



*The Twenty-First
Annual*

**North American
Computational
Linguistics
Open
Competition**

2027

www.naclo.org

2027 Coordinator Handbook

Please check <http://www.naclo.org> for updates and announcements

2027 Contest Dates (USA and Anglophone Canada*)

Open Round: January 28, 2027 / Invitational Round: March 18, 2027

Site registration deadline: January 21, 2027

Student registration deadline: January 25, 2027

Contact nacloinquiries@googlegroups.com if you miss the deadline.

Walk-ins allowed with advance permission of the local site host.

*The dates for the 2027 Francophone contest in Canada will be announced later. Check the [OLCF](http://www.olcf.org) site.

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This is the NACLO Coordinator Handbook. The NACLO Student Handbook is available [here](#).

I. CONTEST OVERVIEW

NACLO (the North American Computational Linguistics Open competition) is a contest for US and Canadian pre-university students in which contestants solve compelling puzzles in linguistics and computational linguistics. Requiring no previous knowledge of linguistics, languages, or computing, these puzzles can be solved by analytical reasoning alone. They serve as a fun and educational introduction to a field many high school students are unfamiliar with. Winners of NACLO are eligible to compete in the International Linguistics Olympiad (IOL), one of about twelve International Science Olympiads aimed at high school students.

Contestants must participate in-person at a registered contest site. In 2026, we had over 200 NACLO sites in the US and Canada. Contest sites are expected to host the contest for free and must not charge students for participation.¹ NACLO is targeted at high school students, but many younger students enjoy participating. (See section 6 for student eligibility criteria.)

Contest in Canada

Canada is represented by two teams at the IOL: an Anglophone team which is selected through NACLO, and a Francophone team which is selected through the Olympiade linguistique canadienne francophone (OLCF). Information about the OLCF can be found [here](#).

Open Round

The Open Round is open to all interested middle school and high school students. Its purpose is to introduce students to the fields of linguistics and computational linguistics, as well as to identify the contestants who will advance to the Invitational Round. The Open Round will be on **January 28, 2027**.

Invitational Round

The Invitational Round will be on **March 18, 2027**. The purpose of the Invitational Round is to provide an additional fun and educational challenge to those who scored highly in the Open Round (so, the problems are more difficult). NACLO also uses the Invitational Round, potentially along with additional assessments, to identify national winners to compete in the International Linguistics Olympiad (IOL) if they meet IOL eligibility requirements. (See section 6 below.) If your school is closed for Spring Break on this date, students may be able to participate at a nearby university site or a nearby secondary school; please contact nacloregistration@googlegroups.com if this is your situation.

¹ In very rare cases, NACLO *may* allow exceptions to this policy to increase contest accessibility in underserved regions. Any exceptions must be approved by NACLO.

2. CONTEST START TIMES AND LENGTHS

Open Round

The Open Round (January 28, 2027) is three hours long. Note that the NACLO jury has the authority to lengthen it in the event of unforeseen circumstances. There are two start times for the Open Round: 9:00am Central and 9:00am Pacific. For alternative timing options, see the next section.

Sites in the Central, Eastern, and Atlantic time zones are expected to compete at the Central time zone starting time, which will be 10:00am in the Eastern time zone and 11:00am in the Atlantic time zone.

Sites in the Hawaiian, Alaskan, Pacific, and Mountain time zones are expected to compete at the Pacific time zone starting time, which will be 7:00am Hawaiian, 8:00am Alaskan, and 10:00am Mountain.

<i>Time zone for the Open Round</i>	<i>Start time (local)</i>	<i>End time (local)</i>
Hawaiian (UTC-10)	7:00am	10:00am
Alaskan (UTC-9)	8:00am	11:00am
Pacific (UTC-8)	9:00am	12:00noon
Mountain (UTC-7)	10:00am	1:00pm
Central (UTC-6)	9:00am	12:00noon
Eastern (UTC-5)	10:00am	1:00pm
Atlantic (UTC-4)	11:00am	2:00pm

Participants in Canada: Please be aware that some provinces have recently changed daylight saving time practices. **Please double check what time zone you will be in on the day of the Open Round.**

The start times shown here are when students can work on the problems. Registration and other administrative activities should be completed earlier. Hosts and participants should arrive at the site 30-45 minutes prior to the designated start time to set up for the contest.

