



Volunteer Judges Handbook

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September 2019

Dear Volunteer,

Welcome! We are thrilled to have you join us as a volunteer judge for the Richmond Region Speech & Debate Initiative serving our region's middle and high school speech and debate teams.

The Richmond Forum launched the Richmond Region Speech & Debate Initiative in 2018 for the purpose of starting, growing, and elevating speech & debate programs in our region's public middle and high schools. To learn more about the Initiative, please visit www.richmondspeechdebate.org.

Please read the entire packet. It will provide you with important information that will make for a smooth judging experience. The packet is designed to provide general guidelines, an overview of each category, sample ballots and additional resources.

In addition, the National Speech and Debate Association (NSDA) has partnered with the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) to develop an [online judges training course](#). The course is free and is required as part of your training. Instructions for enrolling and completing the course, as well as completing the required background check can be found on the initiative's website.

The most important thing we ask of you is that you are attentive, courteous listeners to all of the speakers. Be prepared to hear some wonderful speeches and debates and enjoy yourself.

If you are volunteering, you undoubtedly believe in the power of speech and debate. By volunteering to judge, you have given several students the opportunity to compete. For many tournaments, judges are the limiting factor. On behalf of those students and that tournament, thank you for providing the opportunity for speech and debate!

Sincerely,

Bill Chapman
Executive Director
The Richmond Forum

Sandra Wheeler
Director of Student Programs
The Richmond Forum

GENERAL JUDGING GUIDELINES

Thank you again for donating your valuable time to judge. Without you these competitions could not run. In order to make this a smooth, on-time experience, please read all of the information in this packet carefully.

BEFORE THE COMPETITION

Once you've been matched with a volunteer opportunity, please be sure to find out if any additional training is required. If a tournament has a required training session, please do your best to attend. Often, those trainings are helpful in answering questions about particular rules at a given location. For example, in some areas, students cannot enter the room until you, the judge, are there. In some events, preparation time, forfeit times, or other rules may vary in small but still significant ways. You'll be their favorite volunteer by attending the training and following their procedures.

ON SITE

The schedules for competitions are always tight, as are the number of available judges. Please report to the competition space at least fifteen minutes before you are scheduled to judge.

When you get to your round, you will wait for all of the competitors to arrive. Some competitors are double-entered and may not be there right away, so feel free to start without them at the scheduled time. Double check the codes on your ballot with the students in the round. They will often write their codes on the board for your reference.

The students are familiar with all of the details and should be able to guide you in conducting the round. They are used to first-time judges, so if you have a question, ask!

At this point, your job is to simply watch, follow, and enjoy the round. Taking notes may help you to both make your final decision and give the students quality feedback. The provided ballot for each event will give you some guidelines about how to judge. In general, you will be looking for competitors to be engaging, prepared, professional, convincing, etc. Your opinion matters—there is no wrong or right way to judge a round!

GUIDELINES FOR DEBATE JUDGES

1. Judges are encouraged to briefly discuss their judging philosophy or style with the participants in a debate prior to the start of the match so that participants understand those factors that will determine a decision.
2. While observers are encouraged, judges should clear the room of any person either participant does not want in attendance. All observers must identify themselves and their affiliation with any team competing in the tournament so that the debaters in each session have the option of determining whether or not they want those people in the room or listening to the debate from outside the room. Likewise, judges should clear the room of any person who is causing a distraction for any of the participants or for the judge.
3. Judges are not permitted to carry on private conversations during the debate.
4. Judges should not suggest through audible sounds or body language how they are responding to a presentation in any way that would suggest coaching or critique. Judges may not disclose decisions or suggest or hint at those decisions prior to the announcement of final tournament results during the awards ceremony.
5. Oral critiques are not permitted.
6. Time limits for each section of a debate, including preparation time, must be enforced.
7. Use of profanity is prohibited by all.
8. Judges who smoke may not ask debaters for cigarettes, share a smoke break with debaters or coaches, or permit a smoke break to interrupt the time schedule for a match or for the tournament.
9. Judges may not show favoritism for or socialize with any coach or debater they may be evaluating during the tournament, specifically including private conversations that might be perceived as preferential.
10. Since debaters will be dressed in coats and ties and professional work-world attire, judges will be expected to wear clothing acceptable in professional circles (no jeans, T-shirts, hats).
11. A judge is expected to be in the room throughout the debate. Since the cross-examination periods are an integral part of the evaluation, the judge must be present and listen closely to both questions and responses.
12. Eating by the judge or debaters during the debate is prohibited.

PUBLIC FORUM DEBATE

PURPOSE & OVERVIEW

Public Forum is a two-on-two team event that supports or rejects a position posed by the monthly resolution topic. The clash of ideas must be communicated in a persuasive manner. Pro or Con positions are decided by coin toss every round. The team winning the toss may choose to either go first or select a position. The opponent will choose the remaining option.

The debate should:

- Display solid logic, lucid reasoning, and depth of analysis.
- Utilize evidence without being driven by it.
- Present a clash of ideas by countering/refuting arguments of the opposing team (rebuttal).
- Communicate ideas with clarity, organization, eloquence, and professional decorum.

FORMAT

**Prep time: 2 minutes for each team*

Speech	Time Limit	Purpose
Team A Speaker 1 – Constructive	4 minutes	Present the team's case
Team B Speaker 1 – Constructive	4 minutes	Present the team's case
Crossfire	3 minutes	Speaker 1 from Teams A & B alternate asking and answering questions
Team A Speaker 2 – Rebuttal	4 minutes	Refute the opposing side's arguments
Team B Speaker 2 – Rebuttal	4 minutes	Refute the opposing side's arguments
Crossfire	3 minutes	Speaker 2 from Teams A & B alternate asking and answering questions

Team A Speaker 1 – Summary	2 minutes	Begin crystallizing the main issues in the round
Team B Speaker 1 – Summary	2 minutes	Begin crystallizing the main issues in the round
Grand Crossfire	3 minutes	All four debaters involved in a crossfire at once
Team A Speaker 2 – Final Focus	2 minutes	Explain reasons that you win the round
Team B Speaker 2 – Final Focus	2 minutes	Explain reasons that you win the round

EVALUATION

Judges should evaluate teams on the quality of arguments made, not on their own personal beliefs, and not on issues they think a particular side *should* have argued. Quality and well-explained arguments should win over mere quantity thereof. Debaters should use quoted evidence to support their claims, and well-chosen, relevant evidence may strengthen, but not replace arguments.

Clear communication is an important consideration. Judges will discount arguments that are too fast, too garbled, or too full of technical terminology that is not easily understood by an intelligent high school student or well-informed citizen. Speakers should appeal to the widest possible audience through sound reasoning, succinct organization, credible evidence, and clear delivery.

The Pro should prove that the resolution is true, and the Con should prove that the resolution is not true.

Write constructive, thorough comments to each debater. Give reasons why you voted for one side and state what the losing team needed to do to win.

EXAMPLE

[Watch a Public Forum Debate example.](#)



Virginia High School League Public Forum Debate Ballot

Round _____ Room _____ Date _____ Judge _____

Scores should fall within one of these four ranges: 28-30 for **superior** debating; 25-27 for **excellent** debating; 22-24 for **average** debating; and 19-21 for **below average** debating.



PRO TEAM	CON TEAM
Code # _____ Team Points: _____	Code # _____ Team Points: _____
1 st Debater _____	1 st Debater _____
2 nd Debater _____	2 nd Debater _____
TEAM POINTS: Superior – 28-30; Excellent – 25-27; Average – 22-24; Below Average – 19-21	
The team that won this debate is _____ representing the PRO / CON (circle one). No Low Point Wins! (Code) _____	
Judge Signature: _____ Judge's School: _____	



Order of debate:

Speaker 1 (4 min.)	Speaker 1 Summary (2 min.)
Speaker 2 (4 min.)	Speaker 2 Summary (2 min.)
Crossfire (3 min.)	Grand Crossfire (3 min.)
Speaker 3 (4 min.)	Speaker 3 Final Focus (2 min.)
Speaker 4 (4 min.)	Speaker 4 Final Focus (2 min.)
Crossfire (3 min.)	

Preparation time: 2 minutes per team

Please note: pro/con positions are decided by coin toss every round. The team winning the toss may choose to either go first or select a position. The opponent then has the opportunity to choose the remaining option. For example, Team A wins the coin toss and decides to go second. Team B would then have the a choice of going pro or con.

COMMENTS TO DEBATERS:

REASONS FOR MY DECISION:

(Oral critiques are not permitted)

LINCOLN-DOUGLAS

PURPOSE & OVERVIEW

Lincoln-Douglas debate or L-D has its origins in the political debates of Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas in 1858. L-D is one-on-one debating as opposed to team debating. In addition, L-D debaters consider propositions of value rather than propositions of policy. Topics are selected by the National Speech and Debate Association monthly. Topics range from individual freedom versus the collective good to economic development versus environmental protection. Students may consult evidence gathered prior to the debate but may not use the internet in round. An entire debate is roughly 45 minutes and consists of constructive speeches, rebuttals, and cross-examination.

