

NOVICE SPEECH & DEBATE FESTIVAL TOURNAMENT MODEL

Dogwood Speech & Debate League Rules, Rubrics & Recognition Standards

Section 1: Philosophy & Purpose

The Novice Festival Tournament Model is designed to introduce first-year competitors to the culture, craft, and community of speech and debate in a low-stakes, feedback-rich environment. These festivals prioritize growth over ranking. Every novice competitor receives three rounds of experience and substantive written feedback from trained evaluators.

Recognition is earned — but it is secondary to the learning that takes place across all three rounds. In the tradition of Solo & Ensemble Festivals, all participants complete a set number of performances before an adjudicator, receive rubric-based feedback, and earn a recognition level based on cumulative performance — rather than being eliminated or ranked against one another.

The Dogwood Speech & Debate League thanks the Wisconsin Interscholastic Speech & Dramatic Arts Association (WISDAA) for their assistance in the adaptation and implementation of this model.

Section 2: Tournament Structure

2.1 When These Rules Apply

This festival model governs the first three (3) tournaments of the competition year. Beginning with the fourth tournament, competitors transition to the standard DSDL competitive model with preliminary rounds, advancement criteria, and elimination rounds as governed by the DSDL Unified Manual.

2.2 DSDL By-Law Suspensions for Festival Tournaments

The following DSDL By-Laws are formally suspended for novice divisions at the first three tournaments of the season and replaced by the provisions of this festival rule set:

- By-Law 4.C.1–4.C.3 (Round Counts): Replaced by three (3) rounds per competitor across all events.
- By-Law 4.C.2.ii, 4.C.2.iii, 4.C.3.ii (Finals and Next-In Finals): No elimination, final, or next-in final rounds are held.
- By-Law 11 (Powered Pairing): All rounds are randomly paired. No win/loss bracket applies.
- By-Law 13 (Tie-Breaking): Festival tie-breaking rules in Section 4.2 apply in place of By-Law 13 for recognition purposes.
- By-Law 14 (Awards): The four-tier recognition model replaces the trophy/medal structure for novice festival events.
- By-Law 4.A.4 (Novice Division Rotation): All six novice event areas (LD, PF, Platform, Interp, Limited Prep, Congress) are offered at each festival, superseding the rotating schedule.
- By-Law 4.A.5 (Division Collapse): Novice divisions will not collapse into varsity at festival tournaments regardless of entry count.

2.3 Round Format

- Every novice competitor completes exactly three (3) rounds at each festival tournament.
- There are no elimination rounds, no advancing or breaking, and no head-to-head win/loss records tracked.
- Competitors are scheduled into rooms with other novices. Rooms should be structured to minimize repeat pairings across rounds.
- Each round in Speech Events, LD, and PF are evaluated by one judge who completes the festival rubric ballot.
- There must be two entries in a category in order to have that event run.

2.4 Novice Eligibility

For the purposes of festival participation, a novice is defined as: (a) a first-year competitor, or (b) a student who competed in no more than two high school tournaments in the previous year, consistent with DSDL By-Law 4.D. Students who retain novice status under By-Law 4.D are eligible for festival rounds.

2.5 Events Offered

The following novice events are offered at all three festival tournaments. Novice Declamation is not offered, consistent with By-Law 4.A.3.

- Novice Lincoln-Douglas Debate
- Novice Public Forum Debate
- Novice Congressional Debate
- Novice Platform Speech (Original Oratory & Informative Speaking)
- Novice Interpretation (Dramatic Performance, Duo Interpretation, Program Oral Interpretation, Oral Interpretation)
- Novice Extemporaneous Speaking

2.6 Double Entry between Tournament & Festival

No student is permitted to enter both a Tournament Event (Varsity Debate, Varsity Speech, Varsity Congressional Debate, and/or Declamation) as well as a Festival Event.

Section 3: Scoring System

3.1 Per-Round Score

Each round is evaluated on a 25-point rubric. The rubric contains five (5) criteria, each scored on a scale of 1 to 5, for a maximum of 25 points per round. Standard DSDL rank ballots are replaced by the festival rubric ballot for all novice festival rounds.

Scoring Component	Points
Criteria per round	5 criteria
Points per criterion	1-5 points
Maximum score per round	25 points
Number of rounds	3 rounds
Maximum cumulative score	75 points

3.2 Scoring Scale Guidance for Judges

Score	Label	Description
5	Excellent	Performance exceeds novice expectations; polished, compelling, and clearly prepared
4	Proficient	Meets or approaches novice expectations; solid performance with minor gaps
3	Developing	Some skills demonstrated; foundational elements present but inconsistent
2	Beginning	Skills are emerging; performance shows early-stage understanding of event
1	Incomplete	Significant concerns; performance incomplete or failed to demonstrate event understanding

Section 4: Recognition Model

4.1 Award Tiers

Recognition levels are determined by a competitor's cumulative three-round score relative to the rest of the field in their event. Awards are distributed on a percentage-of-field basis per event and per division. The By-Law 14 trophy/medal structure is replaced by this model for novice festival events.

