

2021-2022 MATHCOUNTS Competition Series Initial Details

The structure of the 2021-2022 Competition Series has been adapted in response to unique obstacles facing coordinators, students and schools throughout the country. Below you will find details related to some of the necessary changes to this year's competition framework, as well as answers to some of the initial questions we grappled with. Additional details will be shared in the coming weeks.

Chapter Competitions – February 2022

The 2021-2022 MATHCOUNTS Chapter Competition will be hosted online through the Art of Problem Solving (AoPS) Contest Platform on Feb. 17, 2022 (exact time frame TBD).

Q If schools are back in-person, there's a greater expectation Chapter Competitions will be held in-person. Are there significant differences between attending school and attending a Chapter Competition?

A Below are a few of the considerations related to this question.

1. Schools have resources to support in-person “gatherings” that volunteer coordinators likely do not have. Many schools that are operating in-person are still not allowing “outside visitors” or even parents into the school buildings, so there are still limitations.
2. Schools are able to do contact tracing for any issues that arise. Venues are requiring this of renters, and this is not something volunteer chapter coordinators are equipped (or should be expected) to do.
3. Schools are prepared to enforce COVID-related mandates. Asking a volunteer to enforce the COVID requirements of a venue (mask mandate, proof of vaccination, social distancing requirements) for participants who may not be willing to comply is not a position we want to put our volunteers in.
4. Some areas and venues have much lower maximum capacity allowances; coordinators have expressed they would not be able to accommodate everyone who initially registers for the competition.
5. Many school districts are requiring adults in the school to be vaccinated (or show proof of negative COVID tests). MATHCOUNTS Chapter Competitions cannot have this same level of scrutiny or expectation of every adult volunteer/attendee at the event.
6. Students not feeling well the day of the competition are likely to still attend a competition since it is the only time it is offered. (An online event would keep this from happening.) Students are more likely to stay home from school when not feeling well.

State Competitions – March 2022

States will have the option of conducting their State Competitions either in-person (preferred) or virtually through the AoPS Contest Platform in March 2022. The national office will be contacting each state coordinator in the coming weeks to discuss their state's preference and how the national office can assist in their planning efforts.



Handling Chapter and State Competitions differently seems odd since they are held just one month apart. What factors contribute to approaching them differently and having more flexibility at the state level?



Many chapter competitions typically use donated spaces (schools, universities, company headquarters) that are either no longer being made available for “outside use” or are putting severely restrictive requirements on users. State competitions are often paying for space (hotels) and these are more available and don’t typically have the same COVID-related requirements.

There are 500+ chapter competitions. A decision about their format must be made now. Pivoting to 500 online events (for tens of thousands of students) would not be feasible for the national office and AoPS (the organization providing the online competition platform) if it is not done now. *If it must be done*, pivoting 56 state events (and a few thousand students) to an online format can be done in a much shorter period of time.

Students who register for the Competition Series are registering for the Chapter Competition and the opportunity to advance. Therefore, the environment at this level must be as conducive as possible to accommodating the most students.

There is obviously an obligation to provide a safe environment for later levels of the competition, too. These state and national events, however, are not guaranteed with registration, the number of students attending these levels can be controlled through advancement policies to ensure the number of students does not overwhelm the available space, and it is up to the student (and their family) if they’d like to take part in the state and/or national events in the formats they are being offered.

The national office logistically cannot support a hybrid approach to the chapter competitions. We can support a hybrid approach (most states in-person, with perhaps a few needing to be held online) for the state competitions.

2021-2022 Raytheon Technologies MATHCOUNTS National Competition

This year’s National Competition is still expected to be held in-person at the Renaissance Washington DC Hotel in Washington, DC, May 7-9, 2022.



An in-person National Competition seems very ambitious given the concerns with in-person Chapter Competitions. Is this really feasible?



The explanation for how the state events are different from the chapter events is relevant to this question, too. It should be noted, however, that some changes to the National Competition structure may be necessary. The national staff is responsi-

ble for the planning of this event, and we will be able to make a decision about any required adjustments closer to May, but likely no later than March 2022.

Unofficial In-Person Chapter Events

Although the official Chapter Competition will be hosted online, coordinators are encouraged to host unofficial, in-person events in their area if they feel they can do so safely. Materials for these unofficial competition events will be available to all coordinators through the HBP online store in December. Hosting one of these events is a great way to provide students with an exciting in-person experience and to recognize local sponsors.

Q

Is it inconsistent to move official Chapter Competitions online but also encourage unofficial, in-person chapter events?

A

We understand it is possible to host a safe, in-person event, and there are many chapter coordinators who are eager to do so. We don't believe 500 chapter competitions can be held safely, in-person and in a way that can both accommodate all registrants and be manageable by all chapter coordinators. We also do not believe *requiring* a student to attend—or *requiring* a volunteer to host—a large, indoor, in-person event is the right path for Chapter Competitions this February.

These fun, unofficial chapter events we are encouraging would be completely optional for students—and coordinators. Additionally, if there are occupancy limitations, coordinators can limit the number of students who can attend (and couldn't do that for an official event).

Q

Will there be a draw for kids to participate in an unofficial event?

