

**BQCFL Speech Judge Guide**  
**Joan M. Cargulia Grand Tournament at MELS**  
**03/07/2026**

<p><u>Topics</u></p> <p>PF: Resolved: The Federal Trade Commission should establish a federal regulatory framework for sports betting.</p> <p>LD: Resolved: The possession of nuclear weapons is immoral.</p> <p><a href="#">Congress Legislation</a></p>	<p><u>Tab Room Contacts</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The Tab Room is located in Room W105.</li></ul> <p>For any issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- WK Kay: 917-533-9590 (text only)</li><li>- <a href="#">Equity Concern Reporting Form</a></li></ul>
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**Overview**

Thank you so much for volunteering your time to judge this weekend, as our tournament literally could not run without you!

We will be running 3 preliminary rounds of speech and debate, and 2 preliminary sessions of Congress. Elims will be run as needed, depending on the number of entries, and there will be a Super Session of Congress. In order to run such a tight schedule, we need a few things from you:

- ***Please stay in the judges' lounge if you are not judging a round:*** we may need to pull you into a round if a judge we paired in is unavailable, and we may even need you to judge an event different from the one(s) you signed up to judge. Please be in the lounge so we can find you and plug you into rounds.
- ***All judges must submit ballots immediately after their round ends:*** you can edit and submit feedback right up until the end of the tournament, but decisions and ranks need to be submitted ASAP after the round ends. Do not disclose the round's result to students, and do not give verbal feedback after the round beyond "Great job and good luck!". There is plenty of room for feedback on your ballot.

## **In-Round Reminders for ALL EVENTS:**

- **Silence all devices before a round starts**
- Sit in a place where all competitors are in front of you but you can still hear everything going on in the round.
- Greet students politely as they enter the room, make them feel welcome, and wish them luck as they exit: beyond that, please keep communication with competitors to a minimum; you are the adult in the room, the umpire/referee in this game, and a part of the educational process, please convey this in your demeanor and attitude at all times.
- Take “roll” in speech/debate rounds: read through the list of codes on the schematic for the group so that you are certain that the right students are in the right place. If there is a question about a certain student, please bring it to the attention of the tabroom. Under no circumstances should you ever ask for the school affiliation of a student. Congress should do a roll call before the start of session.
- All speech judges need to keep time, and provide speakers with time signals – ask “how would you like your time” and follow their requests to the letter. Debate judges should keep official time, even if students are timing themselves. Congress will be timed by the Presiding Officer.
- All ballots are online ballots. Speak to WK or another member of the tab staff after the morning judges’ meeting if you’re not sure how to access your online ballots
- We recommend taking your notes in a separate document (e.g. Google Doc, Microsoft Word, or Notes app), then copy and paste your notes into Tabroom later. This will ensure that you don’t lose your feedback
- Start on time and end on time: submit win/loss/ranks and speaker points ASAP: you will have time to input more in-depth comments throughout the day!
- Preliminary rounds will only have 1 judge, elimination rounds will be paneled. Please check all pairings and your ballot to make sure you have the correct number of judges in the room and the correct students ready to speak in front of you.

## **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 the end of this document for examples of strong ballots by event, 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

Extemp 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 about politics and current events. 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

## Declamation

Dec is a 10-minute speech event (with a 30-second grace period) in which students deliver a speech previously delivered in public by an individual other than the student. This event is reserved for 9th and 10-th graders to develop their basic public speaking skills. The speech is delivered from memory, and should not be an impression of the original speaker – students should be honing their own voice to convey the message of the original text. Successful declaimers demonstrate strong platform presence and command of their text

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

- quality, clarity, and development of the speech's main message
- platform movement
- vocal inflection, tone, and pacing
- persuasive delivery, vocal variety, and presence

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

- alignment with my personal worldview/opinions
- topic choice alone: serious v. funny, etc.

## 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)

## 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

**AT BQCFL TOURNAMENTS, DI/HI ARE ONE, MIXED POOL**

## 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

**DI/HI/DUO Sample ballot**

S5

- Your intro had me locked in, the world of a child is beautiful and you do great justice to it

- Fascinating that we are so amused at the end of your teaser and the intro completely changes our understanding of this adorable moment, very nicely done
- It feels odd that the character does pretty much the same thing your intro does, so perhaps we need less clinical info in the intro? I think hearing it from the character is profound!
- I like how you cleanly and quickly pop back and forth in time
- The “kill him” was a lot, but the subtlety of “the blood made the voices happy” was excellent
- The jump in vocal choice from the almost-stabbing to “within a year” felt like a strange choice to use the older voice (even though it’s narrated in the past tense) since you’re blocking it as if it’s happening in the scene. It was disorienting given how good the pops back in time before were
- “23 pills” delivery felt intense given the choices you make in the lines around it – maybe more incredulous without volume? I’m not sure what you are trying to do with that choice
- The calmness around the baby’s birth was excellent
- The toilet hammer moment was great, but we need more of a buildup in those few lines between the flush and the takeback
- Good job to maintain the hammer hold
- You need a beat before “everything went silent” this moment is so critical and it feels rushed
- You also only have 45 seconds after the death to give us a satisfying close, and it feels very sudden as you come up on time
- Time 10:25

## **Extemp Sample ballot**

**88**

Q: Should the United States increase its military presence in the Arctic?

