

El Dorado County

Academic Decathlon



2026

Speech Judge Handbook

WELCOME!!!

Thank you for volunteering for the **2025 - 2026 El Dorado County Academic Decathlon** on:



January 28, 2026



3:15–5:30 p.m.



Union Mine High School - 6530 Koki Ln, El Dorado, CA 95623

This event will feature around 100 outstanding high school students from local schools, showcasing their talents through written tests, speeches, interviews, and the thrilling Super Quiz.

■ **Your Role as a Judge**

Your role as a Speech Judge is vital to the event's success, and your participation will create a meaningful and impactful experience for our students.

Enclosed in this handbook are **important details about your responsibilities and expectations.**

■ **Stay Connected**

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out:



Dena Allen, Academic Decathlon Coordinator – dkallen@edcoe.org, (530) 295-4530



For immediate assistance during the event, contact Curtis Wise at (530) 957-9749

Thank you for your dedication and support. We look forward to seeing you at the Decathlon!

Warm regards,

Dena Allen

Academic Decathlon Coordinator

ACADEMIC DECATHLON SPEECH SCHEDULE

Thursday, January 23, 2025

| Time | Event | Location |
|-------------|---|---------------------|
| 3:15 – 3:45 | Speech Judges – Orientation/Refreshments | Library |
| 3:45 – 4:00 | Judges set up classrooms | Classrooms |
| 3:45 | Decathletes arrive at Union Mine High School | Cafeteria |
| 3:45 – 4:00 | Decathlete/Coach Check-In | Cafeteria |
| 4:00– 4:05 | Decathletes proceed to assigned classrooms | Assigned Classrooms |
| 4:05 – 5:30 | Interview Competition | Small Gym |
| 4:05 – 5:30 | Speech Competition | Assigned Classrooms |
| 4:45-4:55 | Short break for Judges | |
| 3:45-5:30 | Team Study/Snacks | Cafeteria |
| 5:30 | Pizza | Cafeteria |

● OVERVIEW OF RESPONSIBILITIES

As a Speech Judge, your role is to listen to and evaluate student speeches with fairness and consistency. Each decathlete will deliver:

- A 3½–4-minute prepared speech
- A 1½–2-minute impromptu speech

You will work alongside a panel of 2–3 judges to assess each performance. You will determine who will be Judge 1 and who will be the timer (Judge 2). Note: it has been best-practice that one person is designated to setup the room with new materials in between speech sessions. Staying on schedule is essential to ensure the event runs smoothly.

○ WHAT TO BRING

- No food is allowed in the speech room.
 - You may bring a beverage.
 - Turn off cell phones during speech scoring sessions.
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○ BEFORE SPEECHES BEGIN

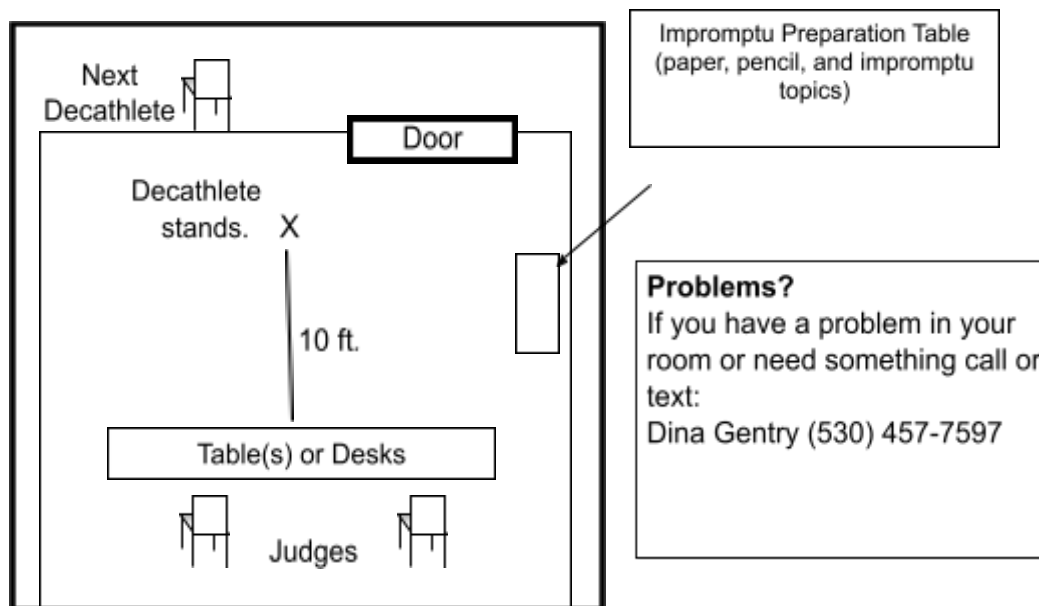
- Review the list of names to ensure you are not judging a close relative or acquaintance.
 - Attend the Speech Judge Orientation for a review of event procedures and scoring criteria.
 - Ask questions and gather insights from experienced judges.
 - Meet your fellow judges and collect your speech evaluation materials.
 - After orientation, proceed directly to your assigned room to prepare.
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○ PREPARATION FOR SPEECHES