Award	Field Percentage	% of Field	Description
Distinction	Top 15% of field	15%	Exceptional novice performance across all three rounds
Excellence	Next 20% of field (16th–35th percentile)	20%	Strong novice performance demonstrating clear skill development
Honor	Next 25% of field (36th–60th percentile)	25%	Solid foundation with emerging competitive skills
Merit	Remaining 40% of field (61st–100th percentile)	40%	Completion of all three festival rounds; growth is the goal

4.1.1 Minimum Recognition Threshold

Notwithstanding the percentage-based distribution established in Section 4.1, the following minimums shall apply at all novice festival tournaments regardless of field size:

1. A minimum of two (2) competitors shall receive a **Distinction** recognition in any event division, provided the field contains at least two competitors. The percentage-based threshold shall apply only when it naturally produces a result of two or more.
2. A minimum of two (2) competitors shall receive an **Excellence** recognition in any event division, provided sufficient competitors remain after Distinction is awarded. Where the field does not contain enough competitors to populate both Distinction and Excellence at their minimums, Distinction takes precedence.
3. In the event that a field contains fewer than four (4) competitors, the Executive Committee or tab staff may, at their discretion, collapse the Distinction and Excellence tiers into a single recognition level, with all remaining competitors receiving **Merit**.
4. These minimums exist to ensure that recognition remains meaningful and appropriately distributed across small fields. The percentage thresholds established in Section 4.1 govern all fields where their application naturally produces results at or above these minimums.

4.2 Tie-Breaking

- Highest single-round score among the three rounds
- Second-highest single-round score
- If still tied, both competitors receive the higher recognition level

4.3 Points Race

Points race points as defined in DSDL By-Laws 16 and the Points Race Guidelines are NOT awarded at festival tournaments 1–3. The festival format (3 rounds, rubric scoring, no rank ballots) is incompatible with the existing points formulas. Points race eligibility begins at DSDL #4 when competitors transition to the standard competitive format.

4.4 Recognition Philosophy

Every competitor who completes all three rounds earns at minimum a Merit recognition. No competitor leaves the festival without acknowledgment of their effort. Recognition certificates or awards should be distributed at the conclusion of the tournament in a brief ceremony that honors all participants.

Section 5: Feedback Standards

5.1 Written Feedback Requirements

Feedback is the most valuable output of the novice festival. Every ballot must include written comments that are specific, actionable, and encouraging. Judges are required to address each criterion with written commentary — not just a score.

- Minimum feedback per criterion: 2–3 complete sentences
- Feedback must identify at least one specific strength in each round
- Feedback must identify at least one specific area for growth in each round
- Judges should reference specific moments from the performance

5.2 Prohibited Feedback Practices

- Comparative feedback referencing other competitors in the round
- Vague praise or criticism without specific reference (e.g., 'Great job!' or 'Needs work')
- Comments about a competitor's appearance unrelated to presentation skills
- Sarcasm or discouraging language of any kind

Section 6: Judge Qualifications & Standards

6.1 Eligible Judges

- Coaches from participating or non-participating schools
- Community members with speech, debate, theatre, or communication backgrounds
- Alumni of the program who have completed varsity competition
- Varsity student judges — see Section 6.2

6.2 Student Judge Requirements

Student judges in LD, PF, and Congress must meet the full requirements of DSDL By-Law 8.A.7: (a) 5 semesters of competition, (b) completion of NSDA Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3 in the assigned event (LD/PF, Speech Events, or Congressional Debate), (c) completion of NSDA Level 1: Intro to Impartial Judging, and (d) completion of DSDL judge training. No exception to this standard is made for festival tournaments.

6.3 Judge Quotas

DSDL By-Law 8 judge quotas apply at festival tournaments: one judge per two debate entries (LD/PF), one judge per four individual event entries, and one judge per six Congress entries. Drops after the Monday deadline do not reduce a school's judge commitment (By-Law 8.A.5). Judges may only serve in the festival judge pool or the competitive tournament judge pool; they may not move from pool to pool unless done so by the Tournament Director.

6.4 Judge Orientation

All judges must attend a pre-tournament orientation before their first round, covering festival philosophy, rubric standards, scoring calibration, and feedback expectations. The DSDL judge training manual (By-Law 9.A.2) should be distributed in advance. Judges who miss orientation may not evaluate rounds.

Section 7: Event-Specific Rules

7.1 Novice Lincoln-Douglas Debate

- Topic: The applicable NSDA Novice LD topic for September/October; thereafter the bimonthly NSDA LD topic, per DSDL LD Event Rules.
- Time limits: AC 6 min | NX 3 min | NC 7 min | AX 3 min | AR1 4 min | NR 6 min | AR2 3 min | Prep 4 min
- Delivery should be conversational and accessible to a lay judge.

- Competitors should run a value and criterion framework; judges should not penalize novices for imperfect framework construction.

7.2 Novice Public Forum Debate

- Topic: The applicable NSDA PF topic for September/October; thereafter the bimonthly NSDA PF topic, per DSDL PF Event Rules.
- Time limits: Standard DSDL PF speech times apply (4/4/3/4/4/3/3/3/2/2 min + 3 min prep per team).
- Delivery should be conversational and accessible to a lay judge.
- Maverick teams: If a partner becomes unable to compete after registration, a maverick team may compete but is not eligible for recognition tier awards, consistent with PF Event Rules B.2.

