2027
Optimist Brain Bowl
Competition Rules

REGISTRATION

1. There will be one Optimist Brain Bowl Mountain Qualifier Tournament in early December. This tournament will be limited to 30 total teams across all grade levels and will consist of five Preliminary Rounds of play. There will be two additional Optimist Brain Bowl Qualifier Tournaments in late January or early February. The tournaments will be known as the South Qualifier Tournament and the North Qualifier Tournament. Each tournament will be limited to 60 total teams across all grade levels and will consist of five Preliminary Rounds followed by three Elimination Rounds. There will be an invitation-only Championship Tournament in late February.
2. Schools may register for any qualifier tournament as long as all teams from a school attend the same tournament. Registrations will be counted toward the tournament limit in the order payment is received and registration will close automatically when the limit is reached. **Unpaid registrations are not guaranteed** and will be offered a spot on a waitlist when registration closes for that tournament. The waitlist will be prioritized in the order coaches opt in. Waitlisted teams may be invited to register as late as one week before the tournament if space becomes available. Schools may NOT register teams in multiple qualifier tournaments, but may request to change tournaments if space is available. Requests must be emailed to the Tournament Director and will be considered in the order received.
3. Schools may register no more than two sixth-grade teams (composed of sixth-grade students only), no more than two seventh-grade teams (composed of seventh- or sixth-grade students), and no more than three eighth-grade teams (composed of eighth-, seventh-, or sixth-grade students). Schools are limited to seven teams.
4. Registration for Optimist Brain Bowl will open no earlier than October 1 for the Mountain tournament and November 1 for the South and North tournaments. Registration will close when a tournament reaches capacity or after 30 days, whichever comes first. **Registration is $90 per team and must be paid before the end of the registration window.** Registration will be permitted after the 30-day registration window only if a tournament has space remaining. Any payments received after the original registration window will be subject to a $15 late fee per team unless the team(s) were added to the waitlist during the registration window.
5. All registration for Optimist Brain Bowl is online at optimistbrainbowl.com. All payments must be made by credit card and transactions are processed through Stripe payments.
6. Refunds must be requested by the last day of the registration window for any team wishing to withdraw their registration. Refunds requested by a team will be subject to a 10% service charge. No refunds will be granted after the registration window closes unless we are forced to cancel a tournament. Teams will receive a full refund in the event a tournament is canceled.

TEAMS

7. Teams consist of two to six students in grades six through eight. Up to five team members may compete in any given round, and the alternate team member may be changed between rounds. No substitution is allowed during a round.
8. Sixth-grade teams may only consist of sixth-grade students. Seventh-grade teams may consist of sixth- or seventh-grade students. Eighth-grade teams may consist of sixth-, seventh-, or eighth-grade students.
9. **Team rosters must be submitted online no later than 3pm on the Friday eight days before the Qualifier Tournament.** The roster deadline may be extended at the discretion of the Tournament Director if there is a change of venue within three weeks of the tournament date. Teams that fail to submit rosters by the deadline may be withdrawn and replaced by teams from the waitlist, if applicable. Coaches are encouraged to create the online rosters as early as possible and may edit the rosters until the deadline.
10. **No changes may be made to team rosters after the roster deadline.** Coaches may request an exception on the day of the Qualifier Tournament ONLY IF teams must be combined due to a last-minute unavailability of team members. The roster(s) for the new combined team(s) will replace the original rosters and no additional substitution will be allowed.

