

**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.

## 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. An odd number of judges (usually 1 or 3) will be sent to the room to judge the round. The judge(s) will listen to all the speeches and rank the competitors in the round from 1<sup>st</sup> through 7<sup>th</sup> place. The same judge will not hear a student speak in both Round 1 and Round 2.

**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 1<sup>st</sup> through 7<sup>th</sup> 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 Registration Table**.
2. Register at the Judges' Registration Table. You will then:
  - Sign-In on the Judge Sheet
  - Get your code from the Judge Sheet. This code will be Alphanumeric (e.g. A01, AA101, etc.). Write down your judge code; you will be using this code for the rest of the tournament.
  - Speech rounds will have one judge assigned to them, the judges will be listed by their judge codes.
3. Please wait in the Judges' Lounge until rounds are posted.
  - Due to the number of contestants and judges that we must accommodate, we are unable to assign judges to their preferred events. If a school has a large number of entries, you may be locked-out of judging certain rounds. Make sure you have things to read or do.
  - Judge codes will be listed at the top of each section. Once you know your section, come to the Registration Table with your event and your code. We will then hand you your ballot and a schematic.
  - If you are not selected for a round, please remain in the Judge Lounge until we release the judges. We may need to slot you into a round if we are having trouble locating a judge.
  - If you leave the Judges' Lounge and are not present when called, your school may be *fined* or *forced to disqualify contestants*.
4. When you get your ballot pack and schematic, take them to your assigned room. If more than one judge is assigned to your room, you should generally walk together to your room and return together from the round at the same time.

## 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 Impromptu and 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.*

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 order of speaker codes on the schematic, 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, you may take that into account when ranking the speaker. 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 1<sup>st</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup>** based upon the student’s skills in overall communication as well as event-specific requirements and guidelines. (See the following section on Judging Guidelines.) 1<sup>st</sup> is for the best speaker.
  - **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 5th. Give the 5th, 6th and 7th place speaker a tie for 5th 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 be fined or forced to disqualify contestants.

## Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

### Frequently Asked Questions

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

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 I 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?**

Except in extreme cases, when you feel you simply cannot be objective, please stay and judge—it will help to keep the tournament running on time. If you are assigned to judge students from your own school, just be as objective as possible. If, however, the contestant is a very close family friend or an actual relative, you should come back to the Judges’ Room to report the situation and be reassigned.

**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 five minutes** and then send a student runner to the Tab Table with the Room Number and Competitor Number. We will then send a response back.

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

Unless the tournament specifies that ties should be given, no ties are allowed on the *Ballot*. On the *Comment Sheets*, which are used by the students to improve their speech, ties are given for 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> place.

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

Do not stop or interrupt the contestant. You have the discretion at league tournaments to penalize students who speaks more than 30 seconds over the time limit by *not awarding a rank of one*.

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

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. Your ranking will be based on how much you enjoyed the speech.

**How about food?**

Judges are usually, at a minimum, provided with food in the Judge lounge. If the tournament is a full-day tournament, meals will often be provided as well.

**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!