NATIONAL SPEECH & DEBATE ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL FORENSIC LEAGUE

# Competition Events Guide

UPDATED SEPTEMBER 6, 2022

# Competition Events Guide

*Updated September 6, 2022*

NATIONAL SPEECH & DEBATE ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL FORENSIC LEAGUE

The purpose of the Competition Events Guide is to assist members in learning about the events the Association offers. It provides insights into how to get started in each event. The guide is not a rules document, but, instead, a tool for understanding the fundamentals of events. There is no document that could adequately explain the ins and outs of every event. Getting to tournaments is the best way to learn about the intricacies of an event. Therefore, this guide is intended to help members get a performance ready and to its first set of tournaments.

This guide is not an authoritative source on how speech and debate events should be done. Rather, the materials offered are suggestions for how to get started. The ideas presented are offered by past competitors and coaches to orient members to each event. While the suggestions offered are well thought out and tested, there are innumerable ways people may begin a speech, case, or interpretation.

Local event offerings differ, but we've noted in the guide whether each event is a main event or supplemental event at the high school and middle school National Tournaments.

Students at Nationals can compete in Supplemental events (Supps) as their primary form of competition or after they've been eliminated from main event competition.

The most important advice we can offer is simple. Do your best! This means that you should do your best to practice, get to a tournament, and reflect upon your experiences. Speech and debate is a journey. Enjoy the process!

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AN INTRODUCTION TO

# Commentary

*Commentary at a Glance*

## Event Description

Extemporaneous **Commentary** is a public speaking event where students draw topics on a range of societal, political, historic, or popular interest and in 20 minutes prepare a five-minute speech that responds to the selected prompt. Students may consult articles and evidence during their preparation time. During the speech itself students are seated behind a desk or table and provide perspective on the given topic. Typically students advocate for a particular position, argument, or opinion during their five minutes, citing sources in the development of the speech for support.

## Considerations for Commentary

While most students in Commentary are interested in current events, often the topics have a unique twist or perspective based upon the wording or phrasing. Participants in this event may exhibit creativity or exercise their sense of humor as a result. A prompt could be a question, such as "Who's afraid of the big bad unions?", or a single word, such as "Oprah." Students in Commentary should read widely, from news articles to editorials and columns, with a variety of different sources expressing a range of opinions. In addition to current events, Commentary students often enjoy history, philosophy, popular culture, and discussing social issues.

## Traits of Successful Commentators

When considering what event you should choose, or which direction to point a student when selecting an event, here are some traits of successful Commentary students to keep in mind:

- Enjoys discussion of current events
- Willing to argue a range of social and political issues
- Dynamic verbal delivery skills
- Passionate in expressing opinions
- Open-minded
- Confident
- Engages an audience

## Samples of Past Commentary Prompts

- The Final Glass Ceiling
- Talented People or Talentless Pretenders
- The Rogue States and Their Leaders
- Education....Schmeducation
- The Wild, Wild World of Sports
- Shhh! Mother Earth Speaks!
- Political Blunders, Bleeps, and Boo-Boos

**Learn More!** The National Speech & Debate Association is the leading provider of competitive and educational resources to aid students and coaches as they explore our competitive events. For Extemporaneous **Commentary**, we have videos of past national final round performances. We have a full-length textbook on Extemporaneous Speaking with many exercises and practices that can be cross-applied to Commentary. We also have many other general competition and coaching resources, activities for class or practice, and more!

## Find Your Voice

*"Through Extemporaneous Commentary, I was provided an experience that taught artful presentation and intense competition, and introduced me to countless brilliant individuals—an experience that culminated in one of the grandest moments of my life, a national championship."*

— **Will Thompson, Association Alum**

COMPETITION EVENTS GUIDE

# Extemporaneous Commentary

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## Basic Understandings

Extemp Commentary, often simply called Commentary, is an original speech created as a result of a prompt such as a question, statement, or single word/short phrase. Topics for the prompt are drawn from historic, social, political, and popular contexts. Students report to a preparation room where all of the commentators gather at tables, set out their files, and await their turn to draw prompts. A staff member in the prep room calls out student codes based upon a pre-assigned speaker order. When a student's code is called, the student will approach the draw table, select one of three available prompts, and prepare for 20 minutes to deliver a speech responding to the chosen prompt. When prep time is up, the student reports to the competition room to deliver a five-minute speech.

Students may access research brought with them to the tournament during the preparation period. Research may take paper or electronic form. Depending on the tournament rules, students may be able to use the internet to prepare. Use of the internet during preparation time is permitted at the National Tournament. During preparation time, students review their files on the prompt selected and outline arguments that will be made throughout the speech. Some students outline with notecards; others use legal pads. Students should document the source of their research on their notes so they can cite the materials while they speak.

Students must present from a seated position and typically speak with a table or desk in front of them. The emphasis of Commentary is centered upon advocacy and argumentation. Much like a TV news commentary or editorial, students present an opinion or viewpoint which takes a position on the topic presented and defends that position with analysis and supporting material. The speech is presented from memory.

## Research

Students should read widely and file articles frequently, both on topics of personal interest as well as on issues that they struggle to understand. Because the topics are so diverse and can be framed in many ways, students

should keep up with the news by reading print or online versions of various newspapers and magazines. Commentators should spend considerable time reviewing both editorials (position of a publication, editor, or editorial board) and columns (opinion pieces written by columnists). Students may encounter the phrase "op-ed" for opinion or editorial sections of websites and print material. Columnists in particular often focus their writing on specific issues such as education, the environment, or government policy. Students not only learn a lot about issues but also identify effective means of establishing an opinion and supporting it. Students should take care to read international sources from all parts of the globe to examine a wide array of perspectives and ideas.

Students should cite sources during their speeches. Typically, the name of the source and date are a minimal requirement, although sometimes speakers may want to provide additional source credibility. For example, "I agree with Janet Yellen, chair of the Federal Reserve, who argues in a column in The New York Times of September 6, 2014, that even more job creation is needed to…."

## Structural Components

As there is such a range of prompts used in Commentary, students have a great degree of freedom in terms of choices they may make for a given speech. Although

sources are used to support the student's ideas, the focus is on advancing a perspective and providing strong arguments for that point of view.

Let's look at an example to see how we might be able to structure a Commentary. We'll use the prompt of "France and Germany: BFFs." This prompt clearly wants the student to examine the relationship between the two countries. However, within that prompt there are many different perspectives that could be forwarded. A student might look at their political impact on Europe and argue that, indeed, these two countries are destined to be best friends forever. Another student might argue that they have not been best friends in the past and that their relationship will eventually dissolve. Still another might argue that they are really "frenemies" based upon a need to appear as friends in public but in fact many of their economic policies are not in alignment with each other.

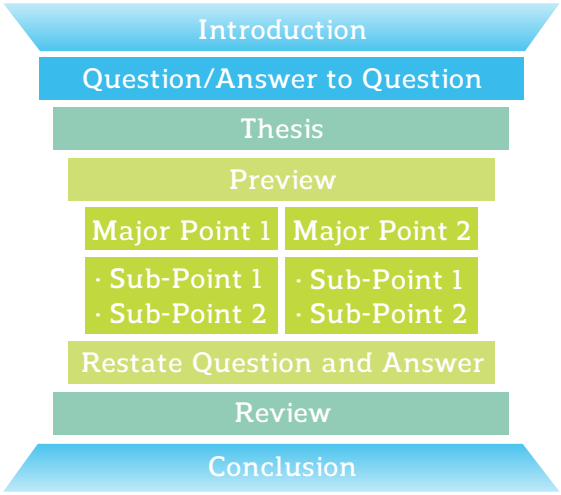
Any of these perspectives can be advanced provided students provide arguments in support of their position. Let's take the "frenemies" response. A student might argue in the first point that France needs to be friends with Germany due to Germany's powerful economy and political clout. The student might argue in the second point that they will in reality be enemies as long as they take opposing views on so many economic and foreign policy issues, such as austerity measures and Europe's role in conflicts such as those in the Middle East.

Students are not judged on how "right" their perspectives are; instead, students are evaluated based upon their ability to create a strong thesis with appropriate arguments in their sub-points and sufficient evidence to back up their claims.

## Organizing

Most Commentary speeches feature an introduction that gains the audience's attention, sets up the speech, and transitions to the prompt the student selected. This is followed by a thesis statement for the speech that expresses the opinion being advanced by the commentator. Speeches typically have a preview statement after the introduction that summarizes the key points the student will make in the body of the speech. Students then organize the body of the speech with major points and sub-points. Speeches also typically feature a review of the major points, a restatement of the prompt and thesis, and a conclusion. Students should practice with a timer or stopwatch to determine how long they should speak on each section. Each major point should be roughly equal to another to keep the speech balanced.

Here is a sample outline:




## Practicing

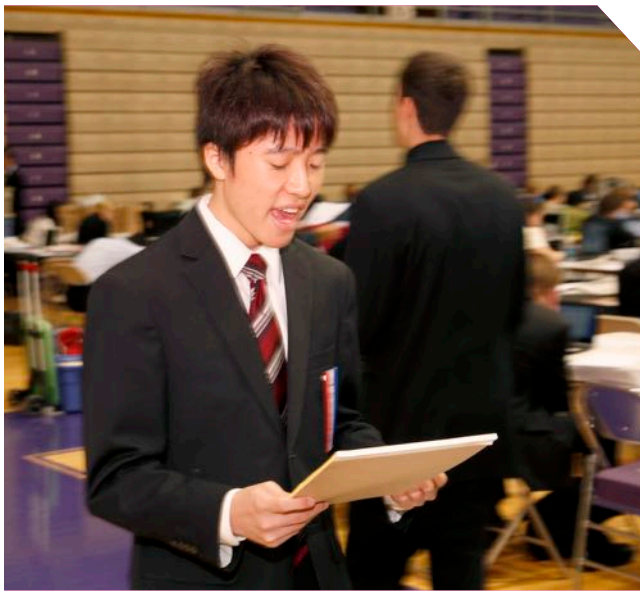
Commentators should start with the basics. Beginners should spend considerable time reading credible news sources on a range of topics. Beginners should receive practice prompts and take the time to review them, talk through potential responses, and focus on creating excellent thesis statements.

Beginners could start practices with a notecard and perhaps focus on one major point. A great beginning strategy for Commentary speakers is to deliver their first speech with unlimited prep time. Following this presentation, coaches can gradually reduce the amount of prep time used until the speaker reaches 20 minutes.

It is easy for students to be intimidated by Commentary. As with any skill, practicing will take some of the anxiety out of approaching the event. Students do not have to know everything—if the student knows a lot about a particular topic of interest, speech practices can take place right away. Students do not have to know everything about every possible prompt to get started. After a number of practices, students can spend time working on language selection, smoothing out their verbal delivery, and filling in the gaps of their knowledge base.

## Performance Tips

Due to the nature of Commentary, competitors will find that each round is unique. Some questions are incredibly challenging, either due to the specific wording or lack of background knowledge of the topic for the student,



and others seem incredibly easy. Every competitor will encounter a round where there simply are no files on a given topic. Commentary speakers need to accept that some rounds are excellent and others are not and to learn from every speech. Some advice for students:

*Ask questions.* If you don't understand a topic area or prompt, be sure to ask coaches, teachers, and teammates. The unique, often "tongue-in-cheek," phrasing of Commentary prompts may lead to some interesting points of analysis. Ask if you are unsure!

*Take notes.* If your files are missing something important, make a note of it and either fill the gaps or talk to your teammates so that everyone is on the same page.

*Practice language.* Commentators often use the same types of language for transitional material. Practice with this language so that you aren't struggling to come up with something fresh in every speech. As you gain experience, you can mix it up, but at the outset, just get comfortable with the format of the speech and the language to get you from point A to point B.

*Line-by-line.* Save your notes from your speeches and revisit them. Give sections of speeches, or entire speeches, over and over again to improve argument quality and language considerations. If you struggle with vocalized pauses and fillers, such as uhms and likes, you can redo lines of your speech repeatedly. Memorize one point of your speech at a time so that you get comfortable with the process of memorizing both the argument as well as source citations.

## Resources

The National Speech & Debate Association is the leading provider of competitive and educational resources to aid students and coaches as they explore our competitive events. For Extemp Commentary, we have videos of past national final round performances. We have a full-length textbook on Extemporaneous Speaking with many exercises and practices that can be cross-applied to Commentary. We also have many other general competition and coaching resources, activities for class or practice, and more at **www.speechanddebate.org**.

AN INTRODUCTION TO

# Declamation

*Declamation at a Glance*

## Event Description

**Declamation** (DEC) is held as a middle school event at the National Tournament. Declamation requires students to select a speech that was delivered in public and perform an excerpt of that speech to an audience. Speeches are up to 10 minutes in length. As a result, students typically shorten the text of the speech to meet time requirements. The event is not designed for students to mimic the original author of the speech. Instead, speakers are to develop an oration that delivers the message of the author in an original and engaging manner.

## Considerations for Selecting Literature

It is important for students to select a speech that is meaningful to them. The speech could be meaningful because of the style or the content of the speech. It is important that the student find a speech that they not only fully understand, but also, can effectively deliver both verbally and nonverbally. Students should consider more than their enjoyment of the speech, but also, whether or not the audience can connect to the speech as well. Finally, students should not pick a speech because they are impressed by the original speaker's delivery. They should select a speech that they are confident they can persuasively deliver.

## Traits of Successful DEC Performers

When considering what event you should choose, or which direction to point a student when selecting an event, here are some traits of successful DEC students to keep in mind:

- Persuasive
- Confident
- Expressive
- Good at Memorization
- Process Oriented
- Creative

## Samples of Past DEC Titles

- *"Commencement Address to Tulane University"* by Ellen DeGeneres
- *"I Have a Dream"* by Martin Luther King Jr.
- *"Farewell to Baseball"* by Louis Gehring
- *"Adopting the Declaration of Human Rights"* by Eleanor Roosevelt
- *"Commencement Address to University of Michigan"* by Dick Costolo
- *"What to the Slave is the Fourth of July"* by Frederick Douglass
- *"Quit India"* by Mahatma Gandhi
- *"Give me Liberty or Give me Death"* by Patrick Henry
- *"The Gettysburg Address"* by Abraham Lincoln
- *"Commencement Address to University of Virginia"* by Stephen Colbert

**Learn More!** The National Speech & Debate Association is the leading provider of competitive & educational resources to aid students and coaches as they explore our competitive events. For Declamation, we have final round performances from past Middle School Nationals available to members. Additionally, the resources on persuasion for MS orators would also apply to Declamation. Webinars on delivery would also be a go-to resource for members. Take advantage of the amazing benefits of being a member by using our resources to help you advance yourself in competitive speech & debate activities. .

## Find Your Voice

*"Declamation was the first speech event I did as a freshmen. It removed some of the pressure because the words were already written (very well written at that, usually by famous people), but I still had to find the right way to deliver them. Playing with different ways to deliver the speech allowed me to explore speech patterns, breathing methods, and all of the other devices important in speech delivery. It helped create a foundation for my success in other speech events."*

— **Sarah Gordon, Association Alum**

# Declamation

## Basic Understandings

Declamation is a public speaking event where students deliver a portion or portions of a speech previously delivered. The goal of a declamation is to convey a message with clarity, emotion, and persuasiveness. The speech the student delivers can be any publicly delivered speech. Commencement addresses, historical speeches, political speeches, and celebrity speeches are common examples that students may use to select their declamation.

## Research

Finding quality speeches to deliver in declamation is one of the easier things that students can research in competitive speech and debate. The full text of speeches, and videos or recordings of speeches, can be found online in simple searches. Students must ensure that they follow publication rules found in the Unified Manual if they are using a recording or transcription of a speech.

Some common search terms:

- political speeches/address
- commencement speeches/address
- historical speeches/address
- social movement speeches/address
- moving speeches

Often students find amazing speeches to deliver in other mediums beyond just the internet. For instance, a student may find a great speech on music education in an educational magazine or journal, or a student may find a speech about a discovery in a scientific publication.

## Structural Components

There are a couple of key structural components of DEC:

First, the "cutting." Your cutting is the 10 minute portion of your selection you chose to perform. This is how you've arranged the performance, and what aspects of the speech you've decided to tell. It is okay for sections of the speech to be moved around to help make the ten-minute version you're delivering flow best.

Second, the "introduction." After you have selected the portion of the text you want to deliver, and organized it, you need to write out an introduction. At a minimum, the introduction should establish the title of the speech, the author, and when it was delivered. Typically students will do a short portion of the speech before delivering their intro. Some students do the introduction and then go into the speech.

The declamation could follow this general structure:

***Teaser*** - thirty to forty-five seconds - student delivers a small portion of the speech to establish the mood and general theme

***Introduction*** - twenty to thirty seconds - student delivers the introduction

***Main Body of Speech*** - seven to eight minutes - student delivers the main points of the speech

***Conclusion of Speech*** - thirty to forty-five seconds - student wraps up the speech.

## Organizing

Before memorizing the material, take the time to "beat" out your script. This means reading the script aloud and making notes as you go. As you read aloud, use symbols to indicate shorter pauses "/" or longer pauses "//." Consider the emotions behind each line. Ask yourself what the motivation for the speaker's words are. Use this to influence your own choices.

Indicate transitional movement and gesturing in the margins of your script. Typically a declamation student will move during key transitions in the speech. For instance, after the "teaser" of the speech and introduction, the speaker may move to one side of the room to deliver the first main point, then move back to the middle for the second main point, before going to the other side of the room for the final main point. The speaker will end up in the same point they started when delivering the conclusion.

When considering gestures, the speaker needs to remember that this is a public speaking event. hey are delivering the message of someone else; however, it is not full-on interpretation with excessive blocking. Gestures should not be a focal point of the declamation. Choose gestures that reflect the emotional state of the speaker. Think in terms of symbolic gestures and psychological gestures. A symbolic gesture is a gesture that is not commonly used in day to day communication. Example: if you were to show me what "freedom" looked like, you may outstretch your arms. It communicates without words the idea of freedom. A psychological gesture is one that is found in conversation. Examples include scratching your nose or shaking your head yes or no. These are typically more subtle and easier to incorporate into a declamation.

Read your script aloud. Eliminate any excess language that sounds awkward or is unnecessarily redundant.

## Practicing

Often, you'll find that if you've spent the appropriate amount of time reading, cutting, and analyzing a script, memorization will be an easier process. Here are some things to keep in mind, to help simplify the process:

First, our brains are a muscle. The more time you practice memorizing the better you become. Often, performers take more time in the beginning of a season to commit a script to memory than they do at the end of the competitive season.

Next, memorization is a physical process. Sitting down staring at a script, re-reading the lines in your head will not be beneficial. Memorize the script with the intent to perform it. Type up a clean version with only your finalized text and movement/gesture notes. Then, tape it to the wall and actively memorize. Read the lines aloud moving with them as indicated by your cutting. Sometimes, it's helpful to do this in front of a mirror, so you can evaluate the effectiveness of your movements. It is helpful to memorize a paragraph at a time, building off of the paragraph that came before. This will significantly decrease the time it takes to memorize your performance.

Once memorized, you and your coach can then build from the choices you've made for your performance. Adjustments to movement, gestures, and delivery can be made.

## Performance Tips

It may sound cliche, but confidence is key! If you've put in the legwork, you should feel confident in the product you've created. Walk into that round with your head held high, ready to show the world what you've got! Trust what you and your coach created. Do what you practiced, and if you feel compelled to "try something new," review it with your coach beforehand. Consistency is key. It's hard to evaluate what to change in practice if your performance in the round is completely different than what you've been working on.

Pay attention to other performers. Smile, be a warm, inviting audience member. There is nothing worse than getting up to perform and having an audience that either stone faces you or won't look you in the eye. Think of it this way: each round is about 60 minutes. Ten of those involve you performing, the other 50 are for you to listen, learn, and support your competitors.

Keep a notebook for between rounds. Sometimes another person's performance will inspire you and it's a good idea to have a notebook handy to write down new ideas. It's

also nice to know who you competed against in each round. This way, you have a better understanding of who your competition is. When you review your ballots after the tournament, you can go back through your notebook and compare your ballots to your notes.

Between rounds, figure out what room you will be performing in next. Congratulate your competitors on a good performance after the round ends, and make friends during downtime. Be gracious, and keep criticisms of other performers to yourself, even if someone else tries to start a negative conversation.

## Resources

The National Speech & Debate Association offers a number of resources. These include, but are not limited to, past national final round performances, lesson plans, textbooks, and more. Given that declamation is a public speaking event, many of the public speaking resources are applicable to declamation.

AN INTRODUCTION TO

# Dramatic Interpretation

*Dramatic Interpretation at a Glance*

NATIONAL SPEECH & DEBATE ASSOCIATION
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## Event Description

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, **Dramatic Interpretation** (DI) focuses on a 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 may also include an introduction written by the student to contextualize the performance and state the title and author.

## Considerations for Selecting DI Literature

Students who do Dramatic Interpretation may perform selections on topics of serious social subject matter such as coping with terminal illness; significant historical situations, events, and figures; as well as racial and gender discrimination, suppression, and oppression. Students should select pieces that are appropriate for them. Considerations for selecting a DI topic should include the student's age, maturity, and school standards.

## Traits of Successful DI Performers

When considering what event you should choose, or in which direction to point a student when selecting an event, below are some general traits of successful DIers to keep in mind:

- Insightful character analysis
- Mature demeanor
- Controlled performance
- Depth/breadth of emotion
- Makes motivated choices
- Expressive

## Examples of Past DI Titles

- *13 Things About Ed Carpolotti* by Jeffrey Hatcher
- *Fences* by August Wilson
- *Marilyn: Her Life in Her Own Words* by George Barris
- *Life of Pi* by Yann Martel
- *Master Class* by Terrence McNally
- *Misery* by Steven King
- *My Left Breast* by Susan Miller
- *Spoonface Steinberg* by Lee Hall
- *The Bald and the Beautiful* by JJ Jonas
- *The Women of Lockerbie* by Deborah Revoort

**Learn More!** The National Speech & Debate Association is the leading provider of competitive and educational resources to aid students and coaches as they explore our competitive events. For **Dramatic Interpretation**, we provide a number of helpful resources—including live and recorded webinars designed to introduce foundational and advanced concepts in Interp; access to DI final round videos; an interpretation textbook for Resource Package subscribers; videos from champion coaches; and much more more! Take advantage of the amazing benefits of being a member by using our resources to help advance yourself in competitive speech and debate activities. Visit **www.speechanddebate.org** for more information.

## Find Your Voice

*DI helped me develop a better understanding of the world in which I live. To be able to create a narrative that portrays a person you have never known or a situation you've never been in so others can learn from it is worth everything."*

**— Jamaque Newberry, Association Alum**

COMPETITION EVENTS GUIDE

# Dramatic Interpretation

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## Basic Understandings

Dramatic Interpretation, contrary to its name, is not all about drama. While dramatic elements are key aspects of the event, melodramatic, or overly-sad selections are not ideal choices for performance. DI lacks props, costuming, sets, and other luxuries seen in various forms of performance art. There is a set time limit of ten minutes, with a 30-second grace period. Students who choose to compete in Dramatic Interpretation should focus on suspending the disbelief of the audience by portraying a realistic, emotional journey of a character(s). The performance should connect to the audience.

## Research

When looking for a Dramatic Interpretation, it's important to know your limitations, and your strengths. Technical skills, vocal flexibility, physicality, and gender can be factors in your choice. Additionally, it's important to think of the performance itself when searching for a script. Does the literature lend itself to performance, or is the language too flowery? Is the plot complicated or is it a simple story told in a simple way? Think about what you are capable of, and how you would like to be challenged throughout the season when making a selection. Remember to consult your state's rules in regards what is acceptable literature.

Ask yourself, what kind of character am I comfortable playing? What kind of story am I comfortable telling? What story do I want to tell? Narrow your search from there. Remember to keep an open mind. Sometimes, you can create an ideal of the piece you'd like to perform, and reject other suggestions that come along the way. Sometimes it's better to try something different that will stretch you as a performer.

When searching for a script, it's important that the language sounds natural when read aloud. For instance, Shakespeare and Hemingway may be be less effective choices for DI because the language is archaic and less conversational. Find a script that when read aloud, feels natural, or comfortable to speak and hear.

Tense is also an important factor of selecting a dramatic interpretation. Because the majority of DI's take place within one scene, or have an anchor reality, the tense should reflect the reality the character is telling the story from. An anchor reality is the imagined-space from which the character is speaking. For instance, a house-wife's anchor reality may be her kitchen. Throughout the story, she may move to other realities that exist in a different space and time, but she will return to tell her story from her anchor reality. Also, consider how the tense will influence blocking, or movement in the performance space, before deciding on a selection.

Go to your local library, visit the biographies section of a bookstore, or visit Play Scripts, Dramatists, or Samuel French online. These are just a few of the places you may find material for your performance.

## Structural Components

Structure of an Interp (taken from *Interpretation of Literature, Bringing Words to Life*).

TEASER • 0:00 – 1:30
*Previews the topic and mood of the selection*

INTRO • 1:30 – 3:00
*Explains the purpose of the performance*

EXPOSITION • 3:00 – 3:30
*Introduces characters and setting*

INCITING INCIDENT • 3:30 – 4:00
*Sends the conflict into motion*

RISING ACTION • 4:00 – 7:30
*Complicates the conflict*

CLIMAX • 7:30 – 8:30
*Emotional peak of the performance*

FALLING ACTION • 8:30 – 9:30
*Resolves the conflict*

There are a few key structural components of every DI:

*Cutting.* Your cutting is the ten-minute portion of your selection you chose to perform. This is how you've arranged the literature, and what aspects of the story you've decided to tell. It will directly influence the other two aspects of your performance.

*Characterization* is informed decisions you've made on how the character(s) will think, act, move and sound. The choices you make about your character should be informed by the script itself.

*Blocking,* or tech, is how the character(s) moves in the space you've created for them. Sometimes blocking is expressive in nature, symbolizing how that character is feeling emotionally, while at other times, denotes events that are occurring in the imagined space i.e. opening up a soda or sweeping the floor.

*Introduction.* An introduction explains the purpose of the performance. Typically, after the teaser, a performer will give a brief explanation of the piece's relevance, then give the title and author before returning to the performance.

## Organizing

Before memorizing the material, take the time to "beat" out your script. This means reading the script aloud and making notes as you go. As you read aloud, use symbols to indicate shorter pauses "/" or longer pauses "//." Consider the emotionality behind each line. Ask yourself what the motivation for the characters' actions are. Use this to influence blocking choices.

Indicate rough blocking in the margins of your script. Choose gestures that reflect the emotional state of the character, or blocking that enhances or creates the illusion of the imagined space of the character. (i.e. resting a hand on a counter or leaning on the back of a chair.) Think in terms of symbolic gestures and psychological gestures. A symbolic gestures is a gesture that is not commonly used in day to day communication. Example: if you were to show me what "freedom" looked like, you may outstretch your arms like Maria Von Trapp singing "The Hills Are Alive" on the side of a mountain. This isn't a common gesture found in conversation. However, it communicates without words the idea of freedom. Conversely, a psychological gesture is one that is found in conversation. Examples include, scratching your nose, or shaking your head yes or no. For more information on these techniques, check out *Interpretation of Literature: Bringing Words to Life* by Travis Kiger and Ganer Newman.

Read your script aloud. Eliminate any excess language that sounds awkward or is unnecessarily redundant. A DI script should be no more than 1,200 words, which requires continuous cutting of superfluous language.

## Practicing

Often, you'll find that if you've spent the appropriate amount of time reading, cutting, and analyzing a script, memorization will be an easier process. Here are some things to keep in mind, to help simplify the process:

First, our brains are a muscle. The more time you practice memorizing, or simply memorize things, the better you become. Often, performers take more time in the beginning of a season to commit a script to memory than they do at the end of the competitive season. Memorizing is a process.

