

The Point Loma Sunset Cliffs Classic Invitational Forensics Tournament

Individual Events: Rules, Regulations, and Judging Tips

(by Skip Rutledge, revised 10/18/23)

- I. A brief description of the 11 AFA individual events speeches and judging tips, subcategorized into three basic areas.
 - A. **Platform Speeches** – These speeches should be the original work of the students. They should be researched and written by the speaker. While there is no formal minimum time requirement but are usually (though not required to be) at least 8 minutes long and should not exceed 10 minutes. Speakers should generally not rely on note cards or scripts by convention, not rule. Early in the year you will see more rely on such notes. Visual aids are allowed but not required. **While the judge should time the speeches, do not give time signals.** The speakers should know how long the speech takes since it is prepared in advance, and pre-timed. Platforms should be well organized, reasoned and should document their claims with qualified evidence. Each speech should have a clear Introduction, Body and Conclusion with transitions. Level of analysis, quality of research and verbal and nonverbal elements of delivery are all important criteria for your assessment, as can be quality and recency of evidence to support arguments, or points.
 1. **Persuasion Speeches** – Speakers are generally expected to develop a strong, compelling argument on a current contemporary issue of social significance. They should clearly prove their argument and usually propose a workable solution to the problem they have selected. That is what they are typically trying to persuade you of. Look for current, qualified research to support main points. Different types of claims may require different types of proof.
 2. **Informative Speeches** – Speakers should inform us of something that most people are not already aware of. The topic should be socially significant and have ramifications that impact society as a whole. Look for good current research to support points. The potential for further application is also considered. Quality visual aids can help inform.
 3. **Speech to Entertain, or After Dinner Speaking** – Also a well-organized speech, typically of an informative or persuasive nature but written in a lighter tone. One main purpose is to entertain. But it should not just be a nightclub routine of disjointed jokes. Some research is expected, but not usually as extensive as one might find in Informative or Persuasive speeches. Some contestants ad-lib a bit in this event, perhaps even linking to other speeches in the round.
 4. **Communication Analysis, or Rhetorical Criticism** – A more specialized form of an informative designed to shed light on a communication related topic. It is often a rhetorical analysis of a communicative event, such as a speech, cultural artifact or movement, examined through the paradigmatic lens of a particular frame of reference or often a scholarly model of understanding. The speech should first explain the communicative act being examined and the model being used to examine it, and then analyze the act through the proposed model, and discuss social implications. Some research is expected. Recency and amount of evidence is less critical than for other platforms.
 - B. **Interpretive Speeches** – These speeches are performances that are designed to demonstrate the speakers' interpretation of 3 different genres of quality literature. Speakers are required to use manuscript books which are to be open when the literature is being interpreted, and closed when the speakers own words are being delivered (intros, transitions, . . .). As with the platform speeches, while there is no formal minimum time for Interps, they are often at least 8 minutes and should not exceed 10 minutes. Very slight grace periods exist, though they differ from judge to judge. Also, judges keep time of the speeches without giving time signals. Judges can look for the believability of the character portrayal, development of a theme in the introduction and support for that theme in the selection, verbal and nonverbal support of persona traits, familiarity with the text, and performance skills. Interpers should not be acting (excessive reliance on body movement, stage blocking, or use of costumes or props) but should instead imply these elements through suggestive reading of material and subtle body movements, often limited to the upper torso, hands and face. Rules do not prohibit the use of original composition of the performer(s). The literature should be of high quality. How compelling the literature is (textual merit), may be used as judging criteria.
 1. **Prose Interpretation** – standard sentence format, paragraph style of writing common to books, short stories, letters, essays, etc. . . . Often utilizes first person point of view.
 2. **Poetry Interpretation** – rhyming and free verse are certainly allowed, though free verse is more typical these days. Expect a fairly eclectic mix of selections on a theme.
 3. **Dramatic Interpretation** – Dialogue driven genre, typically plays, screenplays, monologues, radio dramas, movies, or television scripts or even advertising scripts.
 4. **Programmed Oral Interpretation (POI)** – must include at least two of the above genres on a common theme. Also called Oral Interpretation or Mixed Oral Interpretation.
 5. **Duo Interpretation** – Two interpers performing literature., usually in the dramatic genre. Tradition dictates that the performers do not touch, or maintain direct eye contact, though both are often implied.