7.3 Novice Platform Speech

- Includes: Original Oratory & Informative Speaking
- Time limits: 10-minute maximum with 30-second grace period, per DSDL event rules.
- Speeches must be the original work of the competitor.
- Direct quotation limit: No more than 150 words of direct quotation.
- Memorization: Competitors who use notes or refer to a script during the presentation may not be ranked above "Developing." Judges are allowed to use their discretion and discernment on Developing vs. Beginning on the rubric when it comes to script use.
- Script on demand: Per By-Law 4.B.7, all competitors must bring a written or digital copy of their presentation and must produce it upon request. Failure to produce results in disqualification.
- Re-use: No student may use a piece used in any previous competition season (By-Law 4.B.6).

7.4 Novice Interpretation

- Includes: Dramatic Performance, Duo Interpretation, Oral Interpretation, Program Oral Interpretation.
- Competitors must use published, citable literary material. Publication Guidelines in By-Law 21 apply.
- In DP and DUO, competitors who use notes or refer to a script during the presentation may not be ranked above "Developing." Judges are allowed to use their discretion and discernment on Developing vs. Beginning on the rubric when it comes to script use.
- In OI and POI, Manuscripts (binders) are required; competitors may not perform without a manuscript.
- Introduction is required and included in total time. Time limit: 10 minutes with 30-second grace period.
- Script on demand: Per By-Law 4.B.7, all competitors must bring a written or digital copy of their presentation and must produce it upon request. Failure to produce results in disqualification.
- Re-use: No student may use a piece used in any previous competition season (By-Law 4.B.6).

7.5 Novice Extemporaneous Speaking

- Competitors draw three questions and select one; 30-minute prep time; may use pre-prepared files meeting By-Law 22 standards.
- Draw occurs at 7-minute intervals (first speaker draws 30 minutes before the round begins).
- By-Laws 19 and 22 govern electronic device use.

7.6 Novice Congress

- Two sessions will be used in every festival. NSDA rules apply concerning 10 minutes per competitor.
- Students are scored based on presiding and/or, speeches given, questions asked and/or activity during the round.
- Chamber size: Optimal 12–17 students; maximum 18 per chamber (DSDL Congress event rules).
- Legislation is provided to coaches at least one week prior to the festival, drawn from the DSDL legislation bank.
- All DSDL Congress event rules governing recognition of speakers, motions, amendments, evidence, and laptop use apply.
- Parliamentary duties are given to the designated judge as selected by the tabulation staff; student presiding is encouraged and scored.
- Congress rounds should be assigned two judges where one will serve as the parliamentarian. Parliamentarians may change between sessions. Ideally, one judge would be an adult judge.

Section 8: Event Rubrics

The following rubrics replace standard DSDL rank ballots for all novice festival rounds. All rubrics follow the same 5-criterion, 5-point-per-criterion structure for a 25-point maximum per round.

8.1 Platform Speech Rubric

Applies to: Original Oratory & Informative

Criterion	Excellent 5	Proficient 4	Developing 3	Beginning 2	Incomplete 1	Max
Content & Organization <i>Structure, thesis, evidence, logical flow</i>	Clear thesis; compelling evidence; logical, memorable structure throughout	Thesis present; evidence supports most points; structure mostly clear	Thesis identifiable; some evidence; organizational gaps present	Unclear or missing thesis; limited evidence; disorganized	Unclear or missing thesis; little to no evidence; disorganized	5
Delivery <i>Eye contact, pacing, volume, articulation</i>	Confident, natural delivery; strong eye contact; excellent pacing and clarity	Mostly natural delivery; adequate eye contact; pacing generally effective	Delivery inconsistent; occasional eye contact; pacing issues present	Delivery inconsistent; limited eye contact; volume or clarity concerns	Delivery needs significant work; limited eye contact; monotone or dull	5
Language & Style <i>Word choice, rhetorical devices, originality</i>	Vivid, precise language; effective rhetorical devices; distinctive voice	Generally clear language; some rhetorical awareness; emerging voice	Basic word choice; limited rhetorical devices; voice underdeveloped	Vague or generic language; little rhetorical awareness	Extremely generic language; too casually written	5
Audience Engagement <i>Connection, energy, responsiveness to room</i>	Clearly connects with audience; energy sustains attention throughout	Generally engages audience; energy present for most of the speech	Some moments of connection; energy inconsistent	Limited audience connection; energy flat or forced	No audience connection; energy is extremely flat or forced	5
Time & Compliance <i>Adherence to time limits and event rules</i>	Within time limits; fully memorized and compliant with all event rules	Slightly over/under time; fully memorized	Noticeably over/under time; some memorization issues	Noticeably over/under time; many memorization issues	Significantly over/under time with no memorization	5

8.2 Interpretation Rubric

Applies to: Dramatic Interpretation, Humorous Interpretation, Duo Interpretation, Oral Interpretation, Program Oral Interpretation

