

Student Speakers' Competition

Student Guide

The Student Speakers' Competition is for students who want to become better communicators, build confidence and prepare for a lifetime of success and service. It's about making a greater difference in the world, both now and for the rest of your life.

If you want to speak more confidently, share your faith more passionately and have some fun while you're at it then you should be a part of the Student Speakers' Competition.

A good way to get started is:

- Tell your youth leader, pastor or parent that you want to participate and ask if they will assist and support you.
- Get in contact with the Student Speakers Competition Coordinator at your church if there is one.
- Choose a topic and start researching and writing your speech.
- Practice your speech several times so you know it by heart.
- Put dates for each level of the competition on your calendar.

There are three levels of competition: church, associational and state levels. All participants who score a score of 75 or more are eligible to compete at the state level. The first place winner at the State Competition is eligible to represent Ohio at the National Competition.

Eligibility

Students in grades 10-12 are eligible to participate in the Student Speakers' Competition. You may participate through your church, Christian school or home school group.

Levels of Competition

Church: Participating churches, Christian schools and home school groups may send an unlimited number of students to their Associational Competitions. However, they are still required to hold a Church Competition in which students compete and receive feedback from the judges. Church Competitions should be held at least one week before the Associational Competition.

A copy of the Judge's Guide can be downloaded from the SCBO website (scbo.org) for instructions on how to judge speeches and give students feedback. Speakers need to submit a copy of their speech to the Competition Coordinator one week in advance of the Competition.

Association: Associational Competitions should be held at least one week before the State Competition. Be sure to submit a copy of your speech one week in advance. Students with a score of 75 out of 100 or more may move on to participate in the State Competition.

State: The State Competition is held the first Saturday in May at Reynoldsburg Baptist Church in Reynoldsburg, Ohio. Awards will be given to the first, second and third place winners and the first place winner will be eligible to represent Ohio at the National Competition.

Nationals: Students may only participate at the national level one time. If the same student qualifies for nationals a second time, after having participated in the National Competition at the time of their first qualification, the opportunity will be offered to the second place winner at the State Competition.

Preparing your Speech

Students entered in the Student Speakers' Competition must prepare a four-to-six (4-6) minute speech. You may choose a topic from the official list posted on the SCBO webpage or at the end of this Student's Guide. Your speech should inform, inspire, encourage and/or cause listeners to be concerned about an issue. If you have a topic you would like to speak about, but it is not on the official list, you may submit your topic idea to the State Coordinator for approval.

Forty percent of your total score is based on content. Judges grade speech content based on five criteria:

1. Originality/Related to subject

Your speech must be your own.

You must write your own speech and not copy or borrow a speech from anyone else. It is definitely okay to be influenced by someone else and to quote others, but your speech must be in your own words, except for quotations.

Your speech should reflect what you think.

Quoting scripture and telling what others think is good, but your speech should also reflect original thinking on your part and express what you feel and want listeners to know and do.

Your speech should deal with your subject.

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

2. Organization/Logical Sequencing

Content should flow logically and ideas and information should be properly sequenced.

Your speech should flow logically and in a way that makes it easy for listeners to understand what you are saying.

Your speech's core belief or idea should be clearly evident to the audience.

All good speeches have a strong and clearly identifiable bottom line or core idea. Tell the audience what you want them to

know most of all, and say it more than once to make sure they get it. It's good to say it somewhat differently each time, but saying it multiple times makes sure they get it.

You should have a strong opening and closing.

The most important part of any speech is the opening, the first 30-45 seconds. If you don't get the audience's attention then and make them want to continue listening, they probably won't. Stories, quotes, visuals and gestures make good openers.

The second most important part of a speech is the final 30-45 seconds, or the closing. That's because an effective closing summarizes briefly and reminds listeners of your bottom line or core idea.

This doesn't mean the middle of a speech (points, sub-points, etc.) is not important. It just means a good speech starts by making people want to listen and ends with a strong take-away for listeners.

