



Denver Knowledge Bowl League

How to Run a Knowledge Bowl Tournament

Running a Knowledge Bowl tournament may seem like a daunting task, but there's not much to it when you break it down.

I'm writing this guide to help you prepare to run a tournament of your own. It's not necessarily a complete guide; leagues handle tournaments differently and I'm basing this guide on my own experience and the traditions of the Denver Knowledge Bowl League.

- [Eric Howe](#), Knowledge Bowl Coach, Stargate High School

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Set the date

- ❑ Think about **when works best for you**. Do you have other commitments that take a lot of your time at some point during the year? For example, you might traditionally have a lot of grading for your classes as the semester comes to an end, so maybe December doesn't work so well for you.
- ❑ Think about **when works best for your school** when planning a date. For example, does your school host ACT, PSAT, or SAT testing? If so, those dates probably will not work for hosting a tournament at your school.
- ❑ Think about **when works best for the Denver League**. Ideally we will have a tournament scheduled every month, September through February. We will set an initial schedule for the upcoming year during the coaches meeting at the Regional tournament in February. If you would like to host a tournament in the coming year, bring some dates that would work with you to the Regional so you can grab a tournament.

Reserve the facilities

- ❑ Check your school for availability **before** you ask to host a tournament on at the Regionals Coaches meeting. It's really a hassle to rearrange the league's season schedule if someone finds out that they can't host on date that they've committed to only to find out that they won't have the facilities to do so that day.
- ❑ You need to have **one classroom (or similar room) for each three teams** that are anticipated at the tournament. Be careful and reserve a few extra as well, just to be safe. For example, I usually reserve an entire wing. That's about enough for 24 teams. As our league grows, we may need larger spaces.

- ❑ You also need another room for the **coaches/readers' meeting as well as a large space** (e.g. cafeteria) for teams to hang out in between rooms.
- ❑ Reserve the spaces for the day of your tournament. Do so early if your school's calendar fills up quickly.
- ❑ Some schools may charge your program a fee to "rent" the space. Some may charge a fee to have custodial staff on hand (usually not necessary, except to unlock and lock the facilities). Many do not charge a fee for space or custodial staff.
- ❑ It sounds silly, but make sure that you have access on the tournament date. If you don't have a key to the building, make sure that there will be a school custodian there to let you in if necessary.

Purchase tournament questions and make copies

- ❑ Contact [Academic Hallmarks](#) to get **pristine tournament questions**. You need a standard set (60 written round questions, four rounds of 50 questions plus alternate questions).
- ❑ You will need to tell Academic Hallmarks all of the teams you will likely (or even possibly) have in attendance at the tournament. Tell them the name of every school in the league and any others that you might invite to attend that aren't league members. They need this info to make sure that you get questions that haven't been used at another tournament. If this step isn't done correctly, it's possible that a school may have already attended a tournament that used the same questions. Nothing is worse than showing up to find out that you already know the answers and don't get to play that day. I've seen it happen!
- ❑ You will need to run off copies of the questions:
 - ❑ Run off one copy of the written round for each team (not school) that is attending.
 - ❑ Run off one copy of each oral round for each three teams (not school) that is attending. Round up. Use a different color for each round. For example, if you have 15 teams attending, copy at least 5 copies of each round, with all round one copies one color, round two another color, and so on.
 - ❑ It's a good idea to make a couple of extra copies of each round (written and oral) just in case unexpected teams show up (e.g. A school brings two teams instead of one team).
- ❑ You will need **copies of other items as well**:
 - ❑ If you are not using a scantron like device to score the written round multiple choice questions then you need to make one copy of the [written round answer sheet](#) per team plus another copy to make a key on. You can photocopy the key after you make it in order to have several available to facilitate speedy grading the day of the tournament.
 - ❑ You need one [tournament score sheet](#) per team attending.

- ❑ You need enough [50 questions round score sheets](#) for the tournament (the number of rooms x4; e.g. If you have 15 teams, would need 20 score sheets minimum).
- ❑ Make a few extra of each of the above forms as well in case they are needed.

