

## **Speech Events Overview**

The following pages outline what each event is and how it should be evaluated. In addition to ranking the speakers, you are also expected to write ballots that both highlight strengths of the performance and its weaknesses. Overall:

### **What Strong Ballots Do**

- Explain ranking decisions, not just performance traits
- Reference event goals (analysis, clarity, interpretation, organization)
- Balance specific praise with actionable critiques
- Focus on performance choices within the student's control
  - Never mention a student's manner of dress, perceived or assumed racial/ethnic/economic background, gender or sex, dis/ability, or any other immutable characteristic
- Use language geared towards learning and growth: you are both referee/umpire and educator, and your language should reflect both of those roles.

See [this document for examples of strong ballots](#), and continue on to review standards of adjudication for each event.

### **Speaker Points: A Guide**

- 95-100: this is the platonic ideal. Almost no critical feedback, this student could be in national elims/state finals
- 90-100: this student does a great job. Some small notes on tech and parts to polish, but this student would almost certainly break at states/could at nationals
- 85-90, this is a good performance. Student has technical components they can sharpen, but largely conveys the message of the text.
- 80-85. This performance needs work – significant technical issues/difficulty conveying the message of the text.
- 70-80: This performance has major issues that need to be addressed before the next tournament. Consult with the tabroom before assigning a score in the 70s.

## **Extemporaneous Speaking (International or United States)**

Extemp (IX or USX) is a seven-minute speech event (with a 30-second grace period). Students have 30 minutes to prepare a speech in response to one of three selected questions. During prep, students may consult research they've brought with them; at most tournaments, including this one and the National Tournament, they may also use the internet. Each speech is delivered from memory without notes. Successful Extempers are reflective, focused, and inquisitive. They enjoy research, grasp the connections among global events, and are quick thinkers who can analyze complex issues, structure clear arguments, and support their claims with strong evidence—all under pressure. They tend to be reflective, driven, and deeply interested in how national events shape everyday life. To excel, students must think critically, organize ideas quickly, and deliver with clarity and confidence.

### *I am evaluating speakers on...*

- a clear and well-structured answer to the question
- use of logic and evidence to support that answer
- persuasive delivery and vocal variety
- Platform presence

### *I am not evaluating speakers on...*

- my opinion about their answer to the question – I do not need to agree with their answer, nor should I reward a speaker with whom I agree
- whether they have 3 points – there is no required structure/number of points
- Whether they went 6:30 and not 7:30

## Original Oratory

Original Oratory (OO) is a 10-minute speech event (with a 30-second grace period) in which students deliver a self-written speech designed to persuade an audience on a topic of significance. While the speech may incorporate humor and emotional appeals, it must be grounded in evidence, logic, and clear structure. The speech is delivered from memory and competitors are limited in their use of direct quotations. Successful orators are creative, enthusiastic, and thoughtful communicators. Because oratories are often revised and refined throughout the season, students should choose a topic they're genuinely excited to explore, continuously research, and present repeatedly. Strong orators are process-driven, personable, and confident in connecting ideas with impact.

### *I am evaluating speakers on...*

- quality, clarity, and development of the speech's main message
- effective organization and logical progression
- original analysis, insight, and perspective
- persuasive delivery, vocal variety, and presence
- appropriate and effective use of rhetorical devices / evidence
  - effective integration and citation of sources when used

### *I am not evaluating speakers on...*

- alignment with my personal worldview/opinions
- topic choice alone: serious v. funny, etc.
- whether they have 3 points – there is no required structure/number of points
- amount of evidence (while some is nice, it is not a demand of the event)

## Informative Speaking

Informative Speaking (INF) is a 10-minute original speech event (with a 30-second grace period) in which students aim to educate the audience about a topic of significance. The speech is written and delivered by the student and may include optional visual aids. While the primary purpose is to inform rather than persuade, appropriate use of humor and personality can enhance audience engagement and support effective communication. The speech must be delivered from memory. Effective topics aim to teach the audience something new or provide a fresh perspective on a familiar idea. Speeches should be supported by research and structured to clearly explain concepts using logic, evidence, and engaging delivery.

### *I am evaluating speakers on...*

- clarity and accuracy of the information presented
- organization that supports audience learning
- clear explanation of new ideas and concepts
- effective integration and citation of sources
- Professional, engaging and audience-centered delivery

### *I am not evaluating speakers on...*

- novelty / whether I already knew the information presented
- how persuasive/opinionated the speech is
- my personal interest in the topic
- entertainment value alone
- advocacy for/against a particular position

## Dramatic Interpretation

Dramatic Interpretation (DI) is a 10-minute event (with a 30-second grace period) that challenges students to bring a published piece of serious literature to life using only their voice, facial expressions, and physicality without the use of props, costumes, or sets. While the name suggests high drama, DI is not about melodrama or excessive emotion. Instead, it calls for authentic portrayals of emotionally compelling narratives that connect deeply with the audience. To succeed in Dramatic Interpretation, students must demonstrate emotional control, character depth, and strong internal focus. Successful competitors are able to suspend disbelief and guide audiences through a believable emotional journey. Piece selection is key; students should choose material that aligns with their maturity level and school guidelines.