3. Structure and Grammar

Use complete sentences and good grammar.

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, 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.

Words should be spelled correctly.

There is little excuse for misspelled words today. If in doubt, look up words in a dictionary. Even if you use your computer's

spellchecker, read through your speech again; a spellchecker can be fooled.

Use paragraphs properly.

Paragraphs should be used to signal a shift in content, such as moving from one key point, sub-point, or idea 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).

4. Use of Resources and Proper Credit

Use an adequate number of quotations.

In addition to telling listeners what you think, it's good to tell them what others have said about your topic. Three to five scripture references and/or quotes is about right for a 4-6 minute speech. If there are more quotations than that, you won't have time to state what *you* think.

All recourses you use should clearly help the audience to understand your topic and your point.

Remember, good speeches are built around a clearly defined bottom line or core idea. All recourses you quote or refer to should help the audience to understand and/or buy into that thought or belief. Quotes should never be used just because they sound important or have dramatic effect.

Refer correctly to references.

When quoting a source or citing a reference, be sure to lead into it correctly. This is one of those little things that sets accomplished speakers apart from the crowd.

When quoting a scripture verse, use a lead in like: "It says in 1 Corinthians 13:6 that..." don't say: "1 Corinthians says..." Technically, a scripture verse doesn't say anything; you are the one saying it.

When quoting from a book, an article, or anything another person wrote, say

something like: "John Doe wrote in his book, *How to Do the Right Thing*, that..." If you quote from the same resource a second time, just say: "John Doe also said..."

If you are quoting what you heard another person say, lead in with something like: "I asked John Doe what he thought and he said..." or "I once heard John Doe say..."

Of course, all quotes from a source other than yourself should be surrounded by quotation marks. However, quotation marks should not be used when quoting yourself.

Give proper credit for all scripture and resources.

It is very important to give credit where credit is due. Always use quotation marks to identify quotations and tell where the quotation or idea came from.

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 another person said, be sure to note the person's name and the date they said it (if known).

Reference all your sources in the body of your speech with a superscript number at the end of the quote of reference. Then identify each reference with the corresponding numbers on your bibliography page. See the following page for an example of how a bibliography should look. Five points will be deducted for no bibliography. Two or three points will be deducted for an incorrectly or inconsistently formatted bibliography.

When actually giving your speech, you may identify only the author and the resource. Or you may give only the person's name if it is something you heard someone else say.

Song lyrics may be quoted, but not sung.

5. Purpose Accomplished

Your speech should accomplish its purpose.

What you want your speech to accomplish should be very clear to listeners. Your speech should inform, inspire, encourage and/or cause listeners to be concerned.

A good speech reveals its objective within the first minute. You may say something like "I'm going to prove..." or "I want you to know..." Or you may be more subtle and reveal your objective in the bottom line or core idea your speech is based on.

¹Harbrace College Handbook Eleventh Edition, Copyright 1990, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Inc., page 322.

Laying Out Your Speech

Below is an example of how to lay out a speech. The headers (Speech Title; Opener; etc.) are shown only to demonstrate good layout and the way good speeches flow. Do not show actual header names when typing your speech. Be sure to number your sources both in the body of the speech and in your bibliography. Double-space between lines, and use 14 pt or 16 pt font size for titles and 11 pt or 12 pt font for the rest of the speech.

You will find some excellent suggestions for laying out your speech in the book, *SpeakerPower: How to Get It and Use It* (see below for more information).

Transition to Key Point #2

(Make a statement that bridges to your next point.)

Key Point #2

(Include sub-points here, too.)

Transition to Key Point #3

(Make a statement that bridges to your next point.)

Page 2

Key Point #3

(Include sub-points here, too.)

Closing

(Summarize: review: restate your Bottom Line: tell people what you would like them to do and tell them how they will benefit. Stories and quotes make great parts of a Closing.)

Page 3

Speech Title Speaker's Name

Opener

(Stories and quotes make good Openers.)

