

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF ADJUDICATORS

The adjudicator's primary task is to make judgments about individual speeches and a comparative judgment about all speeches in the competition.

To be able to undertake the task of adjudicating and ranking the speakers, adjudicators must understand:

- a) the principles of speech construction and speech presentation;
- b) the rules of the Rostrum Voice of Youth competition;
- c) the adjudication criteria and be willing to apply the criteria fairly to all contestants;

Adjudicators should be sufficiently familiar with these that they are able to give full attention to the speakers during their presentations.

After listening to and observing each speech, adjudicators must give each contestant a score and make any necessary notes for later use. When the final contestant has spoken, they must determine an order of merit.

What are adjudicators to look for?

The material in a competition speech should be well organised, interesting and engrossing. It should address the topic. But more than that it should enhance the proposition that is being advanced and favour the conclusion that is being urged. Equally importantly, it should make the audience feel involved by touching or adding meaning to some aspect of their lives.

A speech needs to be relevant to the listeners. A fascinating talk on for example 'The Battle of Britain' or 'Albert Einstein' is not to be found effective in a Rostrum Voice of Youth competition unless it is 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, or what we inherit today from these events.

A witty talk by a speaker with natural style and presentation is not to be found effective 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.

Adjudicators face several challenges:

- a) being truly objective;
- b) evaluating a speech as a whole; and
- c) evaluating a range of styles and purposes.

Being objective requires listening to what a speaker is saying and observing how they are saying it and not interpreting it through the filter of the adjudicator's own experience, background, feelings and prejudices.

Involving students aged from 11 to 18 adjudicators can expect that some of their long held views and prejudices may be challenged by a group that may point a finger at the failures of their own generation or have views at serious odds with ones they have adopted throughout their lives.

It is instructive perhaps to look at the reactions to the speech made by 16 year old Greta Thunberg to the United Nations General Assembly in 2019. Those who did not like either her content or tone took to the airwaves to attack. The various positions adopted included that a 16 year old could not have written the speech, that the words were actually written by her parents, that she was a tool of the left and that her aspergers syndrome meant the words could not be trusted. These responses are the result of bias and prejudice not an evaluation of the content of the speech nor of the degree of effectiveness in the way the speech was presented.

Similarly the recent findings announced by the Australian National University, that in research conducted over ten years and involving 11,000 people, they found there was a "negative implicit or unconscious bias against Indigenous Australians across the board".

In a society where our leaders act in ways that polarize views, adjudicators have an increasingly important role to play by remaining objective, evaluating content and delivery untainted by whether the views expressed in a speech match their own.

Adjudicators must evaluate the speech as a whole. The guidance for adjudicators indicates the elements they are tasked to consider in coming to a judgement about a speech's success. In content that includes the material itself, the way it is organised and the use of language while the manner of delivery includes elements such as vocal and visual impact. The adjudicator needs to ask themselves how handling content and delivery contributes to the purpose of the speech and avoid the temptation to concentrate on individual elements of the criteria to the detriment of the whole.

Do not be distracted by the categories of the marking scale, rather than listening to the speech as a whole.

Speakers adopt a range of approaches and have many different objectives for their speeches. This requires that adjudicators compare different types of speeches – oratory, the philosophical speech, the dramatic speech, the humorous speech, the poetic speech or the emotional speech.

There is a view in Rostrum that the success of a speech is in direct proportion to the impact it has on the audience. Any comparative assessment of speeches should therefore be made in terms of the overall effect each speech makes on the hearts and minds of the listeners. Previous guidance has asked adjudicators to measure the effect on the intellect and the effect on emotions. The effect on the intellect was largely anchored in content and the effect on the emotions in delivery. However

most of us will be aware as individuals that words can have a highly emotive context and well crafted gesture and use of the voice can support the delivery of a logical message. Adjudicators need to judge these characteristics in terms of whether the content and delivery of the speaker met the stated purpose of the speech.

Adjudicators need to be aware of the response of the audience to each speaker remembering that engagement by the audience may take a variety of forms from thoughtful through to hilarity and even shame or anger. The question is whether the purpose of the speech was effective.

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.

When evaluating structure:

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 listeners should easily follow the content and the progress of the speech. 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 has the liberty to be more creative.

When evaluating humour:

When evaluating a humorous speech the adjudicator needs to remember that it takes a great deal of mental effort by the competitor to create the right wordplay for humour to be successful. Good marks should be given for the 'matter' content in such a speech. Humorous content may also be used to carry other messages with the speaker using humour to convey a view or seek audience consideration of an issue. In this case the adjudicator needs to consider whether the use of humour was an effective way of meeting this purpose.

