



Competition Rules

The National Ocean Sciences Bowl is a timed competition for teams of high school students involving critical thought questions and "rapid memory recall" responses via a "lock-out" responder system. Question topics cover the biology, physics, geology, and chemistry of the oceans as well as related geography, technology, history, policy, and current events. These rules apply to the Regional and Finals competitions.

Eligibility Rules

1. Each competing team consists of a coach (see the Coaching Policy section for more details), at least four student members, and may include one student alternate (a team of three is *not* eligible to compete).
2. To be eligible to compete, a student must be enrolled for the current school year in grades nine, ten, eleven, or twelve at the team's school or be participating through a student support organization (private, parochial, and home schools are eligible). If a student participates through a student support organization, his/her school must NOT have their own team.
3. Schools considering establishing a NOSB team should select the regional bowl closest by driving distance to their home site. If the school location is equidistant between two regional bowl locations, the school may select the preferred bowl location or the bowl location that has availability for new teams. Once a team has participated in a regional bowl, that bowl then becomes the team's regional bowl for all future competitions.

Exceptions-

- If a team has been participating in a specific regional bowl prior to 2009, the team is permitted to stay with that bowl location even if another bowl is closer. However, if a team would prefer to switch to a bowl that is closer to their school location that currently exists or because a new regional bowl location is established, the team must contact their current regional coordinator to request a bowl move. The team's current regional coordinator will contact the NOSB director at the National office with the request. The National office will schedule a meeting with both regional coordinators to review the proposal. The requesting team's coach, the current regional coordinator and the potential new regional coordinator will receive a letter within 3 weeks of the initial request that will state the final outcome.
 - Schools within the state of Texas are another exception. Due to the size and shape of the state and the locations of the regional competitions, the regional coordinators delineated a diagonal line from just south of the city of Houston up to the lower western corner of the panhandle of Texas. Those schools located below the diagonal line attend the Loggerhead Challenge, those schools located above the diagonal line attend the Dolphin Challenge, but the final decision is at the discretion of the regional coordinators of this region.
4. Participants must be less than 20 years of age or receive a special waiver from the Consortium for Ocean Leadership.
 5. No school may compete in more than one regional competition in a given calendar year and to be eligible for the National Ocean Sciences Bowl Finals, a student must have competed on the same team that won the Regional Ocean Sciences Bowl for that year.

6. Once the competition day has started the composition of the team must remain static. Alternate members cannot be "swapped" between "A" and "B" teams from the same school or different schools.
7. In the spirit of sportsmanship, the National office encourages all teams to remain at their regional competitions through the end of the awards ceremony. Regional coordinators have the wherewithal to enforce this as a rule. Additionally, teams may be disqualified from competing at the regional level at the discretion of the site coordinator(s).
8. The winning team from each regional tournament is invited to participate at the Finals competition. The following rules apply:
 - o All forms in the Winners Packet must be completed and submitted on the designated dates after the regional competition.
 - o All teams must arrive and depart on the designated dates and be in attendance throughout the duration of the tournament. If the entire winning regional team is unable to participate in all activities, the second place team will replace them.

*Any waiver to these rules must be approved by the National Coordinator, and no waivers will be considered after April 1 of the current year.

Competition Structure and Requirements

9. A regional competition must have a minimum of eight teams, but sixteen or more is preferable.
10. The Finals competition will use a round-robin format for the preliminary rounds and a double-elimination format for the final rounds. A round-robin tournament, or all-play-all tournament, is a type of group tournament in which each participant plays every other participant an equal number of times.

A double-elimination tournament is a competition in which a participant ceases to be eligible to win the tournament's championship upon having lost *two* games or matches. A double-elimination tournament is broken into two sets of brackets, the *Winners Bracket* and *Losers Bracket*. After the first round, the winners proceed into the W Bracket and the losers proceed into the L Bracket. The W Bracket is conducted in the same manner as a single-elimination tournament, except of course that the losers of each round "drop down" into the L Bracket.

For the preliminary rounds, teams will be placed in divisions by drawing lots with the number of teams per division as equal as possible. Each team will play every team in its division. At the end of each game, regardless of the overall score, two points are awarded for a win; one point for a tie; and zero points for a loss. There will be no tie-break questions during the round-robin matches if followed by double-elimination games (see rules #43-45 regarding tie-breaks).

