



EXTEMPORANEOUS SPEAKING

JUDGE GUIDE

OVERVIEW

Extemporaneous Speaking is a limited-prep, research-based event. Students draw three political questions, choose one, and have 30 minutes to research, organize, and memorize a 5-7 minute speech answering the question. The speech must be fully memorized, include credible sources in each main point, and demonstrate strong analysis of the topic. **No notes may be used.**

WHAT TO JUDGE

CONTENT:

- Clear, direct answer to the prompt
- Logical structure with 2-3 main points
- Accurate, up-to-date information
- At least 7 credible sources integrated naturally
- Strong analysis (not just repeating evidence)
- Strong, relevant reasoning supporting the argument

DELIVERY:

- Confident, fluent speaking
- Strong eye contact
- Clear volume and pacing
- Purposeful movement (not distracting)
- Professional tone and presence

TIMING

- Prep time: 30 minutes (happens in another room)
- Speaking time: up to 7 minutes
- Grace period: 30 seconds (7:30)
- If anyone goes past 7 minutes and 30 seconds, they cannot be ranked first

BALLOTS

- Rank all speakers 1-7 (1 is best)
- Assign speaker points 90-100, aligned with their rank (100 is best)
- Provide specific written comments (strengths + areas to grow)
- Focus feedback on structure, support, and delivery
- Do not verbally disclose your decision



IMPROMPTU SPEAKING

JUDGE GUIDE

OVERVIEW

Impromptu Speaking is a limited-preparation event in which students receive three prompts, select one, and have 7 minutes TOTAL to prepare and deliver a fully memorized speech from start to finish. There is no required balance between prep time and speaking time; students may spend more time preparing or more time speaking as long as the entire process stays within the 7-minute limit. Before the round begins, judges should pick up the envelopes containing the Impromptu prompts in the judge lounge. Prompts should be given to students one at a time so the student can review each option before deciding which prompt to keep. Once a student selects a prompt, they must return the two unchosen prompts back into the envelope. Prep time begins only after the two unchosen prompts have been returned. Students should read their chosen prompt aloud and may hold the prompt during the speech. After the student finishes their speech, the process restarts for the next competitor: the judge again distributes 3 prompts one at a time, the student selects one, returns the two unchosen prompts to the envelope, and then begins their 7-minute total time. Students may prepare on a blank piece of paper only and may not use technology or any paper that is not blank. Students may not use notes or a script while speaking; any student who uses notes must be ranked last. All competitors must remain in the room for the entire round.

WHAT TO JUDGE

CONTENT:

- Clear focus on chosen prompt
- Logical structure and coherent flow with 2-3 main points
- Thoughtful ideas that go beyond restating the prompt
- Creative approach to the topic
- Effective transitions and purposeful organization

DELIVERY:

- Confident presence and strong eye contact
- Clear, audible voice with steady pacing
- Smooth fluency (minimal pauses or filler words)
- Purposeful, non-distracting movement
- Professional tone

TIMING

- 7 minutes TOTAL (prep + delivery combined)
- No separate prep period
- Students may brainstorm silently or with scratch paper, but may not use notes while speaking
- Grace period: 30 seconds (7:30)
- If anyone goes past 7 minutes and 30 seconds, they cannot be ranked first

BALLOTS

- Rank all speakers 1-7 (1 is best)
- Assign speaker points 90-100, aligned with their rank (100 is best)
- Provide specific written comments (strengths + areas to grow)
- Focus feedback on structure, support, and delivery
- Do not verbally disclose your decision



CONGRESSIONAL DEBATE

JUDGE GUIDE

OVERVIEW

Congressional Debate simulates the U.S. legislative process. Students act as representatives debating bills and resolutions through structured speeches, questioning, and parliamentary procedure. A student Presiding Officer (PO) runs the chamber by recognizing speakers, managing debate flow, and maintaining order. Your role is to score every speech, evaluate legislative engagement, and rank the top performers.

