

UPDATED
FOR 2013

Judge's Guide
for the
Student Speakers
COMPETITION

Georgia Edition
v.2013

A Judge's Guide to the Student Speakers Competition

Steve Williams

A helpful resource for students participating in the Student Speaker's Competition is *SpeakerPower: How to Get It and Use It* by Steve Williams. Call or email Discipleship Ministries for a copy.

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The Privilege of Being a Judge

People who can communicate effectively have helped change the world in every generation. Today's students are being counted on to make the world a better place, but if they are to be successful, they must be able to communicate with skill and confidence.

Judging student speakers is a privilege given only to a few. Most of the students who participate in the Student Speaker's Competition are diligent and work very hard to prepare and deliver good speeches. By serving as a judge, you have an opportunity to help them improve their skills.

The primary purpose of the Student Speaker's Competition is to help high school students grow in

their faith, while becoming competent and confident communicators. It's an objective with lifelong benefits and eternal consequences.

It's a challenge to judge consistently but, with the right blend of firmness and compassion, you can do it. This guide will help you.

Judges have three important tasks:

- Read and score all speeches for *content* before hearing students speak.
- Listen to speakers and judge each one on *delivery*.
- Cooperate with the other judges to determine the winning speakers.

Determining the Winners

Speakers should be judged and scored in the same manner at each level of the competition. The Score Sheet, Tally Sheet, Speaker Feedback form, and Timekeeper's Sheet in this guide should be used at all levels of competition.

Church/Local. The primary purpose of local competition is to give students an opportunity to speak before an audience. Score all speakers and give each speaker feedback. However, no one is eliminated at this level. Churches can send an unlimited number of speakers on to the associational competition.

Association. Each association may send all of its speakers to the regional competition, but every speaker should be judged and receive feedback. Some associations may not have a competition. In that case, participating churches can send all of their speakers to the regional competition.

Region. Judges must determine the two best speakers at the regional level because normally only

two students can advance to the state competition from each region. In unusual circumstances, however, a third speaker may advance to state at the discretion of the competition leadership.

State. A winner and a runner-up are determined at the state competition. The state winner advances to the national competition to compete against winners from other states.

At each level of the competition, judges should read all speeches and score them for content before hearing speakers. After hearing speakers, they should excuse themselves to a private room to add up their scores so the Lead Judge can compile a final score for each participant. This is done by totaling each participant's scores for content and delivery.

The Lead Judge should then give the winner's names to the Competition Coordinator so they can be announced. It is recommended that Score Sheets be seen only by judges and competition officials.

Who's Eligible

The SSC is open to students in grades 10-12. State winners are eligible to compete at the state competition only once. Former state winners may compete again at church, associational and regional levels, but they may not advance to the state competition.

Scoring Speakers

Each speaker is scored on *content* (50 percent) and *delivery* (50 percent.) A scale of 1-10 points is used to score speakers in each of ten different areas of speaking proficiency. Content and delivery are judged independently of each other.

Challenges in Judging

Judging the Student Speakers Competition is a great honor and provides a valuable service to students, but it does have its challenges. That's the way it is with most important things in life.

The greatest challenge for a judge is acknowledging that writing and speaking styles are constantly changing, and adjusting your judging accordingly. If you don't, there will likely be a lack of consistency in the judging at different levels of the Competition, and that can hamper a student's chances.

That's why all judges are encouraged to read and follow this Judge's Guide. It doesn't address all matters of style—it would take hundreds of pages to do that—but it does address the most basic issues. Please refer also to the current Student Guide; it contains even more information about some matters of style and best practices.

Judges must realize that effective writing and speaking styles, and what is considered acceptable, are constantly moving targets. Much of what was considered best practice just 10 or 15 years ago has changed, and continues to change.

To be fair, recognize those changes and give students room to do some things different from what you might have been taught when you were a student.

What has changed

Two excellent examples of the way styles have changed are the use of contractions (written content) and movement (delivery).

Not very many years ago, contractions were considered bad form in speeches, letters and formal papers. The use of contractions is still somewhat discouraged in the business world, but their limited usage is no longer considered verboten.

