



United States Academic Decathlon® Welcome Letter
2025 USAD Nationals
May 1-3, 2025

To: Academic Decathlon Division I-V and Online Teams
From: United States Academic Decathlon

Congratulations on achieving the honor of representing your state at the 2025 USAD Nationals in Des Moines, IA. Plans for Nationals are underway and the USAD staff and volunteers in IA are working hard to make this an enjoyable competition. All registration documents and competition information can be found on the USAD website – [2025 USAD Nationals webpage](#).

Abbreviated Nationals Schedule *(All times are listed in CDT)*

Thursday, April 17

- Online essay, art, and literature events are followed by the Most Valuable Team Member selection at 12:30 p.m. and interview 5-9 p.m. *(online teams do not participate in subjective events)*

Thursday, May 1

- 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, May 2

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

Saturday, May 3

- 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 19, 2025**. 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 23.

Coaches, teams and state directors: please comply with the deadlines specified for submission of your team registration(s) and roster(s). If your competition is too close to the March 19 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 Iowa Events Center at 730 3rd Street, Des Moines, Iowa, 50309.

The host hotels are the Hilton Downtown, Marriott Downtown, Embassy Suites Downtown, and the Hyatt Place Des Moines Downtown. Teams are required to stay at one of 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. **The hotel reservation deadline is Friday, April 4.**

Reservations will be confirmed directly by the hotel. The USAD discounted room rate at the Hilton is \$185/day; the Marriott is \$179/day; the Embassy Suites is \$179/day; and the Hyatt Place Des Moines Downtown \$199/day. Each rate will also include applicable taxes. Team reservations will take precedence over guest reservations. Please note that only the Embassy Suites provides a free breakfast.

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 hotels are all non-smoking.

- **Transportation**

The Hilton, Marriott and Embassy Suites provide airport shuttles, but the Hyatt Place does not. Uber and Lyft are popular methods of transportation downtown. Rental cars or vans are available from Des Moines International Airport. If renting a vehicle at the airport, parking is \$30/day at the Hilton; \$36/day at the Marriott; \$25/day at the Embassy Suites; and \$30/day at the Hyatt Place.

Detailed Nationals Information

Thursday, April 17 (times in CDT)

- **Essay, art, literature, and interview**

The USAD essay, art, and literature events will be held on April 17th at 12:30 p.m. Essay is first, followed immediately by art, literature and interview. Your team must participate in a practice session some time between April 10 at 12:30 p.m. and April 16 at 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 17. Student(s) who do not participate will not be eligible to participate in the 2025 USAD Nationals competition.** Please refer to the [Nationals Online Technical Information](#), located on the 2025 USAD Nationals webpage, for more details.

- **Most Valuable Team Member**

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 2025 USAD Nationals Helpful Information webpage.

- **Interview – 5–9 p.m. (Zoom)**

Interviews will be conducted in an online Zoom room. The Zoom link will be emailed to coaches prior to the competition. Students should log in 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 2025 USAD Nationals webpage.

Thursday, May 1 (times in CDT)

- **Registration and team identification – 8–10 a.m. Events Center, Grand Ballroom Foyer (Level 4)**

You MUST register your team at this time. 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.

Teams arriving before Thursday, May 1, should plan to register early Thursday morning. Please leave the later times for teams arriving on Thursday. If flying on 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.

The official USAD 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 team members at all times.***

- **Welcome event** – 10:30–11:30 a.m. Events Center, Grand Ballroom (Level 4)

All teams, coaches, and USAD representatives are invited to a welcome event. Meet and greet teams from all over the United States, experience a taste of Des Moines, and jumpstart a memorable national competition!

- **Mandatory coaches meeting** – 12–1 p.m. Events Center, Room 107 (Level 1)

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. Events Center (see chart and student schedule for rooms)

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, smart watches, backpacks, purses, study materials, etc., are allowed during the speech and interview events.

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, May 2 (times in CDT)

- **Objective testing** – 8 –11:45 a.m. Events Center, Grand Ballroom (Level 4)

Doors open promptly at 7:45 a.m. ID badges must be worn and will be checked when entering the testing area. **Cell phones, electronic devices, backpacks, print materials, jackets, and hats 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 2025 [USAD Nationals Helpful Information](#) webpage for the complete testing schedule and detailed information.

- **Super Quiz Event & Awards; Speech Showcase** – 2–5 p.m. Events Center, Grand Ballroom (Level 4)

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 2025 [USAD Nationals Helpful Information](#) webpage.

The Speech showcase will immediately follow the Super Quiz. The highest scoring decathlete in the prepared speech component for 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. At the conclusion of the speech showcase, the Super Quiz awards will be presented.

- **Team Event** - 5:30-9 p.m. Greater Des Moines Botanical Gardens

All teams are invited to attend the team event on Friday night. [We will have private access to the Botanical Garden.](#) Tickets are required for entry. This event is free for competing decathletes and one coach. Tickets for additional coaches and other visitors may be obtained using the [“Extras” Form](#) and are \$10 each.

Saturday, May 3 (times in CDT)

- **Awards Ceremony** - 8–12 p.m. Events Center, Grand Ballroom (Level 4)

There will be assigned seating for all attendees. Up to nine team members and one coach 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](#).

- **Results**

Scores will NOT be posted during the competition. An award list will be emailed to State Directors following the awards ceremony that indicates the gold, silver and bronze medal

winners in each event; top teams in each division; and special awards. They will share these with their Nationals teams.

Some of the special awards at Nationals will be communicated after the event and include:

- Asa Edwin Reaves, Esq. Social Science Prize
 - B. Franklin Reinauer II Economics Prize
 - Frank Wurtzel Prize
 - Roberts/Caperton Inspiration Award
 - State Directors' Communication Award
 - Founder's Scholarship: Most Improved Varsity Student
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- **Champions Reception** – 12-1 p.m. Events Center, Room 402 (Level 4)
- All division champion teams, coaches, and related state directors will gather for a celebratory reception following the awards ceremony.

Miscellaneous Information

Team ID numbers will be assigned and posted on the 2025 [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 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 by including this information on the Modifications and Accommodations Form located on the team registration page on the Nationals webpage.

- **Dress Code**

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 Nationals webpage. The average weather in Des Moines in early May is mild with temperatures ranging between 54-73°F. Please dress accordingly. Des Moines, IA is in the Central time zone.

- **Photos**

USAD requests that all teams submit a team photo for Nationals, 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 19**.

- **Nationals Apparel**

2025 USAD Nationals and Academic Decathlon apparel will be available for sale at the competition. Details can be found on the 2025 [USAD Nationals Helpful Information](#) page.