a question of personal privilege to approach the chair (PO) with an amendment. The speaker should have a copy of the legislation (digital or paper) with the specific amendments clearly notated. Amendments may strike, delete or add.
- ◆ **The PO rules the amendment germane or dilatory.** Germane amendments uphold the original intent of the legislation and are permitted, while dilatory amendments do not and are not considered. The PO may call on another speaker while the amendment is being reviewed. If germane, the PO must read the legislation and the legislation with the amendment.
- ◆ **1/3rds second.** The amendment must receive a second from 1/3rd of the speakers to be debated.
- ◆ **Debating the amendment.** Once an amendment has been seconded, speeches become neutral (no affirmation or negation). Precedence and recency are used and recorded as normal, and no authorship or sponsorship applies. Questioning on all amendment speeches is one minute. Most commonly, the chamber will move to previous question on the amendment before any amendment speeches are given and simply proceed to vote on the amendment.
- ◆ **Voting on the amendment.** Calling previous question on the amendment requires a 2/3rds vote and passing the amendment requires a majority vote. The PO should read the legislation and the legislation with the amendment before voting. Once the amendment passes or fails, debate on the legislation continues (with or without the amendment) until previous question on the legislation is called.

Amending the agenda

- 1. Motion to amend the agenda.** A speaker makes a motion to amend the agenda and reads the agenda with the proposed amendment.
- 2. Vote on the amendment.** If a second is received, the PO reads the amended agenda and calls for a vote. A majority vote is required to pass. The PO should read the agenda again if the amendment passes.

AUTHORSHIP AND SPONSORSHIP

The FCDI considers student authored legislation for regional and online qualifiers. Authors are given the privilege to speak first on their own legislation. This is called an authorship speech. A student's name must appear at the bottom of a piece of legislation for the student to be given authorship privilege. School or team name should not be included in student submitted legislation, nor is team name enough to secure the privilege of an authorship.

If the legislation was not authored by a student or if the author is not present, a competitor may sponsor the legislation. The speech is the same as the authorship, but the student did not write the legislation. Sponsorships are selected the same as all other speeches (using precedence and recency).

Both authorship and sponsorship speeches are distinct from first affirmative speeches – rather than focusing on the effects of the legislation, authors and sponsors should reference the specific sections or parts of the legislation and explain their purpose (how they solve a particular issue).

STUDENT AUTHORED LEGISLATION

Types of Legislation:

In Congressional Debate at FCDI tournaments, students may debate the following types of legislation:

◆ STATE

Resolution

Bill

Florida Constitutional Amendment

◆ FEDERAL

Resolution

Bill

Federal Constitutional Amendment

To write legislation, students must use the template corresponding to the appropriate legislation type for the policy or policies created.

Steps for Submitting Legislation

STEP 1: A student identifies an important problem or topic to write legislation about and researches potential solutions and policies. Keep in mind that the legislation must be debatable (the policy can sustain a robust debate) and students should take care to adhere to the Prohibited Content guidelines.

STEP 2: A student uses the appropriate legislation template published on civicsanddebate.com to draft a piece of legislation. The legislation is reviewed by peers and revised for professionalism, clarity and brevity.

STEP 3: A coach emails the student authored legislation for consideration to FCDI@fldoe.org. If legislation is being submitted for use at a particular tournament, include the tournament name and date. Student authored legislation must be submitted at least two months prior to the desired tournament.

STEP 4: The FCDI will review the legislation and provide feedback and revisions as necessary. The FCDI reserves the right to reject any legislation that may not produce healthy debate, use the correct template, follow content requirements or align with the FCDI's mission.

Tips for Writing Legislation

◆ Students should research the differences between bills and resolutions to ensure the policy aligns with the type of legislation being created. A good place to start is by knowing that if the legislative body does not have the authority to fully implement a policy on its own, the policy should likely be written as a resolution. If the legislative body could unilaterally implement the policy, then it should probably be a bill.

- ◆ Look at examples of student submitted legislation published online. This can be helpful when brainstorming a topic or problem to address or how to address a particular problem.
- ◆ Ensure the policy or policies you are considering are not already implemented or soon to be implemented.
- ◆ Make sure the policy or policies you are considering are within the jurisdiction of the legislative body you are writing it for.
- ◆ Consider Constitutionality: bills that are clearly or likely unconstitutional do not make for healthy debates.
- ◆ Write professionally. Avoid excessive wordiness, use a straightforward tone and write the policy or policies clearly, concisely and explicitly. You may develop an eye for well written legislation by analyzing examples.
- ◆ Consider if your solution or policy is too good. There must be enough room for ample, high-quality arguments on both sides. If a bill simply funds something widely considered positive, it is not likely to produce a healthy debate.



Pro Tip:

- ◆ If a bill simply funds something widely considered positive, it is not likely to produce a healthy debate.
- ◆ Be cognizant of the topic you select. Other students across the state may debate it.
- ◆ Make sure to add the author's name at the bottom of the legislation. Do not include the school or team name. The legislation must include only the student author's name to receive authorship privilege.

JUDGING

Congressional Debate is daunting, but you do not need to know the ins and outs to successfully judge a session—you just need focus and a listening ear.

Judges will submit a **rank** and **two speech scores** for each student, including the PO. Congressional Debate is a blend of speech and debate—judges should consider both elements when ranking and scoring. A lower rank indicates a better performance (1 = best competitor in the round).

How to rank competitors in Congressional Debate

- ◆ **Flow the round as you would in a typical debate round:** You may organize your page differently to accommodate the number of speakers, but as long as you are recording the major arguments and clashes made and by whom, you are successfully flowing. At the end of the round, take a few minutes to review the flow before making any decisions. Recall which competitors made which arguments and the ultimate outcome of the clash (i.e. who won or lost?).
- ◆ **Reward “yardage”:** If a competitor makes a significant argument or point that shifts or moves the debate forward, this is a strong indication that they should be ranked highly (closer to 1). Often, competitors will provide an important perspective or information that makes you think, “Hmm. This changes things.”—often, this should be highly rewarded.
 - **Discourage rehash:** On the same token, penalize competitors whose arguments have already been stated or do not advance the debate. If an argument has already been given, subsequent speakers must refute or add to it.
- ◆ **Reward relevance and clash:** Competitors should ultimately debate with each other about the legislation. This means they must reference and refute the arguments made by other competitors. Reward students who directly engage and address the logic/warrant of other arguments.
 - Oftentimes, very relevant and significant arguments are disregarded by the other competitors simply because it is difficult to respond to or would force the other competitors to adjust their speech if they recognize the new information or argument. Penalize students who fail to address previously made arguments that are clearly relevant to their position (i.e. undermines or refutes).
- ◆ **Consider round structure:** Congressional Debate should follow the same rough structure of a typical debate round, with some competitors speaking early and giving constructive speeches (building up main arguments), and others speaking later and giving summary or final focus style speeches (breaking down or addressing arguments). Judges should evaluate speeches in the context of when the speech was given in the round:
 - A sponsor or author does not have the ability to refute because he/she gave the first speech.
 - Early round speeches have fewer arguments/speeches to refute, and late round speeches have a lot. The amount of refutation in each speech should correspond to the time of round.
 - Rule of thumb: Competitors should not give constructive speeches (speeches introducing main arguments for a side) beyond the halfway point of debate on a piece of legislation (i.e. after the 6th speech in a room with 12 speakers). Speeches should shift to refutation, summary and crystallization after this point.
- ◆ **Do not consider the votes made on the legislation:** Previous question (voting on legislation) is only intended to contribute to the atmosphere of a mock session. Whether a bill passes or fails should not affect ranks or scores.

- ◆ **Consider activity:** Beyond speaking, competitors will make motions, ask questions and have some presence in the round. Judges should reward active competitors with a positive presence who make helpful contributions to the round.

SCORING

How to score speeches in Congressional Debate

Speech scores are not used in tabulation in CD, but they are important as a tool for determining ranks and measuring student performance and improvement. Use the rubrics below to provide two speech scores for each competitor. Use the PO rubric for the PO.

Speaker

SCORE	DESCRIPTION
2 - Poor	Speech lacks organization, development or clarity. Limited evidence, analysis or engagement with the debate. Limited control of delivery and poor conduct may detract from the speech.
3 - Below Average	Speech demonstrates basic organization and argumentation. Some evidence and analysis are present, but arguments may be underdeveloped. Limited responsiveness to the debate.
4 - Average	Speech is clear and organized with relevant evidence and analysis. Demonstrates engagement with the debate and responds to prior arguments. Delivery is generally controlled.
5 - Above Average	Speech is well-organized and persuasive. Claims and warrants create solid arguments substantiated by evidence and analysis and the speaker effectively engages in clash. Robust delivery enhances understanding.
6 - Excellent	Speech is exceptionally clear, persuasive and/or thematic. Arguments are thoroughly developed through strong evidence and analysis. Refutation targets opposing warrants. Delivery is polished, compelling and memorable.

Preceding Officer

SCORE	DESCRIPTION
2 - Poor	Demonstrates limited knowledge of parliamentary procedure. Chamber management is improper or inconsistent. Recognizing speakers/questioners and motions is confusing or unfair.
3 - Below Average	Demonstrates basic procedural knowledge and chamber management. Some errors or inconsistencies occur in recognizing speakers/questioners and handling motions.
4 - Average	Demonstrates competent knowledge of parliamentary procedure and generally maintains control. Recognition of speakers/questioners and handling motions mostly follows procedure.
5 - Above Average	Demonstrates strong procedural knowledge and efficiently manages the chamber. Recognition of speakers/questioners is fast and accurate. Communicates clearly; motions handled effectively.
6 - Excellent	Demonstrates exceptional command of parliamentary procedure and chamber leadership. Recognition of speakers/questioners is efficient and accurate, communication is clear and professional, all motions are handled expeditiously and the chamber operates smoothly.

WHAT IS SPEECH?

In a speech event, students deliver either a memorized, pre-prepared speech or a speech prepared within a limited amount of time. Students perform before a judge or panel of judges who evaluate each speech based on event-specific criteria. Judges listen to and time each presentation, assign scores and rankings and provide written feedback.

FCDI offers multiple speech events. These events vary in preparation, speech length, rules, expectations and objectives. Speech events are divided into two broad categories: prepared speech and non-prepared (impromptu) speech.

PREPARED SPEECH EVENTS

Speeches are written, memorized and well-practiced in advance.

- ◆ Original Oratory: An often persuasive or inspiring speech written by the student that addresses a significant topic or advocates a clear message.
- ◆ Informative Speaking: A well-organized speech designed to educate the audience about a topic through clear explanations and visual aids.
- ◆ Oral Interpretation: Competitors perform selected passages from a work of prose or poetry, alternating between poetry and prose programs each round.

LIMITED PREPARATION SPEECH EVENTS

Speeches are prepared shortly before delivery with limited preparation time.

- ◆ Extemporaneous Speaking: A speech prepared within 30 minutes that answers a current-event or policy related question using research, analysis and evidence.
- ◆ Impromptu Speech: A speech prepared and delivered within 7 minutes that responds to a prompt, quote, word or topic with creativity and personal insight.

CONTENT REQUIREMENTS

All prepared and non-prepared speeches must comply with the content guidelines outlined in the Tournament Rules.

- Coaches must obtain parent/guardian permission for all prepared speech content.
- Notify tournament staff if a speech may contain prohibited content.
- ◆ Prepared speeches must be uploaded to the student roster on the FCDI website by the registration deadline for the tournament (required once per year per speech). Scripts should be resubmitted whenever revisions are made.
- ◆ Students may not re-use a prepared speech that was used at any speech and debate tournament in a prior year.

JUDGING

Judges submit a **rank**, a speech **score** and written feedback for every competitor during a round.

