SPEECH JUDGE, ROOM CHAIR
GUIDELINES

“Commitment to Quality Education for All”
The Academic Decathlon is a ten-event scholastic competition for teams of high school students. The ten events include comprehensive written exams in: Art, Economics, Language and Literature, Mathematics, Music, Social Science and Science. In addition, students deliver both a prepared and impromptu speech, write an essay and communicate through a conversational interview. Students also participate in the culminating team event, open to the public, known as the Super Quiz.

The Ventura County Office of Education (VCOE) inaugurated the first Ventura County Academic Decathlon in 1982 to promote learning and academic excellence through teamwork among students of all achievement levels and has continued to coordinate this competition on an annual basis. Ventura County teams have enjoyed tremendous success in the Academic Decathlon, winning both state and national championships.

A particularly unique aspect of the Academic Decathlon format is that it is designed to include students from all academic backgrounds. A team consists of nine full-time students from the ninth through twelfth grades of the same high school. Each nine-member team is comprised of three students whose grade point average falls into the "A" category (Honor students), three students in the "B" category (Scholastic students), and three students in the "C" or below category (Varsity students). All students compete in all ten events. Students in each category compete only against students in that category.

Fostering academic excellence is a cooperative education effort. Without the help and support of our sponsors, volunteers, parents and teachers, this premier scholastic competition would not be such a great success. On behalf of my office and the Ventura County Academic Decathlon, I thank you for your participation and hard work, and look forward to a fun, successful and rewarding competition.

Sincerely,

John E. Tarkany
Ventura County Office of Education
Day 1 Competition Schedule:

8:00 to 8:45 a.m. Judges, Room Chairs check in. Breakfast served.

9:00 to 10:00 a.m. Orientations for Speech Judges, Speech Room Chairs (in separate rooms)

10:15 a.m. Interview Event begins

10:30 a.m. Speech Event begins

12:15 to 1:15 p.m. BREAK and LUNCH for Decathletes and coaches (Some Decathletes will start lunch later, due to their speech and interview schedule)

1:15 p.m. Competition resumes

4:00 p.m. Day 1 Competition concludes (Conclusion time is approximate; length of day is contingent upon # of participants)
**Objective**
To create a professional, yet warm, environment for Decathletes to complete the Speech portion of the Academic Decathlon competition by judging all Prepared and Impromptu presentations in a uniform, unbiased manner throughout the day and keeping confidential thereafter the scoring results of all Decathletes’ performances.

**General Format**
A group of 2-3 Judges and one Room Chair will comprise a Speech judging team.

Judges will use Scantrons to evaluate each Decathlete’s Prepared and Impromptu Speeches.

The Room Chair will be responsible for (a) setting out new materials before each Decathlete enters the room; (b) welcoming and dismissing them; (c) reviewing for the benefit of each student the agenda for their presentations; and (d) distributing, collecting from the Judges, checking, collating and placing each set of completed Scantrons in a designated tray (see below); (e) addressing any scoring discrepancies and/or team member efficiency concerns. (f) In addition, s/he will be responsible for timing each speech and keeping the Judges on schedule.

**Speech Room Set-up**

**Time Rules**
Each Decathlete is given a maximum of **10** minutes in the Speech room. The Room Chair is responsible for maintaining the time schedule. A total of **15** minutes is allocated to hear and score each Decathlete’s speeches and then prepare for the next presenter.

- 1½ minutes  Introductions, review of Prepared Speech guidelines
- 3½ to 4 min.  Prepared Speech
- 1 minute  Review of Impromptu Speech guidelines
- 1 minute  Impromptu Speech preparation by Decathlete
- 1½ to 2 min.  Impromptu Speech
- ½ minute  Decathlete says goodbye to the Judges, exits the room
- 5 minutes  Complete scoring, place Scantrons in tray for collection, prepare for next presenter
**General Guidelines**

- Cellphones must be OFF at all times while in the Speech rooms.
- Know where the restrooms are located. Unless unavoidable, restroom breaks should be restricted to the lunch hour and if applicable, when there is a No Show Decathlete.
- Decathlete scoring results must not be shared with anyone other than the event coordinators.
- Judges and the Room Chair should not make any statement to a Decathlete that would imply or convey an opinion on the outcome of that person’s performances.
- After the completion of each speech, the Judges and Room Chair should applaud the student’s performance, regardless of the outcome.
- The Room Chair and/or Judge should report any speech of a disturbing nature and the name of the Decathlete involved to an event coordinator during the lunch hour or at the day’s end.
- Discrepancies in the execution of the role of Judge or Room Chair that cannot be resolved among the parties involved should be reported immediately to an event coordinator.
- The Room Chair must address persistent scoring discrepancies between Judges greater than a two-point spread in each category early in the day of the competition. If the Room Chair is unable to garner a general consensus among the Judges on how to score appropriately, s/he should call on an event coordinator for a resolution.
- At the end of the day, it is hoped you found this experience rewarding. Your help is invaluable. Pat yourself on the back for a job well done. Thank you!

