



# Current Issues & Events Handbook

For Contest Directors, Coaches and Contestants

2024 • 2025

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# 2024 | 2025

## University Interscholastic League

### Current Issues & Events Handbook

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The details in this handbook expand upon the information in the UIL Constitution & Contest Rules. In addition to this handbook, coaches, contestants and contest directors should read Sections 900-906 for information pertaining to all contests. See also the Academic Quick Reference Chart found at the end of this handbook and on the UIL website.

From the UIL Constitution & Contest Rules:

#### **Section 932: HIGH SCHOOL CURRENT ISSUES AND EVENTS CONTEST**

(a) **THE CONTEST.**

- (1) Purpose. The Current Issues and Events Contest focuses on basic knowledge of current state, national and world events/issues through the study of national and international on-line news sites and/or hard copy, daily newspapers, specialized periodicals, weekly news magazines, journals of political or social nature, and other periodicals that report, summarize or explain world events.
- (2) Format. The contest will consist of objective questions and an essay assessing knowledge of important domestic and international issues, events and personalities.
- (3) Essay. Contestants who fail to submit an essay shall be disqualified. A judge or judges will evaluate the essays of the eight contestants with the highest scores in the objective portion of the test. If a tie occurs for the eighth slot, then essays of all contestants tied for eighth will be judged. The score will be added to the point total from the objective portion of the test, resulting in an overall score.

(b) **ENTRIES.**

- (1) Individual Competition. Each member high school may enter as many as six individuals in the district meet, which may be limited to a maximum of four individuals with district executive committee approval.
- (2) Team Competition. A school shall have a minimum of three contestants compete in order to participate in the team competition. All four members of the winning team will advance to the next higher level of competition.

(c) **QUALIFICATION.** Individuals, teams and wild cards qualify for the next level of competition according to Section 902.

(d) **TIES.**

- (1) Individual Competition. All ties shall be broken through sixth place. If a tie exists after the grading of the essays, then those essays involved in the tie will be judged one against the other(s) to break the tie. When a tie occurs, those contestants who are tied shall be awarded a place before any other places are awarded.
- (2) Team Competition. Refer to Section 902 (h)(3)(D).

# Current Issues & Events

## Contest Rules and Procedures

1. **CONTEST ROSTER.** A contest roster listing contestants will be created from schools' online entries and provided to the contest director.
2. **NUMBERING CONTESTANTS.** Each contestant will be assigned a number. This number should be indicated on the contest roster and included on the contestant's test, answer sheet and essay.
3. **ROLL CALL.** The contest director will call roll from the contest roster and replace any contestant who is not present with a certified substitute at district and the certified alternate or team substitute at regional and state.
4. **SUBSTITUTIONS AND ALTERNATES.** Schools may replace individual contestants on the official district meet roster with a substitute as long as the substitute presents the contest director with the appropriate documentation. Alternates may compete at region and state only in the absence of an individual who won first, second or third place in the preceding competition. If a member of a school's team cannot compete at region or state, only one substitution may be made. See the UIL Constitution and Contest Rules Section 903-905 for clarification.
5. **SEATING.** Contestants will be seated sparsely around the room and away from other contestants from the same school. All persons except participating contestants, the contest director, assistants and monitors will be excluded from the room.
6. **LATE ARRIVAL.** Except in emergencies, the UIL does not recommend allowing contestants to enter the room after this contest has begun. The decision to allow late entry rests with the contest director.
7. **MATERIALS.** Contestants shall furnish their own pens or pencils. Contest directors shall provide contestants with a test, answer sheet and three sheets of blank (preferably lined) paper. Contestants may bring extra lined paper as long as it is presented to a test proctor for inspection prior to the start of the contest. Contestants may write on the exam. Textbooks, periodicals and other reference sources may not be brought into the contest room.
8. **TEST DISTRIBUTION.** Testing materials will be distributed and contestants shall not open the test prior to instructions from the contest director. The assigned contestant number should be written in the top right-hand corner of the test, answer sheet and essay.
9. **ESSAY REQUIRED.** The contest will consist of questions that will be posed in such a way as to allow for objective grading and an essay question that all participants are required to answer. The essay should be of an expository nature. Contestants who fail to write an essay shall be disqualified.
10. **ANNOUNCEMENTS.** Following roll call and prior to the start of the test, contest directors shall read aloud to the contestants the section of this handbook titled Announcements Prior to Conducting the Contest.
11. **START AND STOP SIGNALS.** Contest directors will give the signal to start. After exactly 60 minutes, the contest director will give the verbal notification to stop.
12. **TIMING AND ELECTRONIC DEVICES.** Contestants may use timing devices as long as they do not emit audible signals during the contest. Cell phones, smart watches or any device that can wirelessly connect to the internet, electronic tablets, music players, headphones, etc. may not be used in the testing room. These and all other electronic devices not allowed in the contest should be turned off and should not be accessible during testing.
13. **ANSWER SHEETS.** Answers shall be written on the answer sheet. Graders will not consider answers written on the test or scratch paper. The essay shall be completed on the paper provided by the contest director.
14. **LEGIBILITY.** If a consensus of graders cannot read an answer, they will mark that answer as

incorrect.

