

DEF CON CTF QUALS 2026 RULES



May 22, 21:00 UTC - May 24, 21:00 UTC

1. The top 12 teams from DEF CON Qualifiers will be selected for DEF CON finals.
2. You must have a valid point of contact with a reachable email, where we will reach out to you to confirm your qualification. If you decline the invitation or don't answer by 1 week after the end of the quals, we will move on to the next team up.
3. In order to qualify, you will be required to submit writeups by 1 week after the end of quals. Writeups must be primarily written by humans; if you choose to be assisted by an LLM, please clearly specify the prompts and inputs you used. Asking an LLM to write the whole writeup for you will not be considered.
4. Our primary method of communication is Discord. NOTE: we will use a server that is separate from the official DEF CON discord! A link will be available on the contest website when registration goes live.
5. Sharing flags/solutions/ideas/... with other teams is explicitly prohibited and will result in a disqualification from this year's competition.
6. No team size limit.

7. All participants of a team must only use one team account.
8. Attacking contest/organizer infrastructure is prohibited. If you find a bug in the infrastructure, please report it to us.
9. See our AI/LLM/agent policy below.
10. Any teams with an institutional conflict (e.g., teams affiliated with any of the sponsors of BBB) are ineligible to participate in DEF CON CTF, due to inescapable conflicts of interest.
11. Don't be a jerk (e.g., preventing other people from having fun, preventing our problems from functioning, etc.) - being one will result in a disqualification.
12. If you think you have a valid flag that the system rejects, please contact us.
13. Flag format is bbb{...} unless otherwise specified.
14. If you're not sure about anything in the rules, ask us.
15. We reserve the right to change or amend these rules as we see fit.
16. GL HF DD!

AI/LLM/AGENT POLICY

1. **Fully/primarily autonomous teams are disallowed, and might result in a disqualification.** Humans may use any tools they wish (including LLM-based tools). However, simply/only saying "yes" to AI/agent prompts is explicitly insufficient to be considered "a tool used by a human". We reserve the right to disqualify teams that attempt to circumvent the spirit of this rule.
2. **Players may choose to identify themselves on a human-only (no LLM usage) scoreboard for which they may self-select when they register for the competition.** Note that this scoreboard is for flair only; it will not be factored into qualification for DEF CON finals in August. We will provide this scoreboard and assume those who choose to use it will self-report on an honors-based system.

This policy has not been created in a vacuum, and is intended to be a reflection and representation of the community and its values. We would like to credit the efforts of the organizers of Srdnlen CTF, Kalmar CTF, RITSEC CTF, Dice CTF, Lake CTF, B01lers CTF, and others, for their exploration of AI policies in CTFs.

FINALS

The following is a non-exhaustive list of rules for finals. Official rules and policies will be disseminated after quals.

1. The top 12 teams of quals will not receive any prizes outside of qualification for finals.
2. Exact details subject to change, but 4 hotel rooms expected to accommodate 8 people will be covered for each qualified team. Flights will not be provided.
3. Each qualified team will be provided exactly 8 badges on-site.