

Arthur Garvey Speaking Competition

Competitors handbook

Congratulations on entering the Arthur Garvey Speaker of the Year. You are sure to gain new skills and confidence by experiencing the challenge of competitive speaking. Rostrum Training Council wishes you well and has compiled this handbook for competitors to assist you to gain the most from your experience.

Competition speaking is a different experience to a club speech where you are judged on your own performance. In a competition speech you will be expected to deliver a longer and purposeful speech in competition surroundings. You will be judged in relation to your fellow competitors to find a winner. In a competition only one (or two depending on the level of competition) will be a winner. There will always be a winner even if all speakers were brilliant or all speakers mediocre. Being the winner at any level is not a measure of your speech only a comparison between the contestants in that event. Do not regard not winning as being a failure or winning proving your speech was great. The value of the competition for you is the experience and learning what works for you in a testing speech.

Adjudication of competition speeches is not a critique, as you would expect at a club speech. The adjudicators test your performance under specific guidelines. The guidelines from Australian Rostrum Resource Manual are set out in section 1 of this publication. The full publication is available from the Rostrum Information Centre via email. You are advised to study how the adjudicators judge a competition speech. Then construct, edit, practice and polish; edit practice and polish your work to meet judging guidelines. Be mindful that while adjudicators judge your speech, the measure is how you relate to the audience and impact on their intellect and emotions.

Marking and ranking speeches is also conducted under specific rules and these are shown at section 2 for your information.

While the information set out in the next sections is pointed at the adjudicator it will assist you to find what adjudicators look for in competition speeches. Your Rostrum critics and senior club members are always willing to assist you develop your speech use them to help.

Good luck.

SECTION ONE

Extract from A Resource Manual for Speaking Competitions

COMPETITION SPEECHES

Speeches in a competition are often longer than those given elsewhere and obviously require more effort and preparation and considerably more polish. There is sometimes, too, a temptation to over-prepare or to crowd the speech with information. The secret is to keep the message simple.

Speaking to a large audience in a big hall is a very different experience from the intimate relationship of the conventional club meeting. Speakers should, therefore, not only try to anticipate the mood of the audience and tailor their speeches accordingly, but try to visualise the big occasion – the speaker self-confident yet relaxed, working the audience, make them laugh or cry, make them listen and make them think.

THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE ADJUDICATOR

In a competition adjudicators will be expecting to hear something above and beyond a good speech, i.e. one that follows the accepted tenets of good speechcraft. They will expect that the speech will be interesting, that it will contain ideas that are original, that the speaker believes in them and that they appeal to both the hearts and minds of the audience. In short, they will be expecting a work of art.

THE TASK OF THE ADJUDICATOR

An adjudicator's primary task is to make judgments about individual speakers and a comparative judgment about the particular speakers in a speaking competition. These judgments must be made in the context of the rules of the competition and the prescribed marking formula. Contestants should have access to both of these documents from the very outset, and adjudicators should be so familiar with them that they are able to give full attention to the speakers during the course of the competition.

THE CHALLENGE FOR THE ADJUDICATOR

The problem facing the Adjudicator is the range of approaches adopted by speakers and the many different speech objectives they have. Add to this the difficulty of comparing different types of speeches: oratory, the philosophical speech, the dramatic speech, the humorous speech, the poetic speech, the emotional speech, and the speech using visual or other aids; and the range of personalities of speakers, the differences in their intellectual capacity, their speaking styles & techniques; their emotional warmth.

One of the most common problems is how one judges speakers who use visual aids, and/or provide a dramatic performance rather than a great speech. The adjudicator needs to remember that it is a speech that has been called for, not a dramatic performance--public speaking not acting. Visual aids, other than the most minimal, usually distract us from the message that the speaker is attempting to pass on.

