

OVERVIEW

Applying leadership and 21st century skills, participants utilize written and verbal communication skills designed for a mass audience to convey a news story revolving around a designated theme in both a video broadcast (preliminary) and a digital written format (semifinals). Participants must demonstrate a strong understanding of journalism etiquette and common practices of the field. The theme posted on the [TSA website](#) under *Themes & Problems*.

ELIGIBILITY

One (1) team of two to three (2-3) members per chapter may participate.

TIME LIMITS

PRE-CONFERENCE

- A. All components of the chapter's entry (digital video URL and documentation PDF) must be finished, submitted, and accessible via the Internet by 11:59pm ET on a designated date mid-May.
- B. Participants will have a maximum of four (4) minutes to present an informative news broadcast on a scientific headline chosen each year.
- C. Submissions that are over four (4) minutes will be disqualified.

SEMIFINAL ROUND

- A. Participants will be given ten (10) minutes to read over a provided briefing of the selected individual that describes the work of a selected business or industry professional and plan interview questions for the individual.
- B. Following the briefing, participants will be given the opportunity to engage in a press conference with the chosen individual.
- C. Participants are then given twenty-four (24) hours to produce an original digital news article. View examples of [appropriate news stories](#).

ATTIRE

TSA competition attire is required.

PROCEDURE

PRE-CONFERENCE

- A. Participants review the TSA Honor Statement for Competitive Events found in the General Rules and listed in the individual competitive event rules.
- B. Participants access the annual theme posted on the [TSA website](#) under *Themes & Problems*.

PRELIMINARY ROUND

- A. Participants prepare a news broadcast that presents the information from the annual theme in an informative and creative manner while abiding to the time constraints.
- B. Participants submit a URL to the video file by 11:59pm ET on a designated date in mid-May.
- C. Submission information will be provided on the [TSA website](#) under *Competition Updates*.

PRELIMINARY ROUND

- A. Judges independently assess the entries to determine the top twelve (12) semifinalists.
- B. A list of the twelve (12) semifinalists (in random order) will be posted on the first full day of the conference.

SEMIFINAL ROUND

- A. Semifinalist teams report at the time and place stated in the conference program.
- B. Semifinalist teams may be represented by two (2) to three (3) members.
- C. Semifinalists are given ten (10) minutes to read over a provided written brief on the topic for the digital journalism challenge and to prepare interview questions.
- D. Following the briefing, all semifinalist teams will enter a press conference room and will be given thirty (30) minutes to interview a selected business or industry professional.
- E. Semifinalist teams are given twenty-four (24) hours to produce a digital news story detailing the information provided in the briefing and gathered in the interview.

- F. Teams are responsible for submitting the PDF using the submission procedures provided by the event coordinator.
- G. Judges independently assess the news stories.
- H. The top ten (10) finalists are announced at the awards ceremony.

REGULATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

Students will work to develop their leadership and 21st century skills in the process of preparing for and participating in this TSA competitive event. The development and application of those skills must be evident in their submission, demonstration, and/or communication pertaining to the entry.

PRELIMINARY ROUND

A. Video News Story

1. The news broadcast must present the annually chosen headline, summarize key information, and present it in an original manner. The video must:
 - a. Include an introduction of the headline.
 - b. Sufficiently summarize content from the news story.
 - c. Explain possible future implications of the headline.
 - d. Not exceed four (4) minutes in length.
 - e. Include audio and visual produced solely by the team.
 - i. Royalty free images, video, and music may be used so long as they are properly cited and included in the Student Copyright Checklist.
2. References and Resources should be cited in proper Modern Language Association (MLA) style.
 - a. Sources other than the news story are allowed, but participants must cite them appropriately.