Alternative timing options (Open Round only)

To allow as many students as possible to participate in NACLO, we offer two alternative timing options for the Open Round. These alternative timings are offered to **entire sites, not individual students**. To access alternative timing, the site host should contact nacloinquiries@googlegroups.com, stating which alternative contest time is being requested and briefly explaining the reason.

1. Participating in another NACLO time zone: Site hosts with conflicts during their local contest time may request to run their site in another time zone. For example, a site in the Pacific time zone may be allowed to start the contest at 7am (local) in order to participate with the Central, Eastern, and

Atlantic time zones. The entire site must participate at this time; a single site is not permitted to run in multiple time zones.

2. (NEW as of 2026-2027) After School timing (only for high school sites set to “Enrolled Students Only”): Site hosts who are not able to run their site during a NACLO time zone may opt to run their site in the “After School” time slot. This time slot is **any three hour period between 2pm and 7pm local time**. As above, the entire site must participate at this time. This option is only available for High School sites with the “Enrolled Students Only” setting. **Please be aware** that students participating After School may not have access to the live NACLO Jury to answer their questions, which is a disadvantage. We therefore recommend using this option only if the above two options are impossible.

Alternative timing for the Open Round (option 1 or 2 above) is available upon request only from nacloinquiries@googlegroups.com.

Invitational Round

The Invitational Round (March 18, 2027) will be four hours long. Note that the NACLO jury has the authority to lengthen it in the event of unforeseen circumstances. There are two start times for the Invitational Round: 10:00am Central and 9:00am Pacific. No alternative timing options are available.

(NEW as of 2026-2027) Please note that the timing of the Invitational Round has changed in some time zones. Please verify your start time below:

<i>Time zone for the Invitational Round</i>	<i>Start time (local)</i>	<i>End time (local)</i>
Hawaiian (UTC-9)	7:00am	11:00am
Alaskan (UTC-8)	8:00am	12:00pm
Pacific (UTC-7)	9:00am	1:00pm
Mountain (UTC-6)	10:00am	2:00pm
Central (UTC-5)	10:00am	2:00pm
Eastern (UTC-4)	11:00am	3:00pm
Atlantic (UTC-3)	12:00pm	4:00pm

3. HOW TO BECOME A SITE HOST

Who can be a site host?

Any school, college, or university can be a NACLO site host. Clubs such as regional math or language clubs with adult coaches may also host NACLO. Learning and testing centers must meet certain requirements in order to host NACLO; if you are in this category, please contact nacloinquiries@googlegroups.com to discuss options.

Important: Please note that we do not allow children of site hosts to participate at their parent's site (university or high school). Families in this situation should find either a replacement site host, so the student can participate at the desired site, or an alternative site where the student can participate.

University and College Sites

If you are employed by a university or college, you can become a site host. (University and college sites are collectively referred to as “university sites” by NACLO; there is no difference between the two cases.) As a university site host, you should accept participants from your geographic area. The only limitation should be how many participants you can seat. The current list of universities hosting NACLO is available [here](#). If you would like to be a university site host, and your university is not already registered, please read this Handbook to familiarize yourself with NACLO, and [register](#)! (See section 4 of this Handbook, “Host Responsibilities,” for more information on registering a new site.)

NACLO is a great opportunity to reach out to students who are interested in studying linguistics or computer science. You may provide information on careers in linguistics and language technologies and how to study linguistics and language technologies in college. You can also provide information about your academic programs and admissions requirements.

Each university site is responsible for responding to emails with announcements from the NACLO organizers and contacting registered students with directions and other important information about the day of the contest. We **strongly** suggest creating a webpage with information about your site (location, site-specific procedures, student arrival times, etc.).

High School or Middle School Sites

Students who cannot or choose not to participate at a university site can participate at their own school. In order to participate at school, students should ensure that a teacher (or other administrator such as a librarian) at their school will serve as a site facilitator, is aware of the rules of the contest and will supervise them on the contest day.

(High school and middle school sites are collectively referred to as “high school sites” by NACLO; there is no difference between the cases.)

The current list of high schools hosting NACLO is available [here](#). If you are a teacher or other school staff member interested in hosting NACLO, and your high school is not listed as a current site, please read this Handbook to familiarize yourself with NACLO, and [register](#)! (See section 4 of this Handbook, “Host Responsibilities,” for more information on registering a new site.)