It is important, therefore, that the criteria for assessment are not so tightly defined as to bias the allotted markings towards or against any particular model or indeed, some possible future style. Two examples of the dangers of using fixed concepts about 'good' structure suffice:

- (a) In Rostrum we tend to nurture the 'linear' speech, advocating that the speaker should tell the audience where the speech is going, establish the case, and summarise with a rousing conclusion. We emphasise that the content and the progress of the speech should be easily followed by the listeners. This may be sound advice for the average speaker but could be very constricting if used as an inviolate criterion for all speeches. At competition level, provided that the speech is effective, the speaker surely has the liberty to be more creative.
- (b) In Rostrum we have applied a principle not to introduce new material after the warning bell. A compulsory rule that 25% of an eight-minute speech must be devoted to the wrap-up may be a good idea for most speakers but it is unfair when universally applied. The conclusion itself, rather than its length, is what is significant.

Similarly, in judging the humorous speech, we must be careful not to assume that the intellectual content was negligible, since it takes a great deal of mental effort by the competitor to create the right wordplay for the humour to be successful. We should give good marks for the 'matter' content in such a speech.

Finally, there are certain types of speeches, which should never win speech competitions:

- (a) A fascinating informative talk on 'The Battle of Britain' or 'Albert Einstein' is not a performance speech. It should be made relevant to the listeners by a plausible explanation of its meaning to today's audience, perhaps by relevance to the psychology of the people involved, their ability to overcome adversity, what we inherit today from these events, and so on.
- (b) A witty talk by a speaker with natural style and presentation should not be given the stamp of approval unless, combined with the excellent word-crafting, the material content has imagination, novelty or amusing digs at, say today's follies and fossilised thinking.

A competition speech must be more than just informative or amusing. It must be clever, captivating and inspiring.

SECTION TWO

Extract from A Resource Manual for Critics

ADJUDICATION AND CRITICISM

While the adjudicator may be an accredited Rostrum critic, adjudicating a speech is quite different from presenting a criticism. When adjudicating a speaking competition, the Critic must allow speakers to have their own subject matter and point of view without censure. Unless this possibility is guarded against the Critic's own bias and preference may intrude on their judgement. The adjudicator's task is to discover what the speaker has in mind, and to assess whether it was achieved. This means being impartial, without shutting out their own emotions and good sense. Further, the adjudicator's general knowledge should not be entirely ignored, as this may help to assess how well the speaker handled the subject.

In presenting a criticism the Critic must identify the elements of a particular speech and consider what advice is needed to help the speaker become more effective. While the Critic may compare a particular aspect of one speech against another, there is no requirement to grade the speeches.

MARKING SYSTEM

The present Rostrum system of marking consists of allocating up to:

- 50 marks for Impact on the Intellect, and
- 50 marks for Impact on the Emotions.

Since both of the above rely on an objective attitude by the adjudicator, a short list of sub-headings will help the Critic to be aware of what an adjudicator should look for.

MATTER AND MANNER

The adjudication of a speech may be reduced to the two elements (a) the impact a speaker makes through material intelligently constructed, and (b) the impact of effective presentation.

a. Impact on the Intellect, or What the Speaker Said

The adjudicator should grade the speech according to the overall impact that it has on the audience. This aspect of the speech should have a perceived purpose with logical theme development, should stimulate the audience with information or situations, new insights, authoritative arguments, which have been well researched, and should show originality.

Matter and Logic

Material, originality, credibility. The quality and value of the message.

Supporting Material

Examples, colour, word pictures. Relevance to the objective of the speech. Relevance to the audience. The use of humour.

Appropriate Development

Opening, body and peroration, general construction. Timing, research and preparation. Clear message. Arrangement and progression.

b. Impact on the Emotions, or How the Speaker Said It

The adjudicator grades the speech according to the appeal to the emotions of the audience. It should be assessed for its ability to 'stir the emotions and inspire the heart'. How well did the speaker keep the audience attentive and responsive to the enthusiasm and energy of the speech?

Visual Appeal

Appearance, stance and poise, gesture, animation, notes.

Vocal Appeal

Projection, volume, clarity, diction, pitch, pause, pace.

Mood and Empathy

Audience contact and involvement, Drama, sincerity, conviction, Choice of words and phrases, energy.

PROGRESSIVE COMPARISON

The adjudicator must grade or rank the speakers in order of merit. The marks themselves are not important, as they are only used as a means of measuring relative performance. The method most favoured to achieve a consistent standard is to make a progressive comparison.