The debate should:

- Display effective persuasive oration. Debaters should involve the audience in the debate through effective gestures.
- Be organized. Each speech should be presented in an orderly manner, making use of effective transitions to keep the audience involved in the flow of the debate.
- Clash. The debaters should clearly clash with each other on all major points, offering a rationale for their positions and an explanation of how they differ from their opponents.
- Demonstrate a knowledge of the values inherent in the proposition. Furthermore, they should each uphold a value consistent with their position in the debate.

FORMAT

**Prep time: 3 minutes for each speaker*

Speech	Time Limit	Purpose
Affirmative Constructive	6 minutes	Present the affirmative case
Negative Cross-Examination	3 minutes	Negative asks questions of the affirmative
Negative Constructive	7 minutes	Present the negative case and refute the affirmative case
Affirmative Cross-Examination	3 minutes	Affirmative asks questions of the negative
First Affirmative Rebuttal	4 minutes	Refute the negative case and rebuild the affirmative case

Negative Rebuttal	6 minutes	Refute the affirmative case, rebuild the negative case, and offer reasons that negative should win the round, commonly referred to as voting issues.
2nd Affirmative Rebuttal	3 minutes	Address negative voting issues and offer reasons for why the affirmative should win.

EVALUATION

Judges do not need any extensive training. They need only to be certain their decisions are based upon the issues presented in the round and the effectiveness of each speaker rather than upon their personal views of the topic being debated.

Criteria used by judges in determining winners include all aspects of general effectiveness in debate. Most important of these criteria are clear and persuasive speaking, analysis of issues, persuasiveness of overall argumentation, clarity and organization of arguments, adequacy and accuracy of evidence, and consistent defense of a core value. If a judge determines that a contestant speeds, spreads, uses technical jargon, or otherwise employs Policy tactics in a manner that makes their argument unable to be understood by an intelligent high school student or well-informed citizen, that judge must vote against the offending contestant.

Write constructive, thorough comments to each debater. Give reasons why you voted for one side and state what the losing side needed to do to win.

EXAMPLE

[Watch a Lincoln-Douglas Debate Example.](#)



Virginia High School League Lincoln-Douglas Debate Ballot

ROUND _____ ROOM _____ DATE _____ JUDGE _____

Affirmative (code) name _____ Negative (code) name _____

INSTRUCTIONS TO JUDGES

In making your decision, you might ask yourself the following questions:

1. Which of the debaters persuaded you that their position was more valid?
2. Did the debaters support their position appropriately, using logical argumentation throughout, and evidence where necessary?
3. Which debater communicated more effectively?

CIRCLE THE APPROPRIATE NUMBER

	SUPERIOR	EXCELLENT	GOOD	AVERAGE
Affirmative	50-49-48-47	46-45-44-43	42-41-40-39	38-37-36-35
Negative	50-49-48-47	46-45-44-43	42-41-40-39	38-37-36-35

In my opinion the better debating was done by _____
(affirmative or negative) code

Judge's Signature _____ School _____



AFFIRMATIVE	NEGATIVE
Case & Analysis	Case & Analysis
Support of Issues Through Evidence and Reasoning	Support of Issues through Evidence and Reasoning
Delivery	Delivery

Reason for Decision (Oral Critiques are Not Permitted):

FORMAT

Affirmative 6-minute constructive
 Negative 3-minute cross examination
 Negative 7-minute constructive
 Affirmative 3-minute cross examination
 Affirmative 4-minute rebuttal
 Negative 6-minute rebuttal
 Affirmative 3-minute rebuttal

STUDENT CONGRESS

A simulation of the U.S. legislative process, students generate a series of bills and resolutions for debate in Congressional Debate. Debaters alternate delivering speeches for and against the topic in a group setting. An elected student serves as a presiding officer to ensure debate flows smoothly. Students are assessed on their research, argumentation, and delivery skills, as well as their knowledge and use of parliamentary procedure.

FORMAT

The chamber will elect a Presiding Officer. The judges will begin judging the presiding officer with his or her opening speech and continue judging him or her throughout the round. When judging the presiding officer, the explanations on the ballot are self-explanatory. When it comes to parliamentary procedure and precedence, judges will ask the parliamentarian about the number of mistakes and types of mistakes, then score without influence from the parliamentarian.

The first piece of legislation on the docket will be debated. The author will give a speech that the judges score, then a negative speech will be given that the judges score. This cycle will go on until the chamber votes on the piece of legislation.

EVALUATION

Judges do not need any extensive training. They need only to be certain their decisions are based upon the issues presented in the round and the effectiveness of each speaker rather than upon their personal views of the topic being debated. Most important will be clear and persuasive speaking, documentation of sources, clarity, organization and responding to previous arguments.

EXAMPLE

[Watch a Student Congress Example.](#)



Virginia High School League Student Congress Speaker's Ballot

Round _____ Date _____ Chamber _____ Classification (circle one) 1-3 4 5 6

Speaker's Name _____ Speaker's School _____

Length of Speech _____ Aff/Neg _____

Topic/Bill # _____ Judge's Name _____

Use one ballot for each speech. Rank each speech 12-20 (using no fractions or decimals and 20 being the highest) in each category. **Please write legibly** and comment under each area. Additional comments can be made on the reverse. Oral critiques are not permitted.

Delivery: _____ (12-20)
Is eye contact comprehensive and natural, or is the speaker reading?
Seriousness of purpose, style, poise, coherency, etc.

Originality of Thought: _____ (12-20)
Does the speech advance debate or rehash old thoughts?

Organization and Unity of Speech: _____ (12-20)
Is it organized? Does it develop? Does it ramble?

Evidence and Logical Basis for Statements _____ (12-20)
Breadth of knowledge on the subject
Cites valid sources

Overall Impact and Impression _____ (12-20)
Comments



Virginia High School League Student Congress Presiding Officer's Ballot

Round _____ Date _____ Chamber _____ Classification (circle one) 1-3 4 5 6

Officer's Name _____ Officer's School _____

Judge's Name _____

Rank each presiding officer of your house 12-20 (using no fractions or decimals and 20 being the highest) in each category. **Please write legibly** and comment under each area. Additional comments can be made on the reverse.

Impression _____ (12-20)
Does the member create a positive first impression and a favorable overall impression?

Opening Remarks _____ (12-20)
Did the presiding officer's introduction provide enough information? Did the opening remarks present clear expectations? Did the presiding officer follow through on what he/she said he/she would do?

Knowledge of Parliamentary Procedure _____ (12-20)
Does the presiding officer have an understanding of parliamentary procedure? Does the presiding officer explain motions and his/her actions?

Control _____ (12-20)
Is the presiding officer fair but firm? Is he/she willing to use the gavel as needed? Does he/she rule motions dilatory or do what it takes to advance the business of the house? Did the presiding officer control the session, or did it control him/her?

Precedence _____ (12-20)
Does the presiding officer consistently and accurately keep track of affirmative and negative speeches, motions and questions, making corrections as needed?

POLICY DEBATE

PURPOSE & OVERVIEW

A two-on-two debate that focuses on a policy question for the duration of the academic year, this format tests a student's research, analytical, and delivery skills. Policy debate involves the proposal of a plan by the affirmative team to enact a policy, while the negative team offers reasons to reject that proposal. Throughout the debate, students have the opportunity to cross-examine one another. A judge or panel of judges determines the winner based on the arguments presented.

FORMAT

**Prep time: 8 minutes for each team*

Speech	Abbreviation	Time Limit
1st Affirmative Constructive	1AC	8 minutes
Negative Cross-Examination of Affirmative		3 minutes
1st Negative Constructive	1NC	8 minutes
Affirmative Cross-Examination of Negative		3 minutes
2nd Affirmative Constructive	2AC	8 minutes
Negative Cross-Examination of Affirmative		3 minutes
2nd Negative Constructive	2NC	8 minutes
Affirmative Cross-Examination of Negative		3 minutes
1st Negative Rebuttal	1NR	5 minutes
1st Affirmative Rebuttal	1AR	5 minutes
2nd Negative Rebuttal	2NR	5 minutes

2nd Affirmative Rebuttal	2AR	5 minutes
Prep Time (each team)		5 minutes

EVALUATION

Your decision on who won should be based on which team did a better job of debating and not on your personal opinions or convictions. Be objective as you listen to the debate and evaluate the techniques being employed.

Try to determine which team establishes the greater probability for its position. The debate should be centered on the significance of the problem based on an analysis of the causes and the desirability and practicality of proposed solutions as supported by evidence and reasoning.

