



Massachusetts Forensic League

Speech Judge Handbook

On behalf of the Massachusetts Forensic League and all member schools, we would like to thank you for judging for us today. Without you, this tournament could not function. We hope that you enjoy the results of the hard work that these competitors have put into preparing their performances.

This booklet has been written to help you with the practicalities of judging speech. While it has many guidelines, there are not many “rules” in speech. Feel free to use your common sense and judgment. If you have any questions during the day, please ask the staff.

The Tournament Day

Your school’s head coach should tell you where and when you should arrive at the tournament site. When you arrive, find the coach to get your **judge code** and your **assignment**. If you can’t find him/her, check in at the registration table, which is usually in the main lobby. The tournament staff will help you locate a coach from your school.

Your assignment will generally show 3-4 preliminary rounds, or **prelims**, in different events. Take some time to review the rules for the events you will be judging; rules are listed at the back of this book. The tournament may have to change your assignment during the day, so keep your judge’s handbook with you. Please do not swap rounds with another judge, even if they are judging for your school. Tournament staff will refer to you by code, so be sure to remember it.

At the beginning of the day, the tournament staff will conduct a short **judges’ briefing**. The meeting will cover the estimated time schedule for the day, changes in assignments, locations of competition rooms, the **ballot table**, the judges’ lounge, and descriptions and rules for any special events not in this booklet. At the conclusion of this meeting you will receive your ballots for the first round. It is important that you attend this meeting and take note of all announcements. You may also ask questions of tournament staff on specific event rules.

After the briefing, you will proceed to your Round 1, and follow your schedule for the other prelims. If you are not judging, please be in the judges’ lounge or cafeteria so we can find you in case we need to make a change and assign you a new round. After each prelim, go to the **ballot table** to drop off your ballots, and pick up your next set. About 30-60 minutes after prelims, final rounds or **finals** will be announced. You are expected to be available to judge a final. The awards ceremony will be held shortly after finals.

General Instructions

1. Familiarize yourself with the categories offered at the tournament from the descriptions at the back of this manual.
2. If you have students in your round whom you know personally, contact the tab room before starting the round. They will make any necessary adjustments.
3. Do not carry on a personal conversation with a contestant that could cause another student to feel you might be biased.
4. Judges are not to change individual rounds with other judges. If changes in scheduling need to be done, notify the Tab Room.
5. Some singing is permissible in interpretative events. However, it should be of a limited nature. The story should be the focus of the presentation, not the student's singing voice.
6. Students should be polite and professional at all times; failure to do so *may* affect your ranking of the round. You may ask a student to stop unacceptable conduct during a round, such as reading, sleeping, eating, drinking, tapping a pencil on the table, and so on. Report seriously inappropriate behavior to the tab room.
7. Judges are not to confer with other judges while ranking students. Avoid talking between rounds with other judges about what you have seen. You may prejudice a future judge of those students.

Conducting a Round

1. Remind all people in the room to turn off cell phones before the round begins.
2. In most cases there will be 5-6 students in the room with you. The first thing you should do is establish speaker order. Usually judges take small slips of paper and write the numbers 1-6 on them. Students then draw a number to determine their speaker order, and will speak in that order. In draw events (extemp, radio) students are sent from the prep room in the correct speaking order. Listen to them in the order that they arrive.
3. Please ensure a respectful audience. Observers are permitted. However, performers are easily to distract, so ensure no one is eating, drinking, sleeping, or otherwise being rude.
4. Do everything you can to make the competitors feel at ease in the round. Feel free to smile, laugh, etc. at appropriate moments during presentations. This will do a lot to make competitors feel that you are engaged in their performance.
5. Do not stop a student during a presentation unless there is an emergency (e.g. fire alarm) or a significant disruption to the performance that impacts the contestant's ability to proceed. In that case, allow the contestant to perform again once the disruption ceases. Room noise from another competition room should be ignored; do not restart a performance because of it.
6. Please be sure that the classrooms are treated respectfully. Please do not sit at the teacher's desks or allow any classroom materials or items to be disturbed.

Timing

1. It is your responsibility to time the selection and record the time on the critique sheet. Time limits for each event are listed on the ballots. Time violations should be noted at the top of the ballot, with the exact elapsed time of the performance. The tab staff will assess appropriate penalties; you should rank the round *without* considering the violation.
2. Judges should give students hand signals for time where requested by the student. Most students will politely decline. However, in Extemp and Radio judges **MUST** provide time signals. Judges should time accurately and inform the students of their timing systems. Time signals in Extemp and Radio are provided at the following time intervals:

Time Remaining: 5 4 3 2 1 1/2 Stop

3. Do your best to accommodate reasonable requests, if a student prefers different time signals. If a student exceeds the time limit and grace, please inform him/her discreetly after the round.