High school sites may be open to all students or open to enrolled students only. The host chooses this when registering. If the “enrolled students only” option is selected, then students wishing to register at that site will submit a request to register, which must be approved by the host in the registration system, instead of registering directly. NACLO encourages high school sites to accept all students if they are able; however, we recognize that this will not be possible for all high school sites.

If your student wishes to sign up for another [high school site](#) (i.e., at a high school they do not attend), they may do so if it is a site which allows external students. (In this case, we still recommend that the student email the site host to give them a warning.)

Homeschooled Students

Homeschoolers can register for NACLO by competing at the available university or high school NACLO sites nearby, which are listed on the NACLO website. High school sites that say “Enrolled Students Only” do not accept students from outside their school. If the student selects a high school site that allows external students, we still recommend that the student email the site host to give them a warning.

Homeschooled students with no university site or (open to external students) high school site nearby *may* be permitted to compete under virtual proctoring. Students will have to verify their enrollment at a registered homeschool. Please contact nacloinquiries@googlegroups.com for more information. This is an exception to NACLO’s policy about online participation (see below); we make this exception to ensure that all students have an opportunity to participate.

Virtual High Schools

Students who attend or wish to set up a NACLO site at a 100% virtual high school should contact nacloinquiries@googlegroups.com to discuss options.

Online Participation

Note that there are two very specific exceptions to the following paragraph. Please see the sections on Homeschooled Students (above) and Unforeseen Circumstances (below).

NACLO will **not** be offering an online option in 2027. If you are a student who wants to participate but does not have a site nearby, please consider asking a teacher (or other administrator, such as a librarian) at your high school to register your high school as a site and host the contest. If you are unable to find a willing host at your school, please contact nacloinquiries@googlegroups.com and we will do our best to help you find a site or host.

Participation from Abroad

US and Canadian students living abroad may participate in NACLO in 2027. They must find a staff member at their school to proctor them in person in one of the timezones we offer, which may mean taking the contest in the evening or at night. (This is required for security reasons and because the proctor needs to be in contact with the live jury.) To register a site outside of Canada and the U.S., please inquire about participation at nacloinquiries@googlegroups.com after checking the eligibility requirements below. If you are a student living abroad and are not able to participate in NACLO because of logistical issues, we encourage you to look into [linguistics contests](#) in your country of residence.

Unforeseen Circumstances

In the event of unforeseen circumstances that force the closure of a site (e.g., major weather event), the host should contact nacloinquiries@googlegroups.com as soon as possible so that other arrangements can be made. We will try to find alternative hosts or sites, depending on the situation. In rare cases, students registered prior to the closure event may be permitted to participate under virtual proctoring. These decisions are at the sole discretion of the NACLO organizing team and jury.

Unfortunately, in the event of unforeseen circumstances that prevent a student from participating at an open site (e.g., the student is sick on contest day), NACLO cannot make alternative arrangements.

Special Needs

Students with special needs may be given permission by NACLO to access accommodations (e.g., extra time) during the **Open Round only**. Students will need to provide documentation and should contact nacloinquiries@googlegroups.com to inquire. If accepted, NACLO will contact the student's site host. Hosts are **not required** to accommodate these requests.

4. HOST RESPONSIBILITIES

This is the list of responsibilities for university and high school hosts.

As soon as possible:

