

Individual Events Judging Instructions



Thank you for judging! We're so glad that you're making this commitment to the students' education. Prepare for an entertaining, informative, and uplifting experience as you watch students with a broad range of experience practice their communication skills.

WHY AM I NEEDED?

Each school is obligated to provide a certain number of judges for the tournament based upon the total number of entries from that school. Every school's judges are placed within a "judging pool." You will be asked to judge competitors from *other* schools, although occasionally, you might be sent to a room that contains a competitor from your school.

WHAT DO I NEED TO BRING?

In order to judge, you need just a few basic supplies:

- Two or three pens or pencils (just in case one breaks!) for filling out your *Ballots* and writing comments.
- A timepiece for timing the speeches—either a digital watch with a stopwatch function OR any other timepiece or timer that you can easily track.
- A book, newspaper, project, or any other material of your choice to fill any waiting time between rounds

WHAT IF I'VE NEVER JUDGED BEFORE?

Don't worry! We want the students to learn to communicate with all sorts of audiences. The *Ballot*, or ranking sheet you will receive when you judge a round, will contain a list of criteria for how to judge each event. Read it and observe the competitors' overall communication skills. Then, rank the students in the order that you think they were best, and...ta da!...you're a judge! While each round has importance, don't worry if you are unsure when ranking students. A competitor's success never hinges on just one round.

You will have the opportunity to give each competitor feedback on written *Comment Sheets*, which they will receive after the awards ceremony. As we all know, students are most receptive to feedback when suggestions for improvement are balanced with praise, and we hope your recommendations will encourage them to continue their hard work. You will never have to orally explain or justify your rankings or comments to the students.

WHAT ARE INDIVIDUAL EVENTS?

"Individual Events" are the speech portion of "Speech and Debate." Three categories of speeches comprise Individuals Events, and within each category there are two or more different types of speeches.

- ✓ *Original Speeches*—Original speeches are written by the student.
- ✓ *Interpretive Speeches*—Interpretative speeches are interpretations of published plays, poetry, short stories, or speeches. (Like acting but without props, costumes, or scenery. Vocal, facial, and bodily expression is key.)
- ✓ *Spontaneous Speeches*—Spontaneous speeches are composed at the tournament itself under strict and short time constraints.

Individual Events Judging Instructions

HOW DO TOURNAMENTS WORK?

Preliminary Rounds: Six or seven students competing in the same event are randomly assigned to the first and second round, and at a specified time they will be instructed to go to a classroom to compete. One judge will be sent to the room to judge the round. The judge will listen to all the speeches and rank the competitors in the round from 1st through 3rd, then tie the remaining speakers at 4th place (there can be no ties for 1st, 2nd or 3rd place). A judge will not judge the same event during a tournament.

Semi Final and Final Rounds and Overall Placement: After the preliminary rounds, scores are tabulated to determine the top students (usually fourteen) in each speech event. These students compete in the semifinal round. The top students in the semifinal round (usually seven) compete in the fourth or final round. The finalists are ranked from 1st through 7th place based on how well they did in both the preliminary and final rounds.

Please be on time! Competitors from your school may not be able to compete if you are late or absent.

WHAT SHOULD I DO WHEN I GET TO THE TOURNAMENT?

1. At the entrance to the tournament school, look for a sign or greeter to direct you toward **The Judges' Room**.
2. Register at the Judges' Registration Table. You will be asked:
 - Your name, ☺
 - The school for which you are judging
3. Please wait in the Judges' Room until you are called to judge a particular event.
 - Due to the number of contestants and judges that we must accommodate, we are unable to assign judges to their preferred events.
 - If you leave the Judges' Room and are not present when called, your school may face consequences, such as speakers not advancing in the tournament.
4. When you are called, **take the *Ballot and Comment Sheets* with you to your assigned room**. If more than one judge is assigned to your room, you should walk together to your room and return together.

IN GENERAL, HOW SHOULD I JUDGE INDIVIDUAL EVENTS?

