

IFTSA College Bowl Competition

RULES AND GUIDELINES

BACKGROUND

Since 1985, the Institute of Food Technologists Student Association (IFTSA) College Bowl Competition has tested the knowledge of student teams from across the United States in the following areas: food science and technology, the history of foods and food processing, food law, and general IFT/food-related trivia. The College Bowl Competition is designed to facilitate interaction among students from different universities and provides a forum for students to engage in friendly competition.

PURPOSE

1. To facilitate interaction among students from different universities
2. To stimulate students' desire to accumulate and retain knowledge
3. To provide a forum for universities to engage in friendly competition
4. To create an enjoyable and rewarding experience for all participants

SPONSOR

Nestlé Purina

SCHEDULE

| Date | Event |
|------------------------------------|---|
| February 1, 2026 | Application submission deadline |
| 1 week before Regional Competition | Team roster due to College Bowl Chair |
| March - April 2026 | Regional Competitions |
| July 12-15, 2026 | Final Competition at IFT FIRST in Chicago, IL |
| September 1, 2026 | Bid applications due |



1. Regional Competitions will be conducted during the competition time frame as determined by the Regional Competition Coordinators and the College Bowl Events Committee.
1. The competition finals to determine the Grand Champion will be conducted at IFT FIRST
2. If a Regional Competition cannot be held in person, the Regional Competition Coordinator, in consultation with the College Bowl Chair, will select the region's representative for the competition. The selection of the region's representative may be able to use one of the following methods:
 - a. The Regional Competition may occur virtually.
 - b. If Regional Competition does not occur, the College Bowl Events Committee (College Bowl Chair, VP of Competitions, VP of Events and Experiences, Office of the President) will select a team to travel to the Final Competition at IFT FIRST in one of the following ways:
 - i. The Committee selects a team based on self-identified attributes.
 - ii. The schools in the region vote to select a team.
 - iii. Random selection occurs via "drawing out of a hat" or similar.
 - iv. Last year's regional winning school will be sent to the Final Competition again.
 - v. All schools from an area will submit up to two (2) students to create a combined college bowl team for that region.
 - vi. Other methods of selecting the area representative will be considered by the College Bowl Events Committee on a case-by-case basis.
 - c. If one or multiple teams cannot attend their regional competition, a virtual competition may be held at the discretion of the College Bowl Chair and VP of Competitions.
3. If the Final Competition cannot be held in person, it may be held virtually. Adaptations to allow the event to continue virtually will be considered by the College Bowl Chair and VP of Competitions.
4. If the College Bowl competition is not held either virtually or in person, all registered college bowl participants that were eligible in the current year will also be eligible in the following year regardless of student status.
 - a. This statement does not apply to those who are ineligible due to other factors including but not limited to, current or previous College Bowl Chair status, or member of a winning College Bowl team.

ELIGIBILITY

1. Each contestant must be a member of IFT and registered as a student at the university they are representing during the Fall semester prior to the competition. (If participating in the finals at IFT FIRST, the student need not be currently enrolled.)



- a. The classification of each student (undergraduate or graduate) will be determined by their status during the months of September to December prior to the Regional and Final competitions.
2. Teams can include members from multiple institutions; however, each school may only be represented on one roster, and participants may only compete on one team.
 - a. Example: If members from School A and School B form one team, no other teams can include members from School A or School B.
 - b. Teams containing members from multiple IFTSA regions will be assigned to a regional competition by the competition chair.
3. All members listed on the roster of the Grand Champion team at IFT FIRST will be ineligible to compete on future teams. Therefore, a competing contestant can win only one College Bowl Competition.
4. The College Bowl Chair is ineligible to compete on current and future College Bowl teams. The College Bowl Event Chair, VP of Events and Experiences and the Regional College Bowl Coordinators are ineligible to compete during the competition season in which they are serving.

Teams

1. Each team may consist of an unlimited number of team members. At any given time, four (4) members may compete, but no more than two of those competing team members may be graduate students.
2. One (1) member shall be elected team captain and retain that position throughout the competition. Captains may change between the regional and national competitions.
3. Excluding the team captain, teams may rotate players as they see fit in between rounds (but not within one round).
 - a. The team captain may not substitute an alternate for themselves at any point during the competition.
4. If any team member (including the team captain) is deemed unable to continue play due to illness or any other serious incident, an alternate team member may be seated. If the captain is deemed unable to continue playing, the team may select a new captain.
5. Individuals who did not compete in the Regional Competition may compete on a team in the Final Competition if they meet all other requirements.

REGIONAL COMPETITIONS

Application

Teams must submit their application via the submission portal on IFT.org by February 1st at 11:59 pm CST (Chicago Time UTC-6). Applications received after February 1st may not be accepted.



