

DEBATING TECHNOLOGICAL ISSUES



OVERVIEW

Applying leadership and 21st century skills, team members collaborate to prepare for a debate against a team from another chapter. The teams are instructed to take either the Pro or Con side of a selected subtopic.

The theme and subtopics for this event will be posted on the [TSA website](#) under *Themes & Problems*.

ELIGIBILITY

Three (3) teams of two (2) individuals per state may participate.

TIME LIMITS

Refer to Preliminary Round Procedure for time limits.

ATTIRE

TSA competition attire is required for this event.

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 review the annual theme and subtopics posted on the [TSA website](#) under *Themes & Problems*.
- C. Participants research all subtopics and should be prepared to debate any of the subtopics from both Pro and Con views.
- D. Prepare a summary of references and print (and have available at the conference) a minimum of four (4) copies on an 8½" x 11" sheet of paper; both sides of the paper may be used.
 1. The event title, the event's yearly topic, and a line for the team/chapter ID number must be printed at the top of the front side of the paper.
 2. The reference summary must be typewritten (handwritten is not acceptable).
 3. Font size must not be less than 10 point.
 4. MLA format must be used to cite sources. Listing URLs does not constitute an appropriate citation.

5. References for all three (3) subtopics are to be submitted on one (1) sheet of paper, not a separate sheet for each subtopic.

CHECK-IN

- A. One participant from each team must attend a Pre-Debate meeting at a time and place stated in the conference program to:
 1. Submit a copy of the team's summary of references. Failure to provide an appropriately formatted summary of references disqualifies the team from participation.
 2. Sign up for a debate time.
 3. Receive general information and directions.

PRELIMINARY ROUND

- A. Participants report to the preparation room fifteen minutes before the scheduled debate time.
- B. Participants will draw the subtopic and Pro/Con at the time of their debate. Each debate may have a different subtopic.
- C. Two (2) teams will debate using Pro or Con side of a selected subtopic.
- D. Judges independently judge each debate.
- E. A list of twelve (12) semifinalists (in random order) is posted.

SEMIFINAL ROUND

- A. Semifinalists report to the event area at the time and place stated in the conference program to receive an assigned debate time.
- B. Semifinalist debates follow the same procedure as in the preliminary round.
- C. Ten (10) finalists will be 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

Debate Procedures

- A. Participants report to the preparation room fifteen (15) minutes before the scheduled debate time.
- B. While in the preparation room, the subtopic and the Pro/Con schedule cards will be drawn and the teams will have five (5) minutes to prepare.
- C. At the end of the five (5) minutes of preparation time for the teams, they are escorted to the debate room.
- D. Order of debate format:
 1. Pro Speaker (maximum of 2 minutes)
 2. Con Speaker (maximum of 2 minutes)
 3. Break (1 minute)
 4. Pro Cross Examination of Con (maximum of 2 minutes)
 5. Con Cross Examination of Pro (maximum of 2 minutes)
 6. Break (1 minute)
 7. Pro Rebuttal (maximum of 2 minutes)
 8. Con Rebuttal (maximum of 2 minutes)
- E. The escort introduces the Pro team by identification number and the team is instructed to sit to the left side of the podium.
 1. The first speaker should sit next to the podium.
 2. At this time, participants present their schedule card and a copy of the team's summary of references to the judges.
- F. The Con team is introduced by identification number and instructed to sit to the right side of the podium.
 1. The first speaker should sit next to the podium.
 2. At this time, participants present their schedule card and a copy of the team's summary of references to the judges.
- G. When the judges and teams are ready, the Pro speaker is instructed to move to the podium and begin.
 1. Timing starts when the speaker begins.
 2. After one (1) minute and forty-five (45) seconds, the timer holds up a 4" x 6" card that reads "15 seconds."
3. Penalty points are deducted if a speaker exceeds the allotted time.
- H. When the Pro speaker is finished and has been seated, the Con speaker moves to the podium and begins, according to the same procedure noted above.
- I. When the Con speaker is finished and has been seated, the timer announces a one (1)-minute conference period in which both teams may prepare their questions for cross examination.
- J. During cross-examination, the team answering the questions remains seated.
- K. At the conclusion of the one (1)-minute conference period, the timer announces that the conference period is over and the Pro questioning speaker approaches the podium.
 1. Timing starts when the speaker begins.
 2. After one (1) minute and forty-five (45) seconds, the timer holds up a 4" x 6" card that reads "15 seconds."
 3. If the con team is in the process of answering a question, the team may finish its answer, provided it does not exceed an additional 15 seconds beyond the allotted two (2) minutes. At this time, the team is cut off by the timer.
- L. When the Pro questioning speaker is seated, the Con questioning speaker approaches the podium.
 1. Timing starts when the speaker begins.
 2. After one (1) minute and forty-five (45) seconds, the timer holds up a 4" x 6" card that reads "15 seconds."
 3. If the pro team is in the process of answering a question, the team may finish its answer, provided it does not exceed an additional 15 seconds beyond the allotted two (2) minutes. At this time, the team is cut off by the timer.
- M. At the conclusion of the cross examination, the teams are given a one (1) minute conference break to prepare their rebuttals.
- N. The timer announces the end of the conference break and the Pro rebuttal speaker approaches the podium.