A simple method of achieving a progressive comparison is to use the first speaker as a benchmark and grade other speakers in comparison with the first. It doesn't matter if your own benchmark is close to 50% or to 70% providing you allow sufficient leeway for the following speakers to receive marks above or below the marks that were first awarded. Remember that the marks themselves are unimportant; it is only the ranking that finally matters.

TIME PENALTIES

The Arthur Garvey Competition has a time limit of 30 seconds before or after the final time has actually expired. Adjudicators should disregard any section of the speech that is beyond the upper time limit allowed, and perhaps regard the speech as not completed.

WINNING SPEECHES

Winning speeches will be found where the speaker has a strong desire to achieve a pre-determined goal, to inform, to persuade, to motivate or to entertain and uses an appropriate technique to achieve that goal. These speeches generally target the people present at the time, creating a better response than speeches that are presented as a broadcast to the world at large.

Winning speeches are also seen to start somewhere and go somewhere for a reason which can be identified. The direction is clear. They have a logical development from the opening sentence to the closing remarks without irrelevant material fogging the way.

Humour may enhance a winning speech. But it should not overpower the speaker's intention of presenting a serious speech of some substance. The exception will be when there is a clear intention by the speaker to entertain only and the audience is invited to go along for the ride.

SPEECH APPRAISAL

A speech is judged as a whole. When judging, the adjudicator should sense whether the speech has:

a) A SENSE OF OCCASION

Were the speaker and the speech equal to the occasion, and to the size, the mood and the expectation of the audience?

b) 2. CLARITY OF PURPOSE

Could the audience follow the speech to the point where the speaker's thoughts were clearly understood and appreciated in their correct context?

c) 3. APPROPRIATE MATERIAL

Did the speaker speak to the subject, and was the material relevant, of sufficient depth and orientation to satisfy the perceived expectations of the audience?

d) 4 LOGICAL CONSTRUCTION

Did the speech have a central theme with an interesting opening, a logical development and memorable close? Was it rounded off in the time allotted?

e) 5. MATCHING DELIVERY

Was the speech audible, in 'speaking' language rather than 'reading' language? Was it delivered at the 'listening' speed of the audience? Did the speaker's expressions, gestures, movements and voice make the words 'live'?

f) 6. AUDIENCE APPEAL

Was the speaker convincing as a person worth listening to by appearance, manner and strength of message; did the speaker have empathy with the audience?

WHAT SHOULD THE ADJUDICATOR LOOK FOR;

Was it a fully contained well structured speech with a good opening, a body development, and a memorable peroration? Was there a message?

Were there any distracting or unnecessary inclusions?

Was there evidence of research?

Was it persuasive or instructive or entertaining in the way it was presented?

What was the audience reaction?

These and other questions as well as the details on the adjudication sheet will help the adjudicator to come to the right conclusion.

SECTION THREE

Sample adjudicators marking form

Guidelines for Adjudicators

<p>Important Information The speakers are ranked according to the <u>total</u>. The highest mark is ranked 1, the next 2 etc. Speakers must not be given an equal ranking. The rankings of all adjudicators are totalled. The winner is the speaker with the lowest total of rankings.</p>	<p>Impact on the Intellect Judge the ability of the speaker to achieve a perceived purpose with logical and sequential theme development. Consider; Material: Scope, accuracy, clarity, relevance, logic, adequacy. Arrangement: Introduction, body, conclusion, general construction. Progression: Cohesion, timing, logic, development, evidence of research and preparation. Language: Words, sentences, phrases, grammar, word pictures, figures of speech. Appeal: Imagination, originality, wit, illustrations, highlights.</p>	<p>Impact on the Emotions Judge the ability of the speaker to affect the audience with the presentation of the material. Consider; Visual Impact: Appearance, stance, gesture, notes, use of eyes, visual aids. Vocal Impact: Quality, clarity, variety, volume, pitch, pause, pace, pronunciation. Empathy: Contact, understanding, acceptance, audience involvement. Mood: Feeling, emphasis, enthusiasm, sincerity, speaker involvement. Appeal: Credible, entertaining, memorable, motivating, convincing.</p>
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Adjudication Sheet

Speaker	Topic	Impact on Intellect 50	Impact on Emotion 50	Total	Ranking