

DEBATE
HANDBOOK
2023-24



Table of Contents

Joining the East Ridge High School Debate Team	2
Debate Season	2
Auditions for the Debate Team	2
Debate Team Practices	2
Team Practice Policies	2
Practice Absences Due to Another Activity	3
General Practice Excused Absences	3
Unexcused Practice Absences	3
Communication	3
Late Arrival to Practice	3
Tournaments	4
Tournament Absences	4
Tournament Conduct	4
Transportation To and From Tournaments	4
Debate Fees	5
Family Judging Requirement	5
Volunteer Requirement for Home Tournament	5
Local Invitational Tournaments (Saturday Tournaments)	6
NSDA National Tournament (June)	6
National Circuit Tournaments (Non-School Sponsored)	6
National Tournament of Champions (Non-School Sponsored)	6
ERHS Debate Categories	6
Official Team Website and Instagram	6
Team Leadership Opportunities	7
Leadership Team Expectations and Responsibilities	7
National Speech and Debate Association (NSDA) Membership & Recognition	8
Debate Booster Club	8
Student Concerns	8
Varsity Letting Requirements for Debate	8

Joining the East Ridge High School Debate Team

The East Ridge Debate team prides itself on helping students reach their debate goals. However, this success requires a serious commitment from all competitors, including two weekly practices, a summer camp, Saturday practices in August for Debate, eight to ten all-day Saturday tournaments, and further research and practice on their own. Please consider this in deciding whether to become part of the East Ridge Debate team.

Debate Season

The Debate Tournament Season runs from September through December. However, there is a Summer Camp (usually in July) and August Saturday practices.

Auditions for the Debate Team

Auditions for the Debate team are competitive. Generally, **85 students audition for a team of 60 students**. Auditions for the Debate Team are held in April each year for the following season. Debate auditions are held early because the team begins practices in the summer. Students currently in grades 7th through 11th grade may audition at April auditions.

All information regarding auditions can be found on the Debate website, erhsdebate.com. Students should download the *Audition Packet* as soon as it is released to prepare for the audition. A strong emphasis will be based on the auditioner's preparedness for the audition; it is recommended that ample time is given to research and preparation. Auditions take place at ERHS and last about 15 minutes.

Students may choose the Debate category they wish to pursue, but all final decisions regarding partnerships and category of debate are left to the coaches. Those selected for the team will receive an email confirming such; the team will also be posted on the team website.

Debate Team Practices

Regular attendance at practices is required. Practices are held twice per week on Mondays and Wednesdays.

Team Practice Policies

Students must be prepared for practices per the coach or captain's instruction. Students should bring all materials needed to participate in practices, including laptops, notebooks, pens, pencils, paper, files, or other necessary research or supplies.

Students should not engage in outside activities during practice. This includes homework or playing video games. Students must manage their time so that homework can be completed outside designated practice times.

Students should always be respectful towards coaches, captains, and one another.

Failure to abide by the above Practice Policies will result in the following:

1st time - A warning

2nd time - Dismissal from practice and an unexcused absence

3rd time - Discussion with Coach and possible removal from the team

Practice Absences Due to Another Activity

Students may only be excused from a few practices due to other activities (sports, dance, other clubs, math classes, college courses, etc.). If an activity will lead to more than three missed practices, students should submit a written request for the absence to the head coach for approval. Not all requests can be approved. If a request is not approved, you will be removed from the team and must audition the following year. The written request must be submitted at least two weeks before the first scheduled absence.

General Practice Excused Absences

All students are allowed up to five (5) general absences from regular practices during the season. These are absences due to sickness, mental health, travel, family activities, or homework. Students should inform a coach of an absence. More than five excused absences may incur further consequences at the head coach's discretion.

Unexcused Practice Absences

An unexcused absence is when a student does not attend a practice and fails to inform a coach in advance or when a student is asked to leave practice due to a lack of preparedness or disruptive behavior. Three (3) unexcused absences will result in dismissal from the team for the season.

Communication

Debate is a communication-based activity. It is our goal to foster good communication habits in students. The default for 9th through 12th graders is for coaches to communicate directly with, and only with, students. Students must read coaches' emails and inform their parents of transportation and other needs. Regarding 8th-grade students, parents will be copied on emails. Students and parents should provide an email address that is checked regularly.

Late Arrival to Practice

Practice begins punctually at their scheduled times. Students must arrive on time; if you anticipate being more than 5 minutes late to a practice, text or email a coach.

Tournaments

Students will receive a tournament schedule for the season and are expected to coordinate their plans to attend as many tournaments as possible. Attending as many tournaments as possible is highly recommended, as tournament attendance correlates to competitive growth and success.

