

Blaine High School Debate Team Handbook



Go Bengals!

Dear Debater:

Welcome to the Blaine High School debate team! You are part of a *team* that works hard, competes with excellence, and is respected throughout our conference, section, state, and nation. With your help, we will continue to build upon that tradition.

This handbook has information that should be helpful to you and your parent(s)/guardian(s) during the debate season. You will find team rules and policies. They are meant to help you have a great experience, so please become familiar with them. Do not hesitate to ask me or another coach if you have questions.

I'm glad you are a part of our team, and I will do all that I can to help you have a great experience.

Sincerely,

Ross Eichele

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Introductory Information

Joining the Team

Any student at Blaine High School in good academic standing who meets MSHSL guidelines is eligible to join the debate team. There are no auditions or tryouts. Students must do the following in order to become a member and participate at tournaments:

- Complete the MSHSL Eligibility form (available in the Activities Office)
- Pay the activity fee (\$100), at the Activities Office

Blaine High School does not want the activity fee to be a barrier to participate. Contact the head coach if this is an obstacle for you and we can work something out. Being on the team does not guarantee that you will be able to debate at each tournament.

Costs and Supplies

In addition to the activity fee, there are other costs that you may encounter over the course of the season. All of these costs are possible depending on your involvement:

- Meals: Students are responsible for their own meals at tournaments. Concessions such as pizza, sandwiches, candy, and pop are typically available, or students may bring their own food.
- Clothing: Students are asked to dress professionally at tournaments (see Tournament Attire and Etiquette). This may mean purchasing clothes for some students.
- Supplies: Debaters should have legal pads and pens.
- Overnights: Occasionally the team will stay overnight at hotels when traveling to a distant tournament. Students are asked to pay a fee toward the cost of their lodging and transportation, which depends on the tournament cost and location. An estimate will be provided at the beginning of the season.

Time Commitment and Scheduling

The season runs from September through January. Most of our tournaments occur on Saturdays in October, November, and December. Many students are done competing the first weekend of December. Some tournaments are on Friday nights as well. The most recent tournament schedule can be viewed at our team website (www.anoka.k12.mn.us/bhsdebate). You need to attend practice two times the week prior to a tournament in order to participate in that weekend's competition. You are not allowed to show up and compete without the proper amount of practice.

The amount of time a student dedicates to debate is largely up to that individual. Those who typically do the best in debate compete and practice regularly. We hold practices Tuesdays through Thursdays through the debate season. Tuesday afternoons we have a short meeting after school for all debaters. Practices end at 5:00 p.m., so students may ride home on the activity bus at 5:15 p.m. Students need to stay the entire practice time in order to complete rounds and be prepared for each tournament.

Team Policies and Rules

General Rules

1. All school rules are in effect during debate practice and competition.
2. All MSHSL rules are in effect during debate practice and competition.
3. Treat all things and everyone with respect.
4. Be responsible to your commitments and your actions.
5. Practice during practice.
6. In the event that disciplinary action is necessary, students can be sent home from practice, suspended from competition, or be removed from the team. The school administration may take additional measures.
7. Follow school rules regarding the use of computers.

Coach's Decisions

The coaches have the responsibility of setting the vision, managing the team, and making sure students are growing as speakers and thinkers. Student input is important and valued. There will be times when the coaches have to make decisions about the best interest of the team. This can include, but is not limited to: who can attend tournaments where there is limited registration; who can partner with whom; if we are able to attend certain tournaments; etc. It is important for the health of the team that these decisions are respected and supported.

Lettering

Team members who prove to be outstanding representatives of Blaine High School by carrying a 2.5 cumulative GPA, following all team rules/procedures, and having a positive attitude will be considered for lettering. Once you have achieved these criteria, you will earn a letter for acquiring 150 NFL (National Forensic League) points in a season. Special consideration will be given at the coach's discretion to students who do an outstanding job supporting the team, assisting other students, and/or assisting with fundraisers and team projects.

Debate Formats

Blaine High School offers all four formats of debate: 1) Public Forum debate (PF), 2) Policy debate (CX), 3) Lincoln-Douglas debate (LD), and 4) Congressional debate (CD). While each format is unique, you will learn the same public speaking and critical thinking skill sets in each format. Your participation in any format of debate depends on many factors. Some tournaments only offer specific formats of debate. Some tournaments limit the number of participants a school can have in any one format. All debaters begin in public forum debate. From there we may offer students the ability to compete in CX, LD, or CD depending on their skills and level of dedication. Placement is the head coach's decision. This privilege is earned by consistently demonstrating hard work, success, and competitive drive over the course of a year.

