



Massachusetts Speech & Debate League

Speech Judge Handbook

On behalf of the Massachusetts Speech & Debate 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 events. 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 them, check in at the registration table, which is usually in the main lobby or outside the TAB room. 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, be in the judges' lounge or cafeteria so we can find you in case of a change. After each round, go to the ballot table to drop off your ballots and pick up your next set. About 30-60 minutes after prelims, final rounds (aka: finals) will be announced. You are expected to be available to judge a final. The awards ceremony will be held shortly after the conclusion of all final rounds.

General Instructions

1. All judges should familiarize themselves with the description of the categories offered at the tournament.
2. You should never judge a student from your own school (except in Congress), a relative (your child, niece, nephew etc.), or a student with whom you have worked closely. If you know that a student from another school who you should not judge is going to be competing at a tournament where you will be judging, please notify the coach of your school before the start of the tournament so appropriate blocks can be put in place. If you end up assigned to a round with a student you cannot judge, please notify 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 contestant 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 personnel or the Tournament Director. This is very important because we need to know who is in each round. Not only is this a safety concern, but we don't assign judges to the same event twice in the same tournament. If you swap rounds, the computer system may assign you to later rounds with students you have already judged, which would compromise the integrity of the tournament.
5. Some singing is permissible in interpretation and reading 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. League rules dictate that standard rules of etiquette and professionalism will be abided by at all times. Breaches of those guidelines MAY affect your ranking of the round. It is also appropriate for you to ask a student to stop doing something that you feel is unacceptable during a round (reading, sleeping, eating, tapping a pencil on the table, texting etc.) Report seriously inappropriate behavior to the TAB room and the student's coach will be informed. Any repetition of the behavior will result in disciplinary action by the MSDL board and could mean disqualification from future competition.
7. Judges are not to confer with other judges while ranking or rating students seen. Avoid talking between rounds with other judges. You may prejudice a future judge of those students.

Conducting a Round

In most cases there will be 5-6 students in the room with you. Observers are permitted as long as they are respectful and do not disrupt the round.

1. Remind all people in the room to turn off cell phones before the round begins. There should be no texting during a round! Don't forget to check to be sure your own phone is in airplane mode, too. If you are using your phone as a timer, be sure all sounds are off.
2. As students arrive, confirm that they are in the correct competition room. If you look at your ballot label, you will find a list of the codes of competitors assigned to your section.
3. Once you are certain that the students in your round are supposed to be there, 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.
4. Please ensure a respectful audience. Observers are permitted. However, performers are easily distracted, so ensure that no one is eating, drinking, sleeping, texting or otherwise being rude.
5. Do what 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.
6. 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 clearly impacts the contestant's ability to proceed. In that case, please allow the contestant to start again (from the beginning) once the disruption ceases. Noise from another competition room should be ignored; do not restart a performance because of it.
7. Please be sure that classrooms are treated with respect. Please do not sit at the teacher's desk or allow any classroom materials to be disturbed.

Timing

1. It is the judge's responsibility to time the selection and record the time on the critique sheet. Time limits are listed on the ballots. Time violations should be noted in the space provided on the ballot, with the exact elapsed time of the performance indicated. The tab staff will assess appropriate penalties; you should rank the round without consideration of the violation. Obviously, a breach of the time requirement may be cause for distinction between performances of otherwise equal caliber. No student will be moved up because of a violation charge.
2. If requested, judges should give students time signals when two minutes remain, one minute remains and at the end of their time. Many students will politely decline. However, in Extemporaneous Speaking students *depend* upon time signals. Judges should time accurately and inform the students of their timing systems.

Time signals in Extemp (both Varsity and Novice) are provided at the following time intervals:

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

3. Do your best to accommodate reasonable timing requests. If a student exceeds the time limit and grace period, it is a courtesy to inform him/her discreetly after the round.