Criterion	Excellent 5	Proficient 4	Developing 3	Beginning 2	Incomplete 1	Max
Script Selection & Cutting <i>Suitability, contrast, narrative arc of the cutting</i>	Excellent material selection; cutting reveals strong arc and character contrast	Good material choice; cutting conveys a clear story with reasonable arc	Adequate material; cutting lacks full arc or character distinction	Material poorly suited to event or cutting unclear	Material not suited for event; cutting needs significant work	5
Vocal Variety & Control <i>Pitch, pace, tone, volume differentiation</i>	Masterful vocal variety; clearly enhances storytelling and character(s); Distinct character voices fully realized and consistently maintained throughout	Good vocal variety; enhances performance for most of piece; Character voices generally distinct and mostly sustained	Some vocal variety; could do more to enhance narrative; Some vocal differentiation between characters; inconsistently maintained	Limited vocal variety; difficult to follow; little vocal distinction between characters	No vocal variety; monotone; no vocal distinction between characters	5
Physical Expression <i>Focus, transitions, use of body and space</i>	Focus technique precise; transitions seamless; physicality enhances character; Physical characterization is believable, distinct, and fully committed	Focus generally clear; transitions mostly smooth; body language purposeful; Physical characterization generally believable and mostly consistent	Focus inconsistent; transitions sometimes unclear; physicality limited; Physical characterization emerging but inconsistent or underdeveloped	Focus technique unclear; transitions abrupt; physicality minimal; physical characterization is unconvincing	Focus technique unclear; transitions absent; physicality minimal; physical characterization is absent	5
Overall Performance & Flow <i>Pacing, introduction,</i>	Compelling, unified performance; introduction strong	Performance mostly cohesive; intro adequate	Performance inconsistent; intro underdeveloped	Performance lacks cohesion; no clear intro	Performance has no cohesion and no intro	5
Time & Compliance <i>Adherence to time limits and event rules</i>	Within time limits; fully memorized and compliant with all event rules	Slightly over/under time; fully memorized	Noticeably over/under time; some memorization issues	Noticeably over/under time; many memorization issues	Significantly over/under time with no memorization	5

8.3 Extemporaneous Speaking Rubric

Applies to: Extemporaneous Speaking

Criterion	Excellent 5	Proficient 4	Developing 3	Beginning 2	Incomplete 1	Max
Analysis & Argumentation <i>Depth of reasoning, responsiveness to topic</i>	Incisive analysis; arguments directly responsive to topic/motion; reasoning clear	Solid analysis; arguments generally on-topic; reasoning adequate	Some analysis present; arguments occasionally off-topic or underdeveloped	Minimal analysis; arguments unclear or unresponsive to the topic	No analysis; did not answer the question	5
Organization & Structure <i>Clear intro, body, conclusion; signposting</i>	Crystal clear structure; signposting throughout; memorable conclusion	Structure clear; some signposting; conclusion present	Structure partially clear; limited signposting; conclusion weak	Difficult to identify structure; no signposting or conclusion	No structure; no signposting or conclusion	5
Evidence & Support <i>Use of examples, facts, logical reasoning</i>	Strong examples and reasoning; evidence clearly supports claims	Adequate evidence; most claims supported; some reasoning gaps	Limited evidence; claims often unsupported; reasoning inconsistent	Little supporting evidence; reasoning unclear	No supporting evidence; reasoning unclear	5
Delivery <i>Eye contact, pacing, confidence under time pressure</i>	Confident, polished delivery given prep constraints; excellent pacing and eye contact throughout	Mostly confident; pacing adequate; occasional hesitation but recovers well	Delivery hesitant; pacing issues; some recovery from preparation evident	Significant delivery issues; pacing poor; preparation evident in stumbling	Delivery severely impedes communication; little to no eye contact; speech abandoned, incoherent, or largely undelivered	5
Time & Compliance <i>Use of full time allotment; event rules</i>	Excellent use of time; finishes within grace period	Good use of time; within or just at grace period	Misuses time; time allocation needs adjustment; may have exceeded grace period	Significantly misuses time; may have exceeded grace period	Speech not delivered within time parameters; grace period exceeded;	5

8.4 Lincoln-Douglas Debate Rubric

Applies to: Novice LD Debate

Criterion	Excellent 5	Proficient 4	Developing 3	Beginning 2	Incomplete 1	Max
Value & Criterion <i>Quality of V/C framework and its link to the resolution</i>	Compelling V/C clearly linked to	Clear V/C present; generally links	V/C identifiable but link to	V/C absent, confused, contradictory	No recognizable V/C	5

	resolution; framework actively drives the entire case	to resolution; framework is functional and referenced	resolution weak or underdeveloped	, or entirely disconnected from resolution	attempted; student demonstrates no understanding of framework	
Contentions & Evidence <i>Quality of arguments and supporting evidence</i>	Contentions fully developed with strong, credible evidence; logic is clear and well-warranted	Contentions present and generally developed; evidence adequate; logic mostly sound	Contentions underdeveloped or unwarranted; evidence limited or unverified; logic inconsistent	Contentions unclear or largely missing; little to no evidence offered; reasoning difficult to follow	No discernible contentions; student offers assertions only or fails to present a case	5
Refutation & Clash <i>Directly engaging and answering opponents arguments</i>	Directly and effectively clashes with opponent's key arguments; responses are responsive and impactful	Engages most opponent arguments; responses generally on-point and adequately developed	Some engagement with opponent; responses often underdeveloped, dropped, or non-responsive	Minimal engagement with opponent; key arguments largely ignored or mischaracterized	No meaningful attempt to engage opponent's arguments; rebuttal speeches absent or off-topic	5
Delivery & Confidence <i>Clarity, pace, eye contact, professional demeanor</i>	Confident, clear delivery throughout; strong eye contact; professional demeanor consistently maintained	Mostly confident; clear for most of the round; eye contact and demeanor generally adequate	Delivery inconsistent; clarity or pacing concerns; eye contact or demeanor occasionally lapses	Delivery may impede comprehension; confidence lacking; demeanor concerns throughout	Delivery significantly impedes comprehension; student unable to continue	5
Time & Compliance <i>Use of prep time; adherence to time limits</i>	Excellent time management across all speeches; fully compliant with all time limits	Good time management; at most one minor time concern	Noticeable time misuse in one or more speeches	Significant time misuse across multiple speeches	Speech times not observed	5

