

2025–2026 Competitive Events Guidelines

Foundations of Communication



Foundations of Communication challenges members to demonstrate their understanding of basic business communication principles through an objective test. This event covers topics such as written and verbal communication, professional etiquette, and the use of technology to effectively exchange information in a business setting.

Event Overview

Division	Collegiate
Event Type	Individual
Event Category	Objective Test
Event Elements	50-minute test, 100-multiple choice questions

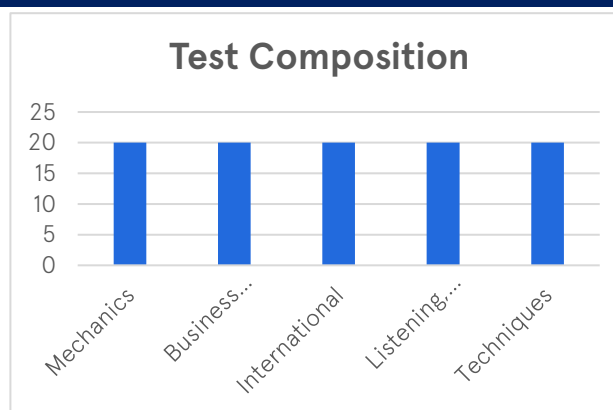
Educational Alignments

Career Cluster Framework Connection	Marketing & Sales
NACE Competency Alignment	Career & Self-Development, Communication, Critical Thinking, Leadership, Professionalism, Technology

This event is intended for students who are early in their collegiate academic journey and just beginning their study of communications. Only members who have completed no more than six credit hours on a semester schedule (or the equivalent number of quarter hours) of college-level communications coursework by May 1, 2026, are eligible to compete.

Knowledge Areas

- Mechanics of Appropriate Business English
- Format and Appropriateness of Business Messages
- Format and Style Differences with International Communications
- Listening, Oral, and Nonverbal Concepts
- Communication Techniques



Test questions are based on the knowledge areas and objectives outlined for this event. Detailed objectives can be found in the study guide included in these guidelines.

State

Check with your State Leader for state-specific competition information and deadlines.

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National

Required Competition Items

Items Competitor Must Provide	Items FBLA Provides On-site
- Sharpened pencil - Fully powered device for online testing - Conference-provided nametag Photo identification - Attire that meets the FBLA Dress Code	- One piece of scratch paper per competitor - Internet access - Test login information (link & password provided at test check-in)

Important FBLA Documents

- Competitors should be familiar with the Competitive Events [Policy & Procedures Manual](#), [Honor Code](#), [Code of Conduct](#), and [Dress Code](#).

Eligibility Requirements

To participate in FBLA competitive events at the National Leadership Conference (NLC), the following criteria must be met:

- Membership Deadline:** FBLA national membership dues must be paid to the specific division by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on March 1 of the current school year.
- Conference Registration:** Members must be officially registered for the NLC and must pay the national conference registration fee to participate.
- Official Hotel Requirement:** To be eligible to compete, competitors must stay within the official FBLA housing block.
- State Entry Limits:** Each state may submit up to four entries per event.
- Event Participation Limits:** Each member may participate in:
 - Two individual or team events, and
 - One chapter event (e.g., *Community Service Project* or *State of Chapter Presentation*).
- Participation Requirement:** To be eligible for an award, each competitor must complete all components of the event at the National Leadership Conference.
- Identification at Check-in:** Competitors must present valid photo identification (physical or digital) that matches the name on their conference name badge. Acceptable forms include a driver's license, passport, state-issued ID, or school ID.
- Late Arrivals:** Competitors will be allowed to compete until such time that the results are finalized, or participation would impact the fairness and integrity of the event, as determined by Competitive Events staff. Five penalty points will be assessed for late arrivals in any competitive event.
- Event Schedule Notes:**
 - Some events may begin before the Opening Session.
 - All schedules are posted in local time for the NLC host city.
 - Schedule changes are not permitted.

Event Administration

- Test Duration:** 50 minutes
- Format:** This event consists of an online objective test that is proctored and completed on-site at the National Leadership Conference (NLC).

