How to Judge – At A Glance

An Introduction to Evaluating Extemporaneous Speaking

NATIONAL SPEECH & DEBATE ASSOCIATION
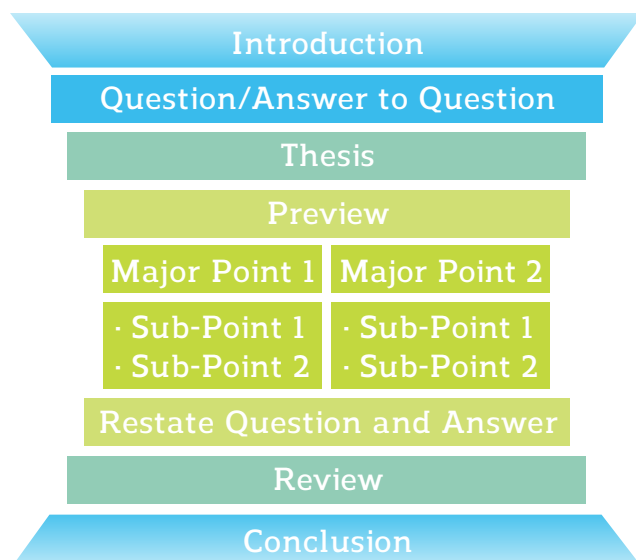NATIONAL FORENSIC LEAGUE

Basic Understanding

Extemporaneous Speaking is a speech on current events with limited preparation time. The competing student's understanding of important political, economic, and cultural issues is assessed along with critical thinking and analytical skills. There are two types of Extemporaneous Speaking. In International Extemporaneous Speaking, students prepare a speech related to international current events. Topics range from country-specific issues to regional concerns to foreign policy. In United States Extemporaneous Speaking, students deliver speeches related to domestic current events. Topics range from political matters to economic concerns to U.S. foreign policy.

Structure

Each round of competition begins with a draw—all students report to a draw room and await their turn to draw topics. A staff member calls out student codes based upon a pre-assigned speaker order. When a student's code is called, s/he approaches the table and takes three questions from an envelope. The student then has the opportunity to select one of those questions, return the other two to the envelope, and prepare for 30 minutes using research s/he has brought along, commonly called files. Students may consult articles and evidence they have on file, but may not use the Internet during preparation. Students create a thesis responding directly to the chosen question and organize their speech around their answer to the posed question. A sample speech is outlined as follows:

- **Introduction**
- **Question/Answer to Question**
- **Thesis**
- **Preview**
- **Major Point 1** | **Major Point 2**
  - · Sub-Point 1 | · Sub-Point 1
  - · Sub-Point 2 | · Sub-Point 2
- **Restate Question and Answer**
- **Review**
- **Conclusion**

Take Note

Judges are encouraged to give students time signals throughout the speech to signal how much of their seven minutes remains. Students are not permitted to watch the speeches of the competitors presenting before them, but once a student has delivered his or her speech, s/he may watch the rest of the remaining speeches in the round. Tournaments have different rules for the use of notes—be sure to check whether speeches must be completely memorized or if notes are permitted.

Evaluating the Round

There are three key areas to consider when evaluating an Extemporaneous Speaking round. First, *argumentation and analysis:* students should organize an approach to the question that examines critical areas of analysis. Students must answer the question and address the justification and impact of their answer. Students should convince the audience that they possess a clear understanding of the topic. Second, *source consideration:* students establish credibility through their analysis of source material. Throughout the development of the speech, competitors should cite their sources. Citations may include the source of the material and the date. Judges should consider the quality and variety of sources students are presenting. Third, *delivery:* judges should take into consideration the major areas of delivery. Use of voice, movement, and expression should factor into the judge's evaluation. Speakers should employ ethos, or credibility, in their speech through a confident delivery. Pitch, tone, pacing, and volume should be employed to express the argument.

Filling Out the Ballot

The judge ranks each contestant, with "one" being the best, and assigns speaker points, generally in a range between 90-100 points, with 100 being outstanding. The judge writes on the ballot how the speaker can improve—e.g., eye contact, clarity, emotion, etc., and what the student did well. As students only have 30 minutes to research, organize, and practice a speech, it is important to note that minor fluency issues may not weigh as much in the judge's assessment of the quality of the speech. Argumentation, source analysis, and delivery should be employed together in assessing the overall quality of the performance.