

Meyers Speech and Debate: The Tournament Survival Guide

Going to your first tournament can be a very scary thing, especially if you don't know what's going on, so here are the answers to all of the questions that are running through your mind. Everything from what to wear to how you will be scored is covered.

Preparation

This category includes what to wear and what to bring. A lot depends on your event. Common sense items to bring include your material for those in the interpretation events along with the black binder. In interp events, you should bring the original source of your material, or a copy of it, including its publication information. Also, grooming items such as hairbrushes and makeup, because six in the morning is early to put on mascara. Money can be brought for snacks or odds and ends but is not necessary, lunches and dinners will be provided when needed. For the extempers and debaters note cards and pens are excellent additions to bring. Also as a debater don't forget your flow chart. Also you might want to bring a change of clothes or at the very least shoes. You may get uncomfortable in the uniform for debate. This leads us to the next question.....What to wear? This is very dependent on what event you participate in. Here is a basic rundown on what is good.

General Rules:

- No denim and no sneakers
- No tight or revealing clothing
- No heavy makeup
- No short skirts, fingertip rule should apply
- Clothes should be professional looking
- Everything should be neat and tucked in
- Watch high heels, they may make posture awkward
- Make sure to style your hair so that it is out of your face.

Extempers, debaters, and those in declamation or Student Congress should dress a little more formally than those in interp events. In DI you may want to dress a little in character, but costuming is not permitted. Girls playing men my pull their hair back and wear something a little more tailored. The girls playing opposite the men may want to dress a little more feminine to provide contrast.

Girls

Skirts and tops
Suit
Pant suits

Boys

khakis and a dress shirt
suit
ties are preferable

REMEMBER:

Don't change who you are when you dress just keep in mind your audience. You should dress so that it adds to your speaking style, not distracts from it. After all this isn't a fashion show, it's a forensics tournament.

Schedule

Debate tournaments are all day affairs and may last from very early in the morning to late at night. This means that you should be prepared for some boredom. We like to consider tournaments hours of boredom punctuated by moments of stark terror. Just kidding...or am I? In reality there is a lot to do at the tournaments and it helps to know what is happening when. With that in mind I put together a sample tournament schedule. This is not a real one. Do not depend on it for anything other than an understanding of what a typical day is like.

6 am: Meet at Meyers High School. Watch adults and the veterans scrambling for coffee and Penguin mints.

7am: Wake up to do final rewrite on introduction. Mr. Borland bothering extempers again with the news of the day.

8:30am: Check in time, all of the lucky members of the team get handed their schematics, will explain those later.

9am: Extemp draw and general meeting

9:30am: First Round starts! Let the fun begin

10:30am: Second round begins this is right after you run up to your teammates and complain about how good everyone else in your room is.

11:30am: Third round begins.

12:30pm: Lunch, mmmm! Cafeteria food. Avoid everything at Scranton Prep. Always eat the hoagies. Give the coaches a big kiss for helping you avoid food poisoning.

1:45pm: Postings, look for your code, laugh, cry, repeat: hug everyone and try to avoid being trampled

2pm: Final rounds, if you did not break dry your eyes and go watch either a teammate who did or the finals of your own event. That latter is so you can dissect everyone else's performance and wonder what happened to you.

5pm: Awards ceremony. Noticed the big gap, did you? That is where the boredom comes in. During that stretch of time you can talk to other teams, walk around campus, eat a lot of snacks, or twirl around until your dizzy, it's your choice. Seriously homework, games, footballs, or books may be a good idea.

6pm: On the road again. Start to hear begging for food.

7pm: Stop for dinner at a good restaurant on the way home. Hear all those seniors arguing over which one.

7:07pm: After the coaches check the score sheets for any really inappropriate comments, we were allowed to read them. Let the complaining begin, "What do you mean too much makeup?" "How am I supposed to have eye contact if he's not looking at me?"

9pm: Sleep in car, the one point in the day when everyone's mouth is shut.