11. Teams that qualify for the Championship Tournament must compete with only the members listed on the roster for the Qualifier Tournament. Any substitution is cause for disqualification.
12. Each team should be assigned a Room Coach for the tournament. The School Coach can be the Room Coach for ONE team. School Coaches should ask for parent volunteers to be Room Coaches for any additional teams at the tournament. The Room Coach is tasked with keeping score and filing any necessary protests on behalf of the team. The Room Coach should be encouraged to provide constructive tournament feedback on the Room Coach's Evaluation form.
13. Each team will need a Spokesperson for each Oral Round of competition. **The Spokesperson is the only person who can give an official answer to a question.** Teams may select a different Spokesperson for each round, but teams may not change the Spokesperson during a round. The Spokesperson should be able to speak loudly and be clearly understood. **Answers that the Reader cannot hear or understand will be considered incorrect.**

RULES OF CONDUCT

14. **Competitors and spectators are expected to use quiet voices (or no talking) in hallways outside competition rooms AT ALL TIMES.** All teams deserve a quiet environment for their competition, and not all rooms finish at the same time. Assume at least one room is still competing and act accordingly. Tournament Officials may ask you to leave the hallway if you are too loud.
15. Team members are expected to be courteous to all Officials, opposing teams, and other team members at all times. Team members may interact with Officials to request confirmation or clarification of an answer, but they are not to argue with Officials.
16. Team members may not bring phones, tablets, smart watches, or any other electronic devices to the competition tables. ALL ELECTRONIC DEVICES in the competition room (teams', Officials', and audience members' devices) must be silenced and stored out of sight, as directed by the Reader. Any electronic device noise can spoil a question, and the owner of a device that makes an unexpected noise may be asked to leave the competition room for the remainder of the round. The official Timekeeper may be permitted to use a timekeeping app on a phone at the discretion of the Reader if the phone is in airplane mode with wifi turned off.
17. Members of the audience -- including parents, siblings, friends, and team alternates sitting out the current round -- should not interact with team members, Readers, Scorekeepers, or Timekeepers during a round. An exception is made if both teams are unable to answer a question and the Reader asks for an answer from the audience.
18. Members of the audience should remain quiet for the duration of the round to avoid distracting the teams. If young children are in attendance, they should be taken to the lobby (not the hallway outside competition rooms) for the remainder of the round at the first indication that they will not be able to remain quiet. Readers may ask parents to remove any child who is causing a distraction.
19. All coaches, team members, and audience members should remain in the competition room until the scheduled end of the round. If your round finishes early, please remember that sound travels very easily from room to room. Therefore, you must keep the noise level to a minimum to be respectful of other competition rooms that may not have finished all of the questions.
20. Teams or team members may be disqualified for violating Rules of Conduct or the Competition Rules at the discretion of the Tournament Director(s).
21. Coaches or audience members may be asked to leave the competition room for violating rules or for any conduct which is detrimental to the competition. Behavior that is hostile, harmful, or disruptive to the host school or its staff, other teams, coaches, competition volunteers, or Officials may result in ejection from the tournament. If a coach or audience member refuses to leave after being asked, the team associated with that person may be disqualified.

SCHEDULE OF THE DAY

22. All teams will compete in five rounds.
    a. Four of the rounds will be oral head-to-head competition with two teams. Each round consists of 30 questions. There are multiple simultaneous competition rooms and all rooms will use the same questions in each round.
    b. One of the five rounds will be a Written Round consisting of 50 multiple-choice questions. Teams from the same school will be scheduled in the Written Round at the same time. Teams who have completed the Written Round should not discuss any of the questions until after the conclusion of the fifth round of competition.

23. Occasionally, a late cancellation or small number of teams in one grade-level category will result in a Bye Round for one or more teams. A team with a Bye Round should report to the originally assigned room where the reader will read the set of questions for them. The Reader may invite members of the audience to form a team to compete against the team with the Bye Round. No score will be recorded for this practice round. (See Rule 50 for Bye Round scoring)
24. In tournaments with more than 45 teams, the top eight teams in each grade-level category will play Elimination Rounds. Medals will be awarded to the top four teams in each category immediately after the conclusion of the final round.

