

Descriptions of Speech and Debate Events

The Tri-County Forensics League (TCFL) sponsors 11-12 official league tournaments each competitive season, beginning with the Fall Novice tournaments, followed by the Winter Opens, and ending with the Spring State Qualifying Tournaments late February to mid-March. Novices are encouraged to compete at both novice *and* open tournaments! Compete as often as possible! Additionally there may be opportunities to compete at college and high school invitationals. The goal is to “qualify” in Feb/March by placing in the top 5 or 6 in an individual event or top-rank in Congress or Debate. **Students must compete in at least one League tournament at the “Open” level to be eligible to compete at a State Qualifier.** All league tournaments follow the rules set forth by the state organization, CHSSA (California High School Speech Association), which holds a state championship tournament in April. If you “qual,” you earn the right to compete for a State Championship title!

Speech and Debate is divided into three main types of events:

Debate --- Student Congress --- Individual Events

Within each category there are subdivisions.

DEBATE: 4 types: Lincoln Douglas (LD), Parliamentary (Parli), Public Forum (Pu Fo) and Policy

LD: Lincoln-Douglas debate is one-on-one debate (you work alone). There is an affirmative speaker and a negative speaker. All contestants debate the same national topic, which changes each semester. Unlike other types of debate, LD is *value* debate. It is the most philosophical of all the debate categories. Thus, rather than debating the pros and cons of a proposed policy, students focus on the merits of the *values* implied in the resolution. Judging is based on effective presentation, taking into account direct clash of issues, organization, logic, analysis, evidence, sportsmanship, and persuasiveness. LD debaters prepare both sides of the resolution, the affirmative and the negative, and can expect to debate both sides at every tournament in alternating rounds.

Parli: Parliamentary Debate is an exciting two-partner/two-team competitive debate on a different topic each round. Each team is given a topic 20 minutes before the round begins. Published information may be consulted during prep time. But except for handwritten notes made during prep time, no materials may be brought into the debate round. Then, without the aid of prepared “briefs,” teams must argue for or against the resolution, relying on persuasive delivery and strong analytical arguments to win.

Public Forum (aka “Po Fo” and “Pu Fo”): Two 2-person teams debate each other on a national topic which changes monthly, focusing on a current event. Research and prepared speeches are allowed and you can expect to work very closely with your partner both before and during the debate round. Teams will debate both sides of the resolution at every tournament.

Policy (Team Debate): This highly structured debate is two-person team debate in which one team, the affirmative, supports a resolution and the other, the negative, opposes it. All contestants debate the same national topic all year, but teams will have varied cases under the topic. Because this style of debate is “policy” debate, the affirmative team has the burden of offering and defending a specific plan for a change. The negative team has the burden of showing that there is no need for a change, that the affirmative’s proposal would not work or that the proposal would be disadvantageous. Judging is based on effective presentation taking into account direct clash of issues, organization, logic, analysis, evidence, sportsmanship, and persuasiveness.

Note: Debate is a serious activity and can become expensive. Debaters often purchase evidence, files, legal pads, briefcases, laptops, and many enroll in debate camps over the summer.

Student Congress

Student Congress is mock legislative debate patterned after our government's congress. Using parliamentary procedure, students debate and vote upon bills and resolutions regarding state, national and international problems. The bills and resolutions are published 2-4 weeks before the tournament, to allow students time to research the topics and prepare speeches. Students decide whether to speak in the proponency or the opponency on each topic. In this event, research and analytical skills are critical, as are extemporaneous and impromptu speaking skills. An added benefit is that students become familiar with current social and political problems and learn parliamentary procedure. Typically, students will compete in 3 or more "sessions" (rounds) per tournament, arguing different bills and resolutions each time. Speakers will be evaluated on their analysis of the arguments, use of evidence and delivery.

