



How Inclusive Is Your Speech and Debate Tournament?

We strive to ensure that you are equipped with the knowledge and tools you need to make your tournaments a safe, welcoming, and inclusive place for all. Use the checklist below as a starting point to measure your tournament's inclusion efforts or plan for the future!

TOURNAMENT PREPARATION

- Publish a **Harassment and Discrimination Policy** in your tournament invitation. Clear expectations and consequences for harassment and discrimination send a crucial message to competitors that this tournament is a safe space for all. Consider creating a **Belonging and Inclusion Station (BIS)** for inquiries related to that policy.
- Consider whether the cost of attending your tournament is reasonable given the budgets of the programs in attendance. Think about ways in which you can assist under-resourced programs in accessing competition.
 - For example, CHSSA provides pre-loaded debit cards for students who request assistance to purchase meals at their state tournament. The NSDA utilizes the Tate Fund to provide financial assistance to National Tournament attendees.
- Recruit a tab staff that reflects the diversity of the student population at your tournament.
 - If your current tab staff lacks diversity, invite someone new to work and learn in your tab room. Make sure you provide the same level of pay for tabbers-in-training or, for all-volunteer staff, remind them they can earn **NSDA service citations** for participation!
- Utilize diverse sets of tournament materials for Extemp, Congress, and/or Impromptu. Check out some examples at www.speechanddebate.org/inclusion.
- Remember to use **inclusive language** in your tournament materials. Learn more about conscious language in the **Conscious Style Guide**.
- Ensure your tournament schedule has adequate time for breaks and meals.
- Invite administrators** from your district or state, especially from Title I schools or schools without regular access to the activity, to attend or observe online to learn more about speech and debate.
- If you are in-person, make sure to provide **all gender restrooms** for everyone.
- Provide a quiet space for participants to use for prayer, meditation, pumping, or a place to decompress.

JUDGING

- Remind your judges that they play an important role in supporting students' educational and competitive endeavors. They must act as educators when they fill out their paradigm, interact with students, and provide feedback.
- Use the implicit bias statement on your ballots. If you're using Tabroom.com or SpeechWire, the statement is listed as a default on your ballots! If your tournament is online, consider adding **additional language** to your ballots about technology.
- Ask coaches to share our **free judge training resources** with the judges they bring to your tournament to ensure students receive high quality, productive feedback.
 - Require judges to complete the free **Cultural Competence** judge training course to ensure judges are doing their part to create safe spaces and healthy competition.
 - Ask new judges to brush up on event rules, norms, and judging best practices by completing the **Adjudicating Speech and Debate** course.
- Build a judging pool that reflects the student body at your tournament.
 - **Use this information** from the NCES as a baseline for national student demographics.
- Refrain from overworking judges
 - Asking judges to rush from round to round (especially in succession) means that they may not get the opportunity to catch their breath, eat, or go to the bathroom. This can result in physical and/or mental exhaustion that negatively affects their ability to listen and think critically. Even the best judges need time to recharge.

TABROOM.COM

- If you're using Tabroom.com, encourage participants to add their pronouns to their profile if they are comfortable doing so.
 - Be sure to remind participants that pronouns will be accessible to other participants in their rounds as well as anyone who is following the entry on Tabroom.com.
- If you're using Tabroom.com, remind participants that if their name is spelled one way at one tournament but a different way at another tournament (*e.g., spelling error on a school's contestant/judge roster, name change*), they can update the data from past tournaments as long as they are still linked to your Tabroom.com.
 - For more details on how to make these updates, review this Tabroom.com **Forum Post**.
- If you're using Tabroom.com, **note accessible rooms** for students with disabilities.
- If you're using Tabroom.com, enable diversity tracking for judges.
 - This allows judges to self-identify as diversity enhancing and helps you ensure panels are as diverse as possible. Review general tips for creating inclusive tournaments on Tabroom.com in our **guide**.
- If your tournament is in-person, remind registrants to fill in student and judge dietary restrictions on their Tabroom.com roster. Review those restrictions in your tournament reports.

