

**KSHSAA Debate, Speech & Drama Manual**  
**Virtual Policy Debate Supplemental Addition**  
**2020-2021 School Year**



Kansas State High School Activities Association and the Kansas Speech Communication Association

**Abstract**

Activities face an uncertain future in the months and years to come as the impacts of COVID-19 continue to make themselves clear. It is possible that many activities will be able to return to in-person competition as normal, but it is also necessary to plan for a scenario where the state, or local district policy, prevents students from traveling and participating fully in in-person competition. Additionally, many of our tournament hosts, especially those which are connected to universities, have already indicated that some virtual competition will occur in 2020-21.

To this end, the Kansas Speech Communication Association has prepared a series of rule variances as well as a set of norms to help KSHSAA and our member coaches to facilitate the transition to online debate opportunities.

**Contributors**

This report was prepared by a subcommittee of the KSCA Executive Board and Classification Representatives:

Tim Ellis (chair), Topeka-Washburn Rural, KSCA Second Vice-President

Andrew Bauer, Halstead, KSCA 3A Classification Representative

Betsy Dutton, Sterling, KSCA 2A Classification Representative

Megan Hagaman, Salina South, KSCA Treasurer and Past President

Eric Skoglund, Olathe Northwest, KSCA 6A Classification Representative

Craig Manteuffel, KSHSAA

The proposed document was reviewed and endorsed by a full meeting of the KSCA Executive Board and Classification Representatives on June 4, 2020.

This document was approved by the KSHSAA Executive Board on June 17, 2020 for the 2020-21 School Year

During the 2020-21 Debate season, person to person and/or virtual debate tournaments may be used by KSHSAA member schools.

# Contents

<b>KSHSAA Sanctioning.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Proposed Rule Variances.....</b>	<b>3-4</b>
<b>Supervision.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>School Coach Judging.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Recording of Rounds.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Host School Debaters.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Electronic Retrieval Devices.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Sharing of Evidence.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Further Rules Considerations.....</b>	<b>4-5</b>
<b>Recording of Rounds.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Speaker Debate Qualifications.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Regional and State Debate Championships.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Speech and Drama.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Our Vision for Debate.....</b>	<b>5-6</b>
<b>Sample Tournament Schedules.....</b>	<b>5-6</b>
<b>Backdrops and Recording Equipment.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Tabroom.com.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Judging Process.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Technology Requirements.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>KSCA Suggestions.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Participant Security.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Budgeting Considerations.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Appendix: Internet Use Rules.....</b>	<b>9</b>

## **Virtual Debate: KSHSAA Sanctioning and Approval of Out of State Tournaments and Hosting Out of State Schools**

- 1) KSHSAA member schools who are invited to attend out of state virtual debate tournaments and plan to participate must:
  - a. comply with all KSHSAA rules including the KSHSAA Bylaw XIV: 500 Road Mile Rule.
  - b. contact the organizer of the event and confirm they have completed and submitted all state association forms and their state association has approved the event for outside competition. Once approved, their state association must send to the KSHSAA their completed and signed approval form so the KSHSAA may begin the approval process.
  - c. ensure all forms are submitted to the KSHSAA at least 30 days prior to the event date.
  
- 2) KSHSAA member schools hosting a virtual debate tournament and are inviting out of state schools must:
  - a. contact their school activities director and complete pages 3 and 4 of the KSHSAA G Form for sanctioning and approval and submit to the KSHSAA at least 30 days prior to the event date.

***IMPORTANT: KSHSAA member schools may only compete against schools who are members of their state association.***

### **Proposed Rule Variances**

The following rule variances are proposed to apply to any virtual debate competition that occurs throughout the 2020-21 school year. When present, page numbers reference the 2019-20 versions of the KSHSAA Handbook and Speech and Debate Manual.

#### **1 – Supervision**

The supervision rule [KSHSAA Speech and Debate Manual, Debate Regulations (p. 8), Sec 6] should be construed to permit supervision to be done virtually, with no obligation for a school coach or advisor to be physically present. However, for all tournaments, a coach or appointed advisor must be available on call.

*Rationale: In the event that virtual competition is needed, some schools' policies may prevent employees from being physically present where students are located, and students may need to compete from a variety of spaces.*

#### **2 – School Coach Judging**

The rule regarding the use of school coaches [KSHSAA Speech and Debate Manual, Invitational Debate Tournaments (p. 9), Sec 3] should be amended to require school coaches to judge any number of rounds per day of competition; the cap of two rounds per day shall be eliminated. Tournament hosts are strongly encouraged to consider this only as a last resort.