8.5 Public Forum Debate Rubric

Applies to: Novice Public Forum Debate (scores applied per team)

Criterion	Excellent 5	Proficient 4	Developing 3	Beginning 2	Incomplete 1	Max
Argumentation & Case	Arguments clearly	Arguments generally	Arguments partially	Arguments unclear,	No discernible	5

<i>Quality, clarity, and development of arguments</i>	constructed, fully developed, and directly advance the team's position on the resolution	clear and mostly developed; connection to the resolution present and maintained	developed; resolution link sometimes unclear or inconsistently maintained	underdeveloped, or largely disconnected from the resolution	case constructed; team offers assertions only or fails to present coherent position	
Evidence & Research <i>Use of cited sources, statistical reasoning, examples</i>	Strong, credible evidence cited throughout; evidence clearly and directly supports all major claims	Adequate evidence cited; most claims supported; citation gaps are minor and infrequent	Limited evidence offered; citations incomplete or inconsistent; claims often go unsupported	Minimal or no evidence cited; claims are entirely unsupported or sources are uncredible	No attempt to cite evidence; or evidence offered is fabricated, wholly unverifiable, or in violation of evidence rules	5
Refutation & Clash <i>Engagement with partner and opponents arguments</i>	Directly and effectively engages all key opponent arguments; responses are on-point, developed, and impactful	Engages most opponent arguments; responses generally clear and adequately developed	Some engagement with opponent arguments; responses often underdeveloped, dropped, or indirect	Limited engagement with opponents; key arguments largely ignored or mischaracterized	No meaningful attempt to engage opponent arguments; rebuttal and summary speeches fail to clash with the opposing case	5
Summary & Final Focus <i>Crystallization, voting issues, closing narrative</i>	Voting issues clearly identified and argued; key arguments crystallized with precision; close is compelling and well-framed	Voting issues present and mostly argued; most key arguments crystallized; close is adequate	Voting issues unclear or incompletely argued; crystallization weak; close underdeveloped or formulaic	No clear voting issues identified; no meaningful crystallization; close absent or wholly ineffective	Summary and Final Focus speeches fail to function as closing speeches; no voting issues, crystallization, or closing narrative attempted	5
Delivery & Teamwork <i>Partnership, clarity, pacing, professional conduct</i>	Great teamwork; delivery clear and polished throughout; professional conduct	Good teamwork; delivery mostly clear; both partners generally professional	Teamwork inconsistent; delivery sometimes unclear; one or more unprofessional	Poor teamwork evident; delivery impedes comprehension;	Significant teamwork issues; delivery so impaired the round cannot be	5

	consistently maintained by both partners	with minor lapses	nal moments noted	professionalism concerns throughout the round	meaningfully evaluated; and/or serious professionalism concerns	
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8.6 Congress Rubric for Speakers

Applies to: Novice Student Congress

Criterion	Excellent 5	Proficient 4	Developing 3	Beginning 2	Incomplete 1	Max
Legislation Understanding <i>Demonstrates knowledge of the bill and its implications</i>	Deep, accurate understanding of the legislation; policy implications, stakeholders, and real-world consequences clearly and confidently articulated; answers questions with precision and adds substantive depth beyond what was covered in the speech	Good understanding of the legislation; most implications addressed; minor gaps in detail or accuracy; answers most questions accurately and with adequate development	Basic understanding present; grasp of implications limited or surface-level; key provisions incompletely addressed; answers questions with partial accuracy or struggles to go beyond what was stated in the speech	Limited or inaccurate understanding of the legislation; misrepresents the bill's intent, provisions, or implications; answers questions inaccurately or is unable to respond meaningfully	Demonstrates no functional understanding of the legislation being debated; speech cannot be connected to the bill under consideration; unable to answer questions or declines to respond	5
Speech Construction <i>Organization, argument clarity, use of evidence</i>	Well-organized speech with a clear thesis, fully developed arguments, and credible evidence throughout; introduction and conclusion are strong	Generally organized; arguments mostly clear and developed; evidence adequate; intro and conclusion present	Partial organization; arguments sometimes unclear or underdeveloped; limited or uncited evidence; structure inconsistent	Disorganized throughout; arguments unclear or absent; evidence missing; no discernible introduction or conclusion	No recognizable speech structure;	5
Responsiveness & Precedence	Clearly and directly	Generally responsive	Some responsiveness	Ignores prior floor	Speaks on the wrong	5