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- **Materials:** Reference or study materials are not permitted at the testing site.
- **Calculators:** Personal calculators are not allowed; an online calculator will be available within the testing platform.
- **Question Review:** Competitors may flag questions within the testing platform for review prior to the finalization of results at the NLC.

Scoring

- Each correct answer is worth one point.
- No points are deducted for incorrect answers.
- Tiebreakers are determined as follows: (1) The number of correct responses to 10 pre-selected tiebreaker questions will be compared. (2) If a tie remains, the number of correct responses to 20 pre-selected questions will be reviewed. (3) If a tie still remains, the competitor who completed the test in the shortest amount of time will be ranked higher.
- Results announced at the National Leadership Conference are considered official and will not be changed after the conclusion of the National Leadership Conference.

Penalty Points

- Competitors may be disqualified if they violate the Code of Conduct or the Honor Code.
- Five points are deducted if competitors do not follow the Dress Code or are late to the testing site.

Recognition

- A maximum of 10 entries (individuals or teams) may be recognized per event.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

- FBLA complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by providing reasonable accommodations for competitors. Accommodation requests must be submitted through the conference registration system by the official registration deadline. All requests will be reviewed, and additional documentation may be required to determine eligibility and appropriate support.

Electronic Devices

- Unless approved as part of a documented accommodation, all cell phones, smartwatches, electronic devices, and headphones must be turned off and stored away before the competition begins. Visible devices during the event will be considered a violation of the FBLA Honor Code.

Sample Preparation Resources

- Official sample test items can be found in [CONNECT](#). These sample items showcase the types of questions that may be asked on the test and familiarize competitors with the multiple-choice item options.

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Study Guide: Knowledge Areas and Objectives

- A. Mechanics of Appropriate Business English
 - 1. Describe and identify the eight parts of speech in context sentences.
 - 2. Use a verb that correctly agrees with the subject of a sentence.
 - 3. Describe the types of verbs and demonstrate the six tenses.
 - 4. Use irregular verbs and their different forms properly and distinguish transitive and intransitive verbs.
 - 5. Identify subjects, predicates, verbs, adverbs, pronouns, direct and indirect objects, and prepositional and infinitive phrases in sentences.
 - 6. Recognize and correct problems in grammar and usage including, but not limited to, completeness, agreement, fragments, run on sentences, dangling modifiers, reference, and form.
 - 7. Describe and write the four kinds of sentences – declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory.
 - 8. Write clear, descriptive sentences in a variety of sentence patterns (e.g., simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex).
 - 9. Write logical, coherent phrases, sentences, and paragraphs incorporating correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
 - 10. Apply techniques for adapting the message to the audience and for developing effective sentences and unified and coherent paragraphs.
 - 11. Determine appropriate use of all punctuation marks including periods, question marks, exclamation points, commas, colons, semi-colons, quotation marks, and apostrophes.
 - 12. Define the grammatical rules that govern the use of special punctuation marks such as the dash, hyphen, and parentheses.
 - 13. Identify how to capitalize sentences, proper nouns, abbreviations, adjectives, and titles correctly.
 - 14. Proofread documents and identify spelling, grammatical, and punctuation errors.
 - 15. Proofread and edit business documents to ensure they are clear, correct, concise, complete, consistency, and courteous including effective word choices and sentence structure.
 - 16. Revise and proofread a message for organization, content, style, mechanics, format, and layout.
 - 17. Recognize how word selection and usage affects communication including slang, jargon, and cliches.
 - 18. Illustrate the proper way to divide words.
 - 19. Illustrate the ability to use a dictionary and thesaurus as an aide to spelling, pronunciation, and meaning.
 - 20. Apply spelling rules such as i before e, words ending in y, and homonyms and commonly confusing words such as effect and affect.
 - 21. Use bias-free language (e.g., gender, race, religion, physical challenges, and sexual orientation).
 - 22. Discuss the importance of proper spelling and grammar in all types of written communication.