The following outline will help you judge the debate. This is a general prospectus of what should happen:

- The affirmative will state the proposition and define terms. They will then usually explain the nature of the problem and trace the causes, citing evils in the present situation (the status quo). They will show how their proposed changes will correct the situation and will usually mention certain advantages that will probably come about if their proposal is accepted.
- The negative will usually defend the status quo and attack the arguments for a change being advanced by the affirmative. They may do this by pointing out that there is no need for a change and that any change would be worse than the present. They may argue that there is no problem or that the problem is presently being solved by changes already in progress. Negative may also offer a counter plan.
- If the negative team uses a counter-plan, they must prove that this proposal is based on a legitimate interpretation of the proposition and that it will solve the problem in a better way than the plan advanced by the affirmative.
- There will usually be several main contentions or major arguments that are of such importance that you can determine who wins the debate by deciding which team won these major arguments.
- The affirmative may also contend that unique, significant, comparative advantages over present system will accrue from their plan. Then they do not have to argue a need or evil.
- The affirmative may also use a criteria case that any solution must fit and compare how their plan and the status quo do, in fact, meet it.
- Remember, the affirmative team has the responsibility of establishing the probability that their proposal will correct the evils in the status quo. If they use the comparative, advantage approach, they need only show their plan is comparatively advantageous and

does not induce significant new harms. In the criteria case they must show: that the criterion is the best one to judge the situation by and that their plan can more effectively fit it without adding new disadvantages. They will attempt to do this by the quality and quantity of evidence and the soundness of their reasoning as they defend their position.

Technical aspects of Debate to be considered in judging:

- There should be agreement on definition of terms as the debate progresses. The affirmative usually defines the terms, but the negative has the right to challenge the definitions if they feel the affirmative has been unfair in defining terms. Unless the definition of terms is attacked by the negative, the definitions advanced by the affirmative are assumed to be accepted.
- The construction of the affirmative case should be done early enough in the debate for the negative to attack it. Totally new arguments for or against the proposition should not be introduced so late in the debate (such as in the rebuttal period), that the other team has no chance to deal with the arguments.
- Arguments must be supported by reasoning and evidence. If arguments are not supported, the opposition should call attention to the fact and insist that the arguments be supported. However, if an argument is advanced and is not dealt with in any way by the opposition, it is presumed to be won by the team advancing the argument.
- If you as a judge know that evidence is being distorted or that the debaters are being dishonest, you should penalize them accordingly. You must be very careful in handling this situation and be very sure of your information. (It is better if the opposition can point out minuses of evidence).
- Minor infractions of the rules such as going a few seconds overtime, whispering too loudly during the debate, etc. should not unduly influence your decision. If, however, such minor infractions interfere with the major aspects of the debate, you should consider this in rendering your decision.
- Delivery alone should not determine the winner, as the emphasis should be on the presentation of arguments. However, if the debater does not communicate clearly and effectively in a manner easily understood, you should take this into consideration. For example, some debaters employ such rapid-fire delivery as to make the presentation difficult, if not impossible, to understand.
- Do not require either team to meet arguments or issues in your mind that are not advanced successfully by the opposition.
- A negative system may argue for simple modifications or repairs of the present system.

Special considerations for cross examination:

- During the questioning period, the questioner should:
 - Ask questions that are arranged in some order.
 - Ask questions that are relevant to the proposition, and to the speech of the debater who is being questioned.

- Ask questions that can be answered; avoid trickery.
- Show the significance of the opponent's answers, making clear the implications.
- The answerer should:
 - Avoid filibuster; make the answers as concise as possible, but refuse to answer questions with a simple "yes" or "no" if doing so would do injustice to his case.
 - Admit lack of knowledge rather than attempt to cover up such lack.
 - Emphasize strong points in his own case at every opportunity.

Miscellaneous considerations:

- Normally, the team winning the debate will have the higher total points. If this is not the case in a particular round, you should specifically indicate that you are giving a "low-point win."
- Avoid making comments to the debaters or coaches which may give some indication of your decision before the results are announced.
- The minimum score for any individual debater shall be 15 points.
- *All requests for evidence or other materials count against either the questioning time or the preparation time (or both) of the requesting team.*

EXAMPLE

[Watch a Policy Debate Example.](#)



JUDGE _____

ROOM _____

Virginia High School League Policy Debate Ballot

TOURNAMENT _____ DATE _____

1. Rate all speakers using the following scale:

SUPERIOR
30 29 28 27

EXCELLENT
26 25 24 23

AVERAGE
22 21 20 19

FAIR
18 17 16 15

2. Fill in decision, points and ranks and return at least white copy to Tournament Control immediately.

3. If pink and yellow copies are retained, complete and return with constructive comments as soon as possible.

4. Oral critiques are not permitted.

5. Do not reveal decision under any circumstances.

AFFIRMATIVE _____ Team # _____				NEGATIVE _____ Team # _____			
School				School			
Position	Name	Points	Rank	Position	Name	Points	Rank
1st AFF. _____	_____	_____	_____	1st NEG. _____	_____	_____	_____
2nd AFF. _____	_____	_____	_____	2nd NEG. _____	_____	_____	_____

THE TEAM WINNING THIS ROUND WAS TEAM # _____ REPRESENTING THE [AFFIRMATIVE] / [NEGATIVE] SIDE.

Judge's Signature _____ School Affiliation _____

Individual Comments

Affirmative	Negative

REASONS FOR DECISION:

FORMAT

First Affirmative 8 minutes
 Second Negative 3 minutes (questions first affirmative)
 First Negative 8 minutes
 First Affirmative 3 minutes (questions first negative)
 Second Affirmative 8 minutes
 First Negative 3 minutes (questions second affirmative)
 Second Negative 8 minutes
 Second Affirmative 3 minutes (questions second negative)
 First Negative 5 minutes (rebuttal)
 First Affirmative 5 minutes (rebuttal)
 Second Negative 5 minutes (rebuttal)
 Second Affirmative 5 minutes (rebuttal)

GUIDELINES FOR FORENSICS JUDGES

1. Do not allow anyone to enter or leave the room during a student's performance. Make clear at the beginning of the round that those who are in the room should remain so until the end of the round.
2. Try to make each competitor feel comfortable and relaxed.
3. "Be thou familiar but by no means vulgar," as Polonius advises. Be friendly but refrain from using any language unsuitable for high school students. On the other hand, don't be too familiar. Don't single out any particular competitor for friendly overtures.
4. Make eye contact with competitors when they perform. They have worked long and hard and want you to see the total package of their performance, not just hear it. They will know you are paying close attention if you are watching them.
5. Do not try to keep time using an analog watch or clock since this is an event in which seconds matter. Use a stopwatch or smartphone timer. No student should be penalized for time if an accurate stopwatch is not in use. Give time signals to extemporaneous and impromptu speakers—5 minutes on down. **For hand signals, hold up one, two, three, four, five, and six fingers to indicate the same number of minutes that have elapsed since the student began speaking, a curved hand at 6:30 and a closed fist at seven minutes.**
6. Alert performers that you will be writing on your ballots while they perform, but they should not assume that what you write is criticism. It may be a compliment!
7. Be on time to rounds.
8. Write all critiques in a positive manner. All suggestions for improvement should be stated in a constructive manner.
9. Put a rank and score on every critique sheet and sign your name at the bottom. Students avidly read these sheets, which constitute their only means for checking the accuracy of competition results.
10. Try to be as objective as possible about the performance of each student. Try not to base judgments on dress and appearance unless the choice of apparel or hairstyle detracts from the performance. Please be sensitive to the fact that many students have no blazer or a dress suit. The Virginia High School League does not have a dress code requirement for forensics competition. However, if the dress or apparel or hairstyle detracts from the performance, the student may lose points. For example, if the competitor must continually push hair out of his or her face or if his clothing is too unkempt or too revealing, those instances would constitute distractions. Certainly, no qualified judge would lower a rating based solely on what a contestant is wearing. That being said, you must remember that forensics is a competition. It's very much like going for a job interview in which the applicants are judged on a number of qualifications. All things being equal, the interviewer also takes note of the applicants' appearance and how they present themselves. That's part of forensics, too. When going to a job interview, you want to dress for success. The same is true for a forensic tournament. If you want to be a winner, you need to look like a winner! It's just all part of the "forensic package" and how a contestant presents himself. If he/she wants to be taken seriously as a competitor, then one's visual image must be considered.
11. Be a responsible judge. Make sure you know all the rules and guidelines for each event. If you aren't sure about any aspect of judging criteria, ask someone who knows.
12. Return ballots as promptly as possible, after making sure the critique sheet ranks and scores match the summary sheet. Make sure there are no ties in rank or quality points.
13. Do not discuss student performance with the students. Do not reveal your rank or scores to anyone other than tab room personnel or the tournament director.

14. Do not discuss your assessments of performance with any other judge.
15. Follow the speaking order on your ballot. The speaking order has been pre-set in a fair manner.
16. Try not to be influenced by a large following of one student who may laugh loudly or applaud vigorously for his or her performance. It's easy to be carried away by crowd appeal, but judges must bear in mind that some crowds are biased.
17. Attempt to prevent distractions from occurring. You should insist that anyone in the room interfering with the competition or performers leave immediately. Don't be afraid to ask competitors to clear a hallway if they are finished with a round while you still have performances to judge. The noise in the hallway can be distracting to both performers and judges.
18. Please remember that this is a voluntary activity. Above all, be reasonable with your scores. We don't want to prescribe a range of scores, but low scores (70s) do seem insulting to students who have worked hard.

INFORMATION FOR SPEECH CONTEST JUDGES

Judges of original oratory, impromptu, and extemporaneous speaking should consider each presentation based on the following areas:

A. Content

- a. Is the subject of interest, significance; properly narrowed; adapted to the speaker, audience and occasion?
- b. Are the ideas clear, sound, original; the analysis complete and valid?
- c. Are the supporting materials valid, relevant, sufficient in number and properly distributed?
- d. Is the language clear, vivid, appropriate, correct and in the conversational mode?
- e. Is the organization clear, unified, coherent, properly proportioned; does it include a thesis statement, an introduction and conclusion?
- f. Is the speech adapted to this audience on this occasion?