1. **Tell the students to wait while you take a few moments to get ready to judge**. As soon as the following items are done, you are ready:
 - Allow the competitors who are assigned to your room to enter and find seats.**
 - Find a seat that gives you a clear view of the front of the room where the competitors will speak. Some judges like to sit near the front; others like to sit toward the back.
 - Double-check that you are not *closely* or *personally* acquainted with any of the speakers in the room. (If so, please return to the Judges' Room for reassignment.)
 - Check that all assigned judges have arrived.
 - Test your timepiece.
 - Place your pen/pencil and scratch paper on your desk along with the *Ballot and Comment Sheets*.
2. **Take "attendance"** and mark the students that are absent; however, some students may be competing in more than one event and will enter the room later in the round.

****NOTE:** Competitors for Extemporaneous Speaking arrive one-at-a-time and are not allowed to enter the contest room until it is their own turn to speak. As one competitor leaves, he/she invites the next speaker into the room.

Individual Events Judging Instructions

3. Call for the contestants to speak in the order listed on your ballot. Students will be identified by alphanumeric codes (e.g., A101) that keep their name and school name confidential. They typically speak in the order they are listed on your *Ballot*. Sometimes students who are "double-entered" (they are competing in two events) and those who are "triple-entered" (yes, that means they are competing in three events) will ask to speak out of turn.

However, do not rearrange the speaker codes on the ballot, even if students speak in an order different from the one listed.

4. Contestants will come to the front of the room and speak to you and the audience as a whole.

5. During the speeches:

- **Jot down notes.** Use these notes to prepare your Comment Sheets.
- **Time the speech.** Students might ask you for time signals. Be certain, though, that you do not orally give them time signals and that you do not interrupt overtime speakers. If the speech is overtime, allowing for a 30 second grace period, you should note this as a violation on the main ballot. Do not lower the speaker's rank for rule violations – note the violation and the tournament officials will assess any penalties. There is no *minimum* time limit, although extremely short speeches might be deemed undeveloped. *If the student's overtime status is due to audience reactions (i.e. laughter), please do not hold this against the student.*
- **Do not allow anyone to interrupt or otherwise disturb a speaker.** If severe distractions occur, please take these into account when evaluating the speaker's performance.

6. Ranking the Students:

- **On the *Ballot*, rank the speakers 1st – 4th** based upon the student's skills in overall communication as well as event-specific requirements and guidelines. (See the following section on Judging Guidelines.) 1st is for the best speaker. There can be no ties for 1st, 2nd, or 3rd place. Ties will occur for 4th.
- **If more than one judge is in the room, arrive at your decision independently.** Tournament officials will combine and tabulate your *Ballots*.
- **Do not discuss particular students' performances or rankings during or after the round with the competitors in the room (or with anyone at the tournament.)** All of your feedback should come only to the students in the written *Comment Sheets*.
- **Sign your *Ballot* and immediately and personally return it to the judges' room as soon as you have finished**—no more than 10 minutes after the round is over, otherwise the next round of students cannot be sent out, and ***the entire tournament may run overtime!***
- **You can finish writing any comments you have for the students on the *Comment Sheets* after you turn your *Ballot* in.**
- There may be a place on the *Comment Sheet* to rank the students 1st through 4th. Give the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th place speaker a tie for 4th place. Try to write at least one positive comment and one comment about an area that needs improvement.

7. **Please wait in the Judge's Room for your next judging assignment.** If you leave the Judges' Room and are not present when called, your school may face consequences.

Individual Events Judging Instructions

Original Events: Descriptions and Judging Guidelines

- **Original Oratory (OO):** The student will present an original speech. The subjects will vary considerably but, regardless of the topic, the aim is to arouse, inspire, and persuade. *At some tournaments, this speech may be combined with Original Advocacy into one event that is usually called "Persuasive Speaking."*
 - **Suggested Judging Criteria for Original Oratory:**
 - ✓ Did the speech display effective writing?
 - ✓ Was the speech organized clearly and easy to follow?
 - ✓ Did the speech contain good reasoning and logic rather than shallow thinking and broad generalization?
 - ✓ Did the speech contain evidence, examples, or expert opinions in support of ideas or conclusions?
 - ✓ Did the speaker use effective oral presentation skills (volume, diction, speed of delivery)?
 - ✓ Was the speaker poised, sincere, and comfortable in delivery?
 - ✓ Did the speaker use effective body language (gestures, facial expression, eye contact)?
 - ✓ Did the speech exemplify the highest standards of language usage, style and vocabulary?
 - ✓ Did the speaker avoid slang, poor grammar, and mispronunciations?