*Rationale: In a virtual competition, there is no physical room of adults waiting on standby. Coaches need to be available to judge as the "pool of last resort."*

### **3 – Recording of Rounds**

We recommend that KSHSAA ought to defer to local board policies regarding recording of online interactions.

*Rationale: The potential for recording of rounds requires further study by KSCA and/or KSHSAA; emerging district policies are currently in conflict about whether adults are prohibited, permitted, and/or required to record their interactions with students.*

### **4 – Host School Debaters**

The rule regarding debaters from the host school [KSHSAA Speech and Debate Manual, Invitational Debate Tournaments (p. 9), Sec 5] should be amended to permit host schools to compete at their own tournament and count those rounds toward state qualification, provided that they are judged only by judges brought by other competing schools rather than members of the community pool.

*Rationale: With uncertainty surrounding the availability of tournaments which match what each school is permitted to do in light of state and local board policy, this ensures all teams could have at least one guaranteed opportunity to compete.*

### **5 – Electronic Retrieval Devices**

The rules regarding the use of electronic retrieval devices [KSHSAA Speech and Debate Manual, Regional and State (p. 10), Sec 8] should be completely replaced by the Internet Use Rules in the attached appendix.

*Rationale: Current rules do not permit connection to the Internet during a debate and would obviously need to be amended. Our rules about the handling of evidence also need to be adapted to work in a virtual format. We recommend a rule change to require evidence be shared prior to the speech (see also #6 below) to accommodate brief connection issues that prevent a judge from clearly hearing a student's speech.*

### **6 – Sharing of Evidence**

The rules regarding the sharing of evidence [KSHSAA Speech and Debate Manual, Regional and State (p. 11), Sec 14] should be replaced by the language in the Internet Use Rules listed in the appendix.

*Rationale: In a world of online debate, internet connectivity issues can create issues with competitors and judges hearing each word with the same clarity as in person. Further complicating connectivity issues, differences in technological equipment can cause clarity gaps for both judges and competitors. An exchange of evidence, if requested, before a speech allows for some of the gaps to be filled in by the observers.*

## **Further Rules Considerations**

### **1 – Recording of Rounds**

As stated above, further study is needed to determine the best path forward through evolving local board policies.

## **2-Speaker Debate Qualifications**

At this time, we do not propose any variance in the qualification standards for the 2-speaker state championship. However, if tournament availability or other factors make it clear that fair treatment demands flexibility, we anticipate returning to this body with a proposal.

## **3 – Regional and State Debate Championships**

At this time, we are not yet ready to prepare a specific model or proposal for hosting regional and state championships in a virtual setting. The local and national debate communities are continuing to evolve and create new solutions, and a delay of even two months would permit us to have a much clearer vision of the best path forward which maximizes student participation and keeps costs to a reasonable level.

## **4 – Speech and Drama**

At this time, our recommendations are only applicable to policy debate competition, primarily in the fall of 2020. We will continue to work with KSHSAA to evaluate the need for a similar proposal regarding speech and drama in the spring of 2021.

## **Our Vision for Debate**

### **Sample Tournament Schedules**

Note that in a virtual format, many tournaments will have to consider having fewer rounds of competition or adding a third day of competition on Thursday or Sunday (subject to local board policy).

#### *1 Day Saturday Only:*

8:00AM Digital Check-In  
8:15AM Pairing R1  
8:45AM Start Time R1  
10:45AM Decision Time R1  
11:15AM Pairing R2  
11:45AM Start Time R2  
1:45PM Decision Time R2  
1:45PM–2:15PM Lunch Break  
2:15PM Pairing R3  
2:45PM Start Time R3  
4:45PM Decision Time R3  
5:15PM Pairing R4  
5:45PM Start Time R4  
7:45PM Decision Time R4

#### *2 Day Friday/Saturday tournament without elimination debates*

##### Friday (2 Rounds)

3:30PM Digital Check-In  
3:45PM Pairing R1  
4:15PM Start Time R1  
6:15PM Decision Time R1

6:15PM–6:45PM Dinner Break  
6:45PM Pairing R2  
7:15PM Start Time R2  
9:15PM Decision Time R2

Saturday (3 Rounds)