Using contractions when speaking is even more accepted today than it is in written papers. In fact, speakers who use no contractions at all sound stiff and overly formal. And that is not the way to connect with an audience.

Change in the way movement is

viewed is at least as great as the change in the usage of contractions. Less than a generation ago, speakers were taught to stand still and even encouraged to stand behind a lectern or a desk. Any movement was considered a distraction.

Purposeful movement has become such an accepted element of effective speaking, most people wonder what's wrong when a speaker doesn't move about. This change is at least partly due to the shrinkage in attention spans. People used to be able to concentrate on a good speaker for as long as one or two hours. Try that today and you'll have an audience revolt on your hands, if anyone is still awake.

Purposeful movement is an excellent way for speakers to emphasize what they're saying and to cause people in the audience to move their eyes and shift their field of view. Caution—pacing is not purposeful movement. For more on what constitutes purposeful movement, please see the "Giving Your Speech" section in the Student Guide.

What has not changed

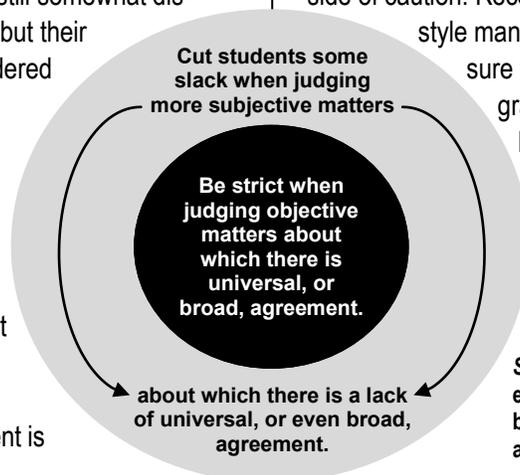
While some things about speeches and speaking have changed, other things have not. Once again, a challenge for judges is to recognize the difference.

Correct punctuation, the proper use of paragraphs, giving credit for sources, speaking loudly enough for people to hear, enunciating clearly, and having poise and confidence are just as important today as they have ever been. And the "rules" for things like these have changed little over the years.

Follow this guide and, if ever in doubt, err on the side of caution. Recommend that speakers check with

style manuals and their teachers to make sure what is accepted practice. The graphic to the left illustrates how to balance your judging between universally accepted best practices and the more subjective matters of style.

Harbrace College Handbook and *MLA Style Manual for Research Papers* are excellent style manuals. Both enjoy broad usage in academia and business, and are available in many libraries.



Judging Content

The content of a speech is important because it's what a student has to say. Students are required to write their own speeches so speeches should reflect what students think and believe. That doesn't mean students are not allowed to consult with other persons and research their topic thoroughly. Quite the opposite — they are encouraged to learn what others think. Writing a speech should be a learning experience.

Be sure and set aside plenty of time to read and score each speech. Competition officials will send speeches to you about a week in advance. Each speech should be judged on its own merits rather than

compared with other speeches.

Guard against allowing personal preferences to guide your decisions. Judging is not about how well you like the speech or whether you agree with it. It's about how well the speech is developed and written.

Content is judged according to the five criteria defined and described in this section. Scoring is based on a scale of 1-10, with 1 being very poor and 10 representing the best possible.

Filling out the content portion of the Score Sheet and the Feedback Sheet in advance of the actual competition date will save time.

Originality/Related to Subject

Does the content appear to be the original work of the speaker?

All speeches should have been written by the speaker and not merely copied or borrowed from someone else. It is definitely okay for a speaker to be influenced by someone else and to quote others, but he must put everything in his own words except quotes.

Clues to originality are how well the speaker seems to understand the topic and how much of the speech is his own thoughts.

Does the speech deal with the subject?

Everything in the speech should deal directly or indirectly with the subject, and not just dance around it.

Watch for content that has little or no connection to the title of the speech.

Does the speech give evidence of creative thinking by the student?

A speech should not just quote Scripture and tell what others have said. It should reflect what the speaker thinks and wants listeners to know.

Watch for phrases such as "I think" or "I believe." Even if a speaker doesn't use those exact words, it should be evident that the speaker has given serious thought to the topic and is expressing what she thinks and believes.