1. Timing starts when the speaker begins.
 2. After one (1) minute and forty-five (45) seconds the timer holds up a 4" x 6" card that reads "15 seconds."
 3. Penalty points are deducted if a speaker exceeds the allotted time.
- O. When the Pro rebuttal speaker is finished and has been seated, the Con rebuttal speaker moves to the podium and begins, according to the same procedure noted above in Procedure N.
- P. When the Con rebuttal speaker is finished and has been seated, the timer announces to both teams that they may leave the debate room.

Debate Details and Notes

- A. Room set-up:



- B. Electronic devices of any sort (cell phones, smart watches, laptops, etc) are not allowed in the debate room.
- C. Teams are penalized five (5) points for speaking over the allotted time.
- D. Pre-written notes may be used. Notes must be written on 3" x 5" notecards.
- E. Handwritten notes may be taken during the debate.
- F. A three (3)-ring binder of reference materials, as noted on the summary of references provided to the judges, may be used during the debate.
- G. No audio-visual materials of any type may be used.
- H. Participants are not allowed to hear the debates of other teams, aside from the team they are debating.
- I. Participants may use their own stopwatches to time themselves. These may only be traditional stopwatches; cell phone stop watches are NOT ALLOWED.
- J. No observers or assistants are allowed in the preparation room.
- K. Participants must both present at different times during the debate. Only one (1) speaker per side is allowed at the podium at any time.
- L. Cross examination (questioning) of the opposing team is to remain civil. Any aggressive behavior, belittling of opponents, or shouting results in immediate disqualification of the offending team.
- M. If there is an odd number of teams entered in the event, one team debates twice, based on a random drawing for teams that wish to go twice. (Note that the coordinator may not force a team to go twice if it does not wish to do so.)
- N. If a team debates twice, it may or may not have the same subtopic or Pro/Con side of the debate.
1. The team also is required to provide an additional copy of the Resource List (Pre-conference C) to the judges.
 2. The highest score of the twice-debating team is used as its score.

SEMIFINAL ROUND

- A. Participants report to the event area at the time and place stated in the conference program to receive an assigned debate time and general information from the judging team.
- B. Participants report to the preparation room at the assigned time.
- C. Preliminary round procedures are used for the semifinal round.
- D. If observers are allowed in the debate room during the semifinal debates, the following shall be observed:
1. No audio or visual recording devices are allowed.
 2. No talking or gesturing is permitted.
 3. Observers are not allowed to enter or leave during a debate.
 4. There is no applause until the debate is completed.
- Please refer to the conference page of the TSA website or the Spectator Events page of the conference program for additional information.

EVALUATION

A. The debate

Note: Scores are reset for the semifinal round and are not added to the preliminary scores.

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 aligns with the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) educational standards.

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:

- Broadcast media specialist
- Lawyer
- Motivational speaker
- Public relations executive

DEBATING TECHNOLOGICAL ISSUES

2025 & 2026 OFFICIAL RATING FORM

HIGH 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.

- ☐ Two (2) team members are present
- ☐ Summary of references is present for each round and is formatted correctly
- ☐ ENTRY NOT EVALUATED

