

• **ENTRIES.** As many as THREE students from COMBINED grade levels 7 and 8 may be entered in the MODERN ORATORY District Contest from each school.

* Districts may elect to allow up to 3 students per grade level from each district, but speech sections must contain a mix of 7th and 8th graders, and ONLY the top 2 from the final round advance to State.

• **ADVANCING TO STATE.** First and second place winners will advance to State. The third place winner will be the alternate. (See page 8 for complete rules. See page 109 for an abbreviated chart for contest administration.)

• **NATURE OF THE CONTEST.** The Modern Oratory contest provides opportunities for students to explore the use of the voice and body in speaking situations; to organize ideas; to prepare and deliver a researched speech; and to develop self-confidence.

In Modern Oratory, the contestant will **select one of the topics listed for the current year**, determine the critical issues in the topic, and determine and acknowledge both pro and con points, citing support discovered in the research. Students will decide which side they will defend and support that side with additional evidence.

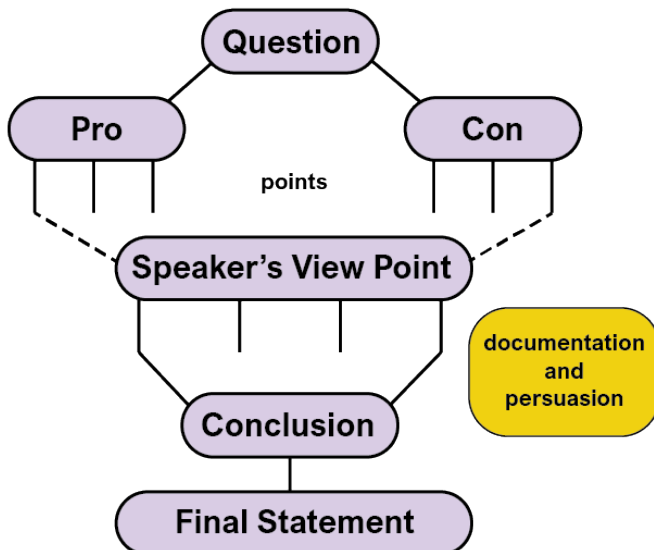
The maximum time limit for each speech is **six (6) minutes**. There is no minimum time limit. Students who exceed the allotted six minutes shall be disqualified. Better speeches are at least three minutes in length, however. A “30-seconds left card” should be held up by the director/timekeeper to indicate time left in speech.

The format of the speech should include . . .

- 1) an introduction;
- 2) statement of the question;
- 3) development of both pro and con points accompanied by documentation;
- 4) statement of the position the writer will defend;
- 5) a summary and conclusion with a final statement.

After writing and editing the speech, the oration in its final form **MUST** be delivered from memory without notes or props (items held in hand or touched) before a live audience. (Audience required)

Along with the skills of analysis, research, note-taking, documentation, evaluation and decision making come those



2025 – 2026 MODERN ORATORY TOPICS

Contestants must select one of the following topics for developing the oration.

1. Do social media influencers possess too much power?
2. Should more Texas schools adopt a four-day school week to improve student performance?
3. Is mental health as important as physical health?
4. Does technology have a positive or negative effect on relationships?
5. How important is it to preserve natural lands in the United States?

of delivery and the skill of memorization. Because so few situations create a format for the development of the skill of memorization, this contest might provide just that incentive. Study the diagram of the contest development diagram below:

Appropriate Gestures: Just as in all PSIA speech contests, responsive use of the body (i.e., spontaneous changes in posture, gesture, and place-to-place movement) are permissible. However, this active use of the body should:

- (A) be appropriate to the demands of the selection;
- (B) be a natural outgrowth from the literature to be performed;
- (C) not call attention to itself; and
- (D) be limited in scope.

The judge's opinion in this matter is final.

Appropriate Dress: Wear nice clothing that does not appear to be a school uniform. Young men with shirts and ties and young ladies in dresses or pant suits show respect and credibility for your prepared speech.

