

Rhode Island High School Ethics Bowl

Guide for Coaches and Teams

2019 - 2020



riethicsbowl@gmail.com

Preparing for the RI Regional Tournament

Based on feedback and requests from last year's tournament, we've put together some general suggestions for how to prepare for our Regional Tournament in January. Keep in mind that these are only suggestions – there's no one right way to prepare. The primary aim of the Ethics Bowl is to practice careful reflection and constructive dialogue about disputed ethical questions. And the secondary aim is to have fun doing it. So don't be afraid to experiment to find what works best for you and your team.

This advice is selected and condensed from the resources offered by the National High School Ethics Bowl and from other regional ethics bowls. If you want more (or different) suggestions on how to prepare, you can consult those sources directly:

<https://nhseb.unc.edu/files/2018/08/FINAL-COACH-ADVICE.pdf>

http://nhseb.unc.edu/files/2014/06/how_to_be_an_ethics_bowl_coach.pdf

<https://nhseb.unc.edu/files/2014/06/A-Guide-to-Preparing-for-the-National-High-School-Ethics-Bowl.pdf>

<https://nhseb.unc.edu/files/2018/06/Ethics-Bowl-4-Case-Studies-session.pptx>

<https://nhseb.unc.edu/files/2018/06/THSEB-Moral-Reasoning-Primer.pdf>

Analyzing Cases:

If your team is new to the Ethics Bowl, you'll want to work together to learn how to identify the ethically important features of a case and to identify how people from different perspectives might see the case differently. Once everyone is comfortable with that, some teams have found it helpful to create a division of labor. For example, some teams divide up the cases, giving one or two students primary responsibility for each case. Other teams divide up the team into different roles – e.g. primary presenter, primary commentator, primary judge responder. But many teams just continue working through all the cases together. Feel free to experiment, or just stick with whatever method is most comfortable for your team.

Here is one model for analyzing a new case. As you go through these steps consider having one or more team members recording or taking notes.

Step 1: First Reactions

Begin by reading through the case and have each student write down their first reaction to each of the study questions. Then compare answers. If there are disagreements, use these to start exploring the reasons that can be given in favor of each answer. If everyone agrees, start by trying to explain what makes that seem like the right answer. Then try to imagine what might lead someone to give a different answer.

Step 2: Breaking Down the Case

Using the previous discussion as a starting point, start listing out the key facts of the case and the important relationships, values, rights, interests, and obligations that are at stake. You can use the questions from the last section of the attached "Philosopher's Toolkit" to help bring some of these out.

Be sure to identify possible points of conflict or disagreement. Do the interests of different people pull in different directions? Would focusing on different kinds of ethical considerations lead to different answers? Why might people disagree about the ethics of this case? Now that you've considered all dimension of the case, do you still agree with your initial assessment?

Keep in mind that on the day of the tournament the case will be the same, but the question you'll be asked may not be taken directly from the study questions. So work to identify all important ethical considerations, whether or not they are covered by the study question.

Step 3: Preparing a Presentation

After identifying and discussing the ethical considerations raised by the case, practice putting together a 5 minute opening presentation on the topic. Time-permitting, follow up with an entire practice (half) round using the case, with the coach or other students providing the commentary judges' questions. As the tournament draws closer, make it a point to schedule time for doing practice rounds with some of the cases. *Note: It can often be difficult for students to fill the entire 5 minutes, especially when they are new to the Ethics Bowl format. In that case, practice ways of ending the opening presentation on a strong note, so it doesn't seem like you've just run out of ideas. For example, you could end by having one team member sum up the most important points. "In conclusion..."*

RIHSEB Guide for Coaches and Teams