

# English-Speaking Union

## Public Speaking Competition

### Guidelines for Judges

#### Key elements for judging

The following are key elements in the competition:

- a coherently presented argument
- demonstration of the ability to think on one's feet
- presence on the platform
- rapport with the audience
- audibility

It is important that competitors should not appear over-prepared or too tied to any notes they use. Spontaneous comments are to a speaker's credit.

All three roles are challenging and require the ability to listen, think and respond.

The competition offers students an opportunity to develop and demonstrate a style of public dialogue that is lively but not adversarial. This is not a war!

#### The importance of good judging

Competitors and spectators must be sure of the competence of the judges if they are to accept their decisions. Of course praise should be given but as a consequence of the evidence not as a benign generality.

Judges should remember that the majority of the competitors fail to get further than the first round. It is therefore essential that judging is of as high a quality as possible at this stage in the competition to give all competitors a sense of having achieved something positive and worthwhile.

#### Feedback

Before announcing the winners, the panel of judges (or one of its members) is asked to offer constructive criticism and advice to the speakers. Judges may be asked to speak and give comments on one of the three roles, and are also asked to discuss the decisions with competitors after the programme, provided that competitors and coaches do not abuse this opportunity and use it to attack the decisions.

#### Reserve teams

In addition to picking out the winning team, the judges are asked to select a reserve team in case the winners are subsequently unable to participate in the next round.

#### Criteria

Judges will assess teams principally by reference to three criteria.

- Content
- Effectiveness in the role
- Style

The constituent elements of these three categories are explained on the opposite page.

#### The Judges' Marksheet

Maximum marks for a school are 100, divided as follows:

- 30 points for the Chairperson
- 40 points for the Speaker
- 30 points for the Questioner

As a guide, the marks should be distributed in the following way:

- Excellent 90-100% of available marks
- Good 70-80%
- Average 50-60%
- Below average 30-40%
- Poor 10-20%

Although your marks are a valuable guide in discussion, you should not feel tied to them: they are your guide to a rank order.

The marks apply to the standards of this competition, not to any notional universal dimension of public speaking excellence or National Curriculum standards.

Judges are requested to write explanatory and constructive comments on their marksheets; Judges must remember that the competition is also an opportunity to learn and improve public speaking techniques and that adjudicators are central to this educational process.

Completed mark sheets should be handed in at the end to the organiser.



# Public Speaking Competition

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### Content

**15 marks out of 30 for Chairs and Questioners**  
**20 marks out of 40 for Speakers**

It should be evident from a good speech, question, introduction or summary that the competitor has carefully considered the topic. The competitor should demonstrate an understanding of the issues involved in the case and an ability to construct a logical argument.

Carefully selected and relevant evidence is important. Irrelevance should be penalised. Weak or frivolous interpretations of the topic are unlikely to be successful.

### Effectiveness in role

**10 marks out of 30 for Chairs and Questioners**  
**10 marks out of 40 for Speakers**

Although each person will need to draw on skills such as those relating to content and style, each role is distinctive:

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The **Chairperson** opens proceedings and must swiftly create an appropriate atmosphere. He or she introduces the speakers and the topic and at the end sums up and thanks both speakers. It is part of the Chairperson's role to introduce the topic without giving a speech.

When the Speaker's speech is over, the Chairperson asks the Questioner to begin questioning the Speaker. After four minutes the Chairperson should invite questions (which should be kept short) from the audience. The Chairperson should rephrase a question from the audience where necessary, but need not follow one procedure throughout. It is the Chairperson's responsibility to end the question period if it goes beyond six and a half minutes.

At the end of the question period the Chairperson should be able to sum up the issues raised by both Speaker and questioners, and should thank everyone before closing the proceedings. It is the Chairperson's job to manage the timing of the whole session.

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The **Speaker** develops a line of argument on the topic which must be supported by relevant information. Reasons must be given for views. The Speaker may speak for or against the topic as it is phrased in the programme. It is not enough merely to assert that something is right or wrong.

As the Speaker has the longest uninterrupted opportunity to develop an argument it is important that the speech holds the audience's attention and that it is clearly structured. A natural style that is not overprepared will be rewarded. Spontaneous comments that are appropriate to the moment are to be encouraged.

The Speaker should demonstrate an ability to answer

questions sensibly and should not try to monopolise the platform in order to avoid answering further questions. The Questioner must be given the opportunity to ask questions.

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The **Questioner** probes the Speaker's statements and views and, as appropriate, should question for elaboration, clarification, correction and alternative lines of argument.

The Questioner is not an adversary; rather he or she is a courteous, probing interviewer who can demonstrate an understanding of the issues raised and who can challenge a line of argument by putting forward an alternative view on behalf of the audience and a wider public.

The Questioner should demonstrate that he or she is a good listener who is able to pick up on points made by the Speaker as well as asking some prepared questions.

Questions should be brief but the way in which they are phrased is crucial. The Questioner may interrupt the Speaker during the question period if, for example, the response is becoming too long or if the Questioner wishes to seek immediate clarification. The Questioner will be rewarded for asking a reasonable number of questions.

### Style

**5 marks out of 30 for Chairs and Questioners**  
**10 marks out of 40 for Speakers**

Style may be defined as rhetorical skill. It covers not what is said but *how* it is said. The following areas are all relevant.

- The speakers' ability to express themselves clearly
- The extent to which the individual develops rapport with the audience
- Variety of voice
- Appropriate use of humour
- Diction: choice of language and fluency

The speakers are expected to display oratorical skills, but an unnecessarily flamboyant or pretentious style is unlikely to be successful.

**Those who read a script or give the impression of reciting a memorised piece should be penalised. The use of pre-prepared sheets and palm cards, or notes made during the speeches, is entirely appropriate, but speakers should not be overdependent on them.**

The use of props is strongly discouraged.