11pm: Home again.

This schedule is accurate for all events except for Student Congress and Debate. It also becomes more complicated when the tournament is double flighted.

Behavior

So we don't expect a lot out of you but we do expect some. Here they are the ten commandments of debate.

1. Thou shall be respectful to the other speakers in the room while they are performing. This means no talking, no making faces, no yawning, no playing with cell phones or video devices and no sleeping while others perform.
2. Thou shall not bad mouth opponents and judges in public. That's what the ride home is for (van talk). Seriously, this is not football: there should be no trash talk.
3. Thou shall behave in the halls. This means no yelling or running. If you feel the need for either, go outside.
4. Thou shall not interrupt rooms that are in progress. Allow who ever is speaking to finish before knocking to go in.
5. Thou shall not speak to an extemper who is prepping. This may cause him or her to be disqualified. If you see one in the hall pacing and talking to themselves please avoid him or her at all costs.
6. Thou shall check in with coaches at regular intervals. They like to know where you are and how you're doing.
7. Thou shall always be with a teammate when walking around or at least inform someone where you are going.
8. Thou shall be respectful when other teams receive awards and excited when a teammate does. Please no hooting or booing.
9. Thou shall not forget your code. When it happens it's not pretty, believe me.
10. Thou shall turn off your cell phone whenever in a competition room.

Just please remember to act as though there is someone watching you at all time. You never know who might see you do something wrong, it could very well be one of your judges.

Rooms and Scoring

Now that you know the rules I can explain what happens in a typical interp room. First thing you do is go to your assigned room. There you will find your judge and competitors there may be as many as five other competitors there. You will then draw for order in the room by selecting a little piece of paper with a number on it. Sometimes they will go by the order on your schematic. The schematic is a piece of paper that has each round on it. Within the round you must find your code to see what room you are in. At the start of the tournament you will be given your code. It is a letter, which represents your school and a number, which represents you. This is how you will be referred to for the rest of the tournament. This is to avoid the name of your school to be mentioned. As you enter your room, write your name, code, and the title and author of your piece. Once you have the order in which you go, you wait to perform. You will hear your competitors in all events except extemp.

Within the room you are ranked from 1 to however many competitors you have in your room. When all of the first three rounds are over the ranks are added together and the lowest numbers make it to the finals. You are guaranteed three rounds. In finals there are three judges who will judge and they each submit a separate score. At the end

of the first three rounds and the three final scores are added together to get your final score.

The lowest score wins. There are a lot of subtle things that the tab room does to break ties I don't know what they are and I don't really want to.

Extemp is very different. The first difference is that you don't see your competitors. You first go to the prep room where your files are. There you will draw for order. Once you have drawn you will wait until your number is called to select your topic. They will give you an envelope with slips of paper in them. You can take three and select the best one to speak on. Once you have selected your topic you have a half-hour to prepare your speech. You should spend half of the time researching and organizing your speech the rest of the time should be spent pacing the hall and talking to yourself. When the person that speaks before you is finished you should then enter the room and write your name and code on the board and hand your topic to the judge. Then you should perform.

Glossary of Selected Terms

Awards Ceremony

The ritual at most tournaments where the top speakers in each event are named, and where the awards are given out. Extremely stressful for finalists, who are waiting to find out what place they took at the tournament. Some ceremonies are very fun, with lots of applause for the speakers from your team. Others are interminably boring, and drive you to thoughts of suicide.

Break

Used as a verb, to break means to advance to the next highest round of competition. For example, a speaker who does well in the preliminary rounds may break to the semis, or a speaker who does well at Districts may break to Nationals. Used as a noun, "breaks" refers to the time when the scorers announce which speakers have broken; they usually make this known by posting the names or ID numbers of the speakers on a wall.

Double-Entered

A speaker is double-entered if he/she is competing in two different events at a Public Speaking tournament. Generally held to be an impressive feat. Not all tournaments allow speakers to double-enter; your coach will know where it is allowed.

