



United States Academic Decathlon® Welcome Letter
2024 USAD Nationals
April 25-27, 2024

To: Academic Decathlon State Champion, Division IV, Division V and Online Teams
From: United States Academic Decathlon

Congratulations on achieving the honor of representing your state at the 2024 USAD Nationals in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Plans for Nationals are underway, and the USAD staff and volunteers in PA are working hard to make this an enjoyable competition. All registration documents and competition information can be found on the USAD website (www.usad.org) – [2024 USAD Nationals webpage](#).

Abbreviated Nationals Schedule

Thursday, April 11, (time in CDT)

- Online essay, art, literature events followed by the MVTM selection 12:30 p.m. and interview 3-7 p.m. (online teams do not participate in the interview event)

Thursday, April 25, (time in EST)

- Registration and team identification 8–10 a.m.
- Welcome ceremony 10:30–11:30 a.m.
- Mandatory coaches meeting 12–1 p.m.
- Speech competition 3–7 p.m.

Friday, April 26, (time in EST)

- Online objective testing schedule (see the [Nationals website](#) for details)
- Objective testing 8–11:45 a.m.
- Super Quiz™ & Speech Showcase 2–5 p.m.
- Team Event 7–9 p.m.

Saturday, April 27, (time in EST)

- Awards ceremony 8 a.m.–12 p.m.
- Champions reception (immediately following Awards ceremony)

Nationals registration information

All forms **MUST** be completed and uploaded to the school’s designated team Google folder by **March 14**. Please make sure all forms are typed (preferred) or printed legibly. **Names of students and teams will appear on all documentation as they appear on the online team roster form.** No name corrections will be made after March 20.

Coaches, teams and state directors: please comply with the deadline dates specified for submission of your team registration(s) and roster(s). If your competition is too close to the March 14 deadline for forms to be received on time, please contact nationals@usad.org.

Competition site and hotel accommodations

This year's competition site is the David L. Lawrence Convention Center (DLCC), 1000 Ft. Duquesne Boulevard, Pittsburgh, PA 15222.

The host hotels are The Westin, 1000 Penn Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15222 and the Drury Plaza Hotel Pittsburgh Downtown (Drury), 745 Grant St, Pittsburgh, PA 15219. Teams are required to stay at the host hotels, or they will not be allowed to compete.

Rooms are limited at each property, and reservations will be processed on a first-come, first-serve basis. To make a reservation, click on the online registration [link](#) for the hotels, found on the Nationals pages of the USAD website. Please make your reservations as soon as possible.

The hotel reservation deadline is Monday, April 1. Reservations will be confirmed directly by the hotel. The USAD discounted room rate at The Westin is \$184 per day plus applicable taxes. The room rate at the Drury is \$169 per day plus applicable taxes. Team reservations will take precedence over guest reservations.

Payment must be made at the time of arrival with a credit card or cash. Out of town checks, purchase orders, and money orders are NOT accepted. Each team will be responsible for payment of hotel rooms and other hotel incidentals. The hotel requires guests to provide a valid credit card at the time of check-in. All team keys and room assignments will be given to the coach upon check-in. The hotel is a non-smoking hotel.

Transportation

Transportation is on your own; the hotel does not provide an airport shuttle. Uber and Lyft are popular methods of transportation to the hotel. Rental cars or vans are available. If renting a car/van at the airport and driving to the hotel, The Westin offers parking for \$41 per day, parking at the Drury is \$32 per day.

Back by popular demand – Twin Teams!

Get to know more about your Academic Decathlon peers before Nationals start! Twin Teams will be announced after all the face-to-face Nationals team participants have been determined. A team will be paired with another team and emailed contact information, so they can connect before Nationals.

Twin Teams can foster new friendships and knowledge about the states represented at Nationals. When you arrive in Pittsburgh, you will already have new friends waiting for you! Activities will be available for teams to connect, further develop their friendships and share their hometown knowledge and culture.

Detailed Nationals information

Thursday, April 11, (time in CDT)

• Online essay, art, literature events followed by the MVTM selection 12:30 p.m. and interview 3-7 p.m.