Congress is fast paced, and there's a lot going on in each house; it is recommended that speakers bring a pad of paper and make careful notes. This way you can keep track of what each "senator" says and refer to those points when you make your own speech and raise questions from the floor. You do not need to worry excessively about parliamentary procedure; each house will have a varsity-level student Presiding Officer (the "P.O.") to recognize speakers and motions, call for votes, etc. Houses are divided according to the students' experience: Novice, JV, and Varsity. Speakers usually stay in the same "house" for all 3 sessions (each session lasts 90 minutes, with short breaks in-between).

There will be between 15 - 20 students per house, and speakers are responsible to hand the judge a ballot before speaking. On this ballot the judge will make comments about the quality of the speech and delivery and rate each student on a numerical scale. After every 3-minute position speech, there is a one-minute cross examination period. The judge makes note of the students who ask cross-ex questions, and pays attention to the quality of those questions. At the end of the 90-minute session, the judge ranks the speakers in the house. The quality and quantity of the cross-ex questions, as well as the individual speeches and use of parliamentary procedure impact the rankings.

Finally, it's fun! Speakers use both prepared and impromptu speeches, and hopefully engage in spirited (but courteous) parliamentary debate! Speakers are allowed to use notes and prepared materials. The speeches should alternate between proponency and opponency. The bills and resolutions will usually be addressed in the order listed, and limited to two topics per session.

Judges are given the following criteria to assess the congress speakers:

- **Delivery:** Communicative and persuasive manner
- **Original Arguments:** Innovative views on the issue backed up by evidence
- **Clash:** Directly responds to the issues presented by previous speakers
- **Questioning:** Incisive, knowledge and direct questions and answers
- **Analysis:** Logical examination of the issues

ORIGINAL ORATORY & ORIGINAL ADVOCACY

Original Oratory (OO): The student presents an original speech. (10 minutes maximum, 30 seconds grace) The subjects vary considerably, but regardless of the topic, the student's *aim is to arouse, persuade, inspire and or motivate*. The speech must be written by the speaker. There may be a maximum of 150 quoted words and these quotes must be identified. The speech should be memorized. No visual aids permitted.

Any appropriate subject may be used. The "OO" is not required to *solve* any of the great problems of the day, rather it should be expected to discuss intelligently, with a degree of originality and with some profit to the audience, the topic chosen. Some speakers do choose to offer solutions, but this is not necessary. An "OO" may serve to alert the audience to a threatening situation, strengthen devotion to a cause, or even eulogize a person. Humor and satire are allowed and often employed.

Criteria: judged on content, organization, effectiveness of writing, delivery.

Original Advocacy (OA): A sister to Original Oratory with some important differences. Here the student presents an original persuasive speech (10 minutes maximum, 30 seconds grace) which identifies a problem and offers a clear, concise legislative solution. Not as broad as "OO," in "OA" the topic is limited to subjects concerning public policy issues of a tangible nature, and *the speaker must advocate a specific legislative and/or regulatory governmental action*. The speech must be written by the contestant, with a maximum of 150 quoted words. Quotations must be identified. The speech should be memorized. No visual aids.

Criteria: judged on content, organization, use of language, effectiveness of writing, and delivery. Remember that the topic must be a public policy issue and the speaker must advocate a specific legislative or regulatory action.

Informative

Description: The purpose of this original speech is to inform, rather than to persuade. These speeches range from simply giving information to actually demonstrating a process. Although speakers are not required to use visual aids, it is recommended and most do. The visual aids used should enhance the speech; costumes may be worn if they are used as visual aids and are put on and taken off during the speech; they may not be part of the speaker's beginning or ending attire.

The set-up and take-down of the visual aids are part of the timed speech, which is subject to the 10 minute limit with a 30 second grace period. **Timing begins as soon as the contestant begins the set-up in the staging area, and does not stop until all aids have been cleared from view.** No persons or animals may be used as aids, nor may audience members participate other than as observers.

Criteria: Although it may be entertaining and/or moving, this is a speech to inform. It should explain, describe, clarify, illustrate or define an object, idea, concept or process. The props used should not substitute for effective writing and oral presentation.

