



## District 39 Contest Format Report District Council Meeting September 26, 2023

The Toastmasters International Board of Directors has made an exception to the Speech Contest Rulebook and determined that all speech contests at the Area, Division, and District levels may be conducted either in person only, online-only, or in a hybrid format for the 2023-2024 speech contest cycle. District 39 leadership received this information from TI by email dated July 25, 2023.

The TI email indicates "In-person contests are defined as those in which all participants are onsite at the specified contest location. Online contests are defined as those in which all participants are online. Hybrid contests are defined as those in which some participants (contestants and judges) are onsite in a physical location, and others are online."

The TI email further indicates "The District Executive Committee must recommend the selected speech contest format (in person, online, or hybrid) for each level (Area, Division, and District) to the District Council for approval no later than September 30 to allow for proper budgeting. Once a format is approved for each level, no changes can be made."

In a series of email communications with TI, District 39 requested clarification on whether a contest could be held online in the event a venue could not be secured for a hybrid contest. TI clarified that, "In the event that a venue is not secured for the contest, the contest committee must make a leadership decision on how to proceed within those rules." TI also clarified that the lack of a venue would not result in disqualification of a contestant, stating "The only grounds for disqualification in a speech contest are eligibility, originality, and reference to another contestant's speech." The series of email communications with TI, exchanged between July 25 and August 9, 2023, is attached.

The District 39 Executive Committee considered this matter on August 28, 2023, and recommended the District 39 Council approve conducting the Area, Division, and District contests in a hybrid format.



**From:** lance.mcmahan@icloud.com   
**Subject:** Re: 2023-2024 speech contest cycle updatePN-01245443  
**Date:** August 9, 2023 at 12:57 PM  
**To:** Toastmasters International [speechcontests@toastmasters.org](mailto:speechcontests@toastmasters.org)  
**Cc:** Laura Gregory [laura.gregory@district39.org](mailto:laura.gregory@district39.org)  
**Bcc:** Lance McMahan [lance.mcmahan@icloud.com](mailto:lance.mcmahan@icloud.com), Donna L. Lewis [donna.lewis@district39.org](mailto:donna.lewis@district39.org)

Thank you for the clarification, Sam, and I believe it is safe to assume you meant “Contestants cannot be disqualified because of the format of the contest they competed in.”

We will proceed accordingly. Thanks,

Lance K. McMahan, DTM  
District Director  
Toastmasters International, District 39  
Cell 916.316.0573  
Integrity - Respect - Service - Excellence  
*Where Leaders Are Made!*

On Aug 9, 2023, at 12:42 PM, Speech Contests <[speechcontests@toastmasters.org](mailto:speechcontests@toastmasters.org)> wrote:

Dear Toastmaster McMahan,

Thank you for your email. Please let me assist.

The only grounds for disqualification in a speech contest are eligibility, originality, and reference to another contestant's speech. Contestants cannot be qualified because of the format of the contest they competed in.

In the announcement from the Board of Directors on July 25, 2023, it states "Once a format is approved for each level, no changes can be made."

We can only advise on the rules in the Speech Contest Rulebook and announcements by the Board of Directors. In the event that a venue is not secured for the contest, the contest committee must make a leadership decision on how to proceed within those rules.

Please let me know if you have any further questions or concerns.

Best regards,

**Sam O.**

Speech Contests Team  
phone: +1 720-439-5050 ext. 1403  
fax: +1 303-799-7753



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**From:** lance.mcmahan@icloud.com <[lance.mcmahan@icloud.com](mailto:lance.mcmahan@icloud.com)>

**Sent:** Monday, August 7, 2023 9:53 AM  
**To:** Speech Contests <[speechcontests@toastmasters.org](mailto:speechcontests@toastmasters.org)>  
**Cc:** Laura Gregory <[laura.gregory@district39.org](mailto:laura.gregory@district39.org)>; Districts <[districts@toastmasters.org](mailto:districts@toastmasters.org)>  
**Subject:** Re: 2023-2024 speech contest cycle updatePN-01245443

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Thank you Miya. Based on your email, it appears Toastmasters International requires us to cancel a contest if we are unable to secure a venue, assuming we choose a hybrid format. Since we will not cancel a contest, is Toastmasters International intending to disqualify contestants who compete under these circumstances?