Present your Core Idea or Bottom Line

(What is your speech really about?)

Key Point #1

(Include sub-points here, too.)

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Bibliography

¹Lewis, C.S. *Mere Christianity*. 1956: Macmillan Company: page 70.

²Luke 3:13, Holy Bible, New International Version (copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society.)

³Smith, John Q. Personal interview. January 12, 2008.

⁴Jones, Sam, *Living Pure in an Immoral Age*. <http://gabaptist.org>. July 29, 2009.

⁵*Doing the Right Thing*. http://www.lifeway.com/lwc/article_main_page/0%.html. January 2008.

⁶*Fireproof*. Director Alex Kendrick. Samuel Goldwyn Films, 2008.

⁷Lewis, C.S. *Mere Christianity*. 1956: Macmillan Company: (ebook, page number unknown).

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Giving your Speech

Good content is important, but it's not enough. You must deliver your speech in a way that causes your audience (and the judges) to take interest in what you say.

Sixty percent of your total score is based on how well you give your speech. Judges will score you on five criteria:

1. Eye contact with the audience

Maintain eye contact with the audience.

Eye contact is arguably the most important connecting skill a speaker can use. You 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 do not count.

Look at individuals 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 3-5 second eye visits with all parts of the audience. It's one of the ways speakers tell people they are speaking to them.

2. Articulate and expressive voice

Use good vocal energy and enunciate clearly.

Sound enthusiastic. Vary the volume, pitch and inflection of your voice to match what you're saying and feeling. Speak loudly, distinctly and slowly enough that your words are clear.

Caution – Be passionate and emotional, but don't be overly emotional or dramatic. Judges may think a speaker who is overly emotional has lost his poise or is trying to manipulate them or the audience.

Avoid distracting vocalizations.

Avoid distracting vocalizations, including: throat clearing, monotone voice and overuse of non-words and phrases such as: Okay, You know, Uh and Like (Verbal Pauses).

Speak Loudly.

Speak loudly enough for everyone in the audience to hear you clearly without having to strain.

3. Poise and Confidence

Be relaxed and in control.

Prepare well. Know your speech and exhibit controlled enthusiasm. Even when speaking loudly and forcefully, there should be a steadiness in your voice to let the judges know you are in control. Your voice should never quiver or tremble.

Appear confident.

Confidence is one of the first things people notice that a speaker has or doesn't have. The way you move toward the podium, the way you stand, the steadiness of your voice and the look on your face are all clues to confidence.

Be convincing, interesting and understandable.

Your ultimate goal is to communicate effectively with the audience. If you want them to hear and understand what you say, you must hold their interest. Convince them you know what you're talking about and that you believe it. Speak with conviction and sincerity without being overly serious. Relax and let the real you shine through.

4. Posture/Movement/Gesturing

Use good posture and effective body movement.

Good posture is important because it makes you look confident and more believable. Stand up straight and don't lean on anything.

Moving purposefully about the podium while you're speaking will help keep the audience focused. Don't be afraid to move both laterally and toward different parts of the audience. It's a sign of confidence and a great way to connect with people. Pacing, however, is not appropriate body movement unless as a brief, purposeful gesture.

Use effective hand and arm gestures.

Speakers who want to connect with people don't stand straight with hands and arms at their sides the entire time they're speaking.

Use natural hand and arm gestures for emphasis or to make points. An effective gesture combined with the right words can help people understand the more subtle points of your message. Avoid distracting gestures like: rubbing your hands together, folding your arms in front of your chest, tugging on your ear lobe and putting your hands in your pockets. Nervous gestures like these are distracting.

Smile and use appropriate facial gestures.

Use your face to help express what you're saying and feeling. Effective facial expressions include smiling, frowning and looks of bewilderment. The key is for facial gestures to match what you're saying.

5. Delivered from Memory

Know your speech well.

