

II. RULES OF SPEECH

A. General

1. The rules of each speech event shall be defined by the Regional Directors and may not necessarily follow those of either the National Forensic League or the National Catholic Forensic League.
2. In all speech events except Extemporaneous Speaking, the maximum time is ten minutes which includes any introductory and transitional narration used; for Extemporaneous Speaking, the maximum time is seven minutes. There is no minimum speaking time for any event.
3. In all speech events, contestants are to be allowed a thirty-second overtime “grace” period for which no penalty should be assessed. If a contestant goes beyond this thirty-second period, he or she may not be ranked first in the round. No other penalties for overtime shall be imposed. (Please note: no penalty for overtime can be imposed if the passage of time was not indicated to the student.)
4. No ties in ranks may be given in a round.
5. In all speech events except Extemporaneous Speaking, a student may not present a selection or use a cutting from a source used by him or her in a tournament in any previous academic year.
6. In general, a judge’s decision should be based upon:
 - a. **Effectiveness of message construction/interpretation.** This includes all matters pertaining, in original events, to speech structure and organization, analysis, use of evidence and/or argumentation. In oral interpretation, this includes all matters pertaining to cutting, characterization, and the appropriateness of the speaker’s overall approach to the literature being presented.
 - b. **Effectiveness of delivery.** This includes all matters pertaining to oral presentation: poise, quality and use of voice, emphasis and variety, facial and bodily expressiveness, ability to adapt to the circumstances of environment and/or audience.
7. In general, a judge’s decision should not be based upon:
 - a. **Partiality.** The judge should not be influenced by the reputation of the speaker, his/her school or coach.

b. **Personal opinion or conviction with regard to topic.** The judge should not base his/her decisions upon whether or not he/she agrees or disagrees with the speaker.

c. **Personal preference with regard to message content or choice of literature.** The judge should not base his/her decisions upon whether or not he/she likes or dislikes the material being presented.

d. **Personal preference on speaking style.** No particular style of message construction, interpretation or delivery is to be set up as the one correct style to which all contestants must conform. Rather, each contestant is to be judged on the effectiveness of his/her own approach and is free to choose and develop whatever style he/she feels is most appropriate to the particular message and/or material he/she is presenting.

8. The judge should not give oral critique during the tournament nor reveal any decisions. After the tournament, the judge may give oral critiques to any speakers.

B. Speech Events

1. Original Oratory

a. This contest shall comprise only memorized orations actually composed by the contestants.

b. Any appropriate subject may be used, but the orator must be truthful. Any non-factual reference, especially a personal one, must be so identified. The oration must be composed from the standpoint of the present speaker; however, the speaker may adopt another persona for a maximum time of one minute.

c. No visual aids are permitted.

d. Not more than 150 words of the oration may be direct quotation from any other speech or writing, and such quotations shall be indicated on a written or typed copy of the oration to be supplied upon the request of the Tournament Committee or Regional Director during the tournament. Extensive paraphrasing of another source is prohibited.

e. Since these orations have been written by the contestants delivering them, the judge should consider thought, composition and delivery of the message. However, since this is a contest in speech rather than in essay writing, the emphasis should be placed on the speech phase. Thought and

composition should be considered primarily in the way they are employed to make effective speaking possible.

f. The orator should not be expected to solve any of the great problems of the day. Rather, he or she should be expected to discuss intelligently, with a degree of originality, in an interesting manner, and with some profit to his/her audience, the topic he or she has chosen.

g. Although many orations deal with some current problem and propose a solution to it, the judge is expressly reminded that this is not the only acceptable form of oratory. The oration may simply alert the audience to a threatening danger, strengthen its devotion to an accepted cause, or eulogize a person. The orator should be given free choice of subject and should be judged solely on the effectiveness of its development and presentation.

h. The composition should be considered carefully for its rhetoric and diction. The use of appropriate figures of speech, balanced sentences, allusions, and other rhetorical devices to make the oration more effective should be noted especially.

i. Delivery should be judged for mastery of the usual mechanics of speech-poise, quality and use of voice, bodily expressiveness, and for the qualities of directness and sincerity which impress the oration on the minds of the audience.

j. No particular style of delivery is to be set up as the one correct style to which all contestants must conform. Rather, each contestant is to be judged on the effectiveness of his/her delivery, and each contestant is free to choose or develop whatever style will best give her/him that effectiveness with his/her particular oration.

