THE AMERICAN LEGION

HIGH SCHOOL ORATORICAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

"A Constitutional Speech Contest"

Chairman's Guide

www.legion.org/oratorical

THE AMERICAN LEGION

HIGH SCHOOL ORATORICAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM - "A CONSTITUTIONAL SPEECH CONTEST"

JUDGE'S SCORECARD

NAME OF JUDGE: _____

			Contestants					
A. CONTENT			**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
1. Originality, freshness, directness, application of knowledge on topic.	*Prepared Oration*	*12 points*						
	Assigned Topic	*4 points*						
2. Skill in selecting examples, description, analogies, specific data.	*Prepared Oration*	*12 points*						
	Assigned Topic	*4 points*						
3. Logic (correctness of inference)	*Prepared Oration*	*12 points*						
	Assigned Topic	*4 points*						
4. Comprehensiveness of knowledge, knows the subject matter.	*Prepared Oration*	*16 points*						
	Assigned Topic	*6 points*						
B. SPEAKING SKILLS			**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
1. Voice and Diction	*Prepared Oration*	*6 points*						
	Assigned Topic	*4 points*						
2. Style: language use, word arrangement, transition, word selection.	*Prepared Oration*	*6 points*						
	Assigned Topic	*4 points*						
3. Body actions, poise, eye contact, posture, gestures	*Prepared Oration*	*6 points*						
	Assigned Topic	*4 points*						
SUB-TOTAL								
PENALTIES: 1 point for each minute or fraction thereof over or under allotted time	Prepared Oration							
	Assigned Topic							
1-10 points for failure to speak on the Constitution								
Final Total Points								
Position Number - 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (Highest Points = 1st place, second highest points = 2nd place, etc.)								

Score all contestants - NO TIES PERMITTED

Judge's Signature: _____

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Introduction

About this guide

The *Chairman's Guide* to the oratorical contest has been developed to assist oratorical contest chairmen at all levels in organizing and conducting a successful oratorical contest. It is designed as an aid and should not be used as a promotional piece, distributed to schools, or to prospective participants. To improve this revision of the *Chairman's Guide*, material previously published in the *Oratorical Contest Guidelines Manual* has been incorporated.

Oratorical chairmen should keep in mind that arrangements for contests leading to the department finals are the responsibility of each department. In some states, rules and regulations below the department finals level may vary from those used in the national contest. Therefore, this guide is offered merely as an aid, and contest chairmen at the post and district levels should be familiar with their respective department's rules.

When preparing for and conducting an oratorical contest, keep in mind that you are dealing with young people and their futures. So when a mistake is made during a contest, it is often the young people who suffer. Avoid mistakes by making the necessary preparations and by being familiar with the rules.

It is the hope of The American Legion that every high school will provide the opportunity for its students to participate in this citizenship education program. However, it is up to each American Legion post to provide the initiative to make this program work.

Chapter One

Contest history and purpose

Contest history

William A. Kitchen, a past department commander of Missouri, is credited with originating The American Legion's National High School Oratorical Contest. He experimented with the contest in a few high schools in and around Kansas City, Mo., during the school year 1934-35. He became the first Department of Missouri oratorical chairman and conducted a state-wide program during the 1935-36 school year.

From this beginning, he encouraged The American Legion to adopt the Missouri oratorical contest plan as a national program. The first national contests were held in 1938, with 11 departments competing and 4,000 participants. The national finals that year were held in Norman, Okla., with John Janson of Phoenix winning first place.

The national finals returned to Missouri for its 50th anniversary in 1987 when it was hosted by Lee Summit Senior High School in Lee Summit, Mo.

In 1997 a major contest innovation was undertaken by centralizing the national finals. The week-long regional, sectional, and national finals contest format was changed to a weekend's competition of quarter-final, semi-final and national final contests that are held in the headquarters city of The American Legion, Indianapolis.

Since its inception, the contest has awarded well over $3 million in scholarships to the participants at the national level of competition. It currently awards $138,000 annually to department winners competing at the national level. Many thousands of dollars in scholarships have been awarded at post, district and state levels.

In 2007 the contest name was changed to The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program, "A Constitutional Speech Contest."

Contest purpose

The contest was developed primarily to instill a better knowledge and appreciation of the Constitution of the United States in high school students. Other objectives include the development of leadership qualities, the ability to think and speak clearly, and the preparation for acceptance of the duties, responsibilities, rights and privileges of American citizenship.

Another purpose of the program is to assist students in paying the high cost of a college education. The first place winner takes home $18,000 and the next two finishers receive $16,000 and $14,000. First round participants in the national contest receive a $1,500 scholarship. Second round participants who do not advance to the final round receive an additional $1,500 scholarship.

