

2014 Fall Startup Event Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the format of this contest?

A: The contest consists of one hundred fast and easy open-answer problems covering topics from arithmetic to calculus, to be taken in thirty minutes. The Fall Startup Event emphasizes speed, mental math ability, and familiarity with problems, equations, and relationships that appear in many competitions.

Q: With subjects like calculus on the tests, won't younger students be at a disadvantage?

A: No; awards are given in five divisions (MS, 9, 10, 11, and 12), so that freshmen are only compared with other freshmen, etc. In addition, two-thirds of the questions are below the Algebra II level, so that all students will find plenty of accessible problems.

Q: How many people may take the test?

A: Your school's registration allows any number of students from your school to participate, but each student must work individually and turn in a separate answer sheet, and all official participants from your school must test simultaneously.

Q: How long will the test take?

A: The test itself will take only 30 minutes of your students' time. As the coach, you will need to familiarize yourself with the materials, make extra copies, and get students situated prior to testing, then score the tests and mail the scored answer sheets back to us after testing. Depending on how many of your students take the test, you might spend two hours enabling your school to participate. If you are pressed for time before the deadline, you may wish to score only the tests of those students that you think may receive an award, and later score the rest at your leisure.

Q: When can I administer the test?

A: To participate officially and be eligible for awards, a student must take the test on **Thursday, September 25th, 2014**. You may administer the test whenever you like on the test date, giving you the flexibility to test at the time your team finds most convenient. If you administer the test more than once on the test date, only students who participated in the first administration will be eligible for awards. The test should not be administered to any students before the test date to ensure that test information does not reach any official participants.

Q: Why do I have to administer the test on that particular day?

A: After taking a test, many students discuss interesting problems with their peers via the Internet. If some schools test before others, students who have not yet taken the test might be exposed to the test material, altering their scores and skewing the results of the contest. To avoid this, we ask that you administer the test on the date specified. In the event of a known schedule conflict (e.g. Finals Week), we do allow schools to administer a test up to one week in advance of the official test date. In the event of an unexpected school closure (often weather-related), you may administer a test up to one week late. Please notify us if you need to test on an alternate date.

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Q: What tools and materials can students use on the test?

A: Students will need a writing implement, test, and answer sheet, and may use blank scratch paper. Students for whom English is not their best language may use a non-electronic foreign-language/English dictionary. No other tools may be used, which specifically excludes all types of calculators, computers, PDAs, MP3 players, and cell phones.

Q: What strategies might students find useful on the contest?

A: Time management is the key strategy for this contest. Because students have little time for each problem, they should skip time-consuming problems. If students finish early, they can return to skipped problems after answering all of the “fast” problems.

Q: What are “exact, complete, and simplified” answers?

A: “Exact” means that there are no approximations, which typically means that answers are left as fractions in terms of π , e , i , and radicals. “Complete” means that all correct answers are part of a student’s answer; i.e. supplying one root of a quadratic would not be sufficient. “Simplified” includes things such as completely reducing all fractional quantities and expressing irrational quantities in simplest radical form, but there are sometimes answers with several comparably simple expressions. We do not consider answers such as $\frac{3}{\sqrt{2}}$ to be simplified, because it is inconvenient to have irrational numbers in the denominators of fractions when discussing or thinking about numerical quantities. We do not consider answers such as $2(1 + \sqrt{2})$ to be simplified, because an operation remains that can be performed exactly.

Q: Why do I receive the answer key and solution guide before the contest?

A: We ask each coach to score their team's answer sheets before submitting them. To do this, you need the answer key soon after the test is over. The solution guide is provided at the same time so that students can review problems while the test is still fresh in their minds and they are more likely to learn the applicable skill. The answers and solutions should not be made available to your students until after you have collected their answer sheets.

Q: Which answer sheets should I submit?

A: You are encouraged to submit as many answer sheets as you like. From the perspective of school awards, you should at least submit your highest score in each grade level (9-12). Scores receiving awards in previous years are available on our website, although they do not necessarily predict this year’s scores.

Q: I have more questions; where can I get more information?

A: Tom Clymer, our director of academic competitions, would be happy to answer your questions. He can be reached at clymer@natassessment.com, or at (206) 650-6411.