

About forensics judging

Forensic competition enables students to find their voice - literally. Their hours of hard work and practice pay off when they perform for their peers and judges during tournament competition.

The Nashville Catholic Middle School Forensic League depends on adult volunteers to serve as judges at these events. By offering both praise and constructive criticism, judges help students develop poise in public performing, and confidence in themselves. Forensic judging is fun, informative and rewarding.

Want to know more?

What is the purpose of the Nashville Catholic Middle School Forensic League?

Founded in 1990, the league gives 5th-8th grade students the opportunity to compete in 12 speech/drama categories. Each year, the 12 active schools in the league host about six tournaments.

Why am I needed?

Each school is required to provide one judge for every six entries; without volunteer judges, tournaments couldn't be held!

Do I need previous experience to be a judge?

No. Reviewing judging materials either at a Judges Workshop or with your school's coach should provide the fundamental information needed.

What is expected of judges?

Judges are expected to provide unbiased and balanced evaluations of student performances. They complete an individual ballot for each student, balancing praise and constructive criticism. They also award speaker points to each student, and rank students from first to last in their section.

Judges are not allowed to give oral critiques, or to consult with others in reaching their decisions.

How do I evaluate students?

Each event is governed by a set of rules. Judges receive the rules, in addition to ballots and other materials, prior to the beginning of each round. They can also be requested in advance of a tournament from a coach. These materials include both objective criteria, such as a maximum time limit, and subjective criteria, such as the effective use of gestures. Judges are asked to evaluate students in an unbiased and balanced manner, based upon the rules governing each category.

What are the speech and drama categories?

From humorous to dramatic, and memorized to extemporaneous, the tournaments feature the following events:

- , Dramatic Interpretation
- , Duet Improvisation
- , Duet Acting
- , Duet Interpretation
- , Humorous Interpretation
- , One-Act Play
- , Original Oratory
- , Pantomime
- , Interpretation of Poetry
- , Interpretation of Prose
- , Storytelling
- , TV Broadcasting

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What category will I be assigned to judge?

Judging assignments are normally made shortly before each tournament begins.

Judges are assigned to the 12 speech and drama events on as-needed and where-needed basis; debate is judged only by those trained for the event. Only those who *strongly* prefer to judge - or not judge - a certain event should make that request to their school's coach. Whether it can be honored will depend upon the needs of the tournament

How do tournaments work?

Judges begin their day by meeting as a group with the Tournament Director to receive important, up-to-the-minute information about the events of the day. They also receive their first-round judging assignments and materials needed to evaluate students. Attendance is required.

Students are each assigned a code (such as A-1 or B-5), that identifies them throughout the tournament without using their name or revealing the name of their school. They are then randomly divided into "sections" within their category, taking care to ensure that students and judges from the same school are not in the same section. The number of sections depends upon the number of entries in the category. For example, if there were seven students entered in Dramatic Interpretation, there would likely be one section. If there were twelve students, there would likely be two sections. Typically, there are not more than seven students per section. Student assignments are posted prior to each round, and students report to their assigned room.

All tournaments have a first round, most have a second round, and some have a final round!

Typically, there is one judge per section in the first round, and two or more judges in the second and final rounds. Each judge completes an individual ballot for each student, balancing praise and constructive criticism. They also award speaker points to each student, and rank students from first to last in their section. *Judges are not allowed to give oral critiques, or to consult with others in reaching their decisions.*

Judges are asked to balance their attention between watching students perform and note taking/marking ballots. They are also asked to complete their ballots in a thoughtful yet timely manner - to help keep the tournament running on schedule - and then return them to the Tabulation (Tab) Room. Refreshments are provided in the Judge's Lounge, and judges are asked to remain there for their next assignment. Judges are also asked to be available for the duration of a tournament.

At the end of each tournament, awards are presented to the top students in each category. Following the tournament, students review their ballots with their coaches.

What if I need help?

At each tournament, a Judge's Counsel is available near the Tab Room to answer questions - either technical or interpretive - about performance rules.

What do I need to bring with me?

Paper for note taking, a couple of ink pens, a stopwatch (or digital watch) to time performances, and a book, newspaper, project or other material to fill the waiting time between rounds.