Past national champions

For an up to date listing of the past national champions visit **www.legion.org/oratorical/champions**

Chapter Two

Promoting your contest

Working with the National Speech and Debate Association

The American Legion has entered into a corporate relationship with the National Speech and Debate Association, the nation's foremost speech and debate organization. Your department chairman has access to the contact information of your local National Speech and Debate Association representative. This is often a teacher or speech and debate coach at a high school, which gives you an outstanding chance of promoting our contest to a large number of students in your area who already enter in speech competitions regularly. Students earn double National Speech and Debate Association points when they compete in The American Legion Oratorical Contest.

Working with your schools

To achieve success in effectively promoting the oratorical contest in your school and community, it is imperative that contacts be made with school officials by the post chairman and others working the oratorical contest.

The post chairman and his/her associates should visit with the teaching staff at the school(s). A determination should be made during their first visit as to the best methods of informing students about the contest. You may wish to consider addressing the students directly through assemblies, classes, etc., if such practice is allowed by the school(s). You might also be able to use school bulletin boards and the school newspaper. Use any and all opportunities that you can for informing students about the oratorical contest.

The chances of securing participants will increase if several people are spreading the word in your community and promoting participation. Seek assistance from other post members, your Auxiliary unit and SAL squadron to get the word out.

Another way to increase interest is to invite a youth audience to the contests with a goal of attracting future participants. If the contest is held during school hours, it may be possible to schedule the contest at a high school.

Another method of building toward the future is to involve elementary school students in the study of the United States Constitution. This can be accomplished by sponsoring essay and speech contests with less stringent requirements than that of the oratorical program. Involvement at this level could attract contestants in the oratorical contest once they become eligible.

Do not overlook parents when seeking support for the program. You should consider contacting the PTA, or similar organization, to explain the oratorical program and to request their support during a meeting.

Suggested talking points

Once you are able to gain permission to address an audience, keep in mind that your mission is to convince those in attendance that the program is worth their time to participate or promote. Here are some suggested talking points for school assemblies and civic groups. Adapt them to fit your needs.

- Ladies and gentlemen, this opportunity to appear before you is an honor as well as a privilege for me as an American Legion member.

- We Legionnaires are proud of our organization, and we are particularly proud of our youth activities which we feel offer much in the development of our country's young people. Few organizations can match in dimension the youth service program carried on by The American Legion under the direction of its National Americanism Commission.

- I look upon this occasion as truly an opportunity. I hope for you as well as for me because in these next few minutes, I will explain a program that can benefit high school students educationally as well as financially.

- The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program, sponsored since 1938 by The American Legion, is designed to instill in high school students a greater knowledge and appreciation of the Constitution of the United States. Other objectives include the development of leadership, the ability to think and speak clearly and the preparation for acceptance of the duties, responsibilities, rights and privileges of American citizenship.

- Each contestant must give a prepared oration on some phase of the United States Constitution, giving emphasis to the duties and obligations of a citizen to his/her government.

- Some states require the "Assigned Topic" portion at local levels. Please refer to your respective department rules.

- Include remarks on how and where to register and the dates and locations for the contest.

- To date, more than $3 million in scholarships have been awarded at the national level by The American Legion to contestants in The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program. The three national finalists receive $18,000, $16,000, and $14,000 respectively. In addition, contestants who win their state finals contest and represent their state at the national contests will receive no less than $1,500 in scholarship funds.

- Scholarships at the national level, which total $138,000 annually, are provided by The American Legion.

- Awards offered by Post _____ include: _____ _____. Other awards offered in the state of _____ include: _____ _____ _____.

- America's future rests on the success of today's youth. A knowledge of the U.S. Constitution will help prepare today's students to meet the challenges of tomorrow's world.

- Thank you ladies and gentlemen, for your kind attention.

Chapter Three

Rules and regulations

Department contests

Arrangements for contests leading to the department finals shall be the responsibility of each department (state) organization of The American Legion. For levels of competition prior to the department finals, the rules and regulations set forth in this guide are not mandatory, they are offered as a guideline. However, all department finals contests shall conform with national contest procedures, rules and regulations, if the department wishes its finalist to compete in the national finals.

A winner certified to the National Americanism Division of The American Legion by a department that did not conduct its final competition in conformity with the rules and regulations may, in the judgment of the director of the Americanism Division, or the director's representative, be disqualified from the national contest.

Each department may certify one contestant into the national contest. If for any reason the department winner is unable to compete in the national contest, the department first runner-up may be substituted following approval by The American Legion's National Americanism Commission. A department first runner-up accepted into national competition will be entitled to all national awards, entitlements and compensation that the department winner would have received had he/she participated at that level.

Department chairmen are required to review all judges scorecards from the department final within 48 hours to ensure that the appropriate winner was certified based on official rules, regulations, scoring, and tiebreaking procedures. If a mistake is found within 48 hours, the chairman will contact National Headquarters immediately at (317) 630-1204 for further instruction. Exactly 48 hours after department final results are announced, those results become official and cannot be changed.

Department winners must be certified to the Americanism Division, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206. Certification date can be found at **www.legion.org/oratorical**.