ACCESSIBILITY

Taking care to create an accessible tournament benefits not only individuals with visible or known disabilities, but also helps to ensure that all participants/attendees, including individuals with non-obvious disabilities and/or chronic health conditions, and people of all ages and body types, are able to fully engage in the program.

1. ASK YOUR PARTICIPANTS!

- When you send out the invitation or notice, include a welcome message to let invitees know they can contact the planner or a designated accessibility contact regarding accommodations. Your message might include text such as:

“We strive to host an inclusive, accessible tournament that enables all individuals, including individuals with disabilities, to engage fully. To be respectful of those with allergies and environmental sensitivities, we ask that you please refrain from wearing strong fragrances. To request an accommodation or for inquiries about accessibility, please contact (name, email, phone).”

- One or two days before your event or meeting, send out a reminder about refraining from wearing strong fragrances.

2. CHECK YOUR LOCATION IN ADVANCE

Look for these features when inspecting your meeting/event space:

HOSTING WITH ADA IN MIND

- Are ADA classrooms and bathrooms clearly identified?
- Are ADA accessible doors, entrances, and hallways available and identified?

VISIBILITY: IMPAIRED SIGHT

- Is there clear signage (identifying location and directions)?
- Are there well-lit meeting spaces and adjacent areas?
- Is the projection screen visible from all seating (if using projection)?

ACOUSTICS: HEARING IMPAIRMENTS

- Is there a public address (PA) system or roving microphone?
- Can you limit unnecessary background music/noise?
- Is there seating available near the presenter for lip reading?
- Are assistive listening devices available?
- Is there a well-lit space for an interpreter if needed?
- Is there seating for hard of hearing folk to see the interpreter?
- Can you enable captions on your ceremony’s recording or include a sign language interpreter during the live event? Read more in our [Online Tournament Guide](#).

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BODY TYPE

- Are there tables and chairs (preferably without arms) instead of desks?
- Does your tournament schedule account for those who might struggle with walking long distances?
- Do you grant elevator access for individuals who may struggle walking up stairs?

MOBILITY: WHEELCHAIR OR MOBILITY IMPAIRMENTS

- Is there accessible parking near the venue and where is it located?
- Where is the handicap accessible ramp located?
- Is there elevator access?
- What are the locations of the accessible bathrooms?
- Are pathways barrier-free?
- Are there wide doorways and aisles to accommodate wheelchairs/scooters?
- Are there no loose cables across the walking areas?

TECHNOLOGY: ADAPTIVE DEVICES

- Are there electrical outlets in accessible seating areas to accommodate devices, laptops, etc.?
- Is there extra space or a work surface?

SERVICE ANIMALS: ACCESS AND SPACE

- Is there a comfortable space for service animals to rest during the event?
- Is there accessible toileting and watering facilities nearby?

3. AT THE TOURNAMENT

ACCESSIBILITY CONTACT

- At the tournament with scheduled accommodations, designate someone to be responsible for accommodations as well as help with seating, ensuring captioning and other technology is working, maintaining clear pathways, or other needs.
- If you're using Tabroom.com, consider using the feature that allows tournament administrators to notify judges of approved accommodations for people with disabilities in their debate rounds. The information about these accommodations will only appear on the ballots of the judges that participate in the entry's rounds. To learn more about this option, check out [*this Tabroom.com Forum post*](#).

FOOD

- Clearly indicate allergens and gluten-free, vegan, vegetarian, or other options.
- Consider healthier options at your concessions area: subs, salads, fruit, veggies, etc.
- Encourage teams to indicate dietary restrictions in their entries

4. LEARN MORE!

[*Read up on the legal basics.*](#)

- Read "[*Giving People who Experience Disability a Place at the Speech and Debate Table*](#)" in *Rostrum* and reflect on the questions at the end of the article.