2. Extemporaneous Speaking

a. Topics shall be phrased as questions and be supplied by the Regional Directors. Topics will be from popular news magazines and New York State issues of the three months prior to the Tournament. Each round of Extemporaneous Speaking should exclude topics available for use in any previous round of the Tournament.

b. The event shall be divided between Junior Varsity and Varsity divisions. Only freshman and sophomore students (ninth and tenth grades) may be entered in the Junior Varsity division.

c. Thirty minutes before each contest round is scheduled to begin, the contestant to speak first shall draw three topics, choose one, and return the

other two. Subsequent contestants shall draw likewise at intervals of seven minutes.

d. As soon as a topic has been chosen, the contestant shall withdraw to the preparation area and prepare the speech without reference to prepared notes, speeches. These are not permitted in the preparation room. Contestants may consult magazines, newspapers, books, pamphlets and annotated bibliographies. Violations of these rules are to be reported by the preparation room chairperson to the Tournament Committee or Regional Director. The Tournament Committee or Regional Director shall determine the appropriate penalty based upon the severity and nature of the violation.

e. Speakers may use a computer to store information and retrieve information from the internet. They may not; however, communicate with anyone outside of the debate round. Any speaker who communicates with someone outside the round will be disqualified from the tournament. Speakers may not plug into outlets in the Prep Room.

e. The preparation room may be occupied during the Tournament only by Extemporaneous Speaking contestants and the designated supervisors. Other event contestants, judges, and friends will be permitted entry into the preparation room only in an emergency and with the approval of the supervisors.

f. During the speech, Junior Varsity contestants are limited to speaking notes on one 3x5" index card. Effective use of the note card should not be penalized. Varsity contestants may not utilize the card during the speech.

g. The extemporaneous speech should not be regarded as a memory test of the material contained in any one magazine article but, rather, as an original synthesis by the speaker of the current data and opinion on the designated topic as presented by numerous sources.

h. The contestant should be held accountable for strict adherence to the precise statement of the topic drawn and discounted severely for shifting to some other phase of the topic on which he/she might prefer to speak. The information presented should be well-chosen, pertinent, and sufficient to adequately answer the basic question(s) in the topic.

i. The material should be organized according to some logical plan to produce a complete speech within the time allowed. Delivery should be free from marked defects in the mechanics of speech—poise, quality and use of voice, enunciation, fluency, facial and bodily expressiveness—and should be effective in enlisting and holding the interest of the audience.

j. The best extemporaneous speech combines clear thinking, good speaking, and interesting presentation to establish a definite thought with respect to the subject chosen for the occasion.

k. There should be no penalties or rewards given because of the point of view of the contestant or the nature of his/her answers to the topic question(s).

3. The Interpretation Events

a. General

1. Selections for interpretation consist of cuttings from published/printed plays, novels, short stories or poetry. Adaptation shall be for the purpose of continuity only. The following guidelines should be strictly adhered to when cutting/adapting material:

a. **Editing must clearly not change the intent of the author.** Each character in the material being presented should retain his/her original name, sex, relationship to the other characters in the selection and position in the work as a whole. Thus, the elimination of reference to the name or sex of a character in order to widen casting possibilities is not permitted.

b. **Structural editing must clearly not change the intent of the author.** The order of events and of dialogue in the original work should be retained in the cutting. Lines attributed to one character may not be reassigned to another in the cutting. Likewise, lines must be spoken to the same character(s) in the cutting as they are in the original source. Thus, the elimination of minor characters, and their lines, may occur in multi-character scenes in order to avoid confusion, and therefore, maintain continuity. The extent to which this is employed might result in question about distortion of the material. The elimination of characters, however, in order to highlight a single one in monologue form may well indeed constitute such a distortion unless care is taken to either: 1) establish and maintain a focal point (or points) for the character(s) being addressed within the platform area, or 2) actually ask the audience to serve as the character(s), being addressed by indicating, in the introduction, that this is the performer's plan.

c. Additional language may not be applied to the literature presented. When combining scenes from throughout the play, novel, short story or poem, no additional language may be presented as part of the author's work. Thus, if it seems necessary to add phrases or lines in order to avoid confusion about a shift in time (or other such change), it should be done with care. Anything beyond the most minimal addition of a very few words (which do not, in themselves, involve any change in the author's intent for the work as a whole) should be done in the narrative or transitional mode.

