

CHEATING & MISCONDUCT POLICY

The mission of Virginia Science Olympiad (“VASO”) is to build excitement in STEM by offering fun and rewarding tournaments for elementary, middle, and high school students. To provide for that mission, Science Olympiad needs to take steps to protect the integrity, safety, and fairness of its tournaments, including enforcing our ban on cheating and misconduct. The purpose of this policy is not to punish or discipline competitors, but instead to ensure this fair and safe competitive environment.

VASO takes cheating and misconduct very seriously and teams can be penalized for the actions of competitors, coaches, guests, and parents. However, VASO is also aware that tournaments can be stressful, and encourages tournament officials to seek a moderate and age-appropriate response in all such situations.

Cheating: Cheating is acting dishonestly or unfairly to gain or give an advantage. Cheating can include (but is not limited to):

- Presenting work that is not the competitor’s own.
- Impairing the ability of other teams to compete.
- Receiving or giving external assistance.
- Sharing test questions or answers that have not been publicly released.
- Obtaining test answers for use by the individual or the team at a tournament.

Misconduct: Misconduct is behavior that disrupts the Science Olympiad program or competition season, any Science Olympiad tournament, or any event within a tournament. Misconduct can include (but is not limited to):

- Obstructing an event or judging.
- Threatening, harassing, or bullying tournament personnel during or outside of a tournament.
- Continuing to dispute final tournament results after scoring and appeal decisions are completed.

Our Process: During a tournament, allegations of cheating and misconduct are reported to tournament officials and the affected team’s head coach before the end of the tournament. The team’s head coach may advocate on behalf of the student/team by filing an appeal with the tournament’s appeal committee. After investigating the allegation, the tournament may assess penalties and implement any appropriate and necessary measures, including disqualification and asking people to leave the tournament. Cheating and misconduct can also happen before or after a tournament and may be reflected in overall tournament results as appropriate as well.

Cheating and misconduct penalties will be reported to the State Director at the conclusion of the tournament. If a school incurs multiple cheating or misconduct charges or the State Director believes that a charge may affect the school’s ability to compete fairly in a season, the State Director will notify the school’s principal of the situation. On the very rare occasion that an infraction results in a ban, the national Science Olympiad office or other

state organizations may be notified. Out of a concern for privacy, VASO representatives will not publicly discuss the incident or penalty.

Additionally, while this policy addresses tournaments that are run by VASO, VASO also reserves the right to act based on credible and substantiated reports from tournament and state directors regarding a team's actions at invitational or out-of-state tournaments. For non-VASO tournaments, we will assess allegations to the best of our ability.

Conclusion: VASO sees the goal of competition as to give one's best effort while displaying honesty, integrity, and good sportsmanship, and recognizes that, by far, Science Olympiad competitors, their coaches, parents, and guests strive to be ethical in all competition situations. While this is a difficult topic, VASO hopes that by laying out its expectations, we can all work together to have safe and fair tournaments.

SCIENCE OLYMPIAD PLEDGES

COMPETITOR'S PLEDGE

I pledge to put forth my best effort in the Science Olympiad tournament and to uphold the principles of honest competition. In my events, I will compete with integrity, respect, and sportsmanship towards my fellow competitors. I will display courtesy towards Event Supervisors and Tournament Personnel. My actions will exemplify the proud spirit of my school, team, and state.

COACH'S PLEDGE

On behalf of the coaches and assistants at this tournament, I pledge to encourage honesty and respect for tournament personnel, our fellow coaches, and other team members. We want our efforts to bring honor to our community and school.

PARENT'S PLEDGE

On behalf of the parents and spectators I pledge to be an example for our children by:

- respecting the rules of Science Olympiad,
- encouraging excellence in preparation and investigation,
- supporting independence in design and production of all competition devices,
- and respecting the decisions of event supervisors and judges.

Our examples will promote the spirit of cooperation within and among all our participating teams.

EVENT SUPERVISOR'S PLEDGE

On behalf of my fellow supervisors and tournament personnel, I pledge to run my event with fairness and respect for the participants and their coaches. Our actions will reflect the principles of the Science Olympiad program and display the pride we feel as representatives of our colleges, universities, companies, states or organizations.