- **Read this booklet** and familiarize yourself with the contest. NACLO has been active since 2007 and the rules have evolved. The [website](#) also has all the relevant information about the contest, including many [resources](#) and [sample problems](#).
- **Reserve a contest room.** The contest room should be large enough so that the number of students who have registered (plus any more walk-ins/late registrants you are willing to take) will each have a desk/writing surface and can spread out so they cannot see each other's papers. The room must also have an internet connection so you can communicate with the jury during the competition. You should reserve the contest room starting at least one hour before the contest start time. This will allow you time to welcome the students, thank the sponsors and local volunteers, read the rules, etc. as well as distribute the contest booklets. The students should start working on the problem set at the designated time and have exactly three hours (in the Open Round) to actually work on the booklets. This means you need to finish with all preparations, reading the rules, etc. before the contest start time.
- **Register your site** (if it is not already registered). Registration happens online, at [this page](#). First, select Host Signup to create your account. Then, choose Site Registration. Please contact nacloregistration@googlegroups.com if you have any questions about the registration process.
- **Promote the competition.** Circulate email announcements, flyers and practice problems to students at your school or near your university. Promotional materials can be found at [this link](#). There may also be useful material [here](#). If you would like to share your promotional materials with others, please send them to us at nacloinquiries@googlegroups.com and we will post them. Please share with us any inventive ways of outreach that you come up with. Tell interested students to register online.
- (Optional) **Arrange for a training/information session.** These are encouraged, but are not required for participation in NACLO and not all participating sites provide them. The training sessions may include problem solving practice, an overview of linguistics and computational linguistics, and ideas about careers in linguistics and computational linguistics. Sessions typically last from one to two hours.
- (Optional) **Schedule additional facilitators if needed.** Use your judgment regarding how many facilitators you will need. There must be at least one person in the room with the participants at all times to take questions and make sure that all participants follow the rules.
- (University sites only) **Set up a local webpage** with information for contestants such as building and room number, driving directions, a campus map, schedule, etc. When your webpage is up and running, please send an email to nacloinquiries@googlegroups.com so we can link your page on the NACLO website.

- **Monitor the registration page for your site** at www.naclo.org to keep track of the number of students registered for your site. In the past, sites have had anywhere from 1 to 250 students with an average of 5-15 students per site. During registration, you will have set a capacity limit for your site based on the size of the room and number of facilitators; if your site becomes full, we encourage you to look into finding additional space and/or facilitators as you are able.
- **Send reminders to registered students about the contest.** Plan for two emails: two weeks before the competition and one week before the competition. The first one can be a reminder of the dates and times. The second one should include directions to your location, a schedule for the day including transportation information, and a list of rules.
- (University sites only, optional) **Do you have any swag for the students?** T-shirts, keychains, pens, etc. At present, we do not have funding to help out with such items, but you may seek funding for these from your department, school, university, or from local businesses.
- (Optional) **Do you want to give the students any food?** At present, we do not have funding to help out with this, but if you can get someone to donate some food, go ahead. Please distribute food in a non-disruptive way before or after the contest or very quietly during the contest.
- (Optional) **Do you want to give out college or career information?** This is often done during the registration/check-in hour, because students may need to leave immediately after the competition. The Linguistics Society of America (LSA) has several brochures on their [website](#). You can also give out information on majoring in linguistics/language technologies at your university or have brochures/representatives from language technologies companies.

1-2 weeks before the contest:

- You will receive an email asking you to **CERTIFY** your site. Instructions for this process will be in the email. It is very important that you certify; this tells us that you are prepared to host the contest.
- **Contact your students:** Plan for two emails: two weeks before the competition and one week before the competition. The first one can be a reminder of the dates and times. The second one should include directions to your location, a schedule for the day including transportation information, and a list of rules.

The day before the contest:

- Obtain the booklets from the jury (they will be shared with you in PDF format) and print one copy (at as high resolution as possible). Make sure that all diagrams and fonts print properly. If everything looks normal, print booklets **single-sided**. The students will be required to write

their answers on the answer sheets and you will need to scan those and submit them to the jury. Make sure to print enough copies for all participants, and print extras if you plan to accept walk-ins. It is okay to print multiple copies of the blank page that appears near the end of the booklet and use it as an extra page for students who request it, and to provide blank scratch paper generally.

- You will receive an email that will ask you to confirm that you are ready for the contest. Please reply to it ASAP. You will be asked if your site will allow walk-ins on the day of the contest.
- **Piazza:** You will also receive an email with a link to the website where you will be communicating with the jury during the contest. We use **Piazza** for this purpose. Please log in to the site to ensure you are able to access the forum. It will be important to keep this site open and monitor it throughout the contest as the jury will post announcements and clarifications which will need to be shared with the contestants.
- Make sure that no student has access to the booklets before the contest starts. Make sure that they are informed not to discuss the problems *even after the contest is over*. We will post the problem booklets on the website by the end of April.

