

## OVERVIEW

Applying leadership and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, participants conduct research on a technology-related career according to a theme posted on the [TSA website](#) under *Themes & Problems* and prepare a cover letter and a job-specific resume. Semifinalists participate in a mock interview.

## ELIGIBILITY

One (1) individual per chapter may participate.

## TIME LIMITS

### PRELIMINARY ROUND

- A. All components of the chapter's entry (PDF) must be finished, submitted, and accessible via the Internet by 11:59 p.m. ET on a designated date in mid-May.
- B. Entries received, or changes made to submitted entries after this deadline will not be judged.

### SEMIFINAL ROUND

- A. Ten (10) minutes is allowed for the mock interview.

## ATTIRE

TSA competition attire is required.

## PROCEDURE

### PRE-CONFERENCE

- A. Participants review the TSA Honor Statement for Competitive Events found in the General Rules and listed in the individual competitive event rules.
- B. Participants access the annual theme posted on the [TSA website](#) under *Themes & Problems*.
- C. Participants concentrate their efforts conducting research on the selected technology-related career.
- D. Participants prepare a cover letter and a job-specific resume.
- E. Participants submit the PDF by 11:59 p.m. ET on a designated date in mid-May.
- F. Submission information will be provided on the [TSA website](#) under *Competition Updates*.

### PRELIMINARY ROUND

- A. A list of twelve (12) semifinalists (in random order) is posted on the first full day of conference.

### SEMIFINAL ROUND

- A. Semifinalists report at the time and place stated in the conference program to sign up for a mock interview time.
- B. Semifinalists report at the assigned time and place to participate in the mock interview.
- C. Simulating a real interview, semifinalists bring with them an additional printed copy of their job-specific resume to the judges at the time of the interview.
- D. The printed copy of the job-specific resume provided to the judges during the interview will not be returned.
- E. Judges evaluate the interviews.
- F. Ten (10) finalists are announced during the conference awards ceremony.

## REGULATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

Students will work to develop their leadership and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in the process of preparing for and participating in this TSA competitive event. The development and application of those skills must be evident in their submission, demonstration, and/or communication pertaining to the entry.

### PRE-CONFERENCE

- A. Participants enter this event with the following scenario in mind:
  - 1. You have graduated from high school and have the appropriate level of education and training (i.e., college degree, technical school, certification and training, etc.) for an entry-level position that is required for successful employment in your selected career.
  - 2. Your training, education, and other qualifications for the entry-level position are realistic for successful employment in your chosen career and are reflected in your resume and cover letter.

- B. Participants should use fictitious home address and telephone number information when completing the documents, however, correct participant names must be used.
- C. Each participant submits a PDF of (no cover page, table of contents, or release forms):
  - 1. Cover letter:
    - a. Must be typed
    - b. Is limited to one (1) single-sided, 8½" x 11" page
    - c. Must include an opening, body, and conclusion
    - d. Headshots or photos are not permissible.
  - 2. The job-specific resume:
    - a. Must be typed
    - b. Is limited to two (2) single-sided, 8½" x 11" pages
    - c. Headshots or photos are not permissible.

## **EVALUATION**

### **PRELIMINARY ROUND**

- A. The cover letter and job-specific resume

### **SEMIFINAL ROUND**

- A. The mock interview

Refer to the official rating form for more information

## **TSA HONOR STATEMENT**

All work must be created and completed by individual competitors or teams. Plagiarism, the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) software, copyright violation, cheating, and falsification of information are prohibited. Participants may NOT use any generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools (e.g. ChatGPT, Google Gemini, GitHub Copilot, etc.). Any attempt to gain an unfair advantage will not be tolerated. Competitors at any level of TSA competition understand and agree to abide by the TSA Honor Statement.

If it is determined that a student violated the TSA Honor Statement, a rules violation of twenty percent (20%) will be incurred.

## **STEM INTEGRATION**

This event has connections to the STEM areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.

## **LEADERSHIP AND 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY SKILLS**

This event provides opportunity for students to build and develop leadership and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills including but not limited to – Communication, Collaboration/Social Skills, Initiative, Problem Solving/Risk Taking, Critical Thinking, Perseverance/Grit, Creativity, Relationship Building/Teamwork, Dependability/Integrity, and Flexibility/Adaptability

## **CAREERS RELATED TO THIS EVENT**

This competition has connections to one (1) or more of the career areas featured in the TSA AND CAREERS section of this guide.

# CAREER PREP

## 2026 & 2027 OFFICIAL RATING FORM

### MIDDLE SCHOOL

Judges: Using minimal (1-4 points), adequate (5-8 points), or exemplary (9-10 points) performance levels as a guideline in the rating form, record the scores earned for the event criteria in the column spaces to the right. The X1 or X2 notation in the criteria column is a multiplier factor for determining the points earned. (Example: an "adequate" score of 7 for an X1 criterion = 7 points; an "adequate" score of 7 for an X2 criterion = 14 points.) A score of zero (0) is acceptable if the minimal performance for any criterion is not met.