RANK

A rank represents the placement a judge assigns to a competitor within the round. Lower numerical ranks indicate stronger performances. For example, in a round with six competitors, a rank of 1 indicates the strongest performance, while a rank of 6 indicates the lowest-ranked performance in a round. Tournament advancement and final placements are determined primarily by ranks. Judges may not assign the same rank to more than one student.

SPEECH SCORE

Judges also assign a speech score for each competitor using the rubric for each specific event. Speech scores are used in tiebreaking (see [Tiebreaking](#)). Speech scores should correspond to ranks—a competitor assigned a higher rank than another competitor may not be assigned a lower speech score.

WRITTEN FEEDBACK

Judges must provide written comments for each competitor. Feedback should identify strengths, provide constructive suggestions for improvement and offer insight into evaluation. All comments must comply with judging guidelines and the [Code of Conduct](#).



Pro Tip: Use the language from the rubric to guide comment language.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Judges will use rubrics for each event to assign speech scores. The rubric should also serve as a general guide for evaluating competitors to determine rankings. Judges may award up to 20 points per category (100 points maximum per speech).

ORIGINAL ORATORY

In Original Oratory (OO), competitors perform an original, memorized speech about a topic of their choosing. The speech has a central theme, purpose or message and is often inspiring or persuasive.

RULES

- ◆ Speeches must be fully memorized. The use of a script or note card is not allowed. A competitor using notes must be ranked last.
- ◆ No visual aids or props are permitted.

JUDGING

Judges should use the rubric below to determine speech scores and as a guideline for rankings.

Speaker Points	10 - 11 POOR	12 - 13 BELOW AVERAGE	14 - 15 AVERAGE	16 - 17 ABOVE AVERAGE	18 - 20 EXCELLENT
Vocal Performance	Rate, volume, pronunciation and/or enunciation frequently interfere with understanding. No use of tone, emphasis and/or vocal variety.	Rate, volume, pronunciation and/or enunciation sometimes impedes understanding. Limited/ineffective use of tone, emphasis and/or vocal variety.	Rate, volume, pronunciation and/or enunciation are generally well-suited. Some use of tone, emphasis and vocal variety to support understanding.	Clear and consistent rate, volume, pronunciation and enunciation. Tone, emphasis and vocal variety enhances audience interest and understanding.	Outstanding rate, volume, pronunciation and enunciation. Tone, emphasis and vocal variety skillfully aid understanding and engagement.
Physical Performance	No/limited eye contact and use of facial expressions, body language or gestures. Posture and movement may detract from performance.	Inconsistent eye contact and use of facial expressions, body language or gestures. Posture or movement may sometimes support delivery but may also distract.	Consistent eye contact, facial expressions, body language and gestures generally support delivery. Posture and movement appear mostly purposeful.	Eye contact and use of facial expressions, body language and gestures reinforce understanding well. Posture and movement are controlled and confident.	Eye contact and dynamic facial expressions, body language and gestures elevate delivery. Confident posture and strategic movement improve engagement.
Organization	No clear or explicit organizational structure or roadmap; lacks introduction, body and/or conclusion. Ideas and/or support are disconnected.	Explicit structure with some structural elements present, but ineffective or poorly developed. Limited transitions; ideas or support not well connected.	Logically organized, explicit structure with a hook, introduction, body and conclusion. Ideas and support generally connect and transitions are somewhat effective.	Explicit structure is easy to follow and well-fit to the topic. Structural elements are clear and cohesive. Transitions effectively connect and support ideas.	Organization is highly clear, cohesive and reflects the topic. Structural elements synergize to reinforce information with vivid transitions.
Content	Problem or need for change is missing or unclear. Central message is weak or unsupported. Little or no use of examples or rhetorical appeals.	Problem is identified but unclear, underdeveloped or ill-suited. Message is weakly supported by examples and rhetorical appeals. Limited rhetorical awareness.	Problem and central message are generally clear and developed. Examples and rhetorical appeals present but may lack depth. Basic rhetorical awareness. Evidence/support is cited properly.	Clear and manageable problem and strong central message. Relevant examples with rhetorical appeals. Adapts to the rhetorical situation. Powerful evidence/support is woven throughout.	Compelling problem and exceptional central message. Sophisticated examples and rhetorical appeals persuasively call the audience to action. Rhetorical situation fully addressed. Powerful evidence legitimizes.
Overall	Speech time is significantly under- or over-time. Poor pacing or uneven development. Limited control of delivery.	Speech time is under 7 minutes or over 10 minutes. Inconsistent pacing and uneven or ineffective use of time. Most ideas or support are underdeveloped.	Speech time is within 7-8 minutes. Mostly balanced pacing and development. Absence of effective thematic or stylistic flair.	Speech time is within 9-10 minutes. Well-paced, consistent development of ideas. Presence is controlled and engaging.	Appropriate time with excellent pacing and development. Delivery confidently integrates vocal, physical and content elements. Includes style and theme.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

ORIGINAL ORATORY

VOCAL PERFORMANCE

Proper rate, pace, volume, pronunciation and enunciation contribute to clear communication. Emphasis, tone and vocal variety are used to improve audience understanding and maintain engagement.

PHYSICAL PERFORMANCE

Eye contact, facial expressions, body language and gestures reinforce delivery. Stance and posture are confident and controlled, and movement is purposeful. Repetitive or unintentional movement does not distract from the performance.

ORGANIZATION

The organization of an Original Oratory is explicitly explained in the introduction using a roadmap and should be easily recognizable throughout the speech. The way the speaker chooses to organize the speech should logically fit the topic and contribute to audience understanding. All structural elements are present, body sections are clearly defined and the conclusion effectively summarizes and circles back to the introduction. Transitions are used as effective tools to connect ideas, enhance cohesion and maintain audience interest.

CONTENT

Speakers identify a clear problem or need for change and persuade the audience through a well-developed and meaningful central message. Speeches clearly demonstrate a problem or need for change that can be meaningfully addressed through a speech and responds with logical reasoning, credible evidence and emotional and ethical appeals. Strong speeches demonstrate awareness of the rhetorical situation, including audience beliefs, values and constraints, and adapt accordingly. Evidence, examples and narratives should illustrate the problem, support a compelling solution or change and encourage reflection or action.

OVERALL PERFORMANCE

Judges should consider the length of the speech and how effectively the available time is used. Strong performances demonstrate appropriate pacing and balanced development of ideas throughout the speech. Creativity, individuality and the integration of vocal, physical and content elements may be taken into account when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the overall performance.

As a reminder when considering overall performance, speeches that exceed the designated grace period may not be awarded first or second place and judges should record all speech times in the ballot.

INFORMATIVE SPEAKING

In Informative Speaking (INF), competitors deliver an original, memorized speech designed to inform the audience about a concept, process, event or other topic. Effective speeches educate the audience in an engaging, expressive and creative manner while communicating information about the subject.

Competitors in Informative Speaking should use visual aids. Visual aids are most commonly boards placed on a tripod stand that are rotated in and out and are interacted with throughout the performance. Visual aids should be professional, clean and polished, but students are encouraged to be creative.

RULES

INFORMATIVE SPEAKING

TIME LIMIT

Speeches are limited to ten minutes with a grace period of thirty seconds. Competitors exceeding 10:30 may not be ranked first.

CONTENT RULES

- ◆ Speeches must be fully memorized. The use of a script or note card is not allowed. A competitor using notes must be ranked last.
- ◆ While visual aids are a mainstay of Informative Speaking, they are not required.
- ◆ Visual aids may not be digital or virtual (i.e. slides, video or digital photographs).
- ◆ Visual aids must not contain lights or sound effects.
- ◆ Competitors are responsible for promptly setting up and breaking down visual aids. No equipment will be provided.
- ◆ All speech and visual aid content must adhere to content guidelines (see [Tournament Rules](#)).
- ◆ All information must be factual, and students should be able to easily access sources if requested. All information and images must be properly cited on a work-cited page.

JUDGING

Judges should use the rubric below to determine speech scores and as a guideline for rankings.

INFORMATIVE SPEAKING RUBRIC

Speaker Points	10 - 11 POOR	12 - 13 BELOW AVERAGE	14 - 15 AVERAGE	16 - 17 ABOVE AVERAGE	18 - 20 EXCELLENT
Vocal Performance	Rate, volume, pronunciation and/or enunciation frequently interfere with understanding. No use of tone, emphasis and/or vocal variety.	Rate, volume, pronunciation and/or enunciation sometimes impedes understanding. Limited/ineffective use of tone, emphasis and/or vocal variety.	Rate, volume, pronunciation and/or enunciation are generally well-suited. Some use of tone, emphasis and vocal variety to support understanding.	Clear and consistent rate, volume, pronunciation and enunciation. Tone, emphasis and vocal variety enhances audience interest and understanding.	Outstanding rate, volume, pronunciation and enunciation. Tone, emphasis and vocal variety skillfully aid understanding and engagement.
Physical Performance	No/limited eye contact and use of facial expressions, body language or gestures. Posture and movement may appear distracting, awkward or unintentional.	Inconsistent eye contact and use of facial expressions, body language or gestures. Posture or movement may sometimes support delivery but may also distract.	Consistent eye contact, facial expressions, body language and gestures generally support delivery. Posture and movement appear mostly purposeful.	Eye contact and use of facial expressions, body language and gestures reinforce understanding well. Posture and movement are controlled and confident.	Eye contact and dynamic facial expressions, body language and gestures elevate delivery. Confident posture and strategic movement improve engagement.
Organization	No clear or explicit organizational structure or roadmap; lacks introduction, body and/or conclusion. Ideas and/or support are disconnected.	Explicit structure with some structural elements present, but ineffective or poorly developed. Limited transitions; ideas or support not well connected.	Logically organized, explicit structure with a hook, introduction, body and conclusion. Ideas and support generally connect and transitions are somewhat effective.	Explicit structure is easy to follow and well-fit to the topic. Structural elements are clear and cohesive. Transitions effectively connect and support ideas.	Organization is highly clear, cohesive and reflects the topic. Structural elements synergize to reinforce information with vivid transitions.
Content	The topic or scope is very poorly suited. Information is unclear, inaccurate or difficult to follow. Ineffective/ little use of visual aids.	The topic or scope is too broad or narrow. Information is limited in clarity or depth. Visual aids provide minimal support.	Appropriate topic and scope. Information is clear, accurate and well explained. Visual aids support understanding. Evidence/support is cited properly.	Topic and scope well explored in time limit. Information is clear and well developed. Visual aids effectively enhance understanding. Powerful evidence/ support is woven throughout.	Topic and scope is optimal for time allotted. Information is insightful, fully developed and engaging. Seamless use of visual aids. Compelling evidence/ support enhances and legitimizes message.
Overall	Speech time is significantly under- or over-time. Poor pacing or uneven development. Limited control of delivery.	Speech time is under 7 minutes or over 10 minutes. Inconsistent pacing and uneven or ineffective use of time. Most ideas or information are underdeveloped.	Speech time is within 7-8 minutes. Mostly balanced pacing and development. Absence of effective thematic or stylistic flair.	Speech time is within 9-10 minutes. Well-paced, consistent development of ideas. Presence is controlled and engaging.	Appropriate time with excellent pacing and development. Delivery confidently integrates vocal, physical and content elements. Includes style and theme.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

INFORMATIVE SPEAKING

VOCAL PERFORMANCE

Proper rate, pace, volume, pronunciation and enunciation contribute to clear communication. Emphasis, tone and vocal variety are used to improve audience understanding and maintain engagement.

PHYSICAL PERFORMANCE

Eye contact, facial expressions, body language and gestures reinforce delivery. Stance and posture are confident and controlled, and movement is purposeful. Repetitive or unintentional movement does not distract from the performance.