Next, memorization is physical. Staring at a script, re-reading the lines in your head will not be beneficial. Memorize the script with the intent to perform it. Type up a clean version with only your finalized text and blocking. Then, tape it to the wall and actively memorize. Read the lines aloud moving with them as indicated by your cutting. Sometimes, it's helpful to do this in front of a mirror, so you can evaluate the effectiveness of your movements. It is helpful to memorize a paragraph at a time, building off of the paragraph that came before. This

will significantly decrease the time it takes to memorize your performance.

Once memorized, you and your coach can then build off of the choices you've made for your character. Adjustments to blocking, characterization, and line delivery can be made.

## Performance Tips

It may sound cliche, but confidence is key! If you've put the work in, you should feel confident in the product you've created. Go into that round with your head held high, ready to show the world what you've got! Trust what you and your coach created. Do what you practiced, and if you feel compelled to "try something new," review it with your coach beforehand. Consistency is key. It's hard to evaluate what to change in practice if your performance in the round is completely different than what you've been working on.

Pay attention to other performers. Smile, be a warm, inviting audience member. There is nothing worse than performing and having an audience that either stone faces you or won't look you in the eye. Think of it this way: each round is about 60 minutes. Ten of those involve you performing, the other 50 are for you to listen, learn, and support your competitors.

Keep a notebook for between rounds. Sometimes, another person's performance will inspire you, and it's a good idea to have a notebook handy to write down new ideas. It's also nice to know who you competed against in each round. This way, you have a better understanding of who your competition is. When you review your ballots after the tournament, you can go back through your notebook and compare your ballots to your notes.

Between rounds, figure out what room you will be performing in next. Congratulate your competitors on a good performance after the round ends, and make friends during downtime. Be gracious, and keep criticisms of other performers to yourself, even if someone else tries to start a negative conversation.

## Resources

A great source is *Interpretation of Literature—Bringing Words to Life* by Travis Kiger and Ganer Newman. They cover cutting, characterization, blocking, and the structure of a story. Additionally, if this is your first time doing Dramatic Interpretation, go watch a final round of DI! Observe the rounds not only as entertainment, but be aware of effective cutting, characterization, and blocking. Ask yourself, how can I apply similar techniques to my performance? How can I build off of what this performer is doing? The best way to learn DI, outside of actively doing it, is by watching and learning from other performers.

Member students and coaches at NSDA schools can access these materials and more at **www.speechanddebate.org/resources**. Use the filter function on the left hand side of the page to find resources specific to Interp and Dramatic Interp.

AN INTRODUCTION TO

# Duo Interpretation

*Duo Interpretation at a Glance*

NATIONAL SPEECH & DEBATE ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL FORENSIC LEAGUE

## Event Description

Two competitors team up to deliver a ten-minute performance of a published play or story. Using off-stage focus, **Duo Interpretation** (DUO) 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 may also include an introduction written by the students to contextualize the performance and state the title and author.

## Considerations for Selecting Duo Literature

When looking at literature, a Duo entry must consider how the literature would work for both members of the team. Duo Interpretation strives for a balanced performance with both partners being integral to the development of the piece's characters, relationships, plot, and more. Duo Interpretation allows for students to do humorous, dramatic, or pieces that combine both into the performance. Considerations for selecting a topic for a Duo Interpretation should include age, maturity, and school standards.

## Traits of Successful Duo Performers

When considering what event you should choose, or which direction to point a student when selecting an event, below are some general traits of successful Duo students to keep in mind:

- Combination of comedic and dramatic skills
- Enthusiasm for choreography
- Strong listening skills
- Willingness to co-create
- Flexibility

## Examples of Past Duo Titles

- *25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* by Rachel Sheinkin
- *Complete Works of William Shakespeare Abridged* by Adam Long, Daniel Singer, and Jess Winfield
- *Expecting Isabel* by Lisa Loomer
- *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change* by Joe DiPietro and Jimmy Roberts
- *Little Shop of Horrors* by Howard Ashman
- *Peter Pan* by J.M. Barrie
- *Regina Flector Wins the Science Fair* by Marco Ramirez
- *Someone Who'll Watch Over Me* by Frank McGuinness
- *The Crayon Map* by Oliver Leslie and Christopher Marianetti
- *Year One* by Harold Ramis, Gene Stupnitsky, and Lee Eisenberg

**Learn More!** The National Speech & Debate Association is the leading provider of competitive and educational resources to aid students and coaches as they explore our competitive events. For **Duo Interpretation**, we provide a number of helpful resources—including live and recorded webinars designed to introduce foundational and advanced concepts in Interp; access to Duo final round videos; an interpretation textbook for Resource Package subscribers; videos from champion coaches; and much more! Take advantage of the amazing benefits of being a member by using our resources to help advance yourself in competitive speech and debate activities. Visit **www.speechanddebate.org** for more information.

## Find Your Voice

*"Duo Interpretation is an excellent crash course on creativity. The process of cutting, blocking, and refining a script really encourages young artists to think differently and create form and empty space. I think the best part of Duo was the opportunity to meet so many talented, creative people who turn words on a page into phenomenal showcases of artistry, and to have the ability to do it all with my best friend."* **— Zach Snow, Association Alum**

# Duo Interpretation

## Basic Understandings

Duo. The event everyone wants to do with a best friend. In truth, while the appeal of Duo might be performing with a friend, this approach may not be best. Duo is about balance. Partners should complement one another stylistically and maintain a similar skill set and work ethic. Chemistry is an important element of Duo, but chemistry outside of a practice/performance setting does not always translate to chemistry when practicing or performing at a tournament. Be sure to share your goals with your coach as they help you through the process of getting started in Duo.

Duo is an event that can be dramatic, comedic, or a combination of the two. With a ten-minute time cap, and a requirement of an off-stage focus, Duo is one of the most unique forms of performance. The main objective is to maintain a sense of balance between performers that focuses on the relationship(s) between the characters they create.

## Research

There are two ways to go about finding a script: You can either let the choice of partner influence the material you want to perform, or let the selection determine the ideal partner.

Go to your local library, visit the bookstore, check out children's stories, or search for plays with two or more characters. Look for a simple story told in a simple way.

Complex plots are hard to follow, especially if there are more than two characters in the selection. Remember: you have ten minutes to tell a story. Don't pick anything too abstract or complicated.

Keep in mind that each partner should be assigned to a specific character(s), and that you should not switch between characters throughout the performance.

Know the strengths and weaknesses of the team. If the piece requires a lot of physical tech, or vocal variance, and a partner struggles with this, it might not be the best idea to choose that selection.

Finally, it's always a good idea to watch the latest Duo rounds. Duo is an incredibly diverse event. Watch a final round to get a feel for the stylistic differences that are found throughout the event.

## Structural Components

Structure of an Interp (taken from *Interpretation of Literature, Bringing Words to Life*).

TEASER • 0:00 – 1:30
*Previews the topic and mood of the selection*

INTRO • 1:30 – 3:00
*Explains the purpose of the performance*

EXPOSITION • 3:00 – 3:30
*Introduces characters and setting*

INCITING INCIDENT • 3:30 – 4:00
*Sends the conflict into motion*

RISING ACTION • 4:00 – 7:30
*Complicates the conflict*

CLIMAX • 7:30 – 8:30
*Emotional peak of the performance*

FALLING ACTION • 8:30 – 9:30
*Resolves the conflict*

*Cutting.* This is the parts of the selection you've chosen to perform. Having a solid cutting is incredibly important because it influences every performative choice you make. It should dictate characterization, motivation, blocking, and relational tensions.

*Characterization.* All interpretation events require that strong character choices are made. Distinct physical, vocal, and emotional choices should be made for each character.

*Relationship.* This is probably the biggest component of an effective Duo. The Duo should focus on the relationship between the characters. There should be a constant push and pull as the characters fight for power in the relationship. The approach can be humorous or dramatic in nature, but there should be defined goals for the performance, and each scene within that performance. Discuss the motivation for each character and set objectives for the message to convey in each scene and how the audience should feel.

*Blocking.* Duo can be the most visually stunning of interpretation events because when you've got double the performers, there is double the potential for creative blocking choices. Blocking is how the characters move within the imagined space you've created for them. Make sure the blocking creates the imagined space the characters exist in (i.e. a spaceship, or an office), and the emotional state of the characters (i.e. standing farther apart to symbolize emotional distance, or turning inward during an intimate conversation).

*Intro.* An introduction explains the purpose of the performance. Typically, each Duo partner takes a turn explaining the justification for the performance. Competitors usually close the intro by giving the title and author before continuing with the performance.

## Organizing

When you cut a Duo, make sure partners agree on the objective of the story. Establish what the climax should be, and from there, construct the story leading up to it. Make sure that the lines are balanced, and remove redundant lines, or chunks of the story that are not integral to the plot of the cutting. Consider what the visual representation of the piece will look like, taking into account that Duo is meant to be performed with an off stage focus. Denote in the cutting changes in pace, where to take beats (pauses), and important blocking moments. Partners need to discuss why the characters are doing what they're doing.

## Practicing

Often, if the appropriate amount of time was spent reading, cutting, and analyzing a script, memorization will be easier. However, it can still be a challenge. Here are things to keep in mind:

First, brains are a muscle. The more time a person practices memorizing, or simply memorize things, the better they become. Memorizing is a process.

Next, memorization is physical. Staring at a script, re-reading the lines will not be beneficial. Memorize the script with the intent to perform it. Type up a clean version with only finalized text and blocking. Then, tape it to the wall to actively memorize. Read the lines aloud moving with them as indicated by the cutting. Partners should be in front of a mirror, so they can evaluate the effectiveness of their movements. This is particularly important in Duo because "clean" blocking, or blocking that is defined, motivated, and executed with precision, will factor into the rank in the round. It is helpful to memorize a scene at a time, building off of the previous scene. Partners need to remember that a character is responding to what a character said before. Conceptualize the lines as a conversation to help memorization.

Because Duo is a dialogue heavy, relationship focused performance, it's important for the characters to listen and react to each other. Notice how friends engage with each other when they talk. Facial reactions, gestures, and other nonverbal response are a huge part of communication. Make sure that each character is engaged in the performance, even when they aren't speaking. Having well thought out, motivated reactions can bring a Duo to the next level.

Once memorized, the Duo students and their coach can then build off of the choices that've been made for characters. Adjustments to blocking, characterization, and line delivery can be made.

## Performance Tips

It may sound cliche, but confidence is key! If the work has been put in, confidence is a natural product. Competitors should go into that round with heads held high, ready to show the world what they've got! Trust what has been created. Do what was practiced, and if feeling compelled to "try something new," the coach should be consulted. Consistency is key. It's hard to evaluate what to change in practice if the performance in the round is completely different than what was worked on for the past few weeks.

Pay attention to other performers. Smile, and be a warm, inviting audience member. Partners should not conspire with each other during the round! If there's something they need to tell each other, it can be said after the round in private. There is nothing worse than performing and having an audience that either stone faces you, won't look you in the eye, or is clearly more concerned about talking to their partner than paying attention to the performance. Think of it this way: each round is about 60 minutes. Ten of those involve a Duo performing, the other 50 are for your Duo to listen, learn, and support your fellow competitors.

Keep a notebook for between rounds. Sometimes, another person's performance will be inspirational, and it's a good idea to have a notebook handy to write down new ideas. It's also nice to know who your Duo competed against in each round. A Duo should review their ballots after the tournament, and then they can go back through their notebook and compare their ballots to their notes.

Between rounds, Duo students should figure out what room they will be performing in next. They should congratulate competitors on a good performance after the round ends, and make friends during downtime. They should be gracious, and keep criticisms of other performers to themselves, even if someone else tries to start a negative conversation.

## Resources

A great source is I*nterpretation of Literature—Bringing Words to Life* by Travis Kiger and Ganer Newman. They cover cutting, characterization, blocking, and the structure of a story. Additionally, if this is your first time doing Duo Interpretation, go watch a final round of Duo! Observe the rounds not only as entertainment, but be aware of effective cutting, characterization, and blocking. Ask yourself, how can I apply similar techniques to my performance? How can I build off of what this Duo is doing? The best way to learn Duo, outside of actively doing it, is by watching and learning from other performers.

Member students and coaches at NSDA schools can access these materials and more at **www.speechanddebate.org/resources**. Use the filter function on the left hand side of the page to find resources specific to Interp and Duo Interp.

AN INTRODUCTION TO

# Expository

*Expository at a Glance*

## Event Description

Expository is a five-minute informative speech that introduces to the audience a topic of the student's choosing. The speaker should provide unique insights and explore interesting implications. At its core, Expository is an informative speech. Students doing Expository may cover topics ranging from an organization, to a product, a process, or concept. Effective speeches provide new information or perspectives on a topic, including those that are widely known.

## Considerations for Selecting a Topic

When selecting a topic it is important for the student to find a subject that they are interested in learning about and discovering new insights. Since the student has to deliver the speech, it is important for them to find a topic that lends itself to engaging delivery for that student. A topic they are not interested in may lead to more static delivery. The topic should be avoided if the speech cannot impart new and unique information to the audience. Topics that are timely can be especially useful.

Students should also consider the relevance of the topic to the audience. While the student may be inspired by a subject they find intriguing, ultimately the goal of the speech is to provide information to an audience. Think about what the audience can do with this information. Why do they need it? Why is the topic important to them? What is the audience's 'need to know'?

## Traits of Successful Expository

When considering what event you should choose, or which direction to point a student when selecting an event, here are some traits of successful Expository students to keep in mind:

- Articulate
- Process oriented
- Inquisitive
- Engaging
- Personable
- Enjoys research
- Passionate about writing
- Creative

## Examples of Past Expository Topics

- Fibonacci
- Roller coaster design
- Concussions
- AED
- Lipitor
- Fitbit
- Corinthians

**Learn More!** The National Speech & Debate Association is the leading provider of competitive & educational resources to aid students and coaches as they explore our competitive events. For Expository, we have videos of past national final round performances. We produce many other general public speaking resources, activities for class or practice, and more!

## Find Your Voice

*"I enjoyed Expository because it didn't require the speaker to convince the audience of anything other than how exciting their topic was. Any speech that explores implications usually involves some level of individualized analysis, which keeps topics that are otherwise redundant fresh."*

**— Josh Planos, Association Alum**

# Expository

## Basic Understandings

Expository is an informative speech that is five minutes long without the use of a visual aid (note: some tournaments permit the use of visual aids but at Nationals none are used). Students who participate in Expository provide unique and interesting information to the audience. An effective Expository introduces them to either a completely new topic or something new about a topic people may know a lot about. Students who do this event would need to be well researched and personally invested in the topic they are wanting to speak on. If the topic is not meaningful to the person it may become harder to deliver the speech to the audience effectively.

## Research

Expository research is as diverse as the topics students select. Expository research might include newspaper and magazine articles, academic journals, non-fiction books, interviews, and credible digital content. Depending upon the topic, it might be possible that a student's own meaningful experiences may be in the speech.

Source materials need to be incorporated throughout the speech with oral citation. The citation style varies with the type of source. For example, students should provide author and title of books, although some students will also provide the credentials of the author. The name of the source and date may be sufficient for newspaper articles. It is important to recognize that whether the material is quoted directly from the source or paraphrased, sources must be cited. When drafting the Expository speech, indicate direct quotations from sources using both quotation marks and some other marking such as highlighting or underlining. Choose your quoted text wisely as it should not be overwhelming in comparison to your own analysis. Once all the research is gathered, the sources should all be compiled into a works cited page.

## Structural Components

When constructing an Expository speech, students need to be sure to have a well thought out introduction, body, and conclusion. As a five-minute speech it is necessary to succinctly express and develop ideas. Depth of information is still possible with efficient word economy in writing.

*The introduction* would work to grab the audience's attention. The "attention grabbing device" should be related to the topic—shock strategies that are unrelated do not work. After this the introduction should provide sufficient context so that the audience understands what the topic is. While doing this the speaker should establish why the audience should care about the information that is going to be presented. The speaker should establish reasons why the information is serious as well as how it's directly related to the audience. As with any good introduction, the speaker should preview the points of the body of the speech.

*The body* of the speech will likely be composed of two or three main points. The body would be the substance of the speech and will set up justifications for the impact of the topic as well as why it relates to the audience. Typical main points in Expository include the background of the topic, the pros and cons of the topic at hand, the development of the topic, and the implications of the analysis presented.

*The conclusion* is going to wrap up the speech. It will tie back to the attention grabbing device from the introduction, as well as review the main points of the speech.

A general breakdown of the timing of an Expository speech could be done in this manner:

**INTRO** • 30 – 45 seconds

**BODY** • 3:00 – 3:15

**CONCLUSION** • 15 – 30 seconds

## Organizing

When developing the ideas of the speech think about answering the questions how and why! How does your topic lend itself to what you are establishing? Why does it happen? To develop a sound position it's necessary to avoid assertions. Furthermore, it's important to ensure that you establish the importance of each point. Why should the audience care? Organizing your ideas around this premise will assist you in the development of the speech.

Organizing the body of a speech is a process impacted by the topic the student has selected. The key is to choose an organizational pattern that works well to support the thesis of the speech. The student also needs to consider what the audience may or may not know already about the topic. Here are a couple of specific examples using the same topic:

Let's say that a student wants to tell us about one of the many popular products to help us manage our health, such as Fitbit's Activity Tracker. The student's thesis might suggest that these health products have a tremendous impact on an individual's own health as well as impacting societal awareness of healthcare. The first point may be what it is and how it is used so that we understand the specific product better. The student may then tell us about how the technology itself works, such as how it measures and reports vital health statistics. The third point might be how these health products are impacting society.

This is just one way of organizing a speech like this. The student might want to put more emphasis on the impact on society. Thus, the student might choose to use one point to note the impact of these products (sales numbers and projections, for example), another to explain how our healthcare costs may go down as a result of using these products, and a third point might be to explain what will happen with these products in the future. The topic might be the same, but these two speeches will be quite different from each other because of the choices made in the body of the speech.

## Practicing

As Expository is delivered without notes, the first step for the student after drafting and revising the speech

is memorization. Remind students that brains are like a muscle. The more a muscle is used, the stronger it becomes. Likewise, the more memorization is practiced, the better the student becomes.

Here are some thoughts for the student regarding memorization: The more cues you give your brain to aid memorization the better. Staring at a script, re-reading the lines in your head, will not be beneficial. Memorize the story with the intent to perform it. Type up a clean version with only your finalized text. You can include notes on gestures and movement. Then, tape it to a wall and actively memorize. Read the lines aloud moving with them as indicated by your notes. Sometimes, it's helpful to do this in front of a mirror, so you can evaluate the effectiveness of your choices. It is helpful to memorize a paragraph at a time, building from the previous paragraph. This will significantly decrease the time it takes to memorize your performance. Once memorized, you and your coach can then build from the choices you've made for your speech. Adjustments to gestures, movement, and line delivery can be made.

Once the student feels confident in their performance, the coach and student can begin practicing. Timing a run-through and critiquing the speech both orally and with written comments is a helpful method. Focus on the big picture in these early practices. Work on explanation of key concepts, engagement with the audience, and energy. Consider carefully how students are using their voice, including pause, pitch, tone, volume, diction, and inflection. Eventually the student will be ready for line-by-line practices. Line-by-line is characterized by intensive rehearsal of each section of the speech. This can be a paragraph, or working on individual line delivery. As the student makes adjustments, be conscious of staying within the time limits.

The student is now ready to perform in front of other students, coaches, or even an audience. Attend

tournaments and review ballots or hold practice rounds with other members of your team.. At this stage, feedback is incredibly important. Take note of all comments. A fresh perspective on a speech is vitally important! Students need to be willing to take feedback and make appropriate modifications.

Even the most talented of performers need practice! Remind students to respect the time and resources of coaches and the school. If they give it their best effort every day, they will be successful no matter the tournament outcome.

## Performance Tips

It may sound cliché, but confidence is key! If you've put the work in, you should feel confident in the product you've created. Go into the round with your head held high, ready to show the world what you've got! Trust what you and your coach created. Do what you practiced, and if you feel compelled to "try something new," review it with your coach beforehand. Consistency is key. It's hard to evaluate what to change in practice if your performance in the round is completely different than what you've been working on.

Pay attention to other performers. Smile! Be a warm, inviting audience member. There is nothing worse than performing and having an audience that either stone faces you or won't look you in the eye. Think of it this way: if your round is 45 minutes long, you are only speaking for five of those minutes. The remaining minutes are for you to listen, learn, and support your competitors.

Keep a notebook for between rounds. Sometimes, another person's performance will inspire you, and it's a good idea to have a notebook handy to write down new ideas. It's also nice to know who you competed against in each round. This way, you have a better understanding of who your competition is. When you review your ballots after the tournament, you can go back through your notebook and compare your ballots to your notes.

Between rounds, figure out what room you will be performing in next. Congratulate your competitors on a good performance after the round ends, and make friends during downtime. Be gracious, and keep criticisms of other performers to yourself, even if someone else tries to start a negative conversation.

## Resources

Resources for Original Oratory and Informative Speaking can be very helpful for students competing in Expository. Visit **www.speechanddebate.org/resources** and use the filters to pull up relevant resources. Member coaches can also access applicable classroom materials in our Intro to Public Speaking course at **www.speechanddebate.org/learn**.

# Extemporaneous Speaking

## COMPETITION EVENTS GUIDE

NATIONAL SPEECH & DEBATE ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL FORENSIC LEAGUE

### Basic Understandings

Extemporaneous Speaking, typically called Extemp, is a speech on current events with limited preparation time. A student's understanding of important political, economic, and cultural issues is assessed along with critical thinking and analytical skills. Students report to a draw room (often referred to as Extemp prep) where all of the extempers gather at tables, set out their files, and await their turn to draw topics. A staff member in the prep room calls out student codes based upon a pre-assigned speaker order. When a student's code is called, the student will approach the draw table and select one of three available prompts. The student will then prepare for thirty minutes to deliver a speech answering the chosen topic. When prep time is up, the student reports to the competition room to deliver a seven minute speech.

Students may access research brought with them to the tournament during the 30-minute preparation period. We refer to these resources as files. Teams may bring their files in paper form, often print-outs of articles organized in hanging file folders by topic area in large plastic bins or totes, or electronic format on laptops or other portable devices such as tablets (for more information, see Research).

During preparation time, students review their files on the topic selected and outline arguments that will be made throughout the speech. Some students outline with notecards; others use legal pads. Students should document the source of their research on their notes so that they can cite the materials while they speak. Students have a lot to do in 30 minutes—they must select a question, review research, outline arguments with supporting materials, and practice at least part of the speech before time expires. Many tournaments prohibit the consultation of notes during the speech in which case speech structure and evidence need to be memorized during prep time as well.

After the 30-minute preparation time, students report to their competition rooms to deliver their speeches. Students must never watch the speakers before them, although students may watch those who speak after them. Judges should give time signals to the competitors while they speak to indicate how much time remains of their seven minutes.

### Research

Students who compete in Extemp must keep up with current events. Students who do International Extemp must read articles concerning events of world-wide importance as they may draw questions regarding conflict among various countries, economic challenges experienced by third world countries, or new leadership in nations across the globe. US Extemp participants must understand political, social, and economic policies of the US and how the US relates to the rest of the world. Reading articles is a vital practice for keeping students informed on topics frequently asked at tournaments. It is also important because students may want to frame their analysis with historical context.

Students should read widely, both on topics of personal interest as well as on issues that they struggle to understand. Because the topics are so diverse and can change rapidly, students should keep up with current events by reading print or online versions of various newspapers, magazines, and journals. Students may want to file at least one US-oriented source and one international source to broaden their exposure to varied ideas and perspectives.

There are various methods to organizing team Extemp files depending upon the format chosen. Students should file articles from reputable newspapers, magazines, and electronic resources. Depending on the tournament rules,

students may be able to use the internet to prepare. Use of the internet during preparation time is permitted at the National Tournament.

Students need to cite sources during their speeches. Typically, the name of the source and date are a minimal requirement, although sometimes speakers need to provide additional source credibility. For example, "As reported in the *New York Times* of September 4, 2014..." or, "Janet Yellen, chair of the Federal Reserve, is quoted in *The Economist* of September 6, 2014...."

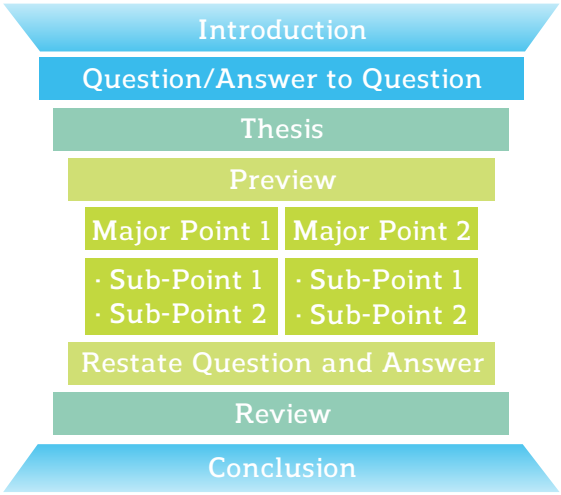
## Structural Components

Overall, an excellent extemporaneous speech is one that provides critical thinking and perspective on an issue of contemporary significance. Extempers must address the question as worded on the draw slip and support their positions with analysis and evidence. Extempers who can provide a clear explanation of what is taking place, and why, will be particularly favored by judges. This is important for those judges who have limited experience with Extemp or who are not as well versed in current events. Students must remember that they sometimes know more about certain parts of the world or specific aspects of our economy than a number of their judges or the observers in the round. Clarity is vitally important. Extempers should not use specialized terms or phrases unless they are placed in context. For example, an International Extemper might discuss a recent development in the currency valuation of a specific country by referencing the name of the currency. A US extemper might analyze the impact of Super PACs (Political Action Committees) by explaining what a PAC is, how Super PACs differ from historical notions of PACs, and how federal and Supreme Court decisions changed the political landscape. It is possible that the judge or observers in the round may not know the value of another nation's currency, or how corporations can donate to political campaigns, unless the extemper provides that information.

## Organizing

Most speeches feature an introduction that gains the audience's attention, sets up the speech, and transitions to recitation of the question and the student's answer to the question. This is followed by a thesis statement for the speech as a whole. Extemp speeches typically have a preview statement after the introduction that summarizes the key points the student will make in the body of the speech. Students then organize the body of the speech with major points and sub-points. Students might choose three major points of analysis, for example, or perhaps two major points with two sub-points under each. Speeches also typically feature a review of the major points, a restatement of the question and student response to the question, and a conclusion. Students should practice with a stopwatch to determine how long they should speak on each section. Each major point should be roughly equal to another to keep the speech balanced.

Here is a sample outline:




## Practicing

Extempers need to start with the basics. Beginning extempers should spend considerable time reading credible news sources on a range of topics. Beginners should receive practice questions and take the time to review them, talk through answers to the questions, and focus on creating excellent thesis statements. Beginners could start practices with a notecard and perhaps focus on one major point of analysis instead of two or three. A great beginning strategy for extempers is to deliver their first speech with unlimited prep time. Following this performance, gradually reduce the amount of prep time used until the speaker reaches 30 minutes. It is easy for students to be intimidated by Extemp. As with any skill, practicing will take some of the anxiety out of approaching the event. Students should not wait to practice-—if the student knows a lot about a particular topic of interest, practices can take place right away. Students do not have to know everything about every country, world leader, or U.S. policy in order to practice. After a number of Extemp practices, students can spend time working on language selection, smoothing out the

verbal and physical delivery, and filling in the gaps of their knowledge base.

## Performance Tips

Due to the nature of Extemp, competitors will find that each round is unique. Some questions are incredibly challenging, either due to the specific wording or lack of background knowledge of the topic for the extemper, and others seem incredibly easy. Every Extemp competitor will encounter a round where there simply are no files on a given topic. Extempers need to accept that some rounds are excellent and others are not and to learn from every speech. There are ways extempers can better prepare for Extemp and put their best foot forward every time. Some advice for students:

*Ask questions.* If you don't understand an economic principle or can't explain why a particular country's actions are significant, be sure to ask coaches, teachers, and teammates.

*Take notes.* If your files are missing something important, make a note of it and either fill the gaps or talk to your teammates so that everyone is on the same page.

