

CREATING AN INDIVIDUAL EVENTS JUDGING PHILOSOPHY

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What is an I.E. Judging Philosophy? It is a series of written statements concerning how the judge views Individual Events in general, variables in each events, and views concerning decision-making. It is a tool that judges, coaches, and graduate assistants can use to develop their views and attitudes concerning judging criteria. In addition, it can serve as a discussion starter for forensics classes, conferences, and graduate assistant training sessions. It is not intended to be shared with competitors (as in debate).

As forensics judges we often let our moods, pet peeves, regional differences, coaching styles, ages, relationships, values, and political opinions cloud our vision while judging I.E. rounds. These things often keep us from doing our JOBS. Our job is to be objective, fair, open minded, educationally based, judges of communication. It is my position that creating a personal judging philosophy will aid judges in doing their jobs. This philosophy is created to help the individual judge determine how he/she will approach the act of judging I.E. rounds. Its content may be shared with others, however, it is intended to be used as a tool for decision making BEFORE a judge begins a season of judging.

A judging philosophy should not articulate a judge's world view (one's view on social issues and life in general), but instead should be a forensics view. It should answer the question, "What criteria do I use to make forensics decisions and why?"

A judging philosophy is dynamic or ever changing. Our views and criteria should develop as one grows as a judge and educator.

As judges and coaches, I believe that it is important to spend some time thinking and writing about WHY we judge the way we do. The I.E.

judging philosophy will improve the "health" of individual events as well as serve as a tool to train graduate students and future coaches.

In addition, I strongly urge coaches who have graduate assistants to make this the student's first assignment as a member of the staff. The philosophy should be discussed and adjustments made so the philosophy is consistent with the program and individual's philosophy and goals. The philosophy should include a paragraph concerning the following topics. Additional topics can be added to suit your program's needs.

- A General Philosophy Statement (overall view of your positions)

What is your view of competition and the value of this activity? What is your focus? How do you approach a round?

- "Overdone" material/topics

How do you feel about overdone material and "old" topics? How do you evaluate these things?

- Different rules (NFA, AFA, Phi Rho Pi, etc.)

What rules do you use when judging? Do you adjust for the particular tournament?

- Listening behavior

How does a student's behavior as an audience member effect their rank/rate?

- Language (dirty words, sexist language, etc.)

What is your attitude toward language?

- Movement and Book-as-Prop (interpretation)

What is your attitude toward movement?

- Use of script (looking at the script)

To what degree should a student "use" the book?

- Current sources

What is your attitude toward current sources and how does it effect your rank/rate?

- Types of comments

What types of comments do you try to write? Do you “coach” on the ballot? Do you highlight the positive/negative? Do you justify the rank?

- Speaker points

What is lowest you will go? What is a “25?” What criteria do you use to assign speaker points?

- Organization of ballot

Do you organize your ballot in any way?

- Appearance

Does the student with the brand new power suit get the same rank as the student without one?

- Time violations

How and to what degree do you penalize for over/under time?

- A statement for *each* event

Each event has its controversial issues. For example, third person stories in prose, example speech vs. unified analysis in impromptu, value topics in persuasion, original interp material, movement in duo, etc. A judging philosophy could include a short paragraph concerning each event.

Appendix A – Sample Individual Events Judging Philosophy

Judging Philosophy

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A General Philosophy Statement

Good is Good. I do not get caught up in trends or technical things.

I evaluate the performance *as a whole*. For example, I would never give a “6” because of one verbal slip or because of a single small problem.

When determining rank, I do not compare the performance to trends or things I have seen in the past. The only thing that I consider is the performances in *that round*. I judge in the moment. Past experiences have no bearing on my ranking. I MAY consider trends or things I have seen in the past when awarding speaker points and making comments. The only exception is when I suspect plagiarism.

I believe in competition. Competition is the *tool* coaches use to teach effective communication skills. It is our little “trick.” Students do not typically come into the office and say, “Wow, teach me to research, write, organize, and appreciate literature!” They see a game or competition that looks like fun. As educators we must use fun to our advantage. As a coach I focus on the process and not the product. Therefore, I try to judge with the same mind set. It is my job as a judge to help the student with this particular stage of the learning process.

“Overdone” material/topics

Interp material should be of a college level and challenging (for the particular student). It should also have literary merit. The fact that somebody “did the piece before” has no bearing on my rank.

Public address topics should be timely, scholarly, creative, and research oriented. The fact that somebody “did the topic before” has no bearing on my rank.

Different rules (NFA, AFA, Phi Rho Pi, etc.)

I make a point of finding out what rules the tournament is following and judge according to those rules. If, for example, the tournament is using Phi Rho Pi rules then I will judge *Speech to Entertain* as *Speech to Entertain*. I will not apply *After Dinner Speaking* rules. This especially important when judging a community college tournament as well as high school tournaments. A judge must evaluate according to the rules of the tournament, NOT the rules he/she feels are “correct.”

Listening behavior

Listening is equally important as speaking. Students who exhibit poor listening behavior will be “warned” on the ballot. The next time I observe the same student exhibiting poor listening skills his/her rank will be dropped. Poor listening behavior includes leaving early when the student is not double entered (or lying about being DE).

Language

Sexiest and foul language should be avoided unless it is being used to make an argument or is a vital part of a character’s dialogue. Blue humor in ADS/STE is not considered scholarly.

Movement and Book-as-Prop (Interpretation)

Both are acceptable as long as they are purposeful. Movement and book-as-prop should “add to” the performance and not be used “to get better ranks.”

Use of script

Students should acknowledge the literature. A student who ignores the literature (not looking at pages, blank script, etc.) will be penalized.

Current sources

Sources should support arguments in a timely and effective manner. If a topic does not call for sources from “this year” then so be it.

Types of comments

My comments on the ballot will reflect positive and negative aspects of the performance. My goal is to encourage the student while providing advice on how to improve the performance or speech. My ballots will end with a “justification of rank” statement.

Speaker points

On a 1-25 scale:

25 - for performances that are among the best I have ever seen.

24 - for performances that are among the best I have seen this year.

23 - for the number one ranked speaker in the round (if they do not meet the above criteria). I may start below 23 if it was an extremely weak round. I work down from there, never going below 15.

Organization of ballot

I organize my ballots into three columns; GOOD STUFF, THINGS TO WORK ON, and COMMENTS. An organized ballot is much easier for a student to read and use. Stream of conscious ballots (which most judges use) are confusing and often useless.

Prose

Should tell a “story.” I look for a beginning, middle and end. Third person stories are acceptable and are judged no differently than first person stories.

Poetry

I look for understanding. And whether or not the student shares that understand with the audience. Programs and long poems are equal.

Drama & Duo

The focus should be on creating *character(s)* and bringing a play to life.

Impromptu & Extemporaneous Speaking

I believe that a unified analysis is a superior way to argue (number of points is irrelevant. 2 or 3 work fine depending on the topic). Example should be used as support for ideas, not as main points.

Persuasion

Value topics should be reserved for ADS or STE.

Problem-Cause-Solution is not the only way to organize a persuasive message. Other methods (as long as they are appropriate for the topic) are encouraged and celebrated.

Informative

Topics should be scholarly, creative and important to a general audience as well as society in general.

After Dinner Speaking

I discourage blue, sexist, or racist humor. The speech should be entertaining, have a solid structure, and provide a useful/motivational message.