B. Documentation Portfolio:

1. Documentation materials (comprising a “portfolio”) are required and must be submitted as a multi-page PDF document with pages in this order:
 - a. Title page with the event title, Chapter ID, the conference city and state, and the year; one (1) page
 - b. Table of contents; pages as needed
 - c. Student Copyright Checklist (see Forms Appendix); one (1) page
 - d. References and Resources; pages as needed
 - e. Photo/Film/Video Consent and Release Forms – required for all identifiable participants and minors require parental permission (see Photo/Film/Video Consent and Release in Forms Appendix); pages as needed

- C. The URL must point directly to the participant’s entry. Entries that require a software download or a request that access be granted will not be judged.

SEMIFINAL ROUND

A. Briefing and Interview

1. Participants arrive at the event area at their designated time.
2. Participants are given ten (10) minutes to be briefed on the interview topic and create questions.
3. Participants have thirty (30) minutes to interview the professional during the press conference
 - a. Team members may choose to use an audio recording device.
 - b. Only audio is permitted to be collected and used by participants.
 - c. No video recording is permitted.
 - d. Participants must respect that anything “off the record” may not be included in the final news story.

B. Digital News Story Format

1. Written articles should be the original work of participants and should not exceed five-hundred (500) words in length and be saved in PDF format.
 - a. If the entry exceeds five-hundred (500) words in length, a rules violation of 20% will be applied.
2. Participants may use any font style or size, but should maintain professionalism.
3. Participants may use any software to design their digital news articles.
4. Students must complete a new Student Copyright Checklist (see Forms Appendix) and save it as a PDF.
5. When applicable, all ideas, text, images, and sounds from other sources must be cited. Copyrighted materials may NOT be used. If including a references and resources page, the page must be save in PDF format.
6. References and Resources should be cited in proper Modern Language Association (MLA) style; one (1) page.
 - a. Participants may use outside resources to supplement their article, but they must be cited appropriately.
7. Combine the digital news story, Student Copyright Checklist, and References and Resources PDFs into one (1) single PDF for submission. Save the PDF with the team ID as the name.

EVALUATION**PRELIMINARY ROUND**

- A. The news broadcast

SEMIFINAL ROUND

- A. The interview and digital news story

Refer to the official rating form for more information.

TSA HONOR STATEMENT

All work must be created and completed by individual competitors or teams. Plagiarism, the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) software, copyright violation, cheating, and falsification of information are prohibited. Participants may NOT use any generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools (e.g. ChatGPT, Google Gemini, GitHub Copilot, etc.). Any attempt to gain an unfair advantage will not be tolerated. Competitors at any level of TSA competition understand and agree to abide by the TSA Honor Statement.

If it is determined that a student violated the TSA Honor Statement, a rules violation of twenty percent (20%) will be incurred.

STEM INTEGRATION

This event aligns with the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) educational standards.

LEADERSHIP AND 21ST CENTURY SKILLS

This event provides opportunity for students to build and develop leadership and 21st century skills including but not limited to – Communication, Collaboration/Social Skills, Initiative, Problem Solving/Risk Taking, Critical Thinking, Perseverance/Grit, Creativity, Relationship Building/Teamwork, Dependability/Integrity, and Flexibility/Adaptability.

CAREERS RELATED TO THIS EVENT

This competition has connections to one (1) or more of the careers below:

- News anchor
- Scientific journalist
- Researcher/corresponding author
- Field reporter

STEM MASS MEDIA

2025 & 2026 OFFICIAL RATING FORM

HIGH SCHOOL

Judges: Using minimal (1-4 points), adequate (5-8 points), or exemplary (9-10 points) performance levels as a guideline in the rating form, record the scores earned for the event criteria in the column spaces to the right. The X1 or X2 notation in the criteria column is a multiplier factor for determining the points earned. (Example: an "adequate" score of 7 for an X1 criterion = 7 points; an "adequate" score of 7 for an X2 criterion = 14 points.) A score of zero (0) is acceptable if the minimal performance for any criterion is not met.

Go/No Go Specifications

- Before judging the entry, ensure that the items below are present; indicate presence with a check mark in the box.
- If an item is missing, leave the box next to the item blank and place a check mark in the box labeled ENTRY NOT EVALUATED.
- If a check mark is placed in the ENTRY NOT EVALUATED box, the entry is not to be judged.

