

Forensics

Forensics: Competitive Speech, NOT Dead People

Forensics is both an individual and team activity. Each student competes for a personal ranking, and these scores are combined to determine the team's rank. At a tournament, a student will compete in three or four rounds achieving a rank in each round.

Competition in a round is among five to seven students who are usually evaluated by one judge, though there can be up to three judges. Impromptu, Extemporaneous, Lincoln Douglas Debate, Parliamentary Debate, and Public Forum Debate are categories in which the students are alone with the judge or judges. Congress, as the name implies, is a student replica of the government body; therefore, students compete among 20-30 students in one room with two judges.

At the close of the tournament, the top six to ten students in each category are honored as well as the top three teams. On the way home from a tournament, all students receive their critique sheets. These sheets are the judges' evaluations and comments from each round. Students can determine their overall ranking in tournaments using a master list of results.

Coaches emphasize that although winning is significant and the team has a tradition of top honors, the most important aspect of the competition is personal growth—challenging oneself, working to achieve a goal, and giving one's best effort. Each time students accomplish this, they develop skills that will serve them throughout their lives.

Tournaments are held on Saturdays at schools in the greater Pittsburgh area and the Mercer area. Transportation is provided to and from tournaments. The bus typically is boarded around 7 a.m. at Pine-Richland High School and returns between 3-6 p.m. Competitions typically begin in October and end in April. Students are not required to attend every single tournament, but to qualify as a team member, students need to attend at least four.

To participate, students must meet the academic standards for extracurricular activities, be willing to schedule and keep rehearsal times with coaches, and practice on their own at home. Appropriate attire (the type one would wear to a professional interview or special occasion) is **required** for tournaments. Lunches and snacks are available at tournaments and typically cost around \$5. *It is expected that students will be picked up promptly after their return from competition.*

The tournaments we host at the high school are our opportunities to raise funds for the team. Parents are asked to support these events by volunteering their time on the day of the tournament. The money made from these tournaments covers the team's tournament costs, year-end banquet, as well as incidental expenses during the season.

The benefits of participating in Forensics are many. There are tangible awards such as trophies, certificates, ribbons and pins, but if questioned, team members most likely would cite other reasons, such as the opportunity to compete using one's academic skills, the chance to meet other students from other schools, the chance to build and perfect presentation skills for college and the job market, the opportunity to learn how to accept and deliver constructive criticism, and finally, the chance to participate on a team of outstanding young men and women.

Forensics fosters independence. Students are responsible for rehearsal schedules, choosing competition categories, locating and reporting on time to their competition rooms in an unfamiliar school, and they are expected to maintain excellent behavior without direct supervision.

Without a doubt, Forensics offers experiences to prepare students for their next educational step, college. Beyond that immediate goal, this activity helps students establish skills that will benefit them for the rest of their lives.

Competition Categories & Descriptions

Humorous Interpretation:

H.I. is a challenging category; yet, at the same time, it is a lot of fun. To act out each character, the speaker must differentiate between the characters' voices utilizing different tones, pitches, and accents. The judges need to distinguish one character from the next. And each character has a focal point: a point or direction that character faces in the room. So the speaker must be able to quickly "pop" from character to character without missing a beat. H.I. takes dedication and practice and lots of energy to perform.

Dramatic Interpretation:

D.I. is a category in which you perform a play or a story that contains dramatic monologue. The piece can be scary, mournful, action-packed, or heart-touching. When performing, you must interpret every character in the play. You can use facial expressions and gestures, but you are not allowed to move around room. Usually, the more characters you are able to portray effectively in your piece, the higher ranking you will achieve.

Duo Interpretation:

Duo is one of the most challenging areas of Forensics. Two performers stand at the front of the room and deliver their performance, either a dramatic or humorous one. The speakers can never look at or touch each other. Judges critique you on how well you and your partner react to each other and how well you both work together as a team.

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Prose:

Prose requires you to select a published piece of literature and edit it to meet time requirements. This category does not require memorization since you read the selection from a black binder, as though you are a master-story teller.

Poetry:

Poetry is similar to prose, except the selection you choose is a poem. Sometimes competitors choose more than one poem to meet time requirements.

Original Oratory:

Oratory is divided into two categories: Persuasive and Informative. You write your own speech about a unique, engaging topic that your audience can relate to and enjoy.

Impromptu:

At the tournament, competitors are given a random topic and a five-minute preparation time limit, then required to speak for five minutes about the selected topic. You're judged on your level of creativity the most; overall, this event is conceivably the most nerve wracking and exciting. Rehearsal for this category is vital.

Extemporaneous:

Competitors give a speech of five to seven minutes in length in response to a question about a current event. To prepare, it's best to read and keep up with events that are happening in the world. At a tournament, you pick a question you want to answer from three choices and then you have 30 minutes preparation time to prepare your speech, which will consist of a "yes" or "no" answer to the question. There are usually four rounds per tournament, so you will have to prepare four different speeches.

Lincoln-Douglas Debate:

This category involves research, dedication, thinking on your feet, and the motivation to succeed. LD debate is one-on-one competition that encompasses gathering both philosophical information and concrete evidence to support your arguments. The basic idea of a debate round is to develop, defend, and support your points as well as attack your opponents' points. When you get a resolution, or topic to discuss, you compose an affirmative and negative case.

Public Forum Debate:

For this event, you need a partner, quick wit, and the ability to express your opinion about anything in a confident manner. Topics are from current news stories—easily researched in news magazines and online. This debate is based upon the old show "Crossfire." During the competition, both speakers ask and answer questions in a polite, but argumentative exchange. You have to be prepared to debate either side, pro or con, on the day of the tournament. One of your strategies should be to appeal to reason and logic.

Congress:

Student Congress requires skills in impromptu, debating, and extemporaneous speaking. You must speak of your own free will. You will receive a packet of bills and resolutions prior to each tournament. Then, based on your political views and strategies, research the topic and begin to construct a speech. Awards are based on the votes of students in the competition round, so you must be known on a favorable term with the rest of the competitors.

Parliamentary Debate:

This debate category requires three members per team. It compares to Public Forum and involves impromptu, oratorical, and extemporaneous skills. More information will be given about this category based on student interest level.

To be an official team member:

- Have fun!
- **Set and keep practice time with coaches and practice at least one time with coaches the week of the tournament.**
- Practice at home.
- Attend at least three tournaments.
- Dress professionally.
- Maintain a high standard of conduct and respect for personal property at all times.
- Do your best!
- Arrive at the bus on time. **WE WILL NOT HOLD THE BUS MORE THAN FIVE MINUTES.** Call the night before if you are not going to attend a tournament: Friday evenings until midnight: Kayley Szymanski at 724-814-4720
- Have fun!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!