



Chemistry Olympiad FAQs

Where and when will the exam be held?

Please see the current website information on the Chemistry Olympiad exam.

Can I register myself for the Local Section Exam (LSE)?

Yes, a small number of students will be allowed to self-register. Self-registration is for students wishing to participate who do not make the four-person team from their high school (the preferred method for participation). That registration will be open for 15 hours from 9:00 a.m. to 11:59 p.m. on the day following the closing of registration from county high schools.

Do I need a photo ID on the day of the exam?

Yes, IDs will be checked to verify identity.

Do I need a calculator?

Yes, but only scientific calculators may be used. No programmable or graphing calculators are allowed.

How long is the LSE exam and what format is it in?

The exam is multiple choice with a written tiebreaker at the end. It will last 2 hours maximum.

What is the policy on cell phones?

While we realize that students may need a phone to call for a ride at the end of the exam, **ALL CELL PHONES MUST BE TURNED OFF AND PUT AWAY** during the exam. If a student is found to have a cell phone that is on, s/he will be disqualified.

Can I leave to go to the restroom during the exam?

No, there are no bathroom breaks! Make sure you visit the restroom immediately before entering your assigned room.

Can the LSE be taken again in a subsequent year following the year it was originally taken?

Any high school student may retake the LSE, but they must either be nominated by their teacher as a member of their school's four-member team, a previous USNCO exam qualifier who competes individually, or self-registered.

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Can I take this exam if I am only a first-year student?

Yes, but this exam is primarily meant for advanced students – those who are in their second year of high school chemistry or beyond.

Do I have to be a U.S. citizen to take the exam?

This is not a requirement to take the LSE. However, a student must have U.S. citizenship ***OR*** have legal, permanent resident status (possess a green card) to continue and participate in the USNCO should s/he score among the top 10 students in Orange County on the LSE.

If I qualify among the top 10 students in Orange County, what is the next step?

If you are a U.S. citizen or permanent resident, then you will be invited to take the USNCO, which will be given on a Saturday in mid-April from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The USNCO exam will contain both written and laboratory portions.

What happens if there is a tie between 2 or more students from my school on the LSE, or a tie for 10th place?

A written tiebreaker question designed by university faculty will be used to break all ties on the LSE.