Tips for Speech Judges

Good morning! We at Randolph thank you for donating your time today to help judge speech contestants at our tournament – truly, our tournament and our activity would not be possible without generous, involved supporters like you. We’d like to point out a few tips & bits of information for speech judges today.

**General Rules for Speech**

* You will be asked to judge one of eleven different speech events per round, or a session of Congress. If you are unfamiliar with the event you are assigned to judge, ask a fellow judge or competitor for clarification. For reference, the events you may be asked to judge include Dramatic Interpretation (DI), Humorous Interpretation (HI), Duo Interpretation (Duo), Oral Interpretation (OI), Program Oral Interpretation (POI), Informative Speaking (INF), Original Oratory (OO), Declamation (Dec), Impromptu Speaking (IMP), Extemporaneous Speaking (EXT), Improvisational Acting (IMV), and Congressional Debate (CON).
* You will receive a ballot with all competitors in order. It is important that, once you have observed and commented on each competitor, you rank the competitors from top to bottom, with **rank 1 as the best**. **No ties are allowed in speech rounds**.
* It may help your process to rank competitors as the round progresses, rather than all at once at the end of the round.
* Some competitors may be entered in two events per single round (“double-entered”). This will be indicated on your ballot; however, competitors should also inform you of this either verbally or on the board (“DE/WR”). You may exercise discretion in allowing competitors who are double-entered to perform before other competitors, and in allowing them to leave early for their second event.
* If a competitor is present in your round but is not on your ballot, **please send him or her to the ballot table.** You should not simply let him or her compete in a round they are not listed on the master ballot for.
* Please do not give oral critiques to the competitors at any time between or after performances. Any critiques or comments should be written on individual ballots.
* As the judge, you are timekeeper for the round. Please use an accurate stopwatch or timekeeping application – clocks and watch hands are not sufficient for this purpose. Most events have a limit of ten (10) minutes with a thirty (30) second grace period. Three events (EXTEMP, IMPROV, IMPROMPTU) have a limit of seven (7) minutes with a thirty (30) second grace period. Competitors may or may not ask for visual time signals at various points – please do your best to provide them. **Competitors who exceed the 10:30 time limit with grace period may not be ranked first in a round**, but no other penalization should be applied automatically.
* Please be as descriptive and efficient as possible on your written critiques. Competitors and coaches use ballot comments to target strengths and weaknesses to improve upon in their performances.
* Once a round has ended and all students have competed, please finish any comments on ballots, rank the competitors, and submit your ballot.
* If you have any issues (competitors not showing up, problems with the room, issues in-round) speak to the students in the hallway first. They will either provide assistance or escalate the issue to someone who can.

**Electronic Balloting**

* You will get an email blast with your judge assignments. You can also sign up for text alerts if you prefer at [speechwire.com/subscribe](http://speechwire.com/subscribe), and there will be a paper list of assignments posted in the judges room just in case.
* Sign in to your SpeechWire account at [www.speechwire.com/login](http://www.speechwire.com/login)
* You should see a large yellow banner indicating that you have ballots. Click on it to see your ballots.
* When you start the round, click the “Start Round” button. This is really important because it lets us know that everyone has gotten underway; if the round hasn’t started after ten minutes or so we will send a student to see if there is anything wrong, a missing competitor, etc.
* The ballot is very simple, so it should be easy to display on any device. There are two sections to the ballot.
* First, judges are responsible for ranking the round. This is basic information that we need to keep the tournament running, as soon as the round is over. Once this is put in and saved, it is LOCKED. You can only change it by alerting the tab staff, who can manually adjust if you made a mistake.
* Second, there are text boxes for you to write your comments for each competitor This section is NOT LOCKED - you can go back and complete this at any time before the end of the final round. It’s recommended that you save this often, if you are typing as you go. The system will let you save comments without putting in ranks, so you can save during the debate if you are working on it as the debate is going on. Many judges also prefer to type comments in a separate document or application and copy/paste at the end.

We hope that you enjoy your rounds today, and wish you good luck!



Judge Expectations

**We expect judges to:**

* **Act as educators**. Most judges are not literally educators by profession, but we do expect all judges to take on this role. This requires you to provide thoughtful, meaningful written critiques and rationales for your decisions. We like to say that judges should “make sure the kids get back on the bus next week” – be truthful and honest in your criticism, but in a constructive way. Students who receive totally positive ballots find them not useful to improve themselves, and those who receive totally negative ballots are disheartened and hurt. Remember that the competitive aspect of the activity is important but is ultimately secondary to the educational aspect.
* **Act as the adult in the room.** While speech & debate is certainly an activity based in free speech, it is your obligation as a judge to restrain certain activities that go beyond the bounds of taste (i.e., physical assault, use of clearly pornographic materials, etc.) that are unacceptable in a high school environment.
* **Be a calming and neutral presence in the room**. Competitors will look to you as the person who knows what he/she is doing, even if you do not feel that way. Act as though you do (chances are you do more than you know), and the competitors will be none the wiser. Avoid speaking too much to competitors, but feel free to be non-specifically and non-preferentially supportive. In general, conduct yourself in a professional manner.
* **Keep the tournament flowing.** The biggest issue in keeping the tournament running on time is always the speed and efficiency of judges. If judges get to their rounds on time, start on time, complete and turn in ballots in a timely fashion, etc., then the tournament runs much smoother and quicker than if those things do not happen. Sometimes all it takes is one slow ballot or lost judge to pull the entire tournament off-schedule.
* **Come prepared.** This means that judges should either be trained by their coaches/schools/teams, or self-trained such that they feel adequately prepared to judge the category they are responsible for. We cannot spend large chunks of tournament time giving judge training other than general reminders and expectations. Any questions about which category you are responsible for or why should be directed toward your school’s coach.
* **Fulfill their obligations.** You are obligated all day for our tournament. Unless you have not been scheduled for a round AND the judges’ lounge has been released for ballot pushes, you should not leave campus. Judges who leave in the middle of the tournament or who leave early will earn fines for their school.
* **Follow the rules of the tournament.** At our tournament, we do not allow oral critiques in-round. We ask this to ensure the swift movement of rounds and flights. If a competitor seeks you out for oral critiques at a later time when there are no time constraints, you are welcome to provide a critique only if you feel it is appropriate.

Finally, in agreeing to judge for your school or group, you also have an implicit agreement with the tournament to act according to the spirit and aims of our activity. Judges whose behavior is unacceptable to the tournament director will be fined and/or removed from the tournament. This may include missed rounds, unaccountable lateness to rounds, going “missing” with ballots, and other inappropriate behavior.