When evaluating drama:

The adjudicator needs to remember that it is a speech that has been called for, not a dramatic performance - public speaking not acting. The public speaker is in dialogue with their audience. They need to display the resilience and skill necessary to adjust their delivery in the face of audience response. In listening to a speech we are listening to the person speaking not a character the speaker has chosen to adopt.

When evaluating visual aids:

Visual aids must contribute to the purpose of the speech. If they distract us from the speaker's message then they are ineffective and will reduce the speech's effectiveness. However, when well used they can add to the success of a speech.

Monitoring impact on an audience

A speaker's impact on the audience can be judged by a careful monitoring of the body language and facial expression of audience members.

The Adjudicator must be careful to avoid an unconscious bias in favour of humorous speeches. The appropriate response to humour is laughter and laughter is easily

observed in others because it is both audible and visible. However, an audience may be powerfully moved by a speech which does not employ a great deal of humour, but there may not be any apparent audible response.

Just as wise speakers include in their preparation some time checking the physical aspects of the venue, so a good adjudicator will arrange with the competition organiser or chairman to be seated in the best position possible to facilitate good judgments in this aspect of the adjudication task.

The adjudication

A top competition speech must have substance as well as style. In analysing each speech to determine what makes it succeed or otherwise, we must use an evaluation system that produces a fair comparison of all the competitors and, at the same time, provides a consistent approach between the several adjudicators.

Rostrum requires adjudicators judging Voice of Youth to evaluate participants in two key areas;

- a) **CONTENT** - the ability of the speaker to achieve a perceived purpose by developing a theme logically and sequentially; and
- b) **DELIVERY** - the ability of the speaker to present the material so as to affect the audience.

Criteria have been developed to support an adjudicator's understanding of what they are to consider when coming to a judgement.

CONTENT: possible 50 percent

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

Interest – imagination, originality, wit, illustrations, highlights.

DELIVERY: possible 50 percent

Visual impact – appearance, stance, gesture, notes, use of eyes, aids

Vocal impact – quality, clarity, variety, volume, projection, pitch, use of pauses, pace, pronunciation.

Empathy – contact, understanding, acceptance, audience involvement

Mood – feeling, emphasis, enthusiasm, sincerity, speaker's involvement

Appeal – credible, entertaining, memorable, motivating, convincing

Adjudicators are requested to adhere strictly to the criteria and use the Rostrum Voice of Youth adjudication sheets.

Adjudicators must be careful to evaluate the content and delivery of a speech independently. We need to recall those occasions when we have been subject to brilliant delivery but left wondering afterwards what if anything had been said. Or conversely struggled through poor delivery that forced us to work hard to understand what were really important points.

For example, the speaker with an eloquent flow of words, fine gestures and engaging personality, but with little substance in their subject matter, should not be given more than a fair share of marks for delivery to make up for a lack of content. Such a speaker might be given an assessment of, say 90% of the possible maximum marks for delivery (i.e. $50 \times 0.9 = 45$), plus say, 30% of the maximum marks for content (i.e. $50 \times 0.3 = 15$), a total of 60.

In contrast, a speaker who has average delivery, rating no more than 50% of the maximum, may have material and arrangement worthy of 80% of the available marks for content. That speaker would then score a total of 65 (50×0.5) + (50×0.8).

In coming to a score adjudicators are to evaluate each element, content and delivery, as a whole. The criteria underlying each component are there to guide adjudicators' understanding. They are not to be scored separately.

Use of a microphone – not to be penalised

Students are encouraged to use voice projection. At national level students are given the option of using a microphone but it is not compulsory. Students should not be penalised for using a microphone. The overall effectiveness of the presentation should be considered.

Time penalties

The Rostrum Voice of Youth competition allows a tolerance of 30 seconds over or under the allocated time before penalties are imposed. The penalties applied are at the discretion of the adjudicators who should disregard any section of a speech that is beyond the maximum time allowed and regard the speech as not completed. Similarly, a speech which does not meet the minimum time requirement should also be regarded as not completed. Poor timing indicates poor preparation.

ALLOCATING MARKS AND DETERMINING THE FINAL SCORE

Scoring is a means to the end of determining an order of merit among the speakers in a competition. The use of agreed criteria by adjudicators provides a basis for a consistent approach to scoring and one which helps to minimise the margin for human error.

