



Prepared Public Speaking

Updates

Below is a summary of updates to the Prepared Public Speaking LDE Handbook for the 2026-2027 cycle.

HANDBOOK UPDATE:

No changes

Purpose

The Tennessee FFA Prepared Public Speaking Leadership Development Event is designed to develop leadership, communication, and citizenship skills by providing member participation in agricultural public speaking activities.

Event Rules

General

- Participation will be limited to the top two participants from each region.
- FFA official dress is required for this event.
- Manuscripts and presentations must be on a current subject of an agricultural nature, which may include agribusiness, animal systems, plant systems, environmental services, food products and processing, natural resource systems, biotechnology systems and power, and structural and technical systems.
- Participants shall submit a Statement of Authenticity at the time of manuscript submission, verifying that the manuscript results from the participant's work. A sample Statement of Authenticity is provided below:

"I certify that all materials presented here are of my creation and that any work adopted from other sources is duly cited and referenced as such." — signature

Manuscript

- Upload manuscripts in PDF format by the designated deadline, as communicated by Tennessee FFA state staff. Late submissions will be assessed a penalty of 20 points (10% of available manuscript points) by the judges scoring the manuscripts. Any document that is submitted more than one week late will be scored at a 0.

Manuscript requirements

- Formatted to fit 8 1/2 x 11-inch paper, double-spaced with a 1-inch margin.
- Cover page includes the speech title, participant's name, state, and year.
- 12-point size, using Times New Roman, Cambria, Arial or Calibri font.
- References and in-text citations documented.
- A reference list at the end of the manuscript, which provides the information necessary for a reader to locate and retrieve any source cited in the body of the manuscript. Each source cited in the manuscript should appear in the reference list; likewise, each entry in the reference list should be cited in the manuscript text.
- Manuscripts not meeting these guidelines will be penalized, per the Manuscript Content and Composition Rubric.
- A signed Statement of Authenticity.

Presentation

- Speeches should be a minimum of six minutes in length and a maximum of eight minutes. Participants will be penalized one point per second on each judge's score sheet for being under six or over eight minutes. No time warnings will be given for the presentation section. Immediately after the speech is presented, the participant will be allowed five additional minutes to be asked questions relating to their speech and/or manuscript content.
- Participants are expected to deliver their presentation in a way that is consistent with their manuscript. Major deviations between the oral presentation and the manuscript should be avoided.
- Time for the presentation starts when the participant utters the first word and ends when the participant concludes the presentation.
- Time for the question-and-answer section begins when the participant starts the first answer to the first question. When five minutes have elapsed, the timekeeper will call "**TIME**," at which time the participant should immediately cease speaking, and should a judge be asking a question when "**TIME**" is called, the judge will stop the question.

Event Format

Manuscript

- Manuscripts will be submitted, with the signed Statement of Authenticity, at a time and in a manner designated by Tennessee FFA state staff.
- Manuscripts will be judged before the event.

Presentation

- Event officials will randomly determine the speaking order and ensure each participant is introduced to the judges and observers before the presentation begins.
- Participants will be permitted to use notes while speaking; however, deductions in scoring may be made if it detracts from the effectiveness of the presentation.
- No props of any sort are allowed. Participants will receive a zero (0) score on the presentation and questions for using a prop. A prop is “a portable or movable object the speaker uses to benefit or enhance the oral presentation.”
- Presentations will be given in a room typically large enough for approximately 100 observers. The participants will be able to view the room before their presentation.
- Typically, there will be three judges in the finals hall.
- No prompter will be provided during the participant’s speech presentation. Help or assistance to the participant from the audience or observers during the presentation is prohibited.
- The judges will be furnished with a copy of each participant’s manuscript to formulate questions to be asked to the participant during the question-and-answer section.
- Judges will be asked to use the entire five minutes for questions/answers.

Scoring/Judging

The manuscripts will be individually scored before the event, without collaboration, by up to three qualified individuals using the official Manuscript Content and Composition rubric. Manuscript scores will be averaged and supplied to the judges after scoring the oral presentation.

At the time of the event, each presentation judge, without collaboration with others, will use the official Presentation and Questions rubric to score each participant on the presentation of the speech and response to questions.

When all participants have finished speaking, each judge will total the score on the manuscript, presentation and response to questions for each participant, deducting any applicable penalties.

The judges’ rankings of each participant shall then be added, and the winner will be that participant whose total ranking is the lowest. Other placings will be determined in the same manner (low-rank method of selection).

Activities	Points
Manuscript	200
Presentation	500
Response to questions	300
Total Points	1,000

Tiebreakers

Ties will be broken based on the greatest number of low ranks. Participants' low ranks will be counted, and the participant with the greatest number of low ranks will be declared the winner.

If a tie still exists, the judges will rank the participants' responses to questions. The participant with the lowest rank in response to questions will be declared the winner.

The participants' raw scores will be totaled if a tie still exists. The participant with the greatest total of raw points will be declared the winner.

References

The following list of references is not intended to be all-inclusive. Other sources may be utilized, and participants are encouraged to use the best instructional materials available. Participants should use discretion when selecting website references by only using reputable, proven sites. The following list contains references that may prove helpful during event preparation. The most current edition of resources should be used.