B. Delivery

- a. In bodily action, is the speaker animated, does action contribute to the expression of ideas and help to hold interest?
- b. In vocal delivery does the speaker have a good quality; is articulation clear and correct; pronunciation according to accepted standards?
- c. In fluency, is the speaker extemporaneous; is he direct; does the speech keep moving?
- d. In platform personality, does the speaker "get over the footlights," sell himself to the audience?

A judge may not disqualify a contestant. Judges who feel violations of rules have occurred must notify the tournament director.

EXTEMPORANEOUS (INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC)

PURPOSE & OVERVIEW

The purpose of the extemporaneous speaking event is to encourage students to combine clear thinking, good extempore, conversational speaking and interesting presentation in establishing a definite thought with respect to current fact and opinion on a designated topic as presented by contemporary sources.

FORMAT

Students are presented with a choice of three questions related to international current events or US events and, in 30 minutes, prepare a seven-minute speech answering the selected question. Students may consult articles and evidence they gather prior to the contest, but may not use the internet during preparation. Topics range from country-specific issues to regional concerns to foreign policy. The speech is delivered from memory. One 4x6 note card is allowed.

Topics for extemporaneous speaking will be chosen from articles appearing in the issues of national news magazines such as *Newsweek*, *Time*, and *U.S. News and World Report* or from mainstream newspapers with national circulation. Topics will be selected from these periodicals, may relate to either domestic or foreign affairs and will be released at least 30 days before each tournament. Questions pertaining to topics are not to be made known to the contestants before the event.

The judge assigned as timekeeper will use a stopwatch or cell phone timer to time each speech indicating progress with hand signals. The timekeeper will indicate time elapsed at the beginning of the fourth minute of the speech, show the progression of minutes at five and six, six minutes thirty seconds, and at the end of the seventh minute indicate that time has expired. The speaker must conclude the speech at the end of seven minutes. Students have a seven-minute time limit plus a 30 second grace period. The timekeeper will note for the speaker and judges the time for each speech.

EVALUATION

1. Judges should time each speech. The speech shall not exceed seven minutes in length. There is no minimum time requirement as long as the topic is adequately covered; however, the contestant is encouraged to speak at least four minutes.
2. Either before the beginning of the speech or as part of the introduction, the contestant is to read their question in the exact words or phrasing as it appears on the paper they selected.
3. Speeches should have as their purpose either to stimulate, to convince, to persuade or to influence action.
4. Visual aids and/or props used while speaking are prohibited.
5. Criteria followed by judges in determining winners are relevance of theme to topic, thought content, logic, freshness, depth, clarity of organization, sincerity of speaker, adequacy and concreteness of supporting details, use of language (vividness, simplicity and comprehension), voice and diction (variety, acceptable pronunciation, clear enunciation), and control and use of body.

6. Judges' rating forms are supplied by the competition director. All contestants are ranked and scored. Judges shall write constructive criticism for each speaker. Judges may not question speaker at the conclusion of their speech.

EXAMPLE

[Watch an Extemporaneous Speech Example.](#)

Extemporaneous Speaking Critique Sheet

Speaker's Code: _____ RANK 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 (circle one)

Round: _____ Room: _____ Score: _____
 (highest) 70 (lowest) - 100

Name of Speaker: _____ Time: _____

Title: _____

JUDGE: As you watch each contestant, please rate each performance element as superior, excellent, good or fair and provide specific, helpful comments below to elaborate your ratings. Your ratings should reflect your overall score and ranking. While ratings do not have a numerical value, contestants with higher ratings should have higher scores and lower (better) rankings.

RATINGS

Superior: shows mastery of element by applying skills effectively and consistently for the entire presentation
Excellent: shows effective application of element for a majority of presentation
Good: applies element well at times, but lacks mastery
Fair: shows attempt at implementation of element, but application is inconsistent and often ineffective

ELEMENT	S	E	G	F
Appearance: speaker's appearance is appropriate for competition				
Poise: speaker is prepared, confident, composed				
Organization: speech has distinct beginning (with strong thesis), middle (with supporting details and illustrations) and end (without mere restatement of thesis)				
Relevance: speech is on-topic, reasoning is sound and supported with citations				
Eye contact: appropriate, focused				
Communication: speaker is conversational, presents material effectively in a way audience can understand content and speaker's stance on topic; purpose (to inform/persuade) is achieved				
Mechanics: diction, grammar, appropriately colorful vocabulary, pronunciation				
Articulation: speaker enunciates, is understandable				
Projection: speaker uses appropriate volume				
Pace: pacing is appropriately varied, is not too fast or too slow				
Movement: movement is meaningful and deliberate; posture is neither stiff nor slovenly; gestures are appropriate				
Energy: speaker presents material with appropriate energy level, is not monotonous				
Citations: speaker clearly and adequately acknowledges sources of quotes, statistics, etc.				
Impact: presentation is impactful and arouses emotion in audience				

COMMENTS:

IMPROMPTU

PURPOSE & OVERVIEW

Impromptu is a public speaking event where students have seven minutes to select a topic, brainstorm their ideas, outline and deliver a speech. Topics include proverbs, ordinary objects, events, quotations, and famous people. The speech is given without notes and uses an introduction, body, and conclusion. The speech can be light-hearted or serious.

FORMAT

Impromptu topics, selected in advance by the tournament director, include proverbs, ordinary objects, events, quotations, and famous people. All students in each section will draw from the same list of topics provided by the tournament organizers. A different subject area will be used for each round. Contestants are to prepare their speech without consultation and without reference to prepared notes or research materials. Each contestant will be provided a 4" x 6" note card to use for notes. Once a contestant has performed, they are not to leave the room until all contestants have finished speaking.

Timing begins immediately after the three topics are drawn. There is no minimum time requirement, but the contestant must cover the subject adequately. The maximum time for preparation and speaking is seven minutes. The contestant may divide their time in any way they see fit. Visual aids and/or props are prohibited. The designated judge will provide the student with oral time signals, indicating the amount of time elapsed at one minute, two minutes, etc. until the contestant begins speaking. Once the contestant begins speaking the judge will provide the student with hand signals showing the progression of each minute, again at six minutes thirty seconds, and at the end of the seventh minute, indicating time has expired. Contestants have a seven-minute time limit plus a thirty second grace period.

EVALUATION

Criteria followed by judges in determining winners are relevance of theme to topic, though content, freshness, depth, clarity of organization, sincerity of speaker, adequacy of support and development, use of language, voice and diction, and control and use of body. The most competitive contestants will have oratorical qualities with speeches that have a clear introduction/thesis, body and conclusion (beginning, middle, end). All contestants are ranked and scored using the VHSL score sheet and are encouraged to provide written constructive criticism for each contestant.

EXAMPLE

[Watch an Impromptu Speech Example.](#)

Impromptu Speaking Critique Sheet

Speaker's Code: _____ RANK 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 (circle one)

Round: _____ Room: _____ Score: _____
(highest) 70 (lowest) - 100

Name of Speaker: _____ Time: _____

Title: _____

JUDGE: As you watch each contestant, please rate each performance element as superior, excellent, good or fair and provide specific, helpful comments below to elaborate your ratings. Your ratings should reflect your overall score and ranking. While ratings do not have a numerical value, contestants with higher ratings should have higher scores and lower (better) rankings.

RATINGS

Superior: shows mastery of element by applying skills effectively and consistently for the entire presentation

Excellent: shows effective application of element for a majority of presentation

Good: applies element well at times, but lacks mastery

Fair: shows attempt at implementation of element, but application is inconsistent and often ineffective

ELEMENT	S	E	G	F
Appearance: speaker's appearance is appropriate for competition				
Poise: speaker is prepared, confident, composed				
Organization: speech has distinct beginning (with strong thesis), middle (with supporting details and illustrations) and end (without mere restatement of thesis)				
Relevance: speech is on-topic, reasoning is sound and supported				
Eye contact: appropriate, focused				
Communication: speaker is conversational, presents material effectively in a way the audience can understand content and speaker's stance on topic				
Mechanics: diction, grammar, appropriately colorful vocabulary, pronunciation				
Articulation: speaker enunciates, is understandable				
Projection: speaker uses appropriate volume				
Pace: pacing is appropriately varied, is not too fast or too slow				
Movement: movement is meaningful and deliberate; posture is neither stiff nor slovenly; gestures are appropriate				
Energy: speaker presents material with appropriate energy level, is not monotonous				
Impact: presentation is impactful and arouses emotion in audience				

COMMENTS:

ORIGINAL ORATORY

PURPOSE & OVERVIEW

Students deliver a self-written, ten-minute speech on a topic of their choosing. Limited in their ability to quote words directly, competitors craft an argument using evidence, logic, and emotional appeals. Topics range widely, and can be informative or persuasive in nature. The speech is delivered from memory.