"Internalize" your speech by becoming thoroughly familiar with it. That means practicing and giving it often. It's not necessary to memorize it, but you should know it well. In fact, reciting a speech word for word can result in a loss of freshness and spontaneity.

You are permitted to use one page of notes when speaking, but you should refer to them only if necessary. You could be penalized if you look at them excessively or sound like you are reading.

If you forget, keep your cool.

If you forget a part of your speech, pause and try to remember. When you do remember, just start where you left off. If you can't remember after four or five seconds, move on to the next part of your speech. Don't "back up" if you remember what you left out later on unless it's essential to helping listeners understand your speech.

Personal Appearance

Dress Modestly and Comfortably

Clothing doesn't have to be expensive to be neat and in good taste. Appropriate is the big thing. Clothing styles are constantly changing, but there is always a line between what's appropriate and what's not.

Dress 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. Points will be deducted for such dress.

Be well groomed

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

Time Allotment

Your speech should be between four and six minutes in length. Speeches will incur a penalty of two points for every ten seconds, or fraction of ten seconds, the speech is under four or over six minutes. There is a maximum penalty of ten points per speaker for a time infraction.

To ensure that your speech falls within these guidelines, aim for a speech of about five minutes when practicing. Speeches often run 10-15 percent longer or shorter when given than when practiced.

Additional Resources

For more about writing and giving powerful speeches and presentations, the following resources are recommended:

- *SpeakerPower: How to Get It and Use It* by Steve Williams. This book can be ordered through the Georgia Baptist Convention by calling the Discipleship and Family Ministries at 770-936-5270 or 800-746-4422.
- *Harbrace College Handbook*. A style manual available at many libraries and bookstores.
- *MLA Style Manual for Research Papers*, available at libraries and bookstores.

Helpful Ideas for the Process of Writing your Speech and Competing

Choosing a Title: Check online at sco.org or contact the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio Bible Teaching/Leadership Resource Group for a list of annual titles. Choose a title from the list. Think about possible subjects. Consider the audience. Will they be interested? What will they know about the subject? What will be their attitude toward the subject?

Objective: Determine your aim or objective. Consider whether you want your speech to inform, persuade, create interest or create concern. Write a clear, one-sentence statement describing what you want to accomplish. Avoid the use of conjunctions (and, but) in your sentence. You may need to rework your objective later, but this will drive your preparation.

Research: Read extensively before you begin the construction of your speech. Take notes on what you read. Think about the subject before you start reading so you won't be overwhelmed with more ideas than you can use. Research, observe and talk with others. Consult your church, school and public libraries for resource material. List all Bible and other references that support your speech. Your pastor or speech coach may be helpful in seeking these.

Outline: Outline your speech. Ask yourself questions about the subject. These questions could form your speech outline. Consider the opener, the body and the closing. You may wish to use a simple formula such as: (1) past, (2) present, (3) future; or (1) problem, (2) possible solutions, (3) your plan and (4) why it's the best plan.

Example:

- I. Opener
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.
- II. Body
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.
- III. Closing
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.

Opener: Write a creative opener that lets your hearers know the purpose of your speech.

Body (here's where you use a lot of paper): Use your outline to write the content of your speech word for word. Select words that express exactly what you mean. Include quotations, questions, illustrations, comparisons and contrasts.

Closing: Write a closing that accomplishes your objective.

Before the Tournament:

- Good speeches are not just written, they are "re-written." Once you have completed your speech, practice sharing it. Ask objective people to listen and give you suggestions for improving your delivery. Practice, practice, practice. Do not memorize your speech. Practice it with a key-word outline until the key-word outline is no longer needed. Using notes is discouraged and will be taken into consideration by the judges.
- Time yourself so you will consistently stay within the official time allotment. Remember, you will be penalized points when you go over or under the 4-6 minute time allotment.
- When you practice, stand straight and use only gestures which are natural. Support your voice from the diaphragm. Keep your jaw loose and throat relaxed.
- You are required to present a typed (double-spaced) manuscript of your speech to the chairman at every tournament.