Filling out Ballots

1. Your master ballot will list the code numbers of the students you will judge. Judge only the students listed; if a student appears who is not listed, without a note from Tab, send the student to Tab. Sometimes a student listed on your ballot will not appear; students get sick or withdraw from events after we print. Notify tab if this occurs.
2. Students will write the name & author of their piece (except in Extemp/Radio) on the classroom board. Copy this information onto the ballots, as well as the code & other info the ballot asks for. Time each performance and write it under "Time elapsed." If there is a time violation, remember to alert the staff when you turn in your ballots.
3. The ballots are the only feedback that the student will receive from you. Be constructive and supportive. Include both positive comments and suggestions for improvement. Students will be very interested in which parts of their performance need work. Positive comments may include "Your characters' voices were very realistic" or "You know a lot about this topic." Constructive criticisms might be such as "You spoke too softly for me to hear well – please speak louder" or "I didn't understand the part in the middle — try to make the story line clearer". If the round was difficult to judge because of the high quality, tell the students. Remember, all of speech is about whether or not the audience (you) believes the speaker; just rely on your judgment and be honest and supportive.
4. After you hear all contestants in a round, rank them 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc, **without ties**.
5. Quality points must also be assigned. The range is 70-100. It is customary to award between 80-100 points unless a student is completely unprepared. 100 points should only be awarded to an extraordinary performance. **Do not award ties**.
6. If you question the suitability of a student's material, or feel there may have been a rule or time violation, **do not mark the student down**. Base your score on the performance given, and report

your concern to the ballot table after the round.

7. Please hand in your ballots as quickly as you can after the round; holding onto ballots delays the tournament. If you need more time to write comments, check in at the ballot table first. When people disappear with ballots, the tab personnel tend to panic.

Questions and Answers for Judges

Q: Is there anything I should bring to the tournament?

A: You should bring a stopwatch and a pen. Lunch will be for sale at the tournament, but if you have special dietary needs you might want to pack one. There is a lot of downtime between rounds. You may want to bring a book, or some work to do.

Q: Is it O.K. for me to judge a student whom I judged at a competition earlier this year?

A: Yes. If you have judged or seen the student's performance at a previous tournament, please judge him/her as if you have never seen the performance before.

Q: What do I do if there is a fire alarm during a round?

A: If an emergency arises, like a fire alarm or building evacuation announcement, have the students exit the building immediately. They are used to fire drills at school. Students should find their coaches once they are outside the building. You will receive instructions about how to continue the round after the event has cleared.

Q: What do I do if I find a student's piece to be offensive or profoundly in conflict with my views or beliefs?

A: In certain events, such as original oratory and extemp, it is the job of the student to present a plausible argument, backed up by sources and/or analysis. You may not agree with the student's perspective, but the rank you assign should reflect the quality of the analysis, not the position taken.

Interpretive events are less clear. Some students choose to perform thought-provoking, challenging material. This decision may make you uncomfortable. We ask that you do your best to rank the student based upon the quality of the performance rather than the content of the piece. Try to respect the students' choices and to be as objective as possible. Please talk to the tab staff if you strongly feel a piece is inappropriate.

Q: What do I do if I think a competitor has broken a rule or is behaving inappropriately?

A: If you suspect a rule violation, fill out the ballot and rank the student anyway. Then, alert the ballot table staff when you turn in your ballots. They will look into the matter.

Individual Event Descriptions

Children's Literature (KL, "Kiddie Lit")

Time: 10 minute maximum including intro [30 second grace]; no minimum.

This event requires the use of a manuscript. The student should present material designed to be read to children so that it may be understood and appreciated by a young child or children. (Note: This does not mean the literature must fall under nursery level only). The selection must be from a single published fictional or non-fictional story, play, a single long poem or a program of poetry. Material from more than one source is not allowed, with the exception of a poetry programs. The author's words as published in the literature may not be altered for this presentation with the exception that cutting is permitted. The student may use vocal skills, facial expressions, and/or hand gestures to develop a narrator and character/s. The presentation should include an introduction that cites the name of the piece and the author. The cutting should provide a cohesive scene or story line (containing a definite beginning, middle and end). No costumes or props may be used in the presentation.

Oratorical Declamation (DEC)

Time: 10 min maximum [30 second grace]; no minimum

Declamation is a memorized event in which the student delivers a speech written by some other person. The speech must have been presented as a public address and found in print, on video, DVD or on an audio recording. Speeches that have been used only for forensic competition are not acceptable, even if they can be found in print. The presentation should include an introduction that provides the title of the speech and the author, and should include relevant information about the theme and date of the oration or its historical significance. Dialects of the original speaker need not be mimicked. No scripts, costumes, or props may be used in the presentation.