FORMAT

A speaker may not use a speech they have delivered in any previous year's contest. Each contestant will deliver their own original speech not to exceed ten minutes in delivery (there is a thirty second grace period). Contestants must present the same speech in each round of a given tournament. Judges are not to provide time signals and there is no minimum time requirement. The oration cannot contain more than 150 words of directly quoted material, nor should the oration be a paraphrase taken completely from one source. The speaker is required to clearly acknowledge the sources of any quotations used. The speaker is allowed to use both sides of two note cards each of which may not exceed 4" x 6" in size. Visual aids used while speaking are not permitted.

Each speaker should prepare a manuscript of their speech for each round of competition. Following the completion of the speech in each round, the speaker will submit a copy of their manuscript to a judge who will submit it to the competition director.

EVALUATION

Both content and delivery are key criteria areas for judging. Look for originality and value of content and theme, soundness of thinking, excellence of organization, adequacy and concreteness of developmental or supporting details and illustrations, vividness of style and content appropriate to the speaker and to the audience in support of contemporary community values; conversational, earnest and concerned delivery; vividness of language; pleasing and varied vocal qualities, posture and bodily movements that are neither stiff nor slovenly; gestures that are felt as necessary; and general effectiveness as a persuasive, convincing, stimulating or inspirational speaker. The purpose is to persuade, so the speaker may seek to convince, stimulate or inspire.

Criteria followed by judges in determining winners are:

- originality and worthwhileness of subject
- thought content (logic, freshness, depth)
- clarity of organization
- sincerity of speaker

- voice and diction (variety, acceptable pronunciation, clear enunciation)

The most competitive contestants will have oratorical qualities with speeches that have a clear intro/thesis, body and conclusion (beginning, middle, end).

EXAMPLE

[Watch an Original Oratory Speech Example.](#)

Original Oratory Critique Sheet

Speaker's Code: _____ RANK 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 (circle one)

Round: _____ Room: _____ Score: _____
 (highest) 70 (lowest) - 100

Name of Speaker: _____ Time: _____

Title: _____

JUDGE: As you watch each contestant, please rate each performance element as superior, excellent, good or fair and provide specific, helpful comments below to elaborate your ratings. Your ratings should reflect your overall score and ranking. While ratings do not have a numerical value, contestants with higher ratings should have higher scores and lower (better) rankings.

RATINGS

Superior: shows mastery of element by applying skills effectively and consistently for the entire presentation

Excellent: shows effective application of element for a majority of presentation

Good: applies element well at times, but lacks mastery

Fair: shows attempt at implementation of element, but application is inconsistent and often ineffective

ELEMENT	S	E	G	F
Appearance: speaker's appearance is appropriate for competition				
Poise: speaker is prepared, confident, composed				
Organization: speech has distinct beginning (with strong thesis), middle (with supporting details and illustrations) and end (without mere restatement of thesis)				
Relevance: speech is on-topic, reasoning is sound and supported with citations				
Eye contact: appropriate, focused				
Communication: speaker is conversational, presents material effectively in a way the audience can understand content and speaker's stance on topic; purpose (to inform/persuade) is achieved				
Mechanics: diction, grammar, appropriately colorful vocabulary, pronunciation				
Articulation: speaker enunciates, is understandable				
Projection: speaker uses appropriate volume				
Pace: pacing is appropriately varied, is not too fast or too slow				
Movement: movement is meaningful and deliberate; posture is neither stiff nor slovenly; gestures are appropriate				
Energy: speaker presents material with appropriate energy level, is not monotonous				
Citations: speaker clearly and adequately acknowledges sources of quotes, statistics, etc.				
Impact: presentation is impactful and arouses emotion in audience				
Choice of Topic: topic is appropriate to speaker and audience, and is engaging				

COMMENTS:

INFORMATION FOR ORAL INTERPRETATION JUDGES

INTRODUCTION

What follows are broad but basic guidelines to the Virginia High School League's individual oral interpretation events – prose, poetry, storytelling, serious dramatic interpretation, humorous dramatic interpretation, serious duo interpretation and humorous duo interpretation. While there are a number of similarities among these events, there are also distinct differences. An obvious distinction is the choice of material. Another difference is that the prose and poetry events are readings – the use of a manuscript is required – while the use of a manuscript is prohibited in serious dramatic, humorous dramatic, serious duo and humorous duo interpretations. A third distinction is to consider presentations on three levels: Level One includes prose and poetry, Level Two includes storytelling, serious/humorous dramatic interpretation and serious/humorous duo interpretation, and Level Three is acting – with each level representing a step higher in terms of animation. It is important also to note a common quality of a good performance in any interpretative event – the presentation should not be overly distracting but should allow the reader to be moved by the author's work.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The student's aim in presenting a selection is to communicate as fully as possible the author's ideas, feelings and imagery. The presentation should reflect careful and thorough analysis of the selection in terms of language, structure, style and meaning, and should demonstrate the student's understanding, appreciation and emotional response to the material. It should be delivered in a lively and expressive conversational manner with clear enunciation and pronunciation, adequate vocal projection, spontaneity, fluency and a strong desire to share the material with the audience. The student should be intellectually, emotionally and physically involved with the material.

The presentation should keep the audience's attention focused on the material, not the presenter. Facial expression, body movement and gesture are important aspects of the presentation, but they must grow from the material, be natural, spontaneous and expressive, and must not seem imposed or "practiced."

The selection should not seem memorized. Although it is almost impossible not to memorize a short selection after hours of preparation, the student, when using a manuscript, should refer to the manuscript frequently if for no other reason than to remind the audience that the reader is the channel for the author's work. Eye contact with the audience will depend on the nature of the material. Expository prose, for example, will usually call for direct eye-to-eye contact while lyrical poetry of a personal nature will require less direct contact – perhaps focusing just above the heads of the audience.

The selection should leave the audience with a clearer understanding, deeper appreciation and stronger emotional involvement with the material than would be possible from a silent reading of the same material. They should be able to see the sights, hear the sounds, feel the pain, sorrow, outrage, joy, calm, or any other emotion inherent in the author's work. This will occur only when the student has applied mind, voice, body and spirit to the presentation.

INTERPRETATION VS. ACTING

One of the most frequent questions with regard to interpretative events is, "What is the difference between acting and oral interpretation?" It arises, no doubt, from the frequent contest criticism that a student "acted" rather than "read" or "presented" his selection. While certain elements are common to both arts, the distinctions between them are clear.

Acting requires that the performer become the character he is portraying. While on the stage, the actor is Hamlet. He wears Hamlet's clothing, thinks Hamlet's thoughts, performs Hamlet's movements. The audience sees the actor, here and now, as the young prince. He is surrounded by his friends and family – he is living in time and space, a tangible being.

Oral interpretation, on the other hand, requires that the performer suggest the character or characters he/she is interpreting. If he/she is interpreting Hamlet, he/she suggests Hamlet's appearance, surroundings and manner. Hamlet and his surroundings exist only in the imagination of the reader and the audience.

The actor is surrounded by other actors, scenery and properties. An actual environment has been created for him/her from paint, light, canvas and furniture. Everyone watching the performance sees the same characters and setting.

The reader or interpreter is generally in a well-lighted room with the audience – he/she sees them and talks to them. He/she tells them about what is happening and about the surroundings. Each member of the audience will have a mental picture of his own and will see the play, story or poem in the mind's eye.

The actual physical nature of the interpretive situation (and prohibition of props and costumes), then, provides the basic distinction between acting and interpretation. There are others. The actor portrays one character, whereas the interpreter may suggest many. The difference between the literal action (bodily and vocal) of the actor and the suggestive action of the interpreter provide other distinctions.

The actor, playing one person, takes on the basic voice and bodily action of the character. The interpreter, particularly in reading a piece, can only give hints as to what a number of characters are like. He/she cannot move around the platform as freely or take on the vocal characteristics of a number of people. Attempting this would provide a highly disorganized spectacle. A shrug of the shoulder or a raising of an eyebrow, a slower rate of speaking or a lower pitch will suggest age, sex, physical infirmity or attitude.

The actor can improve by mastering the art of oral interpretation, and the techniques of acting can assist the interpreter. Both arts require a flexible and expressive voice and a well-controlled body; however, the interpreter must never attempt to substitute literal action for suggestive action. He/she must feel, he/she must imagine deeply so that through voice and body he/she can create mental images for the audience.

In interpretation categories, reasonable movement within a hula hoop area is permitted. A contestant may take a step or even do some dance steps within that hula hoop area. He/she may not move about the room. The most important point to remember is that interpretation is not acting. The interpreter does not need to "be" a character, but merely to create that

character in the minds of the listeners. He uses voice, focal points and postures to allow his listeners to visualize a character, his situation and actions. While there is no specific rule against getting down on one knee, generally speaking, it would not be needed or even appropriate. For a good interpreter, just pretending to lower oneself to one knee is all that is necessary. Allow the listeners' imagination to take over and visualize the scene.

A clear example of how a student can "go too far" toward acting occurred in the state girls prose reading contest a few years ago. A charming young lady read a selection which described an older woman falling to her knees and weeping at the end of the piece. Rather than lowering her eyes or suggesting a vocal crack, she literally went to her knees and feigned weeping. Had it not been so embarrassing it would have been laughable. Up to that point she had read well—she understood the author and character and expressed the meaning, mood and attitude well. But she substituted literal action for suggestion. It is in this area that most of the criticism of "acting" arises.