DEBATE (110 points)				Record scores in the column spaces below.
CRITERIA	Minimal performance	Adequate performance	Exemplary performance	
	1-4 points	5-8 points	9-10 points	
Points of Argument (X1)	Team does not get the attention of the audience, and/or does not outline points clearly.	Team makes an effort to grab the attention of the audience; previewing points are somewhat organized in a logical manner.	Introduction uses an attention getter, clearly states the thesis, and previews main points of the argument; the team is cognizant of the audience.	
Organization (X1)	The main idea may not be focused or developed; the introduction is undeveloped; transitions may be needed.	The main idea is adequately presented, but the organizational structure may need to be strengthened; ideas are generally developed and flow smoothly.	The main idea is clearly presented, well-developed, and firmly supported.	
Topic Knowledge (X2)	The team does not have a grasp of the information; inaccurate, generalized, or inappropriate supporting material is used; there is an over-dependence on notes.	The team has a partial grasp of the information; supporting material is adequate and the team is at ease.	The team has a clear grasp of information; citations are introduced and attributed accurately; the team demonstrates full knowledge, with explanations and elaboration, of the subject area.	
Delivery (X2)	Delivery detracts from the message; eye contact may be very limited; presenter may tend to look at the floor, mumble, speak inaudibly, fidget, or read from notecards; gestures and movements may be jerky or excessive.	Delivery generally seems effective, however, use of volume, eye contact, vocal control, etc., may not be consistent; some hesitancy may be observed; vocal tone, facial expressions, and/or other nonverbal expressions do not detract from the message.	Delivery is extemporaneous, natural, confident, and enhances the message; posture, eye contact, smooth gestures, facial expressions, volume, pace, etc., indicate confidence, a commitment to the topic, and a willingness to communicate.	
Cross Examination (X1)	Questions posed to the opposing team show a minimal knowledge of the subtopic and do not leave much room for discussion; discourse initiated by the team to opponents is often hostile/aggressive and unproductive.	Questions posed to the opposing team show an adequate knowledge of the subtopic and prompt reasonable discussion; discourse initiated by the team to opponents is sometimes unproductive.	Questions posed to the opposing team show excellent knowledge of the subtopic and prompt eloquent discussion; discourse initiated by the team to opponents is respectful and its relevance propels the debate forward.	

DEBATE (110 points) – continued				
Question Responses (X1)	The team's responses are minimally sourced and do not fully answer the questions posed.	The team's responses are moderately sourced and mostly answer the questions posed.	The team's responses are fully sourced and completely answer the questions posed.	
Rebuttal (X1)	Rebuttal is unorganized, unclear, and/or incoherent; rebuttal includes no counter to points made from the opposing team.	Rebuttal is somewhat organized, and it creates a mostly logical counter to the opposing team's points.	Rebuttal is logical, concise, and creative; counter arguments from the opposing team are incorporated in the rebuttal in a unique and interesting way.	
Voice and Language (X1)	Language choices may be limited, peppered with slang or jargon, too complex, or too dull; language is questionable or inappropriate for the audience.	Language used is mostly appropriate, respectful, or inoffensive; word choices are adequate.	Language is familiar to the audience, appropriate for the setting, and free of bias; word choices are vivid and precise.	
Group Member Participation (X1)	One team member speaks for the initial, cross examination, question responses, and the rebuttal; the other team member is disengaged; leadership and/or 21 st century skills are not evident.	Each team member speaks in the debate—one for the initial portion and the other for the rebuttal; during questioning, both team members have adequate knowledge of the topic and subtopic and share ownership equally; leadership and/or 21 st century skills are somewhat evident.	Each team member speaks eloquently in the debate—one for the initial portion of the debate and the other for the rebuttal; during questioning, both team members show clear understanding, knowledge, and ownership of the topic and subtopic; leadership and/or 21 st century skills are clearly evident.	
DEBATE SUBTOTAL (110 points)				
Rules violations (a deduction of 20% of the total possible points for the above section) must be initialed by the evaluator, coordinator, and manager of the event. Record the deduction in the space to the right. Indicate the rule violated: _____				
Time violation (a deduction of five [5] points total will be incurred for exceeding the debate time limit). Record the deduction in the space to the right.				
To arrive at the TOTAL score, add any subtotals and subtract rules violation points, as necessary.				
TOTAL (110 points)				

Comments:

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

JUDGE

Printed name: _____ Signature: _____

DEBATING TECHNOLOGICAL ISSUES

EVENT COORDINATOR INSTRUCTIONS

PERSONNEL

- A. Event coordinator
- B. Judges:
 - 1. Preliminary round, two (2) or more
 - 2. Semifinal round, two (2) or more
- C. Timekeeper/Announcers
 - 1. One (1) timekeeper/announcer per heat room; timekeepers may serve as judges
- D. Escorts for moving teams from preparation room to debate room
 - 1. One (1) per heat room; escorts may not serve as judges

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. Signs that read "DEBATE in PROGRESS" for all rooms, as needed
- C. One (1) stopwatch for each debate room
- D. A 4" x 6" card with the message "15 seconds" written on the card, one (1) card for each debate room
- E. Two (2) 3" x 5" cards with "Pro" written on the card; two (2) 3" x 5" cards with "Con" written on the card; and one (1) 3" x 5" card with "2 minutes" written on it for each debate room
- F. Copies of schedule cards (pro/con for each debate room)
- G. Podium for each debate room
- H. One (1) table and two (2) chairs for the Pro side and one (1) table and two (2) chairs for the Con side for each debate room
- I. One (1) table and three (3) chairs for judges and timekeeper/announcer for each debate room; one (1) chair in the back of the room for the escort
- J. Chairs for observers during the debate, if applicable
- K. Three (3) tables and three (3) chairs in the preparation room for event personnel and participants