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- B. Format and Appropriateness of Business Messages
1. Identify the five Cs of communication.
 2. Discuss the role of letters, memos, and reports in business.
 3. Manage telephone communications and use appropriate techniques to gather and record information.
 4. Discuss communication techniques as they apply to internal and external customers.
 5. Use an appropriate format and business writing style and apply conventions to Standard English.
 6. Describe and demonstrate the stages of the writing process to include planning, writing, editing, proofreading, and revising.
 7. Write and design a document (e.g., memo, letter, and report) using the correct style, format, and content (e.g., letter, memorandum, report, and e-mail) that is appropriate for the type of correspondence (e.g., persuasive, positive, and negative).
 8. Construct technical information in a clear, concise, and objective manner for a specific audience, purpose, and method when communicating in writing.
 9. Develop and maintain professional writing skills that will reflect a clear understanding of the customer's status with a detailed yet concise summarization of facts, comments, and notations.
 10. Determine the type, content, and formatting of a document to write a given situation using appropriate style, tone, and grammar.
 11. Produce letters, memos, e-mails, and reports that address specific tasks.
 12. Conduct research using the five basic steps: planning the search, locating sources of information, organizing the information, evaluating the sources, and using the information to prepare a short report on a business topic.
 13. Create and maintain a level of analytical skill to allow for effective research and data gathering leading to an effective decision.
 14. Identify and utilize traditional and electronic research sources such as encyclopedias, reference manuals, periodicals, internet, etc.
 15. Document all sources (e.g., print and electronic) using current standards.
 16. Comprehend copyright laws and their applications to text, visual art, design, music, and photography.
 17. Use scanning hardware and layout, design, and graphics software to enhance documents.
 18. Compose and evaluate common types of business reports including informational reports, news releases, proposals, and policy statements.
 19. Write an effective formal report using assigned format and acceptable writing style.
 20. Prepare presentation documents to include publicity, agendas, handouts, follow-up report, etc.
 21. Demonstrate and select the appropriate use of electronic messaging technologies (e.g., voice mail, conference calls, video conferencing, social media and e-mail).
 22. Manage e-mail to include composing and sending e-mail, retrieving, reading and printing a message, and sending an attachment by e-mail.

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23. Examine proper use of e-mail and other appropriate internet/intranet communication capabilities, including business related terminology and language.
24. Discuss how e-mail can accentuate or detract from the professional image one is trying to protect.
25. Discuss inappropriate use of e-mail at work.
26. Apply the etiquette rules for electronic messaging (e.g., e-mail, cell phone, voice mail).
27. Discuss ways to keep data secure from theft and destruction.

C. Format and Style Differences with International Communications

1. Describe and analyze problems and barriers with differences in languages and customs on business operations.
2. Identify resources (internet, etc.) for learning about cultural taboos and practices as they relate to international communication.
3. Describe and analyze the impact of cultural diversity on the communication process.
4. Demonstrate understanding of the rudiments of intercultural communication.
5. List examples of how nonverbal messages have different meanings in various cultures.
6. Explain the role of communication in international relations.
7. Identify international illustrations of social media trends and patterns.

D. Listening, Oral, and Nonverbal Concepts

1. Demonstrate effective active listening techniques and identify major barriers to listening.
2. Develop critical reading and listening skills to allow for rapid assimilation of facts and accurate recording of all essential details.
3. Identify and interpret the major types of verbal and nonverbal communication.
4. Discuss various methods of presentation delivery including oral, written, multimedia, videoconferencing, and interactive.
5. Design effective presentations to include multimedia components of presentation software packages.
6. Identify and evaluate different types of presentations to include information, persuasive, and debate.
7. Plan and make an oral presentation using proper techniques and basic speaking skills.
8. Express opinions and discuss issues positively and tactfully.
9. Describe and use effective interpersonal communication in one-on-one and small-group situations.

E. Communication Techniques

1. Define communication (formal and informal) and discuss its implication for effective management.
2. Describe the communication process.
3. Examine communication barriers and ways to eliminate them.

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4. Define active listening and review the keys to effective listening.
5. Describe the role of computer networks, videoconferences, and telecommuting as organizational communication.
6. Discuss the communication skills and leadership styles required in a contemporary organization and analyze how they will be required within worker groups.
7. Use correct grammar, punctuation, terminology and communication skills to produce and edit clearly written traditional and electronic documents.
8. Prepare a meeting plan/agenda and demonstrate a productive meeting.
9. Prepare and deliver a presentation to achieve greatest impact.
10. Demonstrate effective communication techniques and skills in working with individuals, groups, and supervisors (e.g., verbal and nonverbal).