1. General team information, including a team roster and contact information
2. Twenty-five (25) new College Bowl questions
 - a. Each team must submit 25 new questions to the College Bowl question pool. Questions will be submitted in electronic format via the submission portal.
 - b. Questions shall be written in the style of past competitions, either marked as toss up or bonus, and fall within the categories listed in the *Questions* section below.
 - c. The questions submitted must include a source for validation purposes. Internet-based sources are preferable.
 - d. Teams may not use questions they submitted in previous years.
 - e. Members of the audience would be removed from the competition if they interrupt the flow of the competition.

An electronic membership verification form for each team with all possible participating team members must be submitted one (1) week prior to Regional and Final Competition start dates via email to the College Bowl Chair (iftsa.cbc@gmail.com).

Competition Procedures

1. Host institutions will be chosen based on bid submission.
 - a. If more than one institution submits a bid, the region will vote on the location
 - b. All bids will be put up for approval from the region.
 - c. See bid application for additional details.
 - i. A letter of support from the hosting department needs to be included to indicate the department is willing and able to host.
 - d. Rotational systems may be implemented at the region's discretion.
2. Dates of competition will take place in March or April and will be decided on by the host and College Bowl Events Committee.
3. Hosts will be awarded a \$500 stipend to help facilitate the competition.
4. Hosting Requirements and Guidelines.
 - a. The host institution must designate a Regional College Bowl Coordinator, who will sit on the College Bowl Events Committee. This individual will be ineligible to participate in the Regional and Final Competitions during the year they serve.
 - b. There must be a space of proper size to fit approximately fifty (50) people with audio-visual equipment (i.e., buzzer system, sound system, projectors)
 - i. Buzzer systems can be provided by IFTSA if necessary.
 - c. Lunch must be provided for all competitors and volunteers.
5. If there are no host bids received by November 1st of the year prior to the competition, the regions without hosts will be shifted to a virtual format.

FINAL COMPETITION

Prior to competing in the Final Competition, all participating team members must read and sign the Acknowledgement of the Rules, thereby accepting and being held responsible for the official rules during game play. Failure to follow the rules may lead to disqualification of the whole team.

For the national competition, the following procedures will be followed.

1. A preliminary competition will take place during IFT FIRST.
2. The preliminary competition will consist of matches 1-6 from the double elimination diagram at the end of these rules set. These matches will be closed to the public and will be used to determine which teams will be placed in the winning and losing brackets for final competition play during the Annual Event. Identical 20-question sets will be used in matches 1-4 and 5-6.
3. Only competing members of teams, judges, scorekeeper, timekeeper, moderator, IFT staff, venue staff, VP of Competitions, and College Bowl Chair will be allowed in the preliminary competition room.
4. All subsequent matches will use a different 20-question set. These final matches will take place during IFT FIRST, and the general public will be invited.

EQUIPMENT

Game Panels

An appropriate device, buzzer, bell and/or light, etc. will be used to determine the first contestant to respond to a question.

Scoring Device

Scores will be recorded on an electronic display. It should be visible to everyone concerned.

QUESTIONS

1. Questions will be categorized according to the following categories:
 - a. Food chemistry and analysis
 - b. Food microbiology, safety, and quality assurance
 - c. Food engineering, processing, and biotechnology
 - d. Sensory science
 - e. Food laws and regulations
 - f. IFT knowledge
 - g. Food products (carbohydrates, cereal, and grain; dairy; fruits and vegetables; proteins; beverages)



- h. Food history, trivia, and culinology
 - i. Nutrition
2. Questions will be classified as toss-up or bonus questions. Classification of the questions will be left to the discretion of the Competition Chair and/or judges of the competition.
 3. Multiple-choice questions, like other toss-up questions, may be answered at any time while the question is being read. Participants may respond with the letter of the answer or the actual answer. If a participant wishes to venture a guess before all of the answers are read, the judges will determine the correctness of the answer.
 4. All questions will be reviewed by an expert panel prior to use in competition.
 5. Twenty questions per round will be randomly selected from the entire question bank and placed into game packets by the College Bowl Chair of the competition.
 6. There will be no true/false or yes/no questions.
 7. Every fifth question will be a bonus question.
 8. All questions will be read in order by the moderator.
 9. In addition, several substitute questions will be included in the game packet in case a question is thrown out or replaced.

OFFICIALS

Eligibility

Faculty members who serve as a coach for their school's College Bowl team will be ineligible to act as an official, judge or moderator at Regional or Final College Bowl Competitions in which their team competes and may not act as a reviewer of questions.

