

COUNTDOWN ROUND

The Countdown Round is a fast-paced oral competition for top-scoring individuals (based on scores in the Sprint and Target Rounds). In this round, pairs of Mathletes compete against each other and the clock to solve problems. Calculators are not permitted in the Countdown Round. Coordinators will receive a copy of the



Countdown Round, its answers (in the Answer Key Booklet) and the Countdown Round Translation (which includes the answers) with their competition materials. When placing their competition materials orders online, coordinators can request the blacklines to create overhead transparencies of the Countdown Round questions. *If a coordinator would like the Countdown Round questions in PowerPoint format, s/he must email the national office with the request.*

Official vs. Unofficial Countdown Rounds

The state coordinator of each state will determine whether the chapters in his/her state will hold an official Countdown Round or not. An **official Countdown Round** is defined as one that determines a student's final overall rank in the competition. The top 25% of students, up to a maximum of 10, are selected to compete. These students are chosen based on their individual scores from the Sprint and Target Rounds. The use of an official Countdown Round will be consistent for all chapters within a state. In other words, *all* chapters within a state must use the round officially in order for *any* chapter within a state to use it officially. All students, whether registered as part of a school team or as an individual competitor, are eligible to qualify for the Countdown Round.

Over the past few years, about 30% of chapters have held official Countdown Rounds and about 50% of states have held official Countdown Rounds. (Note: Though every chapter within a state must have the same "official vs. unofficial" status, a State Competition does not have to be the same as its Chapter Competitions.)

If a chapter or state coordinator is not holding an official Countdown Round, the Countdown Round may be conducted unofficially (for fun) or omitted. If a Countdown Round is conducted **unofficially**, the official procedures do not have to be followed. Guidelines for a bracket-style Countdown Round are provided in the Chapter & State General Instructions Booklet, and this is a popular option for unofficial Countdown Rounds. Other popular choices are Team Countdown Rounds and match-ups with more than two kids competing against each other at the same time. Remember, this sort of flexibility is only permitted when **unofficial**

Countdown Rounds are being conducted. Chapters and states choosing not to conduct the round officially must determine individual winners on the sole basis of students' scores in the Sprint and Target Rounds of the competition (their Individual Scores).

Official Countdown Round Procedure

If the Countdown Round is used **officially**, the official procedures, as established by the MATHCOUNTS Foundation, must be followed. Please carefully review the complete procedures in the Countdown Round Administration section well in advance of your competition. The Chapter & State General Instructions Booklet, mailed with your competition materials, will include these procedures, too.

Please make a note of the number of questions you use if an official Countdown Round is conducted. This information is requested on the Chapter Report Form and the State Report Form.

Countdown Round Moderator

It is extremely important to have an excellent Countdown Round Moderator conducting your Countdown Round. This would be a person who (1) is very familiar with the MATHCOUNTS rules and with this level of mathematics to make any necessary judgment calls (though the Judge or judges panel also can be consulted), (2) is comfortable and enthusiastic when speaking in front of a crowd, and (3) will be able to speak with the kids and make them as comfortable as possible. A Countdown Round Translation is provided with the competition materials for the Countdown Round Moderator to use. This Translation writes out any complicated mathematics expressions/equations and has the answers written with each question. It is imperative that the Moderator read through the questions before the actual Countdown Round. It is also very helpful to have another volunteer keeping track of the scoring in each match-up of the Countdown Round to assist the Moderator with whether another question is necessary or the match-up is over.



MATHCOUNTS Executive Director, Lou DiGioia, moderates the Countdown Round of the 2012 Raytheon MATHCOUNTS National Competition.

A complete script for the Countdown Round Moderator is available in the next section of this manual; however, some chapters and states have added other important information for their particular competitions to this script. One such script is available in the Sample Documents section of this manual (Sample U).



BE PREPARED!

Suggested items and roles to consider when organizing your Countdown Round:

- A large room capable of seating all students as well as an audience
- One Countdown Round Moderator to read procedures, questions and answers to participating students
- Countdown Round Moderator's script
- Chapter & State General Instructions
- Table tents or other method of indicating assigned areas for schools/teams, Countdown Round participants, sponsors and/or media
- LCD or overhead projector to display problems/answers and a table for projector. It is recommended that coordinators have a spare overhead bulb or LCD projector available in case of technical difficulties.
- One LCD or overhead projector operator
- Transparencies of the Countdown Round questions or the PowerPoint file
- Computer monitors and microphones for competitors and Moderator, if needed
- A large screen at the front of room to project Countdown Round problems and answers
- Table and chairs for two competing students
- Stopwatch/Clock
- Buzzer System (if desired). *ZeeCraft Tech, LLC has a variety of buzzer systems available that may be useful for a Countdown Round. To view an online catalog, visit www.zeecraft.com.*
- One Buzzer System operator
- One person to keep track of time limits and give 10-second warning (this can be the Buzzer System operator)
- Scrap paper and extra pencils/pens for participants
- Pencil sharpener(s)
- One scorer to track scores and number of questions read
- One Judge to determine if alternate forms of an answer are acceptable or rule on answers that are unclear
- Water, if possible



SAMPLE DOCUMENTS!