RULES OF PLAY

25. Teams will sit at tables or grouped desks to the left and right of the Reader. The team on the Reader's left will be the GREEN team and the team on the Reader's right will be the RED team. The Reader may or may not instruct teams where to sit.
26. The Spokesperson for each team will sit in the seat designated by the Reader. **The Spokesperson should look directly at the reader and speak clearly when answering questions.**
27. The only items permitted at the team table are pencils, pens, and scratch paper. All scratch paper at the table should be blank at the beginning of the round. The team bag has enough scratch paper for four Oral Rounds, but teams may request additional paper from the score room if necessary.
28. The Reader will identify the Room Coach for each team prior to beginning the round. The Room Coaches are the only members of the audience who are permitted to take notes during the round. All other audience members must stow all books and papers during the round.
29. Each team will have a buzzer box at the table. Any team member may activate the buzzer and teams are permitted to hover over the buzzer. However, an accidental buzz will be treated as intentional. Buzzers should be tested at the beginning of each round, before the first question is read. Teams or Room Coaches may request a buzzer test between questions if they believe the buzzer is malfunctioning. Team members should be careful to avoid pulling on or tripping over the cords attached to the buzzers.
30. Questions are asked from all academic areas. The Reader will advise teams if an answer requires a First AND Last Name or if the question is a math question, but otherwise WILL NOT announce a category before the question is read.
31. The Reader will read each question aloud one time, without repeating. Either team may buzz in at any time after the Reader has announced the question number.
    a. After the Reader reads the question in its entirety, teams have 15 seconds to buzz in
    b. After buzzing in and being recognized by the Reader, a team has 15 seconds to answer
    c. If a team buzzes in before the Reader reaches the end of the question, the Reader will stop reading at that point and the team that buzzed in will have 15 seconds to answer. The team WILL NOT hear the end of the question before answering. **Accidental buzzes will be treated as intentional.**
32. BOTH teams may discuss the question after the question is read in its entirety but before either team buzzes in or after EITHER team buzzes in. If a team has buzzed in, the other team should ensure that their discussion does not disturb or interfere with the discussion of the team that buzzed in.
33. If the team that buzzed in answers correctly, the reader will repeat the correct answer and read the remainder of the question (if the entire question has not been read), then award **one point**.
34. If the team that buzzed in answers incorrectly, the second team DOES NOT need to buzz in.
    a. If the question was already read in its entirety, it WILL NOT be read again and the second team has 5 seconds to answer
    b. If the question was not read in its entirety (even if only a single word was not read), the Reader will read the entire question from the beginning and the second team will have 15 seconds to answer
35. If the second team answers correctly, the Reader will repeat the correct answer and award **two points**.
36. If the second team answers incorrectly, the Reader may ask the audience for the answer (time permitting). The Reader will announce the correct answer and award **zero points**.
37. **NEW THIS YEAR** A team may answer any time after being recognized by the Reader. **Teams MUST answer BEFORE the Timekeeper calls time.** Teams that have not begun to answer before time is called or teams that hesitate or stall in completing their answer after time is called will be ruled incorrect.
38. **The Spokesperson's answer must match the answer on the Reader's sheet.**

a. The answer may include extra words that restate part of the question. (i.e., "What do you call a group of crows? Expected answer is "murder." Acceptable answer is "murder of crows.")
b. If more than one acceptable answer is listed, ANY ONE of the answers will be considered correct.
c. If the question asks for two or more elements and only a partial answer is given, the answer is wrong.
d. If the question asks for a published title, the answer MUST match exactly, including any article adjectives (A, An, or The) at the beginning of the title.
e. If the question asks for a name, usually the LAST NAME only is sufficient. If a first name is included in the team's answer and it is not correct, the entire answer is wrong. If a first name is required, the Reader will announce that both first and last name are required before reading the question.
f. **The Reader must only consider the FIRST answer given by the Spokesperson.** If the Spokesperson begins an answer, stops, and begins again with a modified, corrected, or different answer, the Reader will rule correct or incorrect based only on the original answer given.