ORGANIZATION

The organization of an informative speech should be explicitly explained in the introduction using a roadmap and remain easily recognizable throughout the speech. The way the speaker chooses to organize the speech should logically fit the topic and contribute to audience understanding. All structural elements are present, body sections are clearly defined and the conclusion effectively summarizes and circles back to the introduction. Transitions are used as effective tools to connect ideas, enhance cohesion and maintain audience interest.

Examples of ways to organize an Informative Speech:

- ◆ Example 1 – Topic: Taiwanese independence
 - Past, present and future
 - Cultural, political socioeconomic considerations
- ◆ Example 2 – Topic: John Locke
 - Personal life, contemporary impact and historical impact
 - Natural Rights Theory, Social Contract Theory and influence on modern democracy
- ◆ Example 3 – Topic: East Asian Fashion Trends
 - Pre-colonial history, mid-century and modern periods
 - 70-80's, 90's-2000's and 2010's-2020's

CONTENT

The speaker clearly and accurately informs the audience about a topic that can be effectively explored in the 10-minute time limit. Information is relevant, well researched and presented in an engaging manner that promotes audience understanding. The introduction effectively contextualizes the topic and provides a clear roadmap for the body. Examples, explanations and visual aids work together to clarify key concepts and reinforce the speech's educational purpose. The most effective speeches demonstrate depth of knowledge, clear explanations and effective use of visual aids and thematic transitions to enhance comprehension and maintain audience interest.

OVERALL PERFORMANCE

Judges should consider the length of the speech and how effectively the available time is used. Strong performances demonstrate appropriate pacing and balanced development of ideas throughout the speech. Creativity, individuality and the integration of vocal, physical and content elements may be taken into account when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the overall

ORAL INTERPRETATION

Oral Interpretation is an interpretation event in which competitors perform one of two creative programs of published literature: one prose and one poetry, using a manuscript in a binder. Prose emphasizes storytelling and narration, while poetry emphasizes the performance of poetic language, rhythm and imagery.

Interpretation events require competitors to transform published literature into a performance. Competitors accomplish this by selectively performing certain portions of a larger work to create a complete performance within the time limit, called cutting, though it is possible for a competitor to select a singular piece of poetry and/or a singular piece of prose that meets the time requirements. Competitors use very limited movement (feet are planted) and rely primarily on posture, gestures and facial expressions to represent the emotions, characters and meaning of the text to the audience. Competitors use their voice, physicality and the creative assembly of their material to create an engaging interpretation that vividly demonstrates their unique interpretation of the text. Judges should consider how effectively all of these choices combined communicate the meaning of the text.

TIME LIMIT

Performances are limited to 10 minutes with a 30 second grace period. Competitors exceeding 10:30 may not be ranked first. Performances under 5 minutes may not be ranked first.

RULES

◆ Alternating Rounds

● Regional and Online Qualifier Tournaments

Round 1	Prose
Round 2	Poetry
Round 3	Prose
Round 4	Poetry

- **State Championship:** The literature performed will alternate every round starting with Prose in round 1 of prelims. Round 2 of prelims is poetry, round 3 is prose, and so on until the final round.

◆ Selecting Literature: Students must perform prose or poetry a piece corresponding to the round. Students performing a prose piece in a poetry round or vice versa must be ranked last.

- **Prose:** Fiction or non-fiction writing represented in sentences and paragraphs.
- **Poetry (all forms):** Writing that expresses ideas by arranging words in verses or stanzas according to sound, rhythm or meaning. Free verse is permissible.
- Prose literature selections may not include plays or drama/theatre but may include public address speeches until the 2027-2028 school year.
- All content must adhere to the Prohibited Content guidelines.

- ◆ **Presentation:** All competitors must use a handheld binder during their performance (A5 mini, 5.5 x 8.5 Inches). Competitors should not read directly, word for word from the binder – they should maintain the illusion of reading from it while utilizing it in the performance. The complete script/program of the student's Prose and Poetry pieces must be printed and placed inside the binder. The outside of the binder must be solid black (no stickers, prints, etc. permitted) and in good condition. Reading directly from a book, device or any other source is not permitted.
- ◆ **Introduction:** All performances should include an introduction that provides the title and author of the work and any necessary background information.
- ◆ **Script/Program:** Coaches must submit both a student's prose and poetry scripts as a PDF to the student roster at FCDI registration. The script upload should include the performance script AND a work cited page indicating the page numbers used.
- ◆ **Editing:** Competitors may cut selections from a larger work as necessary to create a complete and coherent performance within the time limit. All edits should preserve the author's intent, meaning and voice. Competitors may not edit or alter the literature in a way except cutting. Lines attributed to one character may not be attributed to another character.

JUDGING

Judges should use the rubric below to determine speech scores and as a guideline for rankings.

ORAL INTERPRETATION RUBRIC

Speaker Points	10 - 11 POOR	12 - 13 BELOW AVERAGE	14 - 15 AVERAGE	16 - 17 ABOVE AVERAGE	18 - 20 EXCELLENT
Vocal Performance	Rate, volume, emphasis, tone, pronunciation and/or enunciation frequently interfere with understanding and interpretation or no attempt is made to use voice for interpretation.	Rate, volume, enunciation or stylistic choices sometimes impede understanding/ impact interpretation.	Rate, volume, enunciation and stylistic choices support interpretation. Use of variety in tone, emphasis help establish characters, setting and mood.	Strategic use of rate, volume, tone, emphasis and vocal variety strengthens characterization, mood and audience understanding for creative interpretation.	Exceptional vocal control and stylistic vocal choices seamlessly enhance characterization, setting and mood demonstrating creative interpretation and maximum audience engagement.
Physical Performance	Little eye contact or purposeful facial expression, body language or gestures. Posture and movement are distracting or awkward.	Inconsistent eye contact, facial expression, body language or gestures. Posture and movement sometimes support, but may distract from, the interpretation.	Effective eye contact, facial expression, body language and gestures generally support the interpretation. Posture and movement are purposeful.	Skillful use of eye contact, facial expression, posture and movement strengthen the interpretation and draw the audience into the text.	Purposeful, nuanced physical expression fully supports the interpretation. Confident, seamless execution immerses the audience in the text.
Content Interpretation	Limited understanding of the text. Meaning, themes, tone, imagery or emotion are unclear. Selection choices fail to engage the audience or communicate the significance of the text.	Conveys some meaning, but interpretation lacks depth or consistency. Themes, tone, imagery and emotion are uneven, limiting audience connection. Editorial choices are confusing.	Clearly communicates the meaning, themes, tone and emotion of the text. Interpretation is generally consistent and supports audience understanding. Editorial choices make sense.	Thoughtful interpretation conveys the meaning, themes, imagery, tone and emotion of the text. Purposeful editorial choices deepen audience understanding and connection.	Sophisticated interpretation brings the text to life. Every editorial choice strengthens meaning, emotion, imagery and audience impact with exceptional artistry.
Program Construction	Introductions, teasers, transitions and selected passages do not effectively communicate the meaning, significance or emotions of the text.	Introductions, teasers, transitions and selected passages communicate some elements and meaning of the text but lack consistency or effective connection.	Introductions, teasers, transitions and selected passages communicate the main ideas, themes and emotions of the original text. The audience feels connected to the texts.	Introductions, teasers, transitions and selected passages effectively communicate meaning and significance of the text. Editorial choices enhance imagery, emotion and audience connection.	Introductions, teasers, transitions and selected passages powerfully demonstrate the meaning and significance of the text. Novel choices create vivid imagery, powerful emotion and lasting connection.
Overall Performance	Performance is less than 2 minutes and/ or total time exceeds grace period. Poor pacing or uneven development. Heavy reliance on script. Limited control of delivery.	Performance is 2-5 mins. Inconsistent pacing and uneven or ineffective use of time. Most ideas are underdeveloped. Distracting reliance on script.	Performance is 5 or more minutes. Mostly balanced pacing and development. Delivery and structure are passable. Moderate reliance on script.	Performance is greater than 5 minutes and well-paced with consistent development of ideas. Minimal reliance on script. Controlled and engaging delivery.	Performance is greater than 5 minutes with excellent pacing and development. Delivery strategically utilizes the binder. Performance creates a heavy impact.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

ORAL INTERPRETATION

VOCAL PERFORMANCE

Exceptional vocal control and stylistic vocal choices seamlessly enhance characterization, setting and mood demonstrating creative interpretation and maximum audience engagement.

PHYSICAL PERFORMANCE

Purposeful, nuanced physical expression fully supports the interpretation. Confident, seamless execution immerses the audience in the text.

ORGANIZATION

The piece follows an effective storytelling structure with progression through a clear beginning, climax and conclusion or end. The story, themes, emotions or ideas of the piece are clear and easy to follow. The order of selected passages and transitions between sections contributes to logical progression and supports the audience's understanding of the overall interpretation. The arrangement of passages from the original text effectively interprets and communicates the meaning and significance of the literature, creating strong imagery, emotions and impact on the audience. Strong performances preserve the intent of the text while making purposeful choices that enhance the audience's understanding and connection to the text. Students should include an introduction to the text. A teaser and transitions may be used.

CONTENT INTERPRETATION

Sophisticated interpretation brings the text to life. Every editorial choice strengthens meaning, emotion, imagery and audience impact with exceptional artistry. Student analyses of the texts in their programs should be demonstrated through editing, order, vocal and physical performance decisions as well as explicitly stated in the introduction and when applicable--transitions.

PROGRAM CONSTRUCTION

The selection, organization and adaptation of the text should effectively communicate the meaning, themes and significance of the text. This includes the quality of introductions, teasers, transitions and selected passages, as well as how seamlessly they work together to create a cohesive and engaging performance. Strong program construction enhances audience understanding, emotional impact and connection while preserving the integrity and intent of the source material.

OVERALL PERFORMANCE

Judges should consider the length of the speech and how effectively the available time is used. Strong performances demonstrate appropriate pacing and balanced development of ideas throughout the speech. Creativity, individuality and the integration of vocal, physical and content elements may be taken into account when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the overall performance. The student's use of the binder as a storytelling tool should also be considered.

As a reminder when considering overall performance, speeches that exceed the designated grace period may not be awarded first rank and judges should record all speech times in the ballot.

EXTEMPORANEOUS SPEAKING

In Extemporaneous Speaking (EXT), competitors prepare and deliver a researched and supported speech to answer a question related to current events, public policy or contemporary issues within a limited time. Strong extemporaneous speeches clearly answer the question, are organized around well-developed arguments, and feature thoughtful analysis using relevant evidence.

PREPARATION TIME

- ◆ Competitors will report to the designated prep room for Extemporaneous Speaking at the scheduled time.
- ◆ Each competitor will be called up to pull three questions from an envelope, select one of the three, then place the remaining two back into the envelope within 20 seconds.
- ◆ Competitors have thirty minutes to prepare once a question has been selected. Competitors may not leave the preparation room until dismissed by tournament staff. Communication with any person except tournament staff during prep time is prohibited.
- ◆ Students may use devices and internet while preparing speeches, but not AI.
- ◆ Once their prep time is up, competitors report to their competition room immediately to give their speech. Students will enter the competition room to give their speech to the judge one at a time-- as one student finishes their speech, the next student finishes prep.

TIME LIMIT

Speeches are limited to seven minutes with a thirty second grace period. Competitors exceeding 7:30 may not be ranked first. Judges should note the speaking time on each ballot. A competitor may ask the judge for time signals. The judge should always keep time and is the official timekeeper.

RULES

Students may use a device/internet and/or notes during prep time.

- ◆ Competitors may use FCDI/FDI branded note card provided by tournament. Competitors may not supply their own note card.