WHAT TO JUDGE

CONTENT:

- Speech addresses the bill/resolution
- Clear structure + logical arguments
- Accurate evidence and relevant sources
- Direct response to previous arguments
- Original, meaningful contributions (not repeating earlier points)

DELIVERY:

- Professional tone
- Clear voice, appropriate pace
- Confident presence and controlled demeanor
- Effective eye contact
- PO evaluation: fairness, efficiency, knowledge of procedure

TIMING

- Speeches: Up to 3 minutes
- Questioning:
 - 2 minutes for sponsorship speeches
 - 1 minute for all others
- **Session length: 2-hour hard stop** (including a short recess)

Judge responsibilities:

- Score every speech 1-6 (6 is the best; 1 is the worst)
- Keep notes on participation & decorum

BALLOTS

- Score each speech 1-6 based on argument quality & delivery.
- Score the Presiding Officer once per hour, so the P.O. should get 2 speech scores.
- Rank the top 8 legislators at the end; all others receive rank 9.
- Provide specific written comments (strengths + areas to grow) about clarity, organization, and delivery for every single speaker
- No verbal disclosure allowed.



INFORMATIVE SPEAKING

JUDGE GUIDE

OVERVIEW

Informative Speaking (INFO) is a student-written, fully memorized, 10-minute speech designed to teach the audience about a topic of the student's choice. Speeches must be original, factual, logically organized, and may include visual aids that enhance—not distract from—the message. The purpose is to inform, not persuade. **No notes may be used.**

WHAT TO JUDGE

CONTENT:

- Clear, logical organization (typically: History/Definitions → Applications → Implications)
- Strong central message
- Effective explanation of information
- Engaging examples, definitions, and evidence
- Smooth integration of visual aids (if used)

DELIVERY:

- Clear voice, strong volume
- Natural gestures & purposeful movement
- Confident eye contact
- Smooth pacing & fluency
- Professional, polished presentation style

TIMING

- Speaking time: up to 10 minutes
- Grace period: 30 seconds (10:30)
- If anyone goes past 10 minutes and 30 seconds, they cannot be ranked first
- You should be timing the students as they speak
- Please use hand signals for time if students ask!

BALLOTS

- Rank all speakers 1-7 (1 is best)
- Assign speaker points 90-100, aligned with their rank (100 is best)
- Provide specific written comments (strengths + areas to grow) about clarity, organization, and delivery
- Evaluate visual aids (helpful? distracting?)
- Do not verbally disclose your decision



LINCOLN DOUGLAS DEBATE

JUDGE GUIDE

OVERVIEW

Lincoln Douglas (LD) is a one-on-one, values-based debate. Each debater argues the Affirmative or Negative side of the resolution (pre-assigned in Speechwire). LD centers on: (1) A value (the core principle being defended), and (2) A value criterion (the method to achieve the value). Your role is to judge which debater better supports their framework and arguments, evaluates ideas logically, and responds effectively to their opponent.

WHAT TO JUDGE

CONTENT:

- Clear explanation of value + criterion
- Logical structure and organized arguments
- Factual accuracy and credible support
- Strong reasoning and clear analysis
- Effective refutation of the opponent
- Arguments relate directly to the resolution
- Framework applied consistently throughout the debate

DELIVERY:

- Professional and confident tone
- Clear speaking, strong pacing, persuasive style
- Effective use of signposting and organization
- Respectful communication in cross-ex
- Overall clarity & command of the room

TIMING

(Follow exact speech order & times on the ballot)

General LD elements:

- Constructive speeches
- Cross-examinations
- Rebuttals
- Students typically time their own speeches
- Prep time: 3 minutes per debater

Judge responsibilities:

- Track prep time for each debater
- Do not allow speeches to exceed allotted lengths
- Flow the debate (take notes on arguments)

BALLOTS

- Judge the round only on arguments presented, not personal opinion.
- Select a winner (Aff or Neg) and provide a brief Reason for Decision on your ballot which both teams will see.
- Assign speaker points (25-30); winner must receive the higher points.
- Give clear written feedback highlighting strengths and areas to improve for both teams.
- No verbal disclosure allowed.



PUBLIC FORUM DEBATE

JUDGE GUIDE

OVERVIEW

Public Forum (PF) is a two-on-two debate on a current, practical policy topic. Teams debate the Pro or Con side of the resolution (pre-assigned in Speechwire). PF focuses on real-world logic, clear clash, weighing, and evidence, not philosophical frameworks. Judges evaluate which team best supports their case, refutes the other side, and explains why their impacts matter more.