PROTESTS AND PROCEDURAL ERRORS

39. Although our questions are thoroughly vetted by several members of the Brain Bowl Committee, there is always the possibility that a team will come up with an answer we didn't consider. **The Reader WILL NOT accept an answer that is not on the sheet.** Room Coaches should submit a protest form to the Protest Room if they believe their team had a valid alternate answer. All decisions by the Protest Room are final.
    a. Procedural errors should be addressed immediately following the question, according to Rules 40 and 41. Room Coaches should file a protest ONLY IF a Reader refuses to correct a procedural error while both teams are still in the room. Readers who repeatedly refuse to correct procedural errors may be replaced at the discretion of the Tournament Director(s).
    b. Teams should notify the Reader and the opposing team at the end of the round that they intend to file a protest, and must indicate the protest question numbers on the score sheet. **No score change will be allowed for protests not indicated on the score sheet**.
    c. Only the Room Coach may file a protest. The protest form should be filled out completely and taken to the Protest Room immediately after the affected round and before the end of the following round. Late protests may not be considered.
    d. Negative protests, which take points away from an opposing team without a correct answer by the protesting team, will be considered only if it is clear that the Reader failed to correct a procedural error if required by Rule 41.
    e. Protest Room Officials will review the protest form and may ask questions of the Room Coach to ensure they understand the basis for the protest, but they WILL NOT rule on the protest at the time the form is submitted. Teams are encouraged to bring corroborating evidence from a reliable source (NOT Wikipedia!) to support their case for an alternate answer. Protest Room Officials will investigate or research the protest as necessary before ruling. Issues that cannot be substantiated will result in no change of score.
    f. Room Coaches may return to the Protest Room after a round or two to learn the outcome of the protest. Score changes due to a successful protest will be indicated in the online database by a speech bubble icon.
    g. Successful protests may change the scores of one or both teams. If you are keeping track of your preliminary scores, keep that in mind.
    h. During the Elimination Rounds, only protests that could change the outcome of the round will be considered.
    i. Opinions regarding the qualifications or effectiveness of a Reader should be noted on the Room Coach's Evaluation form, not on the Protest form. Opinions on questions CAN be given to the Protest Room.
40. Our volunteer Readers all attend training every year and we try to anticipate every scenario they might encounter. However, they are all human and it is possible that a mistake will occur during a question. The issues listed below are PROCEDURAL ERRORS and can only be corrected by replacing the original question with an alternate question – if any remedy is needed -- before the teams leave the room. **An alternate question completely replaces the original question**, and both teams will have an equal opportunity to buzz in regardless of who might have buzzed in or answered the original question.

a. The Reader did not reset the buzzers before reading the question and teams were unable to buzz in (no remedy is needed if the buzzers were reset after the question number was read but before the question was read).
b. The Reader called on the wrong team (not the team that buzzed in) and they answered before the mistake could be corrected (no remedy needed if the Reader realized the mistake quickly and called on the correct team before the opposing team answered).
c. The Reader accepted an incorrect answer or accepted a corrected or modified answer (no remedy needed if the incorrect answer was from the second team, NOT the team that buzzed in, AND the Reader realized the error and corrected it before beginning the next question).
d. The Reader ruled (correct OR incorrect) on an answer given by a team member other than the spokesperson.
e. The Reader ruled the first team incorrect and revealed the answer without giving the second team an opportunity to answer OR the Reader interrupted the round to confer with the other officials before giving the second team an opportunity to answer.
f. The first team buzzed in before the entire question was read and answered incorrectly, then the Reader did not read the entire question from the beginning for the second team before giving them time to answer (no remedy needed if the second team answered correctly OR if the mistake was called out and corrected before the second team was required to answer).
g. The Reader continued reading after a team buzzed in early (no remedy needed if the team that buzzed in answered incorrectly).
h. The Reader gave the second team 15 seconds to answer when they should have had only 5 seconds (no remedy needed if the second team answered incorrectly).
i. The Reader gave any indication about why the first team's answer was wrong, providing additional information for the second team (no remedy needed if the second team answered incorrectly).
j. The Reader mispronounced a word that was essential to the question in such a way that it was not possible to understand what was asked. Mispronunciation of a non-essential word is not a Procedural Error. Mispronunciation that does not affect one's understanding of the question is not a Procedural Error.

