



How to Host a Competition

The following information describes how I, David Ilsley, have hosted the Maths Teams Challenge. If hosting the competition for the first time at your school, feel free to use this information with as little or as much modification as you think fit.

Staff

Someone, preferably a teacher, needs to act as coordinator for the competition.

Unless the coordinator doesn't have a life, admin staff will be needed for preparation of the competition stationery and grounds staff will be needed for setting up of the competition venue. It will also be helpful to have a couple of other staff, again preferably teachers, available during the competition to help teams to get seated, circulate, answer questions from team supervisors, process scores, take photographs etc.

The team entry fees are partly to offset costs incurred here.

Venue

Find a suitable venue. A typical competition might have 50 teams, so 50 tables (each for 6 people) and 300 chairs will be needed. The venue needs to be big enough. It will be helpful to have a stage and public address system. The venue also needs to be fairly free from outside noise throughout the test. (Having kids playing just outside during the school lunch break would not be suitable.) There might also need to be facilities for providing lunch, maybe a barbeque for a sausage sizzle. However, this is not crucial as other arrangements for lunch could be made, e.g. everyone brings their own.

Date

Decide on a date (preferably around June or July) that suits the school and doesn't clash with other significant events. There is obvious advantage in running the competition on the same date as other host schools, though not all schools in Queensland use the same date and this hasn't been a problem in the past. Having it too early in the year might mean that the question papers are not ready in time though.

Mail-Out

A few months before the competition, a letter or flier needs to be sent to all schools which are close enough to send teams. Inviting primary and secondary schools will increase the number attending. The letter should contain essential details for people who know nothing about Maths Teams Challenge and it should make it sound worthwhile and fun. In the second and subsequent years of running the event at a particular venue, some schools administrators will know about the event, but others who are new to the

school or who took little notice of it in previous years may not, so it is worth doing a similar mail out each year. Many people will need to be reminded anyway.

A picture like the one at the top of this article will help the mail-out be noticed and attract interest. Feel free to use this picture if you don't have a better one. It was taken by David Ilesley and students' faces have been doctored to make them unrecognisable.

Don't include detailed information on the letter. Rather, refer to a website. You can use the Black Star website (www.mtc.blackstarmaths.com) for general information and as a source of practice papers, but, it is worth putting school-specific information on the school website. This might include a map showing how to find the school, the location of the venue within the school and where to park. Also, a timetable for the event, arrangements for lunch etc.

Do specify the entry cost in the mail-out. (Of course, you need to decide on this beforehand. It is worth choosing an amount which will cover all costs (particularly the stationery preparation and prizes – see below – so that the amount doesn't have to be increased the next year. A reasonable charge seems to be \$40 for the first team and \$20 per subsequent team from the same school. This encourages schools to send multiple teams.) Give details of how to pay either in the mail-out or on the website.

Papers

Email Stephen Broderick (sjb@st-ursula.qld.edu.au) and ask him for question papers. He will email these in Word format a few weeks prior to the event. It is customary to make a donation to the Grace House charity, sponsored by St Ursula's College in Cambodia, in appreciation.

Stationery Preparation

This will take quite a few hours of work. Teachers may be willing to do the work, but a reasonable entry fee will allow school administrators or hired outside help to be used instead. Obviously, it shouldn't be done until after the deadline for entries.

Each team will need an A4 envelope. An A4 team sheet should be glued to the front to indicate the team and the division, something like this one to the right:

It can help if the team sheets are coloured according to division, e.g. pink for Year 5-6, cream for Years 7-8, green for Year 9-10, blue for Years 11-12.

Maths Teams Challenge 2020

Years 5-6 Division

Holy Sepulchre College
Team B

Do not open until told

Years 9-10 Division – Team A

Ironbark
State High School

Ironbark
State High School

Years 9-10 Division – Team A

Each team will also need a table marker like the one to the left. This should be made from A4 card, so it can be folded to stand up on the desk like a tent (see the picture at the start of this article). These should be colour-coded according to division the same as the team sheets stuck on the envelopes.

The following materials should go inside the team envelopes.

- 6 Teams Event question papers (one for the supervisor) on white A4 paper
- One set of Relay Event questions. The relay question paper should be cut up into individual questions on strips and stapled together so that, when face down, Question 1 is on the top and Question 20 on the bottom. These should be on white paper. Staple from the Q20 end so they tear off easier.

- An answer sheet for the Teams Event on a dark-coloured paper (same for all divisions).
- An answer sheet for the Relay Event on a different dark-coloured paper (same for all divisions).
- A student response sheet for the Teams Event, coloured according to division.
- A score sheet for the Relay Event, coloured according to division.
- 5 certificates of participation on special paper. Supervisors can enter their students' names at the end of the competition. Have a few spares in case any get messed up.
- It is also worth having a stack of scrap working paper and pencils in case any teams forget to bring them.

Teams can take the envelopes away (except for the score sheets handed in) at the end of the competition.

Trophies

It is customary to have a trophy for the winning team in each division. A shield with small brass plaques that can be engraved with the winning team's details each year is ideal. It is usual to let the winning schools look after the trophy and bring it back at the next year's competition. If running the competition for the first time, four trophies will need to be designed and bought.

It is also customary to present each student in the winning team in each division with a gold medallion, each student in the second-placed team in each division with a silver medallion and each student in the third-placed team in each division with a bronze medallion. These can be purchased with the trophies, but, unlike the trophies, will need to be bought each year.

It is good to display the trophies during the competition, so stands might come in handy.

It might also be a good gesture to invite someone important, like the principal, to present the prizes and maybe say a few words.

Technology

It is good to be able to process scores on a spreadsheet and to project these for students to see. Other information and instructions and a clock showing remaining time for each event can also be displayed.

Venue Layout

It is important to plan which team will sit where before teams arrive. A plan should be projected as the teams enter so that they can find their table and the table markers will confirm for them that they have found the right table.

Generally tables should be arranged in a grid of rows and columns. Allow enough space between the tables for people to walk between them easily while the students are working.

In arranging teams, ensure that no two teams from the same school are at adjacent tables. Cheating isn't generally a problem, but it looks better that way. Also, bear in mind that supervisors will be asked to move to another table before the competition starts. A good way to do this is to get every supervisor to stand up and move two tables to the left, those who go off the end of the row coming back on at the start of the same row. Because of this, it also needs to be checked that no supervisor will end up with a team from their school, and preferably not at a table adjacent to a team from their school. This can require some care.

Encouragement

If this is the first time running the competition at your school, these instructions can sound quite daunting, but, it isn't as difficult as it sounds. The second time through will be a lot easier still. Students enjoy the competition, as do the supervisors, and it helps to develop positive attitudes to mathematics and to get mathematical endeavour recognised in the school. Hosting the competition raises the profile of the school in the community and local papers are often interested in these events too.