ORIGINAL PROSE & POETRY

Description: The presentations in this event are perhaps the most varied. The presentation will be the original work of the student and may be stories, poems, skits, plays, essays, journal writing, or any combination, both humorous and serious. Subject to the 10 minute maximum/30 second grace, there may be up to 150 quoted words.

The writing in "OPP" should demonstrate creativity. Any subject matter is fair game. The speaker may present several pieces, which may or may not be thematically developed. Dancing and singing are permitted.

Criteria: the presentation may be serious or humorous. Speakers are judged on the effectiveness of the writing, use of language, and delivery.

IMPROMPTU

(It helps to have a stopwatch for this event)

Description: In this spontaneous event, the speaker actually prepares the speech in the judge's presence. The topics vary by round, from brief, thought provoking quotations to general interest current events, to personalities, to single-word abstracts. The judge hands the speaker a slip of paper with 3 topics on it, the speaker immediately chooses one and takes **two minutes** (novices at a Novice Tournament have up to 5) to prepare the speech. The maximum speaking time is **FIVE minutes**, and no notes may be used during the speech (although novices at a Novice Tournament may use one 3X5 index card written on one side only). Unless there is a timer in the room, the judge gives time signals, usually at 2 mins, 3, 4, 4:30, and a 10 second countdown using finger signals, not vocal cues. Experienced Impromptu speakers will go right to the wire! There is no minimum time in this event, but length is rewarded in the evaluation.

At the conclusion of each speech, all speakers remain in the room until all contestants have spoken (unless they are double-entered). The judge may ask the other speakers in the room to take over time-signalling, thereby freeing the judge to watch the speaker, not the clock.

Criteria: The speech may be humorous or serious and will be judged on content, organization, adherence to topic, and delivery. The speech does not necessarily have to be factual. When dealing with quotations or abstractions, the speaker might relate the topic to some contemporary issue, or approach the topic metaphorically. Whatever approach the speaker chooses, he/she should respond to the topic in a spontaneous manner and not rely on "canned," pre-rehearsed material.

SPONTANEOUS ARGUMENT (SPAR)

(NOT A STATE EVENT)

Description: This is a fun, exciting event, in which one speaker debates a topic against a rival speaker. The first speaker on the posting is affirmative, the second is negative and goes against the first; the third is affirmative, the fourth is negative and goes against the third, etc. The topics are worded in the form of resolutions, and may be silly or serious. The judge gives the "Aff" speaker the topic. That speaker then has **one minute** to prepare. The "Aff" then gives a **one minute** constructive speech in which he/she identifies the topic and builds his/her position (either the judge or a student timer will give hand signals). The opponent then has **one minute** to prepare. The "Neg" then gives a **one minute** constructive speech, building the reasons to negate the resolution. The two speakers then square off against each other in a civilized manner for **three minutes of open**, unstructured argument. It ends with the Negative then giving a **one minute rebuttal** speech, in which he/she clashes against the ideas offered by the Affirmative. The Affirmative has the last word, giving a **one minute** rebuttal speech in which he/she clashes against the ideas offered by the Negative. **Both speakers deliver their arguments to the judge only; they should not face each other.**

Structure: (Judge begins by handing provided topic to Affirmative Speaker; speaker has 1-minute prep)

Aff Constructive:	1 minute
(Aff hands topic to Neg:	1 minute prep)
Neg Constructive:	1 minute
Open Cross Ex:	3 minutes
Neg Rebuttal/Summary	1 minute
Aff Rebuttal/Summary	1 minute

THE INTERPS: DRAMATIC, HUMOROUS, DUO, DECLAMATION AND PROGRAM ORAL INTERPRETATION

General Description: Generally, the art of interpretation is to be regarded as recreating the characters in the selection, making them seem alive and real to the audience. Presentation must be from memory and without the use of costume or props, **however special rules apply to Program Oral Interp.**

Selections must be cuttings from *published* plays, novels, short stories, essays or poetry. During the presentation, the speaker must name the author and the title of the book or publication from which the cutting was made. Adaptations may be for the purpose of continuity only, not to change the original intent of the author. Selections are judged for their appropriateness as contest material and their suitability to the speakers using them.

