

Connecticut Debate Association May 30, 2020 eTournament

The CDA will be running its first eTournament on Saturday, May 30. Registration is open now on tabroom.com and will close on Saturday, May 23.

There is a lot of detailed information below. Please read it carefully and follow it closely. If you have questions, please email me. We suggest you share this document with your debaters and judges and have a videoconference with them to go over this material prior to registration.

Please consider everything below a “best guess”, but subject to change between now and May 30.

Summary

- **State Finals and Open Divisions.** Registration will accommodate Varsity and Novice divisions for State Finals, and Varsity and Novice divisions Open to all. Our usual rules for State Finals teams will be followed. If we do not have a quorum of at least 60% of State Finals qualifiers, State Finals divisions will be folded into the Open divisions.
- **Registration** will be through tabroom.com. All registrants—students and judges—will need to have linked accounts as described below. Registration will close on May 23, one week before the tournament, so we can check entries and provide training. Late entries will not be accepted.
- **Students** will need to create a tabroom id using an email address which can receive emails from an outside sender. School-provided emails that block outsiders will not work. During the tournament, students will need access to their emails/text messages, to the internet for round pairings, and to have hardware sufficient to participate in the videoconference.
- **Judges** will need to create a tabroom id using an email address which can receive emails from an outside sender. Judges will also need access to their emails/text messages, to the internet for round assignments and electronic ballots, and to have hardware sufficient to participate in the videoconference.
- **Coaches** will have to take primary responsibility to see that their students and judges are appropriately registered, equipped and trained. While we will check all entries, we do not have the resources to individually follow-up. We will notify you of problems and expect that you will contact your students and/or judges to deal with them.
- **Observers.** We are undecided as to whether to permit observers. If we do permit them, they will have to pre-register.
- **Security and privacy.** Each school must decide if participation is consistent with their policies and regulations. We will choose systems that we believe are safe and use them appropriately, but we cannot guarantee either performance or security. Each school is responsible for their own students.
- **Technology.** We will use tabroom.com for registration and to manage the tournament as usual. We have not chosen the internet conferencing software we will use because we are still looking at several options. We will send details when we have made a choice.
- **Technology training and check.** All schools will be required to attend a technology session during the to test connections and go over the tournament process. The coach, all students and all judges will be required to attend. We will provide a sign-up sheet with appropriate lead time.
- **Tournament Day Check-in.** We cannot predict how many debaters we will have, but a normal CDA tournament day has 300-400 debaters and 100 judges and coaches. Teams and judges will have to

be present at assigned check-in times to facilitate the process. Once they check in, students and judges need to stay linked to the conference for the duration of the tournament.

- **Schedule.** We will follow our traditional format of 3 preliminary rounds and a final round for the top two Varsity teams. The time for each round will be extended to accommodate our learning process and allow for glitches.
- **Resolution packet and prep.** We will have a standard resolution packet and one hour of case prep time. We will offer each school connection for prep or they can make their own arrangements.
- **Preliminary Debate Rounds** will occur in private videoconferences consisting of the four debaters and a judge. Tab will have the ability to “drop in” on any round to check on progress and to deal with problems. If we permit observers, they will also be in the “room” but will be muted and asked to turn off their video.
- **Final Round** will be in the main conference and all will be permitted to observe, though muted and with video off.
- **Trophies.** Probably. Type will have to be consistent with delivery options.

Questions and Comments please email ejrutan3@ctdebate.org .

Details

1. Divisions

The tournament will offer four divisions, Varsity State Finals, Novice State Finals, Open Varsity and Open Novice. We would like to hold State Finals if possible, but to be legitimate we need a sufficient number of qualifiers competing. The Open divisions are to give all CDA debaters an opportunity to participate in an eTournament in anticipation of next year.

A legitimate State Finals requires the participation of at least 60% of the 210 qualifiers (126 or more). If we have insufficient registrations we will combine the State Finals and Open divisions into a single Varsity and Novice division. Because we cannot predict attendance, we will not know if State Finals will run until registration closes on May 23.

Coaches should have a list of State Finals qualifiers that was sent to them in March. (If you need the list re-sent, please email ejrutan3@ctdebate.org .) Debaters qualify as individuals, and State Finals teams must be composed of those who qualified, even if these are not their regular partners. If you have an odd number of qualifying debaters in Varsity attending the tournament, you may add one non-qualifying Varsity debater to fill a two-person teams. Similarly you may add one non-qualifying debater in Novice if you have an odd number attending. No more than one non-qualifying Varsity and/or one non-qualifying Novice debater may enroll in State Finals from any one school. We generally do not pair singletons across schools at State Finals.

Any debater may enroll in the Open Varsity or Open Novice divisions, subject to our usual rules regarding Novices.

For State Finals or Open, the Novice division is open to Freshmen and Sophomores only. Juniors and Seniors must debate as Varsity.