- ☐ Digital Video URL submitted
- ☐ Documentation Portfolio PDF submitted
- ☐ ENTRY NOT EVALUATED

PRELIMINARY NEWS BROADCAST (110 points)				Record scores in the column spaces below.
CRITERIA	Minimal performance	Adequate performance	Exemplary performance	
	1-4 points	5-8 points	9-10 points	
Video Quality (X1)	The broadcast shots have obvious problems with focus, steadiness, and framing. The entry conveys a lack of understanding of video equipment.	The broadcast shots are somewhat focused and framed. The team demonstrates an adequate use of video equipment.	The broadcast is enhanced by steady and creative shots. The team demonstrates exemplary use of video equipment.	
Audio (X1)	The audio quality is poor, a result of primary use of the on-camera microphone for recording.	The audio quality is clear and reflects an appropriate use of microphones and audio techniques.	The audio quality is excellent, with use of additional audio clips/cues that enhance the video production.	
Lighting (X1)	The video reflects poor ambient lighting choices and/or the use of heavy backlighting.	The video reflects adequate lighting on subjects and the proper use of lighting techniques.	The video reflects and excellent use of lighting, which contributes to the effectiveness of the broadcast.	
Continuity and Pacing (X1)	The sequencing of the broadcast is confusing or incomprehensible; transitions are distracting from the flow of the broadcast.	The pace and timing are generally structured; there is a good use of transitions, allowing for an adequate flow of the broadcast.	The pace and timing are exceptional. Transitions provide a seamless flow for the broadcast and give directionality to the work.	
Creativity and Originality (X1)	There is little original thought or creativity in the design and production of the broadcast.	The broadcast demonstrates some original thought and creativity.	Originality and creativity are at the forefront of the broadcast, both in content and style.	
Delivery (X1)	Delivery detracts from the broadcast; eye contact may be limited; presented may tend to look away from the camera, mumble, speak inaudibly, fidget, or read excessively from notes; gestures may be jerky or excessive.	Delivery generally seems effective; however, use of volume, eye contact, vocal control, etc., may not be consistent; some hesitancy may be observed; vocal tone, facial expressions, and/or nonverbal expressions do not detract from the message.	Delivery is extemporaneous, natural, confident, and enhances the message.; posture, eye contact, smooth gestures, facial expressions, volume, pace, etc., indicate confidence, a commitment to the topic, and a willingness to communicate.	
Voice and Language (X2)	Language choices may be limited, peppered with slang or jargon, too complex, or too dull; language is questionable or inappropriate for the audience.	Language used is mostly appropriate and effective at communicating the message. Word choices are adequate.	Language is familiar to the audience, appropriate for the setting, and free of bias; word choices are vivid and precise.	

PRELIMINARY NEWS BROADCAST (110 points) – continued					
Professionalism (X1)	The presenter's appearance is unprofessional, sloppy, and inappropriate.	The presenter's appearance is adequate, appropriate, and somewhat professional.	The presenter's appearance is appropriate, professional, and polished.		
Video Effectiveness (X2)	The work does not meet the project goals, has an unclear message, and reflects sloppy work.	The topic is presented with some insight, and the broadcast meets most project goals.	The broadcast is focused, with a clear message and a rich variety of supporting material.		
PRELIMINARY NEWS BROADCAST SUBTOTAL (110 points)					
Rules violations (a deduction of 20% of the total possible points in the semifinalist section) must be initialed by the evaluator, coordinator, and manager of the event. Record the deduction in the space to the right. Indicate the rule violated: _____					