- Past CDE materials, finals hall footage and other resources are available on [FFA.org](https://ffa.org)
- APA Style Guide (most current edition), www.apastyle.org
- Speak Well. (most current edition.) Liz O'Brien. McGraw-Hill Higher Education.
- Purdue's Online Writing Lab – APA Formatting Guide, <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

Manuscript Content and Composition Rubric

200 points

Name				Member Number		
Chapter				State		
Indicator	Very strong evidence of skill 5–4 points	Moderate evidence of skill 3–2 points	Weak evidence of skill 1–0 points	Points Earned	Weight	Total Points
Topic relevance	Topic addresses an issue facing the industry of agriculture.	Topic addresses an issue that may show some relationship to the industry of agriculture.	Topic addresses an issue that is unrelated to the industry of agriculture.		x 6	
Persuasive explanation of position on topic	Position is clearly stated, and ample evidence is provided.	Position is not obvious, and evidence is not clearly provided.	Position is not stated, and evidence is not provided.		x8	
Alternative viewpoints recognized	Identifies and counters alternative viewpoints	Only identifies alternate viewpoints	Does not identify alternate viewpoints		x 4	
Logical order and unity of thought	Clearly organized and concise with strong introduction, body and conclusion layout	Good organization with few statements out of place or lacking in clear construction	Little to no organization is present; sometimes awkward and lacking construction		x 4	
Spelling/grammar (sentence structure, verb agreement, etc.).	Spelling and grammar are extremely high quality with two or less errors in the document.	Spelling and grammar are adequate with three to five errors in the document.	Spelling and grammar are less than adequate with six or more errors in the document.		x 7	
Quality of resources	Resources are from reputable sources.	Resources are from questionable sources.	Resources are unreliable and invalid.		x 6	
Manuscript written according to guidelines	5–4 points	3–2 points	1–0 points			
References and in-text citations documented	Research is cited appropriately throughout the work. Citations appear wherever they are appropriate.	Research is cited appropriately in the work, but there should be more research citations. Citations appear wherever they are appropriate.	Research is not cited often, and citations appear only at the end of sentences or paragraphs. More citations are needed to support the writing.		x 3	
	5 points		0 points			
Double-spaced & formatted to 8½ x 11-inch paper with 1-inch margins. 12-point size, using Times New Roman, Cambria, Arial, or Calibri font					x 1	
Cover page with speech title, participant's name, state, and year; and Signed Statement of Authenticity					x 1	
Total Points EARNED OUT OF 200 POSSIBLE						

Presentation and Questions Rubric

800 points

Name				Member Number		
Chapter				State		
Indicators	Very strong evidence of skill 5-4 points	Moderate evidence of skill 3-2 points	Weak evidence of skill 1-0 points	Points Earned	Weight	Total Score
Oral and Non-Verbal Communication						
Supporting evidence	Examples (stories, statistics, etc.) are vivid, precise and clearly explained.	Examples are usually concrete but sometimes need clarification.	Examples are sometimes confusing, leaving the listeners with questions.		x 15	
Persuasive use of evidence	Exemplary use of evidence to persuade listeners.	Sufficient use of evidence to persuade listeners.	Has difficulty using evidence to persuade listeners		x 15	
Pace	Speaks very articulately at rate that engages audience.	Speaks articulately but occasionally speaks too fast or has long unnecessary hesitations.	Speaks too slow or too fast to engage audience.		x 15	
Command of audience	Speaker uses appropriate emphasis and tone to captivate audience.	Speaker presents speech as mere repeating of facts and speech comes across as a report.	Speaker lacks enthusiasm and power to engage audience.		x 20	
Eye contact	Constantly looks at the entire audience (90 to 100% of the time)	Mostly looks around the audience (60 to 80% of the time)	Occasionally looks at someone or some groups (less than 50 % of the time)		x 10	
Mannerisms and gestures	No nervous habits are displayed. Hand motions are expressive and used to emphasize talking points.	Sometimes exhibits nervous habits; Hands are sometimes used to express or emphasize points.	Displays some nervous habits; Hands are not used to emphasize talking points; hand motions are sometimes distracting.		x 10	
Poise	Portrays confidence and composure through appropriate body language (stance, posture, facial expressions)	Maintains control most of the time; rarely loses composure	Lacks confidence and composure		x 15	
Response to Questions						
Response to questions	Responds with organized thoughts and concise answers	Answers effectively but has to stop and think and sometimes gets off focus	Rambles or responds before thinking		x 20	
Knowledge of topic	Answers show a thorough knowledge of the subject and support answers with strong evidence.	Answers show some knowledge of the subject but lack strong evidence.	Answers show little knowledge of the subject and lacks evidence.		x 40	
Total Oral and Non-Verbal Communication Points						
Total Response to Questions Points						
TOTAL POINTS EARNED OUT OF 800 POSSIBLE						
Time Deduction (-1 point/second under six minutes or over eight minutes)						
Manuscript Score						
Total Net Points						
Rank						