Scholarships

Scholarship awards are presented to the three finalists in the final round of the national contest as follows: 1st place: $18,000; 2nd place: $16,000; 3rd place: $14,000. Each department (state) winner who is certified into and participates in the first round of the national contest will receive a $1,500 scholarship. Each first round winner who advances to and participates in the second round, but

does not advance to the final round, will receive an additional $1,500 scholarship to pursue education beyond high school.

The scholarships awarded by the national organization of The American Legion to the three finalists, to the department winners, and to the first round winners who are eliminated during the second round of competition may be used to attend any college or university in the United States.

A contestant must give both their prepared oration and the assigned topic discourse in order to receive the scholarship.

In addition to the scholarships awarded by the national organization, there are several hundred scholarships awarded at the discretion of the intermediate organizations, to participants at post, district or county, and department levels of competition.

Eligibility

Eligible participants in The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program shall be citizens of or lawful permanent residents of the United States.

All contestants must be bona fide students described as any student under the age of 20 years on the date of the national contest who is presently enrolled in a high school or junior high school (public, parochial, military, private or home school), commencing with grade nine and terminating with grade 12. Students must be enrolled in high school or junior high school when participating at any level of The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program.

High school students that graduate early during the school year are eligible to compete if they are not enrolled in a college, university, trade school or other institution of higher learning at the time of the department finals contest.

Contestants must either be legally domiciled within or attend an educational institution within the department (state) where they enter competition. Contestants can enter competition in only one department.

The three national finalists will be ineligible to participate in the future.

The prepared oration

The prepared oration must be on some aspect of the Constitution of the United States with emphasis on the duties and obligations of a citizen to our government. The same subject and oration used in the department contest must be used in the national contest.

The prepared oration must be the original effort of each contestant and must not take up less than eight minutes or more than 10 minutes for delivery. It must be delivered in the English language.

Contestants may have in their possession a copy of their prepared oration in the first holding room. It may be either electronic or hard copy. They may consult the copy of their prepared oration, until they exit the holding room to begin the contest, at which time the copy of the prepared oration will be surrendered to the contest official who is monitoring the first holding room.

In the prepared oration, as well as in the assigned topic discourse, quotations must be indicated as such. Where quotations are more than 10 words in length, the author's name must be given in the manuscript and cited orally. The singing of a song is not permitted and will result in the immediate disqualification of the contestant. The contestant may, however, quote a verse(s) of a song provided proper attribution is made.

Assigned topic discourse

The assigned topic discourse must last between three and five minutes for delivery. The purpose of the assigned topic discourse is to test the speaker's knowledge of the subject, the extent of his or her research, and the ability to discuss the topic as related to the basic principles of government under the Constitution.

The assigned topic shall be drawn by the contest official in full view of the audience immediately before the last speaker begins delivery of his/her prepared oration and will be made known to the audience and each contestant approximately five minutes prior to the time of delivery. The topic will be on some phase of the Constitution of the United States as listed under assigned topics at **www.legion.org/oratorical/topics**.

All contestants at each contest level are required to speak in the English language on the same assigned topic.

It is acceptable to utilize or incorporate short phrases of a foreign language into the prepared oration and/or assigned topic in order to develop the argument, establish a point, etc. It is to be understood that the vast majority of the prepared oration and/or assigned topic must still be delivered in the English language.

Dress

Uniforms of any kind are not permitted. Appropriate business attire is required of all contestants. Contestants are not permitted to wear awards and medals from previous competition.

Travel expenses

The national organization of The American Legion will pay the travel and lodg-

ing expenses of department winners and their chaperones to the national contest. All contestants must be accompanied by a chaperone over 21 years of age.

The national organization of The American Legion will not assume liability for personal injury, property damage or loss sustained by any contestant or chaperone en route to or from the contest; however, The American Legion does carry a nominal group accident insurance policy on contestants certified into the national competition.

National finals contestants will travel by an air carrier selected by The American Legion or personal automobile if previously approved by the national organization of The American Legion.

TV and radio

Live television and radio broadcasts are permitted in all contests as well as taping or other types of media for later showing, provided: 1) the lighting and other site conditions are the same for all contestants; 2) the taping or broadcasts shall in no way distract the contestants or interfere with the pre-announced scheduled time of the contest; 3) the normal speaking voice of the contestant is not interfered with or amplified within the auditorium; and 4) The American Legion is in no way financially obligated without its prior approval.

Contest regulations

A drawing shall be held by the official in charge of the contest to determine the order in which the contestants will appear. The contest chairman shall announce the title of the contestant's prepared oration immediately after introducing him/her as contestant No. 1, contestant No. 2, etc. The chairman will request the audience to refrain from applause until the judges have made their decision.

A raised platform is not compulsory; however, it is strongly recommended. The use of notes, amplification, lectern or speaker's stand by contestants or prompting in any manner is not permitted. Props are not permitted.

The use of any type of electronic/digital data gathering, receiving and/or transmitting equipment in any form by contestants or members of the audience is prohibited.