Extemper

Any speaker that does Extemp.

Finals

In Public Speaking terms, the final round or rounds of an event. To get to finals, a speaker usually has to break through several elimination rounds, including Preliminary rounds and sometimes Semifinals.

Forensics

Another word for Public Speaking. Does not refer to the examination of dead bodies with intent to discover the cause of death, though that would be pretty cool.

Hardware

Any trophy that has three dimensions; i.e. any award that isn't just a sticker or a piece of paper. Non-perishable.

Interp

Refers to any Interpretive Event, i.e. Dramatic Interpretation, Humorous Interpretation, Thematic Interpretation, Oratorical Interpretation, and Duo Interp. All Interp speeches are 10-minute maximum, canned, pre-memorized, speeches that use material published by other people (hence the word Interp).

Interper

One who specializes in Interpretive Events.

Judges

People who judge Public Speaking tournaments; usually either parents or college students who are donating their time. Be nice to them—they are doing you a favor and they wield a lot of power.

Novice

One who is in his/her first year of Public Speaking or a sophomore or below. Usually a Freshman, but can be from any class. Opposite of veteran.

Post

To tape a sheet on the wall that announces the scores, breaks, panel assignments, and/or seating assignments for the rounds. See posting.

Posting

The time when announcements are put up on the walls for all events. Usually a time of great stress and excitement, for two reasons. First, the sheets include vital information on where you have to go for the next round, and often you don't know who else will be in your round until you see the postings. Second, the postings often announce who has broken to the next round. That's why after most postings, you'll hear some people screaming in excitement, while others just console each other.

Posting Riots

The rush of public speakers who are trying to get to the announcements taped up on a wall. At larger tournaments, getting caught in a posting riot can be a suffocating, profoundly uncomfortable affair. Some speakers are very adept at navigating through a posting riot, and getting to the information quickly. Others think it's a fun practical joke to create a "false posting riot" by yelling "Hey! They're posting!" until a large group rushes an area. A general release of stress and boredom.

Prep Room

The room where Extempers do their thirty minute preparation for their speeches. Usually the last five or so minutes of prep time are spent walking from the Prep Room to the room where you give your speech to the judge. One or two students from each school will be responsible for making sure their team's files get safely to the prep room, and then back home at the end of the tournament. See Extemporaneous, Files.

Prep Time

In Impromptu and Extemp, the time before a speech where the speaker prepares material either in his/her head or on paper. At the end of prep time, the speaker must be ready to make a speech without any notes. Extempers get half an hour of prep time and can look through their files; Impromptu speakers get two minutes and have nothing but their brains for reference. Absolutely no talking with other speakers or with coaches is allowed during prep time, though this rule is laxly enforced at some Extemp tournaments. See Extemp, Impromptu.

Semis

Short for semifinals. Usually speakers break to semis from their preliminary rounds, and the best speakers in the semifinals go on to the final round. See Break.

Sleep

Something you do not get a Public Speaking tournaments. Wise man say, sleep is for people with nothing to stay up for.

Triple-Entered

To be triple-entered is to compete in three different events at a single tournament. Generally held to be a very impressive, almost Herculean feat. Because the events tend to overlap each other, triple-entered competitors rarely have time for such minor conveniences as food, rest, or a chance to relax. Some tournaments, most notable the Stanford Invitations, give awards to the triple-entered students who have the best total results in their three events. Though very physically trying and mentally challenging, triple-entering is a fun opportunity for speakers who want something to boast about later down the line. Not many tournaments allow students to triple-enter; your coach will know where it is allowed.

Veteran

A Public Speaker who has been in the program for at least one year. A four-year veteran is a Senior who started in Public Speaking as a Freshman. Opposite of a Novice.

REMEMBER:

No matter what happens have FUN!!!! That's why we are on the team. Other quick words of advice, get a good nights sleep the night before the tournament and PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE. Good Luck this will be a great season.

SARAH BORLAND '00