### *I am evaluating speakers on...*

- depth, consistency, and clarity of character work
- emotional authenticity and range
- physical and vocal control
- clear storytelling, vocally and physically in the space
- interpretive choices aligned with the text

### *I am not evaluating speakers on...*

- number of characters portrayed
- volume alone as a marker of intensity
- whether the piece is dark, challenging, or representative of an identity / movement
- personal taste in the material
  - “your text is too modern” and “your text is too dated” are equally invalid critiques

## Humorous Interpretation

Humorous Interpretation (HI) is a 10-minute event (with a 30-second grace period) that challenges students to entertain and connect with audiences through comedic storytelling. Using published material, performers often portray multiple characters, shifting voices, and physicality to bring dynamic scenes to life, all without props, costumes, or sets. At its core, HI uses humor as a tool to reveal universal truths, create connection, and make people laugh. But humor is complex and subjective; what gets big laughs from one audience might fall flat with another. That's why successful HI competitors think carefully about their material: Is it genuinely funny? Is it appropriate and engaging for a broad audience? Will the story resonate even if a particular joke doesn't land? Students should choose material appropriate for their age, maturity level, and school or team standards, ensuring that the content is both suitable and effective.

### *I am evaluating speakers on...*

- comedic timing, pacing, and clarity
- character consistency and commitment
- interpretive choices aligned with the text
- physical and vocal control
- audience engagement
- clear storytelling through humor

### *I am not evaluating speakers on...*

- the number of characters portrayed
- joke quantity alone
- whether I personally find the piece funny
- conventions of stand-up / sketch comedy
- personal taste in the material
  - if I find the piece too risqué
  - “your text is too modern” and “your text is too dated” are equally invalid critiques

## Duo Interpretation

Duo Interpretation (DUO) is a 10-minute event (with a 30-second grace period) that showcases two performers bringing a published script to life. The performance can be dramatic, comedic, or a blend of both. What sets Duo apart is its off-stage focus requirement: partners must perform without making direct eye contact or physical contact with each other, challenging them to build chemistry and connection entirely through performance. Successful Duo teams are balanced, sharing a complementary performance style, work ethic, and level of commitment. On-stage chemistry matters most, and personal rapport doesn't always translate into effective performance synergy. Duo also opens the door to pieces that one performer alone might struggle to bring to life, such as scripts with rich dialogue, dual protagonists, or intricate character dynamics that require two distinct voices. Effective Duo scripts often feature strong contrasts in tone or character, tightly written exchanges, and clear relationships that evolve throughout the performance. A strong Duo performance hinges on equal energy, thoughtful staging, and believable relationships between characters.

### *I am evaluating speakers on...*

- strong and balanced teamwork
- coordinated performance
- clear character relationships
- vocal and physical contrast between characters
- no eye contact (students may position themselves to give the illusion of eye contact)
- no physical contact (students may block their piece to give the illusion of physical contact)

### *I am not evaluating speakers on...*

- number of characters portrayed
- theatrical standards of scenework / duet acting
- personal taste in the material
  - if I find the piece too risqué
  - “your text is too modern” and “your text is too dated” are equally invalid critiques

## Program Oral Interpretation

Program Oral Interpretation (POI) is a ten-minute event (with a 30-second grace period) that challenges students to weave together multiple genres of

literature: prose, poetry, and drama, into a cohesive, theme-driven performance. Each program must include at least two of the three genres, though many students choose to incorporate all three, with the goal of crafting a compelling argument or central message supported by the selected texts. Performers begin with an original introduction written by the student, which frames the theme and identifies the titles and authors of the pieces used. POI highlights both literary analysis and interpretive performance. Students construct their programs by selecting published material that explores a common theme from multiple perspectives. A strong POI blends emotional depth, narrative clarity, and performative range, often incorporating both serious and humorous moments. Students are expected to portray multiple characters, shift tone and style, and maintain a strong throughline, all without the use of props or costumes (except for the required manuscript. For the avoidance of doubt, the manuscript may be used as a prop).

***I am evaluating speakers on...***

- a clear and intentional unifying theme
- quality and clarity of transitions
- balance and cohesion among the text selections
- interpretive choices that reinforce the theme/message
- delivery that supports the overall program.

***I am not evaluating speakers on...***

- number of genres of literature/source material selected alone
- prestige or familiarity of sources
- an expectation of equal time per selection
- personal agreement/alignment with the theme/its advocacy