15. **TURNING IN PAPERS.** Contestants shall remain seated and retain their papers during the 60-minute testing period, except in the case of a medical or other emergency. In that event, the student shall receive permission to leave the contest room and shall be accompanied by a monitor while outside the contest room. Students who leave and return to the contest room without permission shall be disqualified.
16. **GRADERS.** Coaches are expected to serve as graders and should be selected by the contest director prior to the beginning of the contest. One grader will be designated as the Lead Grader.
17. **ANSWER KEY.** Prior to the start of grading, the Lead Grader should communicate to the contest director any of the reviewers' concerns and any suggested changes to the answer key as soon as possible.
18. **ANSWER KEY ERRORS.** In the case of a suspected error on the answer key, the contest director should contact the UIL State Office and/or contact the state contest director as soon as possible to communicate the suspected error and to seek clarification before changing the key. Any key error confirmed by the UIL State Office or the state contest director should be corrected on the key used for grading.
19. **GRADING THE CONTEST.** Each test should be graded by more than one person and errors initialed by the grader who marked the error.
20. **SCORING.** The objective portion of all tests will be carefully scored, awarding two points for each correct answer. A judge or judges will then evaluate the essays of the eight contestants with the highest scores in the objective portion of the test. If a tie occurs for the eighth slot, then essays of contestants tied for the eighth slot shall be judged. Each essay will be read and assigned a score based on a zero to 20 scale, with 20 being the highest score possible. Judges must read and assign a score individually before conferring collectively to determine a final consensus score. If there is more than one judge, each judge must read the essay and assign a score individually. This score will be added to the point total from the objective portion of the test, resulting in an overall score. If, at this point, a tie exists, then those essays involved in the tie will be judged one against the other(s) to break the tie. The decision of the judge(s) and contest director is final.
21. **PLACES AND TIES.** Contestants can qualify to the next level of competition as individual first, second and third place winners or members of the winning team or wild card team according to Section 902 of the UIL Constitution and Contest Rules.
  - a. Individual Competition. First place goes to the contestant making the highest total score, second place to the contestant making the next highest, third place to the next highest and so on. Ties shall be broken according to Section 932 of the UIL Constitution and Contest Rules.
  - b. Team Competition. The sum of the top three objective scores (not including the essay score) from each school constitutes the team score for the school. First place is awarded to the team with the highest team score and second place to the team with the next highest. Team ties shall be broken according to Section 902 (h)(3)(D) of the UIL Constitution and Contest Rules. All team members who qualify to regional or state will compete for individual honors.
  - c. Wild Card. A wild card team will advance according to Section 902 of the UIL Constitution and Contest Rules.
22. **VERIFICATION PERIOD.** Following grading and input of unofficial results into the online entry system, contestants and coaches shall be allowed a time to review contest materials and to correctly identify papers and input of results (see After the Contest, Verification Period). Contestants and coaches not present at verification waive the opportunity to ask questions and accept results as official. The purpose of the verification period is to check accuracy in scoring, tabulation and data entry, not to challenge the test or answer key.
23. **ANNOUNCING OFFICIAL RESULTS.** Following the verification period, the contest director should announce, as official, the names and schools of contestants through sixth place and the top two teams. Official results, once announced, are final.
24. **RETURNING THE PAPERS.** If results are final and all test questions resolved, district papers may

be returned no sooner than the end of the last contest day of the district week. Regional papers may be returned no sooner than Saturday of region weekend.

25. **RETURNING THE PAPERS.** If results are final and all test questions resolved, district papers may be returned no sooner than the end of the last contest day of the respective district week. Regional papers may be returned no sooner than late Saturday of region weekend.
26. **NOTIFYING ALTERNATES.** If an individual qualifier cannot compete at the next higher meet, the alternate shall be notified by the school whose student cannot compete and allowed to compete. If a member of a school's team is unable to compete at the next higher level of competition, only one substitution may be made. The substitute shall give the contest director a substitute eligibility form or a letter certifying eligibility, signed by a school administrator.
27. **SWEEPSTAKES POINTS.** Points are awarded through sixth place and to first and second place teams according to Section 902 of the UIL Constitution and Contest Rules.

