

# 2025-2026 Competitive Events Guidelines

## Exploring Professionalism



Exploring Professionalism allows members to demonstrate their understanding of proper business etiquette through an objective test. This event introduces members to the expectations of professional behavior, appearance, communication, and conduct in workplace and social settings.

### Event Overview

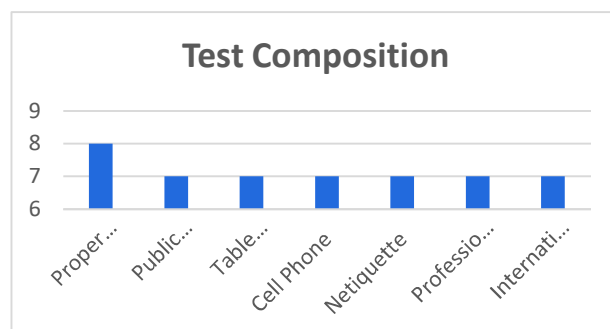
<b>Division</b>	Middle School
<b>Event Type</b>	Individual
<b>Event Category</b>	Objective Test
<b>Event Elements</b>	50-multiple choice questions

### Educational Alignments

<a href="#"><u>Career Cluster Framework Connection</u></a>	Management & Entrepreneurship
<a href="#"><u>NACE Competency Alignment</u></a>	Career & Self-Development, Communication, Professionalism

### Knowledge Areas

- Proper Introductions and Direct Eye Contact
- Public Speaking
- Table Manners and Dining Decorum
- Cell Phone Etiquette
- Netiquette
- Professionalism
- International Customs and Etiquette



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

Each chapter may enter three participants in this event. Testing is school site and will be conducted the two weeks prior to the state leadership conference (in March).

### National

#### Required Competition Items

<u>Items Competitor Must Provide</u>	<u>Items FBLA Provides</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharpened pencil</li> <li>• Fully powered <a href="#"><u>device for online testing</u></a></li> <li>• Conference-provided nametag</li> <li>• Attire that meets the <a href="#"><u>FBLA Dress Code</u></a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One piece of scratch paper per competitor</li> <li>• Internet access</li> <li>• Test login information (link &amp; password provided at test check-in)</li> </ul>

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### **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.
- **Repeat Competitors:** Members may only compete in an event at the NLC more than once if they have not previously placed in the top 10 of that event at the NLC. If a member places in the top 10 of an event at the NLC, they are no longer eligible to compete in that event at future NLCs, unless the event has been modified beyond a name change. Chapter events are exempt from this procedure. **Competitors who placed in the top ten in Business Etiquette at a previous National Leadership Conference are not eligible to compete in this event.**
- **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:
  - One individual or team event, and
  - One chapter event (e.g., *Annual Chapter Activities Presentation* or *Community Service Presentation*).
- **Participation Requirement:** To be eligible for an award, each competitor must complete all components of the event at the National Leadership Conference.
- **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:** 30 minutes
- **Format:** This event consists of an online objective test that is proctored and completed on-site at the National Leadership Conference (NLC).
- **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.

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- **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 [FBLA 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. Proper Introductions and Direct Eye Contact
  - 1. Describe how a professional handshake is still the professional standard.
  - 2. Explain the importance of direct eye contact.
  - 3. Explain situations when handshakes are not appropriate (illness, pandemic)
  - 4. Define the importance of active listening when meeting another person.
  - 5. Show respect by learning and remembering names quickly.
  - 6. Explain the power of a first impression.
  - 7. Avoid making value judgements about people you meet.
  - 8. Respect people's personal space.
  - 9. Explain the importance of self-assessment to improve the first impressions you make.
  - 10. Explain why the initial introduction is not a time to pursue a sale.
  - 11. Explain the importance of choosing words wisely to make a positive first impression.
  - 12. Avoid discussing politics and religion.
  - 13. Explain the power of saying please and thank you.
  - 14. Acknowledge others and when in doubt, introduce people to others at the event.
  - 15. Explain how business card pushing can be a turn off to other people.
- B. Public Speaking
  - 1. Select a topic that is appropriate for the audience and the occasion.
  - 2. Explain the importance of an engaging introduction that orients the audience to the topic.
  - 3. Describe the value of clear main points for a speech.
  - 4. Locate compelling supporting materials to validate the speech.
  - 5. Explain why the conclusion/closure is so important in a speech.
  - 6. Define clear, vivid language and the importance of selecting the correct words for a speech.
  - 7. Demonstrate a careful choice of words to emphasize the main points of a speech.
  - 8. Use suitable vocal expression to engage the audience.
  - 9. Explain the importance of audience engagement for a speech.
  - 10. Demonstrate nonverbal behavior that supports the verbal message.
  - 11. Successfully adapt the presentation/speech to the audience.
  - 12. Describe visual aids that enhance a speech.
  - 13. Define how convincing persuasion is supported by credible evidence.
  - 14. Explain how the speaker's appearance and attitude impact the audience.
  - 15. Define the importance of an effective conclusion for a speech.
- C. Table Manners and Dining Decorum
  - 1. Explain the importance of table manners and dining decorum.
  - 2. Explain the importance of arriving on time for a meal.
  - 3. Describe the importance of making reservations at a restaurant.
  - 4. Describe the proper business dining etiquette place settings.
  - 5. Explain the importance of the table place setting and the need to keep personal belongings off the dining table.
  - 6. Describe the order of utensils in the dining place setting and where to place utensils when they have been used.
  - 7. Explain rules for passing food and condiments around the dining table.
  - 8. Explain the difference between continental and American eating styles.
  - 9. Explain the appropriate procedure for ordering food at a luncheon or dinner where you are the guest.