Please review the following documents provided in the Sample Documents section of this manual:

- Countdown Round Moderator's Script Sample U

COUNTDOWN ROUND ADMINISTRATION

(For an Official Countdown Round)

This section contains instructions, rules and procedures for administering an official Countdown Round at your MATHCOUNTS competition. The rules listed below may not be altered by chapters and states and any proposed procedural modifications must be submitted in writing to the national office for approval at least 30 days in advance of the competition. Please be mindful that minor clarifications in competition administration instructions may occur throughout the year. If this is the case, the instructions accompanying the exam materials will take precedence over the instructions described in this section. Therefore, while it is strongly recommended that you carefully read through the rules and procedures below, it also is critical that you review them again shortly **before** the day of your competition.

Administer the Countdown Round as follows:

1. Read the following statement to everyone in attendance:

The use of any audio or video recording devices is prohibited. Upon request, the media will receive sample problems for their use. No problems from today's competition may be released.

2. *In random order* announce/call forward the ten Mathletes competing in the Countdown Round. *It should be explicitly announced that the Mathletes are initially being called to the front of the room in random order.* The order in which they will compete will be revealed throughout the Countdown Round as the "on deck" students are announced.
3. Once all ten of the Mathletes are called forward, announce and seat the two lowest-ranked students from the written competition (#10 and #9) so that they are in clear view of the moderator. Each competitor should be given clean scratch paper and sharpened pencils before the round begins.
4. Read the following statement to all students who will be competing in the round:

In this round, I will read a problem to you as it is being projected on the screen. You may use the scratch paper and pencil in front of you to calculate your answer to the problem. You are not allowed to use calculators during this round.

You will have a maximum of 45 seconds to solve the problem after it appears on the screen. You will be given a ten-second warning before time expires. As soon as you have solved the problem, press the buzzer [Chapters/States may have alternative methods of determining

order of finish and should adjust directions to students accordingly.] **I will call on the first person who buzzes in. Do not announce your answer until I have called on you. Each time you wish to answer, you must use your buzzer, though you may not answer more than once for any question. If you do not buzz in before you answer, your answer will be disqualified. If you answer after buzzing in but before I call on you, your answer will be accepted, but I ask that you please wait until you hear your name so that there is no confusion.**

Once I call on you, you will have three seconds to begin your answer. Your opponent may continue working while you are responding.

If you answer correctly, you will score one point in the round. If you answer incorrectly, your opponent will have the remainder of the 45 seconds to buzz in for an opportunity to answer the problem and score a point in the round.

Whoever answers *the most* of the three problems correctly (*not necessarily two out of the three) will progress to the next round to compete for the next place. If neither of you answers correctly through three successive problems, or if you are tied, we will use the sudden victory rule, which I will describe the first time it is needed. (see #7)**

It is very important that the rules be followed exactly. If you answer without pressing your buzzer, your answer will be disqualified. Are there any questions?

(*This procedure does not require a student to answer two out of the three problems correctly. A student answering only one problem of three will progress to the next round if his/her opponent has not answered any questions in the round correctly.)

5. Announce the name of the next competitor (8th-place Mathlete from written competition) who will be competing against the winner of the #10 and #9 students' round. This student (#8) is "on-deck."
6. Ask the first two competitors (#10 and #9) to introduce themselves and test their buzzers. Proceed to conduct the round as described above.
7. If a sudden victory situation occurs, read the following statement to the students:

Since you are tied at the end of three problems, I must declare a sudden victory situation. I will now continue to read problems to both of you. Rules for answering problems remain the same as before. The first one of you to answer a problem correctly will progress to the next round.

8. After the winner of this round is identified, congratulate the winner and call for applause for the student who has lost and is leaving the stage. Invite the next competitor (#8) to the table to compete and announce the name of the new "on-deck" student (7th-place Mathlete from written competition). Ask the new competitor (#8) to introduce him/herself and to test his/her buzzer.

Continue in this manner after the winner of each round is identified.

9. Immediately before student #4 begins competing in his/her first round, read the following statement to the students:

For the final four rounds, our rules will change slightly. In order to win a round, our Mathletes will have to answer three problems correctly. The first Mathlete in each round to answer three problems correctly will progress to the next round.

(From this point on, in each round, the first student to answer three problems correctly will win the round and progress to the next round.)

10. Repeat procedure until the Champion of the Countdown Round is identified.

[**Note:** The Countdown Round format changes at the National Competition. At this level, the top 12 students participate in a bracket-style format, the number of questions asked of competitors increases and students must complete their answers within three seconds of being called upon.]

