# How to Manage/Limit/Control Entries — The Waitlist

Who is allowed to enter your tournament is entirely up to you. That said, it is interesting to read what the NSDA says about school based memberships:

To best serve our students, strengthen the creation and sustainability of programs, and establish continuity from middle school to high school, the Board of Directors voted at the Fall Board Meeting to require school affiliation for all memberships beginning with the 2016-2017 school year. Any high school, middle school, home school, or virtual school recognized as an accredited public or private school by the state in which those schools compete may join the National Speech & Debate Association. All current non-school-based clubs and organizations are encouraged to work with the Association and area school districts to create speech and debate programs through their students' schools.

In other words, inclusion is limited to bona fide high schools. Most tournaments follow this guideline, extending it to exclude any students who are not officially representing their schools. So called independent entries are often unaccompanied by an adult empowered to act on their behalf in cases of emergency, and in many cases have been demonstrated to be competing in direct violation of their school’s authority.

Tabroom.com allows you to set parameters for entries, that is, limiting a school to a certain number of entries in each division, and overall limiting the sizes of the fields. However, if you just let this happen on its own, you run the risk of letting in teams who do not meet your level of approval. It is easier to prevent admission to the tournament than to drop a team that was automatically admitted. Further, often tournaments sell out: they run out of space, often within minutes. Having signed up quickly hardly seems like the best way to determine who attends your tournament. This rewards the people who signed up in the first minute, for no other reason than that they signed up in the first minute. If you are limited to, say, 100 entries, the first schools will claim them all with TBAs. Even if you eventually sort things out, you can be shutting out immediate entry to your regular and reliable tournament customers, making it more difficult for them to manage their entries. You need to be on top of this.

A well-managed tournament controls who registers for the tournament. All entries should be waitlisted, as simple as that. (This doesn’t apply to local tournaments where all entrants are welcome, of course, e.g., novice scrambles. We’re mainly talking invitationals here.) You probably have a physical limit to the size of a given field. But you want to insure that every school that wants to come gets a chance. So the recommendation is that you waitlist all entries, and allow two full weeks for schools to register, so that people don’t feel unnecessary pressure to sign up at some artificial deadline. After the two weeks elapse, you simply manage the waitlist by letting in an even number of entries for each school. This is easy to do in tabroom, and it does three things: it gives people time to register (how happy are customers when they can’t get a product because they missed an unnecessary deadline), it distributes the slots fairly, and it allows you to check the bona fides of suspect entries.

Keep in mind that it is important that you stick to team limits. Just because a school has 10 LD teams doesn’t mean that your tournament has to accept them all. The best tournaments run with the most diversity in the number of schools attending. When one or two schools have way more entries than any other schools, it can seriously unbalance the pairings; while there are settings in tabroom to monitor this, they are obscure and complicated. You may be tempted to let in a lot of entries from a big school and not worry about imbalancing your field, but don’t do it. It’s not worth the money. A balanced field is a happy field.