WHAT TO JUDGE

CONTENT:

- Clear, organized arguments relevant to the topic
- Strong evidence and reliable references
- Logical comparison and weighing of impacts
- Effective refutation of the opponent's claims
- Consistent focus on the resolution
- Accurate explanation of key issues in the summary & final focus

DELIVERY:

- Confident, professional tone
- Clear speaking and pacing
- Persuasive, audience-friendly style
- Respectful crossfire participation
- Strong team communication and cohesion

TIMING

(Follow exact speech order & times on the ballot)

General PF elements:

- Constructive Speeches: Present case positions
- Crossfire: Debaters ask questions to clarify or expose weaknesses
- Rebuttals & Summary: Refutation and weighing
- Final Focus: Most important issues + voting justification
- Prep time: 4 minutes per team

Judge responsibilities:

- Track prep time for each debater
- Do not allow speeches to exceed allotted lengths
- Flow the debate (take notes on arguments)

BALLOTS

- Judge the round only on arguments presented, not personal opinion.
- Select a winner (PRO or CON) and provide a brief Reason for Decision on your ballot which both teams will see.
- Assign speaker points (25-30); winner must receive the higher points; each speaker should get different points.
- Give clear written feedback highlighting strengths and areas to improve for both teams.
- No verbal disclosure allowed.



ORIGINAL ORATORY

JUDGE GUIDE

OVERVIEW

Original Oratory (OO) is a student-written, fully memorized persuasive speech up to 10 minutes long. The goal is to present a clear message about a meaningful issue through compelling structure, credible support, and strong delivery. Oratory must be original, organized, and designed to move and persuade—not to entertain or perform dramatically. There are no visual aids or notes allowed. Typically, the main points are structured in causes → effects → solutions.

WHAT TO JUDGE

CONTENT:

- Clear, compelling thesis
- Logical structure
- Strong evidence and impactful examples
- Effective development of ideas
- Smooth flow and coherence
- Original writing with purposeful language

DELIVERY:

- Confident, polished speaking
- Strong eye contact
- Clear voice and pacing
- Purposeful movement & gestures
- Professional tone
- Smooth transitions and overall poise

TIMING

- Speaking time: up to 10 minutes
- Grace period: 30 seconds (10:30)
- If anyone goes past 10 minutes & 30 seconds, they cannot be ranked first
- You should be timing the students as they speak
- Please use hand signals for time if students ask!

BALLOTS

- Rank all speakers 1-7 (1 is best)
- Assign speaker points 90-100, aligned with their rank (100 is best)
- Provide specific written comments (strengths + areas to grow) about clarity, organization, and delivery
- Do not verbally disclose your decision



DRAMATIC PERFORMANCE

JUDGE GUIDE

OVERVIEW

Dramatic Performance (DP) is an individual interpretation event in which students memorize and perform a cutting of a published script, which may be dramatic or humorous in tone. Because most pieces are taken from longer works, students must edit the script down to fit the 10-minute limit, and a key part of judging is evaluating how well the student condensed the material. The performance should still present a clear and cohesive plot, with smooth transitions, purposeful pacing, and an emotional or comedic arc that makes sense on its own. A strong DP performance feels seamless despite being shortened, preserving the original author's intent while showcasing expressive characterization, vocal control, physical acting choices, and overall storytelling quality.

WHAT TO JUDGE

CONTENT:

- Clear understanding of the script's message, tone, and emotional arc
- Effective cutting: plot remains coherent and easy to follow
- Smooth transitions between ideas, characters, or scenes
- Strong introduction (title, author, context, and mood)
- Challenging, appropriate, and meaningful script selection

DELIVERY:

- Characterization: distinct voices, attitudes, posture, facial expressions
- Vocal Performance: clarity, pronunciation, varied tone/pitch, controlled pacing
- Physical Performance: purposeful gestures, motivated movement, no distracting actions
- Confident presence, poise, and consistent energy
- Ability to maintain audience engagement throughout
- Students cannot make eye contact with each other or touch each other

TIMING

- Speaking time: up to 10 minutes
- Grace period: 30 seconds (10:30)
- If anyone goes past 10 minutes & 30 seconds, they cannot be ranked first
- You should be timing the students as they speak
- Please use hand signals for time if students ask!

BALLOTS

- Rank all speakers 1-7 (1 is best)
- Assign speaker points 90-100, aligned with their rank (100 is best)
- Provide specific written comments (strengths + areas to grow) about clarity, organization, and delivery
- Do not verbally disclose your decision



DUO INTERPRETATION

JUDGE GUIDE

OVERVIEW

Duo Interpretation (DUO) is a two-person performance event in which students memorize and perform a cutting of a published script—either dramatic or humorous. Because partners cannot look at or touch each other during the performance (except during the introduction), the piece must rely on precise staging, synchronized timing, and clearly defined characters. Most DUOs condense longer scripts, so part of your evaluation includes assessing the clarity and cohesion of the edited storyline, as well as how smoothly transitions and pacing flow. A strong DUO performance showcases teamwork, character contrast, emotional connection, and a clear, engaging plot.