11. Depending on the number of divisions in the round-robin rounds, the top two teams in each division will advance to the final rounds in double-elimination format. Preliminary rounds ONLY determine eligibility for the final rounds, not position in the draw.

For the Finals competition (25 teams), the top three teams in each of 5 divisions will advance to the final double-elimination competition. A single wild card team, based on the best fourth place

qualifiers in each division, will be selected based on the tie-breaker/seeding rules (see rule #43). This brings the number of teams qualifying for the double elimination to 16.

12. In the double-elimination format, no advancing team is eliminated from this segment of the competition until it has lost two matches. First round opponents for the final rounds will be determined by drawing lots, regardless of whether the team finished first or second in its division. After this, a competition flow chart will be followed to determine opposing teams.

At the National competition teams will be placed into the double-elimination competition based on the results achieved during the round-robin competition.

13. Regional competitions have the option for choosing their tournament style, e.g. only double-elimination, only round-robin, or a combination of both. If an all round-robin format is used, there are two ways of determining the winner: cumulative raw scores or a tally of wins, ties and losses (see rule #10 - #12). Teams must be informed of format and method of breaking ties before the competition begins.

Rules of the Game

14. There are 5 kinds of officials required for each game: Moderator, Science Judge, Rules Judge, Timekeeper, and Scorekeeper.

Moderator Reads questions and maintains the pace of the game.

Science Judge Addresses scientific challenges (see rules on challenges below) and reports the scoring of the team challenge questions to the teams following grading.

Rules Judge Maintains the order in the game room and enforces competition rules.

Timekeeper Marks the game time with a clock and a stopwatch.

Scorekeeper Tracks and records the teams' scores throughout the game.

15. There are three types of questions in the competition: Toss-up, Bonus, and Team Challenge. Two of these types of questions are paired in the competition: toss-up and bonus questions. A toss-up question, which may be answered by any member of either team that is playing by buzzing in, must be answered correctly in order for a team to be offered a bonus question. The third type of question is the Team Challenge Question. The team challenge questions are cooperatively answered, critical thinking questions, requiring more time and thought than the toss-up and bonus questions. Each competing team is given the same amount of time to answer this question and collaboration among team members is encouraged.
16. On toss-up questions, the first player on either team to activate the lock-out buzzer system wins the right to answer the question. Before answering, however, the team member must be verbally recognized by the Moderator. No player may buzz in until AFTER the Moderator has identified the subject area of the question. If this happens, it is treated as a non-answer and the Moderator will not indicate whether the answer was right or wrong. The question is re-read in its entirety to the opposing team which is then given the opportunity to answer both it and the bonus question. (In

other words, this situation is a type of "blurt" and so no points are deducted from the team's score [rule #39-#42].)

17. Should a player answer a toss-up question before being verbally recognized by the Moderator or should consultation among any of the team members occur, any answer given does not count (the Moderator does not say whether the answer given was correct or incorrect) and the team loses the right to answer the toss-up question. The question is then offered to the opposing team.
18. Toss-up questions are only in multiple choice format. Bonus questions can be in either multiple-choice or short-answer format. On short-answer questions, the answer given must have the same meaning as the correct one on the page. The science judge has the final say on whether the answer given by the student is acceptable or not.
19. On multiple-choice questions, the first answer given is the only one that counts and that answer may be the letter (w, x, y or z), the scientific answer or both. If a participant gives both a letter answer and a scientific answer, both parts must be correct.
20. With the exception of articles such as a, an, and the, answers to multiple choice questions must be exactly as those on the written page.

For example: If the correct answer as written on the page is **W. a sea urchin**, then *Acceptable answers* are: W; W. a sea urchin; W. sea urchin; a sea urchin; sea urchin. *Unacceptable answers* are: urchin; an urchin; X. sea urchin.