Moderator

The moderator will be responsible for running the contest. They will ask the questions and designate contestants to answer; the moderator may not challenge an answer, nor will they rule on the correctness of an answer. The contestants or one of the judges may challenge an answer, in which case the moderator will immediately refer the matter to the judges for a final ruling. It is recommended that the moderator be selected from academia. Moderators may be selected from schools in the area in which the meeting is occurring. It is also the responsibility of the moderator to ensure that no filming, taping, or writing down of questions occurs during the competition.

Judges

There shall be a minimum of two (2) judges and preferably three judges. They must be knowledgeable in Food Science and may be university faculty, if they are not from a university having a team in the competition or may be a qualified representative from industry or a regulatory agency. The judges are responsible for ruling on the correctness of an answer. The



decision of judges on all answers and challenges shall be final. One of the judges will be selected as an “Over viewer” and will be responsible for taking notes on question quality and accuracy. At least one judge should also keep score during the competition to confirm and/or validate the scores kept by the score keeper. These notes will be collected by the College Bowl Chair, and changes will be made to the question database.

Score Keeper

The score keeper will keep track of points awarded or subtracted on the scoring device. The College Bowl Chair will appoint the score keeper. Challenges of the score keeper's accuracy will be referred to the judges, whose ruling will be final.

Timekeeper

The timekeeper will be appointed by the College Bowl Chair. The timekeeper will keep track of the time between the final reading of the questions (up to two readings) and the initiation of the team's answer by the team captain. The timekeeper will also keep track of the time elapsed between the contestant's buzz and the initiation of their answer (for toss-up questions). Challenges to the timekeeper's accuracy will be referred to the judges, whose ruling will be final.

PROCEDURE OF PLAY

Order of Team Play

1. Teams will be selected by a lottery into brackets. A double elimination bracket design will be followed throughout the competition.
2. After the completion of each match, the winning and losing teams will be placed into their appropriate new bracket spots following the double elimination diagram.
3. Teams will compete until they have been defeated twice (double elimination) and a champion is declared.

Starting the Match

1. Teams will be assembled and seated at their respective panels. Before play begins for each match, the team captain shall declare themselves to the moderator.
2. The audience will be asked by the moderator to refrain from filming, taping, or writing down any questions asked during the competition.
3. The question packet will be opened by the moderator, and at their signal, the match will begin.
4. The moderator will read each question until a contestant activates the buzzer device.
 - a. The contestant has five (5) seconds to initiate an answer.
 - b. If the answer is correct, the answering team will be credited four (4) points.
 - c. If the answer is incorrect, the answering team will be penalized two (2) points, and the opposing team will be given five seconds to initiate an answer upon a



- rereading of the question. If the answer given by the opposing team is incorrect, that team will also be penalized by two (2) points.
- i. If at any point during answering the question a wrong answer is given, the answer will be deemed incorrect. Clarification may be given or requested, but must remain accurate
 - ii. If the moderator fails to re-read the question for the opposing team, then that team's captain will be given the choice to either receive no points for this question and continue playing or throw out the question and replace it with a new question.
5. If an attempt to answer a question is not made within five (5) seconds after the moderator has finished reading the question, the answer will be read; if applicable, the bonus question will be delayed until a question has been correctly answered. Every fourth question, if answered correctly, will have a four-point bonus question attached; otherwise, the bonus will be delayed until a question is answered correctly. If a situation arises where two bonus questions are back-to-back, the second bonus question will be delayed until at least one question is answered correctly after the first bonus question. [Example: Question #4 is answered incorrectly. Question #5, the first bonus question, will be delayed until the next question is answered correctly. Question #6, #7, and #8 are also answered incorrectly. Question #9 is answered correctly, so the first bonus question, question #5, is attached to question #9. Question #10, the second bonus question, will be delayed and attached to the next correctly answered question. Question #11 is answered correctly, so the second bonus question #10, will be attached to it. If question #19, before the final bonus question #20, is answered incorrectly, further questions will be asked until a team answers one question correctly. This team will then get the opportunity to answer the final bonus question #20. Thus, it is possible that more than 20 questions will be read in a match.]
- a. Scoring of the bonus will be all or nothing – i.e., four (4) points awarded for a correct answer, or zero (0) points awarded for an incorrect answer.
 - b. Conferring among team members will only be permitted on bonus questions, and team members may use pencil and paper to calculate answers. Conferring among team members is not allowed on toss-up questions.
 - c. Team members will not be allowed to use calculators.
 - d. Bonus questions will be read twice.
 - e. An answer must be initiated by the team captain no later than immediately after "time" is called. "Time" will be called fifteen (15) seconds after the second reading of the question.
 - f. No points will be deducted for an incorrect answer.
 - g. Bonus questions not answered, or answered incorrectly, are NOT referred to by the opposing team.
6. A team captain or the moderator may call "timeout" for clarification of a rule or question, or to allow for an unexpected complication.