**SPEECH JUDGE GUIDELINES**

**Scoring**

- Each Judge is assigned an ID number (1, 2 or 3) at the beginning of the day and should use Scantrons bearing that same ID number for all Decathletes throughout the competition.
- Scantrons should be filled out by Judges only between the Prepared and Impromptu Speeches and after the Decathlete has left the room. Keep your Scantron face down at all other times. Make certain all of each Scantron are completed, including the No Penalty/Penalty section.
- Judges must remain unbiased by their own opinions when listening to each Decathlete’s speeches and score the presentations on the merits of the material used to substantiate his/her point of view.
- A Judge must abstain from scoring any Decathlete known to him/her and write “KNOWN TO ME” in the upper right-hand corner of that presenter’s Scantron.
- Write “NO SHOW” in the upper right-hand corner of the Scantron intended for a Decathlete who does not appear in the room to give his/her speeches.
- The Prepared Speech must be completed within 3½-4 minutes, the Impromptu Speech within 1½-2 minutes. The Decathlete should be penalized for being even a second under or over those timeframes — no exceptions!
- Judges should score each Decathlete’s performances independently, though discussion among judges after scoring is allowed.
- Decathletes should refrain from divulging the school they represent, but must not be penalized if that information is disclosed.
- The Prepared and Impromptu Speeches should not be reading exercises. Decathletes may refer to, but not read from, notes during their presentations without penalty unless the notes source proves to be distracting for the Judges (i.e. gazing constantly at index cards, inappropriate gestures with the cards in hand).
- Any suspicion of plagiarism should be reported to the Room Chair, but not reflected in the Decathlete’s performance score.
ROOM CHAIR GUIDELINES, SCRIPTS

- Any Decathlete who arrives 10 minutes or later should be directed to his/her coach and an event coordinator.
- Suspicion of plagiarism or use of a speech from another venue should be reported to an event coordinator.

Before the First Decathlete:
- Make certain everyone’s cell phones are turned OFF.
- Place 1-2 pencils, blank index cards and the first sheet of three questions face down on the Impromptu Speech prep desk.
- Confirm that your stopwatch is working properly and how to use it, and organize the timing cards on your desk.
- Give the Judges Scantrons and ask them to write their name at the top [see SPEECH JUDGE SCORING GUIDELINES Scantron at the back of this packet]. Make sure each Judge uses Scantrons with his/her correlating Judge ID number consistently throughout the competition.
- Verify that the name of the Decathlete on your schedule appears on the Judges’ Scantrons.
- Ask the Judges to be seated.
- Go out to the hallway and if a Decathlete is awaiting you, shake his/her hand and say:

**Script for Introductions, Instructions, Prepared Speech:**

1. “Hello, my name is ______________________, the Room Chair for your presentations. Welcome. You are ______________________ [state their name or if you cannot pronounce it, ask him/her to say it]? Great! Please come in the room and approach the Judges to introduce yourself.”

After the introductions, ask the Decathlete to stand with you behind the tape line on the floor in the room. Then state:

2. “The area behind the tape on the floor defines the space you are encouraged to use for your speeches. You will not be penalized, however, if you inadvertently step over it. You are to give your Prepared Speech of 3½ to 4 minutes first. Please understand that if you are even one second under or over that timeframe, the Judges will reflect that in your performance score. I will hold up a card to show you when you have one minute remaining [at 3 minutes], 30 seconds [at 3:30] and if necessary, when no time remains [at 4 minutes] (at which point you will be allowed to complete your sentence and then must stop).”

**NOTE:** Hold each time card up in front of you for a maximum of 10 seconds. If the student fails to look at the card within that timeframe, the onus for that oversight is on him/her (not you). Do not wave the cards in an effort to get the Decathlete’s attention.

“Please wait for me to be seated. I will then ask if you are ready to begin and once you answer affirmatively, I will say ‘OK, Begin.’ At that point I will start the stopwatch, and you should commence speaking.”

“Do you have any questions?” [If applicable, answer any questions the Decathlete might ask.]

Once you are seated, with the stopwatch in hand, then say:

3. “Are you ready? OK, begin.” and start the stopwatch. Once the timing of a speech has begun, the stopwatch should not be stopped and restarted.

At the conclusion of the Prepared Speech, you and the Judges should applaud the Decathlete’s efforts. Then get up and standing next to the Decathlete, say:
Script for Impromptu Speech:

1. “Your next presentation will be an Impromptu Speech of 1½ -2 minutes. Again, if your speech fails short or exceeds that timeframe, there will be a scoring penalty. I will hold up a card to show when you have one minute remaining [at 1 minute], 30 seconds [at 1:30] and if necessary, when no time remains [at 2 minutes] (at which point you can complete your sentence and then must stop).