- **Original Advocacy (OA):** The student presents an original persuasive speech that identifies a problem and offers a clear, concise, legislative solution. *At some tournaments, this speech may be combined with Original Oratory—see note above.*
- **Suggested Judging Criteria for Original Advocacy:**
 - ✓ Did the speech display effective writing?
 - ✓ Was the speech organized clearly and easy to follow?
 - ✓ Did the speech contain good reasoning and logic rather than shallow thinking and broad generalization?
 - ✓ Did the speech contain evidence, examples, or expert opinions in support of ideas or conclusions?
 - ✓ Was the specific legislative and/or regulator governmental action or remedy clearly explained?
 - ✓ Did the speaker use effective oral presentation skills (volume, diction, speed of delivery)?
 - ✓ Was the speaker poised, sincere, and comfortable in delivery?
 - ✓ Did the speaker use effective body language (gestures, facial expression, eye contact)?
 - ✓ Did the speech exemplify the highest standards of language usage, style and vocabulary?
 - ✓ Did the speaker avoid slang, poor grammar, and mispronunciations?

- **Expository Speaking (Expos):** The purpose of this speech is to inform rather than persuade. These speeches describe, clarify, illustrate or define an object, idea, concept or process.. Visual / auditory aids, are not required, but are encouraged.
 - **Suggested Judging Criteria for Expository Speaking:**
 - ✓ Did the speech display effective writing?
 - ✓ Was the speech clearly organized and easy to follow?
 - ✓ If used, did visual/audio aids contribute effectively to the presentation by conveying information accurately and clearly?
 - ✓ Did the speech contain evidence, examples, or expert opinions in support of ideas or conclusions?
 - ✓ Did the speech convey information accurately and coherently?
 - ✓ Did the speaker use effective oral presentation skills (volume, diction, speed of delivery)?
 - ✓ Was the speaker poised, sincere, and comfortable in delivery?
 - ✓ Did the speaker use effective body language (gestures, facial expression, eye contact)?
 - ✓ Did the speech exemplify the highest standards of language usage and vocabulary?
 - ✓ Did the speaker avoid slang, poor grammar, and mispronunciations?

Individual Events Judging Instructions

- **Original Prose / Poetry: (OPP):** The presentations in this event are perhaps the most varied. The presentations are the original work of the student and may be plays, stories, poems, essays, or any combination thereof. Subject matter may be serious or humorous.
- **Suggested Judging Criteria for Original Prose / Poetry:**
 - ✓ Did the composition display a high degree of originality and creativity?
 - ✓ Did the composition display effective writing?
 - ✓ Was the composition easy to follow?
 - ✓ If poetry, did the composition make effective use of language to evoke images or emotions?
 - ✓ Did the speaker use effective oral presentation skills (volume, diction, speed of delivery)?
 - ✓ Was the speaker poised, sincere, and comfortable in delivery?
 - ✓ Did the speaker use effective body language (gestures, facial expression, eye contact)?

Interpretive Events: Descriptions and Judging Guidelines

Interpretive Events are presentations of material published by authors (other than the students), or speeches delivered by someone else (usually a well-known person) in a public forum. Students "interpret" the meaning of the selection through their voices, posture, gestures, and facial expressions. It's more difficult than acting, since costumes, props, and scenery are not allowed.

