

The First Competition by L. Zajac

If you are a novice speech competitor you are no doubt anxious, nervous, and excited for the season to begin. With competitions coming up soon, it's time to prepare to dazzle your audience. However, you also need to know what to expect during your first competition. As a Speech Team veteran, I can hopefully ease your nerves and walk you through your first competition.

It's the morning of the competition....

When you first board the bus bright and early that Saturday morning for competition be sure you are dressed appropriately. Give yourself time to warm up. Many coaches use the bus ride to do vocal warm-ups; also, feel free to polish your speech. Once you arrive at the competition, make sure to write down your room numbers and times of the rounds. If you are doubling/tripling, visit each of your rooms to leave a double-entered message. Most competitors will write "B7 (or whatever your code is) is doubling in "story" (or whatever the event is) along with "Please wait!"

Where do I go first?

Speech competitions are split into either two or three preliminary rounds and finals. If you are single-entered, you will just follow your schedule and get to your rounds on time. If you are double/triple-entered, it's important to go to the shorter rounds first. Heavily timed events like Broadcasting, Extemp, and IVD should take priority, and scripted events should come later. If you don't show up for a round or go to the longer event first, your judge may very well leave without you, which will result in an automatic last place.

What is the proper etiquette during my rounds?

In your rounds, make sure to be a great audience member. Keep in mind that everyone will be nervous, so it's important to put the other competitors at ease. Make great eye contact, smile, nod as you listen, and clap enthusiastically at the end. You'll make new

friends, and judges also pay attention to those who show good spirit during rounds.

How should I spend my time between rounds?

Make sure to keep your energy up during all of your rounds. Have a soda, eat a snack, talk to your coach or teammates for a pep talk, and so on. Judges can tell when your energy is low, so make sure you're ready to go. When you aren't performing, use your rounds as a learning experience. Take note of different techniques that other competitors try, whether you see great hand gestures, page turns, or facial expressions. Finding what sorts of techniques you like watching can help polish your own event later on. Also, never speak negatively about other performances. Someone's child or team member may be just around the corner!

I have completed my rounds! Now what?

After your rounds are over, you may have some time to grab a bite to eat. Even though you're waiting for posting, make sure to eat something, as you still have a long day ahead of you. When the final event lists are posted, maintain your composure. Some competitors go wild, which looks very unprofessional to the other teams and judges. If you break into finals, fantastic! If not, don't let one competition get you down. It's the beginning of a long season, and your time will come. Use this time to watch other rounds, especially your own events. By seeing the competitors who stood out during this day, you will be able to see the best of the best and learn from them. If anything, final rounds are great fun to watch.



Where is my trophy?

The end of the day will be capped off with an award ceremony, which may range from quick to very elaborate. Winners will receive certificates, medals, or trophies, though the recognition is the best award of all. Again, maintain great team composure and show a professional image. Make sure to congratulate winners and save any complaints you may have for the bus ride home. Oftentimes people look at speech as an individual competition, but it is also a team event. If you have ONE team member in awards EVERYONE should stay to support that student. Leaving after your event is out is the equivalent to fouling-out in a basketball game and then leaving the court because you can't get back in the game.

At the end of the day, you'll be exhausted but most likely elated as well. You've just survived your first competition, and there is a long season ahead. Best of luck to all competitors this season!