



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT THE REGIONAL AND STATE TOURNAMENTS PLUS NATIONALS

State Debate Tournament Regional Speech Tournaments Junior and Senior State Speech Tournaments

These events are managed by the Kentucky High School Speech League.

State Debate Tournament

The State Debate Tournament will be held March 1 at Transylvania University. Member Debate schools may enter up to 10 entries in Congressional Debate and up to 3 entries in Lincoln-Douglas Debate (Varsity), Lincoln-Douglas Debate (Novice), Public Forum Debate (Varsity), and Public Forum Debate (Novice). There is no Regional tournament for Debate nor is there any prerequisite for students to have attended a set number of tournaments before – or any! State invitations will be posted in early February at the latest.

Regional Speech Tournaments:

Your Regional tournament will be held February 1. As a KHSSL member school, you are entitled to enter up to three entries in each of the 14 Senior events; Junior schools may enter up to three entries in each of the 12 Junior events. Students can enter 3 events at the most. There is no requirement for them to have ever been to a tournament at all to participate in the Regional tournament -- it can be their first one or their 101st of the year or ever.

Qualifying for State Speech Tournaments:

Junior Division (grades 4-8):

NEW QUALIFICATION METHODS

As of 2025, Junior Students have three ways to qualify for the State Speech Tournament.

1. Competing at their KHSSL Regional Tournament – advance to State regardless of scores at Regionals.

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OR, IF OFFICIALLY EXEMPTED FROM REGIONALS,

2. Competing at no fewer than two (2) in-state tournaments (in a particular event for which they wish to qualify for state) that use KHSSL competition events and rules during the current school year.

OR

3. Advancing into the final round of that KHSSL event at any in-state tournament that uses KHSSL competition events and rules during the current school year.

The latter two methods are intended to encourage schools to participate in meets all year long, not just Regionals and State. Students' primary way of making State should be the Regional tournament, and students are required to participate in the Regional tournament OR to obtain exemptions **if** they cannot be there that day (see page 86 of the Handbook) but have qualified to State already in one of the other ways.

Senior Division (grades 9-12):

QUALIFICATION METHODS

As of 2025, Senior Students have three ways to qualify for the State Speech Tournament.

1. Competing at their KHSSL Regional Tournament and scoring a total rank of 8 or less at the Regional tournament (there are two rounds, so if they score a 3 and a 5 -- that's 8 -- so to State they go; ditto for a 1 and a 4, etc. -- any total that makes 8 or less).

OR, IF OFFICIALLY EXEMPTED FROM REGIONALS,

2. Competing at no fewer than two (2) in-state tournaments (in a particular event for which they wish to qualify for state) that use KHSSL competition events and rules during the current school year.

OR

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3. Advancing into the final round of that KHSSL event at any in-state tournament that uses KHSSL competition events and rules during the current school year.

The latter two methods are intended to encourage schools to participate in meets all year long, not just Regionals and State. Students' primary way of making State should be the Regional tournament, and students are required to participate in the Regional tournament OR to obtain exemptions **if** they cannot be there that day (see page 86 of the Handbook) but have qualified to State already in one of the other ways.

National Tournaments:

These events are **not** related to KHSSL Regional and State tournaments. They are their own independent organizations. They have many of the same events we offer at KHSSL but not all. CFL and NSDA are for Debate and Senior Speech – see next page for Junior plus info about the University of Kentucky's national-level events.

CFL (the Catholic Forensic League) has its own digital meet to qualify students to Nats each year. It will be held in March -- dates TBA. Katy Cecil at LaRue County High School runs it for Kentucky's branch. Nats are in Chicago this year over Memorial Day weekend. www.kycfl.org www.ncfl.org katy.cecil@larue.kyschools.us This meet is excellent and is much easier to qualify students to (they take more) to Nats than NSDA. I strongly encourage you to give it a go. As a coach, I had great success at this meet with my kids over the years, and it was always a great experience. Kentucky has even hosted this event twice in the last decade in Louisville, though we won't be again for a long time.

NSDA (the National Speech and Debate Association) has its own contest to qualify students who win it to go on to the national speech and debate tournament, held this year in Des Moines the third week of June. It's the largest academic contest in the world and is considered the big Kahuna of all speech/debate meets. Many celebrities and upper-level government officials can trace success back to this contest, and it's a long week but a great one. Qualifying is harder for this one -- usually only two or sometimes three per event get to go and represent Team Kentucky. Rachel Page of Ryle HS is our Kentucky chair for it this year, and the qualifying contest for Nats will be held in Danville two weeks after KHSSL Speech State in March. I was very active in this league as a coach and remain so as a "citizen" -- can't say enough good things about what it does for kids, the opportunities it provides for them and for coaches too -- a great



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organization to be part of and participate
in. www.kynsda.org www.speechanddebate.org rachel.page@boone.kyschools.us

Junior Division National contests:

There is no Junior level CFL contest, but NSDA does run a Junior Division Nationals for middle schoolers the latter part of the Senior Nationals week in June, and it's a great meet. It does not have a qualifier like Senior -- any junior division team that wants to compete can just do so. <https://www.speechanddebate.org/msnats/>

Also, consider the **University of Kentucky Debate Team's National Meets:**

UK Debate is one of the top Debate programs in the country with recent national champions and a legacy of success. They also host the annual Tournament of Champions for both Speech and Debate as well as an online Middle School Tournament of Champions and several national digital contests that are held throughout the year.

The TOC and their digital meets are easy ways to experience national-level competition either online or on the campus of UK in Lexington. Check out all their offerings at <https://ci.uky.edu/debate/toc/dates/tournament-dates>. Tabroom sites exist for each of the meets listed there.

MIND OVER
CHATTER

As you navigate Regionals and State, please don't hesitate to reach out to me for some Coach Conferencing. I was a coach in Kentucky for 28 years before taking on this job and am happy to help you plot and plan what will work best for your squad this year plus look to the future for how to grow toward goals you and your kids have for next steps.

May the words be with you at Regionals, State, and Nationals!

■ Steve Meadows, January 2025