# BEFORE THE CONTEST

## ROOM

Secure the best room available that is large enough for the number of contestants expected. It is very important to have a room with tables or desks with writing areas large enough for students to write comfortably.

## MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT

The contest director will provide:

- Three blank (preferably lined) sheets of paper to each contestant for writing the essay
- Accurate clock for timing, preferably one that contestants can see during the contest
- Stapler
- Pens for grading
- (District) One 8.5 x 11 envelope per school entered, for returning materials

## CONTEST PACKET

The League office will provide:

- A copy of the UIL Current Issues and Events Handbook
- Copies of the tests and answer keys
- Answer sheets
- Grading memo
- Essay Rubric

Contest officials should inventory the contents before the contest. The sealed testing packet should be checked to verify 1) the correct materials are enclosed and 2) the number of copies included is sufficient for the number of competitors. The test packet should then be resealed and not opened again until just prior to the beginning of the contest. The meet director may schedule a specific time and place for contest directors to pick up the test packet before the contest.

## PERSONNEL

Coaches of competitors may serve as contest directors, assistants and monitors.

- Contest director.
- Assistant to the contest director.
- Room Monitor.
- Graders. Almost certainly your best graders will be coaches of the contestants, and we encourage you to use their skill and experience to ensure accurate and efficient grading of the test papers. Designate one grader as the Lead Grader. Make these selections prior to the beginning of the contest.
- An impartial judge or judges who have no vested interest in the contest should grade the essays.

## TIME REQUIRED

Allot up to 90 minutes for the contest. Approximately 20 minutes for roll call, opening remarks, and distributing contest materials and 60 minutes for the test. Stay on schedule as some students may need to go to other events.

Arrange for and announce during the opening remarks the time and place of the verification period prior to the announcement of official results.

### **EVENT ROSTER & RESULTS WORKSHEET**

Obtain a copy of the contest roster from the meet director, which will be generated from the UIL Spring Meet Online Entry System. It will list the school, contestant number, contestant name, district or region number and will indicate the competitors and alternates. You also record scores and/or results on this form to give to the meet director, who will then enter the results/scores into the online system before verification is held for the event.

### **ORGANIZING MATERIALS**

Each contestant will be assigned a number indicated on the contest roster. As an example, the number will be listed on the roster as 6A-17 or 2A-4, indicating the conference and a number. The UIL recommends numbering the tests and answer sheets before the contest begins. Write the contestant number in the upper right-hand corner of the test cover sheet and on the answer sheet. Check all tests to ensure that all pages are printed clearly and completely.

(REGION) If there is more than one conference at the meet, it is important to differentiate contestant numbers by conference.

### **SORTING ENVELOPES (DISTRICT RECOMMENDATION)**

Provide and label a large (8.5 x 11) envelope for each school with contestants entered in the contest, and write the name of the school on the envelope. After the verification period, contestants' tests, answer sheets and a key (one per school) should be placed in the appropriate envelope for return to each school no sooner than late Saturday of the district week. The meet director and the contest director are responsible for deciding whether testing materials can be taken by the contestants and coaches immediately after the contest's verification period is over.

# CONDUCTING THE CONTEST

1. Set up the room to best facilitate the monitoring of the room by contest officials.
2. Organize contest materials for easy distribution.
3. Seat the contestants sparsely around the room separating contestants from the same school.
4. Call roll from the roster and provide students with their assigned contestant number. Replace any contestant who is not present with a certified substitute at district and the certified substitute or alternate at regional.
5. Dismiss from the contest room all individuals, except the contestants, contest director and assistants. Instruct graders to report to the grading room with answer keys and surplus tests; remind them about confidentiality.
6. Distribute the tests, answer sheets and three pieces of lined (preferably) paper for the essay. Caution contestants not to open the test until instructed.
7. Read aloud the announcements listed below