Thursday, April 11 (time in CDT)

Essay, art, and literature

The USAD essay, art, and literature events will be held on April 11th at 12:30 p.m. with essay first, followed immediately by art and literature. Your team must participate in a practice session between April 3, 12:30 p.m. and April 10, 5 p.m., so USAD can confirm all teams/students will be able to access the testing site on competition day. All students and proctors must test their usernames and passwords on these days, even if your team has participated in a USAD national competition in the past. **All students MUST participate in the essay, art, and literature testing on April 11. Student(s) who do not participate will not be eligible to participate in the 2024 USAD Nationals competition.** Please refer to the [Nationals Online Technical Information](#), located on the 2024 USAD Nationals webpage, for more details.

Most valuable team member (MVTM)

After students have completed the online essay, art and literature tests, they will be prompted to complete a rubric to register their vote for the Most Valuable Team Member on their team. Each member of the official team is eligible to vote. Votes will remain anonymous, and the rubrics will be scored by the computer. A [sample](#) of the rubric will be posted on the 2024 USAD Nationals Helpful Information webpage.

Interview – 3–7 p.m. (Zoom link will be sent to coaches)

Interviews will be conducted in an online Zoom room. The Zoom link will be emailed to coaches prior to the competition. Students should log into the Zoom 10 minutes prior to their scheduled interview time. Students should be ready to present their competition ID number and/or photo ID if requested to do so. A description of the online interview procedure will be made available on the 2024 USAD Nationals webpage.

Thursday, April 25 (time in EST)

Registration and team identification – 8–10 a.m. Convention Center – Ballroom Gallery (3rd Floor)

You MUST register your team at this time. Teams arriving before Thursday, April 25, should plan to register early Thursday morning. Please leave the later times for teams arriving Thursday. If flying in Thursday morning, please try to arrive before 8 a.m. so

you have adequate time to get to the hotel, register and prepare for the competition. All team members **MUST** accompany the coach to registration. Each team member **MUST** show a photo ID (e.g., school ID, driver's license, passport, etc.) to register for the competition. **The official USAID identification badge** (issued to students upon registration) **must be worn at all times during competition**. Students and coaches must also carry their personal photo ID with them at all times. *Coaches must carry medical release forms for teams members at all times.*

Welcome event – 10:30–11:30 a.m. Convention Center – Convention Center – Spirit of Pittsburgh Ballroom (3rd Floor)

All teams, coaches and USAID representatives are invited to a welcome event from 10:30-11:30 a.m. in the Convention Center – Spirit of Pittsburgh Ballroom (3rd Floor). Meet and greet teams from all over the U.S., experience a taste of Pittsburgh and jumpstart a memorable national competition!

Mandatory coaches meeting – 12–1 p.m. Convention Center – Convention Center – Lecture Room 406 (4th Floor)

There will be a mandatory meeting for all coaches at this time. Coaches should review the competition outline from the registration packet prior to the meeting. Any final information or changes to the competition will be provided at the meeting.

Speech competition – 3–7 p.m. Check the times/locations on each decathlete's individual schedule (name badge)

Teams will be assigned speech time by lottery. All team members will have times assigned randomly. Please remind your students that **NO** cell phones, electronic devices, computer watches, backpacks, purses, study materials, etc., are allowed during the speech and interview events.

Speech – 3–7 p.m. Convention Center – Convention Center (see chart and student schedule for room location)

All participants will present their speeches before a panel of two or three speech judges. As in previous years, approximately six decathletes will be present in the speech room during the speech competition. All six decathletes enter and leave the room at the same time. This format benefits decathletes by allowing them to listen to their peers' speeches. Decathletes will only receive scores from the official speech judges. The peer audience will not score the speeches.

Each group of approximately six decathletes will be assigned a speech room and a session start time. The start time will be listed on the decathletes' competition ID. Please ensure all decathletes with speech times in the same one-hour block are at their designated location and ready to enter the room at the beginning of the block time. The head judge in each room will welcome the group of decathletes and show them to their seats prior to calling the first decathlete speaker forward. Once a decathlete has presented both of their speeches, they will join the peer audience and the next decathlete will be called by the head judge. The group of six decathletes will be released from the speech room at the end of the session after all six decathletes have presented their speeches.

Friday, April 26, (time in EST)

Objective testing – 8 –11:45 a.m. Convention Center – Spirit of Pittsburgh Ballroom

Doors open promptly at 7:45 a.m. ID badges must be worn and will be checked when entering the testing area. **Cell phones, other electronic devices, backpack packs, print materials, hoodies, jackets and caps are not permitted.** Decathletes will use an automated response system (clicker) to record their objective test answers. Training will be provided prior to the start of testing. Testing starts promptly at 8 a.m. Decathletes will NOT be excused from the testing room for any reason before the scheduled break. View the 2024 [USAD Nationals Helpful Information](#) webpage for the complete testing schedule and detailed information.