Organization/Logical Sequencing

Does the content flow logically and are ideas and information properly sequenced?

Flow and sequence are pretty subjective, but the strongest clues are whether the speech makes sense.

Good speeches leave no doubt in the reader's mind about the writer's intent. If you have difficulty understanding what the speaker is writing about, it may be that the sequencing is faulty.

Is the speech's core belief or idea clearly evident to the audience?

All good speeches have a strong and clearly identifiable bottom line or core idea. If you can't find it, it's probably not there or it's unclear.

The writer should tell you what he wants you to know most of all, and he should say it more than once to make sure you get it. He may say it somewhat differently each time, but it should be there.

Are the speech's opening and closing effective?

The most important part of any speech is the opening, the first 30-45 seconds. If the speaker doesn't get your attention then and make you want to continue reading or listening, you probably won't. Stories, quotes, word pictures and gestures make good openers.

The second most important part of a speech is the final 30-45 seconds, or the close. That's

because an effective close summarizes briefly and reminds you of the speaker's bottom line or core idea.

Does that mean the middle of a speech (points, sub-points, etc.) is not important? Not at all, it just means a good speech starts by making people want to listen and ends with strong take-aways for listeners.

Structure and Grammar

Does the speech use complete sentences and are sentences grammatically correct?

All sentences should have at least a subject and a verb (Ex. — *I believe*). Most sentences have a subject, a verb and an object (Ex. — *I believe in God*).

Many sentences will be even more expressive (Ex. — *I believe in a God who spoke the entire universe into being and knows more than all the super computers in the world, yet counts the exact number of hairs on my head*).

Subjects and verbs should always agree (Ex. — *He did it, not He done it; She and Mary were there, not Her and Mary were there*).

Correct punctuation is also an important part of good grammar. Periods, commas, semi-colons, exclamation points, apostrophes, etc. should all be used correctly.

Are words spelled correctly?

There is little excuse for misspelled words today. Everyone has access to a dictionary and most have a computer with spell-checker. Misspelled words are usually a sign of sloppiness and lack of attention to detail.

Are paragraphs used properly?

Paragraphs should be used to signal a shift in content, such as moving from one key point or sub-point to another. Good paragraphs are unified, coherent, and well developed.¹

All sentences in a paragraph should relate to a single main idea (unity). Ideas should progress easily and logically from one sentence to the next

(coherence). Specific details should clearly support the paragraph's main idea (development).

While there is no set length for paragraphs, they should be long enough to adequately develop an idea, but short enough to make the speech easy to read and maintain the focus of readers and listeners.

Use of Resources and Proper Credit

Is there adequate usage of scripture and outside resources?

Three-to-five references and quotes are about right for a 4-6 minute speech. If there are more than five, the speaker may not have time to tell what he thinks. A well-researched speech will also contain quotes from sources other than the Bible.

Do the resources used clearly help the audience understand the topic and the speaker's point?

All good speeches are built around a clearly defined bottom line or core idea. The resources a speaker quotes or refers to should help the audience understand and/or buy into that thought or belief. Quotes should never be used just because they sound important or have dramatic effect.

Are some sources better than others?

Maybe, but we want students to consider what others think. Do not add or deduct points for sources you believe to be higher/lower in quality.

Is proper credit given to scripture and resources used?

Quotation marks should always be used to identify quotes. Scripture should be identified by the book and verse, as well as the translation quoted.

Quotes from books and papers should give the author's name, book or resource title, date published, publisher's name, the copyright holder, and the page number.

When quoting something the speaker heard another person say, the person's name should be given. Please refer to the Student Guide for an example of how to show credit for all types of

¹Harbrace College Handbook Eleventh Edition. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Inc., page 322.

sources, including those from web sites.

All sources cited should be identified with a superscript number in the body of the speech at the end of the quote or reference. Each source should also be identified with a corresponding number in the bibliography.

Five (5) points should be deducted for no bibliography. Two (2) or three (3) points should be deducted for an incorrectly or inconsistently formatted bibliography. An example of how to format a bibliography is provided in the Student Guide.

When actually giving a speech, a speaker may identify only the author and the resource.

Purpose Accomplished

Does the speech accomplish the speaker's purpose?

This is pretty subjective, but if you can recognize the speaker's intent for the speech you should be able to determine whether she accomplished it.

A good speech reveals its objective within the first minute. Some speakers will say something like "I'm going to prove ..." or "I want you to know." Others will be more subtle; their objective is revealed in the bottom line or core idea their speech is based on.

Judging Delivery

Delivery is an opportunity for students to show they can "connect" with an audience. Having a good message on paper is important but it's not enough. Speaking is like making a phone call. The speaker "calls" the audience, the audience "answers" the phone, and the speaker tries to keep them on the line until he's finished.

Delivery is multi-sensory. Speakers have an opportunity to involve the eyes, ears, hearts and minds of the audience. The burden for involving the audience is on the speaker, and that's where skill plays a crucial role. Speakers who are more skilled and have worked harder usually do a better job of connecting with their audience.

When you listen to speakers, put their written speeches aside and concentrate on the speaker and

how well she delivers her message. If she reaches you and gets you connected, she is probably reaching the rest of the audience too.

Caution— don't "over score" the first speeches you hear. If you do, you will leave yourself no room to give better speeches higher scores. In your mind, determine a kind of baseline for an average speech and then score up or down from that. Note that the Score Sheet says average is worth five or six points.

Clarification— appropriate movement is encouraged and the effective use of notes is permitted in the Student Speaker's Competition.

The five criteria for judging delivery are defined and described in this section. Scoring is based on a scale of 1-10, with 1 being very poor and 10 representing the best possible.

Eye Contact with Audience

Does the speaker maintain eye contact with the audience the majority of the time?

Eye contact is arguably the most important connecting skill a speaker can use. A speaker should look members of the audience in the eye, except when looking away to gesture, to emphasize something or to glance at notes. Looking at walls, the floor or objects in the room don't count.

Does the speaker look at persons in all parts of the audience?

Some speakers look mostly at people they know or only to one or two parts of the audience. Effective communicators, however, make regular eye visits with all parts of the audience. It's one of the ways speakers tell people they are speaking to them. Regular eye contact helps to "seal the deal" by making the speaker appear confident and believable.

Articulate and Expressive Voice

Does the speaker use good vocal energy and enunciate clearly?

Vocal energy and enunciation are relatively easy to detect. The speaker either has them or doesn't have them.

Vocal energy is best expressed by enthusiasm in the speaker's voice. Listen for appropriate use of volume, pitch, and vocal inflection.

Good enunciation is reflected in how easy it is to understand what the speaker says. He should also speak distinctly and slowly enough that his words are clear.

Caution — don't be swayed by an overly emotional speaker. Good speakers are always passionate and emotional, but a speaker who is overly emotional (either genuine or contrived) has either lost his poise or is trying to manipulate the audience or the judges.

Does the speaker speak loudly enough for everyone in the audience to hear clearly?

Speakers should talk loudly enough for judges and others in the room to hear without having to strain. When scoring, you may make allowance for the lack of a microphone or an improperly adjusted sound system.

Poise and Confidence

Does the speaker appear to be relaxed and in control?

Relaxed does not equal *boring*. It means the speaker impresses you that she has prepared well and knows her speech, and that she is in control of her emotions.

Look for calmness *behind* the voice, not necessarily *in* her voice. Good vocal energy means she speaks loud and forceful at times, but her voice is always steady, and not quivering or trembling.

Does the speaker appear to be confident?

Confidence is one of the first things you'll notice that a speaker has or doesn't have. The way she

moves toward the podium, the way she stands, the steadiness of her voice, and the look on her face are all clues to confidence.

A confident speaker knows his subject and is confident in his own ability and in God's promise to speak through him.

Is the speaker convincing, interesting and understandable?

This is highly subjective, but it's another one of those "you'll know it if you see it" things. The speaker should convince you he knows what he's talking about, even if you don't agree with everything he says.

Interesting means you listen with rapt attention throughout the speech. *Understandable* means you "get" what he's talking about and that it makes sense.

Posture/Movement/Gesturing

Does the speaker use good posture and appropriate body movement?