Many students in interpretation events where use of a manuscript is required have found ways to effectively choreograph use of the book into the presentation, particularly to separate the introductory statement from the reading itself or to mark the end. That is permitted, but in those events where props are disallowed, the book may not be used as a physical representation related to the content of the piece. Similarly, a participant's clothes may not be used as costuming.

The greater the student's imagination, the more thoroughly he/she succeeds in creating images for the audience. Often the interpretation may be more rewarding for the audience than an acting performance because the only limits to the setting and action are limits of the imagination. The successful interpreter arouses in his audience real emotions, rich backgrounds and thorough understanding.

JUDGING

- A. To what degree does the student understand and communicate the meaning of the selection in that he/she:
 - a. Makes clear the central theme?
 - b. Makes clear the various parts or divisions in the reading?
 - c. Emphasizes key words in each sentence?
 - d. Makes listeners aware of relationship of ideas to each other (ex: comparison, repetition, parenthetical)?
 - e. Presents ideas in groupings that are easy for the listener to understand?
 - f. Indicates he/she knows the denotative (dictionary) meaning of strange words?
- B. To what degree does the student understand and communicate the emotional aspects of the selections in that he/she:
 - a. Presents the main emotion (in poetry) or attitude (in prose) of the writer?
 - b. Presents secondary emotions or attitudes?
 - c. Presents his/her own attitudes or comments as a reader on the selection?
 - d. Makes the audience see mental pictures of people, scenes, actions, etc., in the presentation?
 - e. Enjoys or appreciates the selection and indicates he/she wants to share it with the audience?
- C. Does the student have effective delivery in that he/she:

- a. Uses a conversational (rather than a “read-ie” theatrical, or oratorical) style?
 - b. Maintains a sense of communication with the listeners (rather than at them, or to himself)?
 - c. Looks at the members of his audience (eye-to-eye, as contrasted to not looking at them at all or looking over them, or through them)?
 - d. Seems to present spontaneously (as contrasted to sounding memorized, drilled or carefully rehearsed)?
 - e. Uses a vocal pattern with variety in rate, pitch, volume, inflection?
 - f. Uses correct pronunciation?
 - g. Has good enunciation (as compared to an overly precise, mannered and careful formation of speech sounds, or a careless indistinct formation)?
 - h. Gets the audience to respond to the presentation (by holding attention, interest, or by getting an overt response such as smiles or laughter)?
 - i. Uses his body to contribute to the meaning and mood of the selection (or has a rigid or slovenly posture that deflects attention from the selection)?
 - j. Uses facial expression to contribute to the presentation (or has a poker face, or an artificial and mannered expression that detracts from the performance)?
- D. (If poetry) Handles effectively the special reading problems presented in poetry?
- a. Reads by groupings or ideas (as contrasted to reading each line as a separate entity)?
 - b. Handles the meter so that it does not dominate the reading to obscure the intellectual meaning?
 - c. Handles rhyme effectively? (Subordinating it if it is quite obvious and dominant, or bringing it out if it is not strong, or if it contributes to mood or humor of selection).
 - d. Makes the most of the imagery in the selection so that the audience sees scenes, feels action, etc.
 - e. Recognizes and brings out sound values so that they contribute to the meaning and emotion of the poem: alliteration, onomatopoeia, repetition of words or phrases, assonance.

A judge may not disqualify a contestant. Judges who feel violations of rules have occurred must notify the tournament director.

STORYTELLING INTERPRETATION

PURPOSE & OVERVIEW

Students select a published children's story that meets a designated theme. Themes range widely and may include mysteries, heroism, or fairy tales. Students select a story that would be appropriate for young children and tell the story as if presenting to that audience. Manuscripts are not permitted.

FORMAT

Participants must present a new selection for each school year. The same selection will be presented in each round of a given tournament. The time limit for performing is ten minutes and judges will not keep time. No notes may be used for the performance. Gestures are encouraged; however, movement is restricted. No walking is allowed.

EVALUATION

All interpretation categories are evaluated based on choice of selection, interpretation, pronunciation, timing, enunciation, eye contact, posture, gestures, voice, poise, appearance, energy level, coherence of story cutting, vocal expression, facial expression, characterization, appeal to children (storytelling only), and impact of message and performance. All participants are ranked and scored. Judges should provide written constructive criticism to each participant.

EXAMPLE

[Watch a Storytelling Speech Performance.](#)

Storytelling Critique Sheet

Speaker's Code: _____ RANK 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 (circle one)

Round: _____ Room: _____ Score: _____
 (highest) 70 (lowest) - 100

Name of Speaker: _____ Time: _____

Title: _____

JUDGE: As you watch each contestant, please rate each performance element as superior, excellent, good or fair and provide specific, helpful comments below to elaborate your ratings. Your ratings should reflect your overall score and ranking. While ratings do not have a numerical value, contestants with higher ratings should have higher scores and lower (better) rankings.

RATINGS

Superior: shows mastery of element by applying skills effectively and consistently for the entire presentation

Excellent: shows effective application of element for a majority of presentation

Good: applies element well at times, but lacks mastery

Fair: shows attempt at implementation of element, but application is inconsistent and often ineffective

ELEMENT	S	E	G	F
Appearance: speaker's appearance is appropriate for competition				
Poise: speaker is prepared, confident, composed				
Choice of Selection: selection is appropriate, and fitting to speaker, category and audience				
Organization: selection flows; editing/cutting is coherent				
Eye contact: appropriate, focused				
Interpretation: speaker's interpretation is intelligible, effective, engaging, and entertaining				
Communication: speaker presents material effectively in a way the audience can understand the story, characters, and character(s) motivation; establishes mood				
Articulation: speaker enunciates, pronounces words correctly, and is understandable				
Projection: speaker uses appropriate volume				
Vocal Characterization: speaker clearly and thoughtfully creates different voices/accents for characters and is consistent when transitioning between/among characters				
Physical Characterization: speaker clearly and thoughtfully creates and presents characters by incorporating appropriate and distinct gestures, body postures, behaviors, and other relevant physicality, and is consistent when transitioning between/among characters				
Pace: pacing is appropriately varied, is not too fast or too slow				
Memorization: delivery is free of memorization lapses and errors				
Freshness: speaker presents material with an "illusion of the first time" as if it were brand new; presentation is not stale or rote				
Energy: speaker presents material with appropriate energy level, is not monotonous				
Impact: presentation is impactful and arouses emotion in audience				

COMMENTS:

SERIOUS DRAMATIC INTERPRETATION

PURPOSE & OVERVIEW

Using a play, short story, or other published work, students perform a selection of one or more portions of a piece up to ten minutes in length. With a spotlight on character development and depth, this event focuses on the student's ability to convey emotion through the use of a dramatic text. Competitors may portray one or multiple characters. No props or costumes may be used. Performances can also include an introduction written by the student to contextualize the performance, and state the title and the author.

FORMAT

Participants must select a selection of a serious nature from a published work. The performance should not exceed ten minutes. The participant should preface the selection with an introductory statement that will give the audience a better understanding of the selection. Movement is allowed, but such movement should be restricted to bending (knees and/or waist); leaning, twisting or swiveling; and no walking. Use of body (gestures, appropriate audience/eye contact, etc.) to suggest character is permitted.

EVALUATION

All interpretation categories are evaluated based on choice of selection, interpretation, pronunciation, timing, enunciation, eye contact, posture, gestures, voice, poise, appearance, energy level, coherence of story cutting, vocal expression, facial expression, characterization, appeal to children (storytelling only), and impact of message and performance. Judges will not provide time signals and the use of manuscripts is prohibited. All participants are ranked and scored. Judges should provide written constructive criticism to each participant.

EXAMPLE

[Watch a Serious Dramatic Interpretation Performance.](#)

Serious Dramatic Interpretation Critique Sheet

Speaker's Code: _____ RANK 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 (circle one)

Round: _____ Room: _____ Score: _____
(highest) 70 (lowest) - 100

Name of Speaker: _____ Time: _____

Title: _____

JUDGE: As you watch each contestant, please rate each performance element as superior, excellent, good or fair and provide specific, helpful comments below to elaborate your ratings. Your ratings should reflect your overall score and ranking. While ratings do not have a numerical value, contestants with higher ratings should have higher scores and lower (better) rankings.