WHAT TO JUDGE

CONTENT:

- Clear, cohesive plot (the cutting should still make sense)
- Effective introduction (title, author, context, mood)
- Smooth transitions between moments or characters
- Well-chosen script that matches performers' strengths
- Strong thematic or emotional build

DELIVERY:

- Distinct, consistent characterizations from each partner
- Strong vocal control, pacing, and projection
- Synchronized timing and clean blocking without eye contact
- Purposeful, non-distracting movement
- Engaging emotional or comedic commitment
- Strong chemistry shown through timing—not physical interaction

TIMING

- Speaking time: up to 10 minutes
- Grace period: 30 seconds (10:30)
- If anyone goes past 10 minutes & 30 seconds, they cannot be ranked first
- You should be timing the students as they speak
- Please use hand signals for time if students ask!

BALLOTS

- Rank all teams 1-7 (1 is best)
- Assign speaker points 90-100, aligned with rankings (100 is best)
- Provide specific written comments (strengths + areas to grow) about clarity, organization, and delivery
- Do not verbally disclose your decision



PROGRAM ORAL INTERPRETATION

JUDGE GUIDE

OVERVIEW

Program Oral Interpretation (POI) is a performance event in which students compile and perform a thematically unified program made from multiple genres of published literature—including prose, poetry, and drama. Students must weave these pieces together to create a coherent narrative arc, unified message, or emotional through-line. Because POI requires students to curate and arrange several texts, part of your evaluation includes assessing how effectively the program is constructed, how smoothly the pieces transition, and how clearly the overarching theme or storyline comes through. A strong POI performance feels intentional, well-structured, expressive, and emotionally engaging.

WHAT TO JUDGE

CONTENT:

- Clear and unified central theme
- Seamless transitions between texts and genres
- Effective structure that builds meaning or emotional impact
- Strong introduction that establishes purpose and context
- Thoughtful curation of literature (pieces complement each other)

DELIVERY:

- Distinct characterizations when portraying different voices or texts
- Clear diction, projection, and vocal variation
- Purposeful, motivated movement (no unnecessary wandering)
- Expressive facial and physical choices
- Confident, polished stage presence
- Ability to maintain audience engagement across multiple styles
- Students must maintain the impression of reading from the script, but cannot break the performance space or use the binder as a prop

TIMING

- Speaking time: up to 10 minutes
- Grace period: 30 seconds (10:30)
- If anyone goes past 10 minutes & 30 seconds, they cannot be ranked first
- You should be timing the students as they speak
- Please use hand signals for time if students ask!

BALLOTS

- Rank all speakers 1-7 (1 is best)
- Assign speaker points 90-100, aligned with their rank (100 is best)
- Provide specific written comments (strengths + areas to grow) about clarity, organization, and delivery
- Do not verbally disclose your decision



DECLAMATION

JUDGE GUIDE

OVERVIEW

Declamation is an event in which students memorize and perform a speech originally delivered by someone else—such as TED Talks, commencement speeches, eulogies, or public addresses. Because the words are not their own, the student's job is to deliver the message with clarity, control, and genuine interpretation, without imitating the original speaker. The declaimer should present the speech so that it feels natural, meaningful, and accessible, demonstrating strong connection to the material while preserving the author's intent.

WHAT TO JUDGE

CONTENT:

- Appropriateness of the speech selection
- Effective introduction (title, author, context, relevance)
- Clear interpretation of the original message
- Smooth, well-paced structure
- Emotional authenticity and connection to the material

DELIVERY:

- Clear diction and projection
- Strong eye contact and confident presence
- Controlled pacing and fluent speaking
- Purposeful, non-distracting gestures and movement
- Tone and inflection that enhance—not overshadow—the meaning

TIMING

- Speaking time: up to 10 minutes
- Grace period: 30 seconds (10:30)
- If anyone goes past 10 minutes & 30 seconds, they cannot be ranked first
- You should be timing the students as they speak
- Please use hand signals for time if students ask!

BALLOTS

- Rank all speakers 1-7 (1 is best)
- Assign speaker points 90-100, aligned with their rank (100 is best)
- Provide specific written comments (strengths + areas to grow) about clarity, organization, and delivery
- Do not verbally disclose your decision