A

Definitely yes. The in-person events coordinators host are what make MATH-COUNTS special. Period. Most students do not progress past the Chapter Competition, so the “officialness” or ability to advance is not the main point of a Chapter Competition. Rather, the highlight is the opportunity for students to get together and compete...it's the excitement of participating in the event while wearing their team shirt and feeling the pride of representing their school. And events like these are even more special for kids in a time when so many events have been canceled or moved online due to COVID.

There can still be a winner; there can still be trophies; there can still be a Countdown Round. It will still be an impactful event in the lives of these middle-schoolers. With the event being unofficial, there are also a lot of opportunities to make it an even more-fun, less-stress event for kids. It can be approached as a practice event for the official competition or as an exciting event of its own.

Q

When would be the ideal time to host an unofficial chapter event?

A There are benefits to hosting the unofficial event as a practice event for the official Chapter Competition, which means hosting it before February 17. Alternatively, it could be hosted after the official Chapter Competition and be an opportunity to host a Countdown Round with the top finishers and give out awards to the winners of the official Chapter Competition.

Team Rounds

Students will have the opportunity to participate in a Chapter Competition Team Round.

Q How will the Team Round work for the online Chapter Competition?

A We hosted a team component last year for three of the practice competitions and heard from many coaches that they missed having that component included for the official competitions. We will make the Team Round an option this year for the Chapter Competition. The competition platform allows all four team members to see the competition problems, allows the pre-identified captain to enter answers, and will calculate a team score using the four students' individual scores and Team Round score. The system **does not** provide a way for teammates to communicate with one another; students must set up their own Zoom or FaceTime call or come up with a similar communication plan if they are not taking the Team Round in the same physical location as each other.

Winners and Advancement from Chapter to State

At a minimum, the top 4 highest-scoring students from each chapter will advance to the State Competition (rather than the top team and top two kids not on the winning team). **After advancing the top 4 highest-scoring students, state coordinators may allow additional students to advance as long as the policy for progression is consistent for all chapters within the state.**

Note that advancement of teams to the State Competition will not be required. The decision to advance teams to the State Competition will be at the discretion of each state coordinator (Please note the shortcomings of the system mentioned in the previous section and the possibility students from a school may be more incentivized to cheat with one another as a team score becomes more meaningful.)

State coordinators who would like to conduct a Team Round at their State Competition will need to think about how to advance teams from the Chapter Competitions. Perhaps the advancement policy for the state is worded such that a winning team is the school whose top four students have the highest average individual score? (In this situation, the Team Round would not be used to determine the top team to advance, but a coordinator could have a trophy/recognition for the team with the best Team Round.)

Q How will a state coordinator know who is advancing to their competition?

A We believe we can provide the results of the official, online Chapter Competition to state coordinators by Saturday, February 19. The state coordinator will receive the scoring information (including chapter designation) for all students competing in their state. Using the advancement criteria they have in place, they will be able to immediately identify which students are advancing to the State Competition—and, as usual, will be the ones to communicate to those students/families that they advanced and what the details are for the State Competition.

Q If an in-person, unofficial chapter event is being held, could that be included in a state's advancement policy?

A The tricky part would be ensuring students who do not feel comfortable attending (or are not permitted to attend) an in-person event at the chapter level are not at a disadvantage from advancing to the state level. It seems there could be ways to allow for some “at-large” state spots to be filled by winners at the unofficial events, but we'd like to discuss the policy with the individual state coordinator in advance to ensure we're thinking through all of the possible implications. In any circumstance, an advancing student must be recognized by their coach as an official competitor for the Chapter Competition.

Q What would be the expectation related to awards now that the official Chapter Competition is online and chapters may or may not be hosting unofficial, in-person events?

A With the official Chapter Competition being conducted online and chapter coordinators having the option of hosting an unofficial, in-person event, there seems to be two scenarios for student recognition:

OPTION 1 – If hosting an unofficial, in-person competition:

Coordinators would be encouraged to recognize as many students as possible at their unofficial, in-person event with trophies, plaques or other awards. (This event gets the priority for recognition.) Sports Awards offers a variety of trophies and medals at all price points that would be suitable for an in-person event. In addition, it would be recommended that coordinators recognize the top 2 highest-scoring students on the official Chapter Competition.

OPTION 2 – If not hosting an unofficial, in-person competition:

Coordinators who opt to forego an unofficial, in-person event in their chapter would be highly encouraged to recognize a larger number of students for their performance on the Chapter Competition. Although the number to recognize is at the discretion of each chapter coordinator, it would be recommended that at least the top 4 or 5 highest-scoring students receive awards.

Chapter and State Competition certificates and awards will be available through Sports Awards. Awards order forms and a trophy brochure will be provided to coordinators in November. Coordinators who have Sports Awards credits remaining from last year may still use their remaining balance for student/coach recognition at their unofficial events or the Chapter Competition. Additional details regarding student recognition will be provided in November.

Countdown Rounds

A Countdown Round will not be used at the chapter level this year. The national office will provide 60 Countdown Round problems to chapter coordinators who would like to host unofficial, in-person events in their chapters.