- Report to your assigned room promptly after the orientation.
 - Ensure you are fully prepared before the first decathlete arrives at 4:05 p.m.
 - Verify the room is:
 - Unlocked
 - Properly arranged with enough furniture set up for the speech format (as shown in the provided diagram).
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Your attention to detail and commitment to consistency are essential for creating a positive and professional experience for each decathlete.

SPEECH AREA SETUP AND GUIDELINES



■ **Room Setup**

- Arrange the room according to the provided diagram, ensuring there are approximately 10 feet between the student and the judges' table(s).
- If furniture needs to be rearranged, take a photo of the original setup to ensure everything is returned to its proper place afterward.
- Ensure students are not facing windows or other potential distractions.

■ **Materials Table**

On a separate table, set up:

- Impromptu speech topics (face down)
- Blank note cards
- Several pencils

■ **Decathlete Arrival Process**

- Post a copy of the decathlete roster just outside the room, near the waiting chair.
- Decathletes should wait outside the room until invited in by a judge to prevent interruptions during speeches.

■ **Judge Preparation**

- Write judge names and assigned numbers (1, 2, 3) on the Script Directions for Timer document.

- Review procedures, timing, and the room schedule together.
- Write your name on the Speech Judging Score Card/Evaluation Form in the spaces provided.

○ **SCHEDULE AND TIMING**

- Each decathlete will arrive at their designated speech room at the scheduled time and wait outside until invited in.
- 10 minutes per decathlete is allocated, which includes:
 - Prepared Speech (3½–4 minutes)
 - Impromptu Speech (1½–2 minutes)
 - 2–3 minutes for scoring

■ **Staying on Schedule**

- Punctuality is essential. If you fall behind, admit the next decathlete immediately and complete scoring during the break or at the end of the session.
- If a decathlete arrives late, make every effort to adjust the schedule to allow them to deliver their speeches.
- For a “No Show”, write “No Show” by the student’s name on the Speech Judging Score Card/Evaluation Form and it will be submitted at the end of the session.

Your attention to detail in setup, timing, and preparation ensures a smooth and professional experience for all participants.

○ **THE PREPARED SPEECH**

- Ensure you have each student’s ID and name entered on the Speech Judging Score Card/Evaluation Form.
 - Write your name in the spaces provided on the form.
 - Once the decathlete enters, Judge 1 will read the script: **Part 1: Introductions and Prepared Speech** aloud.
 - There is no required topic for the prepared speech.
 - At the conclusion of the prepared speech, proceed directly to the Impromptu Speech.
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○ **THE IMPROMPTU SPEECH**

- After the prepared speech, Judge 1 will read the script for **Part 2: Impromptu Speech** aloud.
- The decathlete will:
 - Go to the Impromptu Speech table and acquire a paper with a list of topics.
 - Have 1 minute to select a topic and prepare, using provided note cards and pencils.
- Judges may score the prepared speech while the decathlete prepares the impromptu speech.