d. Substitutive language may be applied to the literature at the contestants' own risk. While many feel the need to eliminate potentially offensive language from material to be used in interpretation, care should be taken that such elimination not alter the author's intent or the integrity of the work. Whole-scale "sanitizing" constitutes a serious distortion of the material. In some cases, performers and their coaches may feel that substituting strong language with less potent wording might help to maintain the author's intent and integrity of the work by satisfying the needs of the audience in the contest setting. The continuity of the piece might not, as a result, be disrupted by the jarring of the audience or by an audience's reacting to strong language by focusing upon fellow performers or judges to "see how they are taking it." Substitution, though, should be done with care. Wording changes should be minimal and should not call attention to themselves in performance. Extensive paraphrasing is not permitted.

e. Material used in "teaser" portions of the performance should adhere to these guidelines.

f. Written or typed copies of cuttings used, including the text of the performers' introductory remarks, and copies of the texts from which those cuttings have been drawn must be supplied upon the request of the Tournament Committee or Regional Director(s) during the tournament.

2. The art of interpretation is to be regarded as recreating the characters in the piece of literature presented and making them seem living and real to the audience.

3. In Interpretation, while gestures and pantomime are not barred, they should be used with some restraint. The contestants should be evaluated on poise, quality and use of voice – inflection, emphasis, consistency and fluency, pronunciation, enunciation—and especially the ability to interpret characters fully and realistically (in so far as the literature is realistic, of course). Narrative should be vivid and animated so as to be a vital and integral part of the presentation rather than “filler” between portion of dialogue.

4. The final test of good interpretation is the ability of the contestant to use all of these factors of cutting and presentation so successfully and unobtrusively that the hearer, in a perfectly created atmosphere, forgets that this is a contest and is carried away to the time and place of the story being created.

5. While it is understood that the ultimate criterion for judging interpretation is the effectiveness of the contestants’ presentation of the selection, coaches are encouraged to guide their students in the direction of literary awareness. No penalties or rewards should be given based solely upon the judge’s feelings about the “quality” of the literature from which the selection was derived.

6. Each contestant shall, during his or her presentation, name the author and the source from which the cutting was made.

7. No props or costumes are to be used in presentation.

8. The NYSFL uses NCFL rules for acceptability of literary sources.

9. Speakers who are double entered may not use the same material in both events. The phrase “same material” refers not to the same piece of literature, but actual lines from the literature.

Therefore, no lines that appear in one event may appear in the other event.

b. Dramatic/Humorous Interpretation

1. Selections for interpretation must be cuttings from plays, novels, short stories or poetry in conformity with NCFL acceptability rules. Adaptations shall be for the purpose of continuity only as outlined above.

2. Selections should be judged on their appropriateness as contest material and their suitability to the particular contestant using them.

3. Students may portray one character or more. Judges should not base their decisions upon the number of characters portrayed in the presentation. It may be just as difficult to adequately sustain in a single believable character for ten minutes as it is to portray a variety of less fully developed characters in the same amount of time. (The cutting must come from a single source).

4. Presentation shall be from memory and shall be done without the use of props or costumes.

5. In Dramatic Interpretation, humor may be utilized as a part of the presentation, and the selection may include comic moments, but the final impact should be serious in tone. This should not necessarily be taken to mean that such impact must be somber or tragic.

6. In Humorous Interpretation, the humor may take many forms, and the evoking of laughter is but one manifestation of the successful presentation. The overall effect of the selection should be comical, ranging from the smile to the “belly laugh”.

7. Characters should be clear and distinct in vocal and physical presentation. Narration, if employed, should be a vital part of the presentation as opposed to “filler” between portions of dialogue. Original introductory and/or transitional material should be delivered with spontaneity and animation.

8. The overall impact of the presentation should be one of believability, as appropriate to the material being performed. Ideally, the hearer feels transported to the world of the literature being presented. The extremes of either over-doing or under-doing the material should be avoided.

c. Duo Interpretation

1. Selections for interpretation must be cuttings from plays, novels, short stories or poetry in conformity with NCFL acceptability rules. Adaptations shall be for the purpose of continuity only as outlined above.

