

Tri-County Forensic League Judging Basics

Thank you for judging! You are very valuable to us, and we very much appreciate your time.

The Basics

- ✓ Read the rules for each event before you begin judging (even if you are experienced, some rules have changed so please review them).
- ✓ Bring scratch paper into the round so you can make notes to help you remember each speaker.
- ✓ If you know one or more of the speakers in the panel you have been assigned, recuse yourself and return to the judges' room immediately.
- ✓ Use a stopwatch to record the time for each speech—the classroom wall clock is not precise enough. If your watch does not have a stopwatch feature, ask the competitors in the room if one of them will lend you theirs. A watch with a second hand is your second best alternative.
- ✓ **Turn off your cell phone** before the round starts and **ask speakers to do the same.**
- ✓ Begin the round by taking roll; **some speakers may arrive late due to double entry—and some may leave early.** This is perfectly fine. Try to stick to the speaker order as listed across the top of your cover sheet, but make allowances for your double-entered speakers. **Record the speakers' codes on the cover sheet as each student steps up to speak—please be accurate.** You may request speakers to write down their codes/titles/topics/authors on the classroom black or white board or you may ask them verbally.
- ✓ Interact/converse with the speakers as little as possible. **Do NOT give oral critiques and do NOT disclose your rankings. Do NOT ask speakers which school they are from.** Do, however, react! Laugh, cry—you do not have to keep a “poker face.” If speakers ask you for feedback, tell them they will read it on your ballot.
- ✓ Do not judge the same event twice (there may be occasional exceptions to this rule, but generally, judge an event only once).
- ✓ **Make constructive comments on your ballots. “Good speech” is not specific enough.** Both students and coaches read your ballots, so please explain your evaluation in detail.
- ✓ **DO NOT RANK THE PANEL UNTIL YOU HAVE HEARD ALL THE SPEAKERS.**
- ✓ If there are multiple judges on the panel, do not converse with them. Do not collaborate—judge independently. Don't reveal your decision to another judge until all ballots have been turned in.
- ✓ Keep an open mind. Some of the themes are mature and may address sensitive topics. **There is no rule against profanity,** but if you feel it is especially gratuitous or if the content strikes you as unnecessarily graphic, you may let that affect your judgment. Speakers may express opinions about controversial topics that differ sharply from your own point of view—do not penalize a speaker for that. Evaluate the speech according to the criteria on the ballot.

Hand Time Signals

Hand time signals in **Extemporaneous Speaking** and in **Impromptu** are necessary. Traditionally you count from 5 minutes down minute by minute, then signal the last 30 seconds and the final ten. **Do not stop a speaker who has exceeded the limit, just take excessive time beyond the grace period into consideration as you rank the speakers in your panel.** Maximum times for each event and their corresponding grace periods are listed on each ballot. **In all other events, only offer hand time signals upon request. Do not impose time signals on speakers who don't want them. Note: never tell a speaker when to “go.” The speaker will start speaking without your prompting.**