Students should review the tournament schedule (cross-reference SAT/ACT dates, partner schedules when applicable, and other commitments) to determine which tournaments they can attend.

Tournament Absences

Students should complete the **Tournament Absence Form** (online) when they cannot attend a tournament. This form is available on the team website. This online form must be completed by 5:00 PM Tuesday before a Saturday tournament. If this deadline is missed, the student must pay the entry fee assessed to the school, generally \$10.

Coaches will no longer accept emails, texts, or calls relating to a tournament absence. ***It must be done through the Tournament Absence Form.***

Of course, illness is an excused tournament absence. The student should contact a coach as soon as possible to inform them they will not attend the tournament.

Tournament Conduct

Any misconduct at any tournament (regardless of the distance or tournament length) may result in the parent(s) being required to pick the student up from the tournament early. Depending on the severity of the offense, this could further result in suspension from the Speech and Debate team and disciplinary action by East Ridge High School.

Transportation To and From Tournaments

Students are expected to ride the bus with the team unless they have informed a coach in advance of other transportation. Students are to remain at the tournament site for the competition duration unless permitted to leave by a coach.

If a parent judges at a tournament, they may transport their student to and from the tournament site.

Debate Team Fees

Debate Fees	Due By	Amount	How to Pay
Booster Club Fee	August 15th	\$50	Check made payable to “ERHS Debate BC”
NSDA Fee* (one-time fee)	August 15 th	\$20	Check made payable to “ERHS Debate BC”
ERHS Activity Fee	September 10th	\$140	Pay Online at the ERHS Fee Portal

*This is a one-time fee; returning students will have already paid this fee.

Family Judging Requirement

Each **student** must provide two (2) judges during each season. A judge can be a parent, extended family member, or sibling (no longer in high school). Judging *at a non-team-sponsored tournament* does not count toward this requirement.

Those who plan to judge must attend a mandatory Judge Training Session. *All parents must attend a judge training before judging at a tournament. This applies to returning families, as well.*

A Sign-up Genius will be posted on the team’s website [erhsdebate.com] to allow you to select your Judging dates in advance.

Should a family decide to opt out of judging one or both judging obligations, they may pay a fee to do so (the opt-out fee for one judge is \$80; the opt-out fee for two judges is \$160). These opt-out fees should be paid before the first tournament of the debate season.

Volunteer Requirement for Home Tournament

The Debate Team hosts a home Tournament. The Debate Tournament is on October 28, 2023.

Hosting a home tournament is a huge undertaking and requires an “all hands on deck” approach to make it successful.

We ask that each family sign up for one volunteer shift at the home tournament. The volunteer shifts are 3-4 hours long and may involve working at the Concession Stand, keeping the Judges’ Hospitality Lounge stocked, or offering information at the Welcome Desk. A Sign-Up Genius will be posted on the respective team website about 45 days before the first tournament.

Local Invitational Tournaments (Saturday Tournaments)

All students on the team will be able to compete in 8-10 invitational tournaments each season. These tournaments are all-day events, leaving on the bus around 6:45 AM and returning to the school around 5:30 PM.

NSDA National Tournament - Held in June

Students qualify for the NSDA National tournament by competing and ranking in the top few students at the Central Minnesota District tournament. This tournament is held at a new location each year.

National Circuit Tournaments - Non-School-Sponsored

There are numerous national tournaments throughout the country that students may wish to attend on their own. These are not school- or team-sponsored tournaments, and the students are responsible for finding their judges and arranging payment of the fees. A student wishing to attend such tournaments should notify the head coach about 90 days in advance of the tournament so the proper paperwork can be completed and submitted to the South Washington County School Board for approval.

National Tournament of Champions - Non-School Sponsored

Students qualify through a bid system. Visit <https://uktoc.org/> for more information. This tournament is hosted annually in April by the University of Kentucky.

ERHS Debate Categories

Congressional Debate - A simulation of the U.S. legislative process, students generate a series of bills and resolutions for debate in Congressional Debate. Debaters alternate delivering short speeches for and against the topic in a group setting. An elected student serves as a presiding officer to ensure the debate flows smoothly. Students are assessed on their research, argumentation, delivery skills, knowledge, and use of parliamentary procedure.

Public Forum Debate - Public Forum involves opposing teams of two debating a topic concerning a current event. Proceeding a coin toss, the winners choose which side to argue (PRO or CON) or which speaker position they prefer (1st or 2nd), and the other team receives the remaining option. Students present cases, engage in rebuttal and refutation, and participate in a “crossfire” (similar to a cross-examination) with the opportunity to question the opposing team.