The time allotted for contestants to deliver their prepared oration shall be between eight and 10 minutes. and between three and five minutes for the assigned topic.

The contest chairman will name an official timer. who will keep an accurate time record of each contestant. The time keeper will be located on the main floor in full view of the contestants. The timekeeper shall begin

timing each contestant at the start of the prepared oration. The timer should be equipped with a stopwatch and time cards for the prepared oration carrying the figures 8, 9 and 10. When eight minutes have been used, the time warning card with the figure 8 shall be placed in full view of the speaker, following with 9 and 10 as the speaker progresses. The same procedure shall be used with cards bearing 3, 4 and 5 during the assigned topic discourse. The contest chairman shall announce the time consumed by each contestant for the prepared oration and the assigned topic immediately after each contestant speaks.

Contestants are required to remain in a private room, where the discourse of the other speakers cannot be heard, until it is their turn to speak (contestants will be under the supervision of an individual appointed by the contest chairman). As the contestants conclude their prepared orations, they must return to a soundproof waiting room. As speakers conclude their assigned topic discourse, they shall not be allowed to associate with contestants who have not fulfilled the assigned topic requirement.

About five minutes prior to the time of the delivery of the assigned topic discourse, contestant No. 1 will be informed of the topic drawn for the assigned topic and shall be permitted to retire to privacy under the direction of an individual appointed by the contest chairman, whose duty it shall be to see that no contestant is permitted to consult any text matter or notes having any connection with the subject matter upon which he/she is to speak, other than the actual words of the topic provided on the card drawn.

Each succeeding contestant will be called upon in the order in which he/she previously appeared. He/she shall also, in turn, be informed of the topic of the assigned topic discourse and shall then be escorted to privacy in the manner as provided for contestant No. 1.

The contest chairman will be expected to introduce each contestant by name immediately before he announces the decision of the judges.

Judges

The judges are an integral part of the oratorical contest. Their qualifications are considered carefully as the decision of the judges is final and must be reached without bias. Impartial judging in all contests is the key to fairness and success of the program which results in the selection of a national champion.

All department finals and the national contest must utilize five judges. No publicity shall be given to the names of the judges in advance of the contest. During the contest, the judges will be seated in different locations in the

auditorium and each judge shall render his or her final decision without consultation with other judges or any other person.

Judges will be advised that a lack of emphasis in the prepared oration and the assigned topic discourse on the duties and obligations of a citizen to our government must result in their downgrading the contestant involved. Judges are permitted to downgrade a contestant up to a maximum of 10 points for failure to speak on the Constitution. The contest chairman will announce any violation of time for each contestant. A penalty of one point for each minute, or fraction thereof, shall be assessed against the contestant's total score.

The judges, timekeepers, tabulators and the contest chairman, following the last assigned topic discourse, may proceed to a private room for final review and tabulation.

Tabulators

The contest chairman will appoint no less than three tabulators for the department finals contest. It will be their responsibility to review the judges' scorecards to be certain they are fully tabulated and signed before they are submitted for final tabulation.

Tabulation procedures

The judges' scorecards will be numbered one through five in the upper right hand corner. Utilizing the tabulation card, the tabulators will enter the judges' position number for each contestant (by speaking order). When this is accomplished for all five judges' scorecards, the contestants' scores are totaled. The contestant receiving the low score, when totaling the tabulation card will be declared the winner. (EXAMPLE: If one contestant receives two firsts, two seconds and a third on the judges' scorecards and tabulation card, his total position number points will be nine; if the second contestant receives two firsts, two seconds, and a fourth, his total position number points will be 10. Even though the second contestant receives two firsts, his total position number point score of 10 will place him second.

Tiebreaking procedures

If, after tabulation of the judges' position number, two contestants receive the same placement point score (not total points) total, the tie shall be broken by comparing the position number scores of the five judges for the two contestants. One of the contestants will be the winner over the other by a majority of the judges' position number when only the placement of the tied contestants is considered.

(EXAMPLE: Consider that contestants No. 1 and No. 2 are tied. If judge's card No. 1 reflects position number for contestant No. 1 as 1 and contestant No. 2 as 2, then it is considered that this judge ranks contestant No. 1 ahead of contestant No. 2. Use this procedure for all five judges' scorecards and a majority of the five judges will break the tie and determine a winner. ***(See example at right)***

If, after tabulation of the judges' position number, three or more contestants receive the same placement point score total, the tie shall be broken by reference to final total points on the judges' scorecards. Only in this instance will the contestant with the largest final total points be declared the winner. ***(See example at right)***

In the case of a tie on the final total point basis, the judges will then meet, compare their scores, and discuss all features of the contest in order to arrive at a final choice. Remember, do not let your judges leave the contest site until you have determined your winner!

Further information on tiebreaking procedures can be found on the DVD, "How to Conduct The National High School Oratorical Contest," (for ordering information see Chapter Eleven).