• **SECTIONING.** Schools should enter their strongest student in the first position when registering in AMC. At District, contestants from the same school will be placed in different sections whenever possible. At State, contestants advancing from the same District will be assigned to different sections whenever possible. Once the speaking order has been set for a tournament, it may not be changed without permission from the District or State Meet Director.

• **WHAT HAPPENS IN THE CONTEST.** 1) The contest director will announce the time and place that contestants and one adult should report for evaluation pick-up and/or awards presentation. 2) As roll is called and substitutes OR alternates are checked in, each contestant will be given a card on which the letter of his/her speaking order is written, in accordance to the Contestant Roster (**Do NOT change speaking order.**); 3) The contest director will call speaker A into the room, either from the hall or a holding room. 4) The contestant will present his/her speech before an audience, and either one or

three judges. When only 30 seconds are left in the allotted time for a speaker, the contest director, who also serves as the timekeeper, will hold up a “30 seconds left” card in order to assist the contestant in stopping the speech prior to the end of the time limit. After speaking, **the contestant will exit the room to the holding area. Judges may take up to 90 seconds to complete evaluation.**

• **ADVANCING TO THE FINAL ROUND.** If there are more than 9 students in the competition, two or more sections of the contest (preliminary round) will be held. The top ranked contestants from each section (top 3 if 2 sections/ top 2 if 3 sections) will advance to the final round. Contestants may

perform the same speech at all levels of competition at both district and state, but they may also present a different speech.

• **POSTING THE PRELIMINARY ROUND.**

After judges have made their decisions in the preliminary rounds, contestants pick up their evaluations at the time and place designated on the schedule. At this time the names of the contestants advancing to the final round will be announced in random order by the Contest Director and posted in random order by tab room officials in AMC and on a designated bulletin board. This document will provide the speaking order for the final round.

2025

MODERN ORATORY

2026

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR COACHES & CONTEST DIRECTORS

• **PREPARATION FOR CONTEST.** Read and follow all instructions provided in the “Information Pertaining to All Contests” section of the *PSIA Academic Handbook*. Observe and practice with students all rules and procedures delineated in the “Instructions to the Contestant” and in the “Checklist for Contest Directors” and the “Checklist for JUDGES.” Preparation for the MODERN ORATORY Contest should include instruction in organizational speech delivery. There are no study materials to order.

Teachers/Coaches will find that Modern Oratory provides participants with an opportunity to:

- 1) formulate ideas;
- 2) define problems;
- 3) research the issues;
- 4) express ideas effectively;
- 5) recognize the rights of others to have differing viewpoints;
- 6) formulate opinions based on solid documentation;
- 7) write multiple-paragraph compositions incorporating outside information with documentation;
- 8) write persuasive discourse of a variety of types;
- 9) revise written work for content, organization, topic development, appropriate transition, clarity of language, appropriate word and sentence choice, according to the purpose and audience for which a piece is written.

Teachers and parents may assist the student in Modern Oratory BUT SHOULD NOT WRITE THE SPEECH FOR THE STUDENT. Middle school students have amazing talent, but it takes good teachers to help it all come together. **Students are not allowed to use A.I. in the creation of their speech.**

• **DRESS CODE:** Contestants are expected to wear regular clothing without school logos. Instruct students to dress comfortably, but avoid wearing shorts, short dresses, cut offs, or any article of clothing that would diminish the quality of the presentation. Although NOT a disqualification for wearing inappropriate clothing, justification for a lower ranking should be expected.

• **PERSONNEL NEEDED FOR CONTEST.**

1. *Contest Director/Timekeeper.* May be a knowledgeable coach of contestants in the contest.
2. *Two Assistant Contest Directors/Hall Monitors.* Should be knowledgeable coaches or parents from different schools, other than that of the director.
3. *Judge(s).* One or preferably three judges may judge a section of 9 or fewer contestants. Judges should be experienced in speech or language arts studies or other profession who use logic, reasoning, and persuasion in their normal occupation (especially lawyers, doctors, detectives, programmers, etc.) and each should have had experience judging at least three speech contests (in the classroom is minimal) prior to being selected to judge at a district or state tournament.

