

Montgomery High School Debate Team Member Handbook

Adopted August 2013

Membership

Membership in the Montgomery High School Debate Team is a privilege, not a right.

Students must have instructor approval to register for, and remain enrolled in the class. Students may be removed from the team and/or class at the discretion of the coach.

As part of the curriculum for the course, students are expected to attend practices and compete at a certain number of tournaments each semester. Specifics regarding tournament participation can be found on the syllabus for each course.

In order to register for tournaments students must attend regular practices. Varsity practices are currently scheduled for Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:00pm to 5:00pm, with Novice practices scheduled for Mondays and Wednesdays from 3:00pm to 5:00pm. Fridays with no tournament scheduled will be open practices. Practice schedules may be changed or modified at any time, but I will make every effort to notify you in advance of any changes.

Qualified member students will be inducted into the Montgomery High School Chapter of the National Forensic League Speech and Debate Honor Society.

Students must uphold the NFL Code of Honor, participate in chapter activities, and remain an active competitor to continue membership in the organization.

Oath: As a member of the National Forensic League, I pledge to uphold the highest standards of integrity, humility, respect, leadership and service in the pursuit of excellence.

Integrity: An NFL member obeys the highest ethical standards and adheres to the rules of the League. NFL members recognize that integrity is central to earning the trust, respect, and support of one's peers. Integrity encompasses the highest regard for honesty, civility, justice, and fairness.

Humility: An NFL member does not regard him or herself more highly than others. Regardless of a person's level of success, he or she always looks beyond oneself to appreciate the inherent value of others.

Respect: An NFL member respects individual differences and fosters diversity. He or she promotes tolerance, inclusion, and empowerment for people from a variety of backgrounds.

Leadership: An NFL member influences others to take positive action toward productive change. NFL members commit to thoughtful and responsible leadership which promotes the other core values in the NFL Code of Honor.

Service: An NFL member exercises the talents he or she has been given to provide service to his or her peers, community, and the League. At all times an NFL member is prepared to work constructively to improve the lives of others.

Points are awarded in the following areas:

Interscholastic Competition:

Debate contests: Public Forum, Lincoln-Douglas, and Policy Debate: 6 points for a win, 3 points for a loss.

Congressional Debate: Between 1-6 points for each speech or hour of presiding, up to 24 points per day.

Speech contests: Each time a speech is performed, it is ranked from 1st through last place. Each performance earns points once, even if it was judged by more than one person.

Extemporaneous Speaking, Original Oratory, Humorous or Dramatic Interpretation, and Duo Interpretation: 6 points for 1st place, 5 points for 2nd, 4 points for 3rd, 3 points for 4th, 2 points for any lower rank.

Other Events: 5 points for 1st place, 4 points for 2nd, 3 points for 3rd, 2 points for 4th, 1 point for any lower rank.

Non-Competitive Speaking/Service Activities. Limits - Students may report up to 200 service points per year, and can be retroactively recorded only for the current and immediate past school years. Students may not record points in both contest and service speaking. Degree requirements no longer exist for recording, or for judging.

Audience Speaking Engagements - for each speech of at least 4 minutes given to an audience of at least 25 adults beyond high school age: 5 points, limit of four speeches per day.

Judging - novice or middle school contests: 2 points per round, limit of four rounds per day.

Middle School Coaching: 2 points per day for coaching middle school practice sessions, which does not include tournaments. A maximum of 50 points per year may be recorded for coaching.

Theatrical Performance Speaking - students may earn points for acting/theatrical performances and/or theatre/festival competition.

5 points for each performance of a play in front of an audience or in competition

Maximum of 20 points for any particular play or competitive readers theatre selection, one act team, ensemble, choral reading group, etc.

Service Citations - for every 100 service points, a student earns a Student Service Citation.

Advancement in the National Forensic League Speech and Debate Honor Society is as follows:

| Degree | Required Points | Gem for Pin Insignia | Votes/Strength |
|-------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|----------------|
| Merit | 25 | None | 1 |
| Honor | 75 | Emerald | 2 |
| Excellence | 150 | Blue Sapphire | 3 |
| Distinction | 250 | Ruby | 4 |
| Special Distinction | 500 | Double Ruby | 5 |
| Superior Distinction | 750 | Triple Ruby | 6 |
| Outstanding Distinction | 1000 | Quadruple Ruby | 7 |
| Premier Distinction | 1500 | Quintuple Ruby | 8 |

Students earning 1000 or more points may wear NFL Honor Cords at Montgomery High School Commencement Exercises.

