

**Austin Rhetoric Club**  
**Handbook**

2024-2025

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# Introduction

Austin Rhetoric Club (ARC) is a Christian family speech and debate club, parent-run and student-led. ARC is affiliated with NCFCA, a Christian speech and debate league. Our goal and vision is to have the students learn how to communicate from a Biblical worldview in an articulate, winsome manner that glorifies God. It is our intention to provide homeschool families with learning experiences that the entire family can enjoy together.

We concentrate on preparing our 12-18 year-old students. Children under 12 years old can compete in junior speech events. Parents are expected to attend club meetings, learn alongside their children, critique speeches and debates, judge, teach, and offer encouragement. When the club sponsors tournaments or workshops, parents also volunteer with tasks pertaining to these events. Parents of juniors are expected to help lead the juniors program.

Club meetings are on Fridays from 3:45 pm to approximately 8:00 pm. We meet at a facility in the north Austin/Cedar Park area. Meetings generally start with speech, followed by dinner, and conclude with debate. Dinner is approximately 5:45 to 6:30 pm.

“Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.” ~1 Timothy 4:12

# Mission

We believe that formal speech and debate can provide a means for homeschool students to learn and exercise analytical and oratorical skills, addressing life issues from a Biblical worldview in a manner that glorifies God. In order to provide these opportunities to homeschool students and their parents, we facilitate club meetings, workshops, and practice tournaments in the Austin area. Families are encouraged to attend various workshops and tournaments.

# Statement of Faith

The Holy Scriptures, as contained in the sixty-six books of Old Testament and New Testament, are the inerrant written Word of God and are His complete and sufficient revelation to mankind. Therefore, we make every effort to structure our club according to the biblical mandate. We are not perfect, but we are always reforming (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:6; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Revelation 22:19).

We believe that there is one living and true God (Deuteronomy 6:4), eternally existing (Psalm 90:2; Revelation 1:8) in three Persons: the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:16-17); that this triune God created all (Genesis 1:1-6), upholds all (Hebrews 1:3), and governs all (Matthew 28:18; Colossians 2:10).

We believe that man was created in the image and likeness of God, and is therefore unique among all creation (Genesis 1:26-27), and that Adam and Eve fell into sin (Genesis 3:1-7), resulting in death, broken fellowship with God, and a sinful nature which has been inherited by all mankind (Genesis 3:23-24; Psalm 51:5; Romans 5:12).

We believe that justification (the act of declaring one to be righteous, or without sin) is a judicial act of God on the believer's behalf (Romans 8:33), based solely on the merits of Christ (1 Peter 3:18; 1 John 1:7, 2:2), and that being born anew by the power of the Holy Spirit into God's family is absolutely essential for personal salvation (John 3:3-7; Titus 3:5). We believe that salvation is wholly of God by grace alone through faith alone on the basis of the redeeming work of Jesus Christ and not on the basis of human merit or works (John 1:12; Ephesians 2:8-9).

We believe in the biblical design for marriage, family, and sexuality (1 Corinthians 7:2; Matthew 19:4), biblical morality (Ephesians 5:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:3), the sanctity of life (Psalm 139:13-16) and the protection of our children both before and after birth (Matthew 18:5-6; Mark 9:42; Luke 17:2). We affirm NCFCA's [Position Statements](#).

Christianity is not merely a religion; it is also a lifestyle and worldview. We are to think biblically about every aspect of our lives (Romans 12:1-2; II Corinthians 10:5-6; Colossians 2:8; 1 Peter 1:14-16).

# Membership

In order to become members of ARC, both parents are required to attend New Member Orientation and meet with members of the ARC board. The purpose of this meeting is to clarify the goals of ARC, the benefits received, and the responsibilities inherent in being active members. This will promote having successful years of learning and growing together as a club and community in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Please fill out the following two forms, which can be found at the end of this document, and bring with you to the New Member Orientation:

- ARC Membership Registration
- Parental Consent & Release of Liability

General requirements are listed below:

