

OVERVIEW

Participants complete a cybersecurity test covering general cybersecurity vocabulary and knowledge needed to execute tasks commonly performed by all levels of cybersecurity professionals. Applying leadership and 21st century skills, participants prepare a presentation addressing a specific cybersecurity issue and present to a group of hypothetical corporate board members (i.e., judges). Participants must explain the importance of cybersecurity and why it is essential that the organization invest in such measures. Participants will answer questions from the judges following the presentation. The problem statement will be posted on the [TSA website](#) under *Themes & Problems*.

ELIGIBILITY

Three (3) individuals per chapter may participate.

TIME LIMITS

- A. One (1) hour to complete the test.
- B. Five (5) minutes are allowed for the presentation and interview broken down as follows:
 1. Three (3) minutes for the presentation
 2. Two (2) minutes to respond to questions from judges

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 problem on the [TSA website](#) under *Themes & Problems*.
- C. Participants prepare a presentation according to the regulations.

PRELIMINARY ROUND

- A. Participants report at the time and place stated in the conference program for the test.
- B. A list of twelve (12) semifinalists (in random order) is posted.

SEMFINAL ROUND

- A. Participants report at the time and place stated in the conference program to schedule a time for the semifinal presentation/interview.
- B. Semifinalists report at the assigned time and place stated in the conference program for the presentation/interview.
- C. Semifinalists present their presentation to the judges and answer questions.
- D. Ten (10) finalists are announced during the conference awards ceremony.

REGULATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

Students will work to develop their leadership and 21st 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.

PRELIMINARY ROUND

- A. Participants take the test individually.
- B. Tests will be administered online only. Written (paper) tests will not be used unless deemed necessary prior to, or on-site at the national conference. Online testing will require each member to provide a laptop, and all members must take the test online. Please review the [National TSA Conference Competition Requirements](#).
- C. Participants are responsible for bringing two (2) sharpened No. 2 pencils to the test site.
- D. In the event the test must be administered using a hard copy and scantron:
 1. Student identification numbers must be entered on the scantron form in the space indicated.
 2. Participants must stop work immediately when time is called.

3. Should a participant complete the test before the time allocated is over, the participant will submit the test and scantron form to the coordinator without any form of communication with any other member. Failure to do so results in disqualification of the participant.
4. All tests and scantrons must be turned in before leaving the test area.

SEMIFINAL ROUND

A. The Presentation/Interview

1. Any participant that is late or fails to arrive to present at the designated time results in an automatic disqualification.
2. Participants enter this event with the current year's problem which can be found on the *Competition Updates* page on the [TSA website](#).
3. No identifying information other than the participant's identification number and conference title and year are permitted.
4. Participants shall focus on the following in their presentation:
 - a. Identify and explain the security problem.
 - b. Explain how physical and digital security measures protect electronic information.
 - c. Use real-world data metrics and situations to support the claim.
 - d. Explain trade-offs when selecting and implementing cybersecurity recommendations.
5. Participants must use fictitious company names if needed for both the company in which the participant is "employed," as well as the fictitious company offering cybersecurity services. Real names may not be used.
6. Participants may use the presentation platform of their choice, such as PowerPoint, Prezi or Google Slides, however, audio may not be used.
 - a. Participants need to provide their own laptop. AC power will not be provided.
- b. Each laptop device needs an HDMI connection or HDMI adapter.
- c. Participant must be prepared to use the laptop screen if a digital projector and/or white background are not available.
7. The participant must orally present key points to the corporate board members.
8. No commercial or copyrighted material may be used.
9. Highlight your proposal with creative visual elements (e.g., graphics, photos, titles, transitions) to actively engage the audience. Participants may use images "labeled for reuse," but must properly cite the source (refer to the General Rules).
10. Photo/Film/Video Consent and Release Forms. If the entry contains images of people (minors require parental consent), proof of consent must be included for each person (see 2026 & 2027 Forms Appendix).
11. Staple or paperclip the citation page (if necessary) and any Photo/Film/Video Consent and Release Forms (if necessary) together and present them to the corporate board members (judges) prior to the presentation.
12. Timing:
 - a. Participants are allowed five (5) minutes for the presentation/interview, broken down as follows:
 - b. Three (3) minutes to present solution to the theme/problem
 - c. Two (2) minutes to answer questions
 - d. A timepiece may be used by the participants, if desired
 - e. One (1) point per ten (10)-second interval is deducted for speaking over three (3) minutes. Time commences when the presenter begins speaking.
- B. Judges score the presentation.
- C. The top ten (10) finalists are announced at the TSA conference awards ceremony.