Completing the Match

1. The moderator will ask questions until all four (4) bonus questions (Question #5, Question #10, Question #15, Question #20) have been asked. Additional toss-up questions will be used until the fourth bonus question has been asked.
2. At the end of the match, the team with the highest score will be declared the winner.
3. If a tie results, a tiebreaker set of three (3) questions will be asked and a winner declared, unless there is still a tie, in which case additional tiebreaker sets will be asked until one team is the winner.
4. Once a winner has been declared by the moderator, protests or challenges will not be considered.

Challenges of Questions and/or Answers

1. Any challenges of questions or answers must be made by the team captain only at the time a particular incident occurs. The judges will consider the challenge; their decision will be final.
 - a. Challenges for a question or an answer cannot be made after the moderator moves on to another question.
2. No other team can make a challenge on a question once the challenge has been accepted by the judges.
3. Any judge may also challenge a question or answer. The moderator may not.
4. If the challenge is granted and the judges decide that the team's original answer was correct, 4 points will be awarded to the answering team. If the challenge is not granted, points will be deducted or awarded as originally decided by the judges. Judges can throw out a question at their discretion and no loss or gain of points will occur. In this instance, the question will be replaced by an extra question included in the packet.
5. Judges may use electronic devices to verify answers.

AWARDS

1. A maximum of eight (8) teams will make it to the finals. The teams will all be judged against one another in the finals.
2. Each finalist team will receive a travel and registration reimbursement of up to \$1,900.
3. The 1st place winner will receive \$1,000 and the 2nd place winner will receive \$750

NOTES

- The enforcement and review of these Rules and Guidelines will be the responsibility of the IFT Student Association Board, with the College Bowl Chair acting as coordinator.
- Changes to these Rules and Guidelines may be made by the IFT Student Association Board. These Rules and Guidelines should be reviewed annually, and the appropriate revisions, if any, made.

- Any competitor that does not follow the IFT Event Code of Conduct will risk being disqualified.

APPEAL PROCESS

1. A review period shall be provided to verify potential errors. During this time, team captains are encouraged to raise any concerns regarding discrepancies.
2. An appeal process shall be in place for all IFTSA competitions to address potential rule infractions. The process is as follows:
 - a. When a rule infraction is identified, the College Bowl Chair shall submit a formal report to the panel of judges.
 - b. The team captain or contestant involved shall be granted an opportunity to present their defense within a reasonable and sufficient timeframe.
 - c. Following the presentation, the judges shall deliberate privately to determine whether a penalty is warranted and, if so, its severity.
 - d. Once a decision has been reached, the judges shall communicate their ruling to both the Chair and the team captain.
 - e. The decision of the judges shall be considered final and binding.

Challenges and Penalties

Challenges based on rule infractions during oral presentations must be made immediately after the presentation, and no later than the finalization of scores. It is the duty of the Chair to ensure that infractions in written proposals and product tastings are noted. Scores should be considered finalized by one (1) hour prior to start of the IFTSA Closing Ceremony. No challenges will be entertained once this time has passed.

Challenges must be referred to the Chair and/or VP of Competitions. The Chair will refer challenges to the VP of Competitions, IFTSA Office of the President, and IFTSA Staff Liaison. It is the necessary duty that all Competition Chairs, VP of Competition, and IFTSA Office of the President report any infractions they receive or notice during competition. Final decisions on challenges, penalties, and IFT Code of Conduct will be made by the IFTSA Staff Liaison and disseminated to necessary parties. This may include input from judges.

QUESTIONS

Contact the College Bowl Chair via email at iftsa.cbc@gmail.com



EXAMPLE DOUBLE ELIMINATION BRACKET





COLLEGE BOWL TEAM MEMBER VERIFICATION FORM

College Bowl Team Member Verification Form

University:

Area/Region:

| Full Name | IFT Member # | Email | Graduate or Undergraduate | Team Captain? |
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REGIONAL HOST BID FORM

[Click to download](#)



IFTSA College Bowl Hosting Form

Host Institution

Location

Regional College Bowl Coordinator Name

Regional College Bowl Coordinator Signature

Date

Regional College Bowl Coordinator Email

Phone Number

Select your IFTSA region:

- Central Atlantic Area
- Midwest Area
- North Atlantic Area
- North Central Area
- Pacific Northwest Area
- Pacific Southwest Area
- South Central Area
- Southeast Area

University Representative Name (i.e. chapter advisor)

University Representative Signature

Date



A letter of support from the department indicating that your institution is willing and able to host.

Please email this completed form and letter of support to the IFTSA Vice President of Events and Experiences (ah842@cornell.edu) by November 1st, 2025.