

**Video #2 of Easy Entry to the World of Speech and Debate**

**“Step 2: Your Individual Options”**

[Watch Video 2](https://club.monumentmembers.com/easy-entry-video2/)

EASY ENTRY TO THE WORLD OF SPEECH AND DEBATE is a compact video course designed to welcome new participants into the world of speech and debate competition…and make it “easy” to succeed at it.

# Previous Video

The step shared yesterday: “Setting Your Foundation.” If you haven’t seen that video, it is foundational. [Watch Video 1 here](https://club.monumentmembers.com/easy-entry-video1/).

# Step #2 to Easy Entry “Your Individual Options”

First thing’s first. You need to correctly identify what kind of school you attend. This goes for students, coaches, teachers, administrators and parents. Later on you will make decisions about leagues, events, and tournament opportunities, and these decisions hinge directly on the four different kinds of schooling that we have nowadays in the world of education. You’ve likely already made this choice, but it helps to know all that is available when you make strategic choices later.

**Public**

The way competition is set up within public schools is through extracurricular teams, much like any “team” activity or sport that a school may have. Sometimes these clubs are supplemented with classes with curriculum and teachers to teach them, but most of the time these are after-school clubs administered by a coach. They meet regularly (e.g. weekly) to prepare for tournaments. These tournaments are hosted by schools in the area, and the coaches have organizations that keep rules and regulations for their tournaments. They typically will have qualification standards for advancing to larger tournaments outside their grassroots organizations.

Organizational structure of local groups vary greatly. Venture to inquire of what coaches in your school does with speech and debate. There often is a community of coaches from a handful of schools who gather to set rules and standards for their tournaments. If there isn’t a coach or a program in your school, ask area schools. There likely is a program going on nearby, perhaps a robust one with friendly teachers ready to welcome a new school into their program.

Depending on the budget of the school, students may be able to travel “the circuit.” These are tournaments hosted by large universities in various parts of the country (i.e. Harvard, Yale). They are typically “open” tournaments and sometimes have scholarships or monetary awards.

Ultimately, public education students should have a club to sign up for, just like any club offered in the school.

**Charter**

Charter schools are formed by interested parties (i.e. parents, teachers, community members) who contract within a school district, essentially forming a “charter” in the local community. I work at a charter school as an English teacher, and I run an afterschool speech and debate club at the school. We compete with other schools in our town and greater county. We also have opportunities to travel to other counties and compete on a state level.

Charter schools are technically public schools in that they are allocated certain state funds measured by the number of students they have enrolled. However, they operate with more autonomy than a public school run strictly by their local boards. Sometimes schools write into their charter higher academic standards than the state — like my school does — which makes speech and debate a perfect addition to the school.

While my school does not have speech and debate as part of their charter, it is written into the school’s curricula and used as a strong selling point for parents when they apply. There are several charter schools competing in all sorts of tournaments, sometimes even in the homeschool world (depending on the league, which I’ll explain later). Clubs in charter schools resemble other schools: students sign up and coaching for upcoming tournaments begin.

**Private**

With private education, it’s “all of the above” with the exception of government funds. They play in the same leagues as public and charter schools play, and many of them have done quite well in competition. Some of the most notorious schools in the country have been private Catholic schools. Though I didn’t compete in grammar school, I was raised through the 8th grade in a Catholic school in Wisconsin. There is something about Catholics and debate, one supposes. They tend to be exceptional debaters.

Fellow speech and debate coaches like me seem to enjoy complaining about the lack of funds dedicated to speech and debate, but private schools have shown that it can work. When a school keeps to its core values of academic excellence, it makes sense to allocate resources to speech and debate. Private schools have strong history showing that it can work.

**Home**

Speech and debate is considered the “homeschool sport,” and I’ve been thoroughly involved in training home educators in this sport since the first league started in 1996. My wife and I are currently part-time home educators who participate in two homeschool forensic leagues. I tell you, this is an awesome community of people.

I was a public school teacher when my wife and I started home educating in the 1990’s, back when the educational choice of homeschooling was a bit taboo. Most people questioned the validity of educating at home – in truth, we had initial doubts ourselves – but that question is gone today. Home education has become a very common educational choice, and a most successful one.