Lance K. McMahan, DTM  
District Director  
Toastmasters International, District 39  
Cell 916.316.0573  
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On Aug 7, 2023, at 7:51 AM, Speech Contests <[speechcontests@toastmasters.org](mailto:speechcontests@toastmasters.org)> wrote:

Dear Toastmaster McMahan,

Thank you for your email. It is my pleasure to assist you.

Once a decision is made for the format of the Speech Contest, this decision is final. The format can not be changed at a later date.

I understand that this is not the answer you were hoping to hear, but I hope you will continue contacting us with any other questions you may have.

Best regards,

**Miya W.**

Speech Contests Team  
phone: +1 720-439-5050 ext. 1403  
fax: +1 303-799-7753



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**From:** lance.mcmahan@isloud.com, lance.mcmahan@isloud.com

**From:** [lance.mcmahan@icloud.com](mailto:lance.mcmahan@icloud.com) <[lance.mcmahan@icloud.com](mailto:lance.mcmahan@icloud.com)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, July 26, 2023 3:38 PM  
**To:** Speech Contests <[speechcontests@toastmasters.org](mailto:speechcontests@toastmasters.org)>  
**Cc:** Laura Gregory <[laura.gregory@district39.org](mailto:laura.gregory@district39.org)>  
**Subject:** Re: 2023-2024 speech contest cycle update

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Hello TI.

Last year we chose to conduct our contests in a hybrid format. We later encountered issues securing a venue for a few contests, and wound up having those contests entirely online. Please confirm that flexibility is available again this year.

Thank you,

Lance K. McMahan, DTM  
District Director  
Toastmasters International, District 39  
Cell 916.316.0573  
Integrity - Respect - Service - Excellence  
*Where Leaders Are Made!*

On Jul 25, 2023, at 3:00 PM, Toastmasters International <[speechcontests@toastmasters.org](mailto:speechcontests@toastmasters.org)> wrote:

## TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL

July 25, 2023

Dear District Leader,

The Board of Directors has made an exception to the *Speech Contest Rulebook* and determined that all speech contests at the Area, Division, and District levels may be conducted either in person only, online only, or in a hybrid format for the 2023-2024 speech contest cycle.

In-person contests are defined as those in which all participants are onsite at the specified contest location. Online contests are defined as those in which all participants are online. Hybrid contests are defined as those in which some participants (contestants and judges) are onsite in a physical location, and others are online.

When selecting a contest format, consider the additional resources required to successfully support the chosen format. If you are considering a hybrid or online contest, review the [Online and Hybrid Speech Contest Best Practices](#) document from the 2022-2023 program year and consider details such as:

- Cost of the online platform needed to support your contest needs
- Cost of audiovisual (AV) equipment needed to run your selected contest format
- Additional supporting roles needed
  - For example, you may need people to run your technology, support contest officials and contestants, and coordinate logistics
- Additional contest official roles needed
  - For example, hybrid contests typically require a set of timers that are present online and a set present onsite

After evaluating these needs, ensure the selected format will not take critical resources away from initiatives that support the District mission and success in the District Recognition Program.

**Your District Executive Committee must recommend the selected speech contest format (in person, online, or hybrid) for each level (Area, Division, and District) to the District Council for approval no later than September 30** to allow for proper budgeting. Once a format is approved for each level, no changes can be made.

Regardless of the contest format your team selects, all contests must be conducted live, with all speech contestants and contest officials participating during the event. Judging must be completed by the end of each respective contest.

If desired, your District may choose to record an in-person, online, or hybrid speech contest with only contestants and contest officials and play the recording during the District Conference to help prevent bandwidth issues that may arise when livestreaming a contest with a large audience. Also, if all contestants of a hybrid speech contest select to be in person, the contest officials may be in person as well.

We look forward to another invigorating program year of inspiring speeches, and thank you for your team's efforts in supporting speech contests!

Sincerely,

Speech Contests Team  
Toastmasters International  
[toastmasters.org](https://toastmasters.org)

*This email has been sent to Area Directors, Division Directors, District Directors, Program Quality Directors, Club Growth Directors, Region Advisors, Past International Presidents, Past International Directors, and Past Region Advisors.*

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This message was intended for: lance.mcmahan@icloud.com. 9127 S. Jamaica Street, Suite 400, Englewood, CO 80112.  
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