Official Team Website and Instagram

Website www.erhsdebate.com

Instagram [HERE](#)

Team Leadership Opportunities

The Debate Leadership Team includes a President, a President-elect, and Captains. The number of Captains each year is determined by the team's needs. Captains are generally in their Junior and Senior years.

Coaches select the **President** and **President-elect**. Coaches look for candidates that are natural leaders, foster teamwork and inclusivity, have a solid understanding of the skills for their debate category, are well-received by teammates, have excellent communication skills with teammates and coaches, and are aligned with the coaching philosophy of the team.

The coaches select the **Captains** through an application process near the end of the season. Coaches look for qualities similar to those looked for in a President and President-elect.

Leadership Team Expectations and Responsibilities

- Ability to attend 95% of practices, tournaments, summer speech camp, and team meetings.
- Be an essential point of communication between coaches and the team.
- Ability to bring up team member concerns to coaches.
- Understands their role on the team in relation to Coaches and does not attempt to circumvent such.
 - Assist coaches with posts to social media and other team communications.
 - Lead fundraising efforts and ensure all fundraisers are properly staffed.
 - Assist with planning the ERHS RIP Home Debate Tournament.
 - Reach out to novice team members to ensure they feel comfortable with debate.
 - Reach out to students who are not feeling connected to their teammates.
 - Spend extra time the week preceding the ERHS RIP Home Debate Tournament to help with various tournament preparations.
 - Stay after the home tournament until everything is cleaned, ensuring each team member is also helping clean up and reset the school.
 - Be a model of proper behavior and positive attitude at practices, meetings, team activities, tournaments, or any function where you represent East Ridge Debate.
 - Be the first to arrive and the last to depart from official team functions.

If a Leadership Team member cannot fulfill these expectations and responsibilities, they should talk to the head coach immediately. If a Leadership Team member fails to uphold the expectations and responsibilities, they may be removed from the Leadership Team.

National Speech and Debate Association (NSDA) Membership & Recognition

NSDA Honor Society recognizes students for participation in speech and debate activities. A one-time membership fee of \$20 is for all students new to debate or speech. Students earn distinction through speech and debate competitions, community service, public speaking, and leadership activities. In addition to offering the student a deserved honor, this provides a measure to demonstrate commitment to the activity to colleges or other entities.

Debate Booster Club

The mission of the Debate Booster Club is to support the coaches and students comprising the East Ridge High School Speech and Debate Team.

The Booster Club fundraises and helps organize and host the Home Tournament. All fees and fundraising proceeds are used to offset the team's costs. This includes travel to local tournaments not covered by ERHS, local tournament entry fees not covered by ERHS, end-of-year banquet, trophies for the home tournament, travel and lodging for coaches to attend the National Tournament with qualifying students, team T-shirts, team bonding activities, office supplies, hiring of judges, and other miscellaneous expenses that may arise.

Every parent or guardian of a team member is automatically a Booster Club member. The Booster Clubs also has Executive Board and various Committee Chairpersons.

The Executive Board includes a President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. There are also Committee Chairpersons for the following: Sponsorship Committee, Fundraising Committee, Home Tournament Committee, and Banquet Committee. Nominations and elections for these committees occur before the start of the season. If you are interested in helping, please reach out to a coach.

Student Concerns

Team members should first bring any concerns to a coach. If the team member feels dissatisfied with the outcome after meeting with a coach, the parent may contact the coach directly. Approaching the ERHS Administration or Activities Director should be the final step if the above protocol is followed and a mutual agreement is unattainable.

Varsity Lettering Requirements for Debate

Earning a Varsity Letter is an outstanding accomplishment. Lettering requirements are:

- (1) Promptly submitting a Reflection to the Head Coach after each tournament. A reflection should include something you did well, something you need to work on, and something you found interesting at that tournament.
- (2) Have No Unexcused Absences.

- (3) Attend five (5) Invitational Tournaments during the season.
- (4) For Congress: Submit two (2) pieces of Legislation for consideration at a tournament. The deadline for submitting such is August 31st. The deadline is non-negotiable.
For Public Forum Debate: Partners will switch speaker positions for one tournament debate. The deadline for such is October 29th. The deadline is non-negotiable.
- (5) Volunteer at one team fundraising event during the season.

**East Ridge High School Debate Team
2023-2024 Handbook Agreement**

Student

I have read and carefully reviewed the obligations and expectations of the East Ridge Debate team as described in the ERHS Debate Handbook. I am willing to uphold these standards and meet the responsibilities required of an ERHS Debate team member.

Student Name

Student Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian

I have read and carefully reviewed the obligations and expectations with my child. I also understand the obligations and responsibilities placed on East Ridge Debate team members and parents/guardians.

Parent Name

Parent Signature

Date