2. Registration

Registration is through tabroom.com as usual. Rather than separate divisions for different host schools, you will find four divisions: State Finals Varsity (SF Varsity), State Finals Novice (SF Novice), Open Varsity and Open Novice. Enter your debaters in the appropriate division.

We will have two groups of Judges, Varsity and Novice. Judges will be assigned to rounds in both the State Finals and Open divisions as needed.

3. Linked Tabroom Accounts

All students and judges must have linked tabroom accounts. Anyone can create their own tabroom account by entering an email address and a password. When creating the linked account, the student can also enter The coach then needs to link the student or judge entries on their roster to that account by entering the email address.

This is the tabroom documentation for setting up an account: http://docs.tabroom.com/Sign_Up

This is the tabroom documentation for managing a school account and adding students by linking their accounts: http://docs.tabroom.com/School_Administration .

4. Students

To register students will need a tabroom account linked to their entry as described above. To participate students will need internet access, conferencing equipment and telephone access. Laptops, tablets and even cell phones may be sufficient. Video access is preferred but audio only will be accepted. In addition to participating in the tournament and rounds, students will need a way to communicate with their partner during prep time and while the other team is speaking.

Students will be expected to register with their team at the assigned time on the tournament day, and stay linked to the conference for the duration. As in a regular tournament there will be breaks between rounds and time for lunch, but students will not be permitted to leave the tournament and re-enter any more than they would have been permitted to leave a host school during the tournament.

Registrations for State Finals will be checked to verify they are qualifiers or otherwise compliant with the rules.

5. Judges

To register judges will need a tabroom account linked to their entry as described above. To participate judges will need internet access, conferencing equipment and telephone access. Laptops, tablets and even cell phones may be sufficient. Video access is preferred but audio only will be accepted. In addition to participating in the tournament and rounds, judges will need a way to notify tab of problems or to ask questions.

Judges will be expected to register with their team at the assigned time on the tournament day, and stay linked to the conference for the duration. As in a regular tournament there will be breaks between rounds and time for lunch, but students will not be permitted to leave the tournament and re-enter any more than they would have been permitted to leave a host school during the tournament.

We will not teach new judges at this tournament—the new technology is enough of a hurdle. We will check to see that any judge registered has previous judging experience or was a former debater.

As colleges will have finished the Spring semester and most not started summer term, we recommend you reach out to recent graduates and ask them if they will judge for the day. Having

extra judges would help make the day easier, and help schools that are new to the league and cannot call on alumni/ae to judge. College students are likely more facile with the technology than most adults. Note: Class of 2020 high school graduates may not judge; they may debate as Seniors.

6. Coaches

We will be relying on coaches to see that their students and judges are prepared for the event. We know some teams have already participated in one or more eTournaments, though each has been run slightly differently. We will work to prepare or provide links to training material as we get closer to the event. We will provide this material to the coaches and expect they review it with their debaters and judges prior to the technology checks the week before the tournament.

Many coaches will be involved as judges, but we understand many will want to work with and observe their teams. We ask coaches to register as judges with linked accounts, but we will work to find away to facilitate their involvement in case preparation and observing debates if they prefer.

7. Security and Privacy

Students and judges will be interacting using videoconferencing and other software over the internet. Even if these are not easily hackable, access information will be sent to possibly several hundred CDA participants across Connecticut who might be careless or might purposely abuse it. We will check-in participants electronically and respond appropriately to any reported abuse, but our ability to monitor all interactions is limited by the likely scale of the event.

Each coach will have to decide if participation in the CDA eTournament is consistent with their own school's policies. Under the CDA Code of Conduct each coach is responsible for the behavior of the students and judges they bring to the event, and they apply to this electronic format as much as to an in-person tournament.

8. Observers

An eTournament at least theoretically provides the ability to easily accommodate observers. However, it does place a burden on our ability to manage things. We will consider allowing debaters to invite observers, but at the moment it is unlikely.

9. Student and Judge Technology

The standard setup for a participant in an eTournament is a computer device with camera, speakers and microphone (most laptops, tablets and chromebooks less than 5 years old have these) with a reliable internet connection and a cell phone in a quiet room. The device will need to run the videoconferencing software and access tabroom and email for round postings and announcements. The cell phone will permit two-way communication with tab for problems and for debaters with their partner for in-round communication.

A headset with a microphone that can be plugged into the computer device is a highly recommended addition, as it makes it much easier to hear and be heard as well as reducing ambient noise. A headset need not be expensive or wireless—I use one purchased in Staples for under \$20.

We have heard of students and judges participate using cell phones alone, but we do not recommend it.

Obviously one can spend a great deal on fancier rigs, but that is not necessary.

We have found that when using a wireless internet connection, being close to the wireless router makes for much better video and audio quality.

We will likely not require video participation, i.e. permit students to use audio only, but we feel it diminishes the experience.

We understand that the equipment available to students varies widely. We will do our best to accommodate all comers, but have a limited ability to do so.

