



Inclusive Coaching and a Welcoming Tournament.

For coaches, judges, tournament hosts and parents who want every student to be able to take part. Practical steps for accessibility, accommodations, new competitors and neurodivergent students.

Principles

- ♦ Ask the student and family what helps, instead of guessing.
- ♦ Change the setting before you change the student.
- ♦ Keep standards for the skill; adjust the path to show it.
- ♦ Protect privacy. Share accommodations only with those who need to know.
- ♦ Plan ahead; last-minute fixes are harder on everyone.

Language note

Some people prefer 'person with autism' and others 'autistic person'. Follow the individual's preference.

Accessibility checklist for hosts

- ☐ Step-free routes to registration, rooms and restrooms
- ☐ Accessible seating and space for mobility devices in rooms
- ☐ Clear, large-print signs and a simple map
- ☐ Quiet room available for breaks
- ☐ Posted schedule with buffer time between rounds
- ☐ A named contact for access needs
- ☐ Request form for accommodations before the entry deadline
- ☐ Elevator or ground floor rooms assigned when needed
- ☐ Water, snacks and allergy information available

Common accommodations

Whether a request can be granted depends on the event rules and tournament policy, so ask early. Examples families sometimes request:

NEED	POSSIBLE SUPPORT
Anxiety or sensory overload	Quiet space, earplugs, preview of the room, extra breaks
Attention differences	Written schedule, reminders, movement breaks
Processing speed	Extra setup time, a printed copy of instructions
Hearing difference	Seat near the front, captioning or interpreter, as available

NEED	POSSIBLE SUPPORT
Vision difference	Large print or digital materials, guided walk-through
Mobility	Accessible room assignment, extra transit time
Speech differences	Judge briefing so delivery is judged fairly

At the NSDA National Tournament, accommodation requests go through an online form submitted by the student's coach and are reviewed ahead of the tournament. Local tournaments set their own process, so ask the tournament director what documentation, if any, is needed.

Welcoming new and neurodivergent students

- 1

Preview. Share photos of the venue, the schedule and a sample round before the day.
- 2

Be predictable. Use consistent routines at practice and say what is next.
- 3

Give clear instructions. Short, concrete steps. Avoid vague phrases like 'just relax'.
- 4

Offer choices. Event, seat or order where possible.
- 5

Pair with a buddy. A trained peer who checks in and walks to rooms together.
- 6

Celebrate strengths. Memory, detail, passion for a topic, creativity.

Everyday team culture

DO	AVOID
Use names and correct pronunciation	Nicknames a student dislikes
Give feedback on the speech	Comments on bodies, voices or backgrounds
Ask before touching or hugging	Assuming comfort with contact
Vary social events (not all loud or costly)	Expensive traditions that exclude some families
Address unkind behavior quickly and privately	Letting jokes slide

Need help adapting your program or supporting your speaker? Book a free consultation at the link below.

Built from public guidance: NSDA National Tournament accessibility page (speechanddebate.org) · NSDA High School Unified Manual (speechanddebate.org). Rules change by league and tournament, so always confirm against your tournament invitation and current league rules.

NOTES

Want a plan built around **your** debater?

Book a free consultation. The short intake takes about a minute and opens right away.

BOOK NOW →