- After the 1-minute selection and preparation, the decathlete will:
 - Read the selected topic aloud.
 - Deliver a 1½–2-minute impromptu speech.
 - At the end of the impromptu speech:
 - Thank the decathlete.
 - Direct them to their next event as indicated on their schedule.
 - Ensure they exit promptly so judges can complete evaluations.
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○ **GENERAL RULES**

- Give each student your full attention.
 - Note cards are allowed, but speeches should not be read verbatim.
 - Gestures are acceptable; props are not allowed.
 - Speeches must be delivered standing, unless a condition prevents this.
 - Speeches must be original and delivered by the decathlete.
 - Do not ask or discuss which school a decathlete represents.
 - Judges may discuss performances only after completing Speech Judging Score Card/Evaluation Forms.
 - Do not rank speeches—each speech must be judged independently using the rubric.
 - No applause or verbal praise is allowed.
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○ **AT THE END OF EACH SESSION**

- Complete the Speech Judging Score Card/Evaluation Form for each decathlete.
 - Place a new list of impromptu topics face down on the Impromptu Table.
 - Remove the previous topic list.
 - One judge will collect all completed forms and return them to Dina Gentry in the cafeteria.
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○ **AFTER THE FINAL SESSION**

- Reset the room to its original layout (use your reference photo if needed). Bring in the outside waiting chair.
 - Remove all Decathlon materials from the room.
 - Return all materials to Dina Gentry.
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○ **SCORING**

- A video regarding the scoring rubric may be seen at [Speech Training Video \(https://tinyurl.com/AcaDecaSpeechTraining\)](https://tinyurl.com/AcaDecaSpeechTraining)
- Excellent 9-10, Very Good 7-8, Good 5-6, Fair 3-4, Poor 0-2.
- It is best-practice to begin at 5 and decrease or increase points to ensure all decathletes are evaluated consistently.

■ **Prepared Speech**

- Speech Development: Clear structure (opening, body, conclusion) supported by examples, facts, and smooth transitions.
- Effectiveness: Engagement, clarity of purpose, and audience connection.
- Correctness of Language: Proper grammar and pronunciation.
- Appropriateness of Language: Suitability for the audience and purpose.
- Speech Value: Meaningful and original contribution.
- Voice: Clear, audible, and expressive delivery.
- Non-Verbal Behavior: Enthusiasm, appropriate gestures, and confidence.

■ **Impromptu Speech**

- Content: Quality and originality of ideas, logical organization.
- Delivery: Effective use of gestures, body language, and voice.
- Overall Effectiveness: Achievement of purpose, clarity, and engagement.

■ **Timing Violations:**


- Prepared Speech: Less than 3½ minutes or more than 4 minutes → -7 points.
- Impromptu Speech: Less than 1½ minutes or more than 2 minutes → -3 points.
- Both speeches violate time limits: Total penalty → -10 points.
- If no penalties apply, mark "0" (no penalty) on the Speech Evaluation Form.
- All judges must assign the same penalty for timing violations.

○ **SCRIPT AND DIRECTIONS FOR TIMER**

■ **PART 1: INTRODUCTIONS AND PREPARED SPEECH (section font has been increased for easier reading)**

Judge 1 reads aloud:

"Welcome to the Speech room. My name is [Your First Name]. I'd like to introduce you to [Judge 2/Timer Name] and [Judge 3 Name]. [Judge 2 Name] will serve as the timer."

"Please tell us your first name and identification number."  *Do not ask which school the decathlete represents.*

"You'll deliver two speeches: a 3½–4-minute prepared speech, followed by a 1½–2-minute impromptu speech. During your speeches we will use colored cards to indicate the time you have left:

- Blue card: 1 minute remaining
- Pink card: 30 seconds remaining
- White card: Time's up (4 minutes for prepared speech)

If you continue past 4 minutes and 10 seconds, the timer will instruct you to stop. Please finish your speech before the white card is shown. Are you ready? You may begin your speech."

Timer (Judge 2) Instructions:

- Start the timer (smart phone, provided timers, etc.) when the speech begins.
 - Raise cards as directed. Instruct the student to stop at 4:10 if necessary.
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■ **PART 2: IMPROMPTU SPEECH**

Judge 1 reads aloud:

"Thank you. Please go to the table, turn over the impromptu topics, and select one. You'll have 1 minute to select and prepare. The timer starts when you turn over the sheet of topics. Use the provided note cards if needed. Once ready, read your topic aloud before beginning your speech."

Timer (Judge 2) Instructions:

- Start the stopwatch when the decathlete turns over the topic sheet.
- Announce "Time" after 1 minute.

Judge 1 continues:

"You may begin your speech."

Timer (Judge 2) Instructions:

- Start the stopwatch when the speech begins.
- Raise cards at 1 minute, ½ minutes, and 2 minutes. If necessary, stop the student at 2:10.

Judge 1 (At the end of the impromptu speech):

"Thank you. You may proceed to your next event. Good luck, and enjoy the rest of your day."