SAMPLE U

COUNTDOWN ROUND MODERATOR'S SCRIPT

MATHCOUNTS®

COUNTDOWN ROUND

(Read ALOUD the following)

Good afternoon. My name is _____ and I will be the moderator for the Countdown Round. This is the most exciting part of today's competition. The students participating in this round are the top ten students of all the students here today.

Before we introduce the ten Mathletes competing in today's Countdown Round, I'd like to remind all students, coaches, and guests that the questions and answers from this round should be treated as confidential until after February 28. Competitions using these same questions are scheduled elsewhere in [State] and other parts of the nation during the month of February. You may not use cameras or video recorders during the Countdown Round while the problems are projected on the screen. Upon request, any media in attendance will receive sample problems for their use. Everyone in attendance today also is reminded to please turn off all cell phones, pagers, and other noise makers.

Now on to the Countdown Round!

As I call your name, please come forward and take a seat in the front row.

Names will be announced in random order and in no way reflect actual rankings.

(Call 10 participants in random order to the front of the room. Once all are seated, call forward the two lowest-ranked students from the written competition (#10 and #9. Announce student's name and school—Call for applause)

Before we begin our first match-up, I will review the official rules and procedures for this round.

I will read a question to you as it is being projected on the screen. Scratch paper and pencils are provided if you wish to use them to calculate your answer to the problem. Students may use their lucky pencil, but they may not use their lucky scratch paper. Calculators are not permitted during this round. You will have a maximum of 45 seconds to solve the problem after it appears on the screen. You will be given a ten-second warning before time expires. As soon as you have solved the problem, press the buzzer. I will call on the first person who buzzes in. Do not announce your answer until I have called on you. Each time you wish to answer, you must use your buzzer, although you may not answer more than once for any question. If you do not buzz in before you announce your answer, your answer will be disqualified. If you announce your answer after buzzing in but before I call on you, your answer will be accepted, but I ask that you please wait until you hear your name so that there is no confusion. If a contestant buzzes in, I will stop reading the remainder of the question and I will call for an

answer.

Students should work the problem as projected, not necessarily as I read it, in case I make a mistake in reading the question.

Once I call on you, you will have three seconds to begin your answer. If you do not start your answer within three seconds, your answer will be disqualified. Your opponent may continue working on the problem while you are announcing your answer.

If you answer correctly, you will score one point in the round. If your answer is incorrect, your opponent will have the remainder of the 45 seconds to buzz in for an opportunity to answer the problem and score a point in the round. If neither contestant answers correctly, another question will be presented. Only one answer from each contestant per question is permitted.

Whoever answers the **most** of three questions correctly (not necessarily two out of three) will progress to the next round and challenge the next higher ranked student. If neither contestant answers a problem correctly after three successive questions, or if there is a tie, we will use the sudden victory rule, which I will describe the first time it is needed.

Students, please note: A contestant does not necessarily have to answer two of the three questions correctly to progress to the next round. For instance, a student who answers one question correctly will progress to the

next round if his or her opponent has not correctly answered any questions in the round. If the same student answers the first two questions correctly, the round will be over and that student will progress to the next round.

It is **very important** that rules be followed exactly. If you answer before pressing the buzzer, your answer will be disqualified.

Audience and students, please do not call out answers to the contestants. Do not speak any answers out loud whether or not you think the contestants can hear you. Any such noise in the background is very distracting to the contestants.

So, students ranked #10 and #9 will compete and the winner will challenge student #8 with the winner of that round challenging student #7 and so on for the first five rounds.

Rules will change slightly for the final four rounds. In the final four rounds, finalists will have to answer three questions correctly in order to progress to the next round. When we get to that point in the competition, I will remind you of the new procedure.

Students' final individual standings will be based on ranking following the Countdown Round.

Are there any questions ?

(Answer Questions)

(Announce the name of the next competitor (8th place Mathlete) who will be competing

against the winner of the #10 and #9 students' round. This student (#8) is "on deck.")

We are now ready to begin our first match-up.

(Proceed to conduct the Round as described above until students 4 and 5 are ready to compete. After the winner of each round is identified, ask his/her opponent to step down. Call for applause for student leaving. Ask the next competitor to take his/her seat at the table by announcing him/her in the following order: student's ranking, school, then name. Announce the student who is now "on deck.")

(Announce each answer to each question BEFORE proceeding to the next question; most of the non-participating students will be trying to work the problems along with the contestants. Even if a correct answer is given, they may not be able to hear the answer if they are in the back of the room.)

(If a sudden victory situation occurs, read the following statement to the students: *"Since you are tied at the end of three problems, I must declare a sudden victory situation. I will now continue to read problems to both of you. Rules for answering problems remain the same as before. The first one of you to answer a problem correctly will progress to the next round."*)

(Continue with rounds until contestants 4 and 5 are ready to compete with each other.)

For the final four rounds our rules will change slightly. From this point forward, a contestant will have to answer three questions correctly in order to progress to the next round. Is this clear to all our competitors?

(Continue as described until the first place individual is identified.)