

# REGISTERING FOR AN APDA TOURNAMENT



## *An Introduction for New Schools*

Written by the APDA Expansion Committee  
Last Revised March 2008

## Introduction

This is the first of a series of documents explaining the intricacies of life on APDA (the American Parliamentary Debate Association) for new schools.

The best way to get started on APDA is to attend a tournament, but the registration process involves so much jargon it's easy to get lost. This pamphlet attempts to clarify the process; Page 6 is an executive summary. We hope you find it useful.

*-The APDA Expansion Committee*

## Finding the Right Tournament

There are dozens of APDA tournaments during the academic year, from early September to mid-April. See <http://apdaweb.org/schedule> for a list of the tournaments for the current year.

In general, “unopposed” tournaments (that is, tournaments that don't share a weekend with any others) are the biggest of the year, and draw the greatest cross-section of the circuit. They're also when the governing body of the league (the APDA board) meets. If you plan to attend only a single tournament during the year, then, you'd do well to choose one of these: Johns Hopkins, Columbia, Harvard, Fordham, NYU, or Princeton.

If you can't make it to one of those tournaments, though, it's not a big deal. Other tournaments often have advantages such as themed parties, exotic meals, and fun activities between rounds, and due to their smaller size may even have a better judge-to-debater ratio.

## Special Tournaments

There are several kinds of tournaments during the year that you may find fun. At *novice* tournaments, only first-year debaters (“novices”) may compete. At *ProAm* tournaments, only novice/varsity or novice/novice teams are allowed. At *opp-choice* tournaments, all of the rounds must give the “opposition” team (the second team to speak in the round) the choice of which side of an issue to defend. Other tournaments on the calendar include *NorthAms*, *Worlds*, and *Nationals*, which are covered in separate documents.

## Reading the Invitation

Once you've decided which tournament to attend, you should visit the APDA forum (<http://apdaweb.org/forum>) about two weeks before the tournament starts. This is when tournaments typically post their official invitations, and you should read them carefully. Note the date by which you must send in pre-registration. (It is generally not acceptable to simply show up at a tournament without having pre-registered.)

## Registration Fees

Registering for tournaments can be expensive; fees in the range of \$100-120 per two-person team are typical. However, if your team is new to the circuit and/or poorly funded, you may be able to negotiate a discount (a “reg break”). Since most tournaments run at a profit, it's often to their advantage to offer you a discount rather than miss out on you coming at all—plus, tournaments are always excited to have new schools.

If you want a reg break, it's best to request one well before the tournament. Typically the invitation will have the email address of the host team's treasurer; send him or her an email explaining your situation as soon as possible. (Note that the treasurer's email address is usually different than the one you'll send your eventual registration information to.)

Finally, note that many tournaments offer a discount for paying upfront in cash. If you opt to be billed, you'll pick up the bill upon arriving at the tournament.

## Housing

At virtually all regular-season tournaments, you'll be housed on the floor or couch of some host debater's dorm room. You may also choose to stay with a friend from the host school. One way or the other, though, you should be sure your registration information explains how many of your debaters will need housing from the tournament organizers. And if any of your teammates have special housing needs (their religion prevents them from housing with members of the opposite sex, for example), mention those as well.

**Note:** Some teams that compete on other circuits are used to staying in hotels when they attend tournaments. This is very rare among APDA teams, due to the cost and the distance of hotels from rounds and parties.

## Seeds

Through a fairly complicated formula, APDA calculates which debaters have performed well enough during the season to qualify for Nationals. Debaters that have achieved that threshold are referred to as having “qualified.” (Note that if you've never debated on APDA before, the only way you could have qualified is by either having made it to octofinals at Worlds or quarterfinals at the North American Championship ["NorthAms"] during the current academic year. To check whether any members of your team are qualified, visit [http://apdaweb.org/wiki/doku.php?id=stats:2007-2008\\_qual](http://apdaweb.org/wiki/doku.php?id=stats:2007-2008_qual).)

A two-person team that has two qualified debaters is said to have a “full seed,” and a team that has one qualified debater is said to have a “half seed.” The main perk? Full- and half-

seeded teams are virtually guaranteed not to debate each other first round of any regular-season tournament.

Regardless of how many quals your team has, however, you are permitted to designate another of your teams as a "free seed" at each tournament. (This designation gives the recipient team similar protection to being a half- or full-seed.) When registering, be sure to indicate which teams are seeded and what kind of seed they have.

## Names

Besides listing the names of the debaters you're sending, you have to list the names of the teams they're in. There are three main styles of naming:

- **Ranking.** The top team from your school would be the "A" team, the next-best the "B" team, and so on. This style is often used by more "serious" teams, and is occasionally mandated by tournaments that take themselves very seriously.
- **First letters of last name.** Another classic style, this combines the first letters of the last names of your debaters, so John Doe and John Smith would be your "DS" team.
- **Inside/Clever/Suggestive/Nonsense joke.** This covers pretty much everything else.