21. If the answer to a toss-up question is wrong and the question was completely read, the other team is given the opportunity to answer the toss-up question, unless time expires before the second team has buzzed in (see rule #48).
22. The answer to the bonus question must come from the team's captain including when the answer is interrupted. Moderators should ignore an answer from anyone but the captain on the bonus question.
23. On a bonus question, once the captain has begun to give his or her answer, no further consultation or contribution by team members is allowed.
24. The competition format will be: 6-minute buzzer round, 2 Team Challenge Questions, break, 6-minute buzzer round.
25. In answering a Team Challenge Question, teams will write the answer out. When time is called the captain will hand in one answer sheet. (Note: the answer sheet handed in need not be written by the team captain.) Partial credit will be awarded.
26. Answers to the Team Challenge Questions must be written clearly and entered where specified for points to be awarded.
27. Consultation among team members is not allowed on toss-up questions. Consultation among actively competing team members IS allowed on bonus and Team Challenge Questions.

Timing Rule

28. The game begins when the moderator begins to read the first toss-up question.
29. The first half of the game is played until either the time expires (6 minutes) or all the designated toss-up questions have been read (8 questions). The team will go directly into the Team Challenge Questions after the end of the first half.
30. The break occurs while the teams' answer sheets are being graded in the Judges Appeals Room and may last longer than 2 minutes, but must be a minimum of 2 minutes. However, no one (students or audience members) can leave or enter the room during this break and only once the round has completed.
31. Upon beginning the second half, the Moderator will start where the previous buzzer round ended (i.e. the moderator ended at question 5 so (s)he begins the second round on question 6). The round will continue for 6 minutes or until 16 questions have been answered.
32. After reading a toss-up question, 5 seconds will be allowed for the teams to respond before the moderator proceeds to the next toss-up question. Timing begins after the Moderator has completed reading the toss-up question. If a player buzzes in and blurts or answers incorrectly, the question passes to the opposing team, which has 5 seconds to respond before the Moderator moves on to the next toss-up question.
33. Once a question has been read entirely, it will not be re-read.
34. A participant who has buzzed in on a toss-up question must answer the question promptly after being verbally recognized by the Moderator. After recognizing a participant, the Moderator will allow for a natural pause (up to 3 seconds), but if the Moderator determines that stalling occurred, the team loses its opportunity to answer the question and it is offered to the opposing team if eligible.
35. On bonus questions, the team will have 20 seconds to begin to give its answer to the bonus question.
36. On a bonus question, the signal "5 SECONDS" will be given by the Timekeeper after 15 seconds of the allowed 20 seconds have expired. In addition, the Timekeeper will indicate the end of the 20-second bonus period by saying "TIME." If the team captain has not begun the response before the Timekeeper calls "TIME," the answer does not count. If the team captain has begun the response, (s)he may complete the answer. No stalling may occur; the team loses the opportunity to respond to the question if the Moderator determines that stalling occurred.
37. On a Team Challenge Question, each team will have at least 2 minutes to write out their answer on paper. The amount of time given to answer a Team Challenge Question is relative to the difficulty and complexity of the question and will be announced by the Moderator prior to time being started. The Timekeeper will call two warnings: "45 SECONDS" when there are 45 seconds left and "15 SECONDS" when there are 15 seconds left. When time has elapsed, the Timekeeper will call "TIME" and all writing must then cease. The team captain will hand in the answer sheet. Results will be announced, and scores recorded, at the beginning of the second half before the first toss-up question. (Timing for the second half will begin on the toss-up question.)

Scoring Rules

38. Toss-up questions are worth 4 points, and bonus questions are worth 6 points. Team Challenge Questions are worth a maximum of 20 points toward which partial credit can be awarded to the final score.
39. If a toss-up question is interrupted, the player was recognized and the answer is **correct**, the team will receive 4 points.

If the answer is **incorrect**, 4 points are deducted from the team's score and the question is re-read in its entirety to the opposing team. The opposing team then has the opportunity to answer the same toss-up question. If their toss-up answer is correct, they have the opportunity to answer the bonus question.

Should a member of the second team interrupt the re-reading of the question, four points will be deducted for an incorrect answer and four points will be granted for a correct answer.