*Practice language.* Extempers often use the same types of language for transitional material. Practice with this language so that you aren't struggling to come up with something fresh in every speech. As you gain experience, you can mix it up, but at the outset, just get comfortable with the format of the speech and the language to get you from point A to point B.

*Line-by-line.* Save your notes from your speeches and revisit them. Give sections of speeches, or entire speeches, over and over again to improve argument quality and language considerations. If you struggle with vocalized pauses and fillers, such as uhms and likes, you can redo lines of your speech repeatedly.

## Resources

Keeping up with the news, while very rewarding, can also feel very overwhelming. Students can take advantage of a number of free electronic resources to keep up-to-date. For example, students might use an RSS reader (which is a news aggregator, bringing news to the student in one website on a continual basis), such as Feedly, to keep up with news. Students can choose to follow particular types of news or specific news outlets. Students can also keep up with current events by following news organizations or analysts on Twitter. Flipboard is a service that brings students the news in a visually appealing format, similar to flipping through the pages of a magazine. Students can also have news updates pushed to them through individual emails or news digests offered by services such as Google News or Yahoo!

The National Speech & Debate Association has many resources specific to Extemporaneous Speaking, including sample Extemp questions, videos of Extemp speeches, a textbook, helpful webinars, and more! Member students and coaches at NSDA schools can access these materials and more at **www.speechanddebate.org/resources**. Use the filter function on the left hand side of the page to find more Extemp related materials.

AN INTRODUCTION TO

# United States Extemporaneous Speaking

*United States Extemporaneous Speaking at a Glance*

NATIONAL SPEECH & DEBATE ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL FORENSIC LEAGUE

## Event Description

In **United States Extemporaneous Speaking** (USX), students are presented with a choice of three questions related to current events in the U.S. 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, and some tournaments allow students to use the internet during preparation time. Topics range from political matters to economic concerns to U.S. foreign policy. The speech is delivered from memory.

## Considerations for Unites States Extemp

Students who do USX are typically very curious about matters of domestic interest. Students should be well read and understand current events within the U.S. To learn more about domestic issues, students should spend significant time reading from a variety of news sources. Recommended reading lists include, but are not limited to: *New York Times*, *Brookings Institute*, *Economist*, *Bloomberg Business Weekly*, *The Guardian*, *Congressional Research Committee*, *The Financial Times*, and more.

## Traits of Successful USX Speakers

When considering what event you should choose, or in which direction to point a student when selecting an event, below are some general traits of successful Extempers to keep in mind:

- Enjoys reading
- Naturally curious or inquisitive
- Passionate about domestic issues
- Determined
- Reflective
- Quick thinker

## Examples of Past USX Questions

- Does the United States' alliance with Israel harm its strategic interest in the Middle East?
- What is the future of legal abortion in the United States?

**Learn More!** The National Speech & Debate Association is the leading provider of competitive and educational resources to aid students and coaches as they explore our competitive events. For **United States Extemporaneous Speaking**, we provide a number of helpful resources—including live and recorded webinars designed to introduce foundational and advanced concepts in Extemp; access to Extemp final round videos; an Extemp textbook for Resource Package subscribers; practice questions; topic analysis; and much more! Take advantage of the amazing benefits of being a member by using our resources to help advance yourself in competitive speech and debate activities. Visit **www.speechanddebate.org** for more information.

## Find Your Voice

*Extemp made me the poised, organized, and strong woman I am today. It taught me how to be myself in front of a room full of strangers, to break down complex theories so they are easily accessible, to quickly problem solve, and, most importantly, that I never need to apologize for being a girl who wants to talk about labor market policies more than celebrity drama."*

**— Talan Tyminski, Association Alum**

AN INTRODUCTION TO

# International Extemporaneous Speaking

*International Extemporaneous Speaking at a Glance*

NATIONAL SPEECH & DEBATE ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL FORENSIC LEAGUE

## Event Description

In **International Extemporaneous Speaking** (IX), students are presented with a choice of three questions related to international current 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, and some tournaments allow students to use the internet during preparation time. Topics range from country-specific issues to regional concerns to foreign policy. The speech is delivered from memory.

## Considerations for International Extemp

Students who do IX are typically very curious about matters of a global interest. Students should be well read and understand current events outside the U.S. To learn more about international issues, students should spend significant time reading from a variety of news sources. Recommended reading lists include, but are not limited to: *Council on Foreign Relations*, *New York Times*, *Asia Times*, *Jerusalem Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, BBC, *Foreign Policy*, *Foreign Affairs*, and more.

## Traits of Successful IX Speakers

When considering what event you should choose, or which direction to point a student when selecting an event, below are some general traits of successful Extempers to keep in mind:

- Enjoys reading
- Naturally curious or inquisitive
- Concerned with the global society in which they live
- Sees interconnectedness of concepts and events
- Reflective
- Focused

## Examples of Past IX Questions

- Will international trade be stronger or weaker in one year?
- Which is more politically viable right now: right-wing nationalism or liberal globalism?

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## Find Your Voice

*"The fast-paced nature of Extemp quickly cultivated my speaking skills, while the never-ending subject matter of current events provided an outlet for my intense curiosity. On its most fundamental level, Extemp gave me a microphone to address the world, imbued eloquence into my voice and ideas, and taught me to make concise arguments."*

**— Dylan Adelman, Association Alum**

AN INTRODUCTION TO

# Humorous Interpretation

*Humorous Interpretation at a Glance*

NATIONAL SPEECH & DEBATE ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL FORENSIC LEAGUE

## Event Description

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** (HI) 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 author.

## Considerations for Selecting HI Literature

When searching for literature, a student should look for more than one-liner jokes. Humor can be created through strategic choreography, creative characterization, and dynamic non-verbal reactions. Typical selection topics range from light-hearted material including interpretations of comics, children's literature, plays, short stories, and more. Considerations for selecting an HI topic should include the student's age, maturity, and school standards.

## Traits of Successful HI Performers

When considering what event you should choose, or which direction to point a student when selecting an event, here are some traits of successful HIers to keep in mind:

- Creative
- Physical control
- Bold/high energy
- Ability to think outside the box
- Dynamic physical and vocal techniques
- Risk taker

## Examples of Past HI Titles

- *Avenue Q* by Robert Lopez
- *Batboy* by Keythe Farley and Brian Flemming
- *Bobby Wilson Can Eat His Own Face* by Don Zolidis
- *Disney Mom Group Therapy* by Mo Gaffney
- *Drugs are Bad* by Jonathan Rand
- *Junie B. Jones is (Almost) a Flower Girl* by Barbara Parks
- *Law & Order - Fairy Tale Unit* by Jonathan Rand
- *Legally Blonde the Musical* by Laurence O'Keefe
- *Ruthless* by Joel Paley
- *The Hunger Pains: A Parody* by The Harvard Lampoon

**Learn More!** The National Speech & Debate Association is the leading provider of competitive and educational resources to aid students and coaches as they explore our competitive events. For **Humorous Interpretation**, we provide a number of helpful resources—including live and recorded webinars designed to introduce foundational and advanced concepts in Interp; access to HI final round videos; an interpretation textbook for Resource Package Subscribers; videos from champion coaches; and much more! Take advantage of the amazing benefits of being a member by using our resources to help advance yourself in competitive speech and debate activities. Visit **www.speechanddebate.org** for more information.

## Find Your Voice

*Robin Williams said, 'You're only given a little spark of madness. You mustn't lose it.' HI was my way of keeping and exercising my madness muscle, because we all need a little madness to keep the insanity away. HI, and speech in general, helped to cultivate a sense of fearlessness, not only in my performances, but also in my life."*

**— Dan Johnson, Association Alum**

COMPETITION EVENTS GUIDE

# Humorous Interpretation

NATIONAL SPEECH & DEBATE ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL FORENSIC LEAGUE

## Basic Understandings

Humorous Interpretation, as its name indicates, is humorous. Competitors often use multi-character selections to tell relatable stories using humor as a device to connect with the audience. Think about your favorite comedian's latest stand up routine, or something funny that recently happened. Ask yourself why it's funny. Then ask yourself if that joke would be funny to, say, your mom, or great-great Uncle Joe. Humor is a complex human quirk. Each individual's sense of humor is unique. However, other aspects of humor are more universal in nature. So, when choosing an HI, it is imperative to consider not only the humorous elements of the selection, but also to keep in mind how the story itself will appeal to the audience. Not everyone will laugh at the same joke, but if a character's plight is relatable, the audience will identify with them. Humor in a Humorous Interpretation should be tasteful and motivated.

## Research

Finding an HI that's right for you may seem a little daunting. Go to your local library, visit the biographies section of a bookstore, or visit Play Scripts, Dramatists, or Samuel French online. These are just a few of the places you may find material. There are a few things to keep in mind when questing for a script.

*Strengths and limitations.* HI often requires a performer to manipulate their voice, move quickly in and out of different characters, and have a strong sense of comedic timing. Think about your vocal register when looking at a cutting. Would you be required to play characters with voices in your upper register? What characters would be played using your lower register? How many ways can you manipulate your voice? How well can you manipulate your body and facial expression to create distinct, unique characters? If you have limited physical or vocal control, it might be beneficial to chose a selection with fewer characters. Think about your abilities outside of acting: can you sing, dance, stand on your head? Could those skills be utilized in your performance? Be aware of how you can showcase your unique skill set.

What makes you laugh? This is your piece, your performance, and your interpretation. Find writing you think is hilarious. If it makes you laugh, and you enjoy performing it, then your audience will enjoy it, too.

Is it honest? Is it relatable? Pick a piece with meaning. No, you don't need to be performing Tolstoy's "Family Happiness" (and honestly, that's probably a bad idea); however, you should choose literature that speaks to a universal truth. As performers, we not only look to entertain our audience, but to engage them in meaningful communication through performance.

## Structural Components

Structure of an Interp (taken from *Interpretation of Literature, Bringing Words to Life*).

TEASER • 0:00 – 1:30
*Previews the topic and mood of the selection*

INTRO • 1:30 – 3:00
*Explains the purpose of the performance*

EXPOSITION • 3:00 – 3:30
*Introduces characters and setting*

INCITING INCIDENT • 3:30 – 4:00
*Sends the conflict into motion*

RISING ACTION • 4:00 – 7:30
*Complicates the conflict*

CLIMAX • 7:30 – 8:30
*Emotional peak of the performance*

FALLING ACTION • 8:30 – 9:30
*Resolves the conflict*

*Cutting.* As with any interp, it's important to cut for performance. Read the dialogue aloud, and remove excessive language that does not build toward the story you are trying to tell. Play with comedic elements, like three part jokes, or reviving jokes from earlier in the cutting. Think about how you will physically depict the story. The visual element of HI lends itself to great, creative jokes. Think about how you will use the imagined environment of your HI to tell a joke.

*Blocking.* The technical aspect of HI requires complete physical control. Transitioning, or "popping" between characters should be practiced. These transitions are fast paced, and require strong physical stamina. Consider how you can tell the story physically. Get in front of a mirror and break down the movements. Increase speed as you build muscle memory. Play with levels and focal points.

*Characters.* Each character should be uniquely distinct with vocal, physical, and emotional choices carefully thought out. Characters in HI tend to stretch the limits of reality. However, be careful to craft characters to which the audience can relate. One of the great challenges with HI is the ability to craft a performance with different levels. Remember that in all good comedy, there is the well-adjusted character who stands in stark contrast to the humorous characters. Find the balance in your selection. Think about the proximity characters would stand in relation to each other, and illustrate the difference by using various physical levels.

*Introduction.* An introduction explains the purpose of the performance. Typically, in HI, the introduction will start off with a joke relevant to the theme of the piece. The performer will then relate the joke back to the theme, and why the piece is relevant to the audience before returning to the performance.

## Organizing

You only have ten minutes in an HI to tell a story and make an audience laugh. Pick your moments accordingly. Decide what jokes you want to play up, and what parts of your story will contrast the humorous moments. As you finalize your cutting, read it aloud to help make informed decisions about characterization and blocking.

Beat out your script. This means reading the script aloud and making notes as you go. As you read aloud, use symbols to indicate shorter pauses "/" or longer pauses "//." Consider the emotionality behind each line. Ask yourself what the motivation for the characters' actions are. Use this to influence blocking choices. Make sure your choices are not just funny for the sake of funny, but make sense contextually in your script. Make sure you are listening for the reactions of the characters to the lines that came before. If you are doing a multi-character performance, remember that this is a dialogue, and should be treated as such.

## Practicing

Often, you'll find that if you've spent the appropriate amount of time reading, cutting, and analyzing a script, memorization will be an easier process. Here are some things to keep in mind, to help simplify the process:

First, our brains are a muscle. The more time you practice memorizing, or simply memorize things, the better you become. Often, performers, take more time in the beginning of a season to commit a script to memory than they do at the end of the competitive season. Memorizing is a process.

Next, memorization is physical. Staring at a script, re-reading the lines in your head will not be beneficial. Memorize the script with the intent to perform it. Type up a clean version with only your finalized text and blocking. Then, tape it to the wall and actively memorize. Read the lines aloud moving with them as indicated by your cutting. It is helpful to memorize a scene at a time, building off of the scene that came before. Remember that dialogue is motivated by the line that came before it. Everything is a response, or reaction. Conceptualize your script this way to decrease the time it takes to memorize your performance.

As you develop a physical sense of the piece, consider how you will express ideas without words. Much of communication is nonverbal; therefore, it makes sense that some of the funniest aspects of an HI are the non-verbal reactions of characters to the events happening in the performance.

Once memorized, you and your coach can then build off of the choices you've made for your characters.

Adjustments to blocking, characterization, and line delivery can be made. Often, performing in front of a coach will help determine whether or not your jokes are landing, or getting a reaction from the audience. Practicing in front of a mirror or videotaping your performance is also a great way to 'see' what the audience sees when you perform. Play with characters. HI is all about experimenting with what makes your audience laugh. Don't be afraid to act ridiculous to get a laugh. Try something new until you get the desired reaction, and then solidify the joke through practice.

## Performance Tips

It may sound cliche, but confidence is key! If you've put the work in, you should feel confident in the product you've created. Go into that round with your head held high, ready to show the world what you've got! Trust what you and your coach created. Do what you practiced, and if you feel compelled to "try something new," review it with your coach beforehand. Consistency is also vital. It's hard to evaluate what to change in practice if your performance in the round is completely different than what you've been working on for the past few weeks.

Pay attention to other performers. Smile, and be a warm, inviting audience member. There is nothing worse than performing and having an audience that either stone faces you or won't look you in the eye. Each round is 60 minutes. Ten of those involve you performing, the other 50 are for you to listen and learn.

Keep a notebook for between rounds. Sometimes, another person's performance will inspire you, and it's a good idea to have a notebook handy to write down new ideas. When you review your ballots after the tournament, you can go back through your notebook and compare your ballots to your notes.

Between rounds, figure out what room you will be performing in next. Congratulate your competitors on a good performance after the round ends, and make friends during downtime. Be gracious, and keep criticisms of other performers to yourself, even if someone else tries to start a negative conversation.

## Resources

A great source is *Interpretation of Literature—Bringing Words to Life* by Travis Kiger and Ganer Newman. They cover cutting, characterization, blocking, and the structure of a story. Additionally, if this is your first time doing Humorous Interpretation, go watch a final round of HI! Observe the rounds not only as entertainment, but be aware of effective cutting, characterization, and blocking. Ask yourself, how can I apply similar techniques to my performance? How can I build off of what this performer is doing? The best way to learn HI, outside of actively doing it, is by watching and learning from other performers.

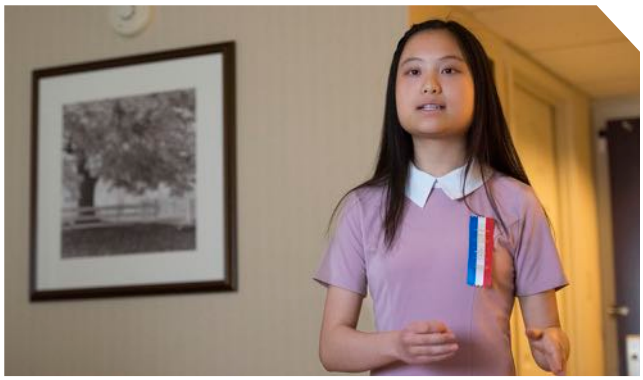
Member students and coaches at NSDA schools can access these materials and more at **www.speechanddebate.org/resources**. Use the filter function on the left hand side of the page to find resources specific to Interp and Humorous Interp.

AN INTRODUCTION TO

# Impromptu

*Impromptu at a Glance*

NATIONAL SPEECH & DEBATE ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL FORENSIC LEAGUE



## Event Description

**Impromptu** (IMP) is a public speaking event where students have seven minutes to select a topic, brainstorm their ideas, outline, and deliver a speech. The speech is given without notes and uses an introduction, body, and conclusion. The speech can be lighthearted or serious. It can be based upon prompts that range from nursery rhymes, current events, celebrities, organizations, and more.

## Considerations for Impromptu

Impromptu tests a student's ability to analyze a prompt, process their thoughts, organize the points of the speech, and deliver them in a clear, coherent manner. Students' logic is extremely important. They must be able to take an abstract idea, such as a fortune from a fortune cookie, and put together a speech that has a thesis and supporting information.

## Traits of Successful Impromptu Performers

When considering what event you should choose, or which direction to point a student when selecting an event, here are some traits of successful Impromptu students to keep in mind:

- Dynamic verbal delivery skills
- Engages an audience
- Quick thinker
- Creative
- Logical thinker
- Broad knowledge base

## Samples of Past Impromptu Prompts

Impromptu topics will have a theme each round. Some examples of these themes include:

- Political quotations
- Music lyrics
- Historical women
- Mythical creatures
- Beach day objects
- Movie quotations

**Learn More!** The National Speech & Debate Association is the leading provider of competitive and educational resources to aid students and coaches as they explore our competitive events. For Impromptu, we have videos of past national final round performances at the middle and high school levels. We have a full-length textbook on Extemporaneous Speaking in addition to many other general resources, activities for class or practice, and more. Visit **www.speechanddebate.org** for more information.

## Find Your Voice

*"Impromptu speaking is like jumping into public speaking head first. It forced quick confidence and helped me grow as a speaker by giving me the skills to prioritize my decision making to prepare an organized and meaningful speech."*

— **Alex Baranosky, Association Alum**

# Impromptu

## Basic Understandings

Impromptu is a limited preparation public speaking event that involves topics ranging from proverbs to abstract words to events to famous people. Each round, students will draw three topics from an envelope containing prompts that relate to a specific topic, and they will choose one prompt. Students will have a total of seven minutes to prepare, memorize, and perform their speech.

As there are so many different topic areas for Impromptu prompts that may be used, it is important to observe rounds to see what prompts have been used in the past. The Association has final round videos of Impromptu from both the high school and middle school level to review.

## Preparation

Though Impromptu prompts rarely require vast amounts of research to understand, students may consult published books, magazines, newspapers, and journal articles that they bring with them to preparation. These materials must be originals or photocopies with no annotation, underlining, writing, or highlighting. Students may not bring outlines or pre-written speeches into the preparation room.

Students would benefit from keeping up with news and current events to maintain a level of background knowledge that may be useful on a variety of topics. Depending on the tournament, the topic areas for each round may be released prior to the competition. If so, students should work with their teammates to read and gather materials on those topics. Researching examples or brainstorming anecdotes that may be relevant for those topic areas can be a good way to prepare for potential Impromptu speeches.

## Organizing

In an Impromptu round, the speaker draws three prompts from an envelope. After drawing the three prompts, the student must select one and begin brainstorming their ideas for the speech. In total, a student has seven minutes. This seven minutes may be divided up by the student however they see fit. For example, they could brainstorm and outline their ideas for three minutes and then deliver a four-minute speech. Alternatively, they could brainstorm and outline for one minute and speak for six minutes. There is no minimum amount of time required for brainstorming and no minimum amount of time for speaking.

Students should work to develop the best possible structure and reasoning in as short amount of time as possible. While it may appear more impressive to speak longer, if the ideas aren't clear or well developed, it can detract from the overall performance. Conversely, a well-thought out but short speech restricts a student's ability to spend adequate time analyzing the prompt. Therefore, students should work to strike a balance between preparation and speaking.

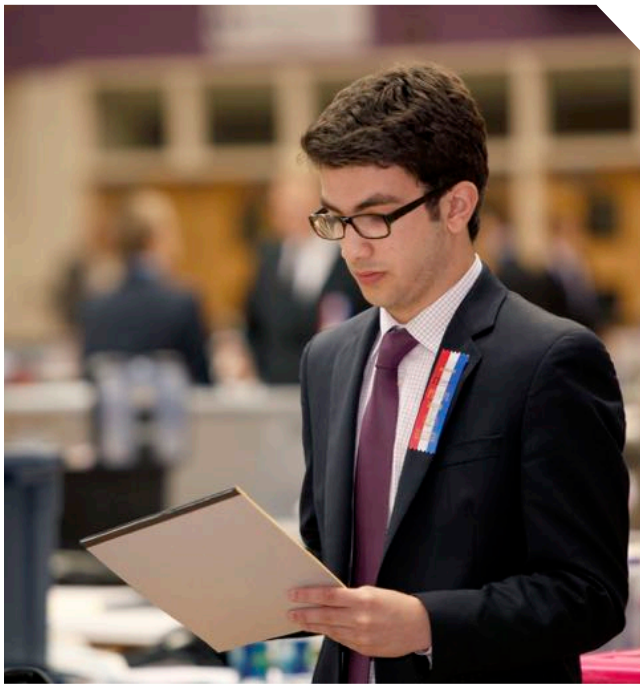
## Structural Components

An Impromptu speech typically follows a basic structure in which a student presents an introduction, body, and conclusion.

*The introduction* should provide adequate context for the trajectory of the speech. If a student has illustrated an example, conveyed their chosen prompt, and provided a thesis statement for the speech, they have created a structurally sound introduction!

*The body* of the speech commonly explores two or three areas of the prompt in greater depth. For example, if a student's thesis focuses on cultivating innovation, they would likely introduce two effective ways to do so and use examples to prove their point.

*The conclusion* wraps up the speech. It will tie back to the attention grabbing device from the introduction, reiterate the prompt, and review the main points of the speech.



## Performance Tips

Impromptu speeches are unique in that they require effective organization in a short period of time. Make sure speeches have a clear structure, are using transitions between each part of the speech, and follow a logical trajectory. Additionally, judges will evaluate the quality of an Impromptu speech's analysis. Does the student directly address the prompt? Does the student develop justifications for their ideas and establish significance to those points? Finally, though Impromptu is a test of a student's ability to think on their feet and present a logical, organized speech, delivery skills are still important! Students should continue to focus on their voice, movement, and expression.

At a tournament, keep a notebook for between rounds. Sometimes, another person's performance will inspire you, and it's a good idea to have a notebook handy to write down new ideas for organization or anecdotes. It's also nice to know who you competed against in each round. This way, you have a better understanding of who your competition is. When you review your ballots after the tournament, you can go back through your notebook and compare your ballots to your notes. Between rounds, figure out what room you will be performing in next. Congratulate your competitors on a good performance after the round ends, and make friends during downtime. Be gracious, and keep criticisms of other performers to yourself, even if someone else tries to start a negative conversation.

## Resources

Check out Impromptu resources at **www.speechanddebate.org**. Final round performances from the middle school and high school National Tournament can help get a feel for the different types of Impromptu prompts as well as provide examples of successful speech organization. The Extemporaneous Speaking textbook also shares ideas for practicing speech outlining and idea generation during preparation. Finally, sample Impromptu prompts from previous National Tournaments are available online to use for practice.

AN INTRODUCTION TO

# Informative Speaking

*Informative Speaking at a Glance*

NATIONAL SPEECH & DEBATE ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL FORENSIC LEAGUE

## Event Description

Students deliver a self-written, ten-minute speech on a topic of their choosing. Limited in their ability to quote words directly, **Informative Speaking** competitors craft a speech using evidence, logic, and optional visual aids. All topics must be informative in nature; the goal is to educate, not to advocate. The speech is delivered from memory.

## Considerations for Selecting an Informative Topic

Students who write Informatives should think seriously about a topic that is of personal interest to them. Given students may be doing Informative for the entirety of the school year, they will want to find a topic that they can keep fresh and engaging for extended periods of time. Additionally, Informative speakers should consider topics that are current and relatable to audience members. Informative is an ongoing process! The last speech that is performed will never be a "final" draft. There is always room for revision, so pick a topic that student's will enthusiastically explore and reflect upon during the season.

## Traits of Successful Informative Performers

When considering what topic students should choose, or which direction to point a student when selecting an event, here are some traits of successful Informative speakers to keep in mind:

- Driven
- Well-spoken
- Enthusiastic
- Logical
- Personable
- Curious

## Examples of Potential Informative Topics

- Social Security
- Urban Agriculture
- Body Language
- New Medicines/Treatment Plans
- Holographic Technology
- Senses
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**Learn More!** The National Speech & Debate Association is the leading provider of competitive and educational resources to aid students and coaches as they explore our competitive events. For **Informative Speaking**, we are developing a number of helpful resources—including live and recorded webinars designed to introduce foundational and advanced concepts in public speaking; videos from champion coaches; and much more more! Take advantage of the amazing benefits of being a member by using our resources to help advance yourself in competitive speech and debate activities. Visit **www.speechanddebate.org** for more information.

## Find Your Voice

*"Informative helped me grow as both a writer and performer. The event allowed me to explore a diverse range of topics that would have never worked in Oratory. You'll learn how to discern the line between what is and is not persuasive - and focus solely on educating and entertaining the audience!"*

— **Kevin King, Association Alum**

COMPETITION EVENTS GUIDE

# Informative Speaking

## Basic Understandings

Informative is a speech written by the student with the intent to inform the audience on a topic of significance. Informative gives students the unique opportunity to showcase their perpsonality while educating the audience.

An Informative is not simply an essay about the topic—it is a well researched and organized presentation with evidence, logic, and sometimes humor to convey a message. Topics are varied and interesting. Whether it be a new technological advance the audience is unaware of or a new take on a concept that everyone is familiar with, Informative is the students opportunity to teach the audience. Types of topics and structure vary greatly, so talk to your coach and work out what works best for you!

While content is very important, Informative requires students to balance that content with delivery and style. Informative speakers must be articulate, engaging, and smooth with their delivery at both a vocal and physical level. Students will want to watch some rounds of other public speaking events  to determine what types of style, delivery, and content might work best for them.

The Informative speaker must also consider the audience as a vital component of the speech. What parts of the speech does the student want to spend the most time developing? Are there parts of the students topic that might take more time to explain? How does humor play a role with regard to the topic? As style and content go hand-in-hand, it's vital that students think carefully about their message, style, and composition of the audience as they construct the speech.

## Research

Informative research is as diverse as the topics students select. Informative research might include newspaper and magazine articles, academic journals, non-fiction books, interviews, and credible digital content. Depending upon the topic, it might be possible that a student's own meaningful experiences may be in the speech.

The key to researching an effective Informative is to guide the audience through the topic. Find research that helps broadly define the topic and then begin narrowing the scope. Keep track of the questions that arise while researching; those are likely the same questions the audience will have, and finding those answers can help make the difference.

Source materials need to be incorporated throughout the speech with oral citation. The citation style varies with the type of source. For example, students should provide author and title of books, although some students will also provide the source credibility of the author. The name of the source and date may be sufficient for newspaper articles. It is important to recognize that whether the material is quoted directly from the source, or paraphrased, sources must be cited. When drafting the Informative, indicate direct quotations from sources using both quotation marks and some other marking such as highlighting or underlining in the script. Remember: only 150 directly quoted words may be used. Students, choose quoted text wisely. Once all of the research is gathered, the sources should be compiled into a works cited page.