Filling out the 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. MSDL rules state that if a student speaks in the wrong room, s/he is automatically given last place. You will help prevent students from being penalized in this way by not listening to students who have not been assigned to your round. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. After you hear all contestants in a round, rank them 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc, **without ties**.
6. 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**.
7. 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.
8. 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 timer and a pen. Lunch is generally for sale at the tournament, but if you have special dietary concerns you might want to pack a lunch. There is quite a bit of 'down' time between rounds. You may want to bring a book to read 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, so this will probably be more disconcerting to you than it is to them. Students should find their coaches once they are outside the building. When the alarm is over, if it is safe to return to the building, you will receive instructions about how to continue the round.

Q: What do I do if the round is interrupted in some other way?

A: If there is a significant disruption during a student's performance that clearly impacts the ability of the student to proceed, please allow the student to stop if he/she requests to do so. The student should take the lead in such circumstances. Once the disruption ceases, please allow the student to start again (from the beginning) if it is possible for him/her to proceed. Sometimes noise from adjacent rooms can be heard through the walls. This is unavoidable and students should continue without stopping in these cases.

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 reliable sources and/or thoughtful 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 makes you uncomfortable. *However, we ask that you do your best to rank the student based upon the quality of his/her performance rather than the content of the piece.* Please keep in mind that students come from a variety of backgrounds and may not share your values. Try to respect their 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 TAB staff when you turn in your ballots. They will look into the matter and make a ruling about it.

League rules dictate that standard rules of etiquette and professionalism will be abided by at all times. Breaches of those guidelines MAY affect your ranking of the round and you can write a note on the student's ballot if you wish. It is also appropriate for you to ask a student to stop doing something that you feel is unacceptable during a round (reading, sleeping, eating, drinking, texting, tapping a pencil on the table etc.) If the student is an observer, you may ask him/her to leave the room. Report seriously inappropriate behavior to the TAB room and the student's coach will be informed. Any repetition of the behavior will result in disciplinary action by the MFL board and could mean disqualification from future competition.

Individual Event Descriptions

Children's Literature "Kiddie Lit" or "KL"

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

This event requires the use of a manuscript. The student should present material designed to 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. 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 storyline (containing a definite beginning, middle and end). No costumes or props may be used in the presentation.

Declamation (Oratorical) "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 Performance "DP"

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

This is a memorized event in which the student presents a selection of literature. 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. Neither monologues nor works with multiple characters are inherently better. The selection must be from a single published play, a fictional or non-fictional work, or a poem. 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. Speakers may not take lines belonging to one character and apply them to a different character in the performance. No scripts, costumes, or props may be used in the presentation.

Duo Interpretation "DUO"

Time: 10 min maximum [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. No scripts, costumes or props may be used in the presentation.

Extemporaneous Speaking “Extemp”

(Novice Extemporaneous Speaking is the same as Extemporaneous Speaking, but is limited to first year competitors.) *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 in Novice Extemp. If a note-card is to be used, the judge it must be presented to the judge to review 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.

Finals in Extemp:

In the final round of Varsity Extemporaneous Speaking, a three-minute cross examination period will follow each speech. *This will not occur in NX.*

Group Discussion “GD”

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.

Impromptu “IMP”

Time: 6 minutes; 30 second grace. No minimum, but the contestant must cover the subject adequately.

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. Impromptu topics may include proverbs, words, events, quotations or famous people.

Informative Speaking “INFO”

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

Students author and deliver a ten-minute speech on a topic of their choosing. Competitors create the speech to educate the audience on a particular topic. Because the goal is to educate, not to advocate, all topics must be informative in nature. A maximum of 150 directly quoted words is allowed in the speech. Informative Speaking competitors craft a speech using evidence, logic, and optional visual aids. If used, the student is expected to set up visual aids in an expedient manner. Students cannot use electronic equipment or any banned material (guns, controlled substances, etc.) as a visual aid, nor can they use live animals or another person. Visual aids should contribute to the audience's understanding, emphasize information, and provide a creative outlet that augments the content of the Informative speech. The speech is delivered from memory.