8:30AM Digital Bus Check-In  
8:45AM Pairing R3  
9:00AM Start Time R3  
11:00AM Decision Time R3  
11:30AM Pairing R4  
12:00PM Start Time R4  
2:00PM Decision Time R4  
2:00PM–2:30PM Lunch Break  
2:30PM Pairing R5  
3:00PM Start Time R5  
5:00PM Decision Time R5

*2 Day Friday/Saturday tournament with elimination debates*

Friday (2 Rounds)

3:30PM Digital Bus Check-In  
3:45PM Pairing R1  
4:00PM Start Time R1  
6:00PM Decision Time R1  
6:00PM–6:30PM Dinner Break  
6:30PM Pairing R2  
6:45PM Start Time R2  
8:45PM Decision Time R2

Saturday (5 Rounds)

8:00AM Digital Bus Check-In  
8:15AM Pairing R3  
8:30AM Start Time R3  
10:30AM Decision Time R3  
10:45AM Pairing R4  
11:00AM Start Time R4  
1:00PM Decision Time R4  
1:00PM–1:30PM Lunch Break  
1:30PM Pairing R5/Quarter  
1:45PM Start Time R5/Quarters  
3:45PM Decision Time R5/Quarters  
4:00PM Pairing Semis  
4:15PM Start Time Semis  
6:15PM Decision Time Semis  
6:15-6:45 Dinner Break  
6:45PM Pairing Finals

7:00PM Start Time Finals  
9:00PM Decision Time Finals

Thirty minutes prior to each round, students and judges will report to their room on the schematic from Tabroom.com. Judges will do a roll call to make sure each student is present, everyone will test their audio and video, and an email chain will be created for the debate. Any tech issues should be resolved in this 30-minute period. The first speaker must begin speaking promptly at the round start time. Judges will be given a time that decisions must be submitted, and they will submit their decision via Tabroom.com immediately after each debate. Judges will be encouraged to write a reason for decision and comments on the online ballot after their decision has been submitted.

### **Backdrops and Recording Equipment**

Competitors may not use green screens, virtual backdrops, on-screen text, or professional equipment enhancements such as professional lighting kits or professional grade camera recording and audio devices (including things like softboxes or using an auditorium's lighting system) during their performance in any event. Other individuals may be present while filming, but audience interaction (laughing, applause, etc.) must not be included in the performance. Competitors may determine how close or distant the camera is set up in order to maximize both verbal and nonverbal communication. If possible, it is recommended that students and judges remove items that may be distracting in the background. Backdrops of a solid color with no special markings may be used by competitors and judges. The Kansas Speech Communication Association will release a list of best practices for online competition.

### **Tabroom.com**

We advise all tournaments are run using online ballots through Tabroom.com. Every judge and competitor would be required to create a Tabroom.com account prior to the tournament registration deadline. Competitors and judges must be able to log in to Tabroom.com to earn access to their competition rooms. Having an account also will allow tournament staff to notify participants of pairing release, schedule updates, and important tournament notifications. Including valid contact information (email address and phone number) in the Tabroom.com account is important so tournament staff can attempt to reach any missing competitors or judges prior to forfeits or loss of judge bond. Tabroom.com is a free service offered through the National Speech and Debate Association.

### **Judging Process**

We recommend that judges check in to their debates online before their round is set to begin. Barring changes in health guidelines, schools could offer a space for judges to judge debates in an online setting, such as a commons area where social distancing guidelines are followed. Schools could offer volunteer community judges technological assistance and the requisite technology to judge their online debate using this setting.

In the event that judges are not allowed to congregate in the building, guidance will need to be provided to judges on setting up their tabroom account and accessing online rooms for the debates they judge. The Kansas Speech Communication Association will offer further guidance in the event that schools do not have access to shared spaces for competition.

Many tournaments should consider asking schools to bring judges to cover their entry, as the virtual format will add challenges in the recruitment of community judges.

## **Technology Requirements**

Competitors and judges are required to have internet access and a device with a microphone and a webcam throughout the duration of the competition. This could include a smartphone, laptop, tablet, or desktop computer with an integrated or external microphone and camera. Judges will be instructed not to allow video/sound equipment quality, physical location, or other elements not in control of individual students to affect their decisions. Equity is a core value of the National Speech & Debate Association. We understand that many students and judges do not have equal access to the internet and technology.