Recruit and train volunteers

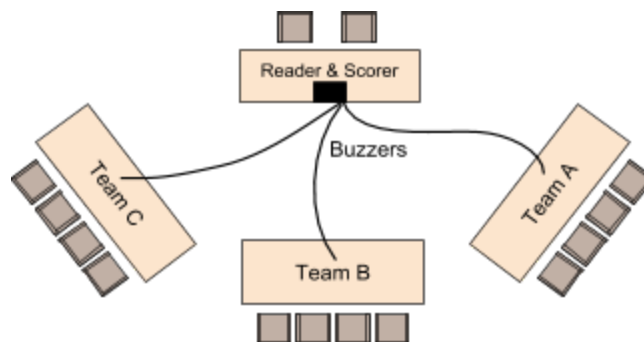
- ❑ Running a tournament takes help. In an ideal world, you will recruit the following volunteers:
 - ❑ **Readers:** These are the most critical position to fill. They read the questions to the teams during the oral rounds. Usually the reader operates the buzzer system as well. You need one Reader for each three participating teams.
 - ❑ **Scorers/Timekeepers:** They assist the reader during the oral rounds. Jobs include timing. If you don't have enough volunteers, you may need to ask experienced Readers to do these jobs as well but some new volunteers will have a hard time juggling all of the jobs. If possible, get as many Scorers/Timers as you have Readers and everyone will be happier.
- ❑ In order to prepare my volunteers I ask them to attend a team practice if possible. Usually staff volunteers can come once and you can show them how it's done, then they can practice. I like to train one or two volunteers at a time in order to give them enough time to practice.
- ❑ Parent volunteers have a harder time fitting practice into their schedules. You might have to have a training session just before the tournament itself or at another time. You won't have time during the tournament to train them, as Readers need to participate in a Readers' meeting during the written round (where they will discuss the questions) and will not be available for training during that time.
- ❑ If you are able to recruit parents and/or staff to help, they will probably have fun and be willing to help out again in the future. I've had success in getting a few teachers to help out year after year, making things a lot smoother. Don't forget that other staff (admin, counselors, etc.) often will be willing to help out. It's a great chance to see kids in a different setting.
- ❑ Finally, it takes time to recruit and retain volunteers. Smaller schools and programs in particular may have difficulty in getting enough volunteers to run a tournament. In the Denver League it is generally expected that coaches will help read/score/time if a host cannot get enough volunteers. Ideally, coaches won't have to do so, as they would rather go with their teams and watch them as they compete in the tournament!

Miscellaneous items prior to tournament day

- ❑ Send an email to all league coaches asking for RSVPs about two weeks prior to the tournament. Ask them how many teams and how many working buzzers they will be bringing so you can plan accordingly.
- ❑ Inform teachers whose rooms will be used a day or two before the tournament. Knowledge Bowl kids tend to be good kids, but a heads up will be appreciated in case any personal items need to be secured.
- ❑ Decide on how you want to do refreshments. Some schools have parents volunteer to take care of purchasing, setup, etc. I just have my students bring in enough for "X" number of students, depending on how many teams have RSVP'd. I let students decide what to bring, but donuts, granola bars, juice boxes, etc. are common choices. Have students bring them in on tournament day and set them up on a table in the commons/cafeteria/etc. for visiting teams to graze on. Someone should bring plates and napkins as well.
- ❑ Print off room signs (e.g. "Room 1", "Room 2").
- ❑ Prepare a [Reader Schedule](#), similar to this one. You will fill in names during the Readers/Coaches' meeting the morning of the tournament.