RATINGS

Superior: shows mastery of element by applying skills effectively and consistently for the entire presentation

Excellent: shows effective application of element for a majority of presentation

Good: applies element well at times, but lacks mastery

Fair: shows attempt at implementation of element, but application is inconsistent and often ineffective

ELEMENT	S	E	G	F
Appearance: speaker's appearance is appropriate for competition				
Poise: speaker is prepared, confident, composed				
Choice of Selection: selection is appropriate, and fitting to speaker, category and audience				
Organization: selection flows; editing/cutting is coherent				
Eye contact: appropriate, focused				
Interpretation: speaker's interpretation is intelligible, effective, engaging, and entertaining				
Communication: speaker presents material effectively in a way the audience can understand the story, characters, and character(s) motivation; establishes mood				
Articulation: speaker enunciates, pronounces words correctly, and is understandable				
Projection: speaker uses appropriate volume				
Vocal Characterization: speaker clearly and thoughtfully creates different voices/accents for characters and is consistent when transitioning between/among characters				
Physical Characterization: speaker clearly and thoughtfully creates and presents characters by incorporating appropriate and distinct gestures, body postures, behaviors, and other relevant physicality, and is consistent when transitioning between/among characters				
Pace: pacing is appropriately varied, is not too fast or too slow				
Memorization: delivery is free of memorization lapses and errors				
Freshness: speaker presents material with an "illusion of the first time" as if it were brand new; presentation is not stale or rote				
Energy: speaker presents material with appropriate energy level, is not monotonous				
Impact: presentation is impactful and arouses emotion in audience				

COMMENTS:

HUMOROUS DRAMATIC INTERPRETATION

PURPOSE & OVERVIEW

Using a play, short story, or other published work, students perform a selection of one or more portions of a piece up to ten minutes in length. Humorous Interpretation is designed to test a student's comedic skills through script analysis, delivery, timing, and character development. Competitors may portray one or multiple characters. No props or costumes may be used. Performances can also include an introduction written by the student to contextualize the performance and state the title and the author.

FORMAT

Each participant shall present one selection of a humorous nature chosen from published material. The participant must present the same selection in each round of a given tournament. The selection should emphasize character development though consistent use of distinct voices, focal points, and postures. Adaptations may be for the purpose of continuity only. The participant should preface the selection with an introductory statement that will give the audience a better understanding of the selection, provided the total time does not exceed ten minutes. Adjudicator will not provide time signals. The use of a manuscript is prohibited. No participant may use a selection that they used in previous years.

EVALUATION

All interpretation categories are evaluated based on choice of selection, interpretation, pronunciation, timing, enunciation, eye contact, posture, gestures, voice, poise, appearance, energy level, coherence of story cutting, vocal expression, facial expression, characterization, appeal to children (storytelling only), and impact of message and performance. All participants are ranked and scored. Judges should provide written constructive criticism to each participant.

EXAMPLE

[Watch a Humorous Dramatic Interpretation Performance.](#)

Humorous Interpretation Critique Sheet

Speaker's Code: _____ RANK 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 (circle one)

Round: _____ Room: _____ Score: _____
 (highest) 70 (lowest) - 100

Name of Speaker: _____ Time: _____

Title: _____

JUDGE: As you watch each contestant, please rate each performance element as superior, excellent, good or fair and provide specific, helpful comments below to elaborate your ratings. Your ratings should reflect your overall score and ranking. While ratings do not have a numerical value, contestants with higher ratings should have higher scores and lower (better) rankings.

RATINGS

Superior: shows mastery of element by applying skills effectively and consistently for the entire presentation

Excellent: shows effective application of element for a majority of presentation

Good: applies element well at times, but lacks mastery

Fair: shows attempt at implementation of element, but application is inconsistent and often ineffective

ELEMENT	S	E	G	F
Appearance: speaker's appearance is appropriate for competition				
Poise: speaker is prepared, confident, composed				
Choice of Selection: selection is appropriate, and fitting to speaker, category and audience				
Organization: selection flows; editing/cutting is coherent				
Eye contact: appropriate, focused				
Interpretation: speaker's interpretation is intelligible, effective, engaging, and entertaining				
Communication: speaker presents material effectively in a way the audience can understand the story, characters, and character(s) motivation; establishes mood				
Articulation: speaker enunciates, pronounces words correctly, and is understandable				
Projection: speaker uses appropriate volume				
Vocal Characterization: speaker clearly and thoughtfully creates different voices/accents for characters and is consistent when transitioning between/among characters				
Physical Characterization: speaker clearly and thoughtfully creates and presents characters by incorporating appropriate and distinct gestures, body postures, behaviors, and other relevant physicality, and is consistent when transitioning between/among characters				
Pace: pacing is appropriately varied, is not too fast or too slow				
Memorization: delivery is free of memorization lapses and errors				
Freshness: speaker presents material with an "illusion of the first time" as if it were brand new; presentation is not stale or rote				
Energy: speaker presents material with appropriate energy level, is not monotonous				
Impact: presentation is impactful and arouses emotion in audience				

COMMENTS:

PROSE INTERPRETATION

PURPOSE & OVERVIEW

Using a short story, parts of a novel, or other published work of prose, students provide an oral interpretation of a selection of materials. Typically, a single piece of literature, prose can be drawn from the works of fiction or nonfiction. Prose corresponds to common speech patterns and may combine elements of narration and dialogue. Students may not use poetry, or drama (plays), in this category. This event is ten minutes, including an introduction.

FORMAT

Each participant reads one prepared published prose selection of their own choice with a total reading time of not more than ten minutes. The participant should preface their reading with an introductory statement which will give the audience a better understanding of the selection read, provided this total time does not exceed ten minutes.

EVALUATION

All interpretation categories are evaluated based on choice of selection, interpretation, pronunciation, timing, enunciation, eye contact, posture, gestures, voice, poise, appearance, energy level, coherence of story cutting, vocal expression, facial expression, characterization, appeal to children (storytelling only), and impact of message and performance. All participants are ranked and scored. Judges should provide written constructive criticism to each participant.

EXAMPLE

[Watch a Prose Interpretation Performance.](#)

Prose Interpretation Critique Sheet

Speaker's Code: _____ RANK 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 (circle one)

Round: _____ Room: _____ Score: _____
 (highest) 70 (lowest) - 100

Name of Speaker: _____ Time: _____

Title: _____

JUDGE: As you watch each contestant, please rate each performance element as superior, excellent, good or fair and provide specific, helpful comments below to elaborate your ratings. Your ratings should reflect your overall score and ranking. While ratings do not have a numerical value, contestants with higher ratings should have higher scores and lower (better) rankings.

RATINGS

Superior: shows mastery of element by applying skills effectively and consistently for the entire presentation

Excellent: shows effective application of element for a majority of presentation

Good: applies element well at times, but lacks mastery

Fair: shows attempt at implementation of element, but application is inconsistent and often ineffective

ELEMENT	S	E	G	F
Appearance: speaker's appearance is appropriate for competition				
Poise: speaker is prepared, confident, composed				
Choice of Selection: selection is appropriate, and fitting to speaker, category and audience				
Organization: selection flows; editing/cutting is coherent				
Interpretation: speaker's interpretation is intelligible, effective, engaging, and entertaining				
Communication: speaker presents material effectively in a way the audience can understand the story, characters, and character(s) motivation; establishes mood				
Articulation: speaker enunciates, pronounces words correctly, and is understandable				
Projection: speaker uses appropriate volume				
Vocal Characterization: speaker clearly and thoughtfully creates different voices/accents for characters and is consistent when transitioning between/among characters				
Physical Characterization: speaker clearly and thoughtfully creates and presents characters by incorporating appropriate and distinct gestures, body postures, behaviors, and other relevant physicality, and is consistent when transitioning between/among characters				
Pace: pacing is appropriately varied, is not too fast or too slow				
Freshness: speaker presents material with an "illusion of the first time" as if it were brand new; presentation is not stale or rote				
Energy: speaker presents material with appropriate energy level, is not monotonous				
Impact: presentation is impactful and arouses emotion in audience				
Eye Contact: appropriate, focused, balance between audience and manuscript to convey dramatic reading				

COMMENTS:

POETRY INTERPRETATION

PURPOSE & OVERVIEW

Using a selection or selections of literature, students provide an oral interpretation of poetry. Poetry is characterized by writing that conveys ideas, experiences, and emotions through language and expression. Students may choose traditional poetry, often characterized by rhyme or rhythm, or nontraditional poetry, which often has a rhythmic flow but is not necessarily structured by formal meter (meter is a beat, pattern, or structure, such as iambic pentameter). Students may not use prose, nor drama (plays) in this category. This event is ten minutes, including an introduction.

FORMAT

Each contestant will read one prepared published poem or poetic group of their own choice with a total reading time of not more than ten minutes. The contestant should preface their reading with an introductory statement which will give the audience a better understanding of the selection read, provided this total time does not exceed ten minutes. Contestants must present the same selection in each round of a given tournament. Judge will not provide time signals. The use of a manuscript is required. No reader may use a prepared poetry selection, adaptation, or cutting that they have read in a regional, super-regional, or state contest in a previous year.

EVALUATION

All interpretation categories are evaluated based on choice of selection, interpretation, pronunciation, timing, enunciation, eye contact, posture, gestures, voice, poise, appearance, energy level, coherence of story cutting, vocal expression, facial expression, characterization, appeal to children (storytelling only), and impact of message and performance. All participants are ranked and scored. Judges should provide written constructive criticism to each participant.

EXAMPLE

[Watch a Poetry Interpretation Performance.](#)

Poetry Interpretation Critique Sheet

Speaker's Code: _____ RANK 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 (circle one)

Round: _____ Room: _____ Score: _____
(highest) 70 (lowest) - 100

Name of Speaker: _____ Time: _____

Title: _____

JUDGE: As you watch each contestant, please rate each performance element as superior, excellent, good or fair and provide specific, helpful comments below to elaborate your ratings. Your ratings should reflect your overall score and ranking. While ratings do not have a numerical value, contestants with higher ratings should have higher scores and lower (better) rankings.

