

# BEST PRACTICES FOR VIRTUAL INFORMATIVE AND PERSUASIVE SPEAKING

## **Preparation**

Prepare for online Extemporaneous Speaking before the start of actual competition rounds by participating in online practice rounds. You must practice with your technology before you enter a competitive tournament so that you will be prepared to understand when you are having issues and how to diagnose those problems before they interfere with your actual competition.

## **Technology Set-Up**

Technical set-up is critical to consider in advance. Your computer should be fully charged or, preferably, plugged in. Purchasing an ethernet cable to hardwire to the router is recommended to improve connectivity. This is far more stable than wi-fi. A cell phone hotspot is not likely to have a fast enough connection to provide stable videoconferencing.

Competitors should enter the virtual contest early to test technology in advance. If using wi-fi, check the connection. Turn off unnecessary devices. Test the microphone. Try to minimize simultaneous connections to the router to improve video quality.

## **Location**

Try to secure a separate room away from noise and other people. If using a wireless connection is necessary, be as close as possible to the router. Inform others of the tournament schedule and required privacy to compete. Be aware of when to be online and show up early.

## **Cameras**

Adjust the web camera taking into consideration what can be seen in the “virtual box”, and adjust the side lighting so as not to be a dark shadow on the screen. Adjust the room. These adjustments might include: a visual background free from distractions, turning on a desk lamp for back lighting, turning off a ceiling fan to eliminate distraction, removing pets that might make noise and making sure what shows in the background is organized and uncluttered.

## **Audio**

Be certain you have silenced notifications for texts, emails, social media and silence your cell phone.

## **Technical Problems**

Technology issues should be reported immediately through a help line or email. The specific “help” procedure should be communicated by tournament officials in advance of the meet.

# Coach Notifications

## **Online Procedures**

Familiarize yourself and your students with the tournament management software. Get any necessary accounts or registration set up ahead of time.

Be sure online registration includes your current cell phone number and an email address that is accurately entered. If you have more than one email address, make a note of which one you have entered in the tournament management software.

Plan in advance how to keep in contact with your students. There are apps available that do not require sharing cell phone numbers, a practice some school districts prohibit. Discuss protocols with the team regarding pre-round meetings, check-in and during the tournament.

Know how to access the specific tournament online video conference being used.

Be available at all times that your students are competing. Make sure you are aware of your judging obligations. Have contact information for tournament personnel.

## **Reminders If Using *SpeechWire* \***

- Be sure you input your students' email addresses into *SpeechWire*.
- Judges must set up accounts as well so they can receive their assigned e-Ballots.
- Retrieve your students' ballots as a PDF and view the tabulation sheets in your team's *SpeechWire* account.

\**SpeechWire* will be used at UIL State Meet.

# Judge Notifications

## **Preparation**

Judges should prepare to enter the world of online judging before the start of actual competition rounds. Access adjudication training presented digitally or via video.

## **Technology**

Technology set-up is important to consider. Become familiar with the tournament software. Review all instructions provided by the tournament host and ask questions well in advance of the competition.

## **Equipment**

Judges should use laptops or desktops when adjudicating rounds, not a tablet or a mobile device.

Keep your video on at all times but your microphone off while students are speaking. Some judges wish to open one Chrome tab to watch the speaker and another to fill out the e-Ballot. Alternatively, you may wish to write notes on paper while observing the round and then transcribing the notes to the e-Ballot at the end of the round. Some use 2 devices. Experiment in advance to discover what works best for you. Note: *SpeechWire* allows you to submit your results and add the comments afterwards, which allows the tab staff to access your rankings to keep the tournament on schedule.

### **Procedure to Start the Round**

Verify the student's name or code and have the contestant reply "Here". This is a quick and easy way to test the audio for each student. In the comment box of the e-Ballot, it's a good idea to type the student's topic so the Tab Room can verify the student spoke on the actual topic they drew.

### **Technology Problems**

Common tech issues:

- Lagging audio – have participant turn off video briefly to improve bandwidth
- Noise in the audio – have participant mute themselves if they are not speaking
- Video quality – have participant readjust light or screen angle
- Disconnection – wait a reasonable amount of time for participant to reconnect

The Contest Director should use discretion in determining the length of time that is reasonable; due to the nature of this timed event, 5 minutes protects the integrity of the draw schedule

### **Contact Info**

Each tournament will have a Help Desk system that will be clearly explained before the tournament begins. Be certain the tournament officials have your current cell phone number and that you know how to reach them, should problems arise.

### **Environment and Disruptions**

Judges are encouraged to remember that participants come from diverse backgrounds and we celebrate that we have economic diversity in our community. A student should not be penalized for things beyond their control. This may include unanticipated interruptions, technical issues or streaming quality and the visual background a student has available to them. A student who cannot afford expensive equipment should be judged the same as one who can.

**Be aware of Temporary Rule Waivers and Contest Procedures when this contest is administered virtually.**

# Extemporaneous Informative & Persuasive Speaking

## Temporary Waivers and Modifications

If UIL Informative and Persuasive Speaking competition is administered through a virtual platform, temporary waivers or alterations to the C&CR and handbook rules and procedures may be implemented for the 2020-21 school year. The adaptations should be followed only when administering a virtual extemporaneous speaking contest. If hosting an in-person contest, the existing contest rules and procedures are to be followed.

**ELECTRONIC DEVICES IN THE PREPARATION DRAW ROOM:** Internet access is permitted to access virtual competition space. Cell phones are permitted to assist with internet access and as timing devices. Coaches and competitors are expected to adhere to existing contest rules that prohibit the access to and use of prepared notes or outlines, extemp speeches, debate evidence, handbooks or briefs, or any other materials restricted in the preparation room as well as assistance in or outside of the round. The UIL Academic Ethics code will remain and all participants are expected to exhibit the highest level of integrity in not seeking outside information or coaching to give them a competitive advantage.

**PUBLIC ROUNDS:** No spectators will be allowed to observe virtual rounds. *When technology allows*, competitors in the round who have already spoken, and coaches may be allowed to observe rounds of their students if they are not judging or otherwise helping the tournament to function. When observing, coaches and students who have already spoken should have their camera off. The only cameras active during the round should be the current speaker and the judge(s).

## PROCEDURES

### Observers of Prep Time

No one is allowed to observe during the speech preparation time. Only contestants and Extemporaneous Preparation officials shall be present in the preparation draw room.

### Cameras

Cameras of participants are expected to be on from the moment their speaker's position is called to draw their topic. Participants should remain on camera throughout their prep time.

## **Microphones**

Competitor's microphone should be muted for the duration of the preparation period except when responding to an Extemp Draw tournament official. Microphone should be turned on once the contestant enters the competition speaking room.

## **Drawing for Topics**

A virtual draw makes it especially important for Extemp Draw officials to follow UIL's existing procedure of having competitors draw every 10 minutes, rather than shortening that time span. Officials may use different options for posting the topic choices for each individual speaker such as the chat box or whatever method the chosen platform may provide. The method will be left to the discretion of the Extemp Draw officials but should be clearly explained to the competitors in advance of the start of the draw.

Providing judges with a copy of each speaker's topic choices reinforces that competitors are delivering a speech on one of the official prompts.

## **Recording**

Recording of rounds is prohibited. If the online platform automatically records, it should be deleted immediately.