<i>Adapting to prior speakers; offering new arguments</i>	builds on or rebuts prior speakers; brings substantively fresh arguments that advance the debate	to the floor debate; content is mostly new; minor repetition of earlier points	ess to prior speakers; occasionally repeats earlier arguments or fails to adapt to the debate's direction	debate entirely; largely repeats arguments already made without acknowledgment or adaptation	side of the legislation, on legislation not currently before the chamber, or delivers a speech that is wholly pre-written and unresponsive to any aspect of the floor debate	
Delivery <i>Eye contact, pace, volume, professional presence</i>	Confident, polished delivery; strong eye contact with the chamber; commands the room with appropriate pace and volume; references script only briefly and purposefully — delivery is driven by the speaker, not the page	Mostly confident; adequate eye contact; professional presence maintained; minor pacing or volume concerns; consults script occasionally but maintains meaningful connection with the chamber	Delivery inconsistent; limited eye contact; pacing or volume issues present; professional presence emerging; relies on script more than necessary, with noticeable drops in eye contact when reading	Delivery impedes communication; minimal eye contact; pace or volume makes speech difficult to follow; unprofessional conduct noted; reads from script for significant portions of the speech with little engagement with the chamber	Delivery significantly impedes comprehension; student reads directly from the page throughout with no meaningful eye contact with the chamber; unable to continue or maintain basic chamber decorum	5
Questioning <i>Quality and substance of questions asked of speakers</i>	Questions are incisive, specific, and substantively advance the debate; student consistently seeks the floor to question throughout the session	Questions are relevant and generally advance debate; student questions multiple speakers with adequate frequency	Questions are adequate but not probing or substantive; student questions infrequently or inconsistently throughout the session	Questions are superficial, off-topic, or largely absent; student rarely seeks the floor to question speakers	Student makes no attempt to question any speaker during the session	5

8.7 Congress Rubric for the Presiding Officer

Applies to: Novice Student Congress

Criterion	Excellent 5	Proficient 4	Developing 3	Beginning 2	Incomplete 1	Max
Recognition & Precedence <i>Correct and consistent application of the precedence/recency method to recognize speakers</i>	Precedence/recency applied correctly and consistently throughout; recognition is transparent, justifiable, and explained to the chamber at the outset; no recognizable errors	Precedence/recency generally applied correctly; recognition mostly consistent; one minor error or lapse in transparency noted	Precedence/recency applied inconsistently; student understands the concept but makes multiple errors in application or fails to explain the process to the chamber	Precedence/recency largely misapplied or ignored; recognition appears arbitrary, inconsistent, or biased toward particular speakers	Student makes no meaningful attempt to apply precedence/recency; recognition is entirely arbitrary or the chamber is unable to function due to recognition failures	5
Parliamentary Procedure <i>Accurate handling of motions, amendments, voting, and chamber rules</i>	All motions, amendments, and votes handled accurately and confidently; rules applied correctly throughout; student demonstrates clear command of parliamentary procedure	Most motions and votes handled correctly; minor procedural errors noted but corrected or managed without disrupting the chamber	Some procedural errors present; student understands basic procedure but struggles with less common motions or amendments; parliamentary intervention needed once	Frequent procedural errors; student has limited command of parliamentary procedure; parliamentary intervention needed multiple times to keep chamber functioning	Student is unable to manage basic parliamentary procedure; chamber cannot function without sustained parliamentary intervention	5
Questioning Management <i>Equitable recognition of questioners; accurate timing and management of questioning periods</i>	Questioners recognized equitably using recency; questioning periods timed accurately and started promptly; one questioner recognized	Questioners generally recognized equitably; timing mostly accurate; minor lapses in recency tracking or clock management noted	Questioning management inconsistent; recency not reliably tracked for questioners; timing errors present; some questioners overlooked	Questioning periods poorly managed; recency ignored for questioner recognition; timing significantly inaccurate; questioning periods frequently	Questioning periods not conducted or so mismanaged that speakers are deprived of a meaningful opportunity to be questioned	5

	per 30-second period; clock managed continuously		or repeatedly recognized	cut short or mishandled		
Chamber Control & Decorum <i>Maintaining order, managing transitions, keeping debate moving productively</i>	Chamber runs smoothly and efficiently; transitions between speeches handled promptly; decorum maintained throughout; student manages disruptions with confidence	Chamber generally well-managed; transitions mostly smooth; decorum maintained with minor lapses	Chamber management inconsistent; some transitions awkward or delayed; one or more decorum issues not addressed promptly	Chamber frequently disrupted or slow; transitions poorly managed; decorum issues not addressed; student struggles to maintain basic order	Chamber unable to function in an orderly manner; student cannot maintain decorum or manage transitions; session requires adult intervention	5
Fairness & Impartiality <i>Equitable treatment of all speakers; unbiased rulings; absence of favoritism</i>	Demonstrably fair and impartial throughout; rulings on motions and dilatory behavior are consistent and well-reasoned; no favoritism toward any speaker or side	Generally fair and impartial; rulings mostly consistent; one instance of apparent favoritism or inconsistency noted but corrected	Fairness inconsistent; rulings occasionally appear arbitrary or favor particular speakers; student does not always apply the same standard across the chamber	Apparent bias or favoritism present; rulings inconsistent or unexplained; chamber members raise fairness concerns during the session	Student demonstrates clear favoritism or makes rulings that materially compromise the fairness of the session	5

Section 9: Tournament Administration

9.1 Registration & Entries

DSDL By-Laws 5, 6, and 7 govern tournament registration, entry caps, and drop fees at festival tournaments. Schools must confirm attendance eight days prior and submit entries by 5:00 pm on the Monday before the tournament. Entry caps: up to 12 entries per IE event, 8 per LD/PF division, 10 per Congress division. Non-member schools competing at festivals are considered invitational entries and are not eligible for points or NCFL qualification per By-Law 17.

9.2 Protests & Disputes

- Scoring errors (mathematical miscalculations) are correctable upon request to tab staff.
- Conduct violations follow By-Law 3.B: protest form submitted within 30 minutes of the round.
- Disagreements over subjective scores are not grounds for adjustment in this format.