Selection for the Section/District Team

Blaine High School is in Section V for debate. We can enter two PF teams, two LD debaters, and two CX teams. We are in the Central Minnesota NFL District, and can select up to four PF teams, four LD debaters, four CX teams, and a varying number of CD debaters. Being selected is an honor. It is also a difficult decision for coaches. Several factors are considered when deciding who should attend these tournaments. Some of them include the debater's ability to represent Blaine well, debate record, contributions to the team, willingness to do well, professionalism, and/or auditions. Students who are chosen represent all of us, so we need to support them.

Tournaments

Signing Up

Communication is essential for success. Tournament registrations are usually due one full week before the tournament. This means we need to know whether or not you plan on attending upcoming tournaments. You will be able to sign up for tournaments at practice. Please talk to a coach if you are uncertain of your schedule or have any concerns.

Limitations

Tournament participation is a privilege, not a right. You earn this privilege by attending practices the week of a tournament, participating in practice rounds, representing the team well, and being a good student and citizen at Blaine High School. Some tournaments limit the number of debaters a school can bring. Because of this there is no guarantee you will be able to compete at every tournament on the schedule. Please see the “Coaches Decisions” for additional information.

Departure and Transportation

You will always know the departure time for each tournament at least one week in advance. We will leave the school from the main entrance for all tournaments. At times we may share a bus with another school. Sometimes we may ride in a van. Students need to provide their own transportation for tournaments in the Anoka-Hennepin District.

Return Times

We will provide students with a tentative return time for each tournament. We usually have a tentative return time available when we are given the departure times. **REMEMBER:** This is an estimate. A tournament running late could affect the actual time we return. Students will always have access to a phone to contact their parent(s)/guardian(s) in the event we run behind schedule.

Tournament Attire

Students are asked to dress professionally at debate tournaments. While our public speaking and thinking skills are the focus of the competition, we recognize that our appearance is always noticed. Because of this we must represent ourselves well. Generally this means the following:

- Males: A dress shirt and tie (or a sweater) and dress pants (Dockers etc.) Sport coats or a suit are optional.
- Females: A suit, nice blouse/sweater and knee length or longer skirt/dress slacks, or professional dresses are all appropriate.

Do not hesitate to ask if you have questions. Round Robin Tuesday night tournaments are informal, so you can wear your regular school clothes.

Students are always expected to be polite, respectful, professional, and courteous at tournaments. *All tournament conduct is a reflection of our team and Blaine High School.* We need to be on our best behavior from the moment we leave to the moment we return. We can and will debrief the tournaments at our weekly meetings.

Tournament Etiquette

Every tournament is unique in its set up, but in general follow the rules listed below:

- Enter the building and head to the commons/cafeteria.
- Stay together as a group until you receive information from the coach
- Warm up. Warm up. Warm up again.
- Look over the materials and map of the school so you'll be on time at the right place.
- Write down the information on the schedule when it is posted.
- Go to your room and do your best, being respectful at all times.
- Return to the commons/cafeteria and wait for the next round when the current round is finished.
- Cell phones ought to be left home or turned off; cell phone usage is inappropriate and rude at awards and between rounds. If you must bring a cell phone, put it away and leave it out of sight and sound.
- Act with dignity and respect at all times. This is even more important at awards. There should be no negative facial expressions or "cat calling" if you are fortunate enough to be called to the stage to receive an award. There should be no cheering or yelling; remember this is a fine arts activity. In the audience there are many speakers who have never won an award; respect them and act with dignity. If you are on the stage, and do not win the award you expect, respond with graciousness. Shake other winners' hands. On stage you are representing Blaine High School, our team, your parents and yourself. Speakers who are not gracious winners are an embarrassment and may not be allowed to participate in the next tournament.

Cancelling

There might be occasions that prevent you from attending a tournament. If you need to cancel please let a coach know as soon as possible. If you need to cancel the morning of the tournament, please communicate this to Mr. Eichele's voicemail (763-506-6554). Students who do not notify Mr. Eichele of a cancellation before a tournament may be charged their registration and judging fees.

Team Communication

Public Communications

Any time you communicate in a public setting about debate, you represent Blaine High School. Represent our team well. Please be respectful of others' opinions. Please do not discuss cases, strategies, or arguments with others in any context. Don't become involved in any online debate discussions. Save debate for rounds at debate tournaments...and save discussions for practice.

We will communicate any changes in practice or tournaments at the weekly team meeting, on the team bulletin board, through notes sent to you during school, on the team website, and through emails to you and your parent(s)/guardian(s)