• **EVALUATION AND JUDGES’ BALLOT.** Coaches and teachers should use the Modern Oratory Evaluation Sheet and the Judges’ Ballot included in the *PSIA Academic Handbook* to assist in preparing contestants for competition. The preliminary round posting form is produced with AMC, and the “Ranking Procedure for Speech Contests” is found immediately following the Impromptu Speaking section.



PRIVATE SCHOOLS INTERSCHOLASTIC ASSOCIATION



Modern Oratory

Individual Evaluation Sheet

SPEAKER ID: _____

(Contestant ID Label to be placed here AFTER judging)

TOPIC: _____ SECTION # or FINAL ROUND #: _____

The contestant selects a topic from a list provided in the *PSIA Academic Handbook* prior to contest. Contestant researches and develops his/her speech. The contestant should define the problem, show the pros and cons of the issue, and reach and support a conclusion. The speech is to be up to six minutes in length and delivered from memory. The judge should use the following criteria in evaluating and ranking the contestant. Check (✓) appropriate box indicating your judgment of the student's expertise. Comments should be constructive and supportive, but constructive criticism will be most helpful for the contestants. Contestants are 7th & 8th grade students combined for competition.

COMMENTS

I. DELIVERY

	Needs Work	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Superior
Did the speaker demonstrate effective communication? Comment:					
Was the speaker able to enlist and hold the interest of the audience? Comment:					
Were gestures limited to the scope of the oration and not over dramatized? Comment:					

II. ORGANIZATION (Notes must not be used in the presentation.)

	Needs Work	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Superior
Did the speaker have an appropriate introduction? Comment:					
Did he/she clearly define the problem and clearly state both sides of the issue? Comment:					
Did he/she reach and support a conclusion? Comment:					
Appropriate dress (no costumes or school uniforms)? Comment:					

III. CONTENT

	Needs Work	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Superior
Did the student analyze and develop the topic, giving both sides of the issue? Comment:					

IV. OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS -

	Needs Work	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Superior
Comment:					

Make copies for each judge for the number of contestants in each section.

Judge's Printed Name _____ Judge's Signature _____

PRIVATE SCHOOLS INTERSCHOLASTIC ASSOCIATION



MODERN ORATORY



Grades 7 and 8
(combined)

Standards for Evaluation and Ballot

Contestants select a topic from the list provided in the *PSIA Academic Handbook*, research and develop the speech. The contestant should define the problem, show the pros and cons of the issue, and reach and support a conclusion. The speech is to be three to six minutes in length and delivered from memory. The judge should use the following criteria in evaluating and ranking the contestant. Comments should be constructive and supportive, but constructive criticism will be appreciated.

- I. **DELIVERY** — Did the speaker demonstrate effective communication? Was the speaker able to enlist and hold the interest of the audience? Were gestures limited to the scope of the oration and not over-dramatized?
- II. **ORGANIZATION** — Did the student have an appropriate introduction? Did he/she clearly define the problem and show both sides of the issue? Did he/she reach and support a conclusion? (Notes must not be used in the presentation.)
- III. **CONTENT** — Did the student analyze the topic giving both sides of the issue?
- IV. **OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS** —

SECTION #: _____

(Do not change speaker order without authorization from the Meet Director)

SPEAKER ORDER & Contestant ID #	RANK Given by judge	TOPIC (Abbreviate as necessary)	FOR CONTEST DIRECTOR USE ONLY: (If needed for identification) CITY / SCHOOL / CONTESTANT NAME
A			
B			
C			
D			
E			
F			
G			
H			
I			

Make copies for each judge in each section.

Judge's Signature _____

Judge's Printed Name _____