## Structural Components

After research has been conducted, the student can compose the speech. Let's go back to the idea of questions as the guide to the speech. Based upon the research and the student's own thoughts on the topic, the student needs to craft a thesis statement. The student should outline two to four major arguments to support the thesis. Argument's have a unique role in Informative Speaking. Since the speech is not persuasive the goal of the argument is not to advocate for change, instead, the goal is to inform the audience. Thus, arguments are used

to establish the significance of the topic or to argue that the topic merits discussion.

Arguments are made up of three important components. First, a student must clearly establish a claim. This is a declarative statement that establishes the point the student sets out to justify in the speech. Next, the student must clearly establish why the argument is valid.

This is known as the warrant for an argument. This means that Informative speakers go beyond just asserting their claims to explaining why their claims should be accepted by the audience. Finally, the student must provide an impact for the argument. Why does the argument matter? Who is affected by this argument?

Now let's pull all of this together. Informative speeches consist of an introduction, body (with 2-4 major points), and a conclusion. Students can group their research to support each element of the speech. For example, if the student finds a great personal narrative from a source which might grab the audience's attention, it can be marked for the intro. The process continues until each portion of the speech has evidence that backs up the claim, warrant, and impacts for each argument.

## Organizing

Students should start with the body of the speech which features the major arguments and ideas. Students should take their main points with supporting research and decide an order. Major points might inform the audience of an issue, challenge assumptions the audience may have, or encourage the audience to visualize what the world might be like. Some questions to consider: What argument or idea makes the most logical sense to start with? What does the audience need to know or understand before they can accept later arguments? Many students want to start by writing the introduction first, but the student can't introduce a speech without understanding what is in that speech and how the arguments will be organized.

After the body of the speech has been established, the student can outline an introduction and conclusion. The introduction should engage the audience, establish the significance of the topic, transition to a thesis statement, and preview the major points that will be covered in the speech. After the body of the speech there is a conclusion which involves a restatement of the thesis, a review of the major points, and final thoughts that engage the audience and call them to action.

With a complete outline now developed, the student can write the speech section by section. It is important for the coach to review each part of the speech for consistency of style and approach. Although the speech needs to be conversational, some students will feature more formal language choices, or incorporate some type of humor throughout the speech, or take a more personal or narrative approach. There is no "right" or "wrong" voice but it needs to match the student's thoughts, ideas, and engagement with the audience.

## Practicing

Students don't have to wait until the speech is completely written to practice. Students should take sections of the speech, such as the introduction and conclusion, or one of the major points in the speech, and talk it out. An effective writing technique is for students to verbalize their thoughts, record them, and then review those recordings to see how their language sounds to the human ear. This will help the student identify what style might be most appropriate for delivery of the message. Although not all students are comfortable being recorded, their ideas, expressions, and turns of phrase can be captured while experimenting with the content.

Once the speech is written, many students struggle with memorization. This doesn't have to be the case! One effective practice technique is breaking the speech up by section or paragraph, such as their introduction, and practicing that section until it is solidly memorized. Once that section is memorized, they can move on to the next section and so on. Students can print out the speech in large type, tape it down a hallway, and read their speech aloud, complete with gestures, to reinforce memorization.

Team and family members are also extremely valuable when it comes to practicing the speech after it is

memorized. Since the audience is such a vital component of Informative, it is important to perform in front of real and varied groups. Students may seek out community groups, such as a local Rotary club, or community centers, such as a senior living facility, and perform their speeches. Students should perform as often as possible in front of an audience to help them get more comfortable before their first tournament. This also provides an excellent opportunity to see how the speech sounds to an audience and test any humor that they might want to use.

## Performance Tips

Students need to recognize that they spend only a small percentage of their time speaking and most of the tournament listening to others. While students watch the other speakers in rounds of Informative, they should take note of what is effective and what needs improvement in other students' speeches. Students can carry a notebook with them and write down thoughts about audience appeals, structure, and language used by other students. What works? What doesn't? They then can share comments with coaches after the tournament is complete and talk about how adjustments might be made to their own speeches.

Informative students need to make sure that they are excellent audience members. That means students are engaged in the round, taking notes, thinking about the arguments and analysis of others' speeches, and being responsive to the speakers. Students need to keep all of their comments about performances to themselves until after the tournament is complete as it is disrespectful to make comments with other students present, in particular critical comments about specific student performances.

After a period of time, students may become a bit bored with their speeches after delivering them over and over again. That is okay! Once the speech is written the student needs to recognize that it is not carved in stone. Making changes to the manuscript is a natural part of the process of speechwriting. After a tournament the students should take the comments on ballots and reflect upon how those comments can improve the speech content and style. Additionally, students need to be reminded that every performance is important, that there is always someone in the room who has never heard that speech before, and that they need to keep up their energy every round of every tournament. Perhaps the writing can be refreshed a bit or perhaps a section of the speech needs a bit more polish, but that should not deter student's performance for that particular audience. Every speech should be given with the same dedication and enthusiasm as the first.

## Resources

Our Intro to Public Speaking "Teacher in a Box" lessons are designed for the novice coach and students and include everything you need for a semester-long speech 1 course. Get started at **www.speechanddebate.org/intro-to-public-speaking**.

Member students and coaches at NSDA schools can access these materials and more at **www.speechanddebate.org/resources**. Use the filter function on the left hand side of the page to find resources specific to Informative Speaking.

AN INTRODUCTION TO

# Original Oratory

*Original Oratory at a Glance*

NATIONAL SPEECH & DEBATE ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL FORENSIC LEAGUE

## Event Description

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

## Considerations for Selecting an OO Topic

Students who write orations should think seriously about a topic that is of personal interest and significance to them. Given the number of weeks students may be doing Oratory, they will want to find a topic that they can keep fresh and engaging for extended periods of time. Additionally, orators should consider topics that are current and relatable to audience members. Oratory is an ongoing process! The last speech that is performed will never be a "final" draft. There is always room for revision, so pick a topic that you will enthusiastically explore and reflect upon during the season.

## Traits of Successful OO Performers

When considering what topic you should choose, or which direction to point a student when selecting an event, here are some traits of successful Orators to keep in mind:

- Creative
- Unique
- Well-spoken
- Personable
- Enthusiastic
- Process-oriented

## Examples of Past OO Topics

- Body Image
- Cultural Norms
- Distractions
- Face-to-Face Communication
- Motivation
- Negative Attention
- Over Commitment
- Sarcasm
- Self-confidence
- White Lies

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## Find Your Voice

*"The skills that I acquired from Oratory are skills most fundamental to the human condition. Oratory allowed me to advocate for what I believed in, in my words. It gave me the ability to tell my story from the stories and experiences of others. I learned the importance of organization, fact checking, word economy, along with innumerable other skills that form the foundation of great writing. Competing in Oratory gave me a unique opportunity to venture into elements of other events. Storytelling, humor, drama, spontaneity, argumentation, and research are all elements that are actively applied in Oratory. It's an event for anyone and everyone."*

— **Avi Jaggi, Association Alum**

# Original Oratory

## Basic Understandings

Original Oratory is a speech written by the student with the intent to inform or persuade the audience on a topic of significance. Oratory gives students the unique opportunity to showcase their voice and passion for their topic.

An Oratory is not simply an essay about the topic—it is a well researched and organized presentation with evidence, logic, emotional appeals, and sometimes humor to convey a message. Topics may be of a value orientation and affect people at a personal level, such as avoiding peer pressure, or they can be more of a policy orientation and ask an audience to enact particular policies or solve societal problems. As the types of structure vary widely across the country, it may be wise to ask coaches in your region what is common.

While content is very important, Oratory requires students to balance that content with delivery and style. Oratory speakers must be articulate, engaging, and smooth with their delivery at both a vocal and physical level. Students will want to watch some rounds of Oratory to determine what types of style, delivery, and content might work best for them.

The Oratory speaker must also consider the audience as a vital component of the speech. What does the student want the audience to think, feel, believe, or be motivated to accomplish? Some students want the judges and fellow students to change attitudes. Others may simply want the audience to think about ideas though a different lens by challenging norms. As style and content go hand-in-hand, it's vital that students think carefully about their message, style, and composition of the audience as they construct the speech.

## Research

Oratory research is as diverse as the topics students select. Oratory research might include newspaper and magazine articles, academic journals, non-fiction books, interviews, and credible digital content. Depending upon the topic, it might be possible that a student's own meaningful experiences may be in the speech.

The key to researching a powerful Oratory is to start with the message the student wants to deliver. Students will look to more personal and emotional styles to motivate the audience in a values based Oratory. Policy oratories may do more research related to government and policy, as well as organizational and community perspectives.

Source materials need to be incorporated throughout the speech with oral citation. The citation style varies with the type of source. For example, students should provide author and title of books, although some students will also provide the source credibility of the author. The name of the source and date may be sufficient for newspaper articles. It is important to recognize that whether the material is quoted directly from the source or paraphrased, sources must be cited. When drafting the Oratory, indicate direct quotations from sources using both quotation marks and some other marking such as highlighting or underlining. Remember: only 150 directly quoted words may be used. Choose your quoted text wisely. Once all the research is gathered, the sources should all be compiled into a works cited page.

## Structural Components

After research has been conducted, the student can develop the composition of the speech. Let's go back to the idea of a message as the guide to the speech. Based upon the research and the student's own thoughts on the topic, the student needs to craft a thesis statement. The student should outline two to four major arguments to support the thesis.

Arguments are made up of three important components. First, a student must clearly establish a claim. This is a declarative statement that establishes the point the student sets out to justify in the speech. Next, the student must clearly establish why the argument is valid.

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## Organizing

Students should start with the body of the speech which features the major arguments and ideas. Students should take their main points with supporting research and decide an order. Major points might inform the audience of an issue, challenge assumptions the audience may have, compel the audience to make a personal change, or encourage the audience to visualize what the world might be like. Some questions to consider: What argument or idea makes the most logical sense to start with? What does the audience need to know or understand before they can accept later arguments? Which point most persuasively calls the audience to action? Many students want to start by writing the introduction first, but the student can't introduce a speech without understanding what is in that speech and how the arguments will be organized.

After the body of the speech has been established, the student can outline an introduction and conclusion. The introduction should engage the audience, establish the significance of the topic, transition to a thesis statement, and preview the major points that will be covered in the speech. After the body of the speech there is a conclusion which involves a restatement of the thesis, a review of the major points, and final thoughts that engage the audience and call them to action.

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Team and family members are also extremely valuable when it comes to practicing the speech after it is memorized. Since the audience is such a vital component of Oratory, it is important to perform in front of real and varied groups. Students may seek out community groups, such as a local Rotary club, or community centers, such as a senior living facility, and perform their speeches. Students should perform as often as possible in front of an audience to help them get more comfortable before their first tournament. This also provides an excellent

opportunity to see how the speech sounds to an audience and test any humor that they might want to use.

## Performance Tips

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Member students and coaches at NSDA schools can access these materials and more at **www.speechanddebate.org/resources**. Use the filter function on the left hand side of the page to find resources specific to Original Oratory.

# Original Spoken Word Poetry

*Getting Started with Original Spoken Word Poetry*

**Original Spoken Word Poetry** is a new supplemental event where students will write and perform original poetry. Original Spoken Word Poetry is poetry written for performance to express ideas, experience, or emotion through the creative arrangement of words according to their sound, their rhythm, their meaning. The maximum time limit is 5 minutes with a 30-second grace period. The delivery must be memorized, and no book or script may be used. No more than 150 words of the original poetry may be direct quotation from any other speech or writing, and such quotations must be identified in a printed copy of the speech. An introduction is permitted, but not required. A successful performer will craft a piece that elicits critical thought, reflection, or emotion. As opposed to traditional Poetry, Spoken Word Poetry is created to be performed aloud and may feature rhythmic flow, vivid imagery, word play, gestures, lyrical elements, and repetition.

Spoken Word is special because it allows the performer to pull from generations of oral tradition and performance. Spoken Word combines elements of rap, hip hop, storytelling, rhyme, repetition, improvisation, and word play. It allows the performer the liberty to tell their story creatively. Spoken Word can be about any topic the performer wishes to speak about, and it often highlights issues that directly affect the performer like social justice, race, politics, community, inequality, gender, identity, or mental health. At its core, it's all about heart and the emotions and opinions of the performer.

## Getting Started

### *Choose a Topic*

The more meaningful your topic is to you, the more powerful the message will be. When selecting a topic, start broad. The overall theme could be family, but the message or story could be about a particular aspect of your family such as the dynamics or love or altercations that exist within your family. Spoken Word should embody your unique experiences and outlook on life. Don't focus on what others might think about the issue, only what you feel about the issue and what you have lived through. Everything you experienced is valid, so put it into your poem. Spoken Word isn't about other people, it's about YOU and YOUR emotions and reality.

### *Find the Gateway*

The **gateway line** is the line that tells your audience what the poem is about. It's not always the first line, but often it is in the very beginning so you can spend the rest of the poem reinforcing, supporting, and expanding on the issue or theme. The gateway line is the line that the rest of the poem stems from, so it should be enticing to the audience. Think of it like your hook or bait for the audience, and the rest of the poem is the actual fishing and reeling in the audience. When you watch the video, pay attention to how it begins. Poets will typically give you just a hint of the overall topic. Sometimes they connect to a motif in the poem. **Motifs** are repetitive details that add to the work's larger meaning. There can be several motifs, but typically the poet picks one emotion—one word or one line that represents that emotion—and repeats it throughout the work so the emotion becomes ingrained in you until you feel and experience the poem as the poet does. A great example of this is in the poem Black Privilege by Crystal Valentine. The gateway line "Black privilege is the hung elephant swinging in the room" sets up the overall motif of what Black privilege is and causes you to keep thinking about that beginning line

throughout the poem, which only enhances the motif and its implications for the larger meaning of the poem.

### *Brainstorm and Outline*

You want the audience to experience what you're experiencing. You are verbally crafting a scene, so WRITE VIVIDLY. Focus on sensory details. It's not just about hearing the poem, it's about feeling the poem. Describe what you felt, heard, saw, tasted, and smelled in order to create impactful, memorable images that will help the audience live the experience through you. Collect every detail you can remember and then write them all down. Even though this is Spoken Word, you need to have the poem in a form that you can manipulate. The poem may not be the same each time you perform, but it's details and message should be. The best way to achieve that is to write the bare bones out and then add in your performance details as you're speaking.

### *Utilize Wordplay*

**Wordplay** is a clever mixture of pictures, emotions, and sounds often used in Spoken Word to make the poem more dynamic. It can enhance the meaning of the piece to show that the piece is not just about an issue, but applicable to a bigger picture topic. Wordplay gives the poem a more sophisticated and creative feel that draws the audience in, but be careful not to use so much wordplay that the message becomes muddled. Reading your poem through the lens of pure meaning rather than the poem as a whole will help determine if there is too much wordplay.

### *Focus on Sound*

Spoken Word is meant to be read aloud, so the way it sounds is just as important as the actual words you're speaking. Utilizing poetic devices such as **onomatopoeia** (using words that imitate sounds), **alliteration** (use of the same consonant at the beginning of each word), **assonance** (the repetition of similar vowels in successive words), and especially **rhyming** (correspondence in the final sounds of two or more lines) and **repetition** (the act of saying or repeating a word or phrase more than once) can affect the feel of the words you write and enhance the sound of the words when spoken. Repeating phrases and lines create the motif and allow the performer to really drive home the message of the poem. As you write your piece, read it out loud as much as possible to gauge how it sounds. It should move you. When you speak the words, you should be able to feel it in every part of your body and soul.

### *Emphasize Your Message*

A **power line** is an impactful line that sticks with your audience long after you've performed your poem. The power line should emphasize the most important concepts and should be the moment you want the audience to feel the most. You should have several power lines throughout the piece to drive home the message, especially as you reach the climax of the poem. One power line should absolutely be at the end of your poem. The last line should be something that really sticks with the audience and makes them stop and think about your message well past the end of the poem. I Won't Write Your Obituary by Nora Cooper *(EXPLICIT LANGUAGE)* is an exemplary example of this. The last line of this poem pulls together all the aspects of the poem into one line and leaves you with raw, unbridled emotion.

### *Welcome Humor*

Don't be afraid to use humor, even with serious subjects. Humor is a way for a lot of people to cope, and the audience will be able to connect with you. Humor also produces levels in your poem and makes it more dynamic. Humor can often break up the serious tone and give you a reprieve from the emotional toll a poem can take on you and the audience.

## Skill Building

### *Create Cohesion*

Your poem should tell a story. That doesn't mean it should be narrative, but the poem should be told in a way that the audience sees the big picture. Just because it's Spoken

Word, with expression of emotion and character, doesn't mean it shouldn't have a point. As you write, try to express your message through a story arc. Tell the audience what happened, vividly, but tell it in a fluid way.

### *Practice Pacing and Intonation*

Pacing and tone are skills that have to be practiced over and over again to make them natural. Every time you write, even if you never intend to perform the piece, you should say it out loud to practice how it would sound. What emotions are you trying to convey? At what speed should you speak? Should you be soft and heartfelt or loud and furious? Should you be speeding through to express the franticness of the words, or should you be taking the words slowly and pausing in abundance? These things take time to master. You'll only know what feels right once you speak it into existence.

### *Write Repeatedly*

The best way to improve your poems is to write as many as possible and perform every single one, even if it's just for yourself. Practice brainstorming topics or ideas and then breathe life into them by speaking about them. Then write down those thoughts and turn them into one meaningful, cohesive poem that you can practice and perform. Much of what you write will never make it into a final poem. Write it down anyway. Follow the path of your experiences and emotions and see where they take you.

Don't forget to set the poem aside and come back to it with fresh eyes. Working nonstop on a poem until you feel like it's finished can actually hurt it. Stop and put it away, then come back and revise. Once you step back, you'll be able to get a feel of the poem as an audience member, not just a writer, because you're experiencing it all over again as if for the first time.

### *Find the Flow*

Spoken Word is all about emotion. If you forget a word or get caught up in the moment, don't be afraid to improvise. Go with what feels right for the poem. Speak your truth no matter what and make the poem flow at all costs. Freestyle is one of the most important elements of Spoken Word, and being able to perform what fits even if it's not what's written is an important skill to master.

### *Memorize*

One major aspect of performing your Spoken Word poem is to be completely memorized. If you're struggling to remember the words or reading from a piece of paper, you lose a huge part of the performance aspect of Spoken Word. Spoken Word is about feeling, the more you struggle to get through or spend time reading the less emotion you're able to incorporate into the performance.

### *Maintain Eye Contact*

One of the most important things about performing your Spoken Word poem is to maintain eye contact with the audience, whether they are in person or through a camera. Eye contact is one of the main ways you connect with your audience. When you break eye contact, the emotional connection is broken. Essentially, the moment you're having is gone. When performing, hold eye contact for an entire thought, and then you can move on. Avoid scanning the room trying to make eye contact with everyone. Make meaningful eye contact by selecting a few people and hold those moments with them to really convey the emotion and meaning.

### *Project*

When you're performing Spoken Word, words sometimes get drowned out in a room. The tone and emotion can affect volume and, as a result, it is incredibly important to project your voice. This does not mean you have to be loud or yell. It means you speak from your diaphragm and make every word hold weight in your voice. When you speak from your diaphragm, you should feel your stomach expand, and your abdominal muscles should support every breath you take. Make sure you're standing or sitting up straight unless blocking dictates otherwise. Concentrate on breathing. Every breath should come from your stomach, and it should contract and expand as you breathe and speak.

### *Enunciate*

Saying every word is important because every word is carefully chosen to enhance the flow and sound and meaning of the poem. Skipping over a single word can completely change the poem by messing up the flow and sound. This is especially important if your pacing is fast to express the emotion. In order to convey the meaning, not just the emotion, you need to hear every word.

### *Utilize Expression and Gestures*

Expressions are not just limited to voice. Your face and body should represent the tone and meaning behind your words. Facial expressions are especially important. The use of your eyes and eyebrows can tell an entire story without even uttering a word, so utilize those assets to enhance the emotions you're conveying.

Make your body as open as possible. Don't be afraid to be big and bold. Let your gestures emphasize your emotions. Don't over gesture; let them flow naturally from your body. Your body is an accessory to the poem. Gestures should complement the other aspects of your piece. As your body expresses emotion, your voice should, too—and, in turn, the emotion in your voice should match what your body is doing. If your tone is timid, your movements should be small and shy. If you're being loud and overtly expressive, your movements should be big and firm.

### *Evaluation*

In supplemental events at the National Tournament, student performances will be evaluated by judges based on their performance, vocalization, and originality.

## Resources

Find sample Spoken Word performances to get started and tools for constructing your own piece in our Spoken Word Starter Kit. Or build your skills by checking out pieces from peers in final round videos. Access resources at **www.speechanddebate.org**.

AN INTRODUCTION TO

# Poetry

*Poetry at a Glance*

photo: Sur la Lune Photography

## Event Description

Using a selection or selections of literature, students provide an interpretation of Poetry (POE) with a time limit of five minutes, including introduction. 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. Students must use a manuscript in Poetry, which typically consists of a small three-ring binder with page protectors. Reading from a book or magazine is prohibited. Binders are available for purchase in the NSDA Store.

## Considerations for Selecting Poetic Literature

Students in Poetry Interpretation may choose literature on topics that are serious, humorous, non-linear, ethereal, or thought-provoking. The key is to choose poems that work for the individual student. Poetry collections, often referred to as anthologies, or a single long-form poem may be selected. If a student chooses to perform a program of different poems, the individual poems may come from one or multiple sources. Considerations for an appropriate piece include the student's personality, maturity, physical and vocal performance range, and school standards.

## Traits of Successful Poetry Performers

When considering what event you should choose, or which direction to point a student, here are some traits of successful Poetry students to keep in mind:

- Expressive and artistic
- Appreciates language
- Excellent verbal and physical control
- Emotional maturity
- Enjoys reading and performing
- Confident
- Engages an audience

## Examples of Past Poetry Titles

- *Revolting Rhymes* by Roald Dahl
- *Soda Jerk* by Cynthia Rylant
- *Where the Sidewalk Ends* by Shel Silverstein
- *Prince Charming* by Cris Gibson
- *Season of Tears* by Adonis
- *Blood Dazzler* by Patricia Smith

**Learn More!** The National Speech & Debate Association is the leading provider of competitive and educational resources to aid students and coaches as they explore our competitive events. For Poetry Interpretation, we have videos of past national final round performances at the middle and high school levels. We have a full-length textbook on Oral Interpretation of Literature. We also have many other interpretation resources, such as webinars, activities for class or practice, and more!

## Find Your Voice

*When all words fail to express what you want to say, Poetry has the kind of language that can. It's a beautiful challenge that you can take in any direction, composing an arrangement that speaks to you yet also creates discussion among your audience. When you nail that performance, it's the best feeling in the world."*

**— Allison Macknick, Association Alum**

# Poetry

## Basic Understandings

Poetry is characterized by writing that conveys ideas, experiences, and emotions through language and expression. Often poetry is very creative in terms of vocabulary and composition. While poetry may tell a story or develop a character, more often poetry's focus on language and form are designed to elicit critical thought, reflection, or emotion. Students may choose what the National Speech & Debate Association refers to as traditional poetry, which often has a formal meter or rhyme scheme, or nontraditional poetry, which often has a rhythmic flow but lacks formal rhyme or meter (examples include spoken word or slam poetry).

As there are so many different types of poetry that can be performed, it is important to observe rounds to see what other students and teams are using. The Association has final rounds of Poetry from both the high school and middle school level to review. Local and regional tournaments may vary in their selection of poetry to perform.

## Research

Begin by looking for a source. In Poetry, poems may come from one source or multiple sources. When looking for Poetry Interpretation, start with what the student knows—what types of literature do they enjoy? What types of themes or ideas can they relate to? Poetry collections, often called anthologies, are very prominent in bookstores or libraries. There are so many to choose from that a student can feel overwhelmed with the abundance of options. Thus, having an idea of themes or topics of interest might lead students to choose a specific collection to review. For example, if the student enjoys learning about cultures and customs, there are many poetry anthologies from various parts of the world that communicate a wide range of experiences. Other collections include themes on motherhood, love, loss—there is even a collection of outlaw poetry!

In addition, many prominent authors who write books or essays may also have written poetry on a range of topics or issues of interest. Thus, conducting a search for authors in addition to specific topics, themes, or pieces is advisable. Many online reading sites offer suggestions for authors or pieces based upon interests. Enter poems the students like and other recommendations will appear. The opportunities truly are limitless!

Read reviews of potential poetry pieces to help narrow the choices. Scanning poetry collections quickly and efficiently is often the best way to process significant amounts of material. Read a few poems aloud to get a feel for how the poetry sounds. Ask the student the following questions: Is an accent or specific vocal quality called for in the literature? Is the theme something a student can relate to? Is the language accessible to the student? Is the language appropriate for oral interpretation? Some poetry is meant to be read or visualized instead of being performed. Also keep in mind that some poetry collections contain very vivid material that may not be appropriate for all ages.

In addition to the above considerations, remember that it is important for the student to perform material that they connect with and is a match for their style and personality. Some students and coaches might want the student to challenge their weaknesses, but in competitive speech activities it is often best to focus on the students' strengths at a young age, especially as they learn the creative process of selecting, cutting, and performing literature. If a student identifies good poetry that isn't a match for that particular student, consider setting it to the side to help out a teammate who might be better suited to the material.

photo: Sur la Lune Photography

## Structural Components

Your *cutting* is the five-minute collection of poems or a single poem you are performing. The cutting is how the student has arranged the poem(s) based upon the themes/ideas expressed. Your cutting may look something like this (taken from *Interpretation of Literature, Bringing Words to Life*). *Note that these times are approximations.

TEASER • 0:00 – 0:30

*Previews the topic, theme, and mood through selected poems. Teasers are not required.*

*Example:*
*Poem #1 (15 seconds)*
*Poem #2 (15 seconds)*

INTRO • 0:30-1:00

*The student, in their own words, discusses the literature. Must be memorized and include titles and authors.*

EXPOSITION • 1:00-2:30

*Develops all of the pieces, themes, and ideas.*

*Example:*
*Poem #2 (20 seconds)*
*Poem #1 (25 seconds)*
*Poem #3 (20 seconds)*
*Poem #2 (15 seconds)*

BUILD TO CLIMAX / CLIMAX • 3:30-4:30

*Poetry changes pace, tone, volume as it builds. Creates emotional peak of the performance. Student continues to go from one poem to the next.*

RESOLUTION • 4:30-5:00

*Poetry changes pace, tone, volume as it pulls back. Concludes the major themes and ideas with the end of one or more poems.*

*Blocking* is a term used to describe movement in a performance. Sometimes blocking is expressive in nature, symbolizing how a character is feeling emotionally, while at other times blocking denotes events that are occurring in the imagined space. Keep in mind that movement should always be motivated by elements in the text or found within a poem. Blocking for the sake of blocking is not necessary, and in many tournaments there are specific rules for how much movement, if any, is allowed. Those performances emphasize vocal or other nonverbal forms of communication.

Blocking is one type of *nonverbal communication*, which may also include gestures, facial expressions, posture, and eye contact. Much of oral interpretation is contained in the nonverbal elements of performance as tone, setting, mood, and character all can be established through various physical representations.

## Organizing

Cutting Poetry is a challenging process as many poets compose their material with language and style in which cutting one part of a poem affects the entire piece. Poetry that is organized by verse or stanza with clear patterns of language and style should be carefully considered. Poetry participants may cut out an entire section of a poem for time limitations, for example, but will not want to modify the words within a stanza nor eliminate individual lines that affect the rhythm or meter.

Once you have your cutting, take the time to "beat" out your script. This means reading the script aloud and making notes as you go. As you read aloud, use symbols to indicate shorter pauses "/" or longer pauses "//." Consider the emotional qualities behind each line. Consider how the lines affect your verbal and nonverbal communication.

Whether the poem has a formal structure and rhyme pattern or is free verse, it is important to examine the conventions within the poetry selections and determine what to emphasize during the performance. For example, rhyme patterns provide flow for the poetry, but can also call attention to themselves, as students anticipate the rhyme and hit the beat hard. Performances may fall into predictable patterns as a result. Students should pay special attention to repetition and decide whether to repeat the words in the same fashion each time or vary their vocal qualities.