#### Go/No Go Specifications

- Before judging the entry, ensure that the items below are present; indicate presence with a check mark in the box.
- If an item is missing, leave the box next to the item blank and place a check mark in the box labeled ENTRY NOT EVALUATED.
- If a check mark is placed in the ENTRY NOT EVALUATED box, the entry is not to be judged.

- ☐ Cover letter and job-specific resume submitted
- ☐ ENTRY NOT EVALUATED

COVER LETTER (40 points)				Record scores in the column spaces below.
CRITERIA	Minimal performance 1-4 points	Adequate performance 5-8 points	Exemplary performance 9-10 points	
<b>Introduction</b> (X1)	Introduction fails to describe the participant, and/or does not clearly identify the position or reason for contact, and/or does not indicate how the position was discovered, and/or does not indicate interest, and/or does not grab the employer's attention.	Introduction describes many of the elements (e.g., participant description, how the position was identified, reason for applying, etc.) and briefly addresses others (e.g., how the position was discovered, interest level, etc.), resulting in an adequate introduction.	Introduction incorporates all elements—the participant, the position or reason for contact, how the position was discovered, and genuine interest in the position—and ultimately grabs the employer's attention.	
<b>Body</b> (identification of skills) (X1)	Participant fails to identify any skills or qualifications, does not explain interest, and does not indicate how his/her skills would provide benefit to the company.	Participant indicates his/her skills, with a general explanation of how the skills relate to the position at hand; participant conveys interest, and briefly connects the skills to benefits for the company.	Participant provides one or two strong qualifications and clearly relates these skills to the job at hand; participant clearly explains how his/her interest and skills can benefit the company.	
<b>Conclusion</b> (X1)	The conclusion does not include a thank-you to the employer and/or, does not note contact information, is not assertive, and/or lacks mention of follow-up after a given period of time.	The conclusion may or may not include a thank-you and follow-up to the employer with contact information; overall, it is adequate.	The conclusion includes a thank-you to the employer for his/her time and the applicant's contact information; it is assertive and mentions a method of follow-up within a given period of time.	
<b>Overall Writing Quality and Grammar</b> (X1)	Writing does not make sense; participant has written too much or too little; there are multiple spelling and grammatical errors.	Writing is average and includes relevant information and content; it is somewhat convincing to an employer; there are minor spelling or grammatical errors.	Writing flows well, is clear, concise, and gets right to the point; it is convincing and contains no spelling or grammatical errors.	
<b>COVER LETTER SUBTOTAL (40 points)</b>				

JOB-SPECIFIC RESUME (40 points)				Record scores in the column spaces below.
CRITERIA	Minimal performance	Adequate performance	Exemplary performance	
	1-4 points	5-8 points	9-10 points	
<b>Audience and Purpose</b> (X1)	Resume does not address a particular audience; the purpose is not clearly stated; revision is needed.	Audience and purpose are generally implied; the resume is somewhat tailored to the employer.	Audience is clearly addressed and the resume is tailored to the employer; the purpose is clearly stated.	
<b>Presentation and Format</b> (X1)	Resume does not have a clear design format; headers are not used or are used incorrectly or inappropriately; resume does not use reverse chronological format.	Resume attempts (and partially succeeds) to use a reverse chronological format; headers are used for a somewhat professional and concise presentation.	Resume follows a reverse chronological format; it uses clear and appropriate headers to organize information; it has a professional appearance.	
<b>Language and Style</b> (X1)	Participant fails to use action words; phrasing is wordy and lacks focus.	Participant uses some action words and some concise and clear words in most of the resume.	Participant consistently uses strong, clear, and concise words throughout the resume.	
<b>Overall Writing Quality and Grammar</b> (X1)	Writing does not make sense; participant has written too much or too little; there are multiple spelling and grammatical errors.	Writing is average and includes relevant information and content; it is somewhat convincing to an employer; there are minor spelling or grammatical errors.	Writing flows well, is clear, concise, and gets right to the point; it is convincing and contains no spelling or grammatical errors.	
<b>JOB-SPECIFIC RESUME SUBTOTAL (40 points)</b>				

Rules violations (a deduction of 20% of the total possible points for the above sections) must be initialed by the judge, coordinator, and manager of the event. Record the deduction in the space to the right.