EVALUATION

PRELIMINARY ROUND

A. The test

SEMIFINAL ROUND

A. The presentation/interview

Refer to the official rating form for more information

RESOURCES

- NICSS Cybersecurity for Students: niccs.cisa.gov/education-training/cybersecurity-students
- NICSS CISA Learning: niccs.cisa.gov/education-training/cisa-learning
- Center for Internet Security - Insights: www.cisecurity.org/insights/all
- Cyber.org: cyber.org
- Hack the Box: www.hackthebox.com
- TryHackMe: tryhackme.com
- IBM Skillbuilder – Cybersecurity: skillsbuild.org/students/course-catalog/cybersecurity
- SANS: www.sans.org

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 21ST CENTURY SKILLS

This event provides opportunity for students to build and develop leadership and 21st 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 careers below:

- Information support & services
- Network systems
- Programming & software development
- Web & digital communications
- Technical support specialist
- Computer software engineer
- Cybersecurity engineer
- Cryptographer
- Cyber Crime Investigator
- Cyber defense incident responder
- Cyber forensics expert
- Cyber legal advisor
- Cyber operator
- Vulnerability assessor

Participant/Team ID# _____

CYBERSECURITY

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.

Participant is present for presentation/interview
 ENTRY NOT EVALUATED

TEST (50 points)																																
				TEST SUBTOTAL (50 points)																												
<p>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.</p> <p>Indicate the rule violated: _____</p>																																
<p>PRELIMINARY SUBTOTAL (50 points)</p>																																
<p>SEMIFINAL PRESENTATION/INTERVIEW (130 points)</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th rowspan="2">CRITERIA</th> <th>Minimal performance</th> <th>Adequate performance</th> <th>Exemplary performance</th> <th rowspan="2">Record scores in the column spaces below.</th> </tr> <tr> <th>1-4 points</th> <th>5-8 points</th> <th>9-10 points</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td colspan="5">PRESENTATION/INTERVIEW (100 points)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Identification and Explanation of Issue (X2)</td> <td>Identification and explanation of the issue is unclear.</td> <td>Issue is defined and explained appropriately; however, some points need clarification.</td> <td>A clear and concise definition and explanation of the issue is evident.</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Explanation of Importance (X2)</td> <td>There is little evidence of research; there is a lack of understanding of the issues cited.</td> <td>There is some evidence of research; an adequate understanding of the issues is present.</td> <td>Thorough research is clearly evident with a firm understanding of the issues established.</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Creativity, Aesthetics, and Artisanship (X1)</td> <td>The presentation lacks creativity; the work is unorganized and sloppy.</td> <td>Some visual elements of creativity exist in the work; presentation is generally organized in its explanation of the issue and the visual elements somewhat enhance the presentation.</td> <td>The presentation exudes creativity; essential design principles and elements are well integrated; presentation logically communicates an important idea and is engaging.</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>					CRITERIA	Minimal performance	Adequate performance	Exemplary performance	Record scores in the column spaces below.	1-4 points	5-8 points	9-10 points	PRESENTATION/INTERVIEW (100 points)					Identification and Explanation of Issue (X2)	Identification and explanation of the issue is unclear.	Issue is defined and explained appropriately; however, some points need clarification.	A clear and concise definition and explanation of the issue is evident.		Explanation of Importance (X2)	There is little evidence of research; there is a lack of understanding of the issues cited.	There is some evidence of research; an adequate understanding of the issues is present.	Thorough research is clearly evident with a firm understanding of the issues established.		Creativity, Aesthetics, and Artisanship (X1)	The presentation lacks creativity; the work is unorganized and sloppy.	Some visual elements of creativity exist in the work; presentation is generally organized in its explanation of the issue and the visual elements somewhat enhance the presentation.	The presentation exudes creativity; essential design principles and elements are well integrated; presentation logically communicates an important idea and is engaging.	
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SEMIFINAL PRESENTATION/INTERVIEW (130 points) – continued			
PRESENTATION/INTERVIEW (100 points) – continued			
Articulation (X2)	Communication of the proposal is unclear, unorganized, and or illogical; leadership and/or 21 st century skills are not evident.	Communication of the proposal is somewhat logical and clear; leadership and/or 21 st century skills are somewhat evident.	Communication of the proposal is clear, concise, and logical; leadership and/or 21 st century skills are clearly evident.
Overall Impact (X2)	The presentation does not detail or enhance the essential components of the participant's problem identification and proposal.	The presentation somewhat enhances the essential components of the participants problem identification and solution.	The presentation greatly details and enhances the essential components of the participant's problem identification and solution.
Interview (X1)	Responses to questions are not clear and show evidence that the member is not knowledgeable of the subject.	Responses to questions are clear and organized and demonstrate knowledge of the subject.	Responses to the questions are highly clear and well organized and demonstrate high knowledge of the subject.
STAGE PRESENCE (30 points)			
Delivery (X1)	Participant is verbose and/or uncertain in his/her presentation; participant's posture, gestures, and lack of eye contact diminish the presentation.	Participant is somewhat well-spoken and clear in his/her presentation; participants' posture, gestures, and eye contact are acceptable in the presentation.	Participant is well-spoken and distinct in its presentation; the participant's posture, gestures, and eye contact result in a polished, natural, and effective presentation.
Appearance (X1)	Participant's appearance is unprofessional, sloppy, and/or inappropriate.	Participant's appearance is adequate and appropriate.	Participant's appearance is clearly exceptional, appropriate, and professional.
Confidence (X1)	Participant appears nervous during the presentation; poor posture, poor eye contact, and lack of confidence are evident; participant reads the presentation from notes.	Participant is generally poised, displays eye contact, and is confident, with little sign of nervousness; participant reads from the presentation or notes for key points, but presents clearly.	Participant "commands" the room, and is exceptionally poised, confident, and positive; participant does not use rely heavily on the presentation or reference materials.
SEMIFINAL PRESENTATION/INTERVIEW SUBTOTAL (130 points)			