*Bookwork* is the use of the manuscript within oral interpretation. The bookwork can be very basic, such as closing the book during the introduction and conclusion, as well as turning pages with each change of poem. Other students will have more extensive bookwork, including page turns to express dramatic moments or changes in tone, or holding the script to represent an imaginary property, such as a photo album.

Indicate potential choices for blocking, bookwork, and rhythm/meter of your script, as needed, while developing the Poetry Interpretation.

Read your script aloud. Eliminate any excess language that sounds awkward or is unnecessarily redundant.

After organizing, some students will consider cutting the poetry differently as a result of choices that are made. As a final step, make sure that the introduction successfully represents the script and performance choices. Cut your script into segments which match the page turns, put it in the book, and let's get practicing!

## Practicing

You will want to start by familiarizing yourself with your script. Although you are not required to be memorized, successful interpers have mastered their script so they know not only what they are saying in the moment, but also know what is coming up next. You can gain familiarity with the script by reading it multiple times. Start by reading each page several times. As you learn the script, make notes about which words you might want to cut, or what is not flowing smoothly from one section to another, so that you can make adjustments after the practice session.

Students may want to practice one complete poem before going on to the next, even if it is split up in the actual script, so that the students have a clear understanding of each poem's vocal quality, intonation, and physical representations. After mastering each of the poems, the student can move on to the script. Keeping each poem consistent from page turn to page turn is a tremendous challenge but very rewarding when it all comes together!

Beginning interpers often struggle with bookwork. It can feel very awkward holding the book comfortably and turning pages naturally. Recognize that it takes time and lots of practice. Watch how other performers conduct their bookwork. Ask for help. Whatever you do, don't rush the bookwork. It is jarring to watch interpers rapidly opening and closing books and zipping through page turns. Even basic bookwork is a part of the performance and establishes an important connection between the student and the script.

Once the student has a solid grasp of the script, the coach and student can do some timed run-throughs with both oral and written comments for the student. Focus on the big picture in these early practices. Work on analysis of language, tone, mood, rhythm, and flow. Consider carefully how students are using their voice, including pause, pitch, tone, volume, diction, and inflection. Eventually the student will be ready for line-by-line practices. Line-by-line is characterized by intensive rehearsal on each and every page and, at times, on every line, until the best possible interpretation is achieved at that moment. Make sure the performance is within the time limits.

The student is now ready to do some performances in front of other students, coaches, or even an audience. Attend tournaments and review ballots or hold practice rounds with other members of your team. At this stage, feedback is incredibly important. Take note of all comments, as having a fresh perspective on an interpretation is vitally important. Students must be willing to take that feedback and make modifications.

Even the most naturally talented of performers need practice! Respect the time and resources of your coach and school. Be sure to give it your best effort every day and you will be successful no matter the tournament outcome.

photo: Sur la Lune Photography

## Performance Tips

It may sound cliché, but confidence is key! If you've put the work in, you should feel confident in the product you've created. Go into that round with your head held high, ready to show the world what you've got! Trust what you and your coach created. Do what you practiced, and if you feel compelled to "try something new," review it with your coach beforehand. Consistency is key. It's hard to evaluate what to change in practice if your performance in the round is completely different than what you've been working on.

Pay attention to other performers. Smile! Be a warm, inviting audience member. There is nothing worse than performing and having an audience that either stone faces you or won't look you in the eye. Think of it this way: if your round is an hour long, you are only speaking for five of those minutes. The remaining minutes are for you to listen, learn, and support your competitors.

Keep a notebook for between rounds. Sometimes, another person's performance will inspire you, and it's a

good idea to have a notebook handy to write down new ideas. It's also nice to know who you competed against in each round. This way, you have a better understanding of who your competition is. When you review your ballots after the tournament, you can go back through your notebook and compare your ballots to your notes.

Between rounds, figure out what room you will be performing in next. Congratulate your competitors on a good performance after the round ends, and make friends during downtime. Be gracious, and keep criticisms of other performers to yourself, even if someone else tries to start a negative conversation.

photo: Sur la Lune Photography

## Resources

A great source is *Interpretation of Literature—Bringing Words to Life* by Travis Kiger and Ganer Newman. They cover cutting, characterization, blocking, and the structure of a story. Watch final round videos of Poetry Interpretation from past National Tournaments. Observe the rounds not only as entertainment, but keep your eyes peeled for effective bookwork, cutting, and performance techniques. Ask yourself, how can I apply similar techniques to my performance? The best way to learn Poetry Interpretation, outside of actively doing it, is by watching and learning from other performers.

The textbook, final rounds, and more can be found on **www.speechanddebate.org.**

AN INTRODUCTION TO

# Program Oral Interpretation

*Program Oral Interpretation at a Glance*

NATIONAL SPEECH & DEBATE ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL FORENSIC LEAGUE

photo: Sur la Lune Photography

## Event Description

Using a combination of prose, poetry, and drama, students construct a program up to 10 minutes in length using at least two out of the three genres: prose, poetry, and drama (plays). With a spotlight on argumentation and performative range, **Program Oral Interpretation** (POI) focuses on a student's ability to combine multiple genres of literature centered around a single theme. Competitors are expected to portray multiple characters. No props or costumes may be used except for the manuscript. Performances also include an introduction written by the student to contextualize the performance and state the titles and authors used in the program.

## Considerations for Selecting POI Literature

Students who do POI are expected to bring together a wide variety of literature for their program. Students should select pieces that are appropriate for them and that create a well-balanced program which may incorporate humor and drama. Considerations for selecting a POI topic should include the student's age, maturity, and school/team/coach standards.

## Traits of Successful POI Performers

When considering what event you should choose, or in which direction to point a student when selecting an event, below are some general traits of successful POI performers to keep in mind:

- Ability to characterize multiple perspectives
- Strong argumentation skills
- Controlled performance
- Depth/breadth of emotion
- Knowledge of poetic, prosaic and dramatic convention

## Sample literature for a POI:

TOPIC: *Magical Realism*

DRAMA:

- *Lily Plants a Garden by Jose Cruz Gonzalez*
- *Joe Turner's Come and Gone by August Wilson*

POETRY:

- *The Rusted Door by Stephan Delbos*
- *Write about an Empty Birdcage by Elaina M. Ellis*
- *The Giant Golden Boy of Biology by Anis Mojgani*

PROSE:

- *The People of Paper by Salvador Plascencia*
- *One Hundred Years of Solitude by Gabriel Garcia Marquez*
- *The Great Divorce by Kelly Link*

**Learn More!** The National Speech & Debate Association is the leading provider of competitive and educational resources to aid students and coaches as they explore our competitive events. For **Program Oral Interpretation**, we are developing a number of helpful resources—including live and recorded webinars designed to introduce foundational and advanced concepts in Interp; an interpretation textbook for Resource Package subscribers; videos from champion coaches; and much more more! Take advantage of the amazing benefits of being a member by using our resources to help advance yourself in competitive speech and debate activities. Visit **www.speechanddebate.org** for more information.

## Find Your Voice

*"POI challenged me to construct my own unique message in a creative yet purposeful way. Piecing together multiple genres of literature not only exposed me to the different styles in which we can voice our ideas, but to the importance of amplifying and unifying these voices fighting for a collective cause"*

**— Kenny Lau, Association Alum**

COMPETITION EVENTS GUIDE

# Program Oral Interpretation

## Basic Understandings

Program Oral Interpretation relies on the performer's ability to portray a wide range of characters and literature all held together under a common theme. Each program must contain at least two of the three genres and students are encouraged to include all three. There is a set time limit of ten minutes, with a 30-second grace period. Students who choose to compete in POI should focus on making an interesting argument that is supported in different ways by each piece of literature they select.

## Research

When looking for a Program Oral Interpretation topic, it's important to know your limitations, and your strengths. Students with a background in Humorous Interpretation may find they have a greater ability to portray multiple characters within the program and choose to include more literature than a student who has a background in Dramatic Interpretation. Conversely, a student with a background in DI may choose to devote more time in the program to a select few pieces of literature, developing each character with greater depth.

What makes POI unique is the performer's ability to choose what kinds of stories they want to tell and the way those stories are told. When deciding on a topic, think about what motivates you. What do you want to change about the world? Whom do you want to lend your voice to? By answering questions like this performers are given a strong sense of potential topics.

Searching for literature in POI can seem intimidating, since you have more scripts to find than the other interpretation events. However, keep in mind that POI allows for the most freedom when searching for literature. As long as it follows the publishing guidelines of the National Speech and Debate Association, and it meets team and coach standards for appropriateness, you can use it!

To start, think about why you wanted to speak about your topic. Then, think about any books, plays or poetry you have encountered that relate to the topic. Find that literature and include it in your POI.

Then, broaden your search. Start researching online, at local libraries and bookstores, and begin piecing together enough literature for a program.

Not only will you be finding different genres of literature, you will also encounter different tones, perspectives and length. Good POI's will include longer narratives for the audience to relate to, short snippets packed with information and literature that lets the audience laugh. Finding a diverse set of literature enables a more dynamic performance.

photo: Sur la Lune Photography

## Structural Components

Structure of an Interp (taken from *Interpretation of Literature, Bringing Words to Life*).

TEASER • 0:00 – 1:30
*Previews the topic and mood of the selection*

INTRO • 1:30 – 3:00
*Explains the purpose of the performance*

EXPOSITION • 3:00 – 3:30
*Introduces characters and setting*

INCITING INCIDENT • 3:30 – 4:00
*Sends the conflict into motion*

RISING ACTION • 4:00 – 7:30
*Complicates the conflict*

CLIMAX • 7:30 – 8:30
*Emotional peak of the performance*

FALLING ACTION • 8:30 – 9:30
*Resolves the conflict*

## Program Oral Interpretation

There are a few key structural components of every POI:

*Programming* is the process of cutting your literature and threading it together throughout the performance. That does not mean that your POI will consist of performing a poem in full, then reading a short story and closing with a monologue from a play. Instead, break your literature down into pages and build a program that follows the structure of interp. For example, introduce the compelling character from your Prose in the intro, and then dedicate time later on in the performance to that same character.

Each selection of literature should be distinct in your performance. Perhaps the non-fiction book you use is performed by characterizing the literature as a lecturer, whereas a poem is performed with a great attention to vocal meter, rhythm and pace. In short, each piece of literature in your POI should have a distinct feel to it.

*Blocking* or tech, is how the character(s) moves in the space you've created for them. In POI, the manuscript may be used as a prop as long as you stay in control of it throughout the entirety of the performance. For example, if you are using a black binder for a manuscript it would be appropriate to mimic using a laptop with your binder.

*Introduction.* An introduction explains the purpose of the performance. Typically, after the teaser, a performer will give a brief explanation of the program's relevance, then give the title and author of each piece used during the performance.

photo: Sur la Lune Photography

## Organizing

Each POI will be organized in a unique way. However, there are some guidelines that create a memorable performance.

Pay attention to balance among genres in the program. Eight minutes from the same play with a little time devoted to a poem at the end is not the recipe for a strong program. Instead, try to devote time to each genre. It is not necessary to carve out exactly three minutes for each, but make sure that each genre is present throughout the program.

Look for thread pieces to help you along. A thread is a piece of literature that tells a complete story throughout the program. This is generally a character that the audience can relate to which helps contextualize your argument in the program. Include a page that introduces the character, another that outlines the conflict, a climax page and resolution. There can be more than one thread piece in a program,(there is no one right answer for how to organize POI), but, make sure the audience has a character they can connect to.

Not all pieces of literature have to be prominently featured in the program. There will likely be pieces that only have one page dedicated to them. Whether it be a funny punchline, an emotionally powerful stanza from a poem, or a short excerpt from a non-fiction book, don't be afraid to include a piece that is short if it adds to your program's theme or argument

## Practicing

After you have finished cutting and organizing your program, it's time to start constructing your performance. The first thing you need to do is put together the manuscript you will be using. The most common manuscript is a small black binder with page protectors (often referred to as slicks), which can be found in our online store and most office supply stores. Type up your cutting, format it into two columns and print the document. Then, simply cut out each specific page and place it in your page slicks. Some people like to put black cardstock in each page slick and glue or tape the cutting to the cardstock. Your cutting should read like a book, meaning, a peer or coach could pick up your manuscript and read your program from beginning to end.

Once you have put the manuscript together, it's time to start creating distinct characters for each piece of literature. Think about different mannerisms, voices and postures each character might have. What kind of environment are they in? Do you have some characters that need to have a lot of blocking? Find a way to make each piece distinct.

Don't be afraid to use your manuscript as a tool in the performance. As a general rule, make sure that all of the words from each section (or scene) of your cutting fit

onto one page. In this way, each time you turn the page, the audience knows that you are transitioning between pieces of literature. Think of each page turn as a pop in and out of the different parts of your program.

photo: Sur la Lune Photography

## Performance Tips

It may sound cliche, but confidence is key! If you've put the work in, you should feel confident in the product you've created. Go into that round with your head held high ready to show the world what you've got! Trust what you and your coach created. Do what you practiced, and if you feel compelled to "try something new," review it with your coach beforehand. Consistency is key. It's hard to evaluate what to change in practice if your performance in the round is completely different than what you've been working on.

Pay attention to other performers. Smile. Be a warm, inviting audience member. There is nothing worse than performing and having an audience that either stone faces you or won't look you in the eye. Think of it this way: each round is about 60 minutes. Ten of those involve you performing, the other 50 are for you to listen, learn, and support your competitors.

Keep a notebook for between rounds. Sometimes, another person's performance will inspire you, and it's a good idea to have a notebook handy to write down new ideas. It's also nice to know who you competed against in each round. This way, you have a better understanding of who your competition is. When you review your ballots after the tournament, you can go back through your notebook and compare your ballots to your notes.

Between rounds, figure out what room you will be performing in next. Congratulate your competitors on a good performance after the round ends, and make friends during downtime. Be gracious, and keep criticisms of other performers to yourself, even if someone else tries to start a negative conversation.

## Resources

A great source is *Interpretation of Literature—Bringing Words to Life* by Travis Kiger and Ganer Newman. They cover cutting, characterization, blocking, and the structure of a story. Additionally, pay special attention to how others in your community are doing POI. Be aware of effective cutting, characterization, and blocking. Ask yourself, how can I apply similar techniques to my performance? How can I build off of what that POI is doing? The best way to learn POI, outside of actively doing it, is by watching and learning from other performers.

Member students and coaches at NSDA schools can access these materials and more at **www.speechanddebate.org/resources**. Use the filter function on the left hand side of the page to find resources specific to Interp and Program Oral Interp.

AN INTRODUCTION TO

# Prose

*Prose at a Glance*

photo: Sur la Lune Photography

## Event Description

Using a short story, parts of a novel, or another published work of prose, students provide an interpretation of one or more selections with a time limit of five minutes, including introduction. Utilizing a single piece of literature, Prose (PRO) can be drawn from works of fiction or non-fiction. Prose corresponds to usual (ordinary/common) patterns of speech and may combine elements of narration and dialogue. Students may not use poetry, nor drama (plays), in this category. Students must use a manuscript in Prose, which typically consists of a small three-ring binder with page protectors. Reading from a book or magazine is prohibited. Binders are available for purchase in the NSDA Store.

## Considerations for Selecting Prose Literature

Students in Prose Interpretation may choose literature on topics that are serious, humorous, mysterious, thought-provoking. The key is to choose a piece that works for the individual student. Non-fiction publications, such as essays, articles, and biographies, or works of fiction, such as short stories and books, may be sources for Prose Interpretation. Considerations for an appropriate piece include the student's personality, maturity, physical and vocal performance range, and school standards.

## Traits of Successful Prose Performers

When considering what event you should choose, or which direction to point a student when selecting an event, here are some traits of successful Prose students to keep in mind:

- Expressive
- Excellent verbal and physical control
- Emotional maturity
- Enjoys reading and performing
- Confident
- Engages an audience

## Examples of Past Prose Titles

- *Imagination: A Memoir* by Elizabeth McCracken
- *Long Shadow of Little Rock* by Daisy Bates
- *The Fault in our Stars* by John Green
- *Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key* by Jack Gantos
- *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll
- *The Elizabeth Stories* by Isabel Huggan

**Learn More!** The National Speech & Debate Association is the leading provider of competitive and educational resources to aid students and coaches as they explore our competitive events. For Prose Interpretation, we have videos of past national final round performances at the middle and high school levels. We have a full-length textbook on Oral Interpretation of Literature. We also have many other interpretation resources, activities for class or practice, and more!

## Find Your Voice

*"I love Prose because it's all about connecting to the audience. I want them to care about a story and connect with it on a very emotional and personal level. A good Prose lets you suspend time for a few minutes and just enjoy the ride."*

**— Emily Anderson, Association Alum**

# Prose

## Basic Understandings

Prose is often classified as the "other" category of interpretation. It's not poetry. It's not drama. It's not storytelling. So what is prose? Prose combines multiple elements of oral interpretation of literature. Prose corresponds to usual patterns of speech—that which you would find most every day in a particular space and time (in contrast to poetic form and language). Prose typically has a narrative with its related rises and falls, much like Storytelling. Prose may also feature character development and dialogue, much like Dramatic Interpretation. Prose may have humorous elements embedded, much like Humorous Interpretation. In short, while many categories have specific interpretation focal points, Prose Interpretation is very wide open, and choices of material may vary from region to region or even tournament to tournament.

## Research

When looking for Prose Interpretation, start with what the student knows—what types of literature do they enjoy? What types of themes or ideas can they relate to? Short story collections, often called anthologies, are very prominent in bookstores or libraries. Unlike Poetry Interpretation, if you find an anthology collection of short stories or novels, you may only perform one selection in Prose. There are so many to choose from that a student can feel overwhelmed with the abundance of options. Thus, having an idea of themes, ideas, or authors might lead students to choose a specific collection to review. For example, if the student enjoys learning about cultures and customs, there are many anthologies from various parts of the world. If the student enjoys reading detective stories, there are many collections focused on mystery and suspense.

In addition, many prominent authors who write novels may also have written short stories or essays on a range of topics or issues of interest. Thus, conducting a search for authors in addition to specific topics, themes, or pieces is advisable. Many online reading sites offer suggestions for authors or pieces based upon interests. Plus there is a host of young adult literature that may be appropriate for interpretation as well. The opportunities truly are limitless!

Read reviews of potential Prose pieces to help narrow the choices. Read summaries to find out the basic plotline before diving into the literature. And do a quick scan of any short story or book to see if it is a good match for the student—how many characters are there? Is an accent called for in the literature? Is it set in a place and time the student can relate to? Is the language accessible to the student? Is the language appropriate for oral interpretation? Can the essence of the scene or plot be conveyed in less than five minutes? Asking these questions while scanning the literature will help certain pieces rise to the top of the list. Ultimately, the student needs to know themself enough to know what can and cannot be performed. If the student cannot perform a southern accent, for example, consistently and authentically, then the student either needs to work very, very hard on that vocal ability or choose another piece. Some students and coaches might want the student to challenge their weaknesses, but in competitive speech activities it is often best to focus on the students' strengths at a young age, especially as they learn the creative process of selecting, cutting, and performing literature.

photo: Sur la Lune Photography

## Structural Components

Your *cutting* is the five-minute portion of the selection you are performing. This is how you've arranged the narrative and what aspects of the story you've decided to tell. Your cutting may look something like this (taken from *Interpretation of Literature, Bringing Words to Life*). *Note that these times are approximations.

TEASER • 0:00 – 0:30
*Previews the topic and mood of the selected literature. Teasers are not required.*

INTRO • 0:30-1:00
*The student, in their own words, discusses the literature. Must be memorized and include the title and author.*

EXPOSITION & INCITING INCIDENT • 1:00 –2:30
*Introduces characters and setting. Sends the conflict into motion.*

RISING ACTION & CLIMAX • 2:30 – 4:30
*Complicates the conflict. Creates emotional peak of the performance.*

FALLING ACTION & RESOLUTION • 4:30-5:00
*Resolves the conflict. Concludes the story.*

photo: Sur la Lune Photography

*Blocking* is a term used to describe movement in a performance. Sometimes blocking is expressive in nature, symbolizing how a character is feeling emotionally, while at other times blocking denotes events that are occurring in the imagined space. Keep in mind that movement should always be motivated by elements in the text or found within a character. Blocking for the sake of blocking is not necessary, and in many tournaments there are specific rules for how much movement, if any, is allowed. Those performances emphasize vocal or other nonverbal forms of communication.

Blocking is one type of *nonverbal communication*, which may also include gestures, facial expressions, posture, and eye contact. Much of oral interpretation is contained in the nonverbal elements of performance as tone, setting, mood, and character all can be established through various physical representations.

## Organizing

Once you have your cutting, take the time to "beat" out your script. This means reading the script aloud and making notes as you go. As you read aloud, use symbols to indicate shorter pauses "/" or longer pauses "//." Consider the narrative and emotional qualities behind each line. Consider how the lines affect your verbal and nonverbal communication.

*Bookwork* is the use of the manuscript within oral interpretation. The bookwork can be very basic, such as closing the book during the introduction and conclusion, as well as turning pages with scene changes. Other students will have more extensive bookwork, including page turns to express dramatic moments or changes in tone, or holding the script to represent an imaginary property, such as a photo album.

If the Prose selection has characters speaking to each other, students can mark focal points in their script. Focal points (sometimes referred to as offstage focus) are used when a character is speaking to another character. Instead of turning their head dramatically back and forth, students can pick a point in front of them to represent the placement of the character. For example, a mother speaking to her daughter might be positioned with a lower focal point to indicate that she is taller than her daughter. When in the voice of the daughter, the focal point might be higher to represent her looking up to an authority figure.

Indicate potential choices for blocking, bookwork, and focal points in the margins of your script, as needed.

Read your script aloud. Eliminate any excess language that sounds awkward or is unnecessarily redundant. After organizing, some students will consider cutting the piece differently as a result of choices that are made. As a final

step, make sure the introduction successfully represents the script and performance choices. Cut your script into segments which match the page turns, put it in the book, and let's get practicing!

## Practicing

You will want to start by familiarizing yourself with your script. Although you are not required to be memorized, successful interpers have mastered their script so that they know not only what they are saying in the moment, but also know what is coming up next. You can gain familiarity with the script by reading several times in a row. Start by reading each page several times. As you learn the script, make notes about which words you might want to cut, or what is not flowing smoothly from one section to another, so you can make adjustments after the practice session.

Beginning interpers often struggle with bookwork. It can feel very awkward holding the book comfortably and turning pages naturally. Recognize that it takes time and lots of practice. Watch how other performers conduct their bookwork. Ask for help. Whatever you do, don't rush the bookwork. It is jarring to watch interpers rapidly opening and closing books and zipping through page turns. Even basic bookwork is a part of the performance and establishes an important connection between the student and the script.

Once the student has a solid grasp of the script, the coach and student can do some timed run-throughs with both oral and written comments for the student. Focus on the big picture in these early practices. Work on analysis of scenes, characters, language, and the overall impact of the story. Consider carefully how students are using their voice, including pause, pitch, tone, volume, diction, and inflection. Eventually the student will be ready for line-by-line practices. Line-by-line is characterized by intensive rehearsal on each and every page and, at times, on every line, until the best possible interpretation is achieved at that moment. Make sure the performance is within the time limits.

The student is now ready to do some performances in front of other students, coaches, or even an audience. Attend tournaments and review ballots or hold practice rounds with other members of your team. At this stage, feedback is incredibly important. Take note of all comments, as having a fresh perspective on an interpretation is vitally important. Students must be willing to take that feedback and make modifications.

Even the most naturally talented of performers need practice! Respect the time and resources of your coach and school. Be sure to give it your best effort every day and you will be successful no matter the tournament outcome.

photo: Sur la Lune Photography

## Performance Tips

It may sound cliché, but confidence is key! If you've put the work in, you should feel confident in the product you've created. Go into that round with your head held high, ready to show the world what you've got! Trust what you and your coach created. Do what you practiced, and if you feel compelled to "try something new," review it with your coach beforehand. Consistency is key. It's hard to evaluate what to change in practice if your performance in the round is completely different than what you've been working on.

Pay attention to other performers. Smile! Be a warm, inviting audience member. There is nothing worse than performing and having an audience that either stone faces you or won't look you in the eye. Think of it this way: if your round is an hour long, you are only speaking for five of those minutes. The remaining minutes are for you to listen, learn, and support your competitors.

Keep a notebook for between rounds. Sometimes, another person's performance will inspire you, and it's a good idea to have a notebook handy to write down new

ideas. It's also nice to know who you competed against in each round. This way, you have a better understanding of who your competition is. When you review your ballots after the tournament, you can go back through your notebook and compare your ballots to your notes.

Between rounds, figure out what room you will be performing in next. Congratulate your competitors on a good performance after the round ends, and make friends during downtime. Be gracious, and keep criticisms of other performers to yourself, even if someone else tries to start a negative conversation.

photo: Sur la Lune Photography

## Resources

A great source is *Interpretation of Literature—Bringing Words to Life* by Travis Kiger and Ganer Newman. They cover cutting, characterization, blocking, and the structure of a story. Watch final round videos of Prose Interpretation from past Nationals. Observe the rounds not only as entertainment, but keep your eyes peeled for effective bookwork, cutting, and performance techniques. Ask yourself, how can I apply similar techniques to my performance? The best way to learn Prose Interpretation, outside of actively doing it, is by watching and learning from other performers.

The textbook, final rounds, and more can be found on **www.speechanddebate.org.**

AN INTRODUCTION TO

# Storytelling

*Storytelling at a Glance*

## Event Description

Students select a published story that meets a specified theme and perform the story for no more than five minutes. Some tournaments may ask Storytelling performers to follow a theme, though the National Tournament does not. Storytelling (STO) 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. Students may use a chair. Manuscripts are not permitted.

## Considerations for Selecting Stories

Students in Storytelling select material based upon the theme and the audience. Children's books are commonly chosen as material. Students can also look for collections of stories on various themes, though only one story from a collection may be performed. Considerations for an appropriate piece include the student's personality, physical and vocal performance range, and school standards.

## Traits of Successful Storytellers

When considering what event you should choose, or which direction to point a student when selecting an event, here are some traits of successful Storytelling students to keep in mind:

- Animated
- Outgoing
- High energy
- Captivating
- Enjoys performing
- Confident
- Engages an audience
- Enjoys working with children

## Examples of Past Storytelling Themes

- Thriller and Mystery
- Americana
- Heroism
- Native American Tales
- Fairy Tales
- Tales of Adventure
- Campfire Stories

**Learn More!** The National Speech & Debate Association is the leading provider of competitive and educational resources to aid students and coaches as they explore our competitive events. For Storytelling, we have videos of past national final round performances at the middle and high school levels. We have a full-length textbook on Oral Interpretation of Literature in addition to many other general interpretation resources, activities for class or practice, and more!

## Find Your Voice

*What I love about Storytelling is it lets a competitor be goofy. Not just funny but outlandishly goofy. There's seldom a moment where you have to worry if something 'makes sense.' Most of the stories used in competition have plot lines that suspend reality in the first place. So, if I have a script with a talking iguana and I want to make him Australian, it works. I love how crazy it can get."*

**— Emma Wilczynski, Association Alum**

# Storytelling

## Basic Understandings

Storytelling consists of sharing a story with an audience, performed as if the audience were a group of young children. The story must meet the theme of the tournament and not exceed five minutes. If the tournament does not have a prescribed theme, such as the National Tournament, any selection is appropriate. Students may use a full range of movement to express themselves and may incorporate a chair in a variety of different ways. Students may be seated but most commonly performers use a full range of stage space available to them.

As there are so many different types of stories that can be performed, it is important to observe rounds to see what other students and teams are using. The Association has final rounds of Storytelling from both the high school and middle school level to review. Local and regional tournaments may vary in the selection of stories performed.

## Research

Storytelling research involves going to libraries and bookstores and enjoying their vast collections of children's books. Keep in mind that five minutes includes an introduction. Thus, the story must be fully conveyed in a very limited frame of time. Students should choose stories that are not only fun but have a story with sufficient plot and character development to keep the audience entertained and engaged.