The decision of the judges shall be final.

Judges' scorecards for department finals and the national contest will not be divulged to anyone at the site of the contest. All national contest judges' scorecards become the property of The American Legion National Headquarters.

National finals contest

For information regarding the National Finals Contest visit **www.legion.org/oratorical/finals**

TWO-WAY TIEBREAKING EXAMPLE

	Contestants - Record of Choice					Contestants - Final Total Points				
Judges	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
1	(1)	2	3	4	5	91	78	71	67	62
2	3	(2)	5	1	4	84	87	69	93	74
3	5	(4)	1	3	2	79	80	92	85	89
4	2	(1)	3	4	5	88	90	79	73	65
5	(1)	3	2	5	4	94	85	91	67	74
Totals	12	12	14	17	20	436	420	402	385	364

WINNER

THREE-WAY TIEBREAKING EXAMPLE

	Contestants - Record of Choice					Contestants - Final Total Points				
Judges	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
1	3	2	1	5	4	81	87	90	62	74
2	1	3	4	2	5	93	82	73	87	68
3	4	3	2	1	5	67	74	81	88	63
4	2	3	1	4	5	87	81	93	67	61
5	2	1	4	3	5	79	86	74	76	72
Totals	**12**	**12**	**12**	15	24	407	410	**411**	380	338

WINNER

Chapter Four

Suggested contest script

Opening remarks

Good morning ladies and gentlemen and welcome to the (contest level) of The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program.

Before we begin the contest, I will ask that Legionnaires uncover and everyone please rise for the invocation given by _____.

INVOCATION IS GIVEN

Will you please join _____ in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

PLEDGE IS GIVEN

Audience briefing

This is the _____ Annual American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program Contest, and this morning you will be hearing _____ speakers. I have several introductions, but I will save them until after the contest has concluded. You will notice that the contestants are not in the auditorium at this time. Throughout the competition portion, they will appear on stage only to deliver their respective orations.

In fairness to all the contestants, I ask that you do not applaud until the contest is completed. I would also ask that you refrain from taking pictures or from leaving your seat while a contestant is speaking. In addition, if anyone in the audience is carrying a cell phone, pager or beeper, please make sure that it is muted or turned off. Our speakers will be introduced by number only. Prompting in any manner is not permitted. Doing so may result in the disqualification of the speaker. Each speaker is about to deliver an eight-to 10-minute prepared oration on some phase of the United States Constitution. The contestants are not allowed to use notes, a podium, or a sound system.

The contestants will be shown a time card at the _____th, _____th, and _____th minute mark of their oration. If there is a violation of the time requirement, a penalty of one point for each minute, or fraction thereof, shall be assessed against the contestant's total score.

Prepared oration

There will be a short pause between contestants to allow the judges time to

mark their score cards. Before introducing the last speaker, I will ask a member of the audience to draw an assigned topic from the four provided. When the last contestant has spoken for seven minutes on the prepared oration, contestant No. 1 will be taken to a private room and given the topic card and allowed five minutes to prepare his or her assigned topic presentation. I will read the assigned topic to you before contestant No. 1 is introduced. All contestants then speak for three to five minutes on the same subject.

If everyone is ready, I will call for contestant No. 1. The title of his/her oration is: _____.

(ORATION IS GIVEN)

The time for contestant No. 1 is _____ minutes and _____ seconds. There is *(no)* time penalty.

(PAUSE)

(Follow the same procedure for the remaining contestants.)

Assigned topic discourse

For the past five minutes, contestant No. 1 has been in a private room preparing for the assigned topic presentation. The topic the contestants will address during this portion of the contest is: *(Read the topic)*

Now, if everyone is ready *(pause and look around)*, I will call for contestant No. 1.

(ASSIGNED TOPIC IS GIVEN)

The time for contestant No. 1 is _____ minutes and _____ seconds. There is *(no)* time penalty.

(Follow the same procedure for the remaining contestants.)

Introductions and winner announcements

This concludes the competition. Will the judges and tabulators please go directly to the tabulation room for the determination of the contest results.

(After the contest is completed introduce judges and contestants by name, city and state. Make any other introductions at this time.)

(Announce the winners and present awards.)

(The contest may be closed with a benediction prayer if desired.)

Chapter Five

Contest briefings

Overview

To conduct a successful contest, everyone involved - contestants, judges, tabulators, timers, escorts and audience members - must know what is expected of them and their responsibilities.

We must understand that not everyone at a contest knows exactly what is expected of them. After all, for contestants, judges, audience members and others, it may be their first oratorical contest.

The contest must be conducted by officials who thoroughly understand their jobs. We owe it to all to conduct the contest in as professional a manner as possible utilizing well-informed, capable people. We can do that by simply taking the time to thoroughly brief everyone associated with the contest.