Tournament day setup

- ❑ Tournaments officially start at 8:30 with the Written Round, so arrive early to set up and be prepared for teams arriving early as well.
- ❑ Many students, coaches, and parents will be new to your school and unfamiliar with its layout. Set up directional signs to guide teams to the common waiting area. Signs to competition rooms and restrooms might also be helpful if their location is not obvious. Some schools may arrive early, so best to do this step soon.
- ❑ Your team should arrive early and help set up to competition rooms. Some schools prefer to do this after school on Friday so it's ready to go.
 - ❑ Assign a room number to each competition room and put the appropriate sign on the door (e.g. "Room 1", "Room 2").
 - ❑ Have your students draw the room's layout on the board if they are not going to remember it, as it will help them put the desks back properly after the tournament is over.
 - ❑ Using whatever kinds of desks you have available in the room to arrange the room similar to this →
 - ❑ As schools come in they will bring their buzzers. Have your students set up the buzzers in each room, making sure to put Team A's buzzers on the reader's left side.
- ❑ Set up the Coaches/Reader's room. Basically, the layout doesn't matter, you just need some tables or desks to sit at. You'll also need all of your copies that you have made (question packets, score sheets, etc.). It's a nice touch to have some refreshments available for your volunteers and coaches, e.g. coffee, donuts, etc.



- ❑ Set up the score sheet display area. I use tacks and a bulletin board near the commons. Some schools prefer magnets to post sheets on lockers, while many use tape and a white board. Whatever method you use, you will need enough room for a grid big enough for the number of teams attending. You don't need to actually put up the score sheets yet, as that can wait until after the written round.

Room 1 Room 2 Room 3 Room 4 Room 5 Room 6

Denver Knowledge Bowl League	
Round Score	Total
Written Round	
Oral Round #1	
Oral Round #2	
Oral Round #3	
Oral Round #4	
Final Total	

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It's okay to have only two teams in the bottom room(s) if you don't have multiples of three!

Running the tournament

- ❑ Check in with coaches as they show up the tournament. Collect their buzzer systems and send the systems with your students to competition rooms to be set up. Also verify the number of teams each school is bringing. These numbers sometimes change up to the last minute.
- ❑ Start at 8:30 even if there are some late teams. If you have to, you can postpone a short while due to inclement weather. Otherwise you should keep to the schedule.
- ❑ At 8:30 call all of the teams together in the common waiting area, welcome them, give a spiel about where the locations of the competition rooms and restrooms, welcome any new schools, etc.
- ❑ Tell teams that they
 - ❑ must write their team name on the answer sheet;
 - ❑ have 45 minutes to complete the written round;
 - ❑ can go to the competition rooms, hallways, or any other areas that you designate to work on the test;
 - ❑ should also turn their phones over to their coach before taking the written round;
 - ❑ also where to turn in their finished test. This is usually just outside the coaches' room where they test will be scored.
- ❑ During the Written Round you will run a Readers meeting. This is also called the Coaches' Meeting. During this time you will (with the help of other coaches of course)
 - ❑ Fill in the [Reader Schedule](#).

- ❑ Go over the questions in the packet to check for possible alternate acceptable answers, pronunciation, etc.
- ❑ Review rules and procedures with volunteers and new coaches.
- ❑ Score Written Round answer sheets as they come in and sort team score sheets accordingly.
- ❑ Readers should take with them the question packets and score sheets for the rounds that they are reading.
- ❑ Post scores after all teams score sheets have been updated and sorted.
- ❑ Have Readers bring you the official score sheet when they have finished reading a round. Add the scores to team scores sheets and resort. Post after each round is completed.
- ❑ Have your students collect buzzers immediately after the final round and bring them to the common room to return to their teams.
- ❑ Save final score sheets in case they are needed later. Sometimes the pictures I take of them at a tournament don't come out so well and I have to consult before I can post scores on the league website!

Clean up after the tournament

- ❑ Collect all tests, questions, and other leftover materials. Recycle these or store them.
- ❑ Clean up and put back rooms into their original order.
- ❑ Run through the rooms and look for items (buzzers, coats, etc.) left behind or anything else out of place.
- ❑ Great job, you're done!

This list is a little rough at this point. If you think of something I've left out, please email me!

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