If a tournament requires that your Storytelling performance fits a theme, it can be difficult to find a piece. Before going to the bookstore or library, take a moment to look for lists of stories online. A simple Google keyword search will net many results. Students may also want to go to sources such as Amazon that provide recommendations on related books to get some additional ideas.

Another strategy is to search by author instead of themes or titles of specific pieces. Children's authors typically produce a large volume of work. By choosing favorite authors and writing styles, students can narrow their choices considerably. Many children's books become part of a larger series. By looking to online reviews or summaries, students can quickly find out what themes emerge from an entire set of books. Finally, keep in mind that many children's stories are produced by more than one individual, such as an illustrator. Be sure to search for the names of all major contributors when doing your research.

## Structural Components

Your *cutting* is the five-minute portion of the story you are performing. The cutting consists of your arrangement of the narrative and what aspects of the story you've decided to tell. Your cutting may look something like this (taken from *Interpretation of Literature, Bringing Words to Life*). *Note that these times are approximations.

TEASER • 0:00 – 0:30
*Previews the story, characters, and style of the selected literature. Teasers are not required.*

INTRO • 0:30 – 1:00
*The student, in their own words, discusses the literature. Must be memorized and include the title and author.*

EXPOSITION & INCITING INCIDENT • 1:00 – 2:30
*Engages the audience in character, setting, and theme. Sends the conflict into motion.*

RISING ACTION & CLIMAX • 2:30 – 4:15
*Complicates the conflict. Creates emotional peak of the performance.*

FALLING ACTION & RESOLUTION • 4:15 – 5:00
*Resolves the conflict. Concludes the story.*

*Blocking* is a term used to describe movement in a performance. Sometimes blocking is expressive in nature, symbolizing how a character is feeling emotionally, while at other times blocking denotes events that are occurring in the imagined space. Keep in mind that movement should always be motivated by elements in the text or derived from the telling of the story. Blocking for the sake of blocking is not necessary. Some stories call for the performers to have more limited movement as the emphasis is on vocal or other nonverbal forms of communication.

One unique element of blocking in Storytelling is the presence of the chair. Some competitors sit down to chat with the audience as if they were children. Others will stand on the chair briefly for effect while others will use it to create a stage space, such as hiding behind it as if it were a protective wall. Students need to take care with the use of the chair, both in terms of their personal safety as well as the rules. Props are not permitted in Storytelling, and the chair should not be used as a prop during the performance.

Blocking is one type of *nonverbal communication*, which may also include gestures, facial expressions, posture, and eye contact. Much of oral interpretation is contained in the nonverbal elements of performance as tone, setting, mood, and character all can be established through various physical representations.

## Organizing

Students should map out all of the activities of the story. This outline provides a snapshot of what takes place and allows for easy review when deciding what to cut or keep in the performance. In addition to maintaining any major plot points in the story, students will want to select the funniest and most dramatic parts of the storyline to draw in the audience.

Students can then choose the most relevant sections of the story and include those in the master manuscript. Once you have your cutting, take the time to "beat out" your manuscript. This means reading the script aloud and making notes as you go. As you read aloud, use symbols to indicate shorter pauses "/" or longer pauses "//." Consider the emotional qualities behind each line. Consider how the lines affect your verbal and nonverbal communication.

Indicate potential choices for blocking, nonverbal expressions, and audience engagement in the manuscript. Taking notes in the preparatory stages is very important for any type of performance.

Read your script aloud. Eliminate any excess language that sounds awkward or is unnecessarily redundant. After organizing, some students will consider cutting the piece differently as a result of choices that are made. As a final step, make sure that the introduction successfully represents the manuscript and performance choices.

## Practicing

As Storytelling must be memorized, the first step after cutting and analyzing your piece is to memorize it. As it is a short event with simplified language, many competitors might find that memorizing a story is very easy. Other students struggle to memorize even short performances. Here are some things to keep in mind as you memorize your story.

Our brains are a muscle. The more time you practice memorizing, the better you become. The more cues that you can give your brain to aid memorization the better. Staring at a script, re-reading the lines in your head, will not be beneficial. Memorize the story with the intent to perform it. Type up a clean version with only your finalized text and blocking. Then, tape it to the wall and actively memorize. Read the lines aloud moving with them as indicated by your cutting. Sometimes, it's helpful to do this in front of a mirror, so you can evaluate the effectiveness of your movements. It is helpful to memorize a paragraph at a time, building off of the

paragraph that came before. This will significantly decrease the time it takes to memorize your performance.

Once memorized, you and your coach can then build off of the choices you've made for your story. Adjustments to blocking, characterization, and line delivery can be made.

Once the student has a solid grasp of the story, the coach and student can do some timed run-throughs with both oral and written comments. Focus on the big picture in early practices. Work on analysis of blocking, engagement with the audience, and energy. Consider carefully how students are using their voice, including pause, pitch, tone, volume, diction, and inflection. Eventually the student will be ready for line-by-line practices. Line-by-line is characterized by intensive rehearsal on each section of the story, at times on every line, until the best possible interpretation is achieved at that moment. Make sure the performance is within the time limits.

The student is now ready to do some performances in front of other students, coaches, or even an audience. Attend tournaments and review ballots or hold practice rounds with other members of your team. At this stage, feedback is incredibly important. Take note of all comments, as having a fresh perspective on an interpretation is vitally important. Students must be willing to take that feedback and make modifications.

Even the most naturally talented of performers need practice! Respect the time and resources of your coach and school. Be sure to give it your best effort every day and you will be successful no matter the tournament outcome.

## Performance Tips

It may sound cliché, but confidence is key! If you've put the work in, you should feel confident in the product you've created. Go into that round with your head held high, ready to show the world what you've got! Trust what you and your coach created. Do what you practiced, and if you feel compelled to "try something new," review it with your coach beforehand. Consistency is key. It's hard to evaluate what to change in practice if your performance in the round is completely different than what you've been working on.

Pay attention to other performers. Smile! Be a warm, inviting audience member. There is nothing worse than getting up to perform and having an audience that either stone faces you or won't look you in the eye. Think of it this way: if your round is 45 minutes long, you are only

speaking for five of those minutes. The remaining minutes are for you to listen, learn, and support your competitors.

Keep a notebook for between rounds. Sometimes, another person's performance will inspire you, and it's a good idea to have a notebook handy to write down new ideas. It's also nice to know who you competed against in each round. This way, you have a better understanding of who your competition is. When you review your ballots after the tournament, you can go back through your notebook and compare your ballots to your notes.

Between rounds, figure out what room you will be performing in next. Congratulate your competitors on a good performance after the round ends, and make friends during downtime. Be gracious, and keep criticisms of other performers to yourself, even if someone else tries to start a negative conversation.

## Resources

We have many great resources for Storytelling, including a webinar specific to helping students in middle school select pieces, get ready for the tournament, and tips for competition. A great general source for interpretation strategies is *Interpretation of Literature—Bringing Words*

*to Life* by Travis Kiger and Ganer Newman. They cover cutting, characterization, blocking, and the structure of a story. Watch final round videos of Storytelling from past Nationals. Observe the rounds not only as entertainment, but also for effective blocking, cutting, and performance techniques. Ask yourself, how can I apply similar techniques to my performance? The best way to learn Storytelling, outside of actively doing it, is by watching and learning from other performers.

The textbook, final rounds, and more can be found on **www.speechanddebate.org.**

# Big Questions Debate

## COMPETITION EVENTS GUIDE

NATIONAL SPEECH & DEBATE ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL FORENSIC LEAGUE

### Basic Understandings

Big Questions (BQ) is a debate format supported by a generous grant from the John Templeton Foundation. In Big Questions debate, students grapple with complex worldview questions concerning the intersection of science, philosophy, and religion. Debaters may choose to debate individually or with a partner. At any given tournament, there may be rounds that are one-on-one, two-on-one, or two-on-two. Big Questions topics last all year from August to June.

Big Questions topics include:

**2020-2021** *Mathematics was discovered, not invented.*

**2019-2020** *Objective morality exists.*

**2018-2019** *Humans are primarily driven by self- interest.*

**2017-2018** *Humans are fundamentally different from all other animals.*

**2016-2017** *Science leaves no room for free will.*

Topics are designed to address deeply held beliefs that often go unexamined. Students are assigned a side of the topic before each round and present cases, engage in rebuttal and refutation, and participate in a question period. Often, average members of the public are recruited to judge and observe this event.

### Research

Since Big Questions topics are ones that students typically already have opinions about, the research process should start with a brainstorm! Many of the strongest arguments are ones that justify and provide evidence for intuitive thoughts about the topic. Evidence will range from scientific studies to philosophical texts. Look for scientific articles written by experts in the field through scholarly databases, journal articles, or news outlets. If you find a philosopher or philosophical concept that supports your argument, look for secondary authors that succinctly explain and apply that concept. Check with your school's Media Center/Library Services Department for research tips and information about what you have access to through your school. Don't forget that NSDA members have free access to the HeinOnline research database!

### Organizing Argumentation

For each argument you make, you must first clearly establish a claim. This is a statement that concisely summarizes the point you will make. Next, you must justify why your claim is true or based in fact and logic. This is known as the warrant for an argument. You will need to go beyond asserting or explaining your claims and back them up with analysis explaining why the argument is valid. The warrant can come in many forms, such as logic or research. Since Big Questions debaters often rely on scientific or philosophical arguments, research from a well-established source is often necessary. Once you have summarized the point you are making and justify it with logic and/or evidence, you will provide an impact for your argument. This means you have established why the argument is significant in the round.

#### *Structural Components*

| Speech | Time Limit |
|---|---|
| Affirmative Constructive | 5 minutes |
| Negative Constructive | 5 minutes |
| Question Segment | 3 minutes |
| Affirmative Rebuttal | 4 minutes |
| Negative Rebuttal | 4 minutes |
| Question Segment | 3 minutes |
| Affirmative Consolation | 3 minutes |
| Negative Consolation | 3 minutes |
| Affirmative Rationale | 3 minutes |
| Negative Rationale | 3 minutes |

*(Each debater gets 3 min of prep time to use at their discretion)*

### *Casing*

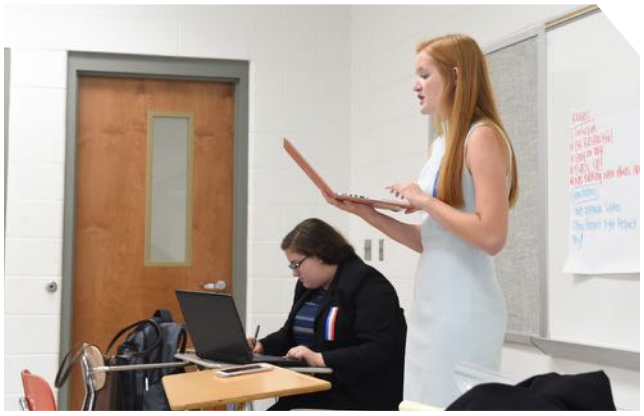
After you have brainstormed and researched topic-specific arguments, it is time to construct cases. In Big Questions, the first speech you give is the Constructive. This is a pre-written, five-minute speech that clearly lays out the arguments supporting your side. While there is no rule requiring a specific structure, there is a traditional approach to constructing this pre-written speech. Often, a constructive starts with a thesis statement as an introductory lead-in to the position. Next, you will define key terms and discuss the metrics for successfully evaluating a round (sometimes called "framework" or "weighing mechanisms"). Following this introduction, you will offer your main arguments following the claim, warrant, impact structure for each. Each main argument is called a "contention." Contentions may include quotes from qualified authors, scientific studies, or your own analysis. Given the five-minute time limit, your constructive will likely have two to three substantial contentions. Because of the more complex philosophical and science topics at hand, consider the level of time and explanation you dedicate to explaining your arguments.

### *Refutations*

After each debater's constructive speech that clearly establishes the arguments for both sides in the debate, there will be a series of speeches that allow debaters to rebut, clarify, and crystallize the debate. In the rebuttal, you will deliver a speech addressing the contentions of your opponent. This speech should address where there are weaknesses or opposing evidence, identify main areas of clash and how arguments interact with one another, rebuild your own contentions, and offer additional evidence for your position. In the consolidation speech, you will reduce the debate to its core elements. You should focus on identifying the areas you are garnering the best advantage and strengthening the analysis and argumentation in those areas. Additional analysis on existing points of contention will be given, but new arguments are discouraged. In the final rationale speech, you will give a summation of the main arguments that prove you have won the debate. No new arguments are offered in the rationale speech; you will focus entirely on the activity that has taken place earlier in the debate.

### *Flowing*

It is important for you to learn how to keep track of arguments in the round. Typically, debaters "flow" the debate round, making note of the arguments presented and refuted in the round. This note-taking approach requires you to abbreviate terms, phrases, and ideas so you can get as much of the debate notated as possible. You should enter each round with a minimum of two pieces of blank paper. Orient each vertically, like a book. One sheet of paper should be the affirmative flow where you keep track of all affirmative arguments, starting with the affirmative constructive and all arguments that stem from it. The other should be the negative flow. Split each paper into narrow columns. The leftmost column of each is where you will take notes on the constructive arguments. The column directly to the right is where you will keep track of responses to the constructive arguments made in the rebuttal speech. The next column is where you will keep track of arguments made in the consolidation, and so forth.



## Performance Tips

You will want to develop good communication habits, including eye contact, a conversational speaking speed and tone, roadmapping (or previewing and reviewing arguments in the order they will be/have been addressed), use of space, and rhetorical devices. While reading specific text from authors as evidence is expected, you should do so at a pace that acknowledges that much of the evidence is dense and may be hard to understand while speaking

quickly. Because community judges will likely adjudicate many rounds, the speed of delivery should be tailored for their comprehension.

## Resources

The NSDA offers great resources to support continued engagement with Big Questions. These include a current year topic analysis, evidence packet, sample negative and positive constructives, lesson plans, and videos of previous final rounds. Member students and coaches at NSDA schools can access these materials and more at **www.speechanddebate.org/resources**.

AN INTRODUCTION TO

# Congressional Debate

*Congressional Debate at a Glance*

NATIONAL SPEECH & DEBATE ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL FORENSIC LEAGUE

## Event Description

A simulation of the U.S. legislative process in the Senate and the House, students generate a series of bills and resolutions for debate in **Congressional Debate.** Debaters (also referred to as Senators and Representatives) 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.

## Considerations for Congressional Debate

Students who do Congressional Debate are typically interested in learning about issues that are significant to the legislative process within the United States. Students are exposed to a deeper application of *Robert's Rules of Parliamentary Procedure*. Students must prepare for debate on numerous topics in any given competition and be able to extend a long-lasting debate with unique and fresh ideas, as well as by refuting previous speakers on a specific topic.

## Traits of Successful Congressional Debaters

When considering what event you should choose, or in which direction to point a student when selecting an event, below are some general traits of successful Senators and Representatives to keep in mind:

- Interested in legislative process
- Networker
- Analytical thinker
- Interested in varied issues
- Persuasive
- Enjoys research

## List of Past Legislation Titles

- Bill to Regulate E-Cigarettes
- Resolution to Recognize the Republic of Somaliland
- Bill to Update the Clean Air Act
- Bill to Increase Development in Space
- Bill to Regulate Three-Dimensional Printing to Prevent the Production of Private Firearms
- Bill to Lift the Ban on Crude Oil Exports
- Bill to Alter Agricultural Subsidies
- Bill Concerning Raising the Federal Minimum Wage
- Resolution to Repeal Zero Tolerance Policies in Public Schools

**Learn More!** The National Speech & Debate Association is the leading provider of competitive and educational resources to aid students and coaches as they explore our competitive events. For **Congressional Debate**, we provide a number of helpful resources—including live and recorded webinars designed to introduce foundational and advanced concepts in Congress; access to Congress final round videos; a Congress textbook; sample Congress dockets; and much more! Take advantage of the amazing benefits of being a member by using our resources to help advance yourself in competitive speech and debate activities. Visit **www.speechanddebate.org** for more information.

## Find Your Voice

*"Congressional Debate is an exercise in leadership. It's a political game where your fellow students can have as much influence on the outcome of the round as your judges. You're rewarded for taking risks; one cannot simply fade into the background and expect to succeed. It's these exact skills that translate into success later in life—those who think a little bit differently are those who make permanent change in the world."*

**— Christina Gilbert, Association Alum**

COMPETITION EVENTS GUIDE

# Congressional Debate

NATIONAL SPEECH & DEBATE ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL FORENSIC LEAGUE

## Basic Understandings

Congressional Debate is like a simulation of the real United States legislature. A group of 10-25 students, called a Chamber, will compete in a legislative session. A series of bills and resolutions will be proposed by students from various schools. Students in turn will be selected by a presiding officer—a student elected to conduct the business of the round—to give speeches both advocating for and encouraging the defeat of the measure in front of them. Following each speech, competitors will be able to pose questions of the speaker. Once debate is exhausted on a particular item, the chamber will vote either to pass or fail the legislation, and debate moves on to the next item.

Legislation comes in two types—a bill and a resolution. A bill is a plan of action, detailing how a particular policy proposal will be implemented. A resolution, meanwhile, is a statement expressing the opinion of the chamber. Passing the resolution does not change anything about the world around us, it merely states the preference of the chamber. For example, let's say a school had a dress code. The student body may pass a piece of legislation expressing their displeasure with the dress code (a resolution) or legislation modifying the colors and styles of the school uniform (a bill).

At the beginning of the session, the students will elect a presiding officer, otherwise known as the PO. The PO's job is to select speakers to give speeches, select questioners, maintain decorum in the chamber, and facilitate a fast and smooth debate for all.

Typically, one session of Congress lasts about 2-3 hours. During that time, students typically give speeches 3 minutes in length. The first two speeches on a piece of legislation are known as the first advocacy, or first pro, and the first rejection, or first con. These speeches are followed by 2 minutes of cross examination. After the first pro and con speech are established, each additional speaker is subject to one minute of cross examination by the chamber. The PO selects the members of the chamber to ask the questions of the speaker.

## Research

Congress arguments generally have solid evidence supporting their claims. Evidence can come from anywhere—newspapers, journal articles, studies, books, primary documents, etc. The type of evidence varies based on the topic being debated, but when gathering research, you want to ask yourself four questions:

1. Is the source reputable? Sources should have a good reputation for 'getting it right'—newswires such as the AP and Reuters tend to be less credible than newspapers. Wikipedia is good background reading to get an overview of a topic, but doesn't have a reputation of being a credible source.
2. Is the source verifiable? This refers to the ability to verify the data and claims made by the source. If a source is based on a personal interview or some other insider knowledge, that generally cannot be verified through independent means.
3. Is the source authoritative? Different sources are expert at different fields. The Office of Budget and Management is an authority on budget policy on the US, but may not be the ideal source for a resolution about foreign policy in the Middle East. Think about whether the source in question is an expert on the field the legislation is about.
4. Is the source recent? While not every source has to be up-to-the-minute, generally, the more recent the source, the better. As current events evolve, older sources may become outdated or irrelevant, but the nature of timeliness will vary based on the topic.

When presenting the evidence to support your claims in the round, students may read the evidence verbatim, or paraphrase. Students would be wise to keep copies of the original source for all evidence used in a speech, including that evidence which is paraphrased. Since paraphrasing is common in Congressional Debate, backing up the paraphrasing with the original source will help eliminate any question that may arise. Oral source citations should also be provided—state the name of the source and the date of publication. For example, "The *New York Times* claims on August 15, 2014 that malnourishment is plaguing the nation of Sudan."

## Structural Components

A Congress speech typically consists of an introduction, a series of arguments and a conclusion. The introduction should be a succinct overview of what is to come in the speech—an attention-getter to get the audience focused, a clear thesis statement, and a preview of the arguments to come. Try to contain the introduction to about 30 seconds—anything longer than that eats up valuable time for content!

Each argument consists of a claim, backing to support that claim, a warrant, and one or more impacts. The claim is simply the argument being made—without support though, the claim is not inherently valid. Thus, it needs backing, or logic and evidence to support why the claim is true. The warrant connects the backing to the claim—it serves as support for why the backing is relevant to the claim. This may be an unstated assumption: for example, let's say the claim is that Program X is a waste of money and the backing is that Program X costs ten billion dollars. The warrant here might be "that's too much money to spend on this program." The argument concludes with an impact—the benefits or drawbacks of the argument being true. By spending too much money on Program X, we won't have the money to spend on some other initiative that would be good. Or by spending this much money on Program X, certain harms will be generated that we want to avoid.

The arguments in a Congress speech can either be constructive in nature or they can serve as refutations to arguments posed by the other side. Constructive arguments build up support for one side of the debate; rebuttals tend to refute arguments on the opposite side. As debate progresses, it is important to avoid rehash, or the mere repeating of previous arguments. Generally speaking, the later the speech is on a given topic, the higher expectation there is to refute and debate previous arguments. After all, 'refutation' is an essential element in any debate event!

Congress speeches end with a conclusion that recaps the main points, repeats the introduction, and ties the speech together thematically.

## Organizing

When preparing your Congress materials, organize research by legislation. It helps to 'tag' your evidence by indicating what claim or arguments that evidence supports. Include a full citation in your notes so you can refer to the original source again should you need to.

You can even organize responses to potential arguments that may be raised throughout the course of debate. If you encounter the same piece of legislation at multiple tournaments, it helps to keep track of the arguments made by other speakers and prepare responses to those claims in advance. Organize your research in a way that will make it easily accessible to you during the session.

Be prepared to debate both sides of the legislation—some topics may encourage many advocacy speeches, so giving a speech opposing the legislation will be more

advantageous. Be mindful of the balance of speeches in the chamber and adjust accordingly.

## Practicing

Giving practice speeches is a great way to get familiar with the mechanics of the event. You can either give speeches on your own, or ask a teammate(s) to debate with you to get familiar with the event. It helps to try to simulate the conditions of the Congress round as much as possible—use the same kind of notes you would in an actual speech.

It may be useful to prepare questions to ask both before the tournament as well as during the session. Having a few good questions prepared is always a good strategy, especially if someone who is called on before you asks a similar question to yours! One tactic may be to see how many questions you can ask of a teammate even though in the real round you may only get one question in.

## Performance Tips

In your first Congress chamber, the key is confidence! Act like you've done this before and follow the lead of your fellow competitors. While it can be intimidating at first, your goal should be to get as many questions and speeches in as you can.

The basic delivery mechanics can take you a long way—eye contact, posture, physically moving between your points to indicate transitions, volume and projection, enunciation, etc. Practice these skills before the tournament so you are sure to demonstrate your mastery in the round!

As the round progresses, notice not only who stands out but why. What is it about their performance that is so appealing? Are they well researched? Do they have solid evidence? Keep track of the kinds of performances that stand out to you so you can focus on those skills in practice!

## Resources

The Association provides resources on its website to help debaters get started in Congressional Debate. In addition to videos of previous final rounds, we offer videos to help you understand a session, argument selection, logical fallacies, as well as an archive of webinars on both topics frequently covered in Congressional Debate and strategies for approaching the activity. We also offer a guide for getting started in debate and templates for developing bills and resolutions.

Member students and coaches at NSDA schools can access these materials and more at **www.speechanddebate.org/resources**. Use the filter function on the left hand side of the page to find resources specific to Congressional Debate.

The website **www.congressionaldebate.org** is another great resource to help you get started. There you will find comprehensive guides on presiding in round, writing legislation, templates to help you craft bills and resolutions, developing arguments, and other tips and tricks.

AN INTRODUCTION TO

# Extemporaneous Debate

*Extemporaneous Debate at a Glance*

NATIONAL SPEECH & DEBATE ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL FORENSIC LEAGUE

## Event Description

**Extemporaneous Debate** is a supplemental event at the National Speech & Debate Tournament. Students compete in a one-on-one format with limited prep time to prepare for the topic they are to debate. Students present arguments and engagein rebuttals; however, unlike other common debate events, students debate a number of topics, as opposed to a single topic for the entire tournament. Each round students are presented a unique resolution. They are given a minimum of 30 minutes to prepare for the round. The use of evidence is permitted, but not a focal point due to the limited time available to prepare a case for the round.

## Considerations for Extemporaneous Debate

Students who are interested in doing Extemporaneous Debate should be well versed in various topics since the resolutions for the debate change round to round. Students should be able to think quickly on their feet and work under time restrictions. Any student who does debate or Extemp is naturally drawn to Extemporaneous Debate. However, the event is not something that other public speakers or interpers should shy away from. Students who are knowledgeable, thoughtful, and able to process ideas quickly to formulate positions would find the event to be challenging and rewarding.

## Traits of Successful Extemp Debaters

When considering what event to choose, or which direction to point a student selecting an event, here are some traits of successful Extemp Debate students to keep in mind:

- Analytical
- Broad knowledge base
- Confident
- Persuasive speaker
- Quick thinker
- Independent
- Logical thinker

## Examples of Past Extemp Debate Topics

- Resolved: The Affordable Care Act should be repealed.
- Resolved: Marijuana use should be decriminalized.
- Resolved: The U.S. should execute its planned troop withdrawal from Afghanistan.
- Resolved: Congress should have the right to limit freedom of expression by corporations, associations, and unions.
- Resolved: The implementation of the Common Core will improve public education in the US.
- Resolved: The deal to free Bowe Bergdahl was unjustified.
- Resolved: Congress should include a "pathway to citizenship" as part of immigration reform.
- Resolved: American businesses should have the right to deny workers the right to unionize.
- Resolved: The U.S. federal government should increase regulations on GMOs.
- Resolved: The U.S. federal government should stop providing loans for college tuition.

**Learn More!** The National Speech & Debate Association is the leading provider of competitive and educational resources to aid students and coaches as they explore our competitive events. The Association provides final round recordings specific to **Extemporaneous Debate**.

## Find Your Voice

*"Extemp Debate conveyed to me the importance of being well read and open minded about a wide variety of topics. The event also helped me work on my word economy and efficiency when discussing important points in every day conversation. Finally, the compressed format and scope of the topics also gave me an opportunity to engage in really enjoyable debate on topics that I would never have been able to without it."*

**— James Stage, Association Alum**

# Extemporaneous Debate

NATIONAL SPEECH & DEBATE ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL FORENSIC LEAGUE

## Basic Understandings

Extemporaneous Debate is a one-on-one format that is unique from other events offered by the National Speech & Debate Association. During this limited prep debate event, students are only guaranteed thirty minutes to prepare for their round once the topic is released. There are instances when debaters may get more than 30 minutes, but never less. Debaters are either in favor of the resolution or against the resolution and will be assigned to a particular side by a computer. Debaters present their positions on the topic and engage in cross-examination and rebuttals.

## Research

Since students have limited time to prepare for a topic, it is important that they are efficient with any research they wish to conduct prior to the round beginning. Students should keep copies of any of the research they use in rounds and be sure to have proper citations with the evidence used. While debaters may look at journals or peer reviewed studies, a limited prep event would make that type of research more difficult. Newspaper articles, think tanks, or credible websites may be the most efficient means of conducting your research. Since time is limited it would make sense that the focus would be less on research and more on brainstorming and generating ideas. Students may consider filing some research in advance, similar to an extemper, so they would already have reputable research on hand for various topics that could be addressed. Students are expected to act in accordance with the Association's LD, PF, and Policy rules on evidence in debate if they elect to use authoritative sources in the round. Check tournament policies to learn if internet is allowed to be used during the preparation period.