40. If the captain interrupts the reading of the bonus question and gets the answer wrong, no points are awarded or deducted and the Moderator goes on to read the next toss-up question.
41. If the Moderator inadvertently gives an answer to a toss-up or bonus question without giving either team a chance to respond, the question is removed from the competition and no points are awarded. The Moderator will then read the extra 17th toss-up or bonus question in place of the inadvertently answered question and play continues with the next pair of questions in sequence.
42. If a toss-up question is interrupted because the player blurts out an answer, i.e., is not recognized by the Moderator, the result is a non-answer. No penalty points will be deducted. The Moderator will not indicate whether the answer was right or wrong and the question is re-read in its entirety to the opposing team.
43. If the Moderator inadvertently gives the answer to a toss-up or bonus question before allowing the second team to respond (after an incorrect answer, or an answer given without the team member having been recognized) the Moderator will read the extra 17th toss-up or bonus question to the second team in place of the inadvertently answered question and play continues with the next pair of questions in sequence.

Summary of Scoring:

TYPE OF QUESTION	POINTS AWARDED
Toss-Up	+4 pts and eligible for bonus
Bonus	+6 pts
Incorrectly Answered Interrupted Toss-up	-4 pts
Unrecognized Interrupted Toss-up (a.k.a. blurt)	0 pts

Incorrectly Answered Interrupted Bonus	0 pts
Team Challenge	+0 to 20 pts

Rules for the End of a Game

Tie-breaks

44. In the event that the top teams from each division in the round-robin portion of the competition are not clearly identifiable, a tie-break procedure in the following order may be used at your regional competition:

- (i) Head to head won/loss record from the round-robin games (i.e. if there are only two teams tied the winner of the earlier game they played against each other in the round robin will proceed to Double Elimination)
- (ii) Fewest losses of each team during the round-robin games.
- (iii) If two (2) teams are still tied, there will be a match between the two teams in which 5 toss-up questions will be asked in a row. No bonus questions will be used during this segment of the competition. If still tied, another 5 toss-up questions will be asked until the advancing team is determined. The interrupt penalty of -4 points is in effect.
- (iv) If more than two teams are tied, each team, in separate rooms, will be given a series of 10 toss-up questions (no bonus questions will be used during this segment of the competition). The usual five (5) seconds will be allowed for a competitor to buzz in after the question is completely read. The interrupt penalty is not in effect here, but there is also no reason to interrupt since all 10 questions will be read to determine the score and competing teams are in separate rooms. Scoring will be based on the number of questions right minus the number wrong. If two or more teams are still tied, procedure *iii* or *iv*, as appropriate, will be used until the advancing teams are determined.

For the National competition a tie-break procedure in the following order will be used:

- (i) *Head to head won/loss record from the round-robin games.*
- (ii) *Fewest losses of each team during the round-robin games.*
- (iii) *Total number of points scored with the greater point total receiving the higher seed.*
- (iv) *Total number of points allowed (i.e. points scored against) with the lower point total receiving the higher seed.*
- (v) *Point differential as calculated by subtracting (iv) from (iii) with the greater point total receiving the higher seed.*

(vi) *A coin toss.*

45. If only two teams are tied for first at the end of the round-robin games, no resolution is necessary as both teams advance to the double-elimination games.
46. If the score is tied (in the double-elimination phase only) at the end of the regulation time period, a series of five toss-up questions will be used to break the tie (alternates may *not* enter the game at this time – see also rule #58). Round-robin matches may end in a tie as explained in rule #10 above. See also rule #13 for exceptions.

Rules for When Time Runs Out

If the question has been completely read before time is up, the following rules apply:

47. If the question has been completely read, but neither team has buzzed in before time is up, the game or the half is over.
48. If the question has been completely read, a player **has buzzed in before time is up** and is recognized by the Moderator before answering, but gives the wrong answer, the game or the half is over.
49. If the question has been completely read, a player has buzzed in before time is up and blurts out the answer (i.e., is not verbally recognized before answering), the Moderator says, "you're not recognized" and the other team is given 5 seconds to buzz in and answer. Should a player on the second team buzz in, get recognized and answer correctly, they will also get the bonus question. Then the game or the half is over.
50. If the question has been completely read, a player has buzzed in before time is up and is recognized before answering, and gives a correct answer, the team gets to answer the bonus question and then the game is over.