Dramatic Interpretation (DI)

Time: 10 minute maximum including intro [30 second grace]; no minimum.

This is a memorized event in which the student presents a selection of literature that is primarily serious in nature. There may be some humor in the presentation, but the overall presentation must be serious in nature. The presentation should include an introduction that cites the name of the piece and the author, and should develop the narrative and/or character(s) via vocal and physical techniques. The selection must be from a single published play, a fictional or non-fictional work, or a poem or program of poetry. Material from more than one author is not allowed. The author's words as published in the literature may not be altered for this presentation with the exception that cutting is permitted. No scripts, costumes, or props may be used in the presentation.

Duo Interpretation (DUO)

Time: 10 minute maximum including intro [30 second grace]; no minimum.

Duo is a unique, memorized event challenging two performers to render a dynamic moment utilizing appropriate vocal expression, gesture, and interaction between partners. As a unit, the two performers will vocally and physically respond to each other's verbal and non-verbal cues while maintaining an off-stage focus. Thus, the scene requiring disciplined interplay between partners and the environment is created in the minds of the audience. The students may only touch and make eye contact during their own written introduction. If lines from the selection are used in the introduction, the contestants must adhere to the rules of the event. The presentation should include an introduction that cites the name of the piece and the author. The selection must be from a single published play, a fictional or non-fictional work, or a poem. Material from more than one source is not allowed. The author's words as published in the literature may not be altered for this presentation with the exception that cutting is permitted. Speakers may not take lines belonging to one character and apply them to a different character in the performance. The material may be humorous or dramatic, or may combine both tones, depending on the work selected. Performers may play more than one character if they choose, but it is not required. In addition, lines in Duo cannot be taken from one character and given to another. No costumes or props may be used in the presentation.

Extemporaneous Speaking (EXT, "Extemp")

Novice Extemp (NX) is for young students. Time: 7 min. maximum [30 second grace]; no minimum.

The students will draw three topics of current interest from the material prepared by the tournament director. Usually topics are based on articles taken from recent issues of publications from major media outlets. The student must pick one of the three topics to prepare for a presentation. The students will have a 30 minute preparation period during which personal information files of books, magazines, and/or newspapers may be used to put together the presentation. After the preparation period, the student should deliver a speech to be evaluated for content and delivery. A single note-card with no more than 50 written words is permitted. If a note-card is to be used, the judge must review it prior to the presentation. Any note-card violation should be brought to the attention of the prep room coordinator prior to the speech; or, the student may choose to proceed without the use of the note-card. The topic slip must be presented to the judge in the round. No visual aids are allowed. Students in Extemporaneous Speaking are responsible for the accuracy of citations of evidence. Students must cite facts and analysis from source material accurately and in keeping with the author's intent. Judges may request to see original copies of the sources cited, and bring discrepancies to the attention of the tournament director.

Group Discussion(GD, “Group”)

Group Discussion is an event in which students discuss and argue a topic set at the beginning of the round. The topics will present an issue, designed to introduce a variety of conflicting opinions. Students will be given the generic nature of the issue in the invitation, with a specific focus to be discussed at the start of the round. Students should research the topic in advance and may bring notes and outside resources into the competition. After the topic is revealed, students will be given 5 minutes to formulate their argument, draw for speaking order, and then each shall be given 2 minutes to deliver an opening statement. Then an open discussion period of up to 15 minutes shall follow in which the issue is discussed and criteria for a resolution or recommendation are established, followed by another period of open discussion of up to 15 minutes to present and discuss possible solutions that meet those criteria. The students will then have 1 minute to prepare their final arguments and 2 minutes to present their final argument in the reverse order of their opening.

Humorous Interpretation (HI)

Time: 10 minute max including introduction [30 second grace]; no minimum.

This is a memorized event in which the student presents a selection of literature that is primarily humorous in nature. There may be some seriousness in the presentation, but the overall presentation must be humorous in nature. The presentation should include an introduction that cites the name of the piece and the author, and should develop the narrative and/or character(s) via vocal and physical techniques. The selection must be from a single published play, a fictional or non-fictional work, or a poem or program of poetry. Material from more than one author is not allowed. The author's words as published in the literature may not be altered for this presentation with the exception that cutting is permitted. No scripts, costumes, or props may be used in the presentation.

Impromptu (IM)

Time: No minimum time, but the contestant must cover the subject adequately, 6 min. max. [30 second grace]

On the speaker's turn, he/she will select three topics from an envelope (or other such container), choosing one of them to perform. After the choice is made, the judge begins to time the event. The contestant has a total of 6 minutes to prepare and deliver his/her presentation. The time may be divided up as the contestant chooses. (Ex: 2 minutes prep, 4 minutes speaking). No outside materials, notes, props or costumes shall be used during presentation. A student has the option of using up to one 3" x 5" index card of notes created during the preparation period. Index cards will be provided by the tournament staff. Impromptu topics may include proverbs, words, events, quotations or famous people.