Contestants

The contestants should be given the opportunity to visit the contest site and familiarize themselves with the facility and with the contest procedures. Each contestant, along with their coach/and or parents, should be given time alone in the room where the contest will be held to test the room acoustics. This often overlooked practice is valuable in reducing the contestant's fear of speaking in an unfamiliar place.

It is important to take every opportunity to put the contestants at ease. and, at the same time, keep the contest moving on schedule.

The chairman or his designated representative should meet the contestants as they arrive and welcome them to the contest. At a designated time, the contestants, their parents and coaches should meet as a group for the briefing.

What are some of the topics that should be covered?

Explain the contest operation to them. Don't assume that they know the basics. Advise them they will have from eight to 10 minutes to deliver their prepared oration, that the drawing for the assigned topic will be just prior to the last speaker, and that each contestant will have five minutes to prepare for their three-to-five minute assigned topic presentation. If the contestants are competing in their first such contest, spend a little more time to make sure they completely understand the operation of the contest.

At times, distractions arise that are beyond the control of the contest officials. For example, determine what to do if a fire alarm should sound, and then advise the contestants what will happen. Point out other possible distractions, like uncontrollable noise that might come from an adjoining room or even from the auditorium.

Advise contestants where the timers will be seated and at what point they will raise the numbered timecards. It is standard procedure for the timers to raise the cards on the minute, not 15 seconds before or after the minute.

The chairman should advise the contestants that the judges will be scattered throughout the audience, but under no circumstances should they be told the exact locations where the judges will be seated.

The chairman should make every attempt to be thorough in his briefing, providing adequate time to answer any questions the contestants might have, and to make the contestants feel comfortable in, what is to them, a stressful environment.

Just prior to the start of the contest, the chairman should have the contestants draw for speaking order. The best method is to have numbers written on small pieces of paper and have each of the contestants come forward, one at a time, and draw a number that represents their speaking order.

Throughout the briefing and anytime prior to the actual contest, there should be no contact between the judges and the contestants. Always keep the two groups separated, preferably by segregating them in different rooms.

The briefing of contestants is important, just as it is for others involved in the contest. Take the time to do it right.

Judges

The general responsibilities of the contest judges were covered earlier in Chapter Three, “Rules and regulations.” However, it is important that these individuals receive a thorough orientation of their responsibilities prior to the contest.

The judges should be instructed to report to a private room away from the contestants and others attending the event at least 45 minutes prior to the contest so that adequate time is available for the briefing. The room in which the briefing is held should be “off-limits” to everyone except the judges and contest chairman or his designated representative.

The chairman should welcome the judges, thank them for consenting to serve in this position and then hand out the official judges' scorecards, scratch tally sheets, pencils and clipboards. The chairman should then cover all aspects of the contest; how it will be conducted and the procedures for arriving at a contest winner.

Scorecard and scoring system

Judges should carefully study and understand the scorecard and the scoring system. As a guideline, judges are encouraged to award their top choice (speaker) approximately 90 points with others proportionally lower. (This is particularly important should a tie exist in the position number totals.)

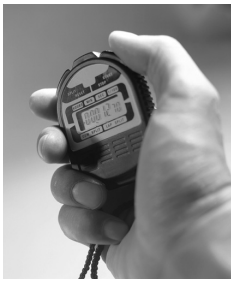
Lack of emphasis in the prepared oration and the assigned topic on the duties and obligations of a citizen to our government must result in the judges downgrading the contestant involved. Judges may downgrade a contestant up to a total of 10 points for failure to speak on the Constitution.

Each judge shall insert the total number of points credited to the contestant and also insert in the placement column the placement for each contestant in accordance with the highest total point scores. If a tie exists in the total point scores on a judge's scorecard, the judge must make adjustments in his scoring of the tied contestants so that no two contestants have the same total point score. This will enable the judge to rank one contestant above the other in the placement column.

Judges shall refrain from discussing any phase of the contest or their judging methods with contestants, coaches, escorts or others, except the contest chairman, following the contest.

(Note: Judges should be provided study materials prior to the contest. This should include the national rules brochure and a copy of the United States Constitution. But before that, the chairman should have given a great deal of thought in the selection of the judges. Appointments should be based on ability and not on political or personal favor. Select them with care, then make sure they know their responsibilities.)

Timekeepers



There must be two timekeepers for the contest who must be seated on the main floor and in full view of the contestants as they deliver their orations.

Too often, a chairman takes for granted that a timer knows how to operate a stopwatch. However, there are several types of stopwatches and it could be disastrous to assume everyone knows how they work. It is important that the chairman meet with the timers to discuss their responsibilities and practice using the stopwatches.

The chairman should make sure the timers practice with the stopwatches until they are completely familiar with their operation. The chairman should ensure the timers have the materials needed to fulfill their responsibilities. These materials include two stopwatches, a timekeeper record card, time cards numbered 8, 9, and 10 for the prepared oration and 3, 4, and 5 for the assigned topic discourse.