But home education is as diverse as the families who choose its path. Today, it is often difficult to tell who home schools and who doesn’t. Many educational choices within public schools offer at-home supplements, and some at-home curricula are sanctioned and even encouraged by public schools. This past decade, laws favoring charter schools have become hugely popular, and these charter schools have adopted more flexible, parent-centered educational approaches that have, in turn, been academically successful.

Home educators are typically academically focused, so it is no wonder that speech and debate has become “the homeschool sport.” I’ll explain later the various leagues available to families, but it is safe to say that most anywhere in the United States home educated students are able to participate in speech and debate.

**Leagues**

A picture containing drawing

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I wish there was one league, one set of rules, one path to choose from — that would make things much easier, wouldn’t it? But the interests and talents of the speech and debate community are vast and varied. I will bring simplicity to the complicated world of speech and debate by giving a short synopsis of the major leagues available to students, plus a bulleted list of the main features the leagues offer.

**NSDA**

I made my debut into speech and debate in public education — as did most American students and educators at the time — in the early 90s. The community had been named the NFL (National Forensic League), but confusion over what “forensic” means and the obvious branding conflict with the National Football League caused the league to adopt its new name: The National Speech and Debate Association. This has been its official name since 2014.

NSDA is run by an Executive Director and an office of staff stationed in Iowa.

NSDA is governed by a Board of Directors.

NSDA has approximately 4000 members schools and over 100,000 student members.

NSDA has a point-based membership system and grants school, coaches, and student memberships.

NSDA competitors may compete in as many events as their schedule allows, but most schools encourage focusing on one event for each student. Public, charter, and private schools typically allow one or two events for speakers and debaters, and Nationals only allows one entry per student.

NSDA competitors are managed between Middle School students and High School students.

NSDA allows homeschoolers to participate through local school districts. In other words, if a homeschooler arranges with a local school to participate on their team, NSDA accepts eligibility.

NSDA competitors see their results through a national database called “Tabroom.” Tournament directors upload results and students are able to monitor their position for advancement to state and regional tournaments. NSDA uses Tabroom to invite high school competitors to the National Tournament.

NSDA Nationals is announced approximately three years in advance and is listed on its website. Nationals consists of approximately 4500 students from more than 1200 schools. The Middle School National Tournament is an open tournament that draws roughly 850 middle schoolers every year, and it runs alongside the High School National Tournament.

You may find out more on NSDA at its website: <https://speechanddebate.org>.

**NCFCA**

This is the first homeschool debate league, and I was an enthusiastic leader in the first years of the league in 1996, coaching debate in our public school while my wife and I were homeschooling our daughters. The league was the brainchild of the Home School Legal Defense Association, a powerful legal firm that has helped defend homeschool freedoms for decades. The league eventually out-grew itself and became the National Christian Forensics and Communications Association (NCFCA) in 2000. Today it remains the largest homeschool speech and debate league in the nation, but has recently broadened its audience to more than just homeschoolers.

NCFCA is run by an Executive Director and an online staff.

NCFCA is governed by a Board of Directors.

NCFCA considers its participants “affiliates” to the league and has approximately 4000 affiliate families.

NCFCA started as a strictly homeschooled league, but added a waiver of allowance in 2014. That waiver was removed altogether in 2019, allowing any educational model to join the league and compete.

NCFCA has both a Statement of Faith and a Code of Behavior that all affiliates must abide to at all NCFCA competitions.

NCFCA competitors must be no younger than 12 years old and no older than 18 years old on September 1st of the competition season. One event (Moot Court) has the minimum age set to 15. High school graduates, no matter the age, are not allowed to compete.

The NCFCA is centrally structured and is separated into 12 geographical regions.

NCFCA competitors may compete in one debate event and up to five speech events, along with the possibility of competing in the unique event of Moot Court.

The NCFCA runs a hierarchy of tournaments with the National Tournament at the top, underscored by regional and state qualifiers. They also run open tournaments and smaller tournaments they call “National Mixers.”

NCFCA affiliates qualify for nationals “slots” and the league awards some “at-large” slots to gain an invitation to nationals. Approximately 450 students compete at the NCFCA National Tournament.

NCFCA announces its national tournament at each year’s previous national tournament.

You may find out more on NCFCA at its website: <https://ncfca.org>.

