How to Judge Extemporaneous Speaking

Extemporaneous Speaking (Extemp) is an original synthesis of current fact and opinion on a designated topic. Extemp showcases a student’s understanding and analysis of important political, economic, and cultural issues. The best speech combines clear thinking, good speaking, and interesting presentation to establish a definite point of view about the chosen prompt. **All speeches must be longer than three minutes or round does not count.**

In the first round of Extemp, students will select a word or phrase. They have five minutes to prepare **a five-minute impromptu speech on the topic.** Their commentary may be light-hearted or serious. It may not include references to cited sources. Past topics have been: *pumpkin spice*, *bombogenesis*, *Philly Special*, *Keeping Up with…*

In Round Two and Round Three, students will select a question about current issues in the United States and the world. They have 20 minutes to prepare **a seven-minute speech**, and may use sources that they brought with them (newspapers, magazines). They cannot access the Internet. Past questions have been: *How can the Paris Climate Agreement move forward without the United States?*

**Debate Structure / Timing and Summary:**

During the regular season, there will be one judge assigned to each competition room. The judge should report to their respective room 15 minutes after the start of Round One and 20 minutes after the start of the Rounds Two and Three (marked on the ballot). Meanwhile, students will be in the Prep Room, drawing their topics, preparing their speeches, and awaiting their turns.

Once the student reports to the competition room, they should greet the judge and pass over their comment sheet (blue/green) where they have already filled in their name, code, and question. The student may request a time signal. When the student is ready, the judge should start the timer. \*Note: During the semi-final and final tournament, students may NOT use notecards.

The student should address the question as worded on the draw slip and support their position with evidence. The judge may have limited experience with the topic; therefore, the student must provide background and context. The student should avoid using stereotypes and loaded language but instead rely on logic to validate their point of view.

The structure of an extemporaneous speech is predictable: the student begins with an introduction that hooks the audience’s attention, recites the question and their answer, and states a thesis that previews the speech as a whole. Students then organize the supporting information into major points and sub-points. Students will often conclude by restating the question, their thesis, and a concluding statement.

When the student finishes their speech, record their time on the comment sheet. The judge is invited to share feedback. The judge may ask the student to leave the room for a moment first, so that they judge can reflect on the performance, and then invite the student back into the competition room.

Students will arrive at the competition room at approximately seven-minute intervals.

At the end of each round, the judge will evaluate the speakers and rate them on a scale from one to six, with the best performance receiving the one ranking. You do not need to assign points. There is a 30-second grace period; a student whose speech is over the time limit by <30 seconds cannot be ranked in first place.

**Judging DOs:**

* Do listen for a direct answer to the question or prompt. You should not have to “figure out” whether the student addressed the topic or not.
* Do make notes as you listen, on the back of the comment sheet, if you like. These can help you justify the ranking or provide feedback later.
* Do use your smartphone to time the speech, but be sure that your ringer is on vibrate.
* Do give a time signal if the speaker asks. The most common signals are at two- and one-minute remaining.
* Do rank speakers as you go. As students deliver their speeches, consider how well they did in comparison to the student(s) who has already gone.
* Do feel empowered to ask observers to leave. Students are permitted to observe as long as they are not competing or if they have already presented in that round. If, however, students become disruptive or distracting, the judge may clear the room.

**Judging DON’Ts:**

* Don’t interrupt the speaker during their presentation, and don’t discuss the contents of the speech after the speaker is finished. If you have questions about their reasoning or sources, record them on the comment sheet.
* Don’t let your personal viewpoint impact your judgement. Although the prompts deal with current, often controversial issues, the judge must listen and determine if there is sufficient evidence and logical reasoning such that an objective person would find the speaker’s answer to be reasonable.

**Giving Feedback on the Comments Sheet:**

**Be descriptive.** Identify what the speaker did effectively and how. Students seriously consider feedback; they want to know their strengths and areas for growth. You can be specific: *“Your analogy to* MacGyver *helped you illustrate your point about adaptability”*; *“You should have introduced the topic with more background so that I understood it*.*”*

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| **Instead of…** | **Say…** |
| Good argument | You answered the question directly  You maintained focus on the topic throughout  You provided background information on the topic  You justified your opinion with logical reasons  You made your point relatable with anecdote/analogy/simile/etc. |
| Good use of evidence | Your examples helped to illustrate your point  You gave some context to your examples  You cited reliable, balanced sources |
| Good organization | You included a clear introduction/body/conclusion  You transitioned smoothly from one reason to another |
| Good voice | Your volume matched the room/size of audience  You modulated your tone to emphasize your point  You paced your words to build up to a conclusion |
| Good eye contact | You made eye contact consistently |
| Good body language | You planted yourself firmly  You gestured to illustrate an image/add emphasis  Your held your hands/arms comfortably, not fidget-y |