Multiple Reading “MULT”

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

This event requires the use of a manuscript; students may speak or sing lines of text only if they are holding 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 must be found in printed literature and 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 make eye contact during their own written introduction. Similarly, except during the introduction, students may not touch each other nor may they touch the binders of other students. 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 all piece(s) and the author(s). The cutting should provide a cohesive scene or storyline (containing a definite beginning, middle and end). Speakers may not take lines belonging to one character and apply them to a different character in the performance. Theatrical props and costumes are prohibited, with the exception of reader's stands, chairs, tables or stools. Furniture may be simultaneously moved by more than one student, but if used as a hand prop, no more than one student may touch furniture at one time. Students are prohibited from placing chairs or stools on top of tables. Teams must provide any/all of their own furniture.

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. No scripts, costumes, or props may be used in the presentation.

Play Reading “PL”

Time: 10 min maximum [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 min maximum [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 such as *For Colored Girls . . .*, 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.

Program Oral Interp “POI”

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

Using a combination of Prose, Poetry, and Drama, students construct a program using at least two out of the three genres. With a spotlight on argumentation and performance range, Program Oral Interpretation 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, including the manuscript. An introduction, written by the student, should contextualize the performance and state the titles and authors used in the program.

Prose Reading “PR”

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

This event requires the use of a manuscript. The student will present material chosen from a single published short story, novel, or essay, 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. No costumes or props may be used in the presentation.

Radio Broadcasting “RB”

Time: 5 minute maximum (5 second grace over or under-time.)

In this event, each student will receive a packet of news-copy or a newspaper. The student will report to a preparation room where s/he will have 30 minutes to select and organize the material into a 5 minute radio news broadcast. Judges will listen to (not watch) the presentation. Throughout the broadcast, the timekeeper or judge will keep the student informed of time. Students may use minimal introductory remarks and transitional material. Advertising, including sponsorship taglines, is not allowed even if it is included in the material provided by the tournament staff.

Student Congress “CD”

In this event, students simulate a working House of Representatives or Senate of the US Congress. Students debate legislation they have written, conduct the rules and regulations of the chambers, and vote on enacting bills and resolutions. Students do not pretend to be members of the real US Congress, but instead speak for themselves and debate their own viewpoints. Students should debate the issues with eloquence and strong analysis and research on the legislation, as well as answering and countering the arguments of the opposing side where appropriate. Students should also conduct themselves fairly and responsibly in the workings of the chamber, and may be penalized for inappropriate or disruptive actions therein. The Student Congress will be run under the direction of a league official called the Parliamentarian. The Congress Chair will maintain guidelines and rules of conduct for the Student Congress.

Useful terms for comments

Articulation: The clarity of a speaker's words. The enunciation of each word the speaker conveys.

Audience Involvement: Does the performer relate to the audience? As a listener, do you feel the speaker is engaging you in his or her performance?

Convey imagery: Is the performer taking the time to use the descriptive language in his or her poetry? Does his or her interpretation of the poem bring the language of the poet to life? Does his or her performance create a picture in your mind?

Creation of environment: Does the performer convey where the character is speaking? Are there suggestive gestures, pantomimed props or visual clues to help you as an audience member SEE where the scene takes place? Once created, is this environment maintained consistently throughout the piece/performance and is it made clear if/when the location changes?

Distinctive Characters: Does the performer craft distinctive human beings for each of the people he or she is portraying in voice, body, and gesture? Does the actor live "truthfully under imaginary, believable circumstances"? Are you able to recognize the characters each time they appear throughout the piece?

Emotional Expression: Does the speaker/performer convey a range of emotional attitudes/tones appropriate to the material? Are his or her words "colored" or "flavored" throughout their performances?

Engaging Narration: If the performer has narration does he or she make it interesting and engaging through out the entire performance? Is the tone of narrator appropriate to the events in the story?

Eye Contact: Does the speaker/performer make direct eye contact with his or her audience when appropriate? Does the speaker/performer look at his or her audience directly and for sustained periods of time when appropriate?

Focal Points to establish characters: Does the performer create a clear focus point when he or she is speaking to another character in a scene? This would be a time when the performer would not look directly at his or her audience because they are speaking to another character. Thereby successfully creating the illusion of a conversation between the characters within the piece?