- Executive Committee members serve as the final authority on protests as specified in By-Law 3.B.

Section 10: Festival Tournament Sweepstakes Points

10.1 Purpose

Sweepstakes points are awarded at each of the first three novice festival tournaments of the season. Festival sweepstakes points are earned on a per-event-category basis and are accumulated alongside points earned at regular season DSDL tournaments for the purpose of determining overall season sweepstakes standings.

10.2 Points Schedule

Placement within each novice event category at the conclusion of a festival tournament shall determine sweepstakes points according to the following schedule:

Placement	Sweepstakes Points
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1st Place	6 points
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2nd Place	5 points
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3rd Place	4 points
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4th Place	3 points
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5th Place	2 points
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6th Place	1 point
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No sweepstakes points shall be awarded beyond 6th place.

10.3 Determining Placement

Placement within each event category shall be determined by cumulative three-round score. Tie-breaking shall be applied as established in Section 4.2 of this document. In the event that two or more competitors are tied at or within the 6th place boundary, both shall receive the points associated with that placement.

10.4 Eligibility

A competitor must complete all three rounds of a festival tournament to be eligible to receive sweepstakes points in that event category. Competitors who withdraw, are disqualified, or fail to complete all three rounds forfeit sweepstakes point eligibility for that tournament and event category.

10.5 Debate Events

In Public Forum Debate, sweepstakes points are awarded to the school on the basis of team placement, consistent with how PF sweepstakes points are handled at regular season DSDL tournaments. Each partner on a placing team earns the school the full point value for that placement.

10.6 Accumulation and Tracking

Festival sweepstakes points shall be tracked by the Tournament Director alongside regular season sweepstakes points. The combined total of all festival and regular season sweepstakes points shall determine the League sweepstakes standings at the conclusion of the competitive season. Festival tournaments are weighted equally to regular season tournaments for sweepstakes purposes.

10.7 Sweepstakes Recognition

The sweepstakes trophy structure established in DSDL By-Law 14.C.6 applies to festival tournaments. The top three schools by total sweepstakes points at each festival tournament shall be recognized at the awards assembly.

Appendix A: Recognition Calculation Quick Reference

- Step 1: Compile cumulative three-round scores for all competitors in each event separately
- Step 2: Rank competitors from highest to lowest cumulative score within each event
- Step 3: Top 15% (rounded up) = **Distinction** — minimum of 2 competitors regardless of field size
- Step 4: Next 20% (rounded up) = **Excellence** — minimum of 2 competitors, provided sufficient competitors remain after Distinction is awarded
- Step 5: Next 25% (rounded up) = **Honor**
- Step 6: Remaining competitors = **Merit**
- Step 7: Apply tie-breaking rules at any boundary where two competitors share identical cumulative scores
- Step 8: If the field contains fewer than four (4) competitors, tab staff may collapse Distinction and Excellence into a single recognition level per Section 4.1.1.3, with all remaining competitors receiving Merit

Examples:

- **(20 competitors):** Distinction = 3 | Excellence = 4 | Honor = 5 | Merit = 8
- **(13 competitors):** Distinction = 2 | Excellence = 3 | Honor = 4 | Merit = 4
- **(6 competitors):** 15% = 0.9 → rounds to 1 → minimum applies → Distinction = 2 | Excellence = 2 | Honor = 1 | Merit = 1
- **(3 competitors):** Field below 4-competitor threshold → tab staff discretion to collapse → Distinction = 2 | Merit = 1

Always round up at each threshold. Where the percentage calculation falls below the minimum established in Section 4.1.1, the minimum governs. When in doubt, award the higher recognition level.

Appendix B: Recording NSDA Points For Festival Tournaments

B.1 Purpose

This appendix explains how DSDL member schools record National Speech & Debate Association (NSDA) honor society merit points from Novice Festival Tournament results. NSDA merit points are entirely separate from — and calculated independently of — the DSDL Recognition Model. A competitor's Distinction/Excellence/Honor/Merit recognition standing comes from the festival's own scoring; NSDA merit points instead accumulate toward each individual student's national NSDA Honor Society degree, regardless of how that student placed within a given festival.

Because the Festival Tournament Model scores rounds with a 25-point rubric rather than head-to-head ranking (Section 2.3; Section 3.1), it faces the same challenge that led the Wisconsin Interscholastic Speech & Dramatic Arts Association (WISDAA) to publish its own conversion guidance for rubric-scored solo & ensemble festivals.

B.2 Key Terms

- **NSDA Merit Points:** the honor-society points a student's home chapter enters into the student's NSDA account after a tournament, used toward NSDA's national degree levels.
- **Rank (for point-entry purposes):** a 1–5 designation a coach inputs into the NSDA points database for a single round. Because festival rounds are not head-to-head ranked, DSDL derives this Rank from the round's rubric score using the table in Section B.4.
- **Association Main Speech Event:** an NSDA category (Extemporaneous Speaking, Original Oratory, Informative Speaking, and Humorous/Dramatic/Duo/Program Oral Interpretation) that earns the highest per-rank point values.
- **Association Debate Event:** Public Forum, Lincoln-Douglas, and Policy Debate, which NSDA scores by win/loss rather than by rank.
- **Congressional/Assembly Speaking:** NSDA's category for Student Congress, scored by either the Speech-Score Method (1–6 points per speech) or the Final Placement Method, capped at 36 points per calendar day.

