The TSA Competitive Event Interview

An interview is an element of many TSA competitive events, typically in the semifinalist portion of an event. Interviews are conducted by evaluators, who question an individual, a select number of team members, or all the members of a team – as designated in a competition's guidelines. Refer to the specific rules for each competitive event for important information about interview regulations; refer to each competition's rubric for interview judging criteria.

- For team events, know in advance (from reading the rules of an event) the number of team members allowed to be present during an interview.

- **Myth: The interview is a presentation about your competition entry.** While you may be asked to present an overview of your project, the interview is more about specific questions from evaluators and your answers to those questions. At the point of an interview, evaluators already have familiarized themselves with your entry – and viewed your product/display/documentation. In the interview, judges are looking for details. To prepare for the interview, expect questions to come from one or more of these areas:

  - For a team event, the role of each of the team members (who did what)
  - How your idea/project was developed
  - The process involved in creating the entry (such as coding, or the use of CAD and modeling)
  - The real-world implications of your research/idea

Example interview questions:

- How did you decide to pursue the specific theme of the project?
- How did you prioritize the workload for this project?
- What skills were important to ensure the completion of this project?
- If you documented the progress of the project, what was the method of documentation?
- What did you team learn from completing this project?
- If this project experienced failure while being developed, how did you handle the failure?
- How could this project have an impact on elements in the real world?

General interview tips:

- Practice responding to possible interview questions before the actual interview.
- Answer the question asked by an evaluator. Don't ramble or segue to another topic.
- Be precise; articulate the answer.
- Be aware of your physical presence, such as posture, appearance (neat/untidy), etc.