Dress and Grooming Standards

93% of communication is non-verbal; this includes choices in attire and grooming (or lack thereof). Judges impressions of competitors are not based solely on what they hear, but on what they see and don't see. The uniform of the debate community is formal, western business attire. The following standards are not negotiable; when in doubt err on the conservative side. Students dressed inappropriately will not be allowed to compete and will pay any drop fees they incur.

Young Women

Young women should wear dresses (with coats) or suits. A black skirt-suit is the preferred attire of champions. Pants suits are an acceptable alternative. Pants/skirts and a blouse are not acceptable attire. Skirts and dresses must cover a significant portion of the knees when standing. Denim is never permitted.

Hosiery is required with skirts and dresses. No brightly colored or patterned hosiery. Nude or black hosiery only.

Nails should be groomed and clear-colored only. White French tips are acceptable.

Only one pair of earrings should be worn during competition. Earrings should not be distracting. Other earrings should be removed or covered.

Hair should never cover any portion of the face. Hair should be up and/or pulled-back. Hair must be a natural color.

Shoes should be a conservative color and have a conservative heel.

Young Men

Young Men should wear a dark-colored suit. Khakis with a Navy sports coat is an acceptable alternative in lieu of a suit. Dress pants and a dress shirt/sweater are not acceptable attire. Denim, corduroy, and polo/golf shirts are never permitted. Ties should be conservative and should be tied in a conservative knot.

Earrings should not be visible at any time during competition. Earrings should be removed or covered prior to entering the competition room. Gages and multiple piercings are not permitted.

Hair should be trimmed and styled away from the face. Hair must be a natural color. Sideburns should not extend past the middle of the ear. Hair should not pass the collar of the shirt.

Facial hair is not permitted. Young men should be clean-shaven at all times, unless exempted.

Shoes should be shined prior to each tournament. Shoes and belt colors should match. Absolutely no white socks. Ever.

Everyone

Everyone should, for the love of all that is holy, wear deodorant and/or anti-perspirant, and bring some with them to the tournament. Also, no body piercings or tattoos.

Background on Fees

Debate is an expensive activity. We are responsible for paying for entry fees, judging fees, hospitality fees, transportation fees, substitute-teacher fees, etc. for each tournament that we attend.

Our team is now too large to transport via a caravan of rental vehicles. We will need to hire a bus for nearly every tournament significantly increasing our transportation fees. The cost to hire a bus from the district for a local tournament is around \$500. More students also means higher entry fees and judging fees.

The minimum tournament cost per student is \$50. All told, an average tournament this year will cost our team \$1200-1500. In order to be a successful program we will need to compete at 10 tournaments.

The MHS debate team is as frugal as we can be to maximize our limited funds. We do our very best to minimize the out-of-pocket expenses for students and their families with fundraisers and a limited budget. Still, we must charge an activity/membership fee to offset the costs of participation.

Last year the MHS debate team spent more than \$500 per student, with spending for some competitors exceeding \$1500.

Membership Fees

The membership fee is set by the team's Executive Committee at the beginning of each year. The 2013-2014 Membership Fee is \$200 per student.

This fee may be paid in full by September 15, or may be paid in the following installments: \$100 due September 1, \$50 due November 1, 2013, and \$50 by January 10, 2014.

We want all students to be able to participate regardless of their financial situation. Students who need a different payment schedule or

are unable to pay may request a fee waiver by contacting the coach prior to the fee deadline.

The membership fee also covers a \$15 fee for lifetime student membership in the National Forensic League Speech and Debate Honor Society. At no time will fees be refunded because a student leaves the team voluntarily or involuntarily.

The membership fee does not cover drop fees that students incur when they register for a tournament and then do not attend, nor does it cover hotel and transportation costs for out-of-town tournaments that are not part of post-district competition.

Practice

Regular practices in-school and at home are vital for success in debate. Students are required to attend two practices each week. This is both a grade and a prerequisite to competition.

Practice begins at 3:00pm and lasts until 5:00pm. Novices practice on Mondays and Wednesdays; Varsity practices on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Advanced students may be asked to lead a lab/cohort of novice students; should they accept that duty those students should plan on attending all practices.