Gestures: Does the speaker or performer use gestures that are appropriate? In public address, speakers should gesture above their waist and co-ordinate their gestures to particular words in their text. As a performer/ character the presenter should use gestures which are appropriate and distinct for each character they are portraying and supportive of the words being spoken.

Introduction: If an introduction is used, does it provide substantial and compelling information to set up the speaker or performer's text? Is the introduction delivered in a conversational manner? Does the speaker/performer look directly at their audience when he/she is speaking?

Logic and Examples: Is the Original Oratory, Extemporaneous speech or Impromptu organized in a logical manner? Are the examples appropriate to the topic and do they enhance the development of the thesis?

Organization/structure: Does the speaker follow a defined structure? Can the listener follow the main points in the speech?

Partner Interaction: In Duo Interpretation or Multiple Reading do the performers seem like they are listening and reacting naturally to one another? Do the partners successfully establish and maintain focal points throughout the performance?

Quality of Sources: In a Original Oratory, Extemporaneous speaking or impromptu speech does the speaker use specific and effective sources or examples to provide support and background for their subject?

Tone Variation and Expression: Does the performer or speaker use a variety of methods to vary his or her vocal performance? Does he or she vary pitch, volume, rate, tone and/or mood? Is the performance enhanced by the vocal variety in the presentation?

Variety of Expression: Does the speaker or performer use a variety of attitude, pitches, rates and or volume to create a vocally compelling and lively presentation?

Physical Variety of Expression: Does the speaker use physical gestures, body language and facial expression to enhance and convey the meaning of the words spoken? Are a variety of gestures, body language and facial expressions employed as appropriate to the material? Is the performance physically engaging?

Word Choice: Are the word choices a speaker uses in Original Oratory, Extemporaneous Speaking & Impromptu Speaking vivid, accurate, and descriptive? Do the word choices enhance the meaning behind their speech topic? Does the speaker/performer choose enticing, appropriate, lively words to introduce their presentation? Does the speaker successfully avoid repetition by using a variety of words and phrases or use repetition to strengthen the message they wish to convey?

JUDGES: Please be sure to explain to the speaker/ performer what he or she can do to IMPROVE his or her presentation. Be sure to add positive comments to let them know what they are doing well in addition to your constructive criticism.

Your help as an educator and judge today is greatly appreciated!
Your BALLOT is a great gift that will help young people
to improve their presentation skills!

Thank you!