10. Videoconferencing Technology

A number of eTournaments have been run, generally successfully, using Zoom, Google Hangouts, Discord, Microsoft Teams, Skype, Hopin.to and other packages, alone or in combination. You may have used some of these packages for education or business or personal calls already. We are looking at them, trying and testing, and we will make a decision by May 23.

There is a great deal of anxiety not knowing what we will use or how we will use it. However, the tournaments we are aware of have generally had 100 or fewer debaters. A regular CDA tournament date usually starts at 300 debaters and has gone as high as 500. We know it can be done, but we need to be reasonably sure we can do it with those numbers.

We appreciate your patience.

11. Technology Check

During the week of May 26 before the tournament, we will ask each school to participate in a technology check. We will hold a mini-video-conference with all of your debaters and judges and make sure each can connect and communicate. This has been done by other tournaments and we feel it is necessary to minimize problems on tournament day.

12. Tournament Day Check-in

Each school will be assigned a check in time on the morning of the tournament prior to 9AM. We expect all coaches, debaters and judges to be online and ready at the assigned time. Individual check in is necessary to limit access to approved participants and exclude potentially disruptive outsiders. Given the expected numbers we may not be able to accommodate late arrivals.

13. Schedule

We will follow our standard tournament format with three preliminary rounds and a final between the top two varsity teams. The schedule below seems reasonable given what I have observed at other eTournaments. It will be a longer day than usual to anticipate teething problems, but no bus rides. If things go well and we can move along faster, we will.

Activity	Time
Online team check-in	8-8:45AM
Resolution packet release	9AM
Preparation time	9-10AM
Round 1	10AM-Noon
Break	Noon-12:30PM
Round 2	12:30-2:30PM
Break	2:30-3PM
Round 3	3-5PM
Break	5-5:30PM
Final round	5:30-7:30PM
Results/awards	7:30-8PM

14. Resolution Packet and Prep

We will use a standard resolution packet, 6-10 pages, delivered to all debaters electronically at 9AM or thereabouts. Debaters will have one hour to work on their affirmative and negative cases in preparation for the first round to begin at 10AM.

Standard rules regarding research materials will apply: debaters may use the packet, a dictionary, an almanac and a copy of the US Constitution. No other resources, human (other than the team coach), printed or electronic, may be consulted. We will rely on the debaters' honor to observe these rules as they have at all past CDA tournaments as we have no easy way of monitoring debaters during case preparation.

Debaters will need to communicate with teammates and coaches during case preparation. CDA permits all debaters from a school to work together and we will try to facilitate this by creating a "room" for each school to confer during prep.

Coaches should discuss how to conduct on-line case preparation with their debaters. Each school may use the electronic prep room provided by CDA, or they may make other arrangement using other communication software. Debaters and coaches may not detach from the tournament conference to do so.

While the debaters are preparing their cases we will bring the judges into a separate room to review electronic ballots. We will not go over judging as all judges are expected to be experienced CDA judges or former CDA debaters.

15. Preliminary Debate Rounds

Each debate round will be scheduled using tabroom. Each pair of teams and a judge will go to or be placed in an electronic room for the round. Judges will be sent tabroom electronic ballots which permit them to signal when the round starts, and to enter their decision and comments when the round ends. At round end debaters and judge will leave the room for the main tournament and have some break time before the next round starts.

At an on-site CDA tournament our biggest delay is entering ballots. Electronic ballots eliminate that step as each judge enters their own results. We will be able to power match starting with the second round, rather than waiting until the third.

The difficult step in most electronic tournaments has been getting teams and judges assorted into electronic debate rooms. The reason we haven't selected a videoconferencing technology as yet is because we want to be sure of that step as it is critical to keeping things running reasonably close to time.

There is no time allotted for lunch at the moment, because there will be enough time between rounds for all to slip out to the kitchen for food and drink. This could change as we know more.

16. Final Round

The final round will be public and held in the main conference. We have not decided whether we will have a final round only for the State Final Varsity division or for both that division and the Open Varsity division.

17. Trophies

Everybody likes trophies, but delivering them is an issue. Most likely plaques, most likely all awards mailed to the coach. Working on it.

There is a lot we don't know, and a lot we may not have thought of. Your comments and questions to ejrutan3@ctdebate.org are welcome. Your patience is appreciated as we do not know what we are doing and may not be able to answer your questions just yet.

I leave you with this bit of dialog from the movie, *Shakespeare in Love*. For "the theatre business" please substitute "debate tournaments."

Philip Henslowe: Mr. Fennyman, allow me to explain about the theatre business. The natural condition is one of insurmountable obstacles on the road to imminent disaster.

Hugh Fennyman: So what do we do?

Philip Henslowe: Nothing. Strangely enough, it all turns out well.

Hugh Fennyman: How?

Philip Henslowe: I don't know. It's a mystery.

I hope to see and hear many of you on May 30!