In the pre-contest briefing, it is important that the timers understand they are to begin timing when the contestant begins to speak and stop when the contestant ceases to speak. The timers would then enter the exact time consumed on the timekeeper record card.

Tabulators

The tabulation of judges' scorecards is vitally important in ordet to avoid a problem occuring in the scoring of the contest. The tabulators should have a thorough knowledge of the scoring process, be adept with a calculator (to check judges' addition totals) and be familiar with the tie-breaking procedures (previously discussed in Chapter Three). The tabulation process should be thorough and not be expedited or abbreviated by time restraints. Before the results of the tabulation are announced, all tabulators as well as the contest chairman should be certain that the proper procedures were followed and correct winner identified.

Ushers

The number of ushers required for a contest must be determined by the contest chairman based on the number of doors affording entrance to the contest room or auditorium. The contest chairman should meet with the ushers prior to the contest and advise them of their responsibilities, which are to assist in seating the audience and to distribute programs before the contest.

They will ensure there are no disruptions by the audience, and they will control the entrance to the auditorium while a contestant is speaking.

Escorts

The contest chairman must also determine the number of escorts needed for the contest. Some chairmen appoint one escort for each contestant and that escort remains with the designated contestant throughout the contest, except when the contestant is giving his or her prepared oration or assigned topic presentation.

Other chairmen appoint one or two escorts to assist in moving the contestants from the holding room to the auditorium stage. Either method is permitted and the layout of the contest facility or the availability of help will dictate which method will work best.

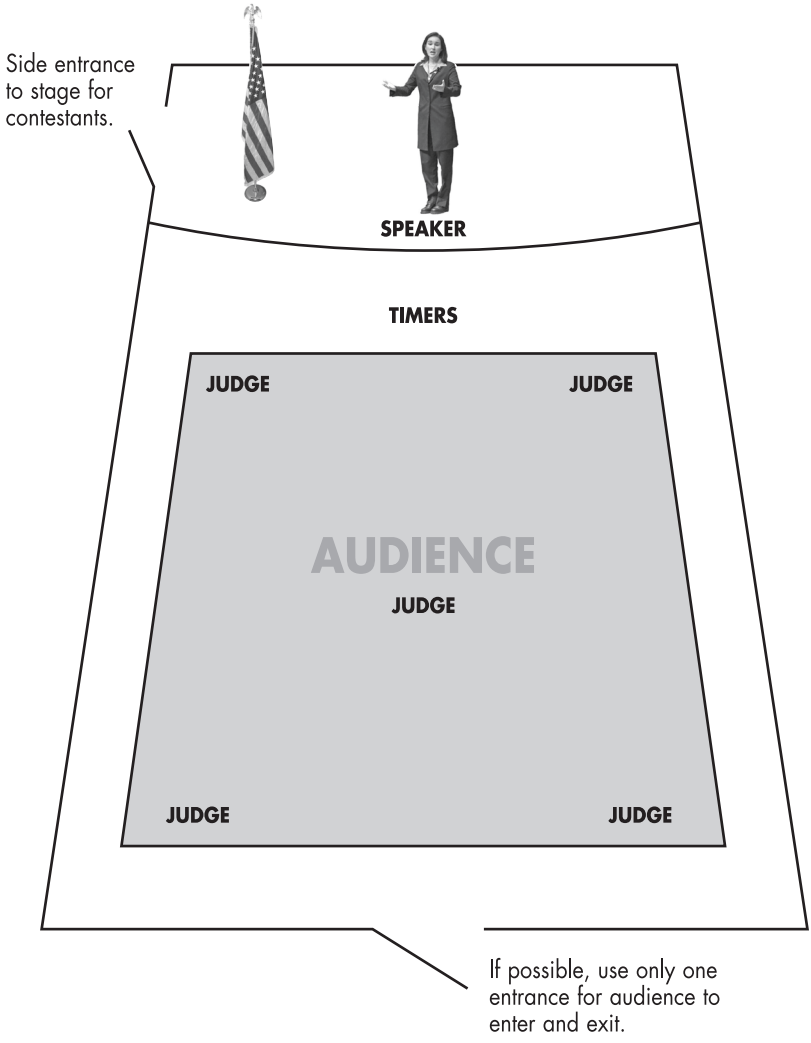
The ushers and escorts are often overlooked by chairmen when they hand out instructions. This shouldn't happen as every officials' role is critical to the overall operation of the contest.

Chapter Six
Key points to remember

1. Make certain all contest officials are well versed regarding their duties and responsibilities. Provide thorough instructions to the judges making certain each judge understands the scoring system and timing/penalty requirement.
2. Instruct the contestants regarding contest rules. Allow them time to inspect the contest site, including holding and assigned topic preparation rooms before the beginning of the contest.
3. Announce to the audience that there will be no applause during the contest, there will be no photographs taken, and the audience must remain seated and quiet during a contestant's presentation.
4. Have contestants draw for speaking order and remain in a soundproof room until called upon to speak. The contestants will be introduced by number and must return to the waiting room after their presentation.
5. Introduce contestants by name, city and state after final tabulation, but prior to announcing the results. Judges and contest officials may also be introduced at this time.
6. Select an American Legion official to award prizes to the winners.
7. Provide instructions to the contest winner regarding their next level of competition.