Good posture is important because studies show that it makes a speaker appear more believable and confident. A speaker should never lean against a lectern or stand with legs crossed.

Movement is good because it helps keep the audience focused. However, all body movement should appear to be natural or purposeful. Some speakers will move about more than others but it does not necessarily mean they are more effective speakers. Pacing is never appropriate movement.

Does he use effective hand and arm gestures?

Congruence or agreement is the issue here. Gesturing should mirror and emphasize what the speaker is saying. Hands and arms should hang at the speaker's side when not being used to gesture positively. Speakers should never put hands in pockets unless doing it for deliberate effect.

Gestures and movement add positive effect to a speech, but the goal should be to help the audience understand and pay attention. Natural gesturing is always better than forced gesturing.

Does the speaker use appropriate facial expressions?

Appropriate facial expressions are important to helping a speaker get and keep the audience's attention. Watch closely for them.

Facial expressions should mirror and reinforce what the speaker is saying. A genuine smile always helps a speaker connect with the audience.

Delivered from Memory

Does the speaker rely excessively on notes?

The key word here is *excessively*. Speakers are allowed to use one page of notes while speaking. A speaker who glances at notes only occasionally should not be penalized. However, points should be deducted if a speaker refers to his notes so much so that he loses eye contact with the audience for more than a few seconds and/or appears to be reading.

Speakers are not required to memorize their speeches though many do. Not memorizing a speech word-for-word can actually enhance delivery by making the speech sound fresher and more spontaneous. However, speakers should always deliver their speeches close to the way they are written.

Does the speaker require prompting?

It will be noticeable if a speaker loses her place and someone in the audience prompts her. It is better if she remembers on her own, even if she has to pause for a few seconds.

There is nothing wrong with pausing briefly. However, becoming flustered, pausing for more than 5-6 seconds, or commenting on the fact that she forgot can indicate a loss of composure.

What about quotes?

Speakers are not required to cite complete credit for quotes when giving speeches. They may give only the book name and author, or when quoting Scripture, may say only the author's name and/or the name of the book.

Personal Appearance

Is the speaker well groomed and is clothing appropriate, neat and in good taste?

Clothing doesn't have to be expensive to be neat and in good taste. *Appropriate* is the big thing. It's not about whether you personally like what a student is wearing. Teen clothing styles are constantly changing, but there is always a line between what's appropriate and what's not.

Speakers should be dressed modestly and comfortably. That means slacks and collared shirts for boys, and dresses, skirts, slacks and collared shirts for girls. Jeans, shorts, t-shirts, short skirts, flip-flops and bare midriffs are not acceptable.

Hair should be neatly combed or brushed. Makeup should be modest and in good taste. Boys should be clean shaven.

Who judges personal appearance?

The Competition Coordinator will determine whether speakers are dressed appropriately.

How many points should be deducted?

A maximum of ten (10) points will be deducted for appearance, depending on the seriousness of the infraction. The Lead Judge shall make a one-time deduction of points on the Tally Sheet.

Within Time Allotment

Was the speech between four and six minutes in length?

This is the easiest part of scoring. A speech is either within the allowable window of four to six minutes or it is not. The Timekeeper will tell you if any points are to be deducted for a speech not being within time allotment.

How many points should be deducted?

The Lead Judge shall make a one-time deduction on the Tally Sheet of two (2) points for every 10 seconds, or fraction of ten seconds, a speech is under four minutes or over six minutes. The most a speaker shall be penalized for time is 10 points.

Score Sheet

Student Speaker COMPETITION

Speaker # _____ Name _____ Speech Title _____

Reminders:

- Judge *content* and *delivery* independently of each other.
- *When students give their speeches*, concentrate on delivery, not written speeches,
- Check your math.
- Any deductions for inappropriate dress or time allotment will be made on the Tally Sheet by the Lead Judge.
- Turn in all score sheets to the Competition Coordinator at the conclusion of the competition.

