

2026 QUALIFICATION METHODS

Please use this for determining which category to register your students for this year's tournament.

Option 1 – Automatic Qualifier — To automatically qualify for the NIETOC, students must meet one of the following criteria:

A – Semifinalist or Finalist at the 2025 NIETOC or NSDA tournaments in the same event for which they are registering.

B – Top three finish at current year's state tournament (if held prior to March 31).

C – Top three finish at the MASQ Qualifying tournament (Dec 2025)

Option 2 – Bid Qualifier — To qualify via the Bid System for the NIETOC, students must earn two bids in a given event at NIETOC-designated tournaments throughout the country.

A – Regular Season Bids earned during the 2025-26 season. To verify that your student is bid qualified, check this database -- <https://nietoc.org/qualifying-tournament-results/>. >Post season bids and several of the automatic qualifications will NOT appear within this database. Those will be independently verified.

B – Post-Season Bids — Contestants receive one bid for each of the following:

>One bid earned by being an Octafinalist or Quarterfinalist at previous year's NIETOC.

>One bid earned by being a Finalist at 2025 state tournament.

>One bid earned by being a Finalist at 2026 state tournament (if held before March 31). We will also extend a bid to semifinalists at the current year's state tournament if there are more than 50 contestants in that event.

C – NSDA National Qualifier – Contestants qualified for the 2026 NSDA tournament before March 31 receive one bid in that event. This also applies if the student qualified in an event, but is attending in another (due to the NSDA single-qualifier rules).

Option 3 – At-Large Qualifier*— To be considered under the At-Large system, a student must earn three "legs" which can be earned at any NIETOC Bid or non-Bid tournaments that accumulate to a total ranking of 9 or less. This is a change from previous years.

To illustrate:

-Joe Smith's DI ranks: 4th, 6th, 4th, 5th, 8th

-Sarah Jones' HI ranks: 4th, 3rd, 1st, 2nd, 12th

In this scenario, Joe's best 3 tournaments result in a total of 13, while Sarah's best 3 results in a total of 6. Thus, Sarah would qualify for consideration as an at-large entry to NIETOC, but Joe would not.

Additionally, if Sarah also has one bid (which may or may not be one of her best three ranks), she would be given priority over and accepted before another student with a total at-large rank of 6.

*Students meeting the above qualification criteria must complete the NIETOC online registration via SpeechWire and provide a working link to documentation via a Google folder. Competitors will be placed on a waiting list until all supporting information can be confirmed. At-large registration is due by March 31, with acceptance notifications provided by April 10.

There will be a \$25 at-large review fee per school that will be added to team invoices.

Option 4 – Bonus Qualifier*— We are also offering bonus entries in supplemental events this year.

Each school may register two supplemental events for a student (or students) who is/are not qualified in a main event.