PRELIMINARY SUBTOTAL (110 points)					
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SEMIFINAL DIGITAL NEWS STORY (90 points)				Record scores in the column spaces below.
CRITERIA	Minimal performance	Adequate performance	Exemplary performance	
	1-4 points	5-8 points	9-10 points	
Organization (X2)	There is no discernible organization; transitions are not present.	A logical progression of ideas is evident; transitions are present throughout the news story.	The news story conveys a logical progression of ideas, with a clear structure that enhances the purpose; transitions are mature and graceful.	
Style (X2)	The style is confusing and hard to follow; it contains fragments and/or run-on sentences; word choice is simple, ordinary, and/or unconvincing.	The style is clear, sentences are somewhat expressive, and word choice is appropriate.	The style is smooth, skillful, and coherent; sentences are strong and expressive, with varied structure; word choice is appropriate and mature.	
Mechanics (X2)	The news story contains distracting errors in punctuation, grammar, and spelling.	Punctuation, grammar, and spelling are generally correct, with few errors.	Punctuation, grammar, and spelling are correct with no errors evident.	
Integration of Theme (X3)	The news story lacks adequate supporting details from the briefing and interview; a relevant message is haphazardly conveyed, if at all.	The news story demonstrates a satisfactory understanding of the subject material; some supporting details obtained from the briefing and interview are used to enhance the writing.	The news story uses supporting details obtained from the briefing and interview often, which thoroughly enhances the writing. The information presented demonstrates factual accuracy exemplary creativity.	
SEMIFINAL DIGITAL NEWS STORY SUBTOTAL (90 points)				
Rules violations (a deduction of 20% of the total possible points in the semifinalist section) must be initialed by the evaluator, coordinator, and manager of the event. Record the deduction in the space to the right.				
Indicate the rule violated: _____				

SEMIFINAL SUBTOTAL (90 points)		
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To arrive at the TOTAL score, add any subtotals and subtract rules violation points, as necessary.		TOTAL (200 points)	
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Comments:

I certify these results to be true and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

JUDGE

Printed name: _____ Signature: _____

STEM MASS MEDIA

EVENT COORDINATOR INSTRUCTIONS

PERSONNEL

- A. Event coordinator
- B. Press Conference Moderator
- C. Judges:
 - 1. Preliminary round, two (2) or more (online)
 - 2. Semifinal round, two (2) or more

MATERIALS

- A. Coordinator's packet, containing:
 - 1. Event guidelines, one (1) copy for the coordinator and for each judge
 - 2. TSA Event Coordinator Report
- B. Media Briefs, one (1) copy for each semifinalist team
- C. A person to serve as an scientist/industry professional
- D. A person to serve as the press conference moderator
- E. Tables and chairs for semifinalist teams
- F. Table and chairs for the press conference room

RESPONSIBILITIES

PRE-CONFERENCE/PRELIMINARY ROUND

- A. National TSA will collect entries until 11:59 p.m. ET on a designated date in mid-May. The submissions are shared with the CRC manager, event coordinator, and assigned judges.
- B. Review entries as they are submitted to the designated online storage utility.
- C. Manage communication and Pre-conference evaluation (at least two [2] or more judges should be recruited earlier in the year). Coordinate with National TSA and/or the Judge Manager.

AT THE CONFERENCE

- A. Attend the mandatory coordinator's meeting at the designated time and location.
- B. Report to the CRC room and check the contents of the coordinator's packet.
- C. Review the event guidelines and check to see that enough personnel have been scheduled.
- D. Inspect the area(s) in which the event is being held for appropriate set-up, including room size, chairs, tables, outlets, etc. Notify the event manager of any potential problems.
- E. At least one (1) hour before the event is set to begin, meet with judges/assistants to review time limits, procedures, regulations, evaluation, and all other details related to the event. If questions arise that cannot be answered, speak to the event manager before the event begins.
- F. Ensure the judges have access to the online judging system.

PRELIMINARY ROUND

- A. On the first full day of competition, post a list of the twelve (12) semifinalists in random order.

SEMIFINAL ROUND

- A. Semifinalists report at the time and place stated in the conference program for the press conference.
- B. Manage the press conference.
- C. Discuss rule violations (e.g. 20% deduction, disqualification) and have all relevant parties initial the rating form.
- D. Semifinalist teams have twenty-four (24) hours to digitally submit news story.
- E. Ensure judges have access to semifinalist submissions for evaluation following the turn-in deadline.
- F. If necessary, manage security and the removal of materials from the event area.