Students will sign-in with their arrival time at each practice. Students should not leave practice early, or arrive late to practices. Practice time should be devoted to research and speaking skills, not homework, video games, or socializing. Students should plan to make-up tests and other missed assignments on days when they are not scheduled to practice, or before school begins.

Students may be dropped from events or tournaments for failure to attend scheduled practices. These students are responsible for paying any drop fees they incur.

Tournament Registration

Tournament registration will now take place electronically. Students will submit their entries prior to the registration deadline they are given. Many tournaments fill-up quickly. Students may be placed on a waitlist if our school has reached its entry limit in that event, or if the overall tournament entry has been reached. Register early to guarantee your spot at a tournament, but understand that you are responsible for any drop fees should you fail to attend for any reason- including emergencies. Drop fees are expensive and are billed after the initial entry fees are paid. Drop fees can range from loss of entry fees (\$15-50) to double, or triple entry fees depending on the circumstances. You must pay those drop fees before you will be able to register for subsequent tournaments, or attend tournaments previously registered.

Tournament Procedures

As Per MISD School Board policy, students must attend school for at least half of the school-day in order to compete in a typical Friday-Saturday tournament. Please do not schedule appointments for tournament days that can reasonably be scheduled for another day.

Students not scheduled to compete on Friday do not need to attend a tournament that day. Students eliminated from competition on Saturday will still gain valuable educational experiences from observing and flowing elimination rounds; these students should not request to leave the tournament early. Once eliminated from competition, students are required to view and flow elimination rounds of debate. Students will not be permitted to roam the tournament premises or sit in the commons/holding area during rounds. Students should only observe events in which they are competing unless they have prior approval from the coach to investigate another event. (Ex. A Policy debater should view elimination rounds of policy- not LD, or Humorous Interp.) Failure and/or refusal to observe and flow elimination-rounds will result in the student not receiving credit for attending that tournament and an immediate suspension from the team for a period determined by the coach.

When registering for a tournament students must enter one debate event and one extemporaneous speaking event. Entries missing one of these core events will not be accepted.

Students may register for more events with prior approval from the coach. Oratory and Interpretation events must be completely memorized and blocked. Students should schedule a preview with the coach prior to registering for these events.

Students should remember that they are ambassadors of Montgomery High School at all times and in all places. Students should conduct themselves with the highest degree of courtesy and professionalism. Students will respect all parents, judges, drivers, coaches, tournament officials, and any others in authority. Disrespect towards anyone will not be tolerated.

Students are not permitted to forfeit any competition at any time, even if you are sure not to break. Forfeitures disrupt the integrity of the brackets and have far-reaching impacts outside the individual round.

Students in the second flight of flighted rounds should report to their rooms no later than 20 minutes after the first flight is scheduled to begin. There is no excuse for being late for the second flight of a round.

Students are not permitted to sleep, or play games in extemp draw. This time should be used for preparation, even before your speaker number is called.

Students in IEs should wait in their competition room until the last student has competed. Students who are cross-entered should check-in with both rooms, and asked to be excused to compete in the other events. Students should never distract another speaker competing in their room.

Keeping old flows is an important strategy in debate. No student should ever throw away a flow from a round, even if the student was only observing that round. These flows can be used for scouting purposes later in the tournament or season.

Students should remain in full tournament attire at all times, even if inconvenient. This includes keeping on shoes, ties, and attire tucked in. Jackets and sport-coats may be removed when not competing, but must be worn during competition. Students may change into casual attire when permitted by the coach- typically after the awards ceremony and pictures, prior to loading the van/bus.

Students should make every effort to leave facilities better than they have found them. This means throwing all trash away at tournaments as soon as the item is consumed or no longer needed. Trash should not collect on the tables associated with our team. In the event of a spill, a tournament official should be notified immediately. The student(s) involved should wait near the spill until it has been cleaned up. If asked to assist in the clean-up the student must oblige. Infractions will be

dealt with as necessary, and may result in tournament suspension for a period determined by the coach.

On special and rare occasions (overnights, District, Region, State), the team may stop at a full-service restaurant for a meal. This is an involved and time-consuming process for all involved. Students should not share meals in these instances, appetizers excepted. When settling, students are required to leave a gratuity of \$2.00 or 18% of their bill, whichever is greater. In some restaurants the gratuity will be automatically included for groups, students should not attempt to pay a lower gratuity.