- **Dramatic or Humorous Interpretation:** The selections come from stories, plays, poems, or other literary material. The student will convey the author's meaning through character voice(s), gestures, and facial expressions. Dramatic presentations will overall be dramatic but may contain lighter, more humorous moments. Humorous presentations will overall be humorous but may contain more serious moments.
 - **Suggested Judging Criteria for Dramatic or Humorous Interpretation:**
 - ✓ Was each selection effectively edited and easy to follow with transitions in time, character, mood and emotion clearly evident?
 - ✓ Did the speaker use effective oral presentation skills (volume, diction, speed of delivery)?
 - ✓ Did the speaker demonstrate mastery of performance details (voice, facial expression, body language, and movement) to achieve clarity, force, and aesthetic effect in recreating character(s) and situations?
 - ✓ Did the speaker convey an understanding of the mood and emotion of the characters?
 - ✓ Did the speaker consistently portray the character(s)?
- **Thematic Interpretation:** In this event, the student attempts to communicate a certain theme, such as "war is hell," by using at least three literary selections that illustrate and develop that theme.
 - **Suggested Judging Criteria for Thematic Interpretation:**
 - ✓ Did the presentation help to evoke or clarify an understanding of and appreciation for a single unified theme?
 - ✓ Did each selection clearly reflect, analyze, shape or relate to the single unified theme?
 - ✓ Was each selection effectively edited and easy to follow with transitions in time, character, mood and emotion clearly evident?
 - ✓ Did the speaker use effective oral presentation skills (volume, diction, speed of delivery)?
 - ✓ Did the speaker demonstrate mastery of performance details (voice, facial expression, body language, and movement) to achieve clarity, force, and aesthetic effect in recreating character(s) and/or the situations?

Individual Events Judging Instructions

- ✓ Did the speaker convey an understanding of the mood and emotion of the selections?
- **Duo Interpretation:** Two students interpret a single selection taken from: a short story, a novel, a play, a poem, or other literary material. Each portrays one or more characters. Students must maintain "off-stage" focus, that is, they cannot make eye contact nor can they touch one another. (*So, they may appear to stare at a fixed point in the distance to represent looking at the other person. A hug, handshake, or other interaction has to be "suggested" rather than directly acted.*) Exception: Speakers may touch and/or make eye contact during their introduction where they explain their piece and provide title and author information.
 - Suggested Judging Criteria for Duo Interpretation:**
 - ✓ Was the selection effectively edited and easy to follow with transitions in time, character, mood and emotion clearly evident?
 - ✓ Did contestants use effective oral presentation skills (volume, diction, speed of delivery)?
 - ✓ Did contestants demonstrate mastery of performance details (voice, facial expression, body language, and movement) to achieve clarity, force, and aesthetic effect in recreating character(s) and situations?
 - ✓ Did the students understand the mood and emotion of the character(s)?
 - ✓ Did contestants consistently portray the character(s)?
- **Oratorical Interpretation:** The selections will be speeches previously delivered in a public forum. The introduction must include the speaker's name, place, and date of the original speech delivery. The student's aim is to convey the message intended by the original speaker.
 - Suggested Judging Criteria for Oratorical Interpretation:**
 - ✓ Was the selection effectively edited and easy to follow?
 - ✓ Did the selection authentically present the original author's intent?
 - ✓ Did contestants use effective oral presentation skills (volume, diction, speed of delivery)?
 - ✓ Did contestants demonstrate mastery of performance details (voice, facial expression, body language, and movement) to achieve clarity, force, and aesthetic effect?
 - ✓ Did the speaker convey an understanding of the thoughts, emotions, ideas, and purposes of the author?

Spontaneous Events: Descriptions and Judging Guidelines

- **Extemporaneous Speaking:** This event is divided into questions about current national and international issues, yielding Foreign Extemporaneous and National Extemporaneous. Thirty minutes prior to speaking before judges, the student draws three topics. After selecting one, s/he prepares the speech and delivers it, speaking for no longer than seven minutes.
 - Suggested Judging Criteria for Extemporaneous Speaking:**
 - ✓ Did the student present an organized speech?
 - ✓ Did the student clearly and effectively discuss, analyze, and evaluate the selected topic?
 - ✓ Did the student sufficiently answer the question?
 - ✓ Did the student show connections between particular events and large social, economic, and/or political trends and developments?
 - ✓ Did the student cite relevant evidence?
 - ✓ Was the speaker poised, sincere, and comfortable in delivery?
 - ✓ Did the speaker use effective oral presentation skills (volume, diction, speed of delivery)?
 - ✓ Did the speaker use effective body language (gestures, facial expression, eye contact)?
 - ✓ Did the speech exemplify the highest standards of language usage and vocabulary?
 - ✓ Did the speaker avoid slang, poor grammar, and mispronunciations?

Individual Events Judging Instructions

- **Impromptu Speaking:** In this event, the student actually prepares the speech in the judges' presence. The topics vary by round from quotations to general current events to abstract words to concrete nouns. After drawing the topic, the student has two minutes to prepare the speech. The maximum speaking time is five minutes.