## Structural Components

All speeches are two minutes in length and all speech times are protected (a speaker may not be interrupted by the other speaker or by the judge). The proposition debater must affirm the resolution by presenting and defending a sufficient case for the resolution. The opposition debater must oppose the resolution and/or the proposition debater's case. The round will have constructives, rebuttals, cross examination, and built in prep time.

| Speech | Time Limit | Responsibility of Debater |
|---|---|---|
| Proposition Constructive | 2 min | The debater in favor of the resolution presents their case/position in support of the topic. |
| Cross Examination of Proposition | 1 min | The opposition debater asks the proposition questions. |
| Opposition Constructive | 2 min | The debater against the resolution or the proposition's case presents their case/position. |
| Cross Examination of Opposition | 1 min | The proposition debater asks the opposition questions. |
| Mandatory Prep Time | 1 min | Both debaters have one minute to prepare their rebuttals. |
| Proposition Rebuttal | 2 min | The proposition debater refutes the main idea of the opposition and supports their main ideas. |
| Opposition Rebuttal | 2 min | The opposition debater refutes the main idea of the proposition and supports their main ideas. |
| Mandatory Prep Time | 1 min | Both debaters have one minute to prepare their rebuttals. |
| Proposition Rebuttal | 2 min | In this final speech the proposition crystallizes the round for the judge and tries to establish sufficient reason for a vote in favor of the resolution. |
| Opposition Rebuttal | 2 min | In this final speech the opposition crystallizes the round for the judge and tries to establish sufficient reason for a vote against the proposition's case and/or the resolution. |

## Organizing

### *Argumentation*

First, a debater must clearly establish their claim. This is generally a declarative statement that establishes the point they are setting out to justify. Next, a debater must clearly establish why their argument is valid. This is known as the warrant for an argument. Debaters need to go beyond asserting their claims by backing them up with analysis explaining why the argument is true. The warrant can come in many forms, but is necessary for the development of the argument. It is important to note that having an author simply make an assertion about a topic is not a warrant. Finally, a debater must provide an impact for their argument. This means the debater establishes why the argument is significant in the round.

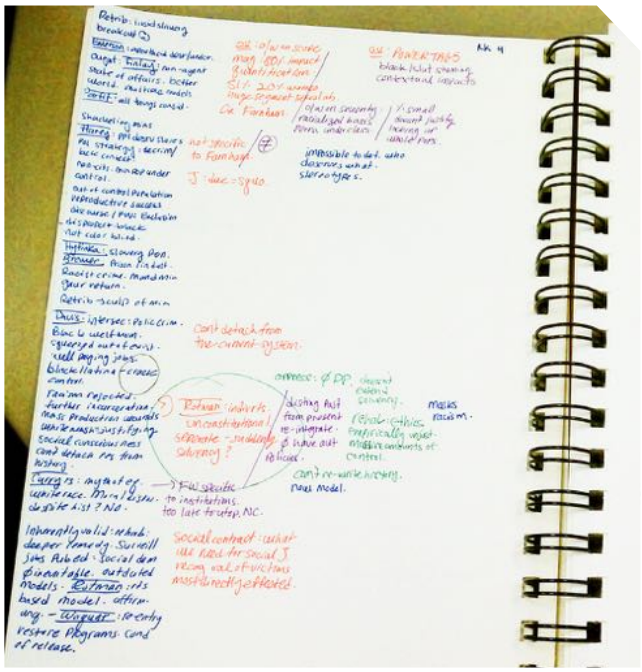
### *Casing*

After students brainstorm arguments, it is time to construct cases. Many students in Extemporaneous Debate will outline a position, as opposed to writing out a case verbatim. Since the case being read is only two minutes it is important for the debater to efficiently develop their ideas. A thesis statement may be appropriate at the start of a case with well structured and signposted arguments that directly link back to said thesis. Similar to contentions in other debate events or main points in Extemp, each main point in the case should be clearly indicated and organized.

### *Refutations*

Extemporaneous Debate is more than just cases! Debaters engage in refuting each other's arguments. Students may refute cases by denying the validity of the argument, which is most common. Additional strategies include, but are not limited to, asserting the reverse of the argument, showing the opponent's arguments do not carry as much weight as their arguments, or taking out the link between the opponent's argument and the thesis they presented.

### *Flowing*



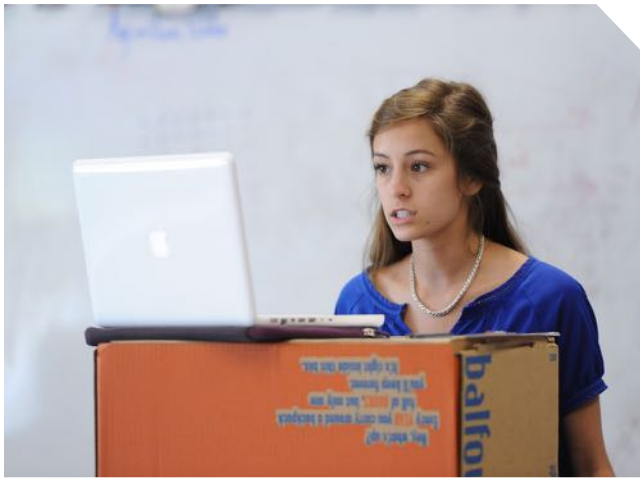
It is important for debaters to learn how to keep track of arguments in the round. Typically debaters "flow" the debate round—making note of the arguments that are presented and refuted in the round. This notetaking approach requires students to abbreviate terms, phrases, and ideas so that they can get as much of the debate written down as possible. Here are some tips:

- Use two sheet of paper. One page will be for anything said about the proposition, the other for anything said about the opposition. Each speech in the round will receive its own column on these pages.
- Use at least one pen, but we recommend two, in different colors, one for each side.
- If your opponent is speaking, you should be writing (initially, do not try and determine what is or isn't important—just get as much down as possible)
- Label the top of each column on the proposition flow with the names of the speeches, in chronological order from left to right.
- Label the top of each column on the opposition flow with the names of the speeches, in chronological order from left to right.

## Practicing

It is a great idea to do practice rounds before going to your first tournament. As these are such short speeches, it might appear at first that there will not be enough time to develop arguments. You will discover that you can be very

efficient and focused with your language to make every second count. This is a skill that must be practiced to be fully developed. The first round could be a stop and go round where a coach or observer stops you when there's a missed opportunity for a strong argument or confusion about what you are saying. During these rounds, you may re-give speeches until you or the observer/coach are satisfied with the speech that is delivered. This is a great time to work on language choices and time management. Additionally, since the tournament only guarantees 30 minutes of prep time, students should practice under those conditions. A student should work on vocal emphasis, eye contact, and fluidity.



## Performance Tips

It is important to remember that you are communicating to your judge. The decision rests solely in the hands of the judge! You must focus on persuading them, which means that you should be directing your speeches and cross-examination questions and answers to the judge, and not to your opponent.

Take feedback from judges as opportunities to improve. If judges provide oral feedback, take notes on what they share to review with your coach. Finally, do not fixate on the outcome of a round—focusing on wins and losses won't lead to greater success!

## Resources

Visit our Resources page to view final round performances. Plus, as a debate event, many of the resources for LD, PF, Policy, or Congress would also apply. Textbooks for the various events go through argumentation practices that would be effective in Extemporaneous Debate. Topic analyses provided on debate topics would be worthwhile

to gather background information for Extemporaneous Debate. Take advantage of the myriad of resources available through the Association.

AN INTRODUCTION TO

# Lincoln-Douglas Debate

*Lincoln-Douglas Debate at a Glance*

NATIONAL SPEECH & DEBATE ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL FORENSIC LEAGUE

## Event Description

In this one-on-one format, students debate a topic provided by the Association. **Lincoln-Douglas Debate** (LD) 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.

## Considerations for Lincoln-Douglas Debate

Lincoln-Douglas Debate typically appeals to individuals who like to debate, but prefer a one-on-one format as opposed to a team or group setting. Additionally, individuals who enjoy LD like exploring questions of how society ought to be. Many people refer to LD Debate as a "values" debate, as questions of morality and justice are commonly examined. Students prepare cases and then engage in an exchange of cross-examinations and rebuttals in an attempt to convince a judge that they are the better debater in the round.

## Traits of Successful LD Debaters

When considering what event you should choose, or in which direction to point a student when selecting an event, below are some general traits of successful LD debaters to keep in mind:

- Independent
- Thinks logically
- Analytical
- Intrigued by philosophy
- Determined
- Thoughtful

## List of Past LD Topics

- Resolved: The United States ought to prioritize the pursuit of national security objectives above the digital privacy of its citizens.
- Resolved: Placing political conditions on humanitarian aid to foreign countries is unjust.
- Resolved: Developing countries should prioritize environmental protection over resource extraction when the two are in conflict.
- Resolved: Targeted killing is a morally permissible foreign policy tool.
- Resolved: Individuals have a moral obligation to assist people in need.
- Resolved: The United States is justified in using private military firms abroad to pursue its military objectives.
- Resolved: In the United States, juveniles charged with violent felonies ought to be treated as adults in the criminal justice system.
- Resolved: The abuse of illegal drugs ought to be treated as a matter of public health, not of criminal justice.

**Note:** For novices, the Association designates the following topic for districts to use during the first two months of a novice season:
**Resolved: Civil disobedience in a democracy is morally justified.**

**Learn More!** The National Speech & Debate Association is the leading provider of competitive and educational resources to aid students and coaches as they explore our competitive events. For **Lincoln-Douglas Debate**, we provide a number of helpful resources—including live and recorded webinars designed to introduce foundational and advanced concepts in LD; access to LD final round videos; an LD textbook; specific guidance on the annual novice topic; topic analysis; research assistance; and much more! Take advantage of the amazing benefits of being a member by using our resources to help advance yourself in competitive speech and debate activities. Visit **www.speechanddebate.org** for more information.

## Find Your Voice

*"LD allowed me to question basic assumptions and reevaluate aspects of the world. Despite debating individually, the community is so welcoming; I made friends across the country."*

**— Jordan Friedman, Association Alum**

COMPETITION EVENTS GUIDE

# Lincoln-Douglas Debate

NATIONAL SPEECH & DEBATE ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL FORENSIC LEAGUE

## Basic Understandings

Lincoln Douglas Debate (LD) is a one-on-one event where debaters argue against one another on a specified resolution. Therefore, it is imperative when students begin LD, they know the resolution being debated. If you visit **www.speechanddebate.org/topics**, you will see the topics assigned by month. Additionally, the Association specifies a separate topic for the first two months of a novice season. It is important to note that not all tournaments use the topic suggested for their competition. Therefore, be sure to check the invitation for complete information.

Once a debater knows the resolution, the student should begin brainstorming arguments on the topic. An argument's basic structure is referred to as claim, warrant, and impact (more details below). The debater should also construct their cases (more details below). Finally, they should consider their opponent's arguments and brainstorm responses. At the end of the round, a debater should also offer summary reasons as to why they should win, which are commonly referred to as "voting issues."

## Research

After students do an initial brainstorm session, conduct research. Look in reputable journals for articles written by experts in the field and texts written by philosophers. Additional sources include, but are not limited to, newspaper articles, think tanks, and credible websites. Check with your school's Media Center/Library Services Department for research tips and information on what you have access to through your school.

## Structural Components

The structure of the round, and corresponding speaker responsibilities, can be found below:

| Speech | Time Limit | Responsibility of Debater |
|---|---|---|
| Affirmative Constructive | 6 min | Present the affirmative case |
| Negative Cross-Examination | 3 min | Negative asks questions of the affirmative |
| Negative Constructive/ Negative Rebuttal | 7 min | Present the negative case and refute the affirmative case |
| Affirmative Cross-Examination | 3 min | Affirmative asks questions of the negative |
| First Affirmative Rebuttal | 4 min | Refute the negative case and rebuild the affirmative case |
| 2nd Negative Rebuttal | 6 min | 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 min | Address negative voting issues and offer crystallization for why the affirmative should win. |

**Each debater is also entitled to four minutes of prep time during the round.*

## Organizing

### *Argumentation*

First, a debater must clearly establish their claim. This is generally a declarative statement that establishes the point they are setting out to justify. Next, a debater must clearly establish why their argument is valid. This is known as the warrant for an argument. Debaters need

to go beyond asserting their claims by backing them up with analysis explaining why the argument is true. The warrant can come in many forms, but is necessary for the development of the argument. It is important to note that having an author simply make an assertion about a topic is not a warrant. Finally, a debater must provide an impact for their argument. This means the debater establishes why the argument is significant in the round.

### *Casing*

After students brainstorm arguments, it is time to construct cases. While there is no rule requiring a specific structure, there is a traditional approach to constructing a case. Most commonly, LD debaters use a value and criterion model to structure their case. Under this model, the students propose a specific value that they feel is the ultimate goal debaters should be striving for in the round. Subsequently, they offer a criterion which offers a specific mechanism to determine if the value is being achieved by either debater in the round. A common example is offering a value of Justice with a criterion of Rights Protection. A debater should offer definitions of these terms, as well as explain how the value best fits the resolution and how the criterion best measures if the value is achieved. After they establish their value and criterion, they would offer contentions. These are the main arguments of the affirmative or negative and would strive to assert that the value/criterion is being achieved. When developing arguments the arguments should link back to the value/criterion.

### *Refutations*

Lincoln Douglas debate is more than just cases! Debaters engage in refuting each other's arguments. Students may refute cases by denying the validity of the argument, which is most common. Additional strategies include, but are not limited to, asserting the reverse of the argument, showing the opponent's arguments do not carry as much weight as their arguments, or taking out the link between the opponent's argument and the value/criterion being used in the round. Students can pre-write their answers to arguments they expect their opponents to make. These are commonly known as "blocks."

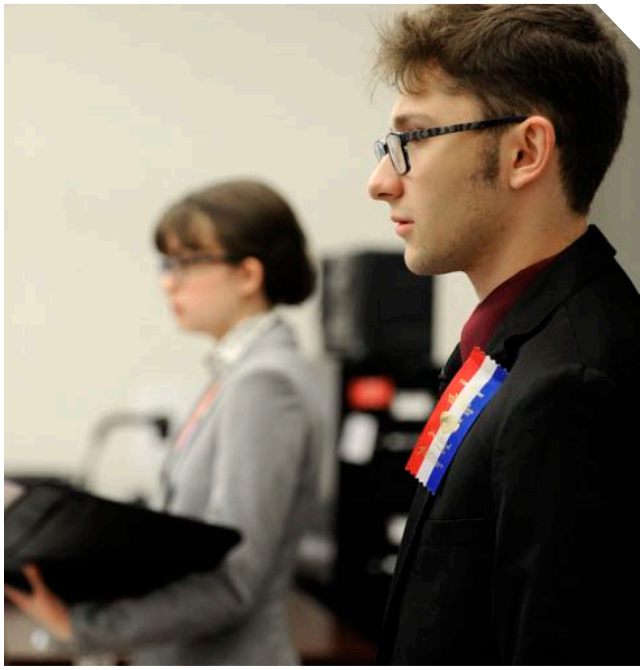
### *Flowing*

It is important for debaters to learn how to keep track of arguments in the round. Typically debaters "flow" the debate round—making note of the arguments that are presented and refuted in the round. This note-taking approach requires students to abbreviate terms, phrases, and ideas so that they can get as much of the debate written down as possible. Here are some tips:

- Two sheets of paper. One page will be for anything said about the affirmative, the other for anything said about the negative. Each speech in the round will receive its own column on these pages.
- At least one pen, but we recommend two, in different colors.
- If your opponent is speaking, you should be writing (do not try and determine what is or isn't important—just get as much down as possible)
- Orient both pieces of paper vertically, as in a book. Fold (or draw lines) on the sheet of paper into 5 columns of equal width. This can be achieved by folding an initial 1.5" column from either side. Flip the paper and fold in another column to match; continue

until the piece of paper has 4 folds to produce 5 columns. This is your affirmative flow.

- Fold the other sheet of paper into 4 columns of equal width. This is your negative flow.
- Label the top of each column on the affirmative flow with the names of the speeches, in chronological order from left to right.
- Label the top of each column on the negative flow with the names of the speeches, in chronological order from left to right.



## Practicing

It is a great idea to do practice rounds before going to your first tournament. At first, it may seem that you do not have enough to say to fill up the speech times. However, that will change with practice. The first round could be a stop and go round where a coach or observer stops you when there's a missed opportunity or confusion about what you are saying. During these rounds, you may re-give speeches until you or the observer/coach are satisfied with the speech that is delivered. Additionally, since your cases are prepared in advance, students should spend time working on the delivery of that speech. A student should work on emphasis, eye contact, and fluidity.

## Performance Tips

It is important to remember that you are communicating to your judge. The decision rests solely in the hands of the judge! You must focus on persuading them, which means that you should be directing your speeches and cross-examination questions and answers to the judge, and not to your opponent.

When at your first tournament it is important to keep in mind that it gets easier with more practice. The goal is not about where you begin, but where you end. If you get better from round to round or tournament to tournament—you're successful. Focus not only on what you could improve upon, but also on what you did well. Celebrate what worked and try and emulate that in future rounds or tournaments. Take feedback from judges as opportunities to improve. If judges provide oral feedback, take notes on what they share to review with your coach. Finally, do not fixate on the outcome of a round—focusing on wins and losses won't lead to greater success!

## Resources

The Association offers great resources to our members. These include lesson plans for introducing Lincoln-Douglas Debate to novices, recorded videos on casing, flowing, and drills, written topic analyses, research guides, a textbook, and more!

Member students and coaches at NSDA schools can access these materials and more at **www.speechanddebate.org/resources**. Use the filter function on the left hand side of the page to find resources specific to Lincoln-Douglas Debate.

AN INTRODUCTION TO

# Policy Debate

*Policy Debate at a Glance*

NATIONAL SPEECH & DEBATE ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL FORENSIC LEAGUE

## Event Description

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** (CX) 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.

## Considerations for Policy Debate

Students who do Policy Debate must be able to work well with a partner. Balanced teams, both in terms of preparation before debates and contributions within a debate, helps provide a competitive advantage during tournaments. Policy debaters are interested in examining specific policies in an intricate and detailed manner. Depth of research is a common trait of successful Policy debaters. Policy Debate is commonly viewed as the most technical debate event within the Association.

## Traits of Successful Policy Debaters

When considering what event you should choose, or in which direction to point a student when selecting an event, below are some general traits of successful Policy debaters to keep in mind:

- Critical of what they are told
- Team player
- Scans as they read
- Determined to find the best research
- Longer attention span
- Single minded

## List of Past Policy Topics

- Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially increase its non-military exploration and/or development of the Earth's oceans.
- Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially increase its economic engagement toward Cuba, Mexico or Venezuela.
- Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially increase its transportation infrastructure investment in the United States.
- Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially increase its exploration and/or development of space beyond the Earth's mesosphere.
- Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially reduce its military and/or police presence in one or more of the following: South Korea, Japan, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Iraq, Turkey.
- Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially increase social services for persons living in poverty in the United States.

**Learn More!** The National Speech & Debate Association is the leading provider of competitive and educational resources to aid students and coaches as they explore our competitive events. For **Policy Debate**, we provide a number of helpful resources—including live and recorded webinars designed to introduce foundational and advanced concepts in Policy; access to Policy final round videos; a Policy textbook; a starter file for beginning debaters; research assistance; and much more! Take advantage of the amazing benefits of being a member by using our resources to help advance yourself in competitive speech and debate activities. Visit **www.speechanddebate.org** for more information.

## Find Your Voice

*"Policy Debate provided me immeasurable critical thinking skills and confidence in not only my ability to speak but also my ability to think. But what I loved most about Policy Debate is that the nature of the activity is one that rewards hard work—nobody is born a good debater. Instead Policy Debate is pure effort and perseverance and I love that."* **— Nathaniel Sawyer, Association Alum**

# Policy Debate

NATIONAL SPEECH & DEBATE ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL FORENSIC LEAGUE

## Basic Understandings

Policy debate is a two-on-two debate where an affirmative team proposes a plan and the negative team argues why that plan should not be adopted. The topic for policy debate changes annually, so debaters throughout the course of the year will debate the same topic.

The debate unfolds throughout a series of speeches as outlined below:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 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) | | 8 minutes |

One member of each team will perform the 'first' speeches, the other the 'second' speeches. So the person who reads the 1AC wil also perform the 1AR, for example. Note that the debate begins with the affirmative speaking first, and then switches midway through the debate where the negative speaks first, thus giving the affirmative the ability to speak last.

## Research

Policy debate is a very research-intensive activity. Unlike traditional writing where the author may briefly quote or even paraphrase evidence, Policy Debate relies on the use of cards, or pieces of evidence directly quoted word-for-word from the source.

A typical piece of evidence consists of three parts: the tagline, the citation, and the evidence. The tagline is the argument or claim that either the evidence asserts or that the debater is asserting based on the evidence. For example, if the Department of Labor had produced a report saying that more people have left the workforce, the tagline might be 'The number of discouraged workers are on the rise' or 'The federal government must respond to the growing number of people leaving the workforce.' The citation provides the information necessary to track down the source, similar to an MLA/APA citation. The author, the title, the publication the source, the page, etc. This information will not be read aloud in the round except for the author and the year (or more specific date if necessary). Finally, a piece of evidence consists of the text of the evidence itself. The expectation in Policy Debate is that cards are read verbatim, so the paraphrasing of evidence as it is being read for the first time is discouraged. Instead, the debater should underline or bold the parts of the text of the evidence they deem most necessary. Please see the resources provided by the Association (listed at the end of this guide) for examples of evidence and cut cards.

So where do all these cards come from? The Association offers a starter pack of affirmative and negative evidence, as well as biweekly updates of evidence research for resource package members. There are other resources available, one of which is the National Debate Coaches Open Evidence Project. As debaters become more advanced, they are better served, though, if they use evidence they have compiled from original research.

Scholarly databases, news outlets, books, journal articles, and other reputable sources are great avenues for finding the best evidence. As research is gathered, be sure to organize your findings based on argument and when you may use that evidence in a round.

## Structural Components

### *Affirmative*

The affirmative begins the debate by offering a plan, a specific example of the year's topic or resolution, and arguing that it is a good idea. In many circumstances, they will address the "stock issues" of a case in Policy Debate; in other instances, they may use a more advanced format of simply discussing advantages to the plan. The ultimate goal of the affirmative is to advocate for the passage of a plan that falls under the resolution. The presumption is that the status quo, or the way things are in the world without the passage of the plan, is worth rejecting in favor of living in a world with the plan adopted. Thankfully for the affirmative, they do not have to demonstrate that the plan would pass in the real world, only that it should. Policy proposals that may never survive the political climate of Congress are still fair game under the presumption of fiat—or the ability of the affirmative to will their plan into existence without having to worry about whether or not it would actually be adopted. To convince audiences to adopt their plan, affirmative cases directly or indirectly address the stock issues of significance, harms, inherency, topicality, and solvency. The Policy 101 debate textbook covers these issues in greater detail.

### *Negative*

The negative has a wide variety of strategies available to respond to the affirmative case. The presumption in policy debate is that if the negative can win one of the aforementioned stock issues, they win the debate. Alternatively, the negative can demonstrate that the harms of the plan outweigh the benefits. These strategies are divided into two broad types: on-case and off-case.

On-case responses to the affirmative position clash directly with arguments posed by the plan's advocates and generally focus on the stock issues. If the affirmative says the plan will save 500,000 lives, the negative may attempt to demonstrate why that claim is untrue. If the affirmative says we are wasting billions of dollars in the status quo on inefficient research, the negative may demonstrate why that research is necessary. We will discuss the structure of those arguments in a moment.

Off-case responses are positions developed that do not directly respond to the arguments posed by the affirmative. This can consist of a variety of positions. First, the negative may offer a disadvantage, or a harm or problem that will be caused when the plan is passed. Disadvantages must generally prove that a harm is brewing in the status quo, something about the passage of this plan will bring that harm into reality or intensify it, and then discuss the impacts of those harms. Second, the negative may propose a counter-plan, or a competitive, non-topical, mutually exclusive plan proposal compared to the affirmative. Third, the negative may directly address the topicality of the affirmative position, arguing that the affirmative's plan is not an example of the resolution, by providing definitions for the words of the resolution, showing how the affirmative fails to meet those definitions, and then discussing why the affirmative case ought to lose for violating this debate rule.

## Organizing

Keeping track of the arguments during the debate can be challenging, but most debaters flow arguments separately. The different components of the affirmative case (significance, harms, inherency, etc.) can be flowed on one sheet of paper or each position may be tracked separately. The negative will typically keep track of arguments on separate pieces of paper (the first disadvantage on one, the topicality on a second, a counterplan on the third, etc.). Arguments are listed shorthand on one side of the page. Each response is flowed in a different color ink next to it representing the two sides of the debate—affirmative arguments may be listed in black while negative arguments are listed in red, for example. More details on how to flow and different flowing techniques can be found in the resource section below.

## Practicing

Policy debate can be a fast-talking event! With strict time limits and the need to present arguments supported by well-articulated research, students will speak as efficiently as possible. Your first foray into performance practice should be reading your case and your positions out loud with a stop-watch. See how long it takes for you to read your case (and make sure your affirmative constructive is in time!). Focus on enunciation and pronunciation as you go. Remember, fewer and better-explained arguments will often win more debates. Ultimately, your judges set the pace for the round and so you should be prepared to speak at the speed they prefer.

It is always helpful to have practice debates before your first contest, against either teammates or even teams from other schools. These debates should be instructional in nature—the goal isn't to 'win.'

## Performance Tips

The first tournament can be an intimidating experience, but don't worry! Every round is an opportunity to learn! Approach your first rounds with confidence and act like you've done this before, even if you haven't. Prior to the debate, you may ask your judge if they have any preferences or paradigms, which will clue you into what kinds of arguments they may prefer and which kinds they may not. When your first round is over, keep your flows and listen to the advice the judge has to offer, either during the oral critique or written down on the ballot. Consult with your coach after the round to see how best to implement feedback. Keep these notes for future tournaments—it is not unusual to have the same judge several times during a year!

Between rounds, it is not unusual for debaters to gather more evidence and look at the organization of their files. Was there an argument you had trouble explaining or answering? Now's a great time to talk to your coach or teammates on how to prepare a "block" to use in future debates. Is there a card you wish you had in the round? Now's a good time to find it! Do you seem to have trouble finding the material you have gathered when you need it? Take a look at the organization of your files. Following the tournament, you can use your old flows to discuss strategy—what arguments seemed to work? What could you have improved on?

Some tournaments feature elimination rounds following the guaranteed preliminary rounds. If you advance and get to debate again, congratulations! It's just like any other round, except typically you will have a panel of judges as opposed to just one. If you don't, use this as an opportunity to observe other rounds to learn more about how to debate effectively.

## Resources

The resource page provided by the National Speech & Debate Association provides a variety of resources to help you in debate! Our Policy Debate "Teacher in a Box" lessons are designed for the novice coach and students and include links to webinars, handouts, and extended materials. Get started at **www.speechanddebate.org/teacher-in-a-box-policy-debate-unit-overview**.

Member students and coaches at NSDA schools can access these materials and more at **www.speechanddebate.org/resources**. Use the filter function on the left hand side of the page to find resources specific to Policy Debate.

AN INTRODUCTION TO

# Pro Con Challenge

*Pro Con Challenge at a Glance*

## Event Description

Students select a debate topic on which they will write a pro and a con speech. Typically, the topic choices include the current NSDA topics in Policy, Lincoln-Douglas, Public Forum, and legislation from the tournament's Congressional Debate docket. Competitors will write a three- to five-minute pro speech and a three- to five-minute con speech on that topic and present both sides within one 10-minute speech. This event allows students to explore debate topics in a new and exciting way while showing off their writing, research, and delivery skills.

## Considerations for Selecting a Topic

Students get to choose from a variety of topics. Consider what type of topic you like. Lincoln-Douglas topics tend to be more philosophical in nature. Public Forum topics typically consider a current event or hot button issue, and Policy topics ask students to consider an overarching governmental policy issue. Congress dockets tend to have more narrow subject matter, and they may range from expressing opinions about what should be done or mandate some action by the federal government.

Consider your interest and familiarity with the topics. You may choose a topic that you've already researched or could utilize your teammates as a resource to learn more about, or you could choose something new! Do you want to address a broad topic or something more narrow? Do you have enough content to fill up a five-minute speech with arguments on both sides of that topic?

Choose a topic you care about. Delivery can improve when you are passionate about the arguments you are writing! A good topic offers two sides that are balanced, equally engaging to your judge, explores larger themes and impacts, and presents a whole story and different perspectives on an issue. Can you be balanced in your presentation? Judges will look for compelling arguments on both sides of the topic.

