

## Chapter 3: Recruiting Students



Recruitment actually goes on all year long. However, there are some specific areas to target.

**High School Classes:** The best classes, in most cases, are English and history. Students who tend to do well in English and history, also tend to do well in Individual Events. In Debate, there is a direct correlation between Math classes and success; students who understand math concepts also tend to understand logic and research skills. Of course, if the school has Speech classes, the students are already learning the basics of communication; the coach now just has to persuade them to use these communication skills in a competition arena. If the principal and school board can be convinced of the importance of this activity, it may be possible to add a Contest Speaking class to the curriculum; students from that class would be mandated to attend a number of tournaments. (See Chapter 17 “Teaching a Competition Class,” page 52)

**“Feeder” Schools:** Some coaches are able to make arrangements in the spring for team members to go to the feeder schools (junior high or middle schools) and speak with and try to recruit students for the team. This could happen during English or math classes; it might happen in an after-school meeting. It is important to “grab” students as early as possible; they are making decisions about their high school involvement in activities.

**Outside of class:** Take a look at the students involved in other activities such as the school newspaper or Student Council or music. These students have many of the skills to be competitive in forensics. Remember there may be schedule conflicts with students who are also involved in sports competition and band contests since these coincide so closely with forensic tournaments, especially in the fall. A coach should also contact students he had in classes in previous years; maybe the students would be “ready” now for forensics.

**Tryouts/Auditions:** Many coaches will require new members to try out/audition for the team. Often veteran members of the team who want to change categories will also be required to audition. Some coaches do this in the spring for the following year; some do it the first or second week of school. Some coaches permit team officers to help in the selection of new members, although there can be problems with this practice. A sample Audition Information sheet can be found in Chapter 20.

**First meeting of the year:** Many coaches hold an information meeting early in September, inviting all students who may be interested in forensics. This is a good meeting for current team officers and members to conduct. General information about the activity can be shared. Team members can perform several minutes of last year’s pieces or give three minutes of constructive and rebuttal speeches in a debate. The coach then sets the next week’s practice schedule for the returning members and for prospective members. Stress that this activity requires much individual work as well as work with team members and coaches; stress that commitment to the tournament schedule is crucial. Refreshments can be served.

One school has **“Bring a Friend”** functions where non-speech students come with team members to discover what competitive forensics is all about.