This is a contest in interpretation. Speakers should be judged on poise, quality and use of voice, inflections, emphasis, pronunciation, enunciation, and especially the ability to interpret characters correctly and consistently. Narrative introductions and transitions should be vivid and animated so as to be interesting and integral, rather than just “filler” between portions of dialogue.

General Rules and Judging Criteria for All Interp Events

- The interpretation should recreate the characters in the selection through the use of voice primarily, gesture and facial expression. The total effect should be to carry the listener away mentally to the time and place of the story.
- Characters in the selection should be consistently portrayed, distinct in voice and gesture.
- Transitions in time, character, mood and emotion should be clearly evident.
- Narration, if used, should enhance the performance, not detract from it.
- Clear diction and good vocal communication skills should be utilized by the speaker.

Dramatic and Humorous Interpretation (separate events)

See previous explanation for Interpretation criteria.

Specific rules for DI/HI are:

- Ten minute maximum with a 30 second grace period allowed.
- Selection must be available nationally as a published source. The cutting must be from a single source in both DI and HI.
- An introduction at or near the beginning of the presentation must include the title and author.
- A maximum of 150 added words is allowed (including the introduction). Words that are changed from the original text also count as “added words.” Changes can be made for purposes of clarity, but should not change the intent of the author.
- The selection *should be memorized*. Use of a script or notes in ‘DI’ or ‘HI’ results in an automatic bottom ranking (except at a Novice Tournament).
- No props, costumes, or make-up may be used.
- **Note: Singing, dancing and kneeling in Interp events is allowed!**

DUO INTERPRETATION

Description: In this event, two students interpret a selection taken from a play, a story, a poem, or other published literary material. The duo presents a memorized selection from a single published print source and each student may present a single character or multiple characters; singing and dancing and kneeling are also allowed. Students must maintain “off-stage” focus; that is, *they may not look at each other or touch each other during the presentation*.

As in the other Interpretation contests, no props, costuming or make-up shall be used. The 10 minute maximum applies. As in all events, if the speech exceeds the 30 second grace period, it is lowered by one rank. The selection should be balanced, with no one partner dominating. During the presentation the duo team must identify the author and the title from which the cutting was made. The cutting must be from a single source.

During the introduction only, the participants may address each other directly—they may even make physical contact!—and may present personas different from the characters portrayed in the cutting itself. However, during the performance itself, focus must be indirect (off-stage).

STORYTELLING

(NOT A STATE EVENT—LEAGUE ONLY)

Description: Here the speaker interprets an entertaining published story appropriate for elementary school-aged children. The use of the book in the presentation is optional. Although not required, many storytellers use props; they may also put on costumes and sing and dance—Storytelling can get very athletic! Multiple characters and zany, exaggerated voices are the norm. There may be a maximum of 150 added words, including the introduction. Like any interp, the intro must include the title and author of the story. A great event for Novice Interpers! Note: Storytellings can often convert to HI’s!

PROGRAM ORAL INTERPRETATION

(this event replaces Thematic Interp as of September 2018)

Description: In POI, the speaker attempts to communicate a specific theme by using different published selections (in a 10 minute speech) which illustrate, develop, and even *argue* that theme. This event uniquely combines separate interp selections. As in all events, if the speech exceeds the 30 second grace period, the speaker's ranking is lowered. Selections must be taken from a minimum of 2 separate published sources and represent at least two out of the three common genres of drama, prose, and poetry. Although not required, POI speakers often draw from current articles published in magazines and newspapers, lending a persuasive aspect to the presentation: in other words, they build an argument!

Sources: Anything published in book form may be used; online material must be included on the NSDA approved website list: <https://www.speechanddebate.org/approved-websites>

Introductory, transitional and explanatory material is the original work of the speaker and must contribute to the development of the theme/thesis. Original added content is limited to 150 words. Authors and titles of each selection must be identified during the presentation but do not count against the added word limit.