The day of the contest and beyond:

- (Optional) Set up a registration table 30-45 minutes before start time. You may get some walk-in students who haven't preregistered. If this happens, let them use your computer to access <https://reg.naclo.org/> before the contest starts and get a NACLO ID. If that is not possible, let them register as soon as the contest is over. Each participant needs to get a NACLO ID.
- Make your site name and ID available to the students (e.g., write it on a blackboard). (They will have to write it on their Answer Sheets.) Your site ID is available on the NACLO website on your Site Coordination page. If you are still unable to find your ID, please use the site name.
- Log in to the Piazza site at least 15 minutes prior to the start of the contest. You must keep this site open throughout the contest.
- **Take attendance** of the students who are present (and update for latecomers). It is crucial that you keep track of which registered students did and did not show up for the contest.
- When students raise their hands for questions, go over to them in order to make sure that they don't say a clue or an answer too loudly. Tell the student that you will convey the question to the jury. **Do not answer the question** even if you think it is simple or obvious.
- All questions from the participants should be posted on the NACLO 2027 Piazza site. Please post your question as a **private question** just to the jury (instructions below). The jury will be periodically updating the Piazza site with all active clarifications that need to be conveyed to all participants. If resources are available at your site, you may wish to project this document for all

participants to view, or write these clarifications on the board. Here is how to post a private question:

- Click "New Post"
- Next to "Post to", click "Individual Student(s) / Instructor(s)"
- Then enter "Instructors" in the text box that comes up.
- Continuously monitor the Piazza site for possible announcements and clarifications by the judges. Make sure that you convey all jury clarifications to all contestants in a timely manner.
- Ask the students to complete a short online student evaluation form. Each student will be emailed a link to the evaluation once the contest has ended.
- Collect the booklets from your students. Students are **not allowed to take copies of the booklets with them**; this rule is essential for preventing possible cross time zone cheating. The booklets will be posted on the NACLO site by the end of April.
- While collecting the booklets, please ensure that all contestants have written their names and NACLO IDs **on each Answer Sheet**.
- Please scan all Answer Sheets (i.e., the Answer Sheets cover page with identification information and all answer pages) and convert them to PDF format. Name each booklet with the student's NACLO ID number (e.g. 'I03557.pdf.') Use a professional scanner at your school (or use a service like a Fedex Office). Do not use a phone, unless you are certain to get highly legible booklets in PDF format.
- **Please do not scan each page of a student's booklet as an individual PDF, and please do not send multiple students' booklets in the same PDF. IT IS VERY CRUCIAL TO NAME EACH FILE PROPERLY.** The jury reserves the right not to grade any submissions that are not properly named. Note that scans must be legible and complete. That is, all answer pages must be submitted, even if blank or incomplete.
- We request that all scanned booklets be sent to us by 11:59 PM on Monday, February 1 for the Open Round, or by 11:59 PM on Friday, March 19, for the Invitational Round. If there are extenuating circumstances that make this impossible, please send us an estimated date and time by which you will send us these materials.
- Once you have scanned all the booklets, the procedure for the Open and Invitational Rounds differs. **For the Open Round:** upload each student's submission to the NACLO website in the page for your site. Under "Contest Booklets," you will see an "Upload" button next to each student's name on the list of registrants. Double check with the attendance you took earlier that you have uploaded a submission for each student who was present, then click the "Mark did not attend" button for all the remaining (absent) students.
- **For the Invitational Round:** Answer Sheets should be submitted via a Google Form; the link to this form will be shared on Piazza and by email.

- **Please retain the hard-copy Answer Sheets until results for that Round are released.** We may need to contact you about them (e.g. if a scan is not legible).
- At this point, your responsibilities are done! Thank you for hosting NACLO. As you wait for the results, keep in mind that it may take 5-7 weeks for these to become available.
- (Optional) You may follow up with the students for college admissions and career guidance, etc.

5. OTHER CONTEST RULES

Students should submit all their solutions in writing, using a *black pen or dark pencil*, only in the space provided and ensure that their handwriting is legible. It is essential that students write darkly enough that their scanned answers are legible; if in doubt, we recommend using a black pen.

Students may solve the given problems in any order, and should try to solve as many problems as possible. Students are not penalized for incorrect answers. Students may receive partial credit for providing an incomplete solution to a problem, so they should write answers even if they are not fully confident in them.

Given the large number of expected participants in the Open Round, most or all of the problems will be automatically gradeable. "Blue," "17", "1A, 2D, 3D, 4E, 5C", "nihuetzi," and "A>C>G>F>B>E>D" are fine answers. The problem booklets will be designed to include an answer sheet.

