



Common Penalty Point Mistakes:
Review for Prepared Events
November 14, 2025

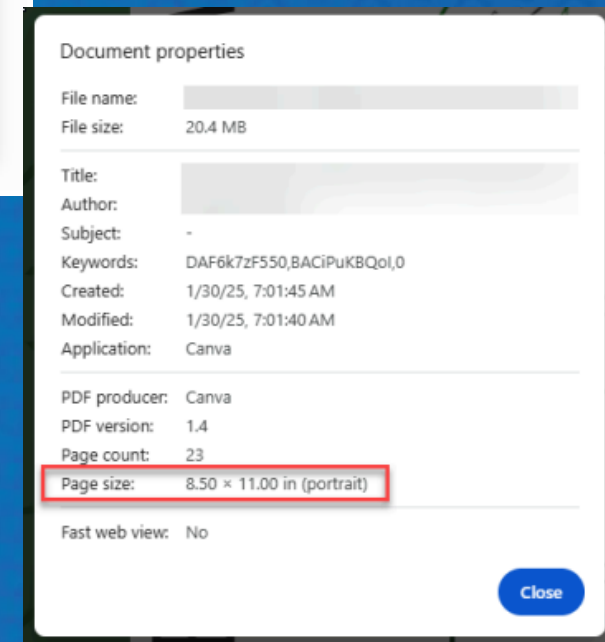
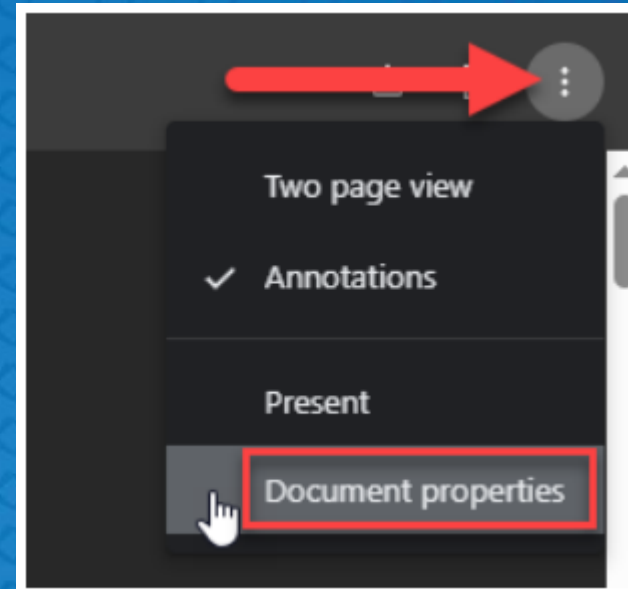
Last year Virginia DECA received **1,415** penalty points across **211** prepared events at SLC...

10 of those events were finalists.

Most Common Mistakes - Papers

#1: PAGE SIZE - must be 8.50 x 11.00 in. It cannot be smaller or larger. This is individually checked on every submission.

To confirm page size: open the pdf document, click on the three dots in the upper right-hand corner, select Document Properties from the dropdown, review Page size.



Most Common Mistakes - Papers

#2: MISSING INFORMATION ON TITLE PAGE - This is considered a requirement under the “written entry follows the outline in the Written Entry Guidelines for the event.” Failure to list ALL of the required information will result in a penalty:

- Name of the event (ex: BUSINESS GROWTH PLAN)
- Name of high school
- School address
- City, State/Province, ZIP/Postal Code
- Name(s) of participant(s)
- Date ***THIS SHOULD BE AN ACTUAL DATE WITH APPROPRIATE MONTH/DAY/YEAR OF COMPETITION. Many submissions notes just a year (ex: 2026) or just a month/year (ex: March 2026). A FULL DATE SHOULD BE LISTED (ex: February 28, 2026).***

Most Common Mistakes - Papers

#3: PAGE NUMBERS - Several penalties could be assessed for incorrect page numbers.

- Page numbers must **START** on the Executive Summary page. There should be **NO** page number (including the number zero) on the Title Page or Table of Contents.
- Page numbers are numbered in sequence. Check **EVERY** page, many submissions at SLC skipped page numbers in the document and/or listed pages out of order.
- **NO separate or blank pages between sections or as title pages for sections.** This includes blank pages at the start or the end of the document - **REMOVE THEM.**

Most Common Mistakes - Papers

#4: STATEMENT OF ASSURANCES (SoA) - must be signed by all participants and the chapter advisor. Because Virginia requires a digital submission, the SoA should be submitted as a separate document.

- Only physical signatures or digital signatures will be accepted. Typed names in a font will not be accepted as signatures.
- CHECK the correct EVENT is listed.
- CHECK the correct SoA is being used! The SoA is updated every year by DECA. Number 6 on the document should read *"All activities or original research described in this entry took place between the 2025 Chartered Association Career Development Conference and the 2026 Chartered Association Career Development Conference."*

Pitch Decks enter the chat

1. The Prepared Event Statement of Assurances and Academic Integrity must be signed by all participants and the chapter advisor and turned in with the pitch deck. Only physical signatures or digital signatures will be accepted. Typed names in a font will not be accepted as signatures. (same as with papers)
2. Limited to 20 slides.
3. All slides are numbered in sequence starting with the title slide and ending with the final slide of the appendix. (This slightly differs from papers; the cover slide is included in the total count, **HOWEVER**, it does not need to be numbered and the title slide must begin with the number "2")

Pitch Decks enter the chat

4. The pitch deck follows the outline in the Pitch Deck Guidelines for the event. Additional subsections are permitted. (just like the “missing information” mistake in papers)
5. The pitch deck must be typed and use a **16:9** aspect ratio at **1920 pixels wide by 1080 pixels tall**. Handwritten correction, notes, charts and graphs will be penalized. **PRO TIP:** When converting the slide pitch deck to a PDF **use the export option** instead of print as a PDF to ensure it remains in the 16:9 aspect ratio (just like page size in papers- this will most likely be the top penalty point category for pitch decks).

These are not ALL the penalties, just the most common.

- Competitors (and advisors) should be diligent in reviewing their prepared events. See DECA's [Advisor Guide to Avoiding Penalty Points](#) as well as the [Pitch Decks: FAQ](#).
- In addition to the advisor, have at least two (2) other people review the event using the [Penalty Point Checklist](#).
- Remember - even one penalty can be the difference between taking 1st place or missing the stage entirely!

Good luck Virginia!