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10. Describe food choices that are easier to consume professionally at a business luncheon or dinner.
  11. Explain appropriate cell phone etiquette for business lunch or dinner.
  12. Define proper posture and manners for a business lunch or dinner.
  13. Explain the proper use of utensils at the dining table.
  14. Explain proper eating habits (waiting for the host to start, pacing your meal to finish at the same time as everyone else).
  15. Explain the proper use of a napkin at the dining table.
  16. Explain the proper technique for cutting meat and salad.
  17. Describe distracting mannerisms at the dining table (crunching ice, using napkin to blow your nose, talking with your mouth full).
  18. Explain the proper way to eat soup.
  19. Calculate the appropriate tip for moderate and excellent service.
  20. Know in advance how the restaurant bill is being paid.
  21. Explain how to break and butter bread and rolls.
  22. Describe how to use technology in a professional manner.
- D. Cell Phone Etiquette
1. Explain the importance of giving full attention to the other person/group on the cell phone.
  2. Define workplace etiquette for using a cell phone.
  3. Define the importance of putting your cell phone away at work and not in your lap.
  4. Explain why the workplace is not the right place to make personal calls on the cell phone.
  5. Describe how your cell phone ringtone impacts your personal image.
  6. Make sure your backdrop is appropriate for Zoom, TEM, and other group meetings.
  7. Describe rules for speaking and listening on group telephone/computer calls.
  8. Describe appropriate and inappropriate information to share on a telephone call.
  9. Explain the importance of placing the cell phone on silence during business meetings.
  10. Describe how improper cell phone etiquette can have a negative impact on a person's professional career.
- E. Netiquette
1. Realize that individuals using the internet are humans who will react emotionally to messages sent.
  2. Know where you are in cyberspace and the consequences of being on inappropriate websites.
  3. Put your best foot forward online.
  4. Share expert knowledge online.
  5. Respect privacy of other people.
  6. Explain the importance of sharing accurate information.
  7. Describe how the abuse of power impacts online communication.
  8. Explain the importance of forgiving other people's mistakes when using the Internet.
  9. Describe how internet rants and flame wars result in unprofessionalism.
  10. Explain the importance of sending concise messages that respect the receiver's time and bandwidth.
  11. Give examples of how communication using the Internet can break down.
  12. Describe the need to proofread a message before sending it electronically.
  13. Make sure to not send a response for a message "To All."
  14. Understand that a message in all CAPS represents inappropriate yelling.
- F. Professionalism

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1. Explain the value of respecting diverse opinions at the workplace.
  2. Describe respectful strategies for discussing delicate topics at the workplace.
  3. Describe appropriate business attire (colors, fabrics, correct fit, clean and pressed).
  4. Define important soft skills for business and social settings.
  5. Explain the importance of a positive attitude.
  6. Define effective work ethic.
  7. Define ethical behavior for the workplace.
  8. Describe the importance of time management and being punctual.
  9. Explain the importance of reliability and accountability.
  10. Describe important organizational skills.
  11. List characteristics that show dedication to your job. (Complete tasks, disciplined, honest, polite.)
  12. Describe discipline and its important role in the workplace.
  13. Define leadership in the workplace.
  14. Explain the importance of flexibility for success.
- G. International Customs and Etiquette
1. Explain the procedure for sharing business cards in an international business setting.
  2. Explain why it is important to research other cultures before conducting global business.
  3. Explain different cultural views regarding personal space, punctuality, eye contact, and gift giving.
  4. Explain how handshakes differ for different culture and global communications.
  5. Explain how English is the preferred language for all participants in international business.
  6. Define multinational and cross-cultural teams.
  7. Describe how understanding the importance of subtle non-verbal communication between cultures can be equally crucial in international business.
  8. Explain the importance of communication within a global business setting.
  9. Describe how organizational structure is related to international business etiquette.
  10. Describe strategies for forming agreements that represent financial benefit to all international partners of the agreement.