RATINGS

Superior: shows mastery of element by applying skills effectively and consistently for the entire presentation

Excellent: shows effective application of element for a majority of presentation

Good: applies element well at times, but lacks mastery

Fair: shows attempt at implementation of element, but application is inconsistent and often ineffective

ELEMENT	S	E	G	F
Appearance: speaker's appearance is appropriate for competition				
Poise: speaker is prepared, confident, composed				
Choice of Selection: selection is appropriate, and fitting to speaker, category and audience				
Organization: selection flows; editing/cutting is coherent				
Interpretation: speaker's interpretation is intelligible, effective, engaging, and entertaining				
Communication: speaker presents material effectively in a way the audience can understand the story, characters, and character(s) motivation; establishes mood				
Articulation: speaker enunciates, pronounces words correctly, and is understandable				
Projection: speaker uses appropriate volume				
Vocal Characterization: speaker clearly and thoughtfully creates different voices/accents for characters and is consistent when transitioning between/among characters				
Physical Characterization: speaker clearly and thoughtfully creates and presents characters by incorporating appropriate and distinct gestures, body postures, behaviors, and other relevant physicality, and is consistent when transitioning between/among characters				
Pace: pacing is appropriately varied, is not too fast or too slow				
Freshness: speaker presents material with an "illusion of the first time" as if it were brand new; presentation is not stale or rote				
Energy: speaker presents material with appropriate energy level, is not monotonous				
Impact: presentation is impactful and arouses emotion in audience				
Eye Contact: appropriate, focused, balance between audience and manuscript to convey dramatic reading				
Delivery: speaker interprets poetic devices in material to differentiate it from prose				

COMMENTS:

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HUMOROUS DUO INTERPRETATION

PURPOSE & OVERVIEW

Two competitors team up to deliver a ten-minute performance of a humorous published play or story. Using off-stage focus, competitors convey emotion and environment through a variety of performance techniques focusing on the relationships and interactions between the characters. No props or costumes are used. Performances can also include an introduction written by the students to contextualize the performance and state the title and the author.

FORMAT

Each duo team must present one selection from a single published work. Though the material may contain humorous tones, the climax and resolution must be a serious dramatic nature. Contestants must present the same selection in each round of a given tournament. Each interpreter may present one or more characters and either or both may present narration. A selection must maintain the author's intent, characters and words as written, except for minor use of transitions, unless written permission is granted by the author or publisher for modification and/or adaptation of the published work. No contestant may use a selection, adaptation, or cutting that either member of the duo team has used in a regional, super-regional, or state contest in a previous year. The contestants should preface the selection with an introductory statement that will give the audience a better understanding of the selection. The use of a manuscript is prohibited. The performers may not have eye or physical contact with each other except during the introduction and should focus off stage. The performers must begin their presentation their presentation from center stage and restrict their physical blocking to movement around one another, switching positions, pivoting from side to side, or turning around completely. No props or costumes are permitted. There is no minimum time for this event with the maximum being ten minutes. Judge will not provide time signals.

EVALUATION

All interpretation categories are evaluated based on choice of selection, interpretation, pronunciation, timing, enunciation, eye contact, posture, gestures, voice, poise, appearance, energy level, coherence of story cutting, vocal expression, facial expression, characterization, appeal to children (storytelling only), and impact of message and performance. All participants are ranked and scored. Judges should provide written constructive criticism to each participant.

EXAMPLE

[Watch a Duo Interpretation Performance.](#)

Humorous Duo Interpretation Critique Sheet

Speaker's Code: _____ RANK 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 (circle one)

Round: _____ Room: _____ Score: _____
 (highest) 70 (lowest) - 100

Name of Speaker: _____ Time: _____

Title: _____

JUDGE: As you watch each pair of contestants, please rate each performance element as superior, excellent, good or fair and provide specific, helpful comments below to elaborate your ratings. Your ratings should reflect your overall score and ranking. While ratings do not have a numerical value, contestants with higher ratings should have higher scores and lower (better) rankings.

RATINGS

Superior: shows mastery of element by applying skills effectively and consistently for the entire presentation

Excellent: shows effective application of element for a majority of presentation

Good: applies element well at times, but lacks mastery

Fair: shows attempt at implementation of element, but application is inconsistent and often ineffective

ELEMENT	S	E	G	F
Appearance: speakers' appearance is appropriate for competition				
Poise: speakers are prepared, confident, composed				
Choice of Selection: selection is appropriate, and fitting to speakers, category and audience				
Organization: selection flows; editing/cutting is coherent				
Eye contact: appropriate, focused				
Interpretation: speakers' interpretation is intelligible, effective, engaging, and entertaining				
Communication: speakers present material effectively in a way the audience can understand the story, characters, and character(s) motivation; establishes mood				
Articulation: speakers enunciate, pronounce words correctly, and are understandable				
Projection: speakers use appropriate volume				
Vocal Characterization: speakers clearly and thoughtfully create different voices/accents for characters and are consistent when transitioning between/among characters				
Physical Characterization: speakers clearly and thoughtfully create and present characters by incorporating appropriate and distinct gestures, body postures, behaviors, and other relevant physicality, and are consistent when transitioning between/among characters				
Pace: pacing is appropriately varied, is not too fast or too slow				
Memorization: delivery is free of memorization lapses and errors				
Freshness: speakers present material with an "illusion of the first time" as if it were brand new; presentation is not stale or rote				
Energy: speakers present material with appropriate energy level, is not monotonous				
Impact: presentation is impactful and arouses emotion in audience				
Chemistry: partners complement one another stylistically and have strong rapport				
Balance: each speaker is integral to the development of the presentation and is equally matched in skill				

COMMENTS:

SERIOUS DUO INTERPRETATION

PURPOSE & OVERVIEW

Two competitors team up to deliver a ten-minute performance of a humorous published play or story. Using off-stage focus, competitors convey emotion and environment through a variety of performance techniques focusing on the relationships and interactions between the characters. No props or costumes are used. Performances can also include an introduction written by the students to contextualize the performance and state the title and the author.

FORMAT

Each duo team must present one selection from a single published work. Though the material may contain serious tones, the climax and resolution must be a humorous nature. Contestants must present the same selection in each round of a given tournament. Each interpreter may present one or more characters and either or both may present narration. A selection must maintain the author's intent, characters and words as written, except for minor use of transitions, unless written permission is granted by the author or publisher for modification and/or adaptation of the published work. No contestant may use a selection, adaptation, or cutting that either member of the duo team has used in a regional, super-regional, or state contest in a previous year. The contestants should preface the selection with an introductory statement that will give the audience a better understanding of the selection. The use of a manuscript is prohibited. The performers may not have eye or physical contact with each other except during the introduction and should focus off stage. The performers must begin their presentation their presentation from center stage and restrict their physical blocking to movement around one another, switching positions, pivoting from side to side, or turning around completely. No props or costumes are permitted. There is no minimum time for this event with the maximum being ten minutes. Judge will not provide time signals.

EVALUATION

All interpretation categories are evaluated based on choice of selection, interpretation, pronunciation, timing, enunciation, eye contact, posture, gestures, voice, poise, appearance, energy level, coherence of story cutting, vocal expression, facial expression, characterization, appeal to children (storytelling only), and impact of message and performance. All participants are ranked and scored. Judges should provide written constructive criticism to each participant.

EXAMPLE

[Watch a Duo Interpretation Performance.](#)

Serious Duo Interpretation Critique Sheet

Speaker's Code: _____ RANK 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 (circle one)

Round: _____ Room: _____ Score: _____
 (highest) 70 (lowest) - 100

Name of Speaker: _____ Time: _____

Title: _____

JUDGE: As you watch each pair of contestants, please rate each performance element as superior, excellent, good or fair and provide specific, helpful comments below to elaborate your ratings. Your ratings should reflect your overall score and ranking. While ratings do not have a numerical value, contestants with higher ratings should have higher scores and lower (better) rankings.

RATINGS

Superior: shows mastery of element by applying skills effectively and consistently for the entire presentation

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Organization: selection flows; editing/cutting is coherent				
Eye contact: appropriate, focused				
Interpretation: speakers' interpretation is intelligible, effective, engaging, and entertaining				
Communication: speakers present material effectively in a way the audience can understand the story, characters, and character(s) motivation; establishes mood				
Articulation: speakers enunciate, pronounce words correctly, and are understandable				
Projection: speakers use appropriate volume				
Vocal Characterization: speakers clearly and thoughtfully create different voices/accents for characters and are consistent when transitioning between/among characters				
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Memorization: delivery is free of memorization lapses and errors				
Freshness: speakers present material with an "illusion of the first time" as if it were brand new; presentation is not stale or rote				
Energy: speakers present material with appropriate energy level, is not monotonous				
Impact: presentation is impactful and arouses emotion in audience				
Chemistry: partners complement one another stylistically and have strong rapport				
Balance: each speaker is integral to the development of the presentation and is equally matched in skill				

COMMENTS: