

4-H Public Speaking Guidelines



Public Speaking Age Levels (as of January 1, of the current 4-H year):

- Junior: 9 – 12
- Intermediate: 13 – 15
- Senior: 16 – 21
- Each member should be asked to prepare either a speech or demonstration on any topic of his/her choice. The speech must be prepared by the 4-H member. Advice from an adult is permitted, but the work must be the effort of the member. A speech may be entered at only one age level.
- A new speech must be prepared each year. A speech delivered in previous years will be disqualified.
- The length of the speech is not critical. Judges will base their scoring on the time the speaker can hold the interest of the audience, and the depth to which the topic is considered. It is suggested that all speeches exceed two minutes and none exceed ten minutes.
- A member competing in this division may use pictures, posters, slides and/or other audio-visual aids in the speech. These aids must not detract from the speaker and/or the speech. These “illustrated talks” are considered public speaking. Any equipment used must be supplied by the contestant.
- Contestants should be well groomed, neatly dressed, and have good posture.
- Recitation of poetry does not qualify as a public speech; however, a short quote or quotes from a poem as part of the speech are permitted.
- Recitation of a monologue or telling a story written by anyone except the member giving the speech is not permitted.
- Preference will be given to talks developed around the individual's own thoughts, ideas, and interpretations.
- A ‘thank you’ does not constitute an effective ending.

- A member may proceed to county level as a winner in Public Speaking or Demonstrations, but not both in any one year.
- Use of a lectern, podium or microphone will not be permitted at any level of competition. It is appropriate to display posters, etc., on an easel in demonstrations or illustrated talks.
- At the county, regional, and provincial levels, an Introduction and Vote of Thanks Competition will be held at the junior level. Many clubs have the members who placed second and third in junior public speaking at the club level present the introduction and thanks of their club winner at the county level. This is a decision a club must make.
- Clubs may hold Introduction and Vote of Thanks Competitions at the club level to determine their entrants for the county level. Each is ultimately judged separately, i.e. it is not a team competition. Therefore, clubs have the opportunity of sending just their junior speaker or the speaker with either an introducer or thanker to the county level if they don't have members for all three positions.
- One member should not participate in any more than one of the events in this junior competition, i.e., the same member should not present both the introduction and the vote of thanks.
- A member can compete at the provincial level in the same age division two years or more regardless if they win or lose.
- At the provincial level, impromptu talks will be required for seniors. Impromptu talks may also be required at the county and regional levels in the senior division at the discretion of the organizing committees. The impromptu speech has a separate score card marked out of 50 points.