**Stoa**

Stoa is not an acronym. A “stoae” is a classical architectural structure for a porch or public area outside the main structures of an arena. These were gathering places for debates and public speeches in Greece and Rome. The Stoa speech and debate league started in 2009 and has largely mirrored NCFCA in their rules, though their governance has been different. I served on Stoa’s first official Board of Directors in 2010, and my residence has many opportunities through Stoa. In some parts of the country, homeschoolers have found opportunities in both Stoa and NCFCA concurrently.

Stoa is run by the governing Board of Directors and an Executive Director.

Stoa considers its participants “members” of the league, and the league has approximately 2000 member families.

Stoa has a Statement of Faith that parents of member families must agree.

Stoa competitors must be between 12 and 18 years old on October 1st of the competition season.

Stoa competitors must be deemed “homeschooled” by the parents and the state. No student enrolled full-time in a public charter school or public school independent study program is allowed.

Stoa has various committees and subcommittees that put forth changes to rules for the membership to consider.

Stoa members run their tournaments, with the league running only one tournament per year, its national tournament.

Stoa competitors may compete in one debate event, as many speech events as they choose, and a unique debate event called “parliamentary debate.”

Stoa competitors see their results through a national database called “Speech Ranks.” Students who are homeschooled may add their ranking from tournaments of “private Christian homeschool speech and debate organizations/leagues.”

Stoa hosts the National Invitational Tournament of Champions (NITOC) every year and typically announces its hosting place at the NITOC before. Students registered on SpeechRanks.com who gain two checkmarks in any event will receive an invitation to compete in that event at NITOC.

You may find out more on Stoa at its website: <https://stoausa.org>.

**Other Leagues and Organizations**

The three leagues above are the largest national leagues from which I have experience. But there are other, lesser-known leagues that may be a better fit for you. Here are some with hyperlinks for more information:

High School Debate Program (HSDP). This is a California-based parliamentary debate program that hosts parli debate tournaments. <https://highschooldebate.org>

Logos Forensics Association (LFA). The Logos Forensics Association is an alternative to the NSDA for private school students. <https://www.logosforensics.org>

National Association for Urban Debate Leagues (NAUDL). This is an association that advances debate education in urban public schools. <https://urbandebate.org>

National Catholic Forensics League (NCFL). This is a unique league run by Catholics with tournaments hosted by Catholics. <http://www.ncfl.org>

National High School Mock Trial. Students compete in a simulated courtroom trial in which they learn about the legal system. <https://nationalmocktrial.org>

World Schools Debating Championships (WSDC). This is an international organization that hosts parliamentary debates around the world. <https://wsdcdebate.org>

If none of these leagues have active schools or clubs in your area that fit your educational model, don’t give up. It is worth noting that there are countless numbers of local leagues that do not aspire to a national network or tournament. I belong to a league of thirteen schools in the Colorado Springs area specifically tailored to middle school students, but these students don't qualify to a higher regional or national tournament. That’s okay, and such a league may be okay for you, too.

Ask around locally and do some research. I bet you’ll find an active speech and debate community suitable for your unique educational model and who would gladly welcome you. It may be easier to get involved than you think, and you’ll soon be thriving from the benefits.

# NEXT STEP: Your Competitive Options

We will take a break from the 4-video course to release some bonuses tomorrow, followed by the NEXT STEP: Your Competitive Options. One note on Thursday’s video: I will also give you a bit of strategy to help you succeed in competition. This course makes it easy to enter the world of speech and debate, but I bet you want to succeed and win, too! I’ll show you how to do just that.

# Freebie (time-sensitive)! Get Library Access to “Revising Your Speech”

Part of our advanced membership includes a audio library of camp presentations from my years of coaching speech and debate camps. I want to make one available to you for free, “Revising Your Speech.” Tomorrow we will get into speech and debate events (and making sense of them). This audio is one of my favorite audios in that I give five clear steps to developing a speech for competition. This is a perfect prelude to Thursday’s video.

[Listen to “Revising Your Speech”](https://club.monumentmembers.com/revising-your-speech/)

**This is time sensitive: Access will expire on June 4 when this course goes away.** Thereafter,access will only be allowed for Monument PLUS members.

# Proof of Completion

*(For students required to take this class for school or club.)*

Assignment: Listen to “Revising Your Speech.” List the five steps I give and send it to your teacher or coach as “proof of completion.”