Competitors must report to the competition room immediately once prep time ends. If a

- ◆ competitor arrives more than five minutes late, they may be forced to forfeit the round.

JUDGING AND EVALUATION

EXTEMPORANEOUS SPEAKING

EXTEMPORANEOUS SPEAKING RUBRIC

Speaker Points	10 - 11 POOR	12 - 13 BELOW AVERAGE	14 - 15 AVERAGE	16 - 17 ABOVE AVERAGE	18 - 20 EXCELLENT
Vocal Performance	Rate, pace, volume, pronunciation and/or enunciation frequently interfere with understanding. No use of tone, emphasis and/or vocal variety.	Rate, pace, volume, pronunciation and/or enunciation sometimes impedes understanding. Limited/ineffective use of tone, emphasis and/or vocal variety.	Rate, pace, volume, pronunciation and/or enunciation are generally well-suited. Some use of tone, emphasis and vocal variety to support understanding.	Clear and consistent rate, pace, volume, pronunciation and enunciation. Tone, emphasis and vocal variety enhances audience interest and understanding	Outstanding rate, pace, volume, pronunciation and enunciation. Tone, emphasis and vocal variety skillfully aid understanding and engagement.
Physical Performance	No/limited eye contact and use of facial expressions, body language or gestures. Posture and movement may appear distracting, awkward or unintentional.	Inconsistent eye contact and use of facial expressions, body language or gestures. Posture or movement may sometimes support delivery but may also distract.	Consistent eye contact, facial expressions, body language and gestures generally support delivery. Posture and movement appear mostly purposeful.	Eye contact and use of facial expressions, body language and gestures reinforce understanding well. Posture and movement are controlled and confident.	Eye contact and dynamic facial expressions, body language and gestures elevate delivery. Confident posture and strategic movement improve engagement.
Organization	No clear or explicit structure, roadmap or answer to the question; lacks introduction, body and/or conclusion. Transitions are absent or confusing.	Explicit structure with some structural elements present, but ineffective or poorly developed. Limited transitions; ideas or support not well connected.	Logically organized, explicit structure. Examples/evidence generally connect and transitions are somewhat effective	Logically organized, explicit structure is easy to follow. Structural elements are clear and cohesive. Transitions effectively connect and support ideas.	Organization is exceptionally clear, cohesive and logical. Transitions flow smoothly and structural elements synergize to reinforce arguments.
Content	Lacks a clear answer to the question. Claims, evidence and analysis are weak, irrelevant or unclear.	Attempts to answer the question, but claims are underdeveloped or ineffectively supported by weak evidence and analysis.	Clear answer supported by relevant evidence and analysis, though ideas may be underdeveloped or connections unclear.	Well-developed answer supported by strong evidence and thoughtful analysis. Style and rhetorical choices enhance effectiveness.	Persuasive answer supported by strong, well-integrated evidence and insightful analysis. Style and creativity strengthen impact.
Overall	Less than 2 minutes is spent speaking. Poor pacing or uneven development. Limited control of delivery.	2-4 minutes is spent speaking. Inconsistent pacing and uneven or ineffective use of time. Most ideas are underdeveloped.	4-6 minutes is spent speaking. Mostly balanced pacing and development. Absence of effective thematic or stylistic flair.	6-7 minutes is spent speaking. Well-paced with consistent development of ideas. Controlled and engaging delivery.	About 7 minutes is spent speaking with excellent pacing and development. Delivery integrates vocal, physical and content elements. Includes style and/or theme.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

EXTEMPORANEOUS SPEAKING

VOCAL PERFORMANCE

Proper rate, pace, volume, pronunciation and enunciation contribute to clear communication. Emphasis, tone and vocal variety are used to improve audience understanding and maintain engagement.

PHYSICAL PERFORMANCE

Eye contact, facial expressions, body language and gestures reinforce delivery. Stance and posture are confident and controlled, and movement is purposeful. Repetitive or unintentional movement does not distract from the performance.

ORGANIZATION

The speech demonstrates a clear and logical structure that effectively frames the speaker's arguments. The introduction contains a hook or attention-grabbing device and a roadmap or preview of the main arguments. The main arguments are clearly presented and defined in the body of the speech, and the conclusion effectively summarizes the answer through the main points. Transitions help ideas feel distinct but connected and cohesive.

CONTENT

The objective of each structural element (hook, intro, body and conclusion) of the speech is well executed. A dynamic hook creates interest, while the introduction contextualizes the question, establishes a direct answer and previews the speaker's main arguments. The body develops the main arguments with strong, relevant evidence and thoughtful analysis to reinforce the speaker's claims and substantiate the central answer. Effective use of style, voice and rhetorical or literary devices enhances audience engagement. The conclusion reinforces the speaker's response to the question, reiterates the key arguments and circles back to the introduction or hook.

OVERALL PERFORMANCE

Judges should consider the length of the speech and how effectively the available time is used. Strong performances demonstrate appropriate pacing and balanced development of ideas throughout the speech. Creativity, individuality and the integration of vocal, physical and content elements may be taken into account when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the overall performance.

As a reminder when considering overall performance, speeches that exceed the designated grace period may not be awarded first rank and judges should record all speech times in the ballot.

IMPROMPTU SPEAKING

In Impromptu Speaking (IMP), competitors are given a prompt and have seven minutes to prepare and deliver a speech supporting, qualifying or disproving the prompt's overall meaning.

PROCEDURE

All IMP rounds follow the same order of events:

1. All competitors enter the room simultaneously with judge permission. The judge takes attendance (notify tournament staff if participants are missing).
2. The judge will receive an envelope containing prompts on slips of paper. The first speaker listed on the ballot will draw three from the envelope.
3. The competitor reads the three prompts and selects one within 30 seconds. The two remaining slips are placed back in the envelope.
4. The judge starts the stopwatch, and the competitor begins to prep (without device/internet use).
5. The student stands to begin their speech, and the judge notes the prep time. The judge provides time signals if requested.
6. The competitor finishes speaking, and the judge notes the prep, speaking and total time on the ballot. The next competitor is called.

TIME LIMIT

The total time to prepare and deliver an impromptu speech may not exceed seven minutes with a grace period of thirty seconds. Competitors exceeding 7:30 may not be ranked first. Judges should note the prep, speaking and total time on each ballot. A competitor may request to time themselves (with a timer only, no electronic devices permitted) or ask the judge for time signals. The judge should always keep time and is the official timekeeper.

RULES

- ◆ No competitor or observer may use a device (other than a timer) or access the internet during the round (while prepping, waiting to speak or while someone else is prepping or speaking). Students using an internet/cellular device during round may be disqualified.
- ◆ Competitors may use an FCDI/FDI branded note card provided by the tournament. Competitors may not supply their own notecard.
- ◆ Students must remain in the competition room for the duration of the round.

JUDGING

Judges should use the rubric below to determine speech scores and as a guideline for rankings.

JUDGING AND EVALUATION

IMPROMPTU SPEAKING

Speaker Points	10 - 11 POOR	12 - 13 BELOW AVERAGE	14 - 15 AVERAGE	16 - 17 ABOVE AVERAGE	18 - 20 EXCELLENT
Vocal Performance	Rate, pace, volume, pronunciation and/or enunciation frequently interfere with understanding. No use of tone, emphasis and/or vocal variety.	Rate, pace, volume, pronunciation and/or enunciation sometimes impedes understanding. Limited/ineffective use of tone, emphasis and/or vocal variety.	Rate, pace, volume, pronunciation and/or enunciation are generally well-suited. Some use of tone, emphasis and vocal variety to support understanding.	Clear and consistent rate, pace, volume, pronunciation and enunciation. Tone, emphasis and vocal variety enhances audience interest and understanding	Outstanding rate, pace, volume, pronunciation and enunciation. Tone, emphasis and vocal variety skillfully aid understanding and engagement.
Physical Performance	No/limited eye contact and use of facial expressions, body language or gestures. Posture and movement may appear distracting, awkward or unintentional.	Inconsistent eye contact and use of facial expressions, body language or gestures. Posture or movement may sometimes support delivery but may also distract.	Consistent eye contact, facial expressions, body language and gestures generally support delivery. Posture and movement appear mostly purposeful.	Eye contact and use of facial expressions, body language and gestures reinforce understanding well. Posture and movement are controlled and confident.	Eye contact and dynamic facial expressions, body language and gestures elevate delivery. Confident posture and strategic movement improve engagement.
Organization	No clear organizational structure; lacks introduction, body and/or conclusion. No transitions; ideas and support are disconnected.	Some structural elements are present, but are unclear or poorly developed. Limited transitions; ideas or support are not well connected.	Recognizable structure with a hook, introduction, body and conclusion. Examples/support generally connect and transitions are somewhat effective.	Logically organized and easy to follow. Structural elements are clear and cohesive. Transitions effectively connect and support ideas.	Organization is highly clear, cohesive and may connect to a theme. Structural elements synergize to reinforce message with vivid transitions.
Content	Interpretation of the prompt is unclear or nonsensical. Unclear or off-topic stance or message/theme. Little or no use of relevant examples/support.	Poor or unclear interpretation of the prompt. Underdeveloped or unclear stance or central message. Weak or irrelevant examples/support.	Clear and reasonable interpretation of the prompt. Stance and message/theme mostly supported by some relevant examples/support.	Interpretation of the prompt is insightful, creative or logical. Well-developed message/theme supported by relevant examples/support.	Interpretation of the prompt is highly insightful, creative or logical. Message/theme is significant/meaningful and supported effectively.
Overall	Less than 2 minutes is spent speaking and/or total time exceeds grace period. Poor pacing or uneven development. Heavy reliance on notes. Limited control of delivery.	2-3 minutes is spent speaking. Inconsistent pacing and uneven or ineffective use of time. Most ideas are underdeveloped. Distracting reliance on notes.	3-4 minutes is spent speaking. Mostly balanced pacing and development. Absence of effective thematic or stylistic flair. Moderate reliance on notes.	4-5 minutes is spent speaking. Speech is well-paced with consistent development of ideas. Minimal reliance on notes. Controlled and engaging delivery.	More than 5 minutes is spent speaking with excellent pacing and development. Little/no use of notes. Delivery confidently integrates vocal, physical and content elements. Includes style or theme.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

IMPROMPTU SPEAKING

VOCAL PERFORMANCE

Proper rate, pace, volume, pronunciation and enunciation contribute to clear communication. Emphasis, tone and vocal variety are used to improve audience understanding and maintain engagement.

PHYSICAL PERFORMANCE

Eye contact, facial expressions, body language and gestures reinforce delivery. Stance and posture are confident and controlled, and movement is purposeful. Repetitive or unintentional movement does not distract from the performance.

ORGANIZATION

The speech demonstrates a clear and logical structure that supports the speaker's central message. The introduction contains a hook or attention-grabbing device and a roadmap or preview of the speech. The body is clearly defined and contains the central message and examples, and the conclusion effectively summarizes the speech. Transitions help ideas feel distinct but connected and cohesive.

CONTENT

The speech has a meaningful, well-supported central theme or message developed in response to the prompt. The student's interpretation of the prompt's meaning is insightful, creative, entertaining and/or logical and well-established. A stance (support, disprove or qualify) on the meaning of the prompt is clearly taken and effectively crafted into a central theme or message. Well-selected anecdotes, examples or evidence directly develop the connection between examples and the central theme or message. Effective content demonstrates depth of thought, logical development of ideas and thematic style.

OVERALL PERFORMANCE

Judges should consider the length of the speech and how effectively the available time is used. Strong performances demonstrate appropriate pacing and balanced development of ideas throughout the speech. Consideration should also be given to the speaker's reliance on notes. Additionally, creativity, individuality and the integration of vocal, physical and content elements may be taken into account when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the overall performance.