RESPONSIBILITIES

AT THE CONFERENCE

- A. Attend the mandatory 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 or room 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. Develop a heat schedule, taking into consideration the number of preparation and debate rooms, the number of entries, and the time allotted for the event. Twenty (20) minutes should be allowed for each debate.
- F. From the list of subtopics, choose one subtopic to be used for each round. The subtopic chosen must apply for all teams.
- G. At least one (1) hour before the event is scheduled to begin, meet with judges/assistants to review time limits, procedures, regulations, evaluation, and any other details pertaining to the event. If questions arise that cannot be answered, speak to the event manager before the event begins.
- H. Ensure the judges have access to the online judging system.

EVENT CHECK-IN

- A. Create the following sign-up sheets:
 - 1. Debate time
- B. Pre-debate meeting:
 - 1. Collect the summary of references from each team and determine the number of teams present.
 - 2. Allow the team representative to sign up for a preliminary round debate time. Heat rooms will be determined in the preparation room.
 - 3. Provide general information and directions.

PRELIMINARY ROUND

- A. Begin the event by checking in the participants when they arrive at the preparation room at their scheduled time.
- B. When two (2) teams and a debate room are available, have one (1) team draw one (1) or two (2) schedule cards (one [1] card has Pro written on it and the other card has Con written on it) and the other team will draw from a set of cards that have the subtopics listed.
 1. The pro/con position and the subtopic will apply for this round's debate.
 2. Collect the summary of references page from each team.
 3. The team is responsible to sit on the correct pro and con sides of the podium and identify the subtopic to the judges before the debate begins.
- C. Record the view each team is presenting on the scheduling sheet.
- D. Have the escort take the teams to the debate room.
- E. The escort announces to the judges the identification number of the Pro team first and then the Con team.
 1. Each team then sits on a designated side of the podium.
 2. The judges need to record each team's identification number on the judge's evaluation sheet.
- F. The escort should remain in the debate room until the end of the debate, when s/he escorts each team from the room. This process of escorting teams into and then out of the debate room for competition takes place until all teams have participated.
- G. If there is an odd number of teams entered in this event, teams are randomly selected to determine the team that debate twice. If a team debates twice, its highest score is used to determine placement.
- H. When the timekeeper/announcer has confirmed that the teams and judges are ready to begin, s/he instructs the Pro speaker to approach the podium and begin.
- I. The timing of each debate starts when the speaker begins; however, if there are any unreasonable delays, the speaker is warned by the timer and timing begins.
- J. Timing of the conference break starts once the Con speaker has completed the presentation. The timekeeper informs the teams that they are in the conference break and also informs the teams when the period is over.
- K. Once the conference break is over, the Pro cross examination speaker approaches the podium and begins, followed by the Con cross examination speaker.
- L. Timing of the second conference break begins once the Con cross examination speaker is seated.
- M. Once the second conference break is over, the Pro rebuttal speaker approaches the podium and begins, followed by the Con rebuttal speaker.
- N. When the Con rebuttal speaker is finished, s/he should return to his/her seat. The timekeeper collects the summary of references from both teams. When the evaluators are ready, the timekeeper announces to the teams that they are to leave the room and they are escorted out by the escort.
- O. The judges inform the escort when they are ready for a new set of teams so that the escort may return to the preparation room.
- P. Following the last team's presentation, the judges complete the scoring, making adjustments for time penalties.
- Q. Decisions about rules violations must be discussed and verified with the judges, event coordinator, and CRC manager to determine either:
 1. To deduct twenty percent (20%) of the total possible points in this round or
 2. To disqualify the entryThe event coordinator, judges, and CRC manager must initial either of these actions on the rating form.
- R. Create a sign-up sheet for the semifinal debates.

SEMIFINAL ROUND

- A. Assign semifinalists a debate time.
- B. At the time and place stated in the conference program, meet with semifinalists to review scheduling and procedures.
- C. Follow the preliminary round procedures, including the selection of pro/con and the selection of the subtopic for the semifinal round of debates.

- D. All communication related to judges and participants during the debate should be handled by the timekeeper.
- E. Discuss rule violations (e.g. 20% deduction, disqualification) and have all relevant parties initial the rating form.
- F. If necessary, manage security and the removal of materials from the event area.