- Agree with our Statement of Faith. If you cannot affirm our Statement of Faith, may we respectfully recommend other clubs to you.
- The oldest competitor of the family must be at least 10 years old by January 1st of the competition year.
- The required non-refundable club membership fee is \$150 per family per year. For the 2024-2025 season, the membership fee is due on Sept. 27th, 2024.
- Join NCFCA as an affiliate. Although you may wait until the winter deadline to register, you might miss out on the early bird discount. The NCFCA affiliation fee is approximately \$135-\$160 per family.
- There may be an additional fee to cover the cost of coaching and/or software for students participating in debate or extemporaneous speech.
- Parents are expected to attend club meetings, learn alongside their children, critique speeches, judge debates, teach, and offer encouragement. When the club sponsors tournaments or workshops, parents also volunteer with tasks pertaining to these events.
- All students and parents are required to attend the speech portion (3:45pm - 6:00 pm) of weekly club meetings, including the Apologetics lessons since a core value of ARC is to teach the students to accurately defend the biblical worldview. "Always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you." -1 Peter 3:15b
- Parents of juniors are expected to help lead and help in the Juniors class.
- All senior competitors are required to compete in 1 or more speech events in at least 2 tournaments every season.
- Competitors should consult with the ARC Board before committing to partnerships with students from other clubs. This applies to both Duo Interpretation, Team Policy Debate, and Moot Court.

# Code of Conduct

- We strive to imitate Christ in speech and in action. Club members are expected to treat each other with kindness, respect, and humility.
- We do not tolerate physical, verbal, emotional, sexual abuse or other inappropriate behavior at any time during ARC club meetings or events.
- The presence, possession, consumption or being under the influence of any illegal or illicit drugs or alcohol is prohibited.
- “More Than Two” Rule: Parents and chaperones should not enter a room where there is only one student present. In the same manner, a student should not enter a room where there is only one non-family adult present.
- Please be familiar with NCFCA’s [Child-Safety Policy](#).
- Dress code for club meetings: At ARC club meetings, the spirit of the dress code is the same as that of [NCFCA](#), just not as formal. Consider what professionalism looks like in a relaxed setting. Students should wear modest attire with the intent of glorifying God. Clothing should not be a distraction. ARC leaders reserve the right to ask students to change clothing. Prohibited clothing include:
  - Clothes that are see-through, tight-fitting, or display inappropriate content
  - Tops that are low-cut, fail to cover shoulders or midriff, or expose undergarments
  - Shorts that are shorter than fingertip length when standing
  - Skirts or dresses that are shorter than 3 inches above the knee
  - Leggings or yoga pants, except those worn under shorts, skirts, or dresses
  - Pants with holes/tears above fingertip length when standing

## Leadership

ARC is parent-run and student-led. We promote youth leadership while still maintaining parental involvement. ARC has both a board of directors, which is composed of select parents, and officers, who are the student leaders of the club.

Officers are given specific responsibilities for specific functions within ARC. All officers must be senior competitors who are committed and attend regularly. Certain positions require extra commitment, and those are noted. Every officer must deliver a speech on election night to be elected. The President will call officers meetings periodically. Each officer will serve for a one-year term and can be re-elected to the same office one time. A student can only hold one office at a time.

# Officer Descriptions

## **President**

- Leads weekly ARC club meetings, following the guidance of parent leaders
- Leads officer meetings
- Sends out weekly communication to students and parent leaders (may delegate this task, if desired, to the Secretary)
- Following the lead of parent leaders to plan special events, such as workshops, end-of-the-year banquet, Christmas party, etc.
- Works with the student officers to identify and improve areas that need organization and growth
- Delegates duties to other officers and provides accountability
- Communicates effectively with parent leaders, students, and special guests
- Demonstrates club-first mentality and shows commitment to ARC's mission throughout the year
- Arranges end-of-year appreciation gifts for parent coaches
- Attends Board-Officer meetings when requested

## Qualifications:

- Age 16 or older by Sept 1st
- Returning club member

## **Vice President**

- Promotes club unity, creates a sense of community among members, and encourages a positive club atmosphere
- Assists the President in executing his/her responsibilities
- Maintains consistent communication with the President
- Leads club meetings in the event of the president's absence
- Helps all club members feel comfortable and at home
- Sets up space or tables at tournaments for ARC members (should delegate this task to another officer if not attending)
- Coordinates social events for club members to promote unity
- Communicates calendar of meals, designating which dates are brown bag, potluck, or pizza
- Maintains supply box of paper goods, utensils, decorations, etc. for meals and special events
- Plans service opportunities for club members to minister to the community
- Demonstrates club-first mentality and shows commitment to ARC's mission
- Attends Board-Officer meetings when requested