B.3 DSDL Novice Events, by NSDA Category

DSDL Novice Event	NSDA Category	Point Method
Platform Speech — Original Oratory	Association Main Speech Event	Rank-based (B.4)
Platform Speech — Informative Speaking	Association Main Speech Event	Rank-based (B.4)
Interpretation — DP, Duo, OI, POI	Association Main Speech Event	Rank-based (B.4)
Extemporaneous Speaking	Association Main Speech Event	Rank-based (B.4)
Lincoln-Douglas Debate	Association Debate Event	Win/loss equivalence (B.5)
Public Forum Debate	Association Debate Event	Win/loss equivalence (B.5)
Congress — Speaker & Presiding Officer	Congressional/Assembly Speaking	Speech-score method (B.6)

B.4 Converting a Rubric Score to an NSDA Rank (Speech Events)

For Platform Speech, Interpretation, and Extemporaneous Speaking, convert each round's rubric total (out of 25, per Section 3.1) into a Rank using the table below, then look up that Rank's Main Association Event point value.

Round Score (out of 25)	Rank to Input	Main Association Event Points
25	1	6
23–24	2	5
19–22	3	4
14–18	4	3
10–13	5	2
0–9	No rank (severe deficiency)	0

B.5 Lincoln-Douglas & Public Forum (Association Debate Events)

NSDA's standard schedule for Association Debate Events (Public Forum & Lincoln-Douglas) awards 6 points per win and 3 points per loss or non-decision. A festival debate round produces no declared winner for either debater to record against.

Therefore, we've adapted the Section B.4 Rank conversion to each debater's own round score, independent of the opponent's score, and treat a Rank of 1–2 as a "win" (6 points) and a Rank of 3 or below — including No rank — as a "loss or non-decision" (3 points).

Round Score (out of 25)	Rank (per B.4)	Association Debate Event Points
23–25	1–2	6 (win)
0–22	3–5 / No rank	3 (loss / non-decision)

B.6 Congress (Speaker & Presiding Officer)

NSDA offers two recording methods for Congressional Debate: the Speech-Score Method (1–6 points per speech) and the Final Placement Method. No more than 36 Congress points may be recorded per calendar day.

Recommended: use the Speech-Score Method, converting each Congress ballot total (Section 8.6 for Speakers, Section 8.7 for the Presiding Officer) with the same B.4 Rank table, read as a 6-point speech score:

Ballot Score (out of 25)	Rank (per B.4)	Congress Speech Score
25	1	6
23–24	2	5
19–22	3	4
14–18	4	3
0–13	5 / No rank	2

A student serving as Presiding Officer may additionally record points for each complete hour of presiding, per NSDA's current presiding-points provision in the NSDA Unified Manual; confirm the exact per-hour rate before entering it, as it is set by NSDA rather than by this rulebook.

B.7 Recording Workflow

- After each festival, tab staff finalize each competitor's three round scores (Section 3.1) and distribute completed ballots (Section 8) to coaches.
- For each student, in each event entered, and for each of the three rounds, the coach (or a designated tab-room recorder) determines the Rank or point value using Section B.4, B.5, or B.6, as applicable to the event.
- Each round-and-event combination is entered as its own line item in the student's NSDA account. A student entered in two events at a three-round festival therefore generates six separate point entries — matching WISDAA's own recording convention (see the worked example in Section B.8).
- Entries are submitted either through autoposting — available within two weeks of the tournament date for tournaments run on Tabroom.com or SpeechWire — or entered manually by the coach through their NSDA account (speechanddebate.org/points-entry). Do not manually re-enter results that were already autoposted.
- Coaches should retain the completed ballots as the source record for each entry in case an entry is later questioned (Section 9.2, Protests & Disputes).

B.8 Worked Example

A novice competitor enters both Platform Speech (Original Oratory) and Extemporaneous Speaking at a three-round festival, scoring 22, 24, and 19 in Platform Speech and 15, 18, and 12 in Extemp. Applying the Section B.4 table produces six separate NSDA point entries:

Event	Round	Score	Rank	Points
Original Oratory	1	22	3	4
Original Oratory	2	24	2	5
Original Oratory	3	19	3	4
Extemp	1	15	4	3
Extemp	2	18	4	3
Extemp	3	12	5	2

Total NSDA merit points recorded from this festival: 21 ($4 + 5 + 4 + 3 + 3 + 2$), entered as six separate lines in the student's NSDA account — independent of whatever Recognition tier (Section 4) or sweepstakes placement (Section 10) the same six rounds produce.

B.9 Notes & Caveats

- This appendix supplements, and does not replace, Section 4 (Recognition Model) and Section 10 (Festival Tournament Sweepstakes Points). A student's NSDA merit points, a competitor's DSDL recognition tier, and a school's sweepstakes points are three separate, independently calculated outputs of the same festival ballots.

- NSDA point values and event classifications belong to the National Speech & Debate Association and change from time to time. Confirm current values at speechanddebate.org/points-entry before submitting an entry.
- The Rank cutoffs in Sections B.4–B.6 are DSDL policy proposals adapted from WISDAA's model, not an NSDA requirement, and should be formally adopted (or amended) by the Executive Committee before official use.
- The Section B.5 debate win/loss equivalence and the Section B.6 Congress method choice are recommendations, not settled DSDL policy, pending the same Executive Committee review.