Also look for how well the characters play off one another and interact. Look as well to continuity of performance for the character not speaking at any given time.

- C. **Limited Preparation Speeches** – These two speeches are designed to develop quick thinking and eloquent delivery of cogent, organized, well-reasoned speeches without much advance notice. Judges give time signals to aid the speakers during the speech, and for impromptu during the preparation period. The speeches themselves can be judged on poise and presence of the speakers, how directly they relate to the specific topic selected, level of organization, fluency of speech, depth of analysis, gestures, humor, etc.. Speakers should not be rewarded for *canned* speeches that do not directly address the selected topic or quotation, even though they may sound very smooth. Look for strong Introduction (attention getter, thesis which clearly answers the quotation/question, & preview), Body (with main points and clear transitions), and Conclusion (review main points, thesis and closure to attention-getter). Note too the nonverbal delivery elements and gestures.
1. **Impromptu** – Speaker has up to 7 minutes to prepare and deliver a speech typically on one of the three resolutions (often quotations), though AFA style has two choices per card unique to each room, for each speaker in the room. Speakers typically take no more than two minutes to prepare and 5 minutes to speak. They will want to know how much time they are using to prepare (30 second increments given verbally) and then how many minutes are left to speak (by descending finger signals). Relevance of points to the selected topic is key.
 2. **Extemporaneous** – The speaker has 30 minutes to prepare a speech on a current contemporary event relying on prepared files collected on all current news issues or the internet. That preparation occurs elsewhere on campus (prep room) before they arrive in your room to speak. This event is expected to provide deeper analysis than impromptu speeches due to the greater preparation times and the research materials. Speakers are expected to be able to not only answer the topic question directly but to prove the analysis through referencing or quoting the research materials. Judges should give time signals with fingers indicating how many minutes of the maximum of seven minutes speaking time is remaining.

II. **Other Judging Considerations:**

- A. **The Ballot:** Please fill in the ballot completely, circling or indicating everything asked for. Try to explain the reason you gave the rank and rate you awarded in the comments portion of the ballot, or on the back. Unexplained decisions are frustrating and unfulfilling to students and coaches alike. Speakers appreciate specific references to what worked or did not work for you in each speech. Try to be constructive in your criticism. It is against organizational and school policy to engage in practices that could be considered sexually harassing or demeaning in any way, such as offering pejorative comments based on race, gender, ethnicity, preference, etc. Please always remain courteous and civil. Speeches may be taken out of order to facilitate double entered speakers. Extempers though are expected to speak in the proper preassigned order, with the prescribed prep time limits.
- B. **Speeches running overtime:** Judges should penalize speakers that significantly exceed the prescribed time limits by marking them down a rank or more. Many judges allow a slight grace period of up to 10 seconds before seriously marking a speaker down, but some are stricter on this interpretation. In elimination rounds many critics ignore time infractions since the speakers are often slowed down due to larger audience reaction and response and should not be penalized for that additional audience reaction time as long as they are still fairly close.
- C. **Do Not Judge your own team members:** This caution may seem obvious to experienced judges, but in case you are new to judging, this is a very important rule in that we must always strive to let competitors perform on an even playing field. And if one of the students they are competing with is one of your close friends or team members that might not be or at least might not appear fair. Contact the judges table or the tab room immediately please for a new ballot, and to let them reassign your ballot. This can easily happen as we often disguise or hide school names on ballots. Thanks for understanding.
- D. **Judge Qualifications:** If you have a bachelor's degree or higher you are free to judge all events, but if not, you must no longer be eligible to compete in that division, at least in that grouping of events. For example, if you can no longer compete in Novice Interps, then you can judge Novice Interps. Also, please check with your coach as some organizations say you lose your competitive eligibility if you judge any IEs period.
- E. **Judge Demeanor:** Please remain professional, courteous, and civil at all times. You should encourage student performers regarding the things you see done well, and make constructive suggestions on how the student might improve in areas that you feel are in need of improvement, but please do not make hurtful comments. Please recognize that college speech is a part of a performative environment, and the market place of ideas. Not all choices will appeal to all judges and audiences.