

JUDGES INSTRUCTIONS

Judges are an integral part of an Oratorical contest. Their qualifications are considered carefully, as the decision of the judges is final and must be reached without bias. Impartial judging in all contests is the key to fairness and success of the program, which results in the selection of a national champion.

All department finals (including semi-finals) and the national contest must utilize five judges. Post contests may utilize three to five judges. No publicity shall be given to the names of judges in advance of the contest. During the contest, judges will be seated in different locations and render their final decision without consultation with other judges or any other person.

Judges will be advised that a lack of emphasis in the prepared oration and assigned topic discourse must result in their downgrading the contestant. Judges are permitted to downgrade a contestant up to a maximum of 10 points for failure to speak on the U.S. Constitution. The contest chairman will announce any violation of time for each contestant. A penalty of one point for each minute, or fraction thereof, shall be assessed against the contestant's total score.

Following the last assigned topic discourse, the judges, timekeepers, tabulators and contest chairman may proceed to a private room for final review and tabulation.

Judges should be instructed to report to a private room away from the contestants and others attending the event at least 45 minutes prior to the contest so that adequate time is available for the briefing. The room in which the briefing is held should be off-limits to everyone except the judges and contest chairman (or the chairman's designated representative).

The chairman should welcome the judges, thank them for serving, and distribute the official scorecards, scratch tally sheets, pencils and clipboards. The chairman should cover all aspects of the contest, especially how it will be conducted and the procedures for arriving at a winner.

SCORECARD AND SCORING SYSTEM

Judges should carefully study and understand the scorecard and scoring system. As a guideline, judges are encouraged to award their top choice (speaker) approximately 90 points with others proportionally lower. (This is particularly important in the event of a tie.)

Lack of emphasis in the prepared oration and the assigned topic on the duties and obligations of a citizen to our government must result in the judges downgrading the contestant involved. Judges may downgrade a contestant up to a total of 10 points for failure to speak on the Constitution.

Each judge shall insert the total number of points credited to the contestant and also insert in the placement column the placement for each contestant in accordance with the highest total point scores. If a tie exists in the total point scores on a judge's scorecard, the judge must adjust the scoring of the tied contestants so that no two contestants have the same total point score. This will enable the judge to rank one contestant above the other in the placement column.

Judges shall refrain from discussing any phase of the contest or their judging methods with anyone but the contest chairman following the contest.

(Reference: The American Legion Oratorical Chairmans Guide, pages 8, 15)

OFFICIAL JUDGING SCORE CARD

The contest is conducted in two phases. The contestants will all appear a first time to present their prepared orations and then appear a second time for their assigned topic. This allows the judges an opportunity to re-evaluate and reconsider "first impressions" and compare each speaker with the others.

The method of judging, scoring, and point values indicated on the Score Card were devised especially for this contest. These were devised to provide Judges with criteria to select fairly and adequately the best contestant of the contest. To attain this objective Judges must become familiar with all factors involved.

- Quotations are to be indicated as such, and if the quotations are more than ten (10) words in length, the name of the author must be given.
- A penalty of one point for each minute, or fraction thereof shall be assessed against the contestant's total score.
- The penalty for plagiarism is disqualification.
- At the close of the contest Judges must fill out the Score Card completely in accordance with the contest rules, total all columns and **affix signatures**.
- Tabulators will collect Score Cards from Judges at the close of the contest and tabulate the results under the supervision of the Chair.
- At the proper time, in accordance with contest rules, the Chair or his representative, will announce the results of the contest and introduce the Judges to the contestants and audience.
- Judges will not discuss any phase of the contest or their judging methods with contestants, parents, coaches, escorts, or others (outside of the chair) following the contest.
- Judges are encouraged to meet the students after the contest to give constructive criticism but should never divulge any details as to how the student was ranked or scored.
- Chairs and tabulators are not permitted to divulge any information from the Judge's Score Card.

SUGGESTIONS TO JUDGES

It is suggested that prior to the contest, each judge should carefully study the point scoring system in relation to the factors to be considered during the presentation of the prepared oration and the assigned topic discussion by each contestant, namely, *content of oration and speaking skills*. Listed below are items which should be given attention in specific areas (see listing of point values on Official Score Card).

CONTENT

1. Originality, freshness, directness, applies knowledge on topic.
 - Is there an original and fresh approach to the topic?
 - Does it relate directly to the subject?
 - Is information applied to aspects of the subject?
 - Does the information flow directly to the audience?
 - Does the speaker stay on topic?
 - Does the assigned topic speech appear to be "canned"?

2. Skill in selecting examples, description, analogies, specific data.
 - Are examples applicable?
 - Do the illustrations appear as an "axe to grind" not exactly related to the subject?
 - Is adequate information provided on examples or descriptions to inform the audience fully on the points?
 - Is proper credit given to quotations or subject matter borrowed from authorities?
 - Are specific data utilized to enrich the subject matter?

3. Logic (Correctness of Inference).
 - Are illustrations supported by logic or facts?
 - Are conclusions properly drawn?
 - Are there inconsistencies in the use of an application of the logic?
 - Are inferences made without proper support or logic?

4. Comprehensiveness of knowledge; knows subject matter.
 - Is plagiarism involved?
 - Does the speaker show a broad grasp of this subject?
 - Does the overall speech effectively demonstrate comprehensiveness and unity of thought(s)?
 - Is the topic significant when viewed as a whole?
 - Does the overall impression outweigh the component parts?
 - Does the assigned topic speech appear to be memorized to the point where its discussion value is lost?
 - Is the total speaking informational and educational for the audience?
 - Is an overall humbleness (or respect) evident in both the prepared and assigned topic speeches?

SPEAKING SKILLS

1. Voice and Diction.

- Does the voice used detract from the content? Pitch? Nasal quality?
- Does the speaker use the proper volume for the physical conditions which surround him?
- Do the words and sentences run together? Articulation? Enunciation?
- Are there errors in pronunciation?

2. Style: Language use, word arrangement, transition, word selection.

- Is the language use appropriate?
- Are the sentences succinct?
- Are the sentences involved to the point that immediate interpretation is not easy? Grammar?
- Does the speaker get lost with many extraneous clauses or phrases?
- Are the words easily identifiable for meanings? Do they fit?
- Is sentence and paragraph transition smooth and continuous?
- Is there a proper introduction, a main body of the speech and a summary or conclusion?

3. Body Action: Poise, eye contact, posture, gestures.

- Is the speaker at ease while speaking?
- Does the speaker have eye contact with all of the audience so that he appears to be speaking to all of them?
- Is their posture of an alert nature?
- Do their movements and gestures enhance or detract from the content and delivery?
- Is the speaker too dramatic?
- Does the speaker's body action and delivery give the appearance of overconfidence?