Glossary of Speech League Terms

ballot	While competitors are performing, judges make notes on ballots . Each judge fills out one ballot for each student in each round. Judges are supposed to give constructive criticism as well as note where performers have done well. Judges' comments can be of varying quality, but can often be very helpful as students strive to improve their performances. In addition to comments, the judge will record the rank in the round and quality points (at tournaments which use them) on the ballot. Students will get their ballots from their coaches after each tournament.	
break	After preliminary rounds are completed, the TAB room determines which students will advance to the next round, based upon their ranks. Those who advance are said to " break " into the next round. The breaks are sometimes announced and sometimes posted on the wall. So, while it sounds like you wouldn't want it to happen, breaking is good at a speech tournament. Students who do not break to finals will benefit from attending a final round. This is one of the best ways to learn about what it takes to get to finals.	
competition number	When a student competes at a tournament, s/he is assigned a competition number , which is used for identification throughout the tournament. This ensures that students are anonymous to their judge so that evaluation is as objective as possible (no "you have my best friend's name", "You're from our rival school", etc.). Students get a different number for each event they enter and at each tournament they attend. It is very important that students remember their number(s) accurately so they can check the schematics (postings) and go to the correct competition rooms.	
cume	Short for cumulatives. Each time a student competes his/her ranks are recorded on a cume sheet by the TAB room. After the tournament is over, you can look at the cumes and see how your students did relative to everyone else in their events.	
drops	After registration is complete, a student may need to drop from the tournament. Sometimes students become ill or a family emergency arises. If a student listed on your ballot does not appear in the round, you might want to check with the TAB room to see if s/he was a last-minute drop.	
double entry	Many tournaments allow students to enter more than one event. Sometimes they may enter any two events and are responsible for competing in one event early in the round, leaving and then going to their other event. Some tournaments split the events in half and call each half a 'platoon' or 'flight.' At these tournaments students can enter one (or sometimes two) event in each platoon. The platoons alternate through the day, so students usually do not have to leave one round in order to get to another one.	
event abbreviations	DEC = Declamation DI = Dramatic Interpretation DP = Dramatic Performance DUO = Duo Interpretation GD = Group Discussion HI = Humorous Interpretation INFO = Informative Speaking KL = Children's Literature (aka: Kiddie Lit) MULT = Multiple Reading	NR = Novice Reading NX = Novice Extemp OO = Original Oratory PFD = Public Forum Debate PL = Play Reading PO = Poetry Reading POI = Program Oral Interp PR = Prose Reading RB = Radio Broadcasting VX = Varsity Extemporaneous Speaking
focal point	In interp events, competitors often use focal points to help differentiate characters. A focal point is an imaginary point in the air. An interper may chose a different point for each character and turn his/her body and head slightly to look at the focal point when speaking for that character. It's subtle and it takes practice. If there is only one character in a piece, the performer may use a focal point or talk directly to the audience. Different pieces call for different methods of presentation.	
forensics	You're probably thinking "dead bodies." But <i>forensics</i> has more than one meaning. In this case, forensics refers to "the art or study of formal argumentation." In other words, people on a speech or debate team participate in forensics.	
MSDL or MFL	Massachusetts Speech & Debate League . (Also known as the MFL). This is our local organization. They sponsor almost all of the tournaments we attend within the state of MA as well as "States." The MSDL website is: www.massforensics.org	
NCFL	National Catholic Forensic League. They hold a national tournament each year over Memorial Day Weekend. In order to attend this tournament students have to enter a special qualifying tournament (this year on February 9, 2008). The top competitors in each of these events at qualifiers get to go to NCFL Nationals: OO, DUO, DEC, VX, OI, DP and Congress as well as debate events.	

quality points	In the MFL, quality points range from 80-100, although it is rare for a judge to give a score less than 85. They are used as tiebreakers for calculating breaks. Quality points are a way a judge can let a student know how strong a round was. A rank of '5' with quality points of '95' tells a student that the judge thought highly of his/her performance, but thought that others were better. A rank of '1' with quality points of '89' would indicate that while a student was best in the room, the judge felt that there was a lot of room for improvement in the performance.
rankings or ranks	When students compete, the job of the judge is to decide who is best in the round, who is 2 nd best etc. Judges assign ranks of 1-6 (or 5 or 7, depending on how many people are in the round) to indicate their preferences. A rank of 1 is better than a 2, but it is important to keep in mind that students are ranked against the competitors in the room. Some rooms are harder than others. When students get their ballots back, they will see the rank each judge gave them for each round. These ranks are also recorded on the cume sheets that are usually posted on-line or included with each team's packet at the end of the tournament.
schematic	Schematics are used to inform competitors which sections of which events they are going to. Students find the schematic for their event and then look for their competitor number to determine which section they are in. They go to the room listed for their section at the appropriate time. Schematics are generally taped to walls around the school where competition takes place. It is a good idea for students to take a pencil with them when they check the schematics so they can record which rooms they will be competing in during prelims. Some people call schematics ' postings ', especially when they are for final rounds.
TAB room	There is a room at every tournament where coaches hand out and collect ballots from judges and record the ranks. It is called the TAB room (short for tabulation). It is the control center for the entire tournament. If you have a question that your coach can't answer, the TAB room is the place to go. This is also the place to go to report an emergency (after you call 911 if necessary.)
warm-ups	After teams arrive at a competition site, they usually put their things down in the cafeteria and head to a classroom for warm-ups. The purpose of warm-ups is four-fold: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To stretch muscles and wake up the body and mind. 2. To prepare each student's vocal instrument so that s/he can speak clearly and well. 3. To help students to focus so they are ready to compete. 4. To build team unity.