2. Selections should be judged on their appropriateness as contest material and their suitability to the particular contestants using them.
3. Two students, as a team, are to present a memorized scene. Each speaker may portray more than one character in addition to taking part in narration, if there is any.
4. Eye contact with the audience is suitable during narration and transitional sections of the presentation. Students may have eye contact with each other only during these portions of the performance. During the presentation the contestants develop character “focal points”. They may not look at, or face each other.
5. Movement and gestures, while permitted, should be suitable to an interpretation rather than a stage performance. Speakers must remain standing and may pivot to indicate entrances and exits from the scene, as well as other limited movement, but no other movement about the platform is allowed.
6. This is a contest in oral interpretation. The students should exhibit the literature, not themselves. The hearer should be presented with a unified scene, story, or poetic image. Contestants should be evaluated on: poise, voice quality and use (inflection, emphasis, enunciation, pronunciation, diction, phrasing), and, especially, the ability to accurately and consistently interpret the characters and the piece of literature as a whole.

d. Oral Interpretation of Prose and Poetry

1. A given round will feature either all poetry or all prose selections. During the Tournament, there will be alternating rounds of prose and poetry with the order selected by the Tournament Committee or Regional Director.
2. The event shall be divided between Junior Varsity and Varsity divisions. Only freshman and sophomore students (ninth and tenth grades) may be entered in the Junior Varsity division.
3. Selections for interpretation must be from literature in conformity with NCFL acceptability rules, either as a single piece, a cutting, or as a series of short pieces united by theme or author.
4. Selections must be read from manuscript. A reasonable balance of eye contact with the script, focal points (as deemed necessary in the material itself) and the audience should be maintained. Either

extreme (too little or too much contact with any one of these points) is to be penalized.

5. Movement and gesture should be suitable to a reading rather than a stage performance. The speaker should not engage in representative movement or pantomime. Suggestion is to be the key in bodily expression. One should make use of tensives as opposed to platform movement. This does not mean that emotional involvement in the material is to be discouraged. It simply means that the manifestation of feeling should rise from the internal as opposed to the external in performance technique.

6. An original introduction must identify the author(s) and the source(s) from which the material was derived.

7. This is a contest in oral interpretation. The reader should exhibit the literature, not himself or herself. The hearer should be presented with a unified scene, story or poetic image. Contestants should be evaluated on: poise, voice quality and use (inflection, emphasis, enunciation, pronunciation, diction, phrasing) and, especially, the ability to accurately and consistently interpret the characters and the piece of literature as a whole.

e. Oratorical Declamation

1. A selection used in Oratorical Declamation must have been originally delivered as a public speech by its author, a person other than the present contestant.

2. As part of the presentation, the contestant shall include an introduction which states the name of the person who originally delivered the speech, the title of the work, and a brief statement about the circumstances under which it was originally presented.

3. Presentation shall be from memory and shall be done without the use of prop or costume.

4. This event is limited to freshman and sophomore (ninth and tenth grade) students only.

5. The contestant should develop the ability to convey the message in a sincere, honest and realistic style. The mechanics of speech must be observed faithfully: poise, quality of voice, effectiveness and ease of gesture, emphasis, variety, pronunciation and enunciation. In addition, the contestant must be able to interpret the meaning of the speech and be able to carry it over to those who

hear him/her. The speaker must be able to capture and hold the attention of his/her listeners.

6. While no particular style should be demanded of the contestant, he/she should be judged in light of the purpose of the speech. Artificiality and/or mere impersonation are to be discredited. Attempts at dramatization rather than the communication of ideas should be penalized. In this light, the event differs from the other interpretation contests. Here, the intent is not to recreate the character of the original speaker—rather, the intent is to focus upon the conveying of the original message of the speaker.

f. Program of Oral Interpretation

1. Speakers will create a program of prose, poetry, and drama, using at least 2 of the three genres.
2. The program should focus on a specific theme. Judgment should be based on how well the speaker uses these cuttings to develop a theme.
3. Selections must be read from a manuscript. Unlike Oral Interpretation, speakers may move as in a stage performance.
4. The manuscript may be used as a prop.

4. Impromptu Speaking

- a. Impromptu Speaking is a “supplementary consolation” event for those students who do not advance to the quarter- or semi-final rounds of competition. It will consist of two rounds with a final round, time permitting. The top six speakers will receive awards.
- b. Each contestant will draw two topics from a set held by the judge. He or she will choose one immediately, then have five minutes to divide as he or she chooses between preparation and speaking time.
- c. Topics will consist of proverbs, famous quotations, names, places, emotions, colors, and other statements which the speaker may interpret as he or she chooses.
- d. There is no pre-registration for this event. Registration will be held immediately after all categories have reached semi-finals; the first 120 (one hundred twenty) students to register will compete in the event.

e. Pairings and judging assignments will be prepared by the Tournament officials.