## Traits of a Successful Pro Con Challenge Speech

Judges will evaluate the structure, arguments, evidence, and speaking abilities of each competitor and rank them against each other. Organization, analysis, and delivery are all key components of a successful Pro Con Challenge speech.

Judges and competitors come from a variety of backgrounds and experience with speech and debate events. Consider avoiding technical terms, debate jargon, and acronyms that may be common in the style of debate topic you have chosen. Your judges may not have experience in that format of debate!

Finally, consider that judges may be judging speeches on a variety of topics or the same topic in your rounds. A topic and speech that stands out is one that is balanced, engaging, and demonstrates an understanding of multiple perspectives on the topic.

**Learn More!** The National Speech & Debate Association is the leading provider of competitive and educational resources to aid students and coaches as they explore our competitive events.

## Find Your Voice

*Pro Con Challenge is fundamentally an exercise in empathy, listening, and shaping a common mind. The skills we learn in Pro Con Challenge are foundational for building our communities."*
**— Bill Harris, Coach**

COMPETITION EVENTS GUIDE

# Pro Con Challenge

## Basic Understandings

Pro Con Challenge is an exercise in intellectual humility. Competitors will select a debate topic and write a three- to five-minute pro speech and a three- to five-minute con speech on that topic. Students will likely not select the same topic as all of the other competitors in their round, so judges may observe speeches on a variety of topics within one round. Judges will evaluate the structure, arguments, evidence, and speaking abilities of each competitor and rank them against each other. The event's goal is to demonstrate that students have the ability to convey multiple perspectives on an overall issue.

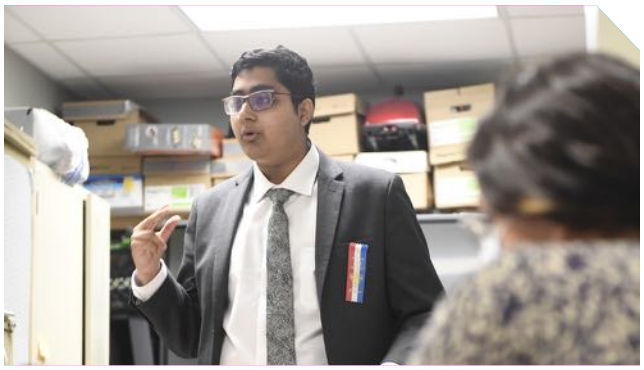
Instead of asking the judge to make a decision on which side of the topic was "won," judges will be asked for consideration of the quality of the speech in its entirety. Judges will rank the quality of the overall presentation against other speeches in the round.

## Research

Speeches should be geared toward an audience member who is a generally informed member of the public. Start by reading about the topic to gain a basic understanding. Unlike a debate round, your judges may not have adjudicated many rounds and have background knowledge on the topic, so your role will be to provide them with enough context for your arguments to make sense! Your topic choice should build an understanding for the issue and why it is up for debate.

Next, dive into researching advanced discussions of the topic. Pro Con Challenge speeches should include a variety of evidence that can range from scientific studies and academic journal articles to philosophical texts. Students are expected to cite evidence in their speeches the same way a debater would. Rules surrounding evidence ethics, citations, and paraphrasing apply to these speeches. Check with your school's Media Center/Library Services Department for research tips and information about what you have access to through your school. Don't forget that NSDA members have free access to the HeinOnline research database!

When planning your research and how to use it in your speeches, consider questions that the judges will use to



adjudicate your performance. Does the speaker display solid logic and reasoning? Does the speaker advocate a position, utilize evidence, and communicate clear ideas? Are both sides of the topic well defended?

## Structural Components

There are a number of choices that competitors are free to make with regard to the structure of their Pro Con speeches. For example, they may run a plan if they chose the Policy topic, but no particular structure is required. During their con case, they may refute their pro case, but it is not required. It is important to remember that these speeches will be judged against any of the given topic areas in one round. Judges will evaluate the structure, arguments, evidence, and speaking abilities of each competitor and rank them against each other.

For each argument you make, you must first clearly establish a claim. This is a statement that concisely summarizes the point you will make. Next, you must justify why your claim is true or based in fact and logic. This is known as the warrant for an argument. You will need to go beyond asserting or explaining your claims and back them up with analysis explaining why the argument is valid. The warrant can come in many forms, such as logic or research. Research from a well-established source is often necessary. Once you have summarized the point you are making and justify it with logic and/or evidence, you will provide an impact for your argument. This means you have established why the argument is significant in the round.

Pro Con speeches are presented back to back. Competitors will present their pro speech and then immediately move on to presenting their con speech. The con speech does not have a dedicated rebuttal period in which the speaker is expected to directly refute the pro arguments they presented; however, students may choose to select con arguments that clash with the pro arguments read in the speech.

## Organization

While there is no rule requiring a specific structure for any debate event's constructive speech, there is a traditional approach to constructing this pre-written speech. Often, a constructive begins with a thesis statement as an introductory lead-in to the position. Next, you will define key terms and discuss the metrics for successfully evaluating the topic (sometimes called "framework" or "weighing mechanisms"). Following this introduction, you will offer your main arguments following the claim, warrant, and impact structure for each. Each main argument is called a "contention." Contentions may include quotes from qualified authors, scientific studies, or your own analysis. Given the five-minute time limit, your constructive will likely have two to three substantial contentions.

There is no particular time limit on each individual pro or con speech, only an overall 10-minute time limit for the whole presentation. However, consider how much time you devote to each side's arguments and plan your transition from pro to con speech. Speeches should be balanced in terms of argumentation and evidence.

Judges will measure not only the strength of the arguments in your speech, but also their presentation. They will consider questions such as: Does the student have a clear structure to their speech? Are transitions used to move effectively between each part of the speech? Does the development of the speech make sense?

## Performance Tips

Students should practice presenting this speech as if it is a constructive being delivered in a debate round. Constructive speeches are pre-written, not extemporaneous. Constructive speeches are not memorized; however, eye contact and other aspects of nonverbal communication are important considerations. Students may speak from notes in any format—legal pads, notecards, or electronic tablets, for example, are all permissible. Because community judges will likely adjudicate many rounds, the speed of delivery should be tailored for their comprehension.

Pro Con Challenge speeches are fundamentally persuasive in nature. While presenting your pro speech, you will be asking judges to believe in your side of the topic. When presenting your con speech, you will be asking them to be persuaded on this side of the topic. Invite the judge to consider their own beliefs about the topic. Consider how your rate of speech, tone, use of space, and rhetorical devices can impact persuasion. Are you using voice, movement, and expression effectively? Are you presenting your arguments with confidence? Is your rate and volume appropriate?

Pro Con Challenge is often offered as an online event. Students may choose to present their speeches while sitting or standing, but they should adjust their gestures, eye contact, and facial expressions to the online world.

## Resources

We have many great resources for Pro Con Challenge, including a webinar specific to helping students prepare to compete in Pro Con Challenge for the first time. Review final round videos of Pro Con Challenge from past National Tournaments. Observe the rounds not only as entertainment, but also for effective organization, research, and performance techniques. Ask yourself, how can I apply similar techniques to my performance? The best way to learn Pro Con Challenge, outside of actively doing it, is by watching and learning from other performers.

AN INTRODUCTION TO

# Public Forum Debate

*Public Forum Debate at a Glance*

NATIONAL SPEECH & DEBATE ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL FORENSIC LEAGUE

## Event Description

**Public Forum Debate** (PF) involves opposing teams of two, debating a topic concerning a current event. Proceeding a coin toss, the winners choose which side to debate (PRO or CON) or which speaker position they prefer (1st or 2nd), and the other team receives the remaining option. Students present cases, engage in rebuttal and refutation, and also participate in a "crossfire" (similar to a cross-examination) with the opportunity to question the opposing team. Often, community members are recruited to judge this event.

## Considerations for Public Forum Debate

As a team event, students who compete in Public Forum need to be able to work well with a partner. Balanced teams, both in terms of preparation before debates and contributions within a debate, helps provide a competitive advantage during tournaments. PF looks at current event topics. Students who do Public Forum must be prepared to debate in front of judges without any formal debate training. Being able to persuade a range of judges is a central component to this event. Additionally, PF is focused upon debating varying resolutions that change frequently, which exposes students to a variety of topics during a singular competitive season.

## Traits of Successful PF Debaters

When considering what event you should choose, or in which direction to point a student when selecting an event, below are some general traits of successful PF debaters to keep in mind:

- Thinks logically
- Simplifies concepts
- Big-picture thinker
- Professional
- Organized in both presentation and thought
- Engaging personality that is persuasive to a variety of people

## List of Past PF Topics

- Resolved: NATO should strengthen its relationship with Ukraine in order to deter further Russian aggression.
- Resolved: Single-gender classrooms would improve the quality of education in American public schools.
- Resolved: Immigration reform should include a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants currently living in the United States.
- Resolved: The benefits of domestic surveillance by the NSA outweigh the harms.
- Resolved: The continuation of current U.S. anti-drug policies in Latin America will do more harm than good.
- Resolved: On balance, the rise of China is beneficial to the interests of the United States.
- Resolved: Congress should renew the Federal Assault Weapons Ban.
- Resolved: The benefits of post-9/11 security measures outweigh the harms to personal freedom.

**Learn More!** The National Speech & Debate Association is the leading provider of competitive and educational resources to aid students and coaches as they explore our competitive events. For **Public Forum Debate**, we provide a number of helpful resources—including live and recorded webinars designed to introduce foundational and advanced concepts in PF; access to PF final round videos; a PF textbook; a starter file for beginning debaters; research assistance; and much more! Take advantage of the amazing benefits of being a member by using our resources to help advance yourself in competitive speech and debate activities. Visit **www.speechanddebate.org** for more information.

## Find Your Voice

*"Public Forum played a large role in who I am today. It taught me to be persuasive. At its core, the event's structure and audience forced me to shape and mold my thoughts into concise, simple, yet elegant arguments."*

**— Danny Rego, Association Alum**

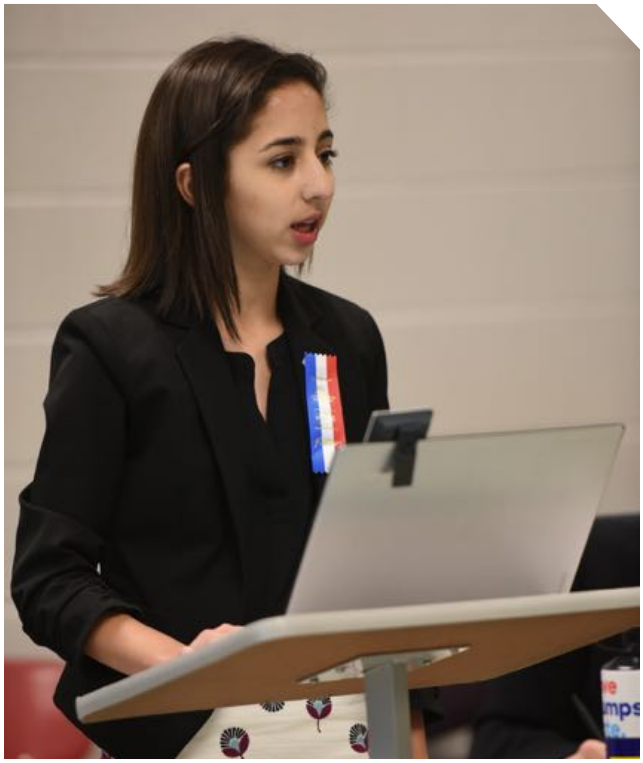
COMPETITION EVENTS GUIDE

# Public Forum Debate

## Basic Understandings

Public Forum Debate (PF) is a two-on-two event where teams argue against each other on a specified resolution. Therefore, it is imperative that when students begin PF, they know the resolution being debated. If you visit **www.speechanddebate.org/topics**, you will see the topics, which are assigned by month of competition. . It is important to note that not all tournaments use the topic suggested due to the timing of their tournament. Therefore, be sure to check the tournament invitation for complete information.

Once a debater knows the resolution, they should begin brainstorming potential arguments on the topic. An argument's basic structure is referred to as claim, warrant, and impact (more details below). A debater will also construct their positions, referred to as cases (more details below). Finally, they should think through potential arguments by their opponent and brainstorm responses. As the round progresses, a team should also offer reasons why they should win the round to the judge.



## Research

After students do an initial brainstorm session, they should conduct research. Evidence can come from anywhere—newspapers, journal articles, studies, books, primary documents, etc. When gathering research, a student should ask four questions:

1. Is the source reputable? Sources should have a good reputation for 'getting it right'—newswires such as the AP and Reuters tend to be less credible than newspapers.
2. Is the source verifiable? This refers to the ability to verify the data and claims made by the source. If a source is based on a personal interview or some other insider knowledge, that generally cannot be verified through independent means.
3. Is the source authoritative? Different sources are expert at different fields. The Office of Budget and Management is an authority on budget policy on the US, but may not be the ideal source for a resolution about foreign policy in the Middle East.
4. Is the source recent? While not every source must be up-to-the-minute, generally, a more recent source is better.

## Structural Components

One team advocates for the resolution, known as the PRO, and one team advocates against the resolution, known as the CON. Before the debate begins, the teams conduct a coin flip. The winner of the flip chooses either the side of the debate OR the speaking order. The team losing the

flip makes the other choice. For example, Jonesville High School wins the coin flip and chooses CON. Smithtown High School, who lost the flip, chooses the speaking order. If they choose 2nd, Jonesville would speak 1st on CON and Smithville will speak 2nd on PRO. Note that unlike other forms of debate, the CON may speak first. The structure of the round, and corresponding speaker responsibilities, follow:

| Speech | Time Limit | Responsibility of Debater |
|---|---|---|
| Team A Speaker 1 - Constructive | 4 min | Present the team's case |
| Team B Speaker 1 - Constructive | 4 min | Present the team's case |
| Crossfire | 3 min | Speaker 1 from Team A & B alternate asking and answering questions |
| Team A Speaker 2 - Rebuttal | 4 min | Refute the opposing side's arguments |
| Team B Speaker 2 - Rebuttal | 4 min | Refute the opposing side's arguments |
| Crossfire | 3 min | Speaker 2 from Team A & B alternate asking and answering questions |
| Team A Speaker 1 - Summary | 3 min | Begin crystallizing the main issues in the round |
| Team B Speaker 1 - Summary | 3 min | Begin crystallizing the main issues in the round |
| Grand Crossfire | 3 min | All four debaters involved in a crossfire at once |
| Team A Speaker 2 - Final Focus | 2 min | Explain reasons that you win the round |
| Team B Speaker 2 - Final Focus | 2 min | Explain reasons that you win the round |

**Each team is entitled to three minutes of prep time during the round.*

## Organizing

### *Argumentation*

First, a debater must clearly establish a claim. This is generally a declarative statement establishing the point they are setting out to justify. Second, a debater must clearly establish why their argument is valid. This is known as the warrant for an argument. Debaters need to go beyond asserting their claims and back them up with analysis. The warrant can come in many forms, but is necessary for the development of the argument. Debaters may use logic or research to back up their claims. It is important to note that having an author make an assertion about a topic is not on its own a warrant. Third, a debater must provide an impact for their argument. This means the debater establishes why the argument is significant in the round.

### *Casing*

After students have brainstormed arguments, it is time to construct cases. While there is no rule requiring a specific structure, there is a traditional approach to constructing a case. Often, a case starts with a well thought out thesis statement as an introductory lead-in to the position. Next, the case would define key terms. Following this introduction the debater would offer contentions, or main arguments.

### *Refutations*

But, PF is more than just cases! After presenting cases, students engage in refuting each other's arguments. Students commonly refute cases by denying the validity of the argument. Additional strategies include, but are not limited to, justifying the reverse of the argument, showing the opponent's arguments do not carry as much weight as their arguments, or taking out the link between the opponent's argument and the priority they establish in the round. Students can pre-write their answers to arguments they expect their opponents to make. These are commonly known as "blocks."

### *Flowing*

It is important for debaters to learn how to keep track of arguments in the round. Typically debaters "flow" the debate round—making note of the arguments presented

and refuted in the round. This note-taking approach requires students to abbreviate terms, phrases, and ideas so that they can get as much of the debate notated as possible. Here are some tips:

- Two sheets of paper. One page will be for anything said about the affirmative, the other for anything said about the negative, regardless of which debater is saying it. Each speech in the round will receive its own column on these pages.
- At least one pen, but we recommend two, in different colors.
- If the opponent is speaking, write (don't try to determine what's important at the outset—just write as much as you can)
- Orient both pieces of paper vertically, like a book. Note that columns will be narrow, which will increase the need for accurate/efficient abbreviations.

## Practicing

It is a great idea to do practice rounds before going to your first tournament. At first, it may seem you do not have enough to say to fill up the speech times. However, that will change with practice. The first round could be a stop and go round where a coach stops you when there's a missed opportunity or confusion about what to do during the speech. During these rounds, you may re-give speeches until you or the coach are satisfied with the speech. Additionally, students should practice delivering prepared speeches focusing on emphasis, eye contact, and fluidity.

## Performance Tips

When at your first tournament it is important to keep in mind that it gets easier with more practice. The goal is not about where you begin, but where you end. Improving from round to round, and tournament to tournament, is the true mark of success. Focus not only on what you could enhance, but also on what you did well. Take feedback from judges as opportunities to improve. If they provide oral feedback, take notes on what they share to review with your coach. Finally, do not fixate on the wins and losses—it won't lead to greater success!

## Resources

Our Public Forum Debate "Teacher in a Box" lessons are designed for the novice coach and students and include links to webinars, handouts, and extended materials. Get started at **www.speechanddebate.org/teacher-in-a-box-pf-unit-overview-novice**.

Member students and coaches at NSDA schools can access these materials and more at **www.speechanddebate.org/resources**. Use the filter function on the left hand side of the page to find resources specific to Public Forum Debate.

AN INTRODUCTION TO

# World Schools Debate

*World Schools Debate at a Glance*

## Event Description

World Schools Debate (WS) features a dynamic format that combines the concepts of "prepared" motions with "impromptu" motions, encouraging debaters to focus on specific issues rather than debate theory or procedural arguments. This highly interactive style of debate allows debaters to engage each other, even during speeches. The challenging format requires good teamwork and in-depth quality argumentation.

## Considerations for World Schools Debate

World Schools Debate is a three-on-three format. While a team may consist of five members, only three students from a team participate in a given debate. Resolutions come in two types: prepared motions and impromptu motions. Teams will be assigned one of two sides in each round—either the *proposition* team proposing the motion or the *opposition* team advocating the rejection of the motion. Debaters present their position on a motion, refute their opponents, and respond to questions throughout the course of the debate.

## Traits of Successful World Schools Debaters

When considering what event you should choose, or in which direction to point a student when selecting an event, below are some general traits of successful World Schools debaters to keep in mind:

- Thinks logically
- Analytical
- Persuasive
- Team-oriented
- Interested in world events
- Culturally competent

## Past World Schools Motions

- This House would eliminate all occupational licensing requirements for practicing the law.
- This House supports the creation of LGBT schools.
- This House would establish an international cap and trade system for refugees.
- This House believes that a two party system is preferable to a multi party system.
- This House supports the privatization of all government owned energy companies.
- This House would prevent immediate family members of leaders from working in the government.
- This House regrets the use of technology to correct perceived imperfections (e.g,. Photoshop, auto-tuning, etc.).
- This House regrets celebrity political speech.
- This House supports parental leave.
- This House supports national funding of the arts.

**Learn More!** The National Speech & Debate Association is the leading provider of competitive and educational resources to aid students and coaches as they explore our competitive events. For World Schools Debate, we provide a number of helpful resources—including judge training, sample ballots, motion guides, access to final round videos, and more. Take advantage of the amazing benefits of being a member by using our resources to help advance yourself in competitive speech and debate activities. Visit **www.speechanddebate.org** for more information.

## Find Your Voice

*"World Schools Debate opened my eyes to issues of global importance while sharpening my communication, critical thinking, and collaboration skills. The unique format of Worlds enables a teamwork dynamic that is not found in other formats of debate."*

**— Tiana Menon, Association Alum**

COMPETITION EVENTS GUIDE

# World Schools Debate

## Basic Understandings

In World Schools Debate (WS), two teams of three students debate each other. While a team may consist of five members, only three students from a team participate in a given debate. Resolutions come in two types: prepared motions and impromptu motions. Teams are assigned one of two sides in each round—either the *proposition* team proposing the motion or the *opposition* team advocating the rejection of the motion. Debaters present their position on a motion, refute their opponents, and respond to questions throughout the course of the debate.

## Research

After students do an initial brainstorming session on prepared motions, they should conduct research. In World Schools Debate, evidence is viewed differently than people tend to view it in more traditional forms of debate (LD, PF, Policy). Trying to approach evidence like one would in other events is counter-productive to individuals participating in Worlds. Instead, in order to be competitive in this event, one should incorporate contemporary and historical examples, statistics that show data and trends, analogies, and experiential evidence.

For impromptu motions, students cannot conduct outside research. Instead, they must rely upon their own understanding of the motion plus an almanac and a dictionary. As a result, it is important for students to stay up-to-date on current events and understand global issues of significance. Researching not just current events but the history to understand how we've arrived at these current events is important. Additionally, in the Worlds format, there are motions that focus on social, entertainment, and other issues, not just political ones.

Research is useful to understand motions and be able to generate arguments. The emphasis in World Schools is less on individual pieces of evidence and more on developing analysis and showing understanding. Research is acceptable on a prepared motion; however, citing evidence is not the primary means of developing argumentation in World Schools Debate.

## Structure

| Speech | Time Limit |
|---|---|
| Proposition Team Speaker 1 | 8 minutes |
| Opposition Team Speaker 1 | 8 minutes |
| Proposition Team Speaker 2 | 8 minutes |
| Opposition Team Speaker 2 | 8 minutes |
| Proposition Team Speaker 3 | 8 minutes |
| Opposition Team Speaker 3 | 8 minutes |
| Opposition Reply | 4 minutes |
| Proposition Reply | 4 minutes |

## Organization

### *Casing*

Both prepared and impromptu motions are offered at every Worlds competition. Prepared motions are released prior to a tournament, so you have nearly an unlimited amount of time to think through writing your cases. However, for impromptu motions, you only have a limited amount of time (one hour!) to divide your time between case-writing and practicing.

Below is a case outline that can be used for both prepared and impromptu motions, along with explanations of what each portion of the outline means. Many arguments for prepared motions will be guided by your prior research in addition to thinking about a topic, whereas arguments for an impromptu motion will be guided purely by thinking about a topic and what material you already know going into the round.

The following example outlines the introduction and arguments for a first proposition speech. Similarly, the first opposition speech may use the same outline for the framing and arguments for their side. The second proposition and second opposition speakers also can use the argument outline for creating the third argument presented in their respective speeches.

Intro Outline:

*Hook:* A few sentences aimed at grabbing the attention of the audience.

*Team Line:* A short sentence that is rhetorically pleasing aimed at explaining the core of your side on a given topic.

*State the Motion/Side*

*Framing:* This section has necessary definitions for vague terms or terms of art in the motion, a model/criteria/definition of the value term for policy/fact/value motions respectively, and explanation of the burden of each side of the debate.

*Roadmap:* An explanation of what you are going to do in your speech. (e.g., "I will give our first two arguments, and my teammate <Name> will give our third argument.")

Argument Outline:

*Tagline:* Begins with "Our first/second/third argument is..." followed by five to seven words explaining the claim to your argument.

*Thesis:* Two or three sentences giving a summary of your argument. Think of it like the thesis to an English essay.

*Steps:* Steps are the warrant to your argument. Use evidence to explain why your argument is true. Use different forms of "steps" to back up the validity of your claim. For example, "steps" could reference different stakeholders who are affected by the argument; "steps" could be subpoints with different examples; or "steps" could be chronological or causal.

*Impact:* A few sentences explaining why your argument matters. Who does it affect? How does it affect them?

*Weighing:* A few sentences explaining why your argument should matter more than the other team's arguments. (Generally this comes after the first proposition speech, since there isn't anything to compare your impacts to yet!)

## Refutation Strategies

Debaters should use a combination of both offense and defense when responding to their opponent's arguments. Stick to one to three arguments at most against every constructive argument that your opponent makes, because you should prioritize more efficient and better explained arguments rather than blippy, short arguments. Offense tends to be better than defense because it forces the opposing team to defend their arguments or risk losing to your offensive response.

### *The Two Types of Refutation*

There are two main types of refutation: *offense* and *defense*. Your responses to your opponent's arguments can utilize both or simply one of the two.

"Offense" refers to points of refutation that make your opponent's argument a reason for why they should *lose* the debate or for why you should *win* the debate. For example, on the topic, "Cats are better than dogs," one side might argue that cats are better because they tend to keep to themselves and are low-maintenance. The other side might make an offensive argument saying that is actually why cats are *not* better than dogs. Because people purchase pets for a primary reason—

to have a companion—if cats keep to themselves and are low-maintenance, then they are in fact *not* a good pet, whereas dogs love their owners and make great companions.

"Defense" refers to points of refutation that indicate an argument is not true, doesn't matter, or does matter *but* is outweighed by another argument in the debate. For example, with the same topic, "Cats are better than dogs," a defensive response might say that cats are in fact not low-maintenance because they require more frequent grooming.

## Flowing

"Flowing" as it is commonly known in debate refers to how you take notes in your respective version of debate. Each style tends to have their own form of flowing. If you are learning WS, you have likely learned a way to flow that you prefer from another style of debate. Students can use any form of flowing that they find easiest for them to follow the structure and arguments of the debate round. However, it is important to know how many WS judges will flow your speeches and how that might impact the way you should speak.

Judges who flow in a more "conventional" WS format will likely fold up their paper into six equal proportions horizontally rather vertically. Each sixth of the paper, which forms a column, will represent one of the constructive speeches from the first proposition speech to the third opposition speech. Then, they will flow the reply speeches side by side on another sheet of paper. Other judges will fold up their paper into eight equally proportioned columns and flow every speech including the reply speeches. Regardless of how they proportion their flows, they will flow each speech from the top down as you speak then draw arrows connecting arguments and their respective points of refutation.

Additionally, some judges might take note of who offers POIs (Points of Information) and what side they are on. At the end of the debate, if a team member has offered no POIs, their speaker points might be docked a speaker point. If an entire team has no POIs, the entire team will be docked speaker points. This is not true of all judges, but many keep some form of tally as debates occur. Since WS ought to be decided by the team that has the most speaker points at the end of the debate, this is crucial to note.

## Practicing

Practicing and speaking is one of the most important things to do while preparing for any speech or tournament. Each speech needs to be fluid and seemingly off-the-cuff (even if that means you have practiced it nearly a dozen times). WS has a huge focus on persuasion/public speaking, which must be earned. Persuasion comes from practicing your speeches to get your tone, emphasis, and rate of speech for your arguments right. A nearly perfect case means nothing in a world where you have not practiced delivering the speech.

As such, you should devote a huge portion of your time preparing for a tournament to practicing delivering your respective arguments as well as engaging in full practice debates. Practice how you play so that you can be one of the most prepared teams at a tournament. A good rule of thumb is that you should never go into a debate round having a) not practiced your assigned speech and b) not having had a practice debate on that topic.

## Performance Tips

When at your first tournament, it is important to keep in mind that it gets easier with more practice. The goal is not about where you begin, but where you end. Improving from round to round, and tournament to tournament,

is the true mark of success. Focus not only on what you could enhance, but also on what you did well. Take feedback from judges as opportunities to improve. If they provide oral feedback, take notes on what they share to review with your coach. Finally, do not fixate on the wins and losses—it won't lead to greater success!

## Resources

The Association offers great resources to our members. These include webinars, motion guides, judging materials, and more. Member students and coaches at NSDA schools can access these materials and more at **www.speechanddebate.org/resources**. Use the filter function on the left hand side of the page to find resources specific to World Schools Debate.

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