Allowed and disallowed materials

Students should bring their own pens and pencils. Students are **not** allowed to bring their own paper. The facilitators will provide all paper needed.

Participants must write their solutions in black ink or dark pencil, and may use pencils for scratch work. They may use blank paper for scratch work; however, they should copy their final solutions into the spaces provided in the problem booklet, and they may enclose additional sheets only if the space in the booklet is insufficient. Scratch paper is to be handed in with the answer booklet, but kept separate from it.

Students may not use any electronic devices except basic wristwatches. In particular, they may not use calculators, computers, tablets, cell phones, pagers, or wristwatches with internet access or built-in calculators. Attempts to use electronic devices will normally lead to disqualification. If a student has any medical electronic devices, required for health reasons, they should let the facilitators know before the contest.

Participants may not use any written or printed materials such as books or their own notes produced before the contest.

Conduct during the contest

Students should follow all instructions of the facilitators; if they have questions about the rules or acceptable conduct during the contest, they should raise their hand and ask a facilitator.

Students may not talk with anyone except facilitators, and may not collaborate with other contestants. Attempts to communicate with other contestants will normally lead to disqualification.

Bags should be placed under the seats before the contest, and may not be used during the contest. If students have brought snacks, these should be placed on the desk before the contest begins.

If a student has a cell phone, pager, or any other sound-emitting device in their bag, they should turn it off before the contest. Just switching it to vibrate or silent mode is not sufficient.

Participants may take bathroom breaks during the contest; however, they may not take their bags, any electronic devices, problem booklets, or their notes with them when temporarily leaving the room. Also, two contestants may not take a bathroom break at the same time.

Unless the local facilitator overrides this rule (e.g., due to university or high school regulations or health precautions), students may bring a snack into the contest site and eat during the contest, but they should be considerate of others. In particular, they should avoid "noisy" foods, such as foods with noisy wrappers, and foods with a strong odor. The facilitators have the authority to remove any types of food from the contest site if they feel that these types of food may distract other contestants. Noisy wrappers should be opened before the contest begins.

If students arrive late, they may still participate in the contest; however, they may not ask facilitators to repeat any instructions. If the facilitators are able and willing, they may stay beyond the normal end time to give late students the full 3 or 4 hours of contest-writing time (for the Open and Invitational Rounds, respectively); however, this is not required.

Questions during the contest

If a student has a question, they need to raise a hand, and one of the facilitators will talk with them. When talking with a facilitator, students should keep their voices low, to make sure that they do not distract other contestants and do not accidentally provide a hint for solving the problem.

If a student needs a clarification for a specific problem, the facilitator will need to contact the jury via Piazza, which means that an immediate answer may not be available. **Please note that local facilitators are not allowed to answer student questions without contacting the jury**, even in cases where the answer seems obvious; this is to ensure fairness to all participants. If the jury agrees that the problem requires a clarification or correction, they will normally announce it to all site facilitators via Piazza.

If the jury feels that an answer is already contained in the booklet, or that attempting to give a student an answer may give someone an extra hint, they may refuse to answer the question by replying “no comment” on Piazza.

Scoring

Every problem will be worth a specified number of points; harder problems are generally worth more points.

The jury determines the overall score as the sum of solution scores. The jury will complete the scoring and announce the results (within five to seven weeks after the competition).

The jury is solely responsible for scoring the solutions, ruling on unforeseen situations, and selecting the winners. Their decisions are final.

Contest Integrity

NACLO is meant to be a fun experience, but it is also a competition, so we take fairness seriously. Therefore, we reserve the right to disqualify participants if the procedures in this handbook are not followed. We also reserve the right to disqualify participants if the NACLO jury finds sufficient evidence that the participant has cheated. Such decisions are up to the discretion of the NACLO jury.

We will not disqualify participants for minor issues such as using a pencil instead of a pen or forgetting to put a NACLO ID on a page (though these issues might negatively affect your score because they might make it harder for graders to score your answers). We will, however, disqualify participants who have disrupted the integrity of the contest, such as by obtaining answers illicitly, taking extra time to complete the contest, or by taking the contest at an unauthorized time.

6. STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

To participate in NACLO, students must satisfy all of the following criteria:

- They have never been enrolled as a full-time college or university student.²
- They will be younger than 20 years old on the first day of the IOL, whose dates are at <https://ioling.org/upcoming/>.
- They are a citizen of the US or Canada or a student in a secondary school in the US or Canada.
- They are available to participate in the contest at one of the times when it is offered.
- They can either participate in the contest at a registered university site or find a teacher or librarian who can run a high school site as specified above.

To be eligible for the Canada Anglophone IOL team, students must:

- Be eligible for and participate in NACLO.
- Be a citizen of Canada or a student in a Canadian secondary school, and provide proof if asked.
- Meet all IOL eligibility rules: <https://ioling.org/rules/rules.pdf>

To be eligible for the US IOL team, students must:

- Be eligible for and participate in NACLO.
- Be a citizen of the US or a student in a US secondary school, and provide proof if asked.
- Meet all IOL eligibility rules: <https://ioling.org/rules/rules.pdf>

IMPORTANT: Students must declare US or Canada

In the case of a multinational contest, like NACLO, all students must be considered as attempting to qualify for only one national IOL team, and must indicate which beforehand, per IOL Regulations. **Therefore**, if a student is eligible for both the Canada Anglophone and US IOL teams, according to the criteria above, they must choose one team that they wish to be considered for. The student will be considered ineligible for the team they do not choose. The student should declare their choice by selecting their desired “IOL Team Eligibility” option during NACLO registration. (In the case of late registrations, e.g. for walk-in participants where allowed, an email must be sent to nacloinquiries@googlegroups.com prior to participation, declaring the student’s choice.)

IMPORTANT: Students must declare NACLO or another contest

In a given year, a student may only attempt to qualify for one national IOL team, per IOL Regulations. A student may participate in more than one IOL-qualifying contest, but must declare before each one which national team they intend to qualify for. **Therefore**, if a student is participating in NACLO and an IOL-qualifying contest in any other country (e.g., UKLO in the United Kingdom) in the current year, they

² In some cases, a student may be dually enrolled at a high school and a college/university, or may be attending a college/university to earn their high school diploma. Students in situations like these may still be eligible for NACLO – please contact nacloinquiries@googlegroups.com for more information.

must declare their choice by emailing nacloinquiries@googlegroups.com prior to the NACLO Open Round (January 28, 2027). If no email is received before this date, the student will by default be considered **ineligible** for both NACLO-selected IOL teams (Canada Anglophone and U.S.).

IMPORTANT: Canada Anglophone and Francophone teams

If you have a Canadian student interested in participating, you should decide, based on the language you speak at home and your language of education, whether you are eligible for the Canada Anglophone (English-language) or Francophone (French-language) IOL Team, and participate in NACLO or [OLCF](#), respectively, according to your linguistic identity. If you are eligible to participate in both contests and decide to do so, you must notify the organizers of both contests ahead of time and declare which is your intended IOL-qualifying contest (see previous paragraph), or you risk disqualification from both contests.

7. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How does a student register for the competition?

Students should register at <https://reg.naclo.org/>. See the Student Handbook ([link](#)) for more information. Students must enter the required information, including an email address which they regularly monitor because NACLO may use it to send updates throughout the year. Students **must select** a site to participate in from the site drop down menu. Students may register to participate at their own school (if it has a NACLO site), at a University Site (all of which accept all students), or any High School site which accepts all students (clearly specified next to their name). If no NACLO site is near a student, students can ask a teacher or staff member at their own school to assist them by hosting NACLO at their school.

Can younger students (e.g., middle school students) participate?

The competition is intended primarily for students in the 13–18 age group. Students younger than 13 are welcome to participate too, but they may participate only with parental permission, and should be aware that NACLO is a challenging contest intended primarily for older students. If you are under 13 and interested in NACLO, please register online and enter a parent/guardian's email address when prompted. We will then reach out to the parent in accordance with FERPA regulations. See the Student Handbook ([link](#)) for more information.

How many problems should participants expect?

Participants should expect anywhere from 6 to 10 problems in each Round (Open and Invitational). The problems are generally harder in the Invitational Round.

What problem types should participants expect?

Students may encounter the following problem types; however, this list is not exhaustive, and they may also get problems of other types. The problems will contain all information required for solving them, and no specialized linguistic knowledge will be needed.