41. **Not all Procedural Errors require a remedy.** If the Reader has made a Procedural Error that requires a remedy and does not correct it, the Room Coach or Spokesperson for either team may ask for an ALTERNATE QUESTION. The Reader will not read an Alternate Question unless it is required as defined below.
    a. For Procedural Error types a through e, the Reader will read an Alternate Question UNLESS no remedy is needed.
    b. For Procedural Error type f, the Reader will read an Alternate Question ONLY IF the second team was required to answer without hearing the full question and answered incorrectly, but not if the second team answered correctly or the Reader corrected the error in real time and read the full question before giving 15 seconds to answer.
    c. For Procedural Error types g through i, the Reader will read an Alternate Question ONLY IF the team gaining an advantage answered correctly and was awarded points.
    d. For Procedural Error type j, the Reader will read an alternate question ONLY IF neither team buzzed in and attempted to answer AND the Timekeeper and Scorekeeper agree (or a majority of officials in the room agree) that the mispronunciation affected the answerability of the question.
42. If a Room Coach has concerns about Procedural Errors that are not being addressed by the Reader during the round, an adult audience member should be sent to the Protest Room to request assistance from a Tournament Official. Play will NOT be paused while waiting for a Tournament Official.

SCORING

43. A team that buzzes in and answers correctly will be awarded **one point**.
44. A team that answers correctly after the opposing team buzzes in and answers incorrectly will be awarded **two points**.
45. **Zero points** will be awarded for any question without a correct answer from either team.
46. Scores for each question will be recorded on the official score sheet and reconciled with the Reader, Scorekeeper, and Room Coaches after each page of 10 questions. GREEN team scores should be recorded on the left side of the score sheet and RED team scores should be recorded on the right side of the score sheet.

47. At the end of each Oral Round, one member from each team (who need not be the Spokesperson) must sign the score sheet to confirm that the score for their team was recorded correctly. This score is official, subject to any successful protests. The question numbers of any planned protests must be listed on the score sheet. No score change will be awarded for protests not declared on the score sheet.
48. A volunteer from the audience may be asked to keep score on the whiteboard in the room. This unofficial score should be kept with tally marks indicating the total score for each team, not individual question scores.
49. During the Preliminary Rounds, tie scores will not be broken. Team ranks are determined by total points over 170 questions, not by wins and losses, so there is no need to break a tie in an individual round.
50. If a team has a Bye Round, the score from the other three Oral Rounds for that team will be averaged and that will be the team's score for the Bye Round. No team may have more than one Bye Round.
51. The final score for each Oral Round will be entered in the online database and will be made visible to School Coaches as each round of data entry is complete. Scores will be updated in the online database if there is a successful protest. Scores affected by a protest will be indicated with a speech bubble icon.
52. Written Round scores will be released online AFTER the announcement of the top eight teams in each grade-level category, or after the winner is announced if there will not be Elimination Rounds. All scores will be posted in the hallway after the announcement.