Scoring though is not an end in itself. It is useful for assessing only those aspects of a speech or its presentation which can be more or less objectively measured. The intangibles of a creative work - for example, the effect it has on you - cannot so easily be measured.

One approach to scoring involves giving the first speaker in a competition a score, often between 65 and 85, which serves as a benchmark for subsequent speakers. If the first speech is clearly deficient or, conversely, outstanding, the adjudicator should nonetheless give a mark which reflects this. Each successive speaker is then assessed as being better than or not as good as the first, in each of the various elements. It is a good idea for adjudicators to make a note of the points which influence their judgement, particularly those which merit extra marks or those which lose marks. A system of pluses or minuses on a worksheet is sometimes used.

Adjudicators should always complete their scoring for a particular speech, in particular, making a judgment about the speech as a whole, before the next speech starts. They should then take sufficient time to see how the score they have just given relates to those given to previous speakers and whether the numerical intervals between them are appropriate.

As systems of adjudication in public speaking tend, because of the recency of impression, to favour the later speakers, adjudicators should go back and re-mark the earlier speakers, in order to obtain a fair balance. After all, their task is to separate the fine differences between the speakers in the competition and to allocate a total mark to each speaker, which, in the end should reflect their thinking as to the merit of each speaker as a whole.

They should continually ask themselves, "Is this 65% speaker really not as good as the earlier one to whom I have given 67%?"

Adjudicators should, after each speech, take their time (but not waste time) over this aspect, and not be pressured by the Chairman. They should make sure, too, that no two contestants are given the same mark. The amount of time available in the short notice section is limited to ensure all finalists have the same amount of preparation time. Finally, they must remember that their overall assessment of each competitor should be the end result of their analysis of the parts, otherwise their ranking will be the result of emotion rather than judgement.

Where a competition is in two unequal parts as in Rostrum Voice of Youth, current practice for determining the final score takes two alternative forms:

One is to allocate a possible hundred marks for the prepared speech, and seventy for the short notice speech, thus the latter accounts for about 41% of the final score.

The other is to mark both parts out of a possible 100 and to scale the mark for the short notice speech to a score out of 70. This can be done quite easily by converting the mark given for the latter out of 100 using the following table. This is the preferable approach, as it ensures that the differences in the weighing of the two parts of the competition are preserved.

Raw scores /100 and adjusted scores /70
Adjusted score = score out of 70

Raw	Adj								
51	35.7	61	42.7	71	49.7	81	56.7	91	63.7
52	36.4	62	43.4	72	50.4	82	57.4	92	64.4
53	37.1	63	44.1	73	51.1	83	58.1	93	65.1
54	37.8	64	44.8	74	51.8	84	58.8	94	65.8
55	38.5	65	45.5	75	52.5	85	59.5	95	66.5
56	39.2	66	46.2	76	53.2	86	60.2	96	67.2
57	39.9	67	46.9	77	53.9	87	60.9	97	67.9
58	40.6	68	47.6	78	54.6	88	61.6	98	68.6
59	41.3	69	48.3	79	55.3	89	62.3	99	69.3
60	42.0	70	49.0	80	56.0	90	63.0	100	70

The two scores – one out of 100, for the prepared speech and one out of 70 for the short notice speech are then added to give the total score and determine the final ranking.

DETERMINING THE RANK ORDER

After the last speaker's marks have been allotted, the outcome carefully reviewed, and any final adjustments made, the order of merit of the competitors can be established. In the Rostrum Voice of Youth National Final where only three placegetters are to be announced, unless there are only five contestants in which case only the first and second placegetters are announced, the first three contestants should be ranked 1, 2 and 3, and the remaining contestants each ranked 4. This procedure is designed to ensure that an aberrant score given by one adjudicator does not inappropriately influence the final decision.

The rank order of the contestants is the objective, and the marking system is merely the tool used to achieve this end. However, checking the additions of marks is essential. It should be noted that, since adjudicators are using their own scale of marks in the elements, it is not valid for the Chairman of Adjudicators or tellers to add individual marks given by the respective adjudicators later to resolve a tie.

The Chairman of Adjudicators or appointed tellers will add the placings given by the individual adjudicators to determine the final order of merit.

Where tellers are used they will collect the ranking sheet from the adjudicators and determine the final result

Information about the results is to be kept confidential and not discussed with anyone at the final or anytime later. At the National level the chairman of adjudicators or the chairman of tellers will hand the tally sheets and the final result sheet to the National Coordinator, at State level to the Zone Coordinator and at Regional level to the Regional Coordinator.