When the reading of the question has been interrupted, the following rules apply:

51. If the question has not been completely read by the Moderator and no one has buzzed in when time is called, the game or half is over.
52. If a player buzzes in before the toss-up question has been completely read, and time runs out, the question is still "in play," such that:
 - (i) If the student waits to be verbally recognized before answering the toss-up question and answers correctly, his/her team gets to answer the bonus question.
 - (ii) If the student waits to be verbally recognized before answering the toss-up question but answers incorrectly, 4 points are deducted from his/her team's score, the question is re-read in its entirety to the opposing team, which will get to answer the bonus question if the toss-up is answered correctly.
 - (iii) If the student does not wait to be verbally recognized (i.e., blurts out the answer), the question is re-read entirely to the opposing team; if a member of the team correctly answers it, that team also gets the bonus question; no interrupt penalty points are deducted.

Rules about Challenges

53. There are two types of challenges that team members may make during a game: challenges to the scientific answer and challenges to the enforcement of the competition rules.
54. Challenges must be made before the Moderator begins the next question. All challenges must come from the team members who are actively competing. No one from the audience may object. All decisions from the Judges in the Appeals Room are final. NO EXCEPTIONS.
55. Should a question or challenge arise during a competition, the competition and the clock will be stopped until the question or challenge is resolved. Once resolved, the match will continue from that point. Should the Moderator or judges decide that some time was lost due to the interruption, the Moderator or judges have the right to request the appropriate amount of time be added back on the clock.
56. Because Team Challenge Questions are graded in the appeals room, there are NO challenges allowed.
57. In the event that the natural progression of a question is disrupted or altered due to an official, the Moderator and Rules Judge will determine the appropriate course of action for the remainder of the question.

Miscellaneous Rules

58. Substitutions may be made only at the break.
59. Prior to each match, the team coaches will introduce themselves to each other and will sit together in the back row of the competition room. Alternate team members will introduce themselves and will sit in the back of the competition room as well.
60. No one in the audience may communicate with participants during the match; communication will result in ejection from the competition room.
61. If someone in the audience shouts out an answer, the question will be thrown out (as will the person) and the Moderator will proceed to the next question. Time will be added to the clock if necessary.
62. No notes may be brought to the competition table. Nothing may be written before the clock starts. Scratch paper will be provided at the beginning of each match and collected at half-time and at the conclusion of the match by the Rules Judge.
63. Calculators, cameras, camcorders, cell phones or audio-recording devices may not be turned on in the game rooms while a game is in session. Please note: this does not apply to official photographers/videographers employed by the competition host.
64. Members of the audience may not write notes of any kind. If this occurs, the written material will be confiscated and the individual(s) may be asked to leave the competition room.

Coaching Policy

- Each team must have a single designated coach. The coach must be a teacher or official from the team's school, school designee, an employee or official with an education program that is sponsoring a team. The coach serves as the primary and official contact for the team in all communications with the regional competition coordinator and the National Ocean Sciences Bowl headquarters.
- Coach responsibilities include:
 - Preparation and supervision of team members.
 - Timely completion of applications and forms.
 - Maintenance of high ethical and sportsmanship standards, both in preparation and in competition.
 - Compliance with policies of the Regional Bowl/National Ocean Sciences Bowl, and the sponsoring school system or education program.
- Changes in designated coach can be made only with the prior approval of the Regional Bowl coordinator. Any substitute coaches will be expected to meet the same eligibility criteria and carry out the same responsibilities as the original coach. Teams arriving on the day of competition without their designated coach will not be allowed to compete.
- Faculty, staff, and students from the institutions sponsoring a Regional Bowl are not eligible to serve as coaches, but may serve as scientific advisors to teams under the following circumstances:
 - Scientific advisors who work with individual teams can have no contact whatsoever with question development and review or with game preparation or practice sessions for officials.
 - Scientific advisors are expected to demonstrate the highest ethical standards. Should they inadvertently be exposed to "insider" information of any kind (e.g. overheard discussion of questions, conversations about rules, or comments from officials about their perspective on policies and rulings), they are expected to withdraw as team scientific advisors.
 - Scientific advisors may not represent the team in communications with Bowl officials.
 - Scientific advisors are not eligible for any awards.
- Any exceptions to these policies must be approved in advance by the Regional Bowl coordinator. Failure to adhere to policy may result in immediate disqualification of the team from competition.