

## GENERAL HINTS

Bonjour!

For more than 25 years, I judged everything from preliminaries to finals in all the oral events (poetry, prose, guided speaking, sight reading, drama solo and group) in all levels. I judged vocal solo prelims by myself and semi-finals as well as finals w/music judges. I judged all the art except scrapbook. After prelims, I liked another judge with me but it's not always possible. Finals are sometimes extremely difficult, so we like to have two people. I will try my best.

This worked well for me in general and for specific events. I've included suggestions I've gotten from the judges since I been doing this. I hope it all helps you.

Sue Cotter - Judge Coordinator

Students compete one at a time in front of a judge/s only. *No other people are allowed in the room.* The names in the program are for student info only. They have nothing to do with judging. You don't need one other than for your own interest.

- You will most likely be in a classroom, even for music and drama. **ART** is on the next page. It's done a little differently.
- Find a place to sit away from the door. There is noise in the hall even though we try to keep the kids quiet. There shouldn't be any PA announcements... *mais on ne sait jamais...*

There is a ballot sheet for each student in your envelope. They are responsible for getting the correct information on the top of the sheet and are disqualified if they do not have it. Please do not do it for them. If they are disqualified for any reason, please listen anyway, complete the ballot according to the criteria and then indicate the reason for disqualification. Do not give them zero points or all 1s.

- It's a good idea to go out in the hall to give out the ballot sheets and tell them YOU will come get them when it's their turn. This gives you time in between participants to write down comments or notes and becomes more important as the rounds continue.
- Don't let them hang out in the hall until the last minute. You are perfectly entitled to tell them to come into the room and present their piece when you are ready, not them.

Quickly check the ballot to see they have all the info and tell them to begin when they're ready. I made them take a deep breath to relax before they started. I don't know if it helped but they seemed to appreciate it. Many are *extremely* nervous!

- Some have a little intro to the piece; some just do it alone. It should have no bearing on judging. I always considered the relative length and/or difficulty of a piece and think it's important; others do not. It's up to you. Just be consistent.
- Most stand for poetry, prose - and drama, *bien sûr!* They sit next to or across from you for guided speaking and sight reading.
- I suggest you do not write on the ballot until final rankings and even then use pencil. You have a judge's worksheet in your packet that's a great help. [hints for ranking follow]

Each student must give you a neat, unmarked copy of whatever it is they're doing in poetry, prose, drama and music. You may keep it. It can be good to take notes on as they speak.

- Please DO NOT prompt them, help them, ask any questions or correct them. **In short, say NOTHING but merci** - as tempting as it may be. Their task is to recite the piece, period.

We have problems with this *every year*. It causes a lot of unnecessary teacher anger and student tears. In the same vein – do not ask students what school they are from or who their teacher is. We want this to be as impartial as we can make it.

- If you know a student, for whatever reason, send them to someone judging the same thing at the same level – often next door or across the hall. If possible, that person can send a student back to you to keep the sections as even as possible but it might not work – *c'est pas grave*.
- Try to look at them when they're reciting. It's hard but they get upset if you don't look at all. If you use a smart phone as a timer or to take notes, please tell the kids or they think you're texting and ignoring them.
- Most adhere to the time limits on the ballots. It shouldn't be a problem. If you don't have a time piece there should be a clock in the room that will help you keep track. See note above about smart phones.
  - If you want to glance through the piece before they start, that's fine. Just tell them or they may begin and get flustered if they have to start over.

When the students finish please remember to thank them and perhaps ask them to remind the others that you will come out to get them. I know it may sound silly for me to remind you to thank them but sometimes I got so caught up in filling out the ballot that I forgot.

- Please write at least one kind comment on the bottom of the form – in French or in English. Something nice encourages them to keep taking French. As a teacher, I always appreciated any constructive criticism to help us do better next time – so feel free to do that. If you wanted to offer corrections – this is the place to do it!
- Suggested comments – *Bravo! Bien fait! Bon effort! Bon travail!* In short, anything nice. I will try to have a list for you at Symposium

**PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE STAY IN THE ROOM THE ENTIRE TIME!** For prelims it's not as important because everyone may not show up. But for semis and finals – **THEY WILL!** The latter students are often in more than one event in the same time slot. Someone from their school should arrive to hold a place for them – so please wait! Every year a judge leaves early and a student shows up to find the room empty. We will tell teachers that they should instruct students **NOT** to wait until the last minute.

- It is because of these students that I advise waiting to fill out final rankings. Add your comments, just not the rank or score. On more than one occasion, the best student arrived at the last minute. Besides, the kids get really upset when they see that they were 3<sup>rd</sup>, for example, but you erased it to rank them lower.

You need to bring the finished ballots to the library/ballot room at the end of the round. We've found it's better for the judge to bring them in person in case there are any questions.

**IMPORTANT NOTE, for FINALS especially - THERE CAN BE NO TIES!**

Please do not give the same score to two students in the same section.

It is the rank, not the score, that is most important.

**HINTS FOR RANKING**

I used the worksheet in the packet. If there was a second judge, I used the piece the student gave me. You can only write down so much in the given time, but you probably need something by the end.

For **ART** only - the students are not there. The art is usually displayed by category in a gym, on the bleachers. I quickly turned down or backwards anything that I felt was out of consideration. That way I wasn't distracted by them. Then I kept eliminating until I got to the final six that had to be ranked.

The first student was my baseline for anything I judged. I ranked everyone else either above or below. I didn't pay attention to the score. I just made sure they weren't the same before I let the next one in. If no one was waiting I used the time to write comments.

When time was up, I added up the scores on the worksheet and adjusted them to reflect the ballot's 30, 35 or so points - 35 points to 1<sup>st</sup>, 34 to 2<sup>nd</sup> etc or however you want. The number of points doesn't matter in the overall standing. It's the **RANK** that counts. Use the sheet in your envelope to rank the students in order, from first to whatever number is last. If you want to see ballot details go to

<http://www.texasfrenchsymposium.org/ballots.html> but you'll get them when you arrive. I will also have them posted in the Hospitality Room.

If you still have questions we'll have short orientation meetings for all but ART in the Hospitality Room on Friday evening at 7:30 and on Saturday morning at 8:00.

**A NOTE ABOUT PRELIMS**

For whatever reason, every student does not always come, especially in level 1. You may end up with only 7 and that is the number to advance **BUT** you feel that some should not. You don't have to advance them all. I remember having only 3 who deserved advancing when at least 3 more had shown up. I only advanced 3 but made sure to note it on the form.

The preliminaries start with an equal amount of students but don't always end that way. If, when you go out to get another student in the hall, you see you have a small number of students and your neighbor, judging the **SAME EVENT** at the **SAME LEVEL** has a lot you can judge any of your neighbor's students up to a maximum of 13. They **WILL** all show up for semi and finals. **PLEASE** - stay the whole time!