

# TEAM COORDINATOR GUIDE

# LOUDER THAN A BOMB

## Massachusetts (MA)

### POETRY SLAM

is the competitive art of performance poetry (aka spoken word poetry). Individuals or teams perform their own original work without use of props, costumes or musical accompaniment. Five judges score each piece from zero to ten (using decimal points, 8.3, 9.2 etc) putting equal emphasis on quality of writing and performance. Low & high scores are dropped, the remaining three scores are added up to determine the poet's final score.

### HISTORY

Poetry slam was invented by Chicago poet, Marc Smith, in the mid 1980's. By the early 1990's, poetry slam had sparked a national movement. Youth poetry slams started in communities across the country. The Brave New Voices International Youth Poetry Slam Festival (BNV) began in 1997, and The Louder Than A Bomb Youth Poetry Slam Festival (LTAB) began in Chicago in 2001. These slam festival models are now being used across the country. The Massachusetts Literary Education and Performance Collective (MassLEAP) started the first Louder Than A Bomb Festival in Massachusetts in 2012. Currently, poetry slams take place at hundreds of certified venues throughout the United States. International tournaments, college tournaments, individual tournaments are also proliferating throughout the world.

### LOUDER THAN A BOMB ORIGIN

Co-founded by Young Chicago Authors organizers Anna West & Kevin Coval in Chicago in 2001, began with only four schools competing on one night. Fifteen years later, LTAB is now the largest poetry slam festival in the world, with over 120 schools and 1000 young people participating over the course of several weeks every year. The name of the festival honors a song by radical rap group, Public Enemy. The central idea being that young people's voices in unison are louder than any act of violence or hate inflicted upon them. LTAB brings young people together across political and geographical boundaries. Students surmount cultural and socio-economic differences to take part in an experience where young writers learn about themselves while listening to the words of others. A shared love of writing and performing creates lasting bonds. These things are possible because LTAB combines friendly competition with a grounded, contemporary, populist approach to poetry.

# FIELDING AN LTAB MA TEAM

**REPRESENTATION:** Each team must represent a school, church or community organization dedicated to serving teens in Massachusetts. Each entity may only register one team. (Example, a school cannot field two different teams).

**AGE:** Participants must be between the ages of 13 and 19.

**TEAM:** Each team must have a minimum of 4-6 youth who are eligible to compete in the tournament. Teams are encouraged to include 2 additional alternates (who are invited to participate in all events, but may not compete unless a team member drops during the tournament).

**AFFILIATION:** Team members must be affiliated with the school or organization they're representing.

**ADULT COACHES/CHAPERONES:** Teams must have 1-2 coaches/chaperones who serve as point people for the communities they represent (teachers, school employees, parents w/ written school acknowledgment). New coaches/chaperones must attend two community meetings before the festival. All coaches are required to attend the mandatory coaches meeting before the festival.

We celebrate student leaders who help organize, however, attendees must be accompanied by adults at the festival. Parental permission forms & media waivers will be provided ahead of time and need to be submitted before the festival.

**REGISTRATION COSTS:** \$150 per team. Registration covers festival tee shirts for all team members (up to 8 poets, 2 coaches), as well as tickets for finals theater showcase. All other expenses (travel to festival, meals, etc) need to be covered by teams unless otherwise communicated by festival organizers.

**CROSSING THE STREET:** Required opening ceremony for participation in Louder than a Bomb. The festival is much more than the competition. CTS (for short) brings all these youth together before the tournament to engage with each other, cypher, high five, participate workshops, write & eat together and celebrate one another before a single score is given.

**TEAM POEMS:** Each team is responsible for having one "individual" poem prepared for each member of the team. Also, each team must have a group poem, a collaborative, multi-voice piece in which 4 team members perform on stage at once. Everyone on the team may be involved with the writing of the piece, but only active team members are allowed to perform the piece on stage. At minimum, a team needs 4 individual poems and one team poem.

## COMPETITION:

- Each team will compete in 2 separate preliminary matches. There are 4-6 eligible poets on your team w/ up to 2 alternates.
- In each poetry slam bout (match) there are 4 "individual poem" rounds (in which every team competes) & one "team poem" round.
- Poets may be used interchangeably during prelims.  
(Example: Your poets are A,B,C,D,E,& F. Your team is competing in bouts 2 & 11.)

In bout **2**, you may elect to compete w/ individual poems from A,B,C & D.  
In bout **11**, you may compete w/ individual poems from C,D,E & F.

In both bouts, your group poem has poets A,B,E & F. (or any 4 members from your 6 member team may perform in the group poem round). **\*\*You cannot send a team member to perform twice as an individual in a given bout.\*\***

- Team bout order: 4 teams in each bout. A representative from each team will draw for order before the start of the bout. Teams will receive an "A", "B", "C" or "D". The order for each bout will follow the following formula, to ensure that no team leads off each round.

Round 1 Order:	A,B,C,D	(individual round)
Round 2 Order:	B,C,D,A	(individual round)
Round 3 Order:	C,D,A,B	(individual round)
Round 4 Order:	D,A,B,C	(individual round)
Round 5 Order:	A,B,C,D	(*team piece round)

- **Alternates in competition:** can only compete if a member of your team has to drop out of the tournament. Coaches must communicate with tournament director if an alternate is to take the place of a team member. Once an alternate takes a team member's place, that team member is not eligible to compete in the tournament.
- **Bout logistics:** Ideally, there will be 4 teams in each bout. However, there may be circumstances in which bouts may have 3 or 5 teams involved. LTAB organizers will communicate with team coaches ahead of time if such a case arises. Each bout will have a host, a bout manager and 5 judges. All concerns about a poetry slam bout should be discussed with them before a poetry slam bout begins.
- **Advancement:** After 5 rounds, a team's scores are determined cumulatively. (score of 150 is most possible for a team) For each individual poetry slam bout, a ranking will be assigned after each prelim. 1 for first, 2 for second, 3 for third, 4 for 4th etc. After two prelim bouts, the top 16 lowest cumulative ranked will be invited to compete in semi-finals. (tie breakers for final spots will be determined by cumulative scores from both prelim bouts). Semi-finals teams must win their semi-final bout to advance to team championship finals. Semi-final ties for first place will be broken with a tie breaker round, in which teams must select a poem not used in that semi final bout. (i.e. a poet who performed in round one can perform again with a different poem, or if your team has a different group poem, you may select that)
- **Repeat Rule:** An LTAB team may repeat any of their prepared poems throughout both prelims, semis and finals. No repeats during any one bout however.

# LTAB MA POETRY SLAM RULES

**TIME:** Each poem must be under 3 minutes in length. After a 10 second grace period, poems will be penalized half a point for every ten seconds over time. (example: a poem clocking in at 3 minutes 32 seconds will receive a 1.5 time penalty).

**INTRODUCTION:** LTAB, we encourage poets to introduce their piece before the poem begins (name, age, school, title, dedication). The clock starts when the poem starts. If this introduction strays beyond those parameters, bout managers will be instructed to start the clock.

**PLAGIARISM:** Participants must perform pieces of their own original creation. Participants who plagiarize will be disqualified. Quoting other people's works and utilizing literary or pop cultural allusions is not plagiarism.

**PROPS, COSTUMES OR MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT:** may NOT be used in the slam and will incur penalties. Poetry slammers ARE allowed to sing, scat, beat box, clap hands or make whatever sounds they can using their own bodies or microphone to compliment their words.

**CONTENT & LANGUAGE:** LTAB MA strives to create a family friendly, welcoming and accessible event for the public. We work to create safe spaces for speakers and listeners alike. With that in mind, profanity, hate speech and discriminatory language is prohibited by way of point deductions. If you use language that festival organizers deem as a curse word or hateful against another group of people, you will be deducted a full point per infraction. If you have questions, please contact festival organizers for clarification.

**JUDGES:** Teams will be asked to provide community members to serve as judges for prelim bouts in which they are not competing. Semi finals and finals, judge panels will be selected from greater community members including educators, artists, youth and in some instances random audience members. Judges should in no way be affiliated with a participating team. If a team is aware of a conflict, they need to relate that to host or bout manager.

**PROTESTS:** All possible rule infractions or protests must be lodged with bout manager after the bout is over (do not interrupt a poetry slam during the slam). Bout manager will review the complaint with the tournament staff before making a decision regarding potential consequences. Tournament staff will then communicate with coaches involved before any decision is announced.

# LTAB MA RECOMMENDATIONS

**MEMORIZATION:** Memorize and perform your poems just like you would a theatrical piece! There will be no point deductions for reading off paper but poets are scored off of their writing and performance. A performance is enhanced when poets can connect with their audience.

**READING YOUR POEMS:** If your poet feels more comfortable reading their piece, PLEASE encourage them to print their poems on paper. Tablets run low on batteries, cell phones get cell phone calls during performances, etc. Print their poems for them.

**GET READY:** Don't start a poem until you're ready. Make sure the microphone(s) are well placed and that the audience & judges can hear you. Allow the host to assist if you need help.

**REHEARSE:** Is not just for practice, set up a community event or two before LTAB, so poets can practice performing for an audience.

**RESPECT & SAFE SPACE:** Be mindful that these youth poets are representing your community. Coaches set the pace by actively listening and cheering on other poets & teams, respecting other people's lived experiences, even if they do not necessarily reflect your own views or experience. Poetry slam is subjective, please do not get caught up in the scores and competition. Let's remember that stepping out of one's writing journal and sharing their art and listening to others is a profound act. These young people habitually prove that. Your job as a coach/chaperone is to honor their brilliance and help ensure this experience is a safe & positive one.

**COMMUNICATION:** There are very few issues our organizers cannot work around as long as we know about it ahead of time. Most of our organizers are only part time or volunteer, so please be patient with our team, we will do our best to communicate with you quickly and efficiently.

Remember...

*"The points are not the point! The point is the poetry!"*