As a reminder when considering overall performance, speeches that exceed the designated grace period may not be awarded first place and judges should record all speech times in the ballot.

WE THE PEOPLE: A CITIZEN SHOWDOWN

We the People: A Citizen Showdown is a trivia event that allows students to demonstrate their knowledge of American history, government and civics in a game-show style competition. Competitors use buzzers to respond to rapid fire questions and earn the most points.

RULES

- ◆ **Questions:** A judge will read each question aloud. Competitors may not press the buzzer until the judge has finished reading the question. A competitor who buzzes before the question is fully read forfeits the opportunity to answer that question (this does not apply to a question being repeated).
- ◆ **Buzzers:** After the judge has finished reading a question, competitors have 10 seconds to press their buzzer to signal that they wish to answer. The student who buzzes first is given the first opportunity to answer. If that answer is incorrect, the other students may buzz in again. If the second student does not answer correctly, the question is skipped. If no student buzzes in after 5 seconds, the judge may repeat the question.
- ◆ **Answer promptly:** A student who is recognized after buzzing must answer immediately. If the student pauses or hesitates, the answer is ruled incorrect.
- ◆ **No outside help:** Students must answer without external assistance or communication. Notes, books, electronic devices or other forms of assistance are prohibited.
- ◆ **One answer only:** Once a student provides an answer, it may not be changed or supplemented.
- ◆ **No strategic buzzing:** Students should only buzz when they believe they know the answer. Repeatedly buzzing without attempting a genuine answer, or buzzing solely to prevent others from answering, is prohibited.
- ◆ **Cooldown:** If a student is the first to buzz in on five consecutive questions, the student enters a cooldown period for the next two questions and may not buzz during those questions. This gives other competitors an opportunity to participate.
- ◆ **Points:** Students earn two points for each correct answer and lose one point for each incorrect answer.
- ◆ **Accuracy:** The judge(s) determines whether an answer is correct or incorrect. The judge's determination is final.

QUESTIONS

Questions may consist of knowledge and challenge questions. Knowledge questions test competitors' ability to recall information about American history, government and civics, whereas challenge questions require students to apply their knowledge of these subjects.

Example of questions:

- ◆ **Knowledge question:** Which Constitutional amendment protects freedom of the press?
- ◆ **Challenge question:** A newspaper publishes an article criticizing elected officials. Government officials demand that the newspaper remove the article. Which amendment to the United States Constitution most directly protects the newspaper's right to publish the article?

Questions are designed to assess students' knowledge and understanding of middle and high school civics, American history and government benchmarks, as well as related topics. Competitors should study the relevant benchmarks for the grade levels included in their division.

ROUND STRUCTURE

One round consists of three 10-minute periods of competition with 5-minute breaks between each period.

Period One	10 minutes
Break	5 minutes
Period Two	10 minutes
Break	5 minutes
Period Three	10 minutes

SCORING

Final placements at regional qualifier tournaments are determined by the total points across all rounds. Advancement to elimination rounds at the State Championship are determined by total points across all preliminary rounds. Advancement to subsequent elimination rounds is determined by the total points earned during the prior elimination round. Final placements are determined by total points earned in the final round.

Ties in We the People will not be broken at regional tournaments. If the competitors tied for a final placement or bid, both competitors will receive it (and the subsequent placement will be eliminated; i.e. a two-way tie for first would eliminate second place). Ties at the State Championship will be broken by a 10-question mini round between the tied students.

JUDGING

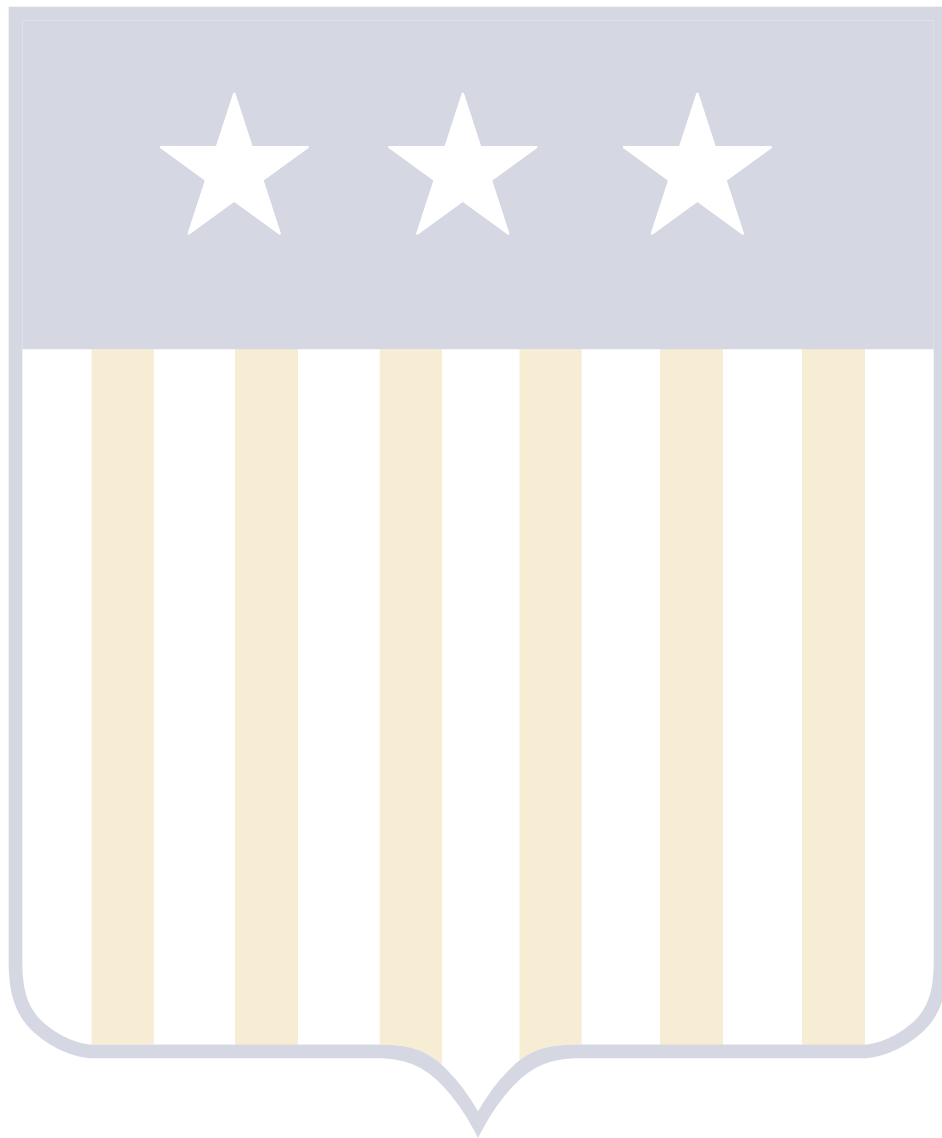
The buzzer system will be set up prior to the arrival of judges or competitors. The judge(s) should locate the moderator's clicker and any paper materials provided (scoring sheet and judge guide). The moderator's clicker is a lever-shaped button attached to the main system console with a cord. When pressed, the clicker resets the buzzers. The moderator should click the button after a student answers a question.

The judge(s) should start a timer once the question has been fully read. If no competitor buzzes in after 5 seconds, the judge(s) may repeat the question. If no student buzzes in after 10 seconds, the question is skipped. If a competitor buzzes in before the question is fully read, the competitor may not answer the question.

If a competitor buzzes in first five times consecutively, the competitor may not buzz in for the next two questions.

Students must answer immediately once recognized. If a student pauses or hesitates, count the answer as incorrect. The judge may use their discretion to evaluate the accuracy of answers. Not all acceptable answers may be listed.

COACHING



COACH RESPONSIBILITIES

Coaches play an invaluable role in shaping the success, culture and development of a speech and debate team. The following responsibilities outline key practices that support student growth, team success and positive team experience.

COMMUNICATION AND ORGANIZATION

One of the most important aspects of coaching is organizing information for your team and communicating with members, parents, judges and administrators. Coaches will need to communicate with each of the following groups:

Communication with parents:

Documents and information: Coaches will need to collect and submit media releases and information for tournament registration and any required paperwork for field trips/participation in speech and debate tournaments.

Calendar and registration: Provide a tournament calendar for the team and create a way for parents and students to sign up for competitions, practices and/or meetings.

Tournament information: Provide relevant information on tournaments and events (i.e. rules, expectations, drop-off and pick-up locations and times, schedule, etc.).

Volunteering or judging: Parents are invaluable resources as volunteers, chaperones and/or judges. Communicate to coordinate roles, requirements and availability.

Day-of communication: Provide a way to communicate with parents/guardians during tournaments.

Communication with students/competitors:

Recruitment: Advertise the team (flyers, intercom announcements, social media posts, club pages, school website or newspaper etc.) to students.

Calendar and registration: Provide a tournament calendar and sign-ups for tournaments, practices and meetings. Communicate clear deadlines for signing up for and withdrawing from tournaments.

Tournament information: Provide relevant information on tournaments and events (i.e. rules, expectations, drop-off and pick-up locations and times, schedule, etc.).

Expectations and conduct: Explain what participation looks like in speech and debate, how a tournament will go and communicate expectations for student behavior.

- Provide clear expectations, roles and responsibilities for student leaders.
- Create and communicate mechanisms for accountability.
- Ensure all students have read and understand the handbook and code of conduct.

Day-of communication: Provide a way to communicate with students during tournaments.

Communication with judges:

Recruitment: Advertise judging opportunities to the school, parents/guardians and community.

Availability and tournament information: Coordinate availability for tournaments and provide relevant information (location, schedule, parking, etc.). Ensure judges for online tournaments understand their obligation for the full duration of the tournament.

Resources and judge training: Explain what judging speech and debate looks like in practice and direct judges to the judge page on the FCDI website and the required online judge training course. If a judge must register with the district to volunteer at a school-related event, direct judges to the appropriate signup.

Day-of communication: Provide a way to communicate with judges during tournaments. Ensure judges understand that attendance is mandatory and that they must notify you if they can no longer attend or must withdraw.

Communication with administrators:

School and district policies/requirements: Coordinate with school and district administrators to ensure that participation in tournaments, practices and other speech and debate activities satisfies all policies and requirements, especially for travel or overnight events.

Chaperones and proxy coaches: If participation in a tournament requires a proxy coach or additional chaperones, work with administration to complete the necessary paperwork.

Transportation: School or district administration may be able to help with arranging transportation to and from tournaments.

Bookkeeping: Set up an account for your team and collaborate with the bookkeeper to manage funds.

Communication with FCDI/FDI:

Receiving information: The FCDI and FDI will post applications, forms and important information on the website, social media and announcements via email. Coaches should monitor each regularly.

Registration: Make sure to maintain up to date and accurate coach, team and student registration on the FCDI website and SpeechWire. Update the student roster and submit proxy letters as needed.

Questions and support: The FCDI and FDI are always here to help. Please reach out as necessary (FCDI@fldoe.org and info@floridadebate.org)

EXAMPLE METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

- Emails (regular/scheduled and announcements as needed)
- Existing school LMS or Google Classroom for posting resources, calendar and other information
- Google Forms (for collecting signups, information, documents, scripts, etc.)
- Team contract for parents and students with clear expectations and requirements

LOGISTICS

Coaches are responsible for arranging the logistics of tournament participation. This includes registration, field trip forms and approvals, communication, transportation, lodging and preparation. The FCDI offers a Team Support Stipend to help cover the cost of competition (see [Stipends](#)).