In a minute, I am going to ask you to be seated at that desk [point to it]. There is a sheet of three questions face down there. After I sit down, I will instruct you to turn over that sheet and when you do so, I will start the stopwatch. You will then have one minute to decide which question you want to address in your Impromptu Speech and contemplate what you are going to say. You can make notations, if you’d like, on the index cards provided for your use and then refer to them during your speech without penalty.

After your one-minute prep period ends, I will ask you to read for us the question you have selected and then ask you to return to this spot for your Impromptu Speech.

As before, please wait for me to be seated, ask if you are ready to begin and then once you answer affirmatively, I will say ‘OK, Begin.’ At that point I will start the stopwatch, and you should commence speaking.

Do you have any questions? [If applicable, answer any questions the Decathlete might ask.] Please be seated.”

Once you are seated, with the stopwatch in hand, then say:

2. “Are you ready? OK, begin.” and start the stopwatch. Do not stop and restart the stopwatch!

REMINDER: The Judges can use this one-minute time period to start filling in the Decathlete’s Scantron. Make certain the Judges have turned their Scantrons over again before the student stands to complete his/her Impromptu Speech.

At the conclusion of the one-minute preparatory period, say:

3. “Please read for us the question you will be addressing in your Impromptu Speech” and say, “Thank you” once that has been done. Wait for the student to return to the Decathlete area behind the tape. Then say:


At the conclusion of the Impromptu Speech, you and the Judges should applaud the Decathlete’s efforts.

5. “May I have your index cards, please?” (No cards with notations should be taken out the room.)

6. “Feel free to approach the Judges, if you’d like, to say goodbye.” and then see the Decathlete to the door, saying something like, “It was a pleasure meeting you” or “Have a good rest of the day.” If the next Decathlete on your schedule is waiting in the hallway, let that person know you will be back in a few minutes.

Once the Decathlete has left the room and the door has closed:

- Inform the Judges of any time penalties or no penalty for the Prepared and/or Impromptu Speech.
- While they are finishing filling out the Scantrons, put a new sheet of questions face down on the Impromptu Speech prep desk and if needed, another pencil and blank index cards.
- Collect the Scantrons from the Judges. Make certain all sections have been completed.
- If there is a significant difference in scoring among the Judges, discuss the discrepancy(ies) and try to reason with the party(ies) involved to modify their scoring choice(s) to within two points of that of their colleague(s).
- Put the completed Scantrons in the tray by the door.
- Distribute the next Decathlete’s Scantrons to the Judges.

REMINDER: You and the Judges should adhere to this script/presentation format for each subsequent Decathlete.
# U.S. Academic Decathlon Speech Evaluation Form

**Directions:**
- Use No. 2 pencil only.
- Please:
  1. Make dark marks.
  2. Erase completely to change.
  3. Enter: Student's name and number.
  4. Mark 1 student per form.

## Prepared Speech

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<th>Speech Development</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
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<td>• Interest</td>
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## Impromptu Speech

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## Speech Penalties

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<th>Timing Violation</th>
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<th>PREPARED ONLY</th>
<th>IMPROMPTU ONLY</th>
<th>NO PENALTY</th>
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1-a) Make certain the Decathlete listed here is the person you are judging.
1-b) Write your name.
1-c) Confirm that the Judge ID number is yours.
2) Write "No Show" or "Know Student" here, when applicable. A Judge must not score a student who he/she knows.
A-G) Use the score of "10" only for exceptional, virtually flawless speeches.
SCANTRON CATEGORY DESCRIPTIONS

**Prepared Speech:**

a. **Speech Development** – The speech should be structured around a purpose/message that includes an opening, body and summary.

b. **Effectiveness** – Effectiveness is determined by whether the Decathlete voices his/her ideas so the Judges understand them, stay engaged and are impacted by the conclusion.

c. **Correctness** – The grammar used should keep the Judges focused on what the Decathlete says, not how it is said.

d. **Appropriateness** – The vocabulary should be relevant to the topic and tailored to the audience hearing it. Language should promote a clear understanding of thoughts and should be consistent with the Academic Decathlon competition objectives. *The speech should not be a reading exercise.*

e. **Speech Value** – The speech should make a contribution to the Judges’ thinking with impactful ideas and/or humor.

f. **Voice** – Vocal variety (flexibility in pitch, articulation, pace and volume) should be used to enhance the listening appeal and effectiveness of the presentation.

g. **Non-verbal** – The Decathlete’s appearance and attire should be clean, neat and business-like. Body language should support key points with gestures, facial expressions and body positioning. The speaker’s demeanor should reflect confidence and a “command of the stage”. *Props are prohibited.*

**Impromptu Speech:**

Content - (see A, C above)

Delivery - (see D, E, F, G above)

Overall Effectiveness – (see B above)