## Novices

First-year debaters ("novices") are eligible for special awards and, at most tournaments, special elimination rounds ("outrounds"). It's thus important to indicate on your registration which of your debaters are novices—usually accomplished by a (n) symbol after their name.

**Note:** Under current rules anyone who is debating for the first year on APDA—regardless of how many years they've debated on other circuits—is considered a novice. In addition, someone who debates at fewer than 3 tournaments in a given year still counts as a novice for the following year.

## Judging Requirements

Tournaments are judged by current debaters and alumni of the host school. Almost always, however, there aren't enough judges for the number of teams, so the tournament imposes a "judging requirement" that requires attending schools to send judges to help out.

Judging requirements are expressed as functions in terms of  $n$ , where  $n$  is the number of teams your school is sending. For example, at a tournament with an  $n/3$  judging requirement, you'd have to send one judge for every three teams you sent; at an  $n-2$  tournament, you'd

have to bring two fewer judges than teams. (Note that unless explicitly stated otherwise, judging requirements are rounded down absolutely—in other words, even if the formula indicates you have to bring 1.8 judges, you only have to bring 1.) Occasionally, tournaments will demand a certain level of experience from your judges.

If it will be difficult to find enough judges to meet your requirement, get in touch with the tournament well in advance. Most tournaments will be lenient, although some will impose a fine for failing to comply. On extremely rare occasions the tournament may break up a team you're sending and draft the two members to judge if your school fails to meet the judging requirement, although the possibility of this happening must be announced in advance.

You're always welcome to bring more judges than are required, however. This can be a good way to show nervous members of your team what debating is all about, and can sometimes result in a small discount for the remaining teams you're sending.

Finally, when sending in your judge information, it's useful to list their previous debate and judging experience; tournaments use this information to help determine what quality of rounds your judges will be watching.

## Dietary Needs

Registration fees typically include three meals (dinner on Friday night plus breakfast and lunch on Saturday), although at some tournaments you are on your own to find one of these meals in the city around the host school.

In your registration you should specify any special dietary needs members of your team have. Vegetarianism is typically accommodated easily; kosher, vegan, halal, and lactose-intolerant diets less easily. If the host school can't provide meals that meet your needs, they may give you a discount to cover the cost of bringing your own food.

## Contact Information

Most tournaments simply require a name and cell phone number for one person from your team who's attending. Sometimes, though, a tournament may require detailed information on all of your debaters.

## Sending in Registration

Registration (also known as “reg,” rhymes with “edge”) is accomplished by sending an email to the address or addresses specified in the invitation. A sample registration email is shown on the next page.

## Sample Registration

## Explanation

Dear **BJU Debate Team**, ← Host school

**Her Mother of Anchovies College's** debate team plans to send three teams this weekend: ← Your school

**HMAC A: Marisa McFlurry and Michael McNugget** (half seed) ← Team's name

HMAC B: John Valjean **(n)** and Dmitri Shostakovich (free seed) ← Indicates John is a novice (first-year APDA debater)

HMAC C: **Kumbaya M'Lord (n)** and Come M'Lady (n) ← Debater's name

We will also bringing a judge, **Jack Daniels**, ← Judge's name (and qualifications) who debated all high school and has debated at one APDA tournament so far.

**All seven of us will need housing.** ← Accommodation needs

**Kumbaya is a vegetarian.** ← Dietary needs

My cell phone number is **900-370-4892** ← Contact information

**See you on Friday!** ← Trite conclusion

**-Michael McNugget** ← Your name

**President, HMAC Debate Team** ← Your position

## Verifying Registration

It's important to verify your registration when you get to the tournament—especially names, seeded status, and novice status.

## Scratches

At most tournaments, schools and individual teams are permitted a limited number of "scratches"—prohibitions on a judge judging your school or team for the preliminary rounds of the tournament. These are usually used by debaters who have a vendetta against a judge, or who think a judge has a vendetta against them. Hopefully as a first time debater this won't affect you.

**Note:** If you have reason to believe that a judge can't judge someone from your team impartially (e.g. they've dated before, were roommates over the summer, dueled once, etc.) it's your responsibility to let the tournament know when you arrive. Judges barred from judging you in this way are known as "tab scratches" (so called because they are decided on by the tabulation staff of the tournament) and do not count toward the number of discretionary scratches you have. And to be safe, always double-check that the tournament knows any judges you've brought along are from your school so they're not assigned to judge you.

## Debating

Once your registration is verified, you're ready to go. Go to GA (the "general assembly" room) to hang out with your team and other debaters before the first round starts.