Multiple Reading (MULT)

Time: 12 minute maximum including intro [30 second grace]; no minimum.

This event requires the use of a manuscript. A group of 3-8 students will present a scene or scenes from published material (play(s), work(s) of prose, and/or work(s) of poetry. The material may be either serious or humorous in nature. The students may use vocal skills, facial expressions, and/or hand gestures to develop a narrator and character/s; however, the focus of the performers should be off-stage. The students may only touch and make eye contact during their own written introduction. If lines from the selection are used in the introduction, the contestants must adhere to the rules of the event. The presentation should include an introduction that cites the name(s) of the piece(s) and the author(s). The cutting should provide a cohesive scene or storyline (containing a definite beginning, middle and end). The material must be found in printed literature. Props, costumes, and other theatrical devices are prohibited; however, reader's stands or stools may be used.

Novice Extemp (NX): See Extemporaneous Speaking above.

Novice Reading (NR)

Time: 10 minute maximum including intro [30 second grace]; no minimum.

This event is limited to first year forensic competitors only, and requires the use of a manuscript. The student will present material either from prose, poetry, or drama. Children's literature is acceptable in this category. The student may use vocal skills, facial expressions, and/or hand gestures to develop a narrator and character/s. The presentation should include an introduction that cites the name of the piece and the author. The selection must be from a single published play, a fictional or non-fictional work, or a poem or program of poetry. Material from more than one source is not allowed with the exception of a poetry programs. The author's words as published in the literature may not be altered for this presentation with the exception that cutting is permitted. No costumes or props may be used in the presentation.

Original Oratory (OO)

Time: 10 min. maximum [30 second grace]; no minimum.

Oratory is a memorized event in which the student presents original thought and commentary on a topic of his/her choice. Generally, but not always, the speech is of a persuasive nature. No manuscripts may be used during the presentation. A maximum of 150 directly quoted words is allowed in the oration. Students will be judged on their delivery skills and ability to discuss the topic effectively and intelligently. Students must use their own work, and may not copy the same speech or substantial sections of the same speech as another contestant. Students in Original Oratory are responsible for the accuracy of citations of evidence. Students must cite facts and analysis from source material accurately and in keeping with the author's intent. Judges may request to see original copies of the sources cited, and bring discrepancies to the attention of the tournament director. No scripts, costumes, or props may be used in the presentation.

Play Reading (PL)

Time: 10 minute maximum including intro [30 second grace]; no minimum.

This event requires the use of a manuscript. The student should present a scene or scenes from a published play. The material may be either serious or humorous in nature. The student may use vocal skills, facial expressions, and/or hand gestures to develop a narrator and character or characters. The presentation should include an introduction that cites the name of the piece and the author. The selection must be from a single published play. Material from more than one source is not allowed. The author's words as published in the play may not be altered for this presentation with the exception that cutting is permitted. No costumes or props may be used in the presentation.

Poetry Reading (PO)

Time: 10 minute maximum including intro [30 second grace]; no minimum.

This event requires the use of a manuscript. The student will present material chosen from published poetry. Students may present either a single, long poem or several shorter poems connected either by theme or by author. The student may use vocal skills, facial expressions, and/or hand gestures to develop a narrator and character/s. The presentation should include an introduction that cites the name of the piece(s) and the author(s). The poetry need not have a rhyming pattern. Free verse poetry is acceptable in this event. Verse dramas, including the plays of Shakespeare, are not classified as poetry. The material must be found in printed literature. No costumes or props may be used in the presentation.

Prose Reading (PR)

Time: 10 minute maximum including intro [30 second grace]; no minimum.

This event requires the use of a manuscript. The student will present material chosen from published short stories, novels, or essays, fictive or non-fictive. The material may be either serious or humorous in nature. The student may use vocal skills, facial expressions, and/or hand gestures to develop a narrator and character/s. The presentation should include an introduction that cites the name of the piece and the author. The cutting should provide a cohesive scene or story line (containing a definite beginning, middle and end.) The material must be found in printed literature.

Student Congress (CON)

In this event, students simulate a chamber of the US Congress. Students debate legislation they have written, preside over themselves, and vote. Students do not pretend to be real Congress members, but speak for themselves. Students should debate the issues with eloquence, strong analysis and research, and counter the arguments of the opposing side. Students should act fairly and responsibly in the workings of the chamber, and may be penalized for inappropriate or disruptive actions. The Student Congress will be run under the direction of a league official called the Parliamentarian. The Parliamentarian of your chamber will provide you with further instructions and details about this event.