

THE AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF MISSOURI  
HIGH SCHOOL ORATORICAL CONTESTS

INSTRUCTIONS TO JUDGES

Please accept the appreciation of The American Legion for your willingness to serve as a judge in this important Americanism program, THE AMERICAN LEGION HIGH SCHOOL ORATORICAL CONTEST.

To acquaint you with the duties to be performed by judges in connection with this Contest, the following data has been prepared and is supplemented with copies of the Missouri Rules pamphlet and the official score card.

It is important that you read and study this material carefully prior to the contest.

Impartial judging in all Contests is the key to the fairness and success of the program from which results the selections of the best qualified student in each Contest.

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1. Five judges are used in all Zone and State Contests. Not less than three nor more than five judges are used in all lower contests. Have two alternate judges available.
  2. The Chairman of each Contest is responsible for obtaining judges and providing them with the necessary information.
  3. The Chairman in charge of each contest, who usually presides during the contest, will meet with judges prior to time of the Contest. Be sure to note exact time, date, and place, as contests are set on rigid time schedules. The purpose of this meeting is to be sure judges are acquainted with all phases of the Contest and to provide them with necessary working materials.
  4. Judges are seated in different locations, where the Contest is held and are not permitted to confer with one another, unless the Chairman determines it to be necessary, because a tie cannot be broken by tabulating the individual judge's score cards in accordance with the Missouri Rules.
  5. The Prepared Oration must be the original efforts of each contestant, and must be based on some phase of the Constitution of the United States which will give emphasis to the attendant duties and obligations of a citizen to our Government. The delivery time in District and Zone Contests shall not be less than 5 minutes nor more than 6 minutes. The delivery time in the State Contest shall not be less than 8 minutes nor more than 10 minutes. The Contest chairman will announce the title of each prepared oration before the contestant speaks.
  6. At the conclusion of the prepared orations at the District, Zone, and State level, each contestant shall speak on an Assigned Topic, an Article or Amendment of the Constitution to be selected by a drawing to be conducted by the Chairmen immediately prior to the delivery of the last prepared oration. Its purpose is to test the speaker's knowledge of the subject, the extent of their research and ability to discuss the subject as related to the basic principles of government under the Constitution. Each contestant shall be given 5 minutes to prepare his talk. The delivery time of the Assigned Topic in ALL contests is not less than 3 minutes nor more than 5 minutes.
  7. Both the Prepared Oration and Assigned Topic must be based on some phase of the Constitution of the United States which will give Emphasis to the Attendant Duties and Obligations of a Citizens to our Government, and lack of such emphasis must result in the judges downgrading the contestant. Judges may downgrade the contestant by up to 10 points for failure to speak on the Constitution in the Prepared Oration.
  8. The Chairman will announce to the judges, at the conclusion of each contestant's appearance, any violations of the time limitations, or other penalty points in accordance with the rules. One point is to be

deducted from the total score of the contestant for each minute or fraction thereof over or under the allotted time.

9. It is suggested that, prior to the Contest, each judge should carefully study the point scoring system in relation to the factors to be considered, during the presentation of the Prepared Oration and the Assigned Topic by each contestant, namely, content of oration and speaking skills. Listed below, you will find items which should be given attention in specific areas. (See listing of point values on official score card.)

A. CONTENT

1. Originality, Freshness, Directness, Applies Knowledge, on Topic.

Is there an original and fresh approach to the topic?  
Does it relate directly to the subject?  
Is information applied to aspects of the subject?  
Does the information flow directly to the audience?  
Does the speaker stay on the topic?  
Does the extemporaneous speech appear to be "canned"?

2. Skill in Selecting examples, Description, Analogies, Specific Data.

Are examples applicable?  
Do the illustrations appear as an "ax to grind" not exactly related to the subject?  
Is adequate information provided on examples or descriptions to inform the audience fully on the points?  
Is proper credit given to quotations or subject matter borrowed from authorities?  
Are specific data utilized to enrich the subject matter?

3. Logic (Correctness of Inference)

Are illustrations supported by logic or facts?  
Are conclusions properly drawn?  
Are there inconsistencies in the use of an application of the logic?  
Are inferences made without proper support or logic?