TIME DEDUCTIONS	
One (1) point per ten (10)-second interval is deducted for speaking over three (3) minutes. Time commences when the competitor begins speaking.	
TOTAL TIME FOR PRESENTATION	
TIME DEDUCTION	
TOTAL TIME DEDUCTIONS	

Record scores
in the column
spaces below.

SEMIFINAL SUBTOTAL (130 points)	
To arrive at the TOTAL score, add any subtotals and subtract rules violation points, as necessary.	TOTAL (180 points)

Comments:

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

JUDGE

Printed name: _____ Signature: _____

CYBERSECURITY

EVENT COORDINATOR INSTRUCTIONS

PERSONNEL

- A. Event coordinator
- B. Judges, two (2) or more
- C. Assistants for the set-up, monitoring, and clean-up of the preliminary and the semifinal rounds, two (2) or more

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. Tables and chairs for participants
- C. Tables and chairs for judges
- D. A projector (if available) with HDMI input for computers to project the presentation if desired.
- E. Presentation screen or wall to project the presentation (if available)
- F. Stopwatch or clock for the timekeeper

RESPONSIBILITIES

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, chairs, tables, outlets, etc. Notify the event manager of any potential problems.
- E. At least one (1) hour before the event is to begin, meet with judges 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. Prior to the conference, the event coordinator shall become familiar with the format of the exam (refer to the [National TSA Conference Competition Requirements](#)).
- B. Late participants and/or entries are considered on a case-by-case basis and only when lateness is caused by events beyond the participant's control.
- C. In order to compete, participants must be on the entry list or must have approval of the CRC.
- D. Begin the event at the scheduled time by closing the doors and checking the entry list.
- E. All participants and judges should be in the room at this time.
- F. Late participants and/or entries are considered on a case-by-case basis and only when lateness is caused by events beyond the participant's control.
- G. In order to compete, participants must be on the entry list or must have approval of the CRC.
- H. Distribute any necessary materials.
- I. Monitor the one (1)-hour test.
- J. 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 all initial either of these actions on the rating form.

SEMIFINAL ROUND

- A. Semifinalists report at the time and place stated in the conference program to sign up for a presentation time.
- B. Semifinalists report at the assigned time and place for the on-site challenge with:
 - 1. One (1) laptop, or other presentation hardware (e.g. iPad)
- C. Participants do NOT have access to electrical power/outlets during the event.

- D. Participants can have access to the Internet during the event.
- E. Participants must have the presentation downloaded and accessible on their computers.
- F. Participants may project their presentation via the projector (if available).
- G. Participants are given eight (8) minutes to present, broken down as follows:
 1. Two (2) minutes to set up
 2. Three (3) minutes for the presentation
 3. Two (2) minutes to respond to questions
 4. One (1) minute to clear material
- H. Discuss rule violations (e.g., 20% deduction, disqualification) and have all relevant parties initial the rating form.
- I. Manage security and the removal of materials from the area.