### Qualifications:

- Age 15 or older by Sept 1st
- Returning club member
- Comfortable executing last-minute requests, in case of unexpected absence of President

## **Secretary**

- Coordinates room assignments for speech preparation/presentation; creates signs for rooms
- Facilitates student sign-up sheet for speech practice
- Maintains file of impromptu topics for practice
- Prints programs for End-of-Year Banquet
- Assigns parent coaches to speech rooms for the purpose of giving feedback
- Coordinates intra-club communication between members when asked by the President
- Takes detailed notes of officer meetings and relays notes to fellow officers and parent leaders
- Creates, distributes, and stores name tags for club members at special events
- Generates and organizes handouts for workshops
- Writes club thank-you notes to host church and others as applicable
- Attends Board-Officer meetings when requested

### Qualifications:

- Age 14 or older by Sept 1st
- Returning club member
- Good at taking notes



### **Chaplain (Male and/or Female)**

- Encourages club members to focus on Jesus Christ as they address issues from a Biblical worldview in a manner that glorifies God
- Works with Vice President to help club members feel comfortable and at home
- Maintains a list of prayer requests
- Seeks to assist club members in ministering to each other in various ways, such as meals for families, packages and cards for a parent deployed overseas, cards, etc.
- Leads students in prayer at tournaments after morning devotions/announcements and other appropriate times

#### Qualifications:

- Age 15 or older by Sept 1st
- Committed believer in Jesus Christ with spiritual leadership qualities

### **Sergeant-at-Arms**

- Arrives on time (3:45pm) to set up the facility
- Leads a team of three Deputy Sergeants-at-Arms to mobilize club members in setting up and cleaning facility before and after meetings
- Mobilize speech-only students to clean up dinner room and reset speech rooms after dinner (debaters will be responsible for cleaning the debate rooms)
- Designate someone to take out the trash
- Ensures that all areas are clean before leaving the facility
- Coordinates with the VP to determine needed chairs and tables for special events

#### Qualifications:

- Age 14 or older by Sept 1st
- Possesses leadership capabilities

### **Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms (if necessary)**

- Follows the direction of the Sergeant-at-Arms to mobilize club members in setting up and cleaning the facility before and after meetings

#### Qualifications:

- Age 12 or older by Sept 1st

## **Webmaster**

- Maintains the club website
- Works with the Evidence Ring Masters to oversee evidence sharing as related to the website
- Works through the summer following his/her term, as needed

### Qualifications:

- Ages 13 or older by Sept 1st
- General computer knowledge
- Consistent computer access

## **Photographer**

- Documents club meetings, events, and tournaments through photographs and videos
- Works with Webmaster to upload photos onto the club website
- Invites club members to upload photos for end-of-year slideshow
- Creates slideshows for club events, when requested

### Qualifications:

- Owns a camera

## **Evidence Ring Master (ERM)**

- Maintains the evidence submitted from other students
- Facilitates the club's collaboration on research
- Encourages students to complete assignments and contribute relevant, convincing evidence
- Note: There may be a different ERM for Extemporaneous Speech, Lincoln-Douglas Debate, and Team Policy Debate. This position is not part of the general election. Competitors within each of these subgroups will elect their ERM.

### Qualifications:

- Returning club member
- Evidence and technology skills

# ARC Membership Registration

## Parent & Student Acknowledgement of Expectations:

- My family affirms Austin Rhetoric Club's Statement of Faith.
- I (or the other parent) will need to attend most club meetings.
- I (or the other parent) will participate during meetings by giving feedback on speeches, judging debates, or teaching competitors/juniors.
- I understand that Senior Competitors are required to compete in at least 2 tournaments per year.
- My family will help recruit judges for tournaments.
- I understand that parents of Juniors will be needed to help in the Junior classroom during speech time.
- I consent to having my family's photos taken by Club Photographer at club meetings, club events, and tournaments.