Manuscripts are required in this event. This is the only event where the use of a handheld manuscript is MANDATORY! The script is typically placed in a small binder which remains in the hand(s) of the speaker at all times. Speakers can get very creative with the use of the binder! Although it can serve as a prop, it must NOT contain visual aids and should contain the speech itself. The speaker, although required to address and control the manuscript, is not required to actually read from it. The selections can be memorized, or the speaker may choose to read from the handheld script. Neither method is preferred, but most competitive speakers are memorized and use the binder to enhance their delivery.

Criteria: the total presentation should develop ONE theme or thesis. The net result for the listener should be a new and clearer understanding of the theme/thesis the speaker develops. The quality of the selections will be judged on the effectiveness of the overall development, not on a subjective evaluation of the "worth" of the material.

Interpretation of the POI selections should display a clear understanding of those selections. Introductory and transitional material should contribute to the total effect of the thematic argument. Each selection may be introduced at the time it is presented, or speakers may introduce all of the selections at once near the beginning of the presentation, and then "weave" the selections together. As in all interp events, singing is allowed.

ORATORICAL INTERPRETATION

Description: The selections will be speeches originally delivered by a real person (as opposed to a fictional character) in a public forum before an audience (comedy routines, poetry slams, storytellings, etc. are excluded—speeches must be oratorical in nature). The aim is to effectively convey the message intended by the original speaker. There is the usual 10 minute maximum with a 30 second grace period. 150 original words may be added by the speaker in an introduction and for purposes of cohesion of the cutting. The introduction must identify the title of the speech, the author, the location, and the date and circumstances under which the original speech was delivered. Two or more speeches may not be combined. The selection should be memorized; online sources are limited to NSDA approved website list: <https://www.speechanddebate.org/approved-websites> as of September 2018.

EXTEMPORANEOUS

Extemporaneous speaking is a competitive public speaking event in which a contestant draws three questions pertaining to current events, and the contestant must choose the question he/she is most comfortable speaking about. Here is an example of the kind of questions a contestant might have:

1. What is the future of Obamacare?
2. Vladimir Putin: friend or foe?
3. Ten years later, has the U. S. economy recovered sufficiently?

After reading the topics, the speaker chooses one, and has 30 minutes to research, write and memorize a 6 - 7 minute speech (novices may use one index card with notes on at the Novice Tournament only). Speakers may consult physical or electronic files brought to the contest, but live internet access is not allowed. Topics are in question form, and are pulled from the last 6 weeks of periodicals such as *Time* and *The Economist*. After 30 minutes, the speaker then reports to a different room and deliver the speech in front of a judge who judges it based on content, analysis of the question, and delivery.

You may notice that the above questions are a mixture of foreign and domestic topics. At most tournaments, you may choose both foreign and domestic issues, but at some tournaments, they are actually separate events, and you may only enter one. If you choose Foreign Extemp, you should not encounter any questions about domestic issues, and if you choose National Extemp, you should not have to answer questions about foreign issues (but you may be asked to speak about US foreign policy).

Speech Structure

Most speeches follow the following format:

- I. INTRODUCTION (often about 1 minute long)
 - A. Attention getter. This can be an anecdote or a quotation. If it's an anecdote, there should be a CLEAR connection to the topic
 - B. Explain the link of the anecdote or quote to the topic.
 - C. Explain the significance of the topic.
 - D. Read the question WORD FOR WORD as it was written.
 - E. Answer the question, and say what the two (or three) areas of analysis (main points) will be.
- II. BODY (about 5 minutes long)
 - A. AREA OF ANALYSIS 1
 1. Generalization 1
 - a. Documentation/evidence (cite sources!)
 - b. Documentation/evidence (cite sources!)
 2. Generalization 2
 - a. Documentation/evidence (cite sources!)
 - b. Documentation/evidence (cite sources!)
 - B. Area of analysis 2 (repeat steps from area 1)
 - C. Area of analysis 3 (optional; repeat steps from 1)
- III. CONCLUSION (typically 30 seconds to 1 minute long)
 - A. Repeat question
 - B. Repeat answer and summarize the areas of analysis.
 - C. Tie ending into the attention getter (close the circle).