### **The Kansas Speech Communication Association suggests the following pieces of technological equipment or platforms for use in online debate:**

1) Zoom is the preferred online meeting platform for debate. It allows flexibility in terms of tournaments who want to use applications like classrooms.cloud\* or who want to manage their tournament through the use of breakout rooms within zoom. Both of these options allow for student safety to be monitored, allow the tournament host to disable the use of things like virtual backgrounds, and allow the competitors and judges to be provided with passwords that secure their entry to the debate tournament. Zoom is being utilized by debate programs across the country and all major tournaments that have already been held because it offers the most private and secure way for online debates to function.

\* The classrooms.cloud feature will be discussed in depth in the participant security section below.

2) Headsets are suggested for students who are participating in debate. Headsets allow for the best quality of sound for judges, teammates, and opponents, which is paramount to success in online competition.

3) Laptop computers or Chromebooks are suggested for connection to the debate platform. Cell phones can be used but audio and video quality is usually less than ideal.

4) An ethernet connection is suggested in order to improve internet connection, as opposed to WiFi.

5) To protect student privacy, we suggest that debate teams have partners create a separate email account for the sharing of electronic evidence, instead of using their personal email addresses.

6) Competitors and judges should keep their cameras on during each round to create accountability, immediately notice any connectivity issues, and allow students to monitor judge reactions to their performances.

## **Participant Security**

Participant security is a top priority for online debate. We recommend the use of classroom.cloud or another zoom based platform in order to protect the data of students and judges competing and to monitor closely those who have access to online debate. Classrooms.cloud is the platform that can be used to conduct competition rounds. The platform uses the Zoom.us network of video conferencing. A number of restrictions will be used to protect participants in the Classrooms.cloud platform. Students and judges will use their Tabroom.com account info to login to the competition site. Only Tabroom.com accounts associated with the tournament will be permitted entry to the competition site. All classrooms will require an additional password for participants to enter before they may join a competition room. The ability to use Zoom backgrounds will be turned off. The ability to share screens and file share through the chat will be turned off. Rooms will be monitored to ensure the correct competitors and judges are in each room and tournament officials will be contacted to locate any missing participants. Finally, tournament staff and volunteers will have a

small, dedicated number of rooms that they are responsible for monitoring. They will constantly rotate through rounds and can quickly remove anyone violating tournament policy. Participants may report disruptions to the tournament host, where staff will be prepared to send volunteers into the room to handle the problem immediately. We understand many parents and school districts have security and privacy concerns. We will do our best to accommodate these issues and strive to eliminate as many barriers as possible to participation in debate.

### **Budgeting Considerations**

Entry fees may have to be increased from norms previously established in the Kansas debate community. Entry fee increases would be due to the associated technological burden on host institutions. Classrooms.cloud, for example, offers on site tech help in order to guarantee competitor security and ease of access. However, it would require either higher entry fees or a tournament to run at a loss for the host institution. Classrooms.cloud costs 30 dollars per room, per day, which would mean entry fees to cover the cost of the platform would need to be increased by 15 dollars per team for a one day tournament. However, without transportation or lodging costs, some schools may be able to shift funds in order to guarantee access to online debate.

### **Appendix: Internet Use Rules**

Rules for online competition will supersede the existing technology rules for the duration of online competition due to coronavirus concerns.

A. Contestants may use electronic devices (including laptop computers, tablets, and/or cell phones) to access the internet during debate rounds with the following conditions:

1. Computers or other electronic devices may not be used to receive information for competitive advantage from non-competitors (coaches, assistant coaches, other students) inside or outside of the room in which the competition occurs. Information that would be restricted would include but not be limited to coach/nonparticipating competitor generated arguments, advice on arguments to run, questions to ask during cross examination, and other information not generated by the participating competitors.

2. Internet access may be used to retrieve files, exchange evidence and/or arguments, research arguments, and partner to partner communication. These electronic device guidelines do not limit communication between debate partners during the debate round.

B. Penalty: Contestants found to have violated these provisions will be disqualified from the tournament and will forfeit all rounds and merit points in that event.

C. Availability of Evidence: Upon request, contestants electing to use computers have the responsibility to promptly provide a copy of any evidence read in a speech for inspection by the judge or opponent prior to the speech being delivered.

D. Contestants electing to use computers are responsible for providing their own computers, batteries, extension cords, and all other necessary accessories. Tournament hosts will not be responsible for providing computers, printers, software, paper, or extension cords for contestants. Host schools may provide wireless internet access, but will not guarantee that contestants will be able to gain access when needed.

E. Contestants choosing to use laptop computers and/or related devices accept the risk of equipment failure. Judges and/or contest directors will give no special consideration or accommodation, including no additional speech time or prep time, should equipment failure occur.