Students are not permitted to leave the tournament premises without the coach. Students should not walk to stores, restaurants, etc. even if with a group and within sight of the tournament location.

Transportation

Students are never permitted to transport themselves to a tournament. Students transported by parents and other adults must complete the MHS Alternate Student Travel form. This form must be signed by the coach and by an administrator. As with any form of bureaucracy, it takes time to complete. All forms should be submitted to the coach no later than Tuesday of the tournament week. Requests will not be honored after this deadline.

Students will be given a time to load the bus/van on tournament days, this time will be 10-15 minutes prior to departure. Failure to arrive on-time will result in an 20-point grade reduction for that tournament. Habitual tardiness will result in suspension from competition for a period determined by the coach.

We will not wait for late students, and we will not rendezvous at an alternate location. Students who miss the bus/van must be driven to the tournament by their parent or other legal guardian. Upon arrival the parent or legal guardian must locate the coach to officially check-in. Guardians who do not check-in with the coach will be immediately called to pick-up the student from the tournament. This is a one-strike policy, upon the second occurrence the student will be suspended from

competition for a period determined by the coach. Late students are responsible for all drop-fees associated for their tardiness. If a student must forfeit a round of competition due to tardiness, they are responsible for the original entry fee. If the student is a member of a team event, the tardy student is responsible for all fees incurred by the team, in addition to a formal apology to their partner.

On the return trips home, Students will be alerted to contact their rides approximately 30-45 minutes prior to our arrival at the high school. I realize that waiting for a bus to arrive late at night is not ideal; I will do my very best to make sure you have an accurate ETA. Please be on-time to pick-up your child. Students not picked-up with 10 minutes of arrival at the high school will be billed \$2 per minute from the time of arrival. This money will be deposited into the debate activity account and earmarked for student scholarships. Thank you in advance for your contributions.

Overnight Trips

Students are selected for overnight tournaments at the coach's discretion. Hotels, airfare, meals, etc. will be paid for by the student (post-district competition excepted). Drops from an overnight tournament will still incur any pre-planned travel fees.

Students at hotels should conduct themselves with the highest standards of courtesy and civility. Loud noise will not be tolerated. Students are not permitted to make any charges to the room. Students may not enter the hotel rooms of any other schools or individuals; other schools and individuals may not enter our team's rooms. Boys are not permitted in girls' rooms, and girls are not permitted in boys' rooms. Curfew will be set by the coach. Students will stand quietly outside the doors of their room at curfew for a room check. Students are not permitted to leave the room after curfew. If a student leaves their room after curfew the entire room is subject to disciplinary action; parents will be contacted immediately and asked to collect their children.

Policy for Unbreakable Brackets

After preliminary competition, competitors are listed from best to worst based on Win-Loss record and other tie-breaking procedures. The top competitors are then seeded into an elimination bracket. Frequently, competitors from the same school will be slated to compete against each other. Some tournaments will "break" or adjust the brackets to prevent competitors from the same school having to debate each other.

As a general rule, the higher seeded entry from the original rankings will advance without debating. However, a lower seeded entry may be selected to advance over a higher seeded entry, especially if the lower seeded entry will benefit from qualification points for state.

Ultimately, this is the coach's decision, and all decisions are final. Students will never announce which entry will advance in these situations. Appropriate consequences will be taken for students violating this procedure.

Other tournaments, especially larger/state-level tournaments, will not “break” brackets. Sometimes, we hope frequently, Montgomery competitors will be all that’s left in an elimination bracket. In either of these instances one competitor or team will be selected by the coach to advance without debating. This is sometimes referred to as “walking-over” or “coaching-over.”

This decision is entirely up to the coach. No Montgomery students will ever debate against each other in competition.

Lettering

Students may letter in Debate via any of the following methods:

1. Qualifying and competing at the TFA State Tournament in any main event for two years.
2. Qualifying and competing at TFA State in multiple main events within the same competition year.
3. Advancing to elimination rounds at the TFA State Tournament in a main event.
4. Earning the National Forensic League degree of Special Distinction (500 NFL Points). At least 425 points must come from competition.
5. Qualifying and competing at any of the following tournaments: the NFL National Tournament, the Catholic Forensic League Grand National Tournament, the Tournament of Champions (U of Kentucky), or the Tournament of Champions-Extemporaneous Speaking.

