

## Arkansas State Communication Association

### Guidelines for Tournament Judges

*The students who participate in the Arkansas State Communication Association tournaments work hard and make a personal commitment to preparing for competition. They have a right to expect that they will be evaluated fairly and consistently by judges who are knowledgeable in the field of communication and familiar with the tournament process. Because the directors of individual tournaments have no vehicle for training judges, ASCA recommends that all coaches be responsible for the lay judges who assist them by providing them with the following guidelines:*

#### GUIDELINES

##### I. Becoming a Qualified Judge

- A. Often performers and their coaches are uncomfortable being evaluated by young judges who have been their competitors in the past. It is preferred that lay judges be out of competition one full year.
- B. Coaches who invite parents and guests to be lay judges must be responsible for preparing them to judge. Lay judges should be thoroughly familiar with both the rules and process of tournaments.
  - 1. Coaches should provide new judges with this or a similar description of the judge's responsibilities. New judges should be encouraged to read and discuss these responsibilities.
  - 2. Coaches should provide new judges with a "practice" round in which an experienced judge sits in to offer suggestions, answer questions, and look over finished ballots.
- C. New judges should not be anxious about making the right decisions. Experience will show that not all judges interpret rules and regulations the same way. **Every** ballot is just one judge's opinion.

##### II. Managing the Round

- A. **Place yourself in a spot directly in front of the performing area**, even if it means asking observers to move. Take all the time needed to become familiar with the rules and get ready to listen.
- B. When you are ready to begin, you may call performers in any order you wish. The exception to this is in draw events such as Extemp and Improvised Duet Acting. These performers should perform in the order they draw topics so that preparation time is equal.
- C. Many students will request to perform first or next because they are entered in another event at the same time. Cooperate with these double-entered students whenever possible. However, most tournaments do not allow triple-entries.
- D. Check the chalkboard in the room where your event is held. Often, performers will leave a DOUBLE-ENTERED note on the board, and **the judge is expected to wait until the round is completely over** (usually 1 hour or 1 hour 15 minutes) for these performers

before closing out the round.

- E. Be sympathetic with nervous performers and allow them to start over or try again if necessary. Always allow a performer to finish his performance.
- F. If a timekeeper is present, request that he/she sit in a spot clearly visible to the performers and that he/she hold cards up throughout the performance rather than intermittently.
- G. Enforce courtesy from the observers. Do not hold the performer responsible for the behavior of others in the room, even if they come in together.
- H. Many students will request a verbal critique, but there is generally no time for this during the round. Giving a verbal critique is the judge's option if time allows.

### **III. Completing the Judge's Ballot**

- A. At tournament registration, the judge will receive an assignment sheet informing him of his judging assignments for preliminary rounds. Subsequent assignments will be posted as the tournament progresses.
- B. The judge's ballot is actually an envelope containing several items: a list of rules for the event, a critique sheet for each performer, and a ranking sheet.
- C. **Read the rules for the event** before the round begins. Tournaments have the option of writing their own rules and these often vary slightly from what is considered standard.
- D. **Fill out each performer's critique sheet with a thoughtful evaluation of his/her work.** Try to include both positive and negative comments and to make all criticism constructive. The critique sheet is not merely a checklist, give the performer something with which to work. **Never write a critique so harsh that it discourages a young performer unnecessarily.** This critique sheet can be filled out during the performance, after the performance, or after the round. However, give the performer some degree of eye contact and nonverbal feedback during the performance.
- E. The critique sheet requires a rating and ranking for each student. These ratings in the preliminary round determine the awarding of certificates at the end of the tournament. However, **it is common practice to leave rankings unmarked below 4th or ratings unmarked below FAIR.**
- F. The ranking sheet is never seen by the student and must have every performer ranked and rated with no ties.
- G. Three judges are usually present in a final round. **Complete your ballot before discussing your decision with the other two judges.**
- H. The entire ballot should be turned in as soon as possible after the round to keep the tournament running on schedule.
- I. Judges should remain available between rounds and should be present one round past the elimination of their own team in case they are needed.

### **IV. Knowing the Rules and Penalties**

- A. **Read the rules for the event before the round begins.** Don't assume the rules are standard.
- B. **The standard penalty for breaking a rule or not meeting a time limit is to lower the performer one ranking and one rating.**
- C. A student should never be penalized more than one ranking unless he/she exhibits behavior

that is offensive or completely unacceptable. Bad taste in language or content or rude behavior to another performer would be examples of serious misconduct that might result in disqualification. In these cases, a student might be stopped in mid-performance and/or given the lowest ranking on the judge's ranking sheet.

*Determining the best performance in a round can be very difficult, and the criteria can be different in every situation. The criteria is always very subjective, and the judge should attempt to justify his decision as he writes the critique. Following are some suggestions regarding what to look for in specific events.*

- A. Subtlety and control are valuable assets for a performer. Loud is not always better.
- B. Interpretive events such as Prose and Poetry Interp emphasize the use of the voice for bringing the literature to life. Performers in these events should not move their feet, but should rely on voices, facial expressions, and hand gestures. In acting events, such as Solo and Duet Acting, performers are allowed to physically recreate the situation with movement.
- C. In Mime, the performers should not touch each other.
- D. In Improvised Duet Acting, young performers often cross the line using questionable content and language. If you are really offended and feel inclined to do so, stop them.
- E. In any event, performers should not be criticized for selecting well-known pieces of literature. Remember that the material is new to the student and merits consideration.