Super Quiz, Speech Showcase and Super Quiz Awards – 2–5 p.m. Convention Center – Spirit of Pittsburgh Ballroom

The Super Quiz will use an automated response system (clicker). Students will come to the testing area as a group according to their GPA category. Students are expected to record one answer per team by pressing the appropriate button on the team assigned clicker. Questions and subjects are randomized. Super Quiz is a standalone event and scores will NOT be added to team scores. Details can be found on the 2024 USAD Nationals Helpful Information webpage.

Speech showcase will immediately follow the Super Quiz. The highest scoring decathlete in the prepared speech component for the Honor, Scholastic and Varsity categories will present their speech. Coaches and decathletes will be notified before the Super Quiz, so they are prepared when their name is called. Coaches will be asked to provide USAD with a short synopsis of their decathlete’s speech for placement purposes. At the conclusion of the speech showcase, the Super Quiz awards will be presented.

Team Event 7-9 p.m. Convention Center – Ballroom Gallery

All teams are invited to hang out at the team event on Friday evening. There will be a DJ, indoor yard games and more. This event is free, but tickets **will** be required for entry. Tickets to this event will be included in your team’s registration packet. You will be provided one coach ticket in addition to participant tickets corresponding with the number on your official roster. Tickets for additional coaches, parents and other visitors may be obtained using the [“Extras” Form](#).

Saturday, April 27 (time in EST)

Awards Ceremony 8 – 11:30 a.m. Convention Center – Spirit of Pittsburgh Ballroom

There will be assigned seating for all attendees. Up to nine team members and two coaches may be seated together at the team table. Award ceremony tickets are **required** for entry to the ballroom. Tickets will be included in your team’s registration packet. You will be provided one coach ticket in addition to participant tickets, corresponding with the number on your official roster. Award ceremony tickets for additional coaches, parents and other guests are complimentary and may be secured using the [“Extras” Form](#) on the 2024 USAD Nationals Helpful Information webpage. To ensure ample seating is available, additional coaches, parents and guests will need a ticket to enter the ballroom and view the awards ceremony.

Score results

Scores will NOT be posted during the competition. State directors will be emailed a copy of the results to share with their Nationals teams.

Champions reception – 11:30 a.m. –12 p.m. (or immediately following the awards) Convention Center – Room 301

Champion U.S. teams, coaches and state directors from all divisions will gather for a celebratory reception following the awards ceremony.

Miscellaneous Information

April postings

Team ID numbers will be assigned and posted on the 2024 USAD Nationals Helpful Information webpage in early April after all state competitions have been completed. The interview and speech schedule will also be posted at that time.

Documents regarding: General Rules, Appeals Procedures, Calculator Policy, Dress Code, Code of Conduct, Competition Schedule, etc., can also be downloaded from the 2024 USAD Nationals webpage. Once you download forms and other materials, please read them carefully.

Decathlete behavior

All participants are expected to demonstrate behavior that is appropriate for USAD events and in keeping with the USAD Code of Conduct. The failure of any member of the team to adhere to the policies and procedures listed in the USAD Code of Conduct may result in the disqualification of the delinquent decathlete and/or the entire team.

Modifications and Accommodations

If there are team members who require modifications or accommodations, please notify USAD of this by including this information on the Modifications and Accommodations Form located on the team registration page on the 2024 USAD Nationals webpage.

Dress

Publicity pictures, news coverage and video productions are commonplace at USAD events. Participants and coaches are expected to dress in good taste and in accordance with the Code of Conduct. A copy is located on the 2024 Nationals page of the USAD website. The average weather in Pittsburgh in April is mild with temperatures ranging between 41-67°F, please dress accordingly. Pittsburgh, PA is in the Eastern Time Zone.

Photos

USAD is requesting that all teams submit a team photo for Nationals use which could be used on the USAD website, social media and may also be included in USAD's Curriculum Overview. Ideally, photos should be at least 300 DPI or taken with a 2-megapixel or larger device. Please email your team photo(s) to nationals@usad.org by March 14.

Nationals t-shirts and apparel

2024 USAD Nationals and Academic Decathlon t-shirts and apparel will be available for sale at the competition. Details can be found on the 2024 USAD Nationals Helpful Information page.