## **Announcements Prior to Conducting the Contest**

- a. Do not open the test until instructed to do so.
  - b. Timing devices that do not emit audible signals during the contest may be used. All cell phones must be turned off and not set to vibrate.
  - c. Write your assigned contestant number in the top right-hand corner on the answer sheet, the test and each page of your essay. (Check for accuracy if it has already been written by the contest officials.)
  - d. You may write on the test paper. Answers must be written on the answer sheet and the essay on the paper provided.
  - e. All participants must answer the essay question.
  - f. This is a 60-minute contest. A contestant may turn in contest materials, including brainstorming notes and rough drafts, once he or she has finished the test.
  - g. Verification period will be held in room \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ a.m./p.m. This is contestants' and coaches only time to verify grading and unofficial results.
  - h. Are there any questions?
  - i. You may begin the contest.
7. During the contest, remain silent. It is important that the contestants have a quiet setting for the contest.
  8. Give contestants the signal to start. Terminate the contest at the end of exactly 60 minutes.
  9. When the time has elapsed, the contest director should collect all test materials, including test, answer key and essay. Check that the correct contestant number is on each document.
  10. Deliver all materials to the grading room.
  11. Submit the substitution forms/letters to the meet director to update the original entry in the online entry system.



# GRADING THE CONTEST

## **GRADERS**

The contest director should select judges to grade tests. Coaches may serve as graders of the objective portions of the contest. Impartial judge(s) who have no stake in the contest will be selected to grade the essays. Contest coaches whose students are not involved in the standings may judge the essays.

Graders should report to the grading room as soon as the contest begins. The Lead Grader will provide answer keys, surplus tests and scoring charts to the grading room when the contest has started. Persons not assigned to grade should not enter the grading room.

Graders should review the test and verify the official answer key. In the case of an error on the answer key of an objectively-scored contest, graders should notify the UIL state office of the nature of the error and/or contact the respective state contest director to seek clarification. Questions should not be altered in any way or discarded without a ruling from the UIL state office and/or the respective state contest director.

## **GRADING INSTRUCTIONS**

Have more than one person grade each answer sheet. Graders should initial the answer sheet where indicated. Using pencils or pens of different colors is a good option.

When marking the answer sheets, no mark should be made if the item is correct. Place an X over the question number that is incorrect. Do not mark over the contestant's answer. If any answer space is left blank, draw a line through the blank. The graders should initial each error.

Each contestant shall be awarded the points indicated for each correct answer. Do not deduct points for incorrect answers. See test instructions for varying point values. Add points carefully. Grade and score papers contending to place no fewer than three times..

## **GRADING THE ESSAY**

After grading the objective portion of the contest, judges will then evaluate the essays of the eight contestants with the highest scores in the objective portion of the test. Complete the rubric for each essay being graded. Each essay will be read and assigned a score based on a one to 20 scale, with 20 being the highest score possible. This score will be added to the point total from the objective portion of the test, resulting in an overall score.

The essay should be of an expository nature. The essay should be judged on content first. Writing style, clarity and precision of composition should be secondary considerations. Students should attempt to substantially develop a full range of points relative to the essay prompt. In the question of quality versus quantity, judges will determine whether an essay that introduces many points shall be scored higher than an essay that develops fewer points more substantially.

## **PLACES AND TIES**

Refer to Current Issues and Events Contest Rules and Procedures.

**IDENTIFYING PAPERS**

After papers have been ranked, indicate on the answer sheet the name and school of the student, or simply the school that corresponds with the contestant number. This will expedite both the verification process and the sorting of contest materials for return after the meet concludes.

# AFTER THE CONTEST

## **REPORT TO MEET DIRECTOR**

Individual contest directors shall give the contest roster/results form to the district director immediately after the contest papers are scored. The district meet director is responsible for entering results into the online entry system. All scores must be entered into the online entry system prior to verification and announcement of results. Enter all contestants' scores, not just the top six. All scores are needed to determine team results. Provide at least one copy of the unofficial results from the online entry system during verification.

## **VERIFICATION PERIOD**

Announce that no one present may use writing or erasing instruments during the verification period. If the key was changed during the grading process (with the approval of the UIL state office or the state contest director), the contest director shall announce the changes made. The contest director shall allow the contestants and coaches a time period not to exceed 15 minutes to look at all of the following items:

- Contestant's test, answer sheet and essay
- An answer key, in its original form as supplied by the League office
- Essay rubric, if the essay was graded
- Display of scores after entry into the UIL Spring Meet Online Entry System

Do not allow anyone to take papers from the room. During this period, the contestants and/or coaches shall verify that they have the correct papers and look for possible errors in the grading, calculation or data entry of scores. Display each contestant's score (not just the top 6 places) preferably by displaying the printed page from the online scoring system after scores were entered. This will allow data entry of score to be reviewed by contestants and coaches during the Verification Period.