4. Comprehensiveness of knowledge, knows subject matter

Is plagiarism involved?  
Does the speaker show a broad grasp of the subject?  
Does the overall speech effectively demonstrate comprehensiveness and unity of thought or thoughts?  
Is the topic significant when viewed as a whole?  
Does the overall impression outweigh the component parts?  
Does the extemporaneous speech appear to be memorized to the point where its discussion value is lost?  
Is the total speaking informational and educational for the audience?  
Is an overall humbleness (or respect) evident in both the prepared and extemporaneous speeches?

B. SPEAKING SKILLS

1. Voice and Dictation

Does the voice used detract from the content? Pitch? Nasal Quality?  
Is proper inflection utilized?  
Is the speaker easily understood?  
Does the speaker use the proper volume for the physical conditions which surround the speaker?  
Do the words and sentences run together? Articulation? Enunciation?  
Are there errors in pronunciation?

2. Style: Language Use, Word Arrangement, Transition, Word Selection.

Is the language use appropriate?  
Are the sentences succinct?  
Are the sentences involved to the point that immediate interpretation is not easy? Grammar?  
Does the speaker get lost with many extraneous clauses or phrases?  
Are words used easily identifiable for meanings? Do they fit?  
Is sentence and paragraph transition smooth and continuous?  
Is there a proper introduction, a main body of the speech, a summary or conclusion?

3. Body Action: Poise, Eye Contact, Posture, Gestures.

Is the speaker at ease while speaking?  
Does the speaker have eye contact with all of the audience so that he/she appears to be speaking to all of them?  
Is the speaker's posture of an alert nature?  
Does their movements and gestures enhance or detract from the contact and delivery?  
Is the speaker too dramatic?  
Does the speaker's body action and delivery give the appearance of cockiness or "know-it-all attitude"?

Be sure also to note this provision of the rules. "LACK OF EMPHASIS IN THE PREPARED ORATION AND THE ASSIGNED TOPIC ON THE ATTENDANT DUTIES AND OBLIGATIONS OF A CITIZEN MUST RESULT IN THE JUDGES DOWNGRADING THE CONTESTANT INVOLVED. JUDGES WILL ALSO DOWNGRADE CONTESTANTS IF PARTS OF THEIR ASSIGNED TOPIC APPEAR OVERLY "CANNED."

10. Official Judging of Score Card:

- (a) The method of judging and scoring and the point values indicated on the score card were devised especially for this contest.
- (b) They were devised to provide judges with criteria to select fairly and adequately the best contestant of the Contest.
- (c) To attain this objective, judges must become familiar with all factors involved.

11. Quotations are to be indicated as such, and if the quotations are more than ten (10) words in length, the name of the author must be given. The penalty for plagiarism is disqualification.

12. At the close of the Contest, judges should be sure to fill out the score card completely in accordance with the Contest Rules, total all columns and affix signatures.

Tabulators will collect score cards from judges at the close of the Contest and tabulate the results under the supervision of the Chairman.

13. At the proper time, in accordance with Contest rules, the Chairman, or his representative, will announce the results of the Contest and introduce the judges to the contestants and audience.
14. JUDGES ARE REQUESTED NOT TO DISCUSS ANY PHASE OF THE CONTEST OR THEIR JUDGING METHODS WITH CONTESTANTS, COACHES, ESCORTS, OR OTHERS OUTSIDE OF THE CHAIRMAN FOLLOWING THE CONTEST. Previous experience has proven this to be an unwise practice and usually results in criticism of judges. At the conclusion of the State Contest, the chairman may retire from the room with the judges while they are reviewing and individually scoring their cards. Tabulators will then tabulate the results before all return to the auditorium.
15. Chairmen and tabulators are not permitted to divulge the judges score cards at the site of the Contest. Persons interested in the scoring for professional reasons, may upon written request, be mailed at a later date copies of the scores of a contestant with the names of the judges omitted.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Duane Benton".

Judge Duane Benton, Chairman  
Department Oratorical Commission