Teams participating in FCDI speech and debate tournaments are required to arrange their own transportation to and from the event. It is the responsibility of each team to ensure compliance with their respective school and district policies regarding student transportation. This includes adhering to guidelines for safety, supervision and any specific regulations governing the transportation of students to off-campus activities. By organizing their transportation arrangements responsibly and in accordance with school policies, teams contribute to smooth and successful participation in tournaments.

★ **Pro Tip:** It is strongly recommended to create a contractual document for parents to acknowledge their responsibilities regarding transportation. Having a signed document clearly listing the who, what, when and where of drop-off, carpooling and pick-up will go far in eliminating confusion and setting and upholding boundaries. It is imperative that parents provide a phone number to the coach for contact on tournament days.

COMPETITION

Coaches perform lots of responsibilities to help students build skills and prepare for competition:

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Coaches help students develop essential speech and debate skills, including research, argumentation, public speaking and critical thinking. They provide guidance, instruction and feedback to help students improve their performance. To accomplish this, conduct workshops, training sessions and practices focused on specific speech and debate skills. Offer hands-on exercises, drills and simulations to reinforce learning and skill acquisition.

DEBATE DRILLS AND EXERCISES

Conduct debate drills and exercises to help students practice argumentation, rebuttal and cross-examination skills. Create scenarios and case studies for students to analyze, develop arguments and engage in structured debates.

MOCK COMPETITIONS

Organize mock competitions or practice rounds to simulate tournament conditions and provide students with valuable experience and feedback. Rotate roles as competitors, judges and timekeepers to expose students to different perspectives and challenges.

★ **Pro Tip:** Having students judge their peers as similarly as possible to judging a real round is an invaluable way for students to understand a judge's perspective and adjust performances accordingly.

PERFORMANCE COACHING

Offer one-on-one coaching sessions to help students refine their speech delivery, stage presence and performance techniques. Provide feedback on vocal variety, body language, pacing and overall presentation style. Provide sign-ups for meeting times.

TOURNAMENT PREPARATION

Prepare students for upcoming tournaments by conducting mock rounds with the published resolutions, topic areas or legislation for the tournament, refining strategies and addressing logistical considerations such as travel arrangements and competition etiquette. Help students develop pre-competition rituals and routines to stay focused and relaxed on tournament day. Communicate and adhere to deadlines and tournament rules.

RESEARCH SUPPORT

Provide guidance and resources to support students' research efforts on speech topics, argumentation, and current events. Point students to resources and teach effective research methods and citation practices.

PEER FEEDBACK AND COLLABORATION

Encourage peer feedback and collaboration among team members. Facilitate peer review sessions where students can provide constructive criticism, share insights and offer support to one another. Model feedback and provide rubrics and comment stems. This can be organized through a student exec board or other student leadership.

VIDEO ANALYSIS

Record students' performances during practice sessions for later review and analysis. Use video playback to identify strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement in speech delivery, body language and overall performance. Encourage students to self-critique videos.

GOAL SETTING AND PROGRESS TRACKING

Work with students to set clear, achievable goals for skill improvement and competition performance. Establish benchmarks and milestones to track progress over time and celebrate successes along the way. SMART Goals are helpful.

REFLECTION

Encourage students to reflect after tournaments by reviewing their feedback (ballots), areas for improvement and setting goals for future development. Foster a growth mindset that embraces challenges and values continuous learning and improvement.

COACH CHECKLIST FOR TOURNAMENT REGISTRATION

BEFORE THE TOURNAMENT

1. **FCDI Team Registration:** Due on Friday the week before a tournament. Complete once for 2026-2027 and update coaches or the student roster as needed.
2. **SpeechWire Tournament Registration:** Student and judge entries are due on Friday the week before a tournament.
3. **Judge Completion of the Online Judge Training Course:** Ensure all judges have signed up and completed the course at least a week before their first tournament (only required once for 2026-2027).

FCDI TEAM REGISTRATION

◆ STEP 1: REGISTER YOUR TEAM

Provide some background information about your team.

◆ STEP 2: REGISTER COACHES

Name the official head and assistant coach of record.

◆ STEP 3: COMPLETE STUDENT ROSTER

Enter all students competing in FCDI tournaments in 2026-2027.

SPEECHWIRE

◆ STEP 1: CREATE YOUR ACCOUNT

Create/log into your account on www.speechwire.com. At the top of the page, click on the "Your Account" link. If you already have an account, simply log-in. If you need to create an account, click the button labeled "Create Account" and follow the instructions listed (make sure to follow the team naming conventions; see [FCDI Membership](#)).

◆ STEP 2: CREATE A TEAM ROSTER

Select the "Team Roster" icon. Add new student member names AND email addresses. The email address is important as this is how the students will access ballots after the tournament. Students will need to activate their accounts. You can see which students have activated their accounts on your roster. You can always go back and add email addresses if you don't have them at the time. Once your account and roster are created, you will skip the first two steps in the future.

◆ STEP 3: FIND YOUR TOURNAMENT

You can do this one of two ways.

- You can use the "Tournament Calendar" link on the left hand margin on the Speechwire home page. Click on that link and find the tournament you wish to register for. Click on the "register" link and then log into your account.
- If you are already in your account, go back to your home page. Select the "Tournament Registration" icon. You may see the tournament listed if you were invited or if you had marked the tournament as attending when you were browsing the calendar.

◆ STEP 4: REGISTER

You will see a series of icons to work your way through. You will update your entries, update your judges and view your entries (as a double check). FCDI tournaments are free for in-state teams – please disregard the invoice.

NEW COACH TIMELINE

BEGINNING OF SCHOOL YEAR - RECRUIT

- **Recruiting:** Reach out to administrators, teachers, counselors and other coaches for information and recommendations on advertising your club to students (i.e. club fairs, announcements, etc.) and finding volunteers, judges and/or an assistant coach.
- **Coordination:** Develop a system for students and parents to acknowledge the code of conduct, team rules and sign up for competitions. As you create team policies and rules, plan around the drop/withdrawal fee (see [Fees](#)).
- **Communication:** Create a virtual hub for your team (Google Classroom, Canvas, etc.) so that you can communicate with parents and students and post all important information (tournament schedule, announcements, signups, media release forms, etc.) in one spot. This may also serve as a way to collect documents from students, like scripts or media releases.
- **Support:** Make your team stronger by establishing reliable parent/guardian relationships. Hold an informational meeting for parents. Parents can get involved by serving as judges or chaperones and organizing carpools or other team activities.
- **Accountability:** Encourage students to create a personal timeline for preparing for and attending tournaments. Students should facilitate parental approval or involvement well in advance.
- **Registration/Deadlines:** Be aware of league membership and tournament registration deadlines and plan accordingly. Allow enough time when you close your sign-ups for you to ensure all necessary steps to register for a tournament are completed properly before the deadline.

THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL YEAR

- **Consistency:** Keep parents, team members and judges informed through email, the virtual team hub and/or an approved messaging service. It's important to communicate specific tournament information to students, parents and judges.
- **Preparation:** Register and prepare for tournaments efficiently and completely.
 - Ensure all judges are entered in SpeechWire and have completed the judge training course before.
 - Double check that competitors are registered in the correct events and divisions.
 - Make sure you have enough judges to meet your team's obligation.
 - Be aware of your students' performance pieces and debate cases. They represent your school and your team.
 - If applicable, plan for and order meals in advance. Arrange transportation and lodging for tournaments as needed.
 - Be prepared - gather everything you need for tournament day ahead of time.
- **Help:** Monitor your email for important communications from the FCDI and FDI. Reach out if you need help or have any questions.
- **Show Off:** Publicize successes! Tag the FCDI on social media @civicsanddebate on Facebook, X and Instagram.

END OF SCHOOL YEAR

- **Celebrate:** Plan an awards banquet.
 - Play a slides presentation with photos and high points from the year.
 - Have seniors present “Words of Wisdom” to their teammates -- 3–5-minute speeches offering advice about how to be successful in school, in debate and in life.
- **Plan:** Reflect on the year and plan for the next one.
 - Reflect on this year’s successes and failures. Identify areas for improvement.
 - Make necessary changes to next year’s goals and plans.
 - Select or announce team leaders for next year.
 - Plan or announce next year’s tournament calendar.

RESOURCES

Florida Civics and Debate Initiative

civicsanddebate.com

Florida Debate Initiative

floridadebate.org

American Civics and History Initiative

amcivics.org

Ashbrook Center

ashbrook.org

Bill of Rights Institute

billofrightsinstitute.org

Florida Joint Center for Citizenship

floridacitizen.org

Jack Miller Center

jackmillercenter.org

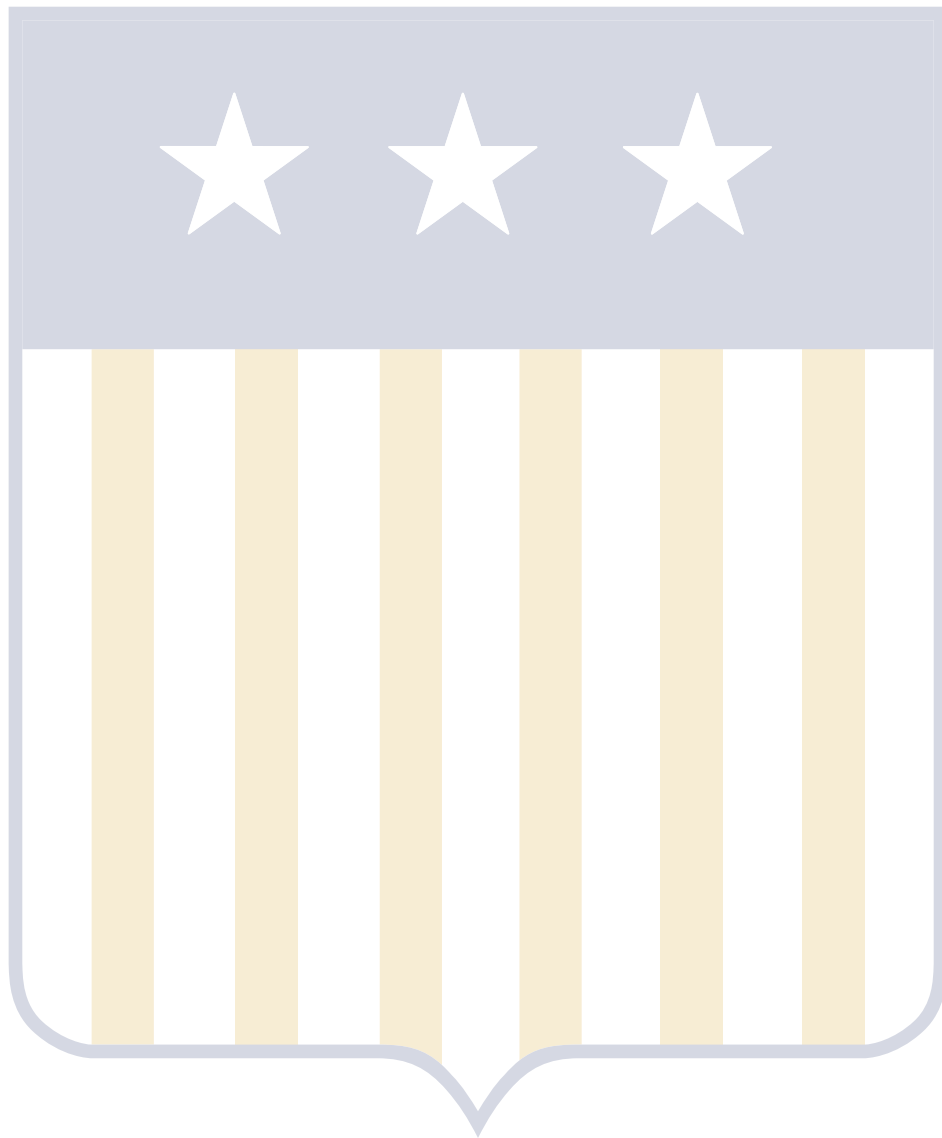
The News Literacy Project

NewsLit.org

Ronald Reagan Presidential Debate Series

Reaganfoundation.org

PARENTS & OBSERVERS



PARENTS

Parents are essential partners in the success of a speech and debate team. Their encouragement, involvement and support contribute to a positive experience. By working collaboratively with coaches, parents can support the team's goals and contribute to competitive success.

ENCOURAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

Parents are crucial team supporters. Parents play a vital role in encouraging and supporting their children's interest in speech and debate. This includes providing positive reinforcement, expressing interest and attending competitions to show support.

JUDGING

Speech and debate is an activity that ultimately benefits the student. Parents and guardians should be willing and prepared to step in to volunteer as a judge if needed. The immense benefit of competing in speech and debate tournaments cannot happen without judges.

CHAPERONING

Speech and debate requires students to exhibit maturity and professionalism. Unlike most team sports, the coach will not be able to observe the actions of every competitor at all times. If a student requires constant supervision, a parent must attend to provide the necessary supervision. Parents may also be required to serve as chaperones on overnight or travel trips.

PROVIDING RESOURCES

Parents may need to provide resources such as financial support for participation in tournaments and travel expenses. They may also assist in obtaining the materials necessary for competition, such as access to a device or professional attire.

FACILITATING PRACTICE AND PREPARATION

Parents can help create a conducive environment for practice and preparation at home. This may involve providing time and space for practicing speeches, offering feedback and helping with research or preparation.

COACHING AND MENTORSHIP

Some parents may have experience in speech and debate or seek to learn more. Parents may serve as coaches or mentors to their children as they participate in speech and debate. Parents may offer guidance, advice and strategies for improving performance and navigating the competitive landscape.

NON-PARTICIPANT OBSERVERS

Welcome to the guidelines for non-participant observers at speech and debate tournaments! Whether you're a parent, teacher or simply a curious individual, we appreciate your interest in witnessing the intellectual rigor and eloquence displayed by young debaters and speakers.

REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

◆ REGISTRATION

Coaches should note any observers to tournament staff at registration. This helps tournament staff ensure event security.

◆ CODE OF CONDUCT

Non-participant observers are expected to adhere to the code of conduct and promote respect, professionalism and courtesy. This includes refraining from disruptive behavior, such as talking loudly or using electronic devices during rounds.

◆ **PHOTOS, VIDEOS & DEVICES**

Observers may NOT take photos or videos in competition rooms at any time, even of your own student(s). Any observer found in violation of this policy will be removed from the tournament. Observers should not use electronic devices while in a competition room.

◆ **IDENTIFICATION BADGES**

Upon registration, non-participant observers may be provided with an identification badge. If provided, badges must be worn visibly at all times and returned to tournament staff at the end of the tournament.

◆ **SPACES**

Speech and debate tournaments include a variety of designated spaces, each serving a specific purpose. Non-participant observers may enter competition spaces and the student Lounge. The judge lounge is for judges only.

◆ **OBSERVER ETIQUETTE**

While observing rounds, it's important for non-participants to maintain a respectful distance from competitors and judges. Avoid distracting judges and competitors and giving unsolicited feedback. Observers should mind their facial expressions and non-verbal communication during rounds.

◆ **NON-INTERFERENCE POLICY**

Non-participant observers should refrain from interfering with the tournament proceedings in any way. This includes refraining from entering or existing competition spaces while a speech or debate is ongoing.

◆ **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Respect the confidentiality of the tournament proceedings. Avoid discussing specific rounds or disclosing information about competitors' performances.

◆ **UNDERSTANDING RULES AND PROCEDURES**

While familiarity with speech and debate is not required, non-participant observers may benefit from a basic understanding of the rules and procedures. This can provide a sense of what to expect and enhance appreciation of the performances.

◆ **JUDGES-IN-TRAINING**

Observers often include individuals who are training to become judges. By observing live rounds, observers can learn about the evaluation criteria, scoring systems and standards used in competitive speech and debate.

◆ **AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT**

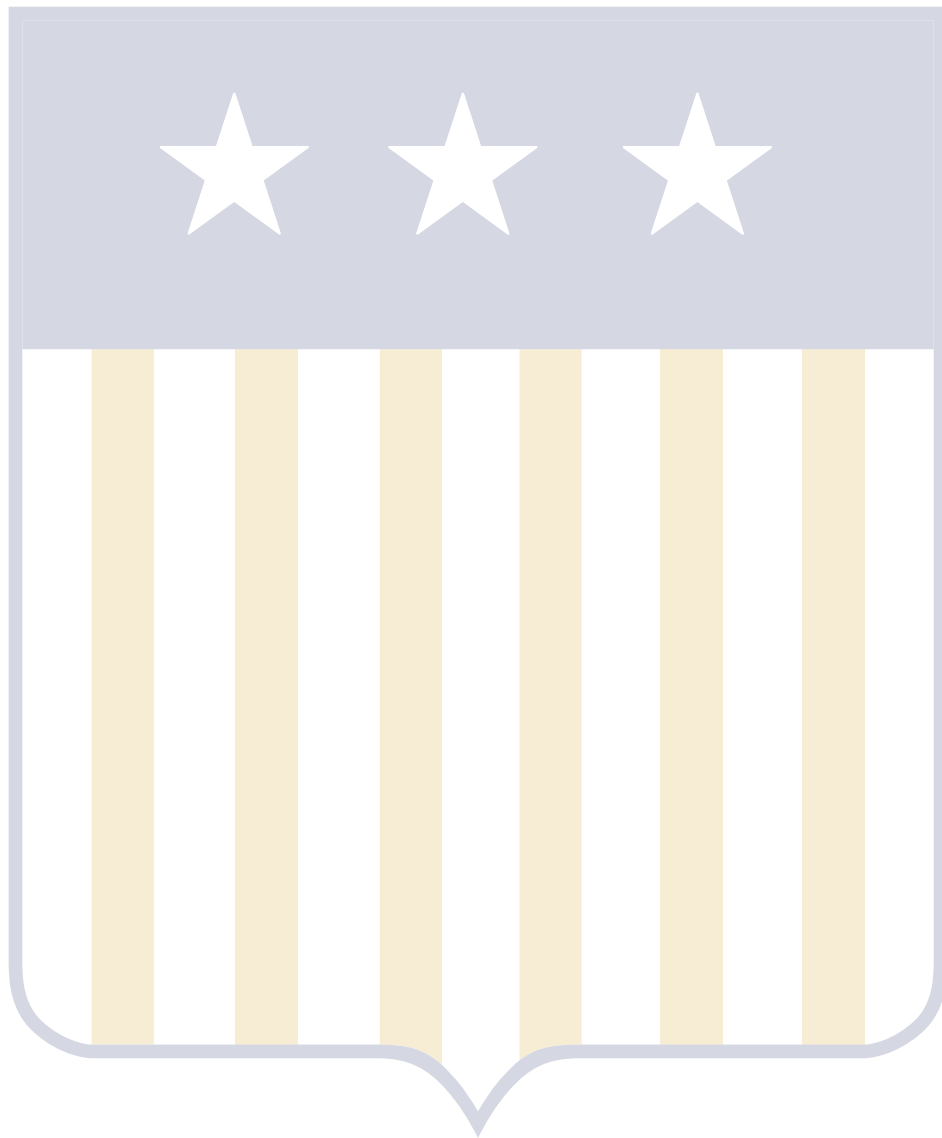
Observers contribute to the overall atmosphere and engagement of the event by providing an attentive audience for participants. Their presence encourages speakers and debaters to perform at their best and adds to the dynamic energy of the competition.

◆ **SUPPORT NETWORK**

Observers can serve as a support network for participants by offering encouragement, motivation and solidarity. Knowing that they have an audience that is interested in their performance can boost participants' confidence and morale.

Your presence adds to the atmosphere of camaraderie and intellectual engagement that defines speech and debate tournaments. By following these requirements and guidelines, non-participant observers can contribute to the success and positive atmosphere of speech and debate tournaments. Thank you for your interest and support!

SPEECHWIRE GUIDE



SPEECHWIRE GUIDE

Please see review the instructions below for how to use SpeechWire to register your team.

Registering for tournaments using SpeechWire.com

In order to register for a tournament that is using SpeechWire to run its entry registration, you will need to create a free SpeechWire registration account for your school and then log into your account and register your entries. Each of these tasks is outlined below.

Creating a SpeechWire account for your school

First, open your preferred web browser (any web browser should work) and go to:

<http://www.speechwire.com/login>

Near the middle of the page, click the 'Create account' button. Read the text on the screen, then near the bottom, select the state that your school/team is located in, and click 'Next step'.

Checking for an existing school record and entering your school name

The following screen will appear:



[Account home page](#)

[ACCOUNT](#)

[Log in](#)

[HOSTING?](#)

[Order SpeechWire](#)

[THIS SEASON](#)

[Tournament calendar](#)

[Open tournaments](#)

Check for existing team account

Step 2 of 3: Confirm that no team exists for this team/independent competitor yet

The drop-down list below contains all of the teams in the state that you selected for which records already exist on SpeechWire. Please click on it and scan it to make sure that no record exists for your team yet. Please check for any alternate spellings or ways that your team's name might appear.

Teams already on SpeechWire in Ohio:

If a record already exists for your team, there may already be a head coach account created for the team. If so, you need to contact the current account holder and ask them to change the account information over to you. If you cannot do this or no head coach account has ever been created for the team, please send an email to accounts@speechwire.com, provide the name and email address of the head coach as well as the name of the team, and ask for the head coach account to be created or updated. Either way, if a record exists already for the team, please click the 'Cancel' button below and follow the directions in this paragraph.

If there is not a record for your team yet, please enter your team's name or the independent competitor's name below, select if you are creating a team or independent competitor account, and then click 'Next step' to continue.

New team/independent name:

Account type:

Account level:

First please check the drop down list next to "Teams already on SpeechWire in [your state]:" and ensure that your school is not already listed.

If it is already listed, it is likely that either a past coach at your school or a tournament manager running a tournament that did not use online registration has already created a record for your school. If this is the case, please stop now and send an email to accounts@speechwire.com asking to have the account turned over to you. SpeechWire will respond to your request as quickly as possible and will create an account for you on that school record. If you are in an urgent hurry and you cannot wait for this, you may also create a second record for your school by just spelling the name differently and continuing to follow these steps. If you do this, however, please email accounts@speechwire.com when you are done so that we can ensure that the old account is disabled and future tournaments will use the new account that you created.

Once you have checked to ensure that your school does not already have a SpeechWire account, look near the bottom of the screen. Type in the name of your school, select if it is a school or independent student (SpeechWire also supports independents), as well as the level of the team (high school, college, middle school, etc.) Then, click Next step.

Account owner information and contact information

The next screen will summarize what you have already entered about your team, and then it will ask for two pieces of required information: your name and your email address. An email address is required because your initial account password will be emailed to this address for security reasons, to ensure you actually own the address.

Below these fields are a series of fields asking for optional information. The more information that you provide, the more information that SpeechWire can provide to tournament managers to ensure that they can contact you if they have questions or concerns that they need to bring to your attention.

Finally, the last part of the page contains a security image to confirm that you are a human and not a search engine robot or automated system. Carefully copy the two words shown into the box. If you cannot read the words, you can click the small button with two arrows in a circle to load new words to try.

Once you have completed the page, click 'Create account'. If you have filled everything out properly, SpeechWire will create your account and send your account password to the email address that you provided. Please check the email address for the password, which should generally arrive within a few minutes.