Judge's Name _____

Scoring System									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Poor		Fair		Average		Good		Excellent	

	Judge's Notes	Score
CONTENT	1. Originality/Related to subject <input type="checkbox"/> Original work of speaker? <input type="checkbox"/> Told what he/she thought? <input type="checkbox"/> Evidence of creative thinking? <input type="checkbox"/> Adequately covered subject?	
	2. Organization/Logical sequencing <input type="checkbox"/> Good flow/sequencing? <input type="checkbox"/> Opening and close effective? <input type="checkbox"/> Core belief clearly evident? <input type="checkbox"/> Made sense?	
	3. Structure and grammar <input type="checkbox"/> Used correct grammar? <input type="checkbox"/> Paragraphs used properly? <input type="checkbox"/> Words spelled correctly? <input type="checkbox"/> Used correct punctuation?	
	4. Use of resources and proper credit <input type="checkbox"/> Adequate # of resources? <input type="checkbox"/> Proper credit given? <input type="checkbox"/> Resources used effectively? <input type="checkbox"/> Included a bibliography?	
	5. Purpose accomplished <input type="checkbox"/> Objective of speech stated? <input type="checkbox"/> Purpose accomplished?	

DELIVERY	1. Eye contact with audience <input type="checkbox"/> Maintained eye contact? <input type="checkbox"/> Made eye contact with all parts of the audience? <input type="checkbox"/> Held it long enough?	
	2. Articulate and expressive voice <input type="checkbox"/> Used good vocal energy? <input type="checkbox"/> Spoke loudly enough? <input type="checkbox"/> Enunciated clearly <input type="checkbox"/> Passionate about subject?	
	3. Poise and confidence <input type="checkbox"/> Relaxed and in control? <input type="checkbox"/> Convincing and interesting? <input type="checkbox"/> Appeared confident? <input type="checkbox"/> Paused appropriately?	
	4. Posture/Movement/Gesturing <input type="checkbox"/> Maintained good posture? <input type="checkbox"/> Hand and arm gestures? <input type="checkbox"/> Moved about appropriately? <input type="checkbox"/> Facial expression?	
	5. Delivered from memory <input type="checkbox"/> Made proper use of notes? <input type="checkbox"/> Any prompting needed? <input type="checkbox"/> Gave written speech? <input type="checkbox"/> Adequate credit for quotes?	

TOTAL SCORE

Tally Sheet

Student Speaker COMPETITION

Lead Judge _____ Competition Date _____

Competition Level

Check One:

- Church Competition. Church Name: _____
- Associational Competition. Association Name: _____
- Regional Competition. Region Name: _____
- State Competition

JUDGE'S SCORES

	Speakers									
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10
Judge #1:										
Judge #2:										
Judge #3:										
Points <i>deducted</i> for dress ¹ , time allotment ² , and/or speech turned in late ³ .	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

TOTAL POINTS

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

¹Make a one-time deduction for inappropriate dress if instructed to do so by the Competition Coordinator. Maximum deduction is 10 points per speaker.

²Make a one-time deduction for time if instructed to do so by the Timekeeper. Deduct 2 points for every 10 seconds, or fraction of 10 seconds, a speaker is under 4 minutes or over 6 minutes. The maximum deduction for time is 10 points per speaker.

³Make a one-time deduction for speeches turned in late: a penalty of two points for the first day late and one point each for the second and third days.

HIGHEST SCORING SPEAKERS		
Speaker Number	Speaker's Name	Total Points

Feedback Sheet

Student Speaker
COMPETITION

Speaker's Name _____ Date _____

Title of Speech _____

CONTENT:

Things the speaker did well:	Things the speaker could have done better:
------------------------------	--

DELIVERY:

Things the speaker did well:	Things the speaker could have done better:
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Timekeeper's Sheet



Timekeeper _____ Date _____ Location _____

Reminders:

- Speeches should be between 4 minutes and 6 minutes in length.
- Penalize speakers 2 points for every 10 seconds, or fraction of 10 seconds, a speech is under 4 minutes or over 6 minutes. The maximum deduction for any student is 10 points.
- Turn in the Timekeeper's Sheet to the Lead Judge after all speakers have spoken.

Speaker	Length of Speech	Number of Seconds Over/Under	Points Penalized
#1			
#2			
#3			
#4			
#5			
#6			
#7			
#8			
#9			
#10			
#11			
#12			
#13			
#14			
#15			
#16			
#17			
#18			
#19			
#20			