At state meet only, the contest director may omit a display of data entry into the UIL Spring Meet Online Entry System if data entry has been carefully reviewed and verified by graders or other assistants during the grading and scoring period. If errors in grading, scoring or online data entry are found during the verification period, the contest director shall make the corrections.

After resolving all questions, or the end of the 15 minutes, the contest director should announce that the Verification Period has ended. If papers are not being returned on the day of the contest, see Returning Papers below.

## **ANNOUNCING OFFICIAL WINNERS**

After resolving all questions, or the end of the 15 minutes, the contest director should announce that verification has ended. Official results with the name and the school of each contestant who places first through sixth and the schools of the winning and alternate teams should be announced. These results, once announced as official, shall be final.

## **QUALIFICATIONS TO REGIONAL OR STATE**

Contestants can qualify to the next level of competition as individual first, second and third place

winner or members of the winning team or wild card team. All who qualify to regional or state will compete for individual honors.

### **RETURNING PAPERS**

If papers are not being returned, pick up all tests, answer sheets, scoring charts and keys so that none remain with a contestant or coach. Place the materials in the sorting envelopes by school. At the district meet, papers may be returned no sooner than the end of the meet on the last day of the district week. If the region meet is held on Saturday, the test, answer keys, scoring charts and answer sheets may be returned to the contestants the day of the meet.

# CURRENT ISSUES & EVENTS CONTEST QUICK REFERENCE CHART

Note: Grading time varies. For most events, allocate a minimum of two hours.

<b>Contest</b>	<b>Study Material</b>
<p><b>ROOMS</b> 1 – testing 1 – grading</p> <p>PREP TIME — 20 TEST TIME — 60</p> <p><b>CONTEST MATERIALS</b> UIL Packet: tests &amp; keys, answer blanks, rubrics.</p> <p>Director Provides: contest roster and results form (generated from online entry system), contest rules, clock, 8 1/2 x 11-inch paper; pencils for graders, stapler; and one 8 1/2 x 11-inch envelope per school.</p> <p><b>PERSONNEL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Director</li><li>• One or more assistant(s)/monitor(s)</li><li>• Head grader</li></ul> <p><b>NUMBER OF ENTRIES</b> (District) 6 per school (Region) 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> individuals per district; 1<sup>st</sup> place team per district; wild card team.</p> <p><b>TIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Individual — All ties are broken by judging the essays. Even if two essays were originally scored equally, compare one to the other to break the tie.</li><li>• Team — Break tie with fourth team member's objective score. If tie still exists, all teams involved in tie advance.</li></ul> <p><b>GRADING/JUDGES</b> At least 3, preferably more. Graders may be coaches.</p> <p><b>AWARDS</b> Individual medals: 1<sup>st</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> Team medals: 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> place teams</p> <p><b>POINTS</b> 1<sup>st</sup> — 15 2<sup>nd</sup> — 12 3<sup>rd</sup> — 10 4<sup>th</sup> — 8 5<sup>th</sup> — 6 6<sup>th</sup> — 4</p> <p>1<sup>st</sup> team — 10 2<sup>nd</sup> team — 5</p> <p><b>ADVANCE</b> Top 3 individuals and 1st place team. Top second place team per regional will also advance.</p>	<p>Visit the UIL Study Materials webpage (<a href="https://www.uiltexas.org/academics/resources/study-materials">https://www.uiltexas.org/academics/resources/study-materials</a>) to purchase or download study materials. Some materials are available for free download.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Study packets include materials from every level of competition of stated year:</li><li>• Current Issues &amp; Events Study Guide offers contestants and coaches information about the test, strategies and tips for study and tips on writing a successful essay.</li></ul> <p>The Academics homepage of the UIL website contains a variety of additional forms needed for academic programs, including the Professional Acknowledgment Form for all sponsors, coaches and directors of academic events and the Substitute Eligibility Form needed for contestants not listed on the original entry form for UIL meets.</p> <p>The Current Issues &amp; Events Handbook includes a description of the current UIL contest format, rules and procedures. It is available as a free download: <a href="http://www.uiltexas.org/academics/resources/contest-handbooks-manuals">http://www.uiltexas.org/academics/resources/contest-handbooks-manuals</a></p> <p>The generic forms needed to host invitational meets, such as grading rubrics, answer sheets and contest results form are posted, as are the Academic Meet Director Manual, the conflict pattern and various checklists for academic Coordinators. Check the different web pages for speech and debate, theatre, and the A+ Program for current information and forms specific to those contests.</p>



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Phone: 512.471.5883 • Academic Email: [academics@uiltexas.org](mailto:academics@uiltexas.org)