

# CHECKLIST FOR MANAGING AND HOSTING A DEBATE TOURNAMENT

by  
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## PLANNING:

### BEFORE THE YEAR STARTS

^ Select a date - ask advice, check for conflicts, see if nearby schools will attend, see what kind of tournament (divisions, rounds, days) people want.

^ Contact a nearby hotel - shop around, gain a good price for rooms, reserve some, establish a date they will hold them until, gain any free rooms or special offers they might grant.

^ Create a tournament schedule - leave lots of time, consider movement time from building to building, 2 hours per debate (2.5 hours college), extra long lunch breaks if they have to leave campus, consider power pairing breaks.

^ Distribute invitations - mail them, put them in results packets at other tournaments, distribute them by hand to other coaches you see, add it to league or other calendars,, put the invitation of a debate listserv, make a webpage for it.

^ Plan a budget. Make your fees reflect your costs.

## IMPLEMENTING:

### IN THE WEEKS BEFORE THE TOURNAMENT

^ Reserve rooms to fit your needs and schedule. Always get more rooms than you need.

^ Awards - shop around, get a good price, don't wait to order them, keep engraved parts separate from awards so you can use them again if fewer teams show up.

^ Ballots - get ballots from NFL or make your own, make sure you have enough, include elimination rounds.

^ Plan refreshments - negotiate with campus catering or provide

your own, make sure coffee gets started brewing very early in the AM, consider providing snacks for power pairing breaks. Buy bulk candy and snacks to have available.

^ Put out a publicity release to local press, but especially to campus publicity and send it to all administrators you want to know about your event.

^ Accept entries as they come in, call people to confirm they are coming even if they don't know precisely which teams, create a file and list of teams and judges.

## STAGING THE EVENT:

### IN THE DAYS BEFORE

^ Reconfirm room reservations, make extra copies of your supporting documents to show to teachers who "just assume" they can use rooms, alert custodial and security.

^ Plan registration for hotel or campus, have people to staff it, prepare receipts and have change in a cash box. Take good records of all funds received. Whenever possible, have all checks made payable to your school, not to you. Deposit it in your team account.

^ Reconfirm refreshments and who is responsible for them.

^ Count numbers of teams and judges and make sure you have enough judges. If not, start recruiting them.

^ Put out another publicity release.

^ Make sure you have a copier near the tabulation room to copy pairings and results.

^ Prepare a welcome book with entries, schedules, and maps of campus and how to get to local eateries. Print it for distribution at registration and have them available during the

tournament.

^ If using computerized tab software run a dummy tournament several days in advance to make sure you understand it and there are no bugs.

## DURING THE TOURNAMENT:

### WHEN IT ALL HAPPENS

^ Have your students and supporters signed up for specific tasks and/or on call to help with things.

^ Establish a ballot distribution and collection table.

^ Use computerized pairing software (Mac = TRM, PC = SMART Tournament Administrator

- or -

^ Create team and judge cards.  
^ Randomly pair preset rounds.

^ Record results on cards as they come in.

^ Pair power paired rounds.  
^ Determine top teams and speakers.

^ Prepare elimination round bracket (1-8, 2-7, 3-6, 4-5).

^ Have awards assembly: thanks, awards, keep it short.

^ Prepare and distribute results sheets and ballots in a packet for each school.

## AFTER THE TOURNAMENT:

### IN THE WEEK FOLLOWING

^ Publicize the results to the debate community and also in a press release.

^ Prepare a financial balance sheet to have on hand in case anyone asks.

^ Send thank you notes to those who helped you.

^ Start planning your next tournament and use what you learned.

***(Professor Alfred C. Snider, Edwin Lawrence Professor of Forensics, University of Vermont***

*Outstanding college debater at Brown University, Third place 1972 National Debate Tournament, 29 years as college coach, as qualified teams for the elimination rounds at both CEDA Nationals and the National Debate Tournament, originator of gaming paradigm, 1993 National Coach of the Year, one of the most widely published debate theorists in the world. Director and Founder of World Debate Institute. System Operator of Debate Central [<http://debate.uvm.edu>].*

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*DEBATE CENTRAL: <http://debate.uvm.edu/>*

*WORLD DEBATE INSTITUTE 2000 - make plans now - <http://debate.uvm.edu/wdi.html>*

*Proud member of <http://www.whosim.org> - "Don't just observe it, experience it!"*

***(Alfred C. Snider is the Edwin W. Lawrence Professor of Forensics at the University of Vermont. Originator of the gaming paradigm for academic debate he directs one of America's largest debate programs as well as the World Debate Institute and the website DEBATE CENTRAL located at <http://debate.uvm.edu/>***