Logging into your SpeechWire account

Once you have created your school's SpeechWire account, open your preferred web browser and go to this address:

<http://www.speechwire.com/login>

The upper portion of the screen contains the login form:

Log in to your SpeechWire account

In order to log in to your SpeechWire account, please enter your email address and account password below and click 'Log in'. If you have forgotten or misplaced your password, click 'Forgot password?'

Email address:

Password:



Carefully key in your email address and your password. Take special care entering your password – capitalization matters! Once you have typed in your email address and password, click 'Log in'. You will see the SpeechWire home page, which looks like this:

Head coach tools



[Tournament registration](#)



[Team roster](#)



[Coaches](#)

Account settings



[Change email or password](#)



[Team address information](#)



[Edit account information](#)



[Order SpeechWire](#)



[Log out](#)

If you like (this part is optional), you can input the names of the students on your team before you register. Click 'Team roster' if you would like to do this and type in the names of your students. Note that SpeechWire will automatically place your cursor in the 'New member' field, and if you hit the 'Enter' key on your keyboard, it will add the student whose name you entered. In this way, you can quickly type in a name, hit 'Enter', and type in another name, all without using the mouse. This can significantly speed the input process.

Once you have entered your students' names, if you want to, return to your account home page and click the 'Tournament registration' button.

Accessing tournament registration for the tournament you want to enter

Once you click 'Tournament registration', you will see the 'My tournaments' screen. If you have been invited to any tournaments or have already registered for any, you will see them listed in the table like so:

My tournaments

You have been invited or have confirmed attendance at the following tournaments. Click on one to manage your entries at the tournament.

[Return to home page](#)

[View open tournaments](#)

January 2011	Tournament	Attending?	Status	More information	Location
Jan. 8, 2011	Riverwood's Invitational	YES	OPEN	Info Register	Riverwood, IN
Jan. 29, 2011	North Point Classic 2011	MAYBE	OPEN	Info Register	North Point, OH
May 2011	Tournament	Attending?	Status	More information	Location
May. 28, 2011	Winterford Open	MAYBE	OPEN	Info Register	Winterford, NC

Click the 'Register' link for the tournament you want to enter to register. Tournaments lacking 'Register' links may not have begun their registration yet. Continue to the next page if the tournament you wanted was in the list.

Alternately, if you wish to register for an 'open' tournament that you do not need to be invited to, click the 'View open tournaments' button to show a list of the opens running on SpeechWire. Something like this list will appear:

2012-2013 tournament calendar

These tournaments are using SpeechWire during the 2012-2013 season and meet the criteria above. A few links may appear under 'More information'. 'Info' will let you learn more about a tournament, 'Register' will send you to tournament registration (in your SpeechWire account), and 'Results' will show you the tournament results.

October 2012	Tournament	More information	Level	Location
Oct. 6-7, 2012	VA is for Lovers Fall Swing	Info Register	College	Fairfax, VA
November 2012	Tournament	More information	Level	Location
Nov. 3, 2012	Munster Novice Meet	Info Register	H.S.	Munster, IN
Nov. 3, 2012	Noblesville November Fest	Info Register	H.S.	Noblesville, IN
Nov. 11, 2012	UW Whitewater Edna Sorber Tournament	Info Register	College	Whitewater, WI
December 2012	Tournament	More information	Level	Location
Dec. 1-2, 2012	GMU Patriot Games Classic	Info Register	H.S.	Fairfax, VA

Locate the tournament that you wish to register for and click on its 'Register' link to enter tournament registration for it. Please continue to the next page for the procedure of how to enter the tournament.

Registering for the tournament

Once you have accessed tournament registration for the tournament that you wish to enter, you will see a screen something like this one:

Riverwood's Invitational

January 8, 2011 - Riverwood, IN

This is an open tournament. Any team can register to attend without an invitation, as long as the tournament is not full. You are logged in as the coach of **Test Team**.

Currently, your team is **unsure if it will attend** the Riverwood's Invitational. Click on the [Will you attend?](#) button below to set whether you will attend or not. Once you say you will attend, you can submit your entries.

Tournament registration



[Will you attend?](#)

Tournament information



[General information](#)



[Files for download](#)



[Tournament schedule](#)



[Fee schedule](#)



[Manager contact info](#)

More information pages for this tournament

[Lunch](#)

If you want to learn more about the tournament, use the second row of buttons labeled 'Tournament information'. Some extra information may be available in additional pages under 'More information pages for this tournament' if the manager has added any.

Once you are ready to enter the tournament, click the 'Will you attend?' button.

Will you attend?

Riverwood's Invitational registration

Will you be attending the Riverwood's Invitational? To add yourself to this open tournament, select 'Yes, my team will attend' below and click 'Submit response'.

Yes, my team will attend

Now, using the drop-down box, select 'Yes, my team will attend' and click 'Submit response'. Click 'Submit your entries now' to enter the names of your students.

Entering your students in the tournament

Once you click on the button to update your entries, you will see a screen like this one:

2-Person Policy Debate

(Varsity/JV)

This team has no entries in this event.

Dramatic Duet Acting

(Varsity/Novice, Capped at 4 entries)

This team has no entries in this event.

Dramatic Interpretation

(Varsity/Novice, Capped at 3 entries)

This team has no entries in this event.

There is a section for every event in the tournament. To add entries in an event, click the 'Add entry' button for that event so that the appropriate number of entries appears. Key in the names of the students that you will enter in each event and select which division to enter the students in. Eventually, your page will look similar to this:

2-Person Policy Debate

(Varsity/JV)

NEW 1: and Division:

Dramatic Duet Acting

(Varsity/Novice, Capped at 4 entries)

NEW 1: and Division:

NEW 2: and Division:

Dramatic Interpretation

(Varsity/Novice, Capped at 3 entries)

NEW 1: Division:

NEW 2: Division:

NEW 3: Division:

Once you have entered your students, click the 'Update entries' button near the bottom of the page. Your entries will be saved. Next, click 'Return to tournament home page'.

Registering your judges

The tournament home page will now look similar to this:

Riverwood's Invitational

January 8, 2011 - Riverwood, IN

This is an open tournament. Any team can register to attend without an invitation, as long as the tournament is not full. You are logged in as the coach of **Test Team**.

Currently, your team is **attending** the Riverwood's Invitational.

Tournament registration



[Will you attend?](#)



[Update your entries](#)



[Piece registration](#)



[Update your judges](#)



[View your entries](#)



[Current invoice](#)

Tournament information



[General information](#)



[Files for download](#)



[Tournament schedule](#)



[Fee schedule](#)



[Manager contact info](#)

More information pages for this tournament

[Lunch](#)

The buttons available may vary depending on how the tournament manager is running their registration. Click 'Update your judges'. Near the top of the page, you will see a form like this:

Add judges

If you need to add one or more judges to your entry, please type in the number of judges to add, and then click 'Add judges'. If the tournament manager wants you to enter the names of your judges, you will get to enter them after you click 'Add judges'.

Number of judges to add:

Type in the number of judges to add to your team's entry and click 'Add judges'. You will now see the middle of the page contain a form that looks something like this:

Code	Name	Type	Clean?	Coach?	Drop?	Blocks	Availability
EE1	No name specified	Unspecified ▾	No ▾	No ▾	Drop	Blocks	Mark unavailable times
EE2	No name specified	Unspecified ▾	No ▾	No ▾	Drop	Blocks	Mark unavailable times
EE3	No name specified	Unspecified ▾	No ▾	No ▾	Drop	Blocks	Mark unavailable times

The fields shown will vary widely depending on how the manager has configured their registration and what information they have chosen to gather about judges. Many of the common fields are shown in the image on the preceding page. From left to right, these fields are shown:

Name: In most tournament situations, tournament managers collect the names of the judges that will be at their tournament. If you see text boxes that you can type the names of your judges into, please enter them now and do not leave them as 'No name specified'.

Type: Many tournaments allow you to designate the type of each judge. This is often referred to as the judge's 'pool' in many regions. Usually, these will be something like 'Interp', 'Public Speaking', 'Lincoln-Douglas', 'LD/PF only', 'Varsity only', 'All events', etc. If the manager has allowed you to select a type, this will let you determine what the judge is best qualified to judge.

Clean? If this column appears, you may use it to mark which judges are Clean, or Neutral. Clean/Neutral judges are allowed to judge any student, **even your own entries. Be very careful with this! Do not mark your judges as clean or neutral unless they actually do not know your students!** Most managers do not allow the registration of this information and handle hired judges themselves.

Coach? Some managers collect which judges are coach judges and which are non-coach judges. This is often used to try and give coaches off-rounds so they can spend time with students, and to utilize hired judges as effectively as possible.

Drop? Use the drop buttons to drop judges you have registered if they are not going to attend the tournament. **Drop fees may apply depending on tournament rules.**

Blocks: Some managers allow you to register blocks for your judges. This may include blocking them from certain events or certain schools (where they have family members or friends competing, for instance).

Availability: Some managers allow you to mark times when your judges are **NOT** available to judge. SpeechWire assumes judges are available throughout the whole tournament unless they are specifically blocked from specific times on specific days.

IMPORTANT: Once you are done entering information about your judges, don't forget to click the 'Save changes' button to save what you entered! Then click 'Return to tournament home page'.

Registering additional information if needed or viewing your submitted information

There are other buttons on the home page that are not documented in this brief handbook, but they may allow you to do things like view your entries, view your current invoice, submit information about what pieces your students will be performing, etc.

Please remember that until the manager closes registration, you can always log back into your SpeechWire coach account and make changes to your registration. Take note, however, of any drop fees the manager has specified in their tournament information screens, as they may apply when you drop entries or judges.

Should you wish to browse a list of all of the tournaments using SpeechWire, you can access it at www.SpeechWire.com/calendar. Please note that not all of these tournaments will be 'open' tournaments that you can add your school to.

If you have any information about using SpeechWire to register, please send an email to support@speechwire.com and support staff will respond to you as quickly as possible, usually within 24 hours, and often significantly more quickly than that. If you have questions about setting up your account specifically, you can email them to accounts@speechwire.com. If you have questions about the tournament itself, you can generally find the manager's contact information by clicking 'Manager contact info' on the tournament registration home page.

If you host a speech, debate or student congress tournament, please consider using SpeechWire to run your tournament! As of this writing, SpeechWire has run more than 1,100 tournaments in 16 states, and the number is always growing. To learn more about SpeechWire, visit www.SpeechWire.com – and if you'd like to order SpeechWire for your tournament, visit www.SpeechWire.com/order and fill out the form on that page. We would love to work with you on your tournament!

Thank you for using SpeechWire to register for tournaments! I hope that you have had a pleasant experience, and I hope that you have a nice day. I appreciate your taking the time to read this handbook.

Sincerely,

Ben Stewart

Owner and creator, SpeechWire Tournament Services

CLOSING ARGUMENT

Competitive debate supports academic learning, builds character, teaches responsibility and draws out hidden talents in students. Students learn to be flexible and think quickly on their feet. Although there are rules and standards for judges to follow in competitive speech and debate, communication is a subjective process. Students must adapt their arguments to win ballots from a varied judge pool. The feedback students receive from judges helps them better understand how to frame the most effective message. These inputs help students build high-level communication and critical thinking skills.

In conclusion, the Florida Civics and Debate Initiative Handbook serves as an essential resource and guide for educators, students and all stakeholders committed to fostering critical thinking, civic engagement and effective communication skills among Florida's youth. By promoting the values of democracy, respectful discourse and informed citizenship, the FCDI not only supports the development of future leaders but also strengthens our communities and the republic as a whole.

Together, let us continue to champion the principles of debate, civics education and participation by empowering every student with the knowledge, skills and opportunities to thrive in a pluralistic society.