Suggested Judging Criteria for Impromptu Speaking:

- ✓ Did the student present an organized speech?
- ✓ Did the student clearly and effectively discuss, analyze and evaluate the selected topic?
- ✓ Was the speaker poised, sincere and comfortable in delivery?
- ✓ Did the speaker use effective oral presentation skills (volume, diction, speed of delivery)?
- ✓ Did the speaker use effective body language (gestures, facial expression, eye contact)?
- ✓ Did the speech exemplify the highest standards of language usage and vocabulary?
- ✓ Did the speaker avoid slang, poor grammar, and mispronunciations?

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

I've been waiting for a long time and I still have not been called to judge. Why?

Gee, only 25 minutes? Tournament administrators do the best they can to avoid long waits for judges, but it takes time to assign students to rounds, especially at large tournament. They also need to be sure that judges are not assigned to rounds containing their own school's participants. Complications sometimes arise. Students and judges are sometimes late to rounds, and judges sometimes forget to return in their *Ballots*.

Make sure that you report to the Judges' Room when you complete a round. Feel free to do personal work or read while you wait and enjoy the refreshments and company of other parents. Chances are you will see them again at the next tournament!

Give me some idea of what I am supposed to write on the Comment Sheets?

Thanks for asking this question! Students can't wait to read judges' comments. What you say to them will have an impact on how they refine their piece for the next tournament. Be specific, be constructive, give pluses and minuses, and let them know how their speech made you feel. Remember, speaking in public is a lot harder than these kids make it look!

Here is what one judge wrote on the Comment Sheet for a student who presented, "The Universal Language," by David Ives, in a Humorous Interpretation round: "Terrific characterization of "the girl" in your selection—wonderful facial expressions and voice. "The boy" was believable, but at times, I could not tell how he was reacting to the female character. Work on his expressiveness. This was a funny piece—cut to just the right length. It made me laugh and held my attention all the way through."

A judge for an Original Oratory on child labor wrote, "Powerful speech. Excellent statistics. Good case studies. Strong and effective choice of language and use of hand motions. I can see you feel strongly about this topic and you have convinced me it is a problem that must be solved. At times, I had difficulty understanding you. Slow down, even if it means shortening your piece. Work on pacing."

What do I do if I know one of the contestants in the room to which I'm assigned?

You should come back to the Judges' Room to report the situation and be reassigned.

Individual Events Judging Instructions

Except for one competitor who did not show up, all the others have spoken. Can I leave the room now?

Some contestants are entered in more than one event and may arrive late. They should not enter the room during someone else's speech and they should tell you why they're late. If you have finished the round (the other scheduled speakers have delivered their speeches) and a speaker has still not arrived, wait ten minutes before leaving. When you return your *Ballot*, report the "no-show" at the judges' room.

Are you sure I can't give a tie? They were all so good!

Ties are only allowed for 4th place and only in preliminary rounds. In semi-final and final rounds, there can be no ties. Ties are allowed for ratings (superior, excellent, good, fair and needs improvement).

What should I do if one of the contestants exceeds the time limit?

Do not stop or interrupt the contestant. Note the speaker's time on the ballot in the "violations" column. Do not penalize the speaker in your rankings – simply note the infraction and the tournament officials will assess any penalties.

What if a speech topic, message, or language personally offends me?

For the most part, do your best to remain unbiased and don't let your personal opinions affect your evaluation of a student's speech. Judge their speaking ability, and for original events, the writing and/or effective argumentation of their piece. Let the student know via your written comments on the *Comment Sheet*. If the speech is extremely offensive, you may wish to make a note of the student's code, come to the judge's desk after the round, and ask to speak to the student's speech coach.

How about lunch?

Judges are usually, at a minimum, provided with meals – generally breakfast, lunch and dinner, with snacks in between. Please note this food is provided for the judges only; please do not share the food with the students.

This is fun! When can I do it again?

If you enjoy your judging experience, we'll be happy to have you return to judge! We have tournaments throughout the year and we're always in need of judges! Know a friend or a neighbor who you think would like to do this? Please let the coach at your school know. And, again, thank you! We could not have a tournament if it weren't for people like you!