

The United States Academic Decathlon® Calculator Policy for Curriculum Year 2025-2026

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

At the local, regional, and state levels, calculators may be used for the Mathematics and Super Quiz™ events, in accordance with USAD guidelines.

However, calculators will NOT be allowed on the Mathematics Test at the USAD National Finals. The National Mathematics test is being developed with accessible numbers and problem types that do not require a calculator. All items will be solvable using logical reasoning, estimation, basic computation, and written work.

The United States Academic Decathlon® Calculator Policy 2025-2026

The United States Academic Decathlon® has always endeavored to reflect current high school curriculum and instruction in our competitions. Recent surveys of calculator use in high schools nationwide indicate that calculators are now used in the vast majority of high school mathematics courses across the country, and our decision to allow calculators is consistent with this practice in math instruction.

After reviewing the policies of the major testing institutions and consulting state directors, the United States Academic Decathlon® has adapted MOST of the American College Testing (ACT) and College Board (SAT program) guidelines for calculator use as stated below.

I. Competitors May Use Calculators for the Mathematics Test

If competitors wish to use calculators on the United States Academic Decathlon® mathematics test and or Super Quiz™, they are responsible for bringing them to the test and/or Super Quiz™ Relay. Calculators will not be provided for students who do not bring their own. Calculator use is permitted only for mathematics and Super Quiz™ Relay; competitors will not be allowed to use calculators on any other test.

II. Permissible Calculators

If a competitor wishes to use a calculator, it can be a basic, four-function, scientific, or graphing calculator, provided it has none of the features listed in Section III below.

Calculator models with non-QWERTY keyboard are allowed. **Calculators with alphanumeric keys (such as the TI-Nspire and TI-84 plus) are acceptable.**

During the mathematics test, competitors are not permitted to refer to information that was stored in their graphing calculator memory prior to the test. Students wishing to utilize their graphing calculator's memory function during the mathematics test will be required to have the memory erased prior to entering the testing room and at the completion of the mathematics test.

III. Prohibited Calculators

Calculators with any of the following features are **NOT** allowed in the United States Academic Decathlon® competitions:

- pocket organizers

- hand-held or laptop computers
- electronic writing pads or pen-input devices
- models with QWERTY keyboard-like keypad, **e.g. TI-92 or HP-95**
- models with paper tape
- models that make noise
- models that can engage in wireless communication (transfer data or information with other calculators)
- models that require a power cord
- **models with CAS (computer algebra systems), e.g. TI-89 TI-Nspire CAS**

Because companies are continuously introducing new products, it would be impossible for the United States Academic Decathlon® to maintain an up-to-date list of specific model numbers that possess these features.

If a competitor is uncertain whether a particular calculator will be allowed, the student should bring a backup that does not possess any of the features in question. No backup calculator will be provided for any competitor whose calculator is disallowed. Backup calculators that are approved by USAD may be taken into the testing arena, but can only be used if the primary approved calculator fails.

IV. Competing without a Calculator

Competitors may opt to take the Mathematics Test without a calculator, however, the United States Academic Decathlon® is suggesting competitors use a basic, scientific, or graphing calculator for solving the mathematics test items.

V. Calculator Failure During a Test

If a competitor's calculator stops working during a test, the student should continue taking the test without a calculator. No additional calculator will be provided, and the competitor will not be allowed to take the test again later. However, as noted in Section III above, a competitor may bring a backup calculator and/or spare batteries to the test.