ELIMINATION ROUNDS

56. At the end of the five Preliminary Rounds, the teams will be ranked within each grade-level category and the top eight teams in each category will compete in Elimination Rounds. Ties for teams ranked 9th or below will not be broken. If two teams are tied for 4th/5th place, the tie will not be broken. All other ties for teams ranked 1-8 will be broken using the following rules:
    a. The Written Round score is the first tiebreaker.
    b. The highest individual wr Round score is the second tiebreaker
    c. The Oral Round scores for rounds in which both teams competed will be reviewed in order, starting with Round 1. The first difference will be the tiebreaker.
    d. If the Written Round, highest Oral Round, and all head-to-head Oral Rounds are equal, the tie will be broken by a tossup question. The two tied teams will be asked one question requiring a numeric answer. Each team will submit a written response, and the team closest to the correct answer will win the tiebreaker.
57. Teams are seeded for the elimination bracket in each grade-level category based on the rank from the Preliminary Rounds. The first Elimination Round will pair 1st place with 8th place, 2nd place with 7th place, 3rd place with 6th place, and 4th place with 5th place. The second Elimination Round will pair the winner of 1-8 with the winner of 4-5 and the winner of 2-7 with the winner of 3-6.
58. Elimination Rounds will be head-to-head Oral Rounds of 30 questions. All rounds will end with a winner. If a round is tied at the end of 30 questions and after any protests have been addressed, the remaining alternate questions will be read one at a time and the first team to answer correctly will be the winner. If there is still no winner after the alternate questions are exhausted, the reader will read a tiebreaker question requiring a numerical answer. Both teams will submit a written response and the team closest to the correct answer will be the winner.
59. **All protests must be addressed WHILE BOTH TEAMS ARE STILL IN THE ROOM.** Only protests that could change the outcome of the match will be considered. Some teams use the strategy of not buzzing in once their lead exceeds the number of questions remaining in an Elimination Round. This strategy is allowed, but it may backfire if a protest takes points away from the leading team and the opposing team earns points from an alternate question. Teams are encouraged to attempt to answer every question.
60. Four teams in each grade-level category will be eliminated after the first Elimination Round. They will be ranked 5-8 based on the total score from six rounds of play. Ties will not be broken.
61. The remaining four teams in each grade-level category will play two additional rounds to determine ranks 1-4. The winners in Round 7 will play the Finals Round to determine ranks 1 and 2, and the eliminated teams in Round 7 will play the Consolation Round to determine ranks 3 and 4.
62. All 12 teams (four teams in each grade-level category) competing in Round 8 will receive medals and an automatic invitation to the Championship Tournament. Teams will receive a medal ticket at the conclusion of the round and

should proceed immediately to the awards area for medals and photos. There will NOT be an aggregate medal ceremony, and teams will have shorter wait times if they stagger their arrivals at the awards area as they finish their rounds rather than waiting for the other rooms to finish.

CHAMPIONSHIP TOURNAMENT

63. The winners of the first Elimination Round at each Qualifier Tournament will be automatically invited to the Championship Tournament. Tournaments with 45 or fewer teams will not have any automatically qualifying teams. The remaining wildcard spots for the Championship Tournament will be filled using the following criteria:
    a. All teams eliminated after the Preliminary Rounds or the first Elimination Round and all teams from tournaments with 45 or fewer teams will be ranked in a single wildcard list based on their five-round preliminary scores. Elimination Round scores will not be considered. **Ties will not be broken.**
    b. The top-scoring teams in each grade-level category will be invited to the Championship Tournament to create a pool of 18 teams with the automatic qualifiers. Teams with the same preliminary score (ties) will either be invited to the Championship or eliminated as a group. The final number of teams in each grade-level category may be 16-20, depending on ties and team availability, at the discretion of the Tournament Director.
    c. Wildcard teams will be invited to the Championship Tournament no later than the Monday following the second Qualifier Tournament. Registration payment must be submitted online no later than 4pm on the Monday seven days after the Championship Tournament invitations are sent (please note this deadline may fall on the Presidents Day holiday). If any wildcard teams are unable to compete in the Championship Tournament or fail to submit the registration fee by the deadline, the Brain Bowl Committee may invite the next team(s) on the ranked list as alternates to fill the vacancies.
64. All wildcard and alternate teams must earn a minimum qualifying score during the five Preliminary Rounds at the Qualifier Tournament to be invited to the Championship Tournament. The minimum qualifying scores are:
    a. 50 points for sixth-grade teams
    b. 60 points for seventh-grade teams
    c. 70 points for eighth-grade teams