Typically, students also have the opportunity to letter from placement in the top-3 at the UIL District Academic Tournament. UIL Academic lettering procedures are handled separately, and are subject to change. Students should consult the UIL Academic Coordinator for more information.

Selection to UIL & NFL District Teams

It is an honor to be selected to the UIL District and NFL District teams. Success in these tournaments can earn a student recognition, valuable scholarships and other financial aid.

A student who competes in the UIL State tournament may apply to the Texas Interscholastic League Fund (TILF); this foundation allows students to apply for hundreds of scholarships with one application. Each year the TILF awards more than 600 students with more than \$1 Million in scholarships. Last year, three MHS seniors earned \$5,700 in TILF awards. More information can be found at tilf.uiltexas.org.

Entries into these tournaments are limited; the UIL only allows 3 entries per event, and the NFL only allows 4 entries per event (in addition to an overall entry limit).

Not all students will be selected for these teams. The composition of these teams is solely the decision of the coach. Students should always compete at their best level to maximize their chances for selection. There are no set criteria for selection, but emphasis is placed on previous success in the event, practice and work ethic, and commitment to the team.

The District teams and alternates will be announced via postings no later than two weeks before scheduled competition.

Typically, at least one student withdraws from competition allowing and alternate to compete. Alternates may travel with the team, and should always be ready to compete.

Declining to compete at district, region, or state competition is not acceptable behavior. Failure to compete may jeopardize the success of the entire team. Dates for these tournaments are known in advance and take precedence over other commitments. Declining a spot may result in suspension and/or permanent removal from the team.

Activity Absences

Competition in debate will require the use of activity absences. The MISD School Board allows a student to miss up to 10 cumulative days of school for sponsored activities through district competition; students may use 2 additional days if they participate in more than one activity.

The MHS debate team makes a special effort to prevent excessive activity absences; however, with the change in this year's schedule more activity absences are inevitable. Students should allocate 6-8 activity absences to debate activities. This will allow for 4-6 activity absences for other classes and extra-curricular activities. Keeping track of activity absences is ultimately the student's responsibility. Students should alert the debate coach prior to using any activity absences for other activities so notations can be made. A student with excessive absences may not get to compete tournaments that exceed the allowed amount.

Eligibility & No Pass, No Play

Students are required to maintain eligibility under the Texas University Interscholastic League "No Pass, No Play" rules. Students must have above a 70 average in each class at the end of each 6-weeks to maintain eligibility. Certain advanced classes have been exempted from the 70-average requirement. In these advanced classes, students must end the 6-weeks with a 65 average or above.

Students who do not meet the requirements for all classes will be deemed Academically Ineligible for competition for a minimum of 3 weeks after a 1 week grace-period. Eligibility may be regained if the student meets all the requirements at the end of the 3 week period.

Students that lose eligibility for the first time (3-week period) will be placed on probation with the team. A second loss of eligibility, either consecutive or non-consecutive, may result in dismissal from the class and/or team.

Do not jeopardize your debate career by becoming academically ineligible. If you fail to make your tournament quota for the grading period due to ineligibility or otherwise, your grade in the debate class will be negatively impacted.

Ineligibility only prevents a student from competing in an interscholastic competition. Ineligible students must fulfill all other team obligations and requirements.

Conduct

Team members are at all times representatives of Montgomery High School and the MHS Debate Team and should conduct themselves with the highest respect to both organizations. Students are required to sign the MHS Honor Code and the National Forensic League Code of Honor: As a member of the National Forensic League, I pledge to uphold the highest standards of integrity, humility, respect, leadership, and service in the pursuit of excellence.

Students who are assigned to ISS for disciplinary reasons will be placed on probation for the remainder of the school year after their first offense. A subsequent offense may result in more severe consequences such as suspension, up-to and including dismissal from the team.

Students who are assigned to the DAEP for disciplinary reasons may be suspended from the team, in addition to other consequences, up-to and including dismissal from the team.

Advanced Credit

Students will earn advanced credit for enrollment in Debate II, Debate III, and Debate IV (Special Topics in Speech.) This also provides a higher weighted GPA.