



Youth Speakers Tournament

She stepped up to the microphone. She was only 16 but she had the poise that belied her age. She had spent months preparing for this moment. Her friends and family were there rooting for her. She was far from perfect, but she had something in her life that made her different. Her life belonged to Jesus.

Her speech had not been written ... she had sculpted it. She had practiced it over and over to: the mirror, her parents, her pastor, her speech coach, her church, and yes, even to her dog. She had won her church tournament. