



Medicine Bowl and Biology Bowl Rules

1. The Questions

1-1. Two types of questions will be used: toss-up questions, worth 4 points, and bonus questions, worth 10 points. A toss-up question may be answered by any of the 4 members of either team that are actively competing. A team answering a toss-up question correctly will always get a chance to answer a bonus question; the other team is ineligible. No communication among team members is allowed on toss-up questions, but communication is allowed on bonus questions. The Medicine Bowl question categories are: Molecular Cell Biology, Human Physiology, and Human Disease. The Biology Bowl question categories are: Cells, Genetics, Evolution & Classification, Microorganisms, Plants, Animals & Behavior, The Human Body, and Ecology.

1-2. No team will have more than one opportunity to answer a toss-up question. If neither team answers a toss-up correctly, the moderator will proceed to the next toss-up question.

1-3. Questions are either multiple-choice or short-answer. A participant may answer a multiple-choice question with either the letter answer (W, X, Y or Z) or the verbal answer; however, if the verbal answer is given, it must be exactly as indicated in the question or as read by the moderator. The only acceptable answer to a multiple-choice question will be the best of the 4 choices indicated in the question.

1-4. Once read in its entirety, a question will not be re-read.

1-5. For toss-up questions, the first player on either team to “buzz in” earns the right to answer the question, except that no player may buzz in until AFTER the moderator has identified the subject area of the question. If a player buzzes in prior to the reading of the subject area, the moderator will inform the player that they have buzzed in too soon, and may add time back to the clock, if necessary.



1-6. On any toss-up or bonus question, the first response given, as determined by the officials, is the only one that counts. However, if a participant gives both a letter answer and a scientific answer to a multiple-choice question, both parts must be correct. Any prefacing remarks that do not directly answer the question, such as “my answer is” or repeating the question, will be considered delaying the game and counted as an incorrect answer. (Note: a very short “um”, “er”, or vocal stumble is acceptable, provided the officials do not consider it delaying the game.) The moderator may interrupt a player in the process of giving an incorrect answer at any time, so as to continue the flow of the game.

1-7. If the first team’s answer to a toss-up question is wrong and the question was completely read, the other team is given the opportunity to answer it. The second team is allowed another 5 seconds to buzz in after the moderator indicates the answer is wrong or that a blurt or communication has occurred.

1-8. The answer to a bonus question must come from the team’s captain. The moderator must ignore an answer from anyone but the captain on the bonus question. If the moderator inadvertently responds to someone other than the captain while indicating whether an answer is correct, or to the captain before the answer is being given, the officials will replace the game time used in that bonus, and the next bonus question will be read to the team playing the bonus. If this situation occurs on the last question of the round, the officials will obtain a replacement bonus question.

1-9. The team that is not playing a bonus question or that has lost its opportunity at a toss-up question must not distract the opposing team while it hears and answers the question. If the non-playing team engages in behavior that is visually, verbally, or audibly distracting, the opposing team will be awarded the following:

- a) For toss-up questions: 4 points for the toss-up question, the option of having 20 additional seconds run off the clock, and the opportunity to answer the bonus question. The moderator will then proceed to the next toss-up.
- b) For bonus questions: 10 points for the bonus question and the option of having 40 additional seconds run off the clock. The moderator will then proceed to the next toss-up.



During each round, each team will be allowed one “accidental” buzz during questions for the opposing team. The first accidental buzz by a team during a game will not extend the period the opposing team has to play its toss-up or bonus question. All subsequent accidental buzzes by that team during questions will be called distractions.

2. Verbal Recognition & Communication

2-1. The only player who may answer a toss-up question is the one who has buzzed in first. Before answering a toss-up question, the team member who has buzzed in must be verbally recognized by the moderator or scientific judge. (Before the match, the official who will be recognizing participants will be identified.) If a player from a team that has buzzed in answers before being recognized, it is termed a blurt and the moderator will award 4 points to the opposing team, but will not indicate whether the answer was correct or not. (Involuntary sounds such as sneezes will be ignored.) The toss-up question is then offered to the opposing team, if still eligible. If the question has not been completely read, the question is reread in its entirety, and the opposing team has an opportunity to answer the toss-up question, and, if correct, a chance to answer the bonus question.

2-2. On toss-up questions, no communication among team members may occur. Prior to buzz: Should communication among any of the team members occur without a team member buzzing in, or if any team member should give an answer without buzzing in, any answer given does not count, the moderator will not indicate whether the answer given was correct or not, and the team loses the right to answer the toss-up question. The question is then offered to the opposing team, if still eligible. After a buzz: If communication occurs, the communication is then classified as a blurt as in Rule 2-1, and 4 penalty points will be awarded to the opposing team.

2-3. If both teams are eligible to answer a toss-up question, a player has buzzed in, and a player from the opposing team gives an answer, the answer of the second player will be treated as communication without buzzing in, as in Rule 2-2. If the



team of the player who incorrectly answers was ineligible for the toss-up question, this is treated as a distraction. (See Rule 1-9.)

2-4. If the moderator inadvertently gives the answer to a toss-up question without giving either team a chance to respond, the moderator will proceed to the next toss-up question. If this situation occurs on the last question of a round, the officials will obtain a replacement toss-up question.

2-5. For a toss-up question, after an incorrect answer or a blurt, if the moderator inadvertently gives the answer before allowing the second team to respond, the next toss-up question will be read to the second team in place of the inadvertently answered question. If this situation occurs on the last question of a round, the officials will obtain a replacement toss-up question.

2-6. On a toss-up question, if the moderator inadvertently recognizes a player other than the one who buzzed in, the player who buzzed in will be allowed to answer as though they had been correctly recognized. If the player who was inadvertently recognized answers the question and is from the same team as they player who buzzed in, it will be considered a blurt, with 4 points awarded to the opposing team. If the player who was inadvertently recognized answers the question and is from the opposite team as they player who buzzed in, it will be treated as in Rule 2-3.

3. Timing

3-1. The match is played until either the time expires or all of the toss-up questions (and earned bonuses for correct toss-ups) have been read. The matches at the Biology Bowl and the Medicine Bowl, except for the championship round, will have two 8-minute halves with a 2-minute break. Halves in the championship round will be 10 minutes with a 2-minute break. Each half begins with a toss-up question.

3-2. After reading a toss-up question, the moderator will allow 5 seconds for the 2 teams to respond before proceeding to the next toss-up question. Timing begins after the moderator has completed reading the toss-up question, including all choices on a multiple-choice question.



3-3. A participant who has buzzed in on a toss-up question must answer the question promptly after being verbally recognized by the moderator or scientific judge. After recognizing a participant, the moderator will allow for a natural pause (up to 2 seconds), but if the moderator determines that stalling has occurred, it will be treated as a wrong answer.

3-4. After a team member has answered a toss-up question correctly, the team is given the opportunity to answer a bonus question. The team will have 20 seconds for its captain to begin to give its answer to the bonus question; timing begins after the moderator has completed reading the bonus question, including all choices on a multiple-choice question.

3-5. On a bonus question, the signal “5 SECONDS” will be given by the timekeeper after 15 seconds of the allowed 20 seconds have elapsed. Additionally, the timekeeper will indicate the end of the 20-second bonus period by saying “TIME.” If the team captain has not begun the response before the timekeeper calls “TIME,” the answer does not count. If the team captain has begun the response, they may complete the answer, but must proceed through it without stalling.

3-6. If a toss-up question is begun before time expires in a half, that question will be finished under the usual rules of play, including the bonus if the toss-up is answered correctly. The half is then over. A question will be considered to have been begun if the subject area has been completely read. The second half will begin with the first toss-up question not read in the first half.

3-7. Each half is 8 minutes. At 8 minutes, say “Game”. If team is in process of answering a question, just turn off the clock and announce “Game” when process of the question has been completed.



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Summary of Timing

Type of Question	Time Allowed
Toss-up	Teams have 5 seconds to buzz in after question is read. If no team has buzzed in, say "TIME".
Toss-up: Buzz in after Toss-up has been read	Must answer within natural pause (up to 2 seconds). If no answer, say "TIME".
Bonus	Team gets 20 seconds to discuss. After 15 seconds, Timer will announce "5 seconds". If no answer after 20 seconds, say "TIME".
End of Game	Each half is 8 minutes. At 8 minutes, say "Game". If team is in process of answering a question, just turn off the clock and announce "Game" when process of the question has been completed.

4. Scoring

4-1. Toss-up questions are worth 4 points, and bonus questions are worth 10 points.

4-2. If a toss-up question is interrupted (that is, not completely read by the moderator), the player is recognized, and the answer is correct, the team will receive 4 points. If the answer is incorrect, or if a player from the team buzzing in answers without being verbally recognized, or if communication occurs on the team buzzing in, 4 points are added to the opposing team's score. If it is still eligible for the toss-up, the opposing team will have the toss-up question re-read from the beginning, be given an opportunity to answer it, and, if correct, have an opportunity to answer the bonus question.