Indicate the rule violated: \_\_\_\_\_

**PRELIMINARY SUBTOTAL (80 points)**

SEMIFINAL MOCK INTERVIEW (50 points)				Record scores in the column spaces below.
CRITERIA	Minimal performance	Adequate performance	Exemplary performance	
	1-4 points	5-8 points	9-10 points	
<b>Organization</b> (X1)	Participant is unorganized and unprepared for the interview; an illogical explanation of the career choice is presented.	Participant is generally prepared for the interview; an explanation of the career choice is somewhat communicated and organized.	Interview responses are clear, well organized, and easy to follow; the responses reflect knowledge of the career choice and are communicated in a concise manner.	
<b>Knowledge</b> (X2)	Participant seems to have little understanding of the concepts in the career choice; answers to questions may be vague.	Participant exhibits a general understanding of the career choice.	Participant shows clear evidence of a thorough understanding of the career choice.	
<b>Delivery</b> (X1)	Participant is verbose and/or uncertain in the interview; participant's posture, gestures, and lack of eye contact diminish the interview.	Participant is somewhat well-spoken and clear in the interview; participant's posture, gestures, and eye contact are acceptable in the interview.	Participant is well-spoken and clear in the interview; participant's posture, gestures, and eye contact result in a polished, natural, and effective interview.	

SEMIFINAL MOCK INTERVIEW (50 points) – continued				
<b>Articulation</b> (X1)	Communication is full of illogical thoughts that lack clarity, and/or there is insufficient information provided about the career choice; leadership and/or 21 <sup>st</sup> century skills are not evident.	Communication is somewhat logical, easy-to-follow, and/or there is sufficient information provided describing the career choice; leadership and/or 21 <sup>st</sup> century skills are somewhat evident.	Communication is clear and concise, and there is ample information provided about the career choice; leadership and/or 21 <sup>st</sup> century skills are clearly evident.	
<b>SEMIFINAL MOCK INTERVIEW SUBTOTAL (50 points)</b>				
<p>Rules violations (a deduction of 20% of the total possible points in the semifinalist sections above) must be initialed by the evaluator, coordinator, and manager of the event. Record the deduction in the space to the right.</p> <p>Indicate the rule violated: _____</p>				
<b>SEMIFINAL SUBTOTAL (50 points)</b>				
<p>To arrive at the <b>TOTAL</b> score, add any subtotals and subtract rules violation points, as necessary.</p> <p><b>TOTAL (130 points)</b></p>				

Comments:

I certify these results to be true and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

**JUDGE**

Printed name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

# CAREER PREP

## EVENT COORDINATOR INSTRUCTIONS

### PERSONNEL

- A. Event coordinator
- B. Judges:
  - 1. Preliminary round, two (2) or more
  - 2. Semifinal round, two (2) or more (preferably the same judges who reviewed the written entries)
- C. Assistants, two (2)

### MATERIALS

- A. Coordinator's packet, containing:
  - 1. Event guidelines, one (1) copy for the coordinator and for each judge
  - 2. TSA Event Coordinator Report
- B. Interview questions appropriate to the annual selection of technology-related careers
- C. Manila folder for semifinal resumes
- D. Tables and chairs for event coordinator, judges, and participants

### RESPONSIBILITIES

#### PRE-CONFERENCE

- A. National TSA will collect entries until 11:59 p.m. ET on a designated date in mid-May. The results are shared with the CRC manager, event coordinator, and assigned judges.
- B. Review entries as they are submitted to the designated online storage utility.
- C. Manage communication and pre-conference evaluation (at least two [2] or more judges should be recruited earlier in the year). Coordinate with the Judge Manager.
- D. Judges determine the twelve (12) semifinalists.

#### AT THE CONFERENCE

- A. Attend the mandatory event coordinator's meeting at the designated time and location.
- B. Report to the CRC room and check the contents of the coordinator's packet.

- C. Review the event guidelines and check to see that enough personnel have been scheduled.
- D. Inspect the area(s) in which the event is to be held for appropriate set-up, including room size, tables, chairs, etc. Notify the event manager of any potential problems.
- E. At least one (1) hour before the event is to begin, meet with judges and assistants to review time limits, procedures, regulations, evaluation, and all other details related to the event. If questions arise that cannot be answered, speak to the event manager before the event begins.
- F. Ensure the judges have access to the online judging system.

#### PRELIMINARY ROUND

- A. On the first full day of the conference, post a list of the twelve (12) semifinalists in random order.
- B. Create a sign-up sheet for semifinal mock interviews.

#### SEMIFINAL ROUND

- A. Semifinalists report at the time and place stated in the conference program to sign-up for the mock interview.
- B. Semifinalists report at the assigned time and place for the mock interview.
- C. Manage the interviews.
- D. Judges use the same official rating form for both the preliminary and semifinal round of judging.
- E. Decisions about rules violations must be discussed and verified with the judges, event coordinator, and the CRC manager to determine either:
  - 1. To deduct twenty percent (20%) of the total possible points in this round
  - 2. To disqualify the entry

The event coordinator, judges, and CRC manager must initial either of these actions on the rating form.
- F. If necessary, manage security and the removal of materials from the event area.