ANS: Yes, since its very important to strategic value for the US military, Russian tensions, and discovery of naval ships / bases

1. Arctic strategy is important to US military
  - China, Japan, asia in general, good to be there
    - War on the Rocks is a blog site for military pros: you wanna be careful with blogs bc they aren't peer-reviewed/as academically rigorous as some other military sources
    - I wish this analysis had gone a little deeper, I think you don't tell us a lot about the US' general strategic footing in hte
    - Also, weave your source/citation thereof into the point rather than just dropping it in at the end of the point after all the analysis
2. Russia
  - Putin wants Soviet glory again, US military resources would prevent this
  - Your analysis here was a lot clearer, you walked us through Russia's threat logically, nicely done!
  - Same as above re: weaving in sources
3. China
  - China threatens US
  - I think you could have said a lot more here, like on your Russia point. You really only give us 30 seconds on this: developing this point to the level of your Russia point would have elevated the speech significantly!
  - Same as above re: weaving in sources

Overall:

- Is the arctic/its waters US territory? Be very specific in phrasing things like that, as "territory" has a very specific legal meaning
- For your walks: it felt like you were using TOO much of the room: pick your spot for each of your area of analysis within a bit together of a frame around the center: start up center for intro, step down center for question and statement of significance and roadmap, then down stage right for point one, back to down center for point 2, and down stage left for point 3, then back to down center for your conclusion
- You have great things to tell us: deliver with confidence: hold your head high and project: the room is bigger than you think, give us all of your voice to fill it

## **OO Sample ballot**

S1

- I like the devolution from excitement to disappointment in the intro, but I think you can infuse even more drama into the sharing of this anecdote
- Good pivot to the idea of MPDG by explaining Deb
- Movie night roadmap
  1. Description and what is MPDG
    - Does the definition you offer taxonomically include all of the characters we'd recognize?
    - "She exists only..." fluency stumble
    - "Closed feedback loop" analysis is very strong
    - On Whore-Madonna: I immediately asked "how are you going to tie this into MPDG analysis?" I don't know if your analytical choice of "these are symptoms of the same disease" does enough to justify the 30ish seconds you spend on it
  2. Observe effects on real women
    - "As early as 6 years old, girls report" what's the citation there? Is it the Johnson study you cite a few sentences later? Keep citations clean
    - "Development of individuality" fluency stumble
    - It took 5 minutes for the phrase "not like other girls" to come up and think that's wild. That's one of the most accessible points into your model
    - On female dis/identification with the label: this is a great place for
    - "Sexism, prejudice" fluency stumble
    - I need this point to have some sort of emotional edge: the whole bit of analysis
  3. Debrief solutions
    - "Alright" is not a transition phrase that does anything for you
    - Good on Gerwig and Coppola getting opportunities, I'm seeing solvency
    - On Barbie: warrant that this movie is actually an example
    - On humanizing MPDG: I don't think I get the solvency here. Doesn't fleshing her out fundamentally make her NOT an MPDG? I don't think I understand this here. "Changing the narrative" means the trope disappears, not gets reformed
- Conclusion felt remarkably canned, phrases like "finally" and "all in all" have the same problem as "alright" as transitional
- Fine callback to intro
- Great job, and good luck the rest of the way!
- Time: 9:17

## **POI Sample ballot**

- The bird binder tech needs to get pulled thru conceptually sooner, I don't get it til like 3 minutes in with the Lakshmi piece – maybe find some other places to
- I don't know if the musical theater selections advance the argument or distract from it. Perhaps consider different transition pieces
- Keep the NYC-ish accent consistent, you drop it in like 10 seconds - you do it so well but keep it consistent in that piece, if you're gonna do it at all
- Love the intro, but a note on the use of the phrase "slavery" could be taken from [this piece](#), among others. A lot of anti-trafficking organizations are actively grappling with the politics of the phrase, and you have an important voice in that conversation!
- Like the cup of tea blocking a lot
- Good on the transitions around "children are half of the persons trafficked"
- Love the pop from "rupees" to "what do you think you are doing," but I wasn't sure which piece you went back into until you got to "you'll go back to your room like the other girls" there because I don't find the voices entirely consistent across the pieces
- For the "old man on top of me" blocking, I think it's a bold choice to have your back to us, but that means we need more than just the hand in the are and the slight crouch – more dynamics in your voice (and projection thereof)
- "Slavery is illegal almost everywhere in the world" bit around 6:30 is great, but I need greater incredulity there than anywhere else in the piece because isn't that the culmination of your argument? That this proliferates despite the legal issues
- "This is too good to believe" needs to absolutely gut punch us, give that more emphasis, maybe slow down or alter your delivery somehow?
- See when we got back to the NYC-ish accent piece at 8:30, you don't do the accent at all. It's tough to track the pieces and how well they weave into one another when it's unclear which is which
- You are bringing attention to critically important issues with excellent performance: keep up the great work! Congrats and good luck going forward!
- Time: 9:21