4-3. The double interrupt. If a toss-up question is interrupted and a team incurs a penalty as in the previous rule, 4 points are added to the opposing team's score. The moderator will then proceed to re-read the question from the beginning. However, if the opposing team buzzes in at any time before the re-reading is



completed and subsequently incurs a penalty as in the previous rule, 4 points are added to the first team's score, and the moderator will proceed to the next toss-up question.

4-4. Blurt penalties are 4 points awarded to the opposing team. (See Rule 2-1.)

4-5. For games that occur in the elimination tournaments, if the score is tied at the end of the match, a series of 5 toss-up questions will be used to break the tie. Usual toss-up timing and scoring rules and interrupt, blurt, and communication penalties are in effect during tie-breakers. There are no bonuses or game clock during tiebreakers. If the teams are still tied after the 5 questions, additional 5 toss-up question tiebreaker matches will be played until the tie is broken.

Summary of Scoring

Type of Question	Points Awarded
Correct Toss-up (or distraction by non-playing team) Incorrect Toss-up	+4 points & eligible for bonus question +0 points
Correct Bonus (or distraction by non-playing team) Incorrect Bonus	+10 points +0 points
Interrupted Toss-up: - Correct Answer - Incorrect Answer	+4 points & eligible for bonus question +4 points to opposing team
After a team member buzzes in: - Unrecognized Toss-up (Blurt) - Unrecognized Interrupted Toss-up (also a Blurt) - Communication among players	+4 points to opposing team
Before a team member buzzes in: - Answering a toss-up - Communication among players	+0 points, but team is disqualified from answering the toss-up



5. Challenges

5-1. Challenges must be made before the moderator begins the next question, or, for the last question of a half, within 3 seconds of the end of that half. No challenges may be made during the play of a question. All challenges must come from the 4 members of each team who are actively competing. The fifth team member, coach, and others associated with a team may not become involved in challenges or their discussion. If anyone associated with a team, other than the 4 active team members, initiates or discusses a challenge, the team will have the challenge ruled against it. All decisions of the judges are final. Note: Regardless of subsequent questions having begun, issues involving scoring errors or game clock management can be initiated by anyone in the room, until the game officially ends, three seconds after the final question is over. If such issues can be resolved, they may be corrected by the officials.

5-2. Challenges may be made either to scientific content (i.e., whether an answer is scientifically correct or not) or to the administration of the rules (e.g., whether the rules are being correctly interpreted and applied). Challenges may NOT be made to judgment calls by the officials, including but not limited to whether a question has been interrupted, whether 5 seconds have elapsed before a player buzzes in on a toss-up, whether 20 seconds have elapsed before a captain begins answering a bonus, whether the non-playing team has engaged in distracting behavior during a question, whether a half has expired before a new toss-up question begins, whether a stall or blurt has occurred, whether players have communicated during a toss-up, whether a player has given a first response, whether an answer has been pronounced correctly, whether an answer to a multiple-choice question is exact, whether time should be added back to the clock, whether a buzzer system has malfunctioned (and, if so, whether the first player to buzz in can be identified), or whether a non-playing audience member has shouted an answer, including whether the shouter is associated with one of the 2 teams.

5-3. Challenges to scientific content will be limited to 2 unsuccessful challenges per team per round, including tiebreaker questions. Successful challenges do not count against this limit. After the second unsuccessful challenge for a team during



a round, that team will not be allowed any further challenges to scientific content during that round. Challenges to rules may be made at any time a question is not in play; however, whether a scientific challenge has been made and whether it has been successful are judgment calls, and may not be challenged, as per Rule 5-2.

5-4. Should a question or challenge arise during a match, the match and the clock will be stopped until the question is resolved. Once the question has been resolved, the match will continue from that point. Should the moderator decide that some time was lost due to the interruption in play, an appropriate amount of time will be put back on the clock.

5-5. If a team's answer to a toss-up question is judged incorrect, and they wish to challenge the ruling on the basis of scientific content, but the opposing team is still eligible for the toss-up, the first team must hold its challenge until after the opposing team has completed its toss-up opportunity. The first team should then state its challenge before the next bonus or toss-up question is begun. If the challenge is denied, play will proceed as usual from the end of the second team's answer. If the challenge is upheld, the second team's answer will be disregarded, as will any scoring for either team due to the second team's answer, and the time lost since the first team's answer was disallowed will be put back on the clock. The first team will then be awarded 4 points and have the opportunity to answer the bonus question.

5-6. If a team's answer to a toss-up question is judged correct, the opposing team challenges the ruling on the basis of scientific content, and the challenge is upheld, the first team's answer will be treated as incorrect. If the second team is still eligible to answer the toss-up question, it will be read the next toss-up question. If this situation occurs on the last question of a round, the officials will obtain a replacement toss-up question.