Chapter Seven

Contest floorplan



Chapter Eight

Chairman's checklist

Facilities required

- ☐ Name of school or other facility
- ☐ Name of auditorium
- ☐ Seating capacity
- ☐ Stage or raised platform
- ☐ United States flag
- ☐ Acoustics (quality)
- ☐ Waiting room(s) with at least 10 chairs (soundproof — close to auditorium)
- ☐ Waiting room(s) for assigned topic preparation
- ☐ Class bells disconnected
- ☐ Parking facilities available

Materials required

- ☐ Clipboards for judges
- ☐ Stopwatches (2)
- ☐ Pencils
- ☐ Calculator or adding machine
- ☐ Judges' instructions/scorecards
- ☐ Judges' scratch tally sheets
- ☐ Tabulator instructions/tabulation card
- ☐ Timekeeper instructions/timekeeper record card
- ☐ Numbered time cards
- ☐ Assigned topic cards
- ☐ Printed programs
- ☐ National rules brochures

- ☐ Certificates of appreciation for contest workers

Appointments

- ☐ Judges (5)
- ☐ Tabulators (3)
- ☐ Timekeepers (2)
- ☐ Escorts
- ☐ Ushers
- ☐ Publicity chairman
- ☐ Transportation chairman

Audience

- ☐ Local high schools
- ☐ Speech teachers
- ☐ Civic leaders
- ☐ American Legion, Auxiliary and SAL officials

Publicity arrangements

- ☐ Invite local news media
- ☐ Photographer

Entertainment (contingent on contest arrangements)

- ☐ Banquet/luncheon

Acknowledgments

- ☐ Thank you notes, certificates of appreciation, etc. to all contest personnel

Chapter Nine

Contest follow-up

1. Notify the contest chairman at the next level of competition as to the winner of your contest. If the name of the contact at the next level is not known, notify your department adjutant.
2. Show your appreciation to judges by presenting them with certificates of appreciation or plaques. It may also be proper to honor contestant coaches with some form of recognition.
3. Provide a post-contest press release to the media. Go to www.legion.org/oratorical/resources to download a sample.
4. Write thank you notes or letters to all contest personnel.
5. Schedule your contest winner to present his or her oration before other school and/or civic groups.
6. Follow your contest winner through future levels of competition.

Chapter Ten
Contest forms and materials

Examples of each of the following contest forms are included in the *Chairman's Guide*. They may be reproduced locally for your use - or you may contact your department headquarters for additional copies.

- Judge's Scorecard
- Tabulation Card
- Timekeeper Record Card

Additional materials that can be used to assist in the preparation for the oratorical contest include the following items:•

- Contest Promotional Brochure. Stock# 22-008. No cost. Call the Americanism Division at (317) 630-1204 or email acy@legion.org for a copy.
- Oratorical Contest downloadable files. All files can be downloaded at www.legion.org/oratorical/resources. The files include the following:
  - National Rules Brochure. Current year's rules. No cost.
  - How to Conduct The National High School Oratorical Contest video series. Excellent training aid.
  - National Finals video. Video of the most recent National Finals Contest held in Indianapolis.
  - Contest Judges' Briefing video. Video of the judges' briefing conducted at the National Finals Contest.
  - Sample news releases to send to local media to promote the contest. One promotes the upcoming event and the other names the winner.
  - Sample PSAs to send to local broadcast media to promote the contest.
  - Contest Public Service Announcement (PSA) video.
  - Excel Judge's Scorecard and Tabulation Card spreadsheet.
- Declaration of Independence and Constitution of the United States of America. The text of both documents - Stock# 755.206 (Consult Emblem Sales catalog for pricing). Available from National Emblem Sales. emblem.legion.org/

Current contest information on The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program can also be found on The American Legion's website: www.legion.org/oratorical.

THE AMERICAN LEGION
High School Oratorical Scholarship Program

TABULATION CARD

JUDGES	CONTESTANTS RECORD OF CHOICE						CONTESTANTS – FINAL TOTAL POINTS *(for 3-way tiebreaker only!)*					
	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
1												
2												
3												
4												
5												
TOTALS												

NOTE: all TABULATOR'S signatures are required below.

THE AMERICAN LEGION
High School Oratorical Scholarship Program
TIMEKEEPER RECORD CARD

CONTESTANT	Time Consumed PREPARED ORATION		Time Consumed ASSIGNED TOPIC	
	Minutes	Seconds	Minutes	Seconds
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				

NOTE: both TIMEKEEPER'S signatures are required below.

_____ _____

The American Legion

P.O. Box 1055
Indianapolis, IN 46206
(317) 630-1204
oratorical@legion.org

www.legion.org

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