Family Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

### Father

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

### Mother

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

### Child #1

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Area of Interest (please circle):    Speech    Lincoln-Douglas Value Debate    Team Policy Debate    Junior

### Child #2

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Area of Interest (please circle):    Speech    Lincoln-Douglas Value Debate    Team Policy Debate    Junior

Child #3

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Area of Interest (please circle):    Speech    Lincoln-Douglas Value Debate    Team Policy Debate    Junior

Child #4

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Area of Interest (please circle):    Speech    Lincoln-Douglas Value Debate    Team Policy Debate    Junior

Child #5

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Area of Interest (please circle):    Speech    Lincoln-Douglas Value Debate    Team Policy Debate    Junior

Please let us know which areas you (parents) would be interested in serving this year:

- Apologetics Speech
- Extemporaneous Speech
- Impromptu Speech
- Interpretation Speech
- Platform Speech
- Lincoln-Douglas Value Debate
- Team Policy Debate
- Juniors Program
- Club T-shirts (September)
- Economics Workshop (September/October)
- Practice Tournament (November or early December)
- Judge Recruitment Coordinator (spring)
- End-of-Year Banquet & Open House (mid-May)
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

# Parental Consent and Release of Liability

## Austin Rhetoric Club (ARC)

IMPORTANT: THIS DOCUMENT CONTAINS A RELEASE OF LIABILITY.  
YOU ARE ADVISED TO REVIEW IT CAREFULLY WITH COUNSEL OF YOUR CHOICE.

List of All Family Members Participating in ARC (Please Print):

(1) Father	(5)
(2) Mother	(6)
(3)	(7)
(4)	(8)

Each signatory hereto agrees as follows on behalf of the signatory and each of the above-listed minor children of the signatory:

- (1) Participation is a privilege. I understand and agree that participation in the Austin Rhetoric Club (ARC) is a privilege, and in consideration of that privilege, sign this Parental Consent and Release of Liability.
- (2) Consent to participation. I give consent to participation in ARC and its activities.
- (3) Acknowledgement of risks. I acknowledge that participation in ARC may involve risk of property damage and of personal injury, illness or even death, including but not limited to the risks arising from transportation-related activities, recreational activities, accidents in and around facilities used by ARC, adverse weather conditions, and injuries and illness that result from contact with other participants, food-borne illnesses, and allergic reactions.
- (4) Assumption of risk. By signing this Parental Consent and Release of Liability, I affirm that I and each of my above-listed minor children is fully capable of safely participating in all ARC activities, and I expressly assume all risks of such participation, whether such risks are known or unknown to me at this time.
- (5) Release of liability. I further release ARC and its directors, officers, participants, volunteers, agents, and any party or facility hosting an ARC activity (the “Released Parties”) from any and all claims that I and my above-listed minor children may have against any of the Released Parties. This release of liability is given on behalf of myself, my above-listed minor children, and any heirs, family, estate, administrators, and personal representatives of me and/or my above-listed minor children. I expressly agree that this release of liability is intended to be as broad and inclusive as permitted by the State of Texas.
- (6) Consent to Medical Treatment. I hereby give my consent that, if I am not present, any of my above-listed minor children may receive medical treatment that may be deemed advisable in the event of injury, accident, and/or illness during an ARC activity.

List any medical or food allergies of family members participating in ARC (please write “None” if applicable):

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(7) Authority to Sign. I represent and warrant that I am a parent or legal guardian of the above-listed minor children, and have the full power and authority to enter into this Parental Consent and Release of Liability on behalf of myself and my above-listed minor children. By signing below, I acknowledge that I have read and understand this document, and also represent that all information provided is accurate. I agree that this Parental Consent and Release of Liability shall be governed by and interpreted in accordance with the laws of the State of Texas, without giving effect to its conflict of law principles. Any litigation under this Parental Consent and Release of Liability shall be resolved in the courts of Travis County, Texas.

\_\_\_\_\_

Father

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number

\_\_\_\_\_

Date Signed

\_\_\_\_\_

Mother

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number

\_\_\_\_\_

Date Signed