- *Translation problems:* A problem includes a set of sentences in a foreign language and their translations into English, which may be in order or out of order. The task is to learn as much as possible from these translations and then translate other given sentences to or from English. Note that the foreign language may have “tricky” structure and grammar. For example, German sentences often end in verbs. Japanese speakers use different terms for their own family than for someone else’s family. Some languages do not use any equivalent of “the” or any equivalent of “to be”. Others treat animate and inanimate objects differently. Be prepared to figure out these unfamiliar features from the text.
- *Number problems:* A problem includes foreign sentences that describe basic arithmetic facts, such as “six times four is twenty-four,” and the task is to figure out how to translate different numbers and expressions. Some languages use bases other than ten; others use different words for the same number depending on the objects being counted, etc.
- *Writing systems:* The task is to figure out how a particular writing system works and then use it to write out a given text, such as an ancient inscription. Some languages are written right to left or top to bottom, others do not use vowels, etc.
- *Calendar systems:* The task is to figure out what calendar was used by a particular civilization based on sentences that refer to it.
- *Phonological problems:* The task is to figure out the patterns in the sound system of a language.
- *Computational problems:* The task is to develop a procedure to perform a particular linguistic task in a way that can be carried out by a computer.
- *Other types:* Deciphering kinship systems, transcribing spoken dialogue, associating sentences with images, translating unknown languages from scratch, and many other types of problems.

Where can I find example problems and related materials?

You can find more than 300 past problems on the main website under “[Practice Problems](#).” You can find even more problems by searching for the “International Linguistics Olympiad” online.

By searching for NACLO on YouTube, you will find some videos that give an overview of NACLO and a few videos that walk through how to solve a NACLO problem.

What knowledge and skills do participants need?

Participants need logical thinking and problem-solving ability, as well as basic general knowledge, such as arithmetic and standard calendars. Participants do not need prior knowledge of linguistics, computer science, programming, or foreign languages.

How many people participate in NACLO?

In 2026, 1,800+ students participated at over 200 sites.

What happens if a participant does well?

If a participant earns a high score at the Open Round, they will advance to the Invitational Round. Participants will be notified if invited to participate in the Invitational Round. Student scores on the Invitational Round, potentially along with additional assessments, will be used to select four or eight US students and four Canadian students to represent the United States and Canada Anglophone at the International Linguistics Olympiad, provided they meet IOL eligibility requirements (see "IOL eligibility" section). Team members will be expected to participate in weekly online practices from early May to mid-July.

If participants advance to the International Linguistics Olympiad, do they have to pay for their trip?

NACLO always tries to raise funds to cover travel expenses so that IOL team members do not need to pay. In most recent years, grants and donations, including by the US National Science Foundation (NSF), have paid all the expenses for the two US teams. We also actively engage in fundraising to cover the Canada Anglophone team. However, we may not always succeed in our fundraising efforts. Therefore, if a student is selected for the team (US or Canada), we will inform them about the funding situation and let them know whether they will need to find additional sources of funding.

How well did the United States teams do at the IOL from 2007 to 2026?

The United States first participated in the IOL in 2007. From 2007 to 2026, the U.S.A won 103 Individual Contest medals (30 gold – the most of any country, 40 silver, 33 bronze); 14 Team Contest trophies (8 gold, 5 silver, 1 bronze); and numerous other awards.

You can find more information about the results at <https://ioling.org/results/USA> and the press releases on the NACLO website.

How well did Canada and Canada Anglophone do at the IOL?

Canada participated in the IOL as a single team ("Canada," selected by NACLO) from 2011 to 2016. Starting in 2017, Canada has sent two separate teams to the IOL ("Canada Anglophone," selected by NACLO, and "Canada Francophone", selected by [OLCF](#)). From 2011 to 2026, the two NACLO-selected Canadian teams won 26 Individual Contest medals (7 gold, 7 silver, 12 bronze); 2 Team Contest trophies (1 silver, 1 bronze); and numerous other awards. Canada Anglophone won the award for the highest

average score on the individual contest during the 2026 IOL, including the 2nd and 3rd place medalists and the highest average score of any team since USA Red in 2019.

You can find more information about the results at <https://ioling.org/results/CAN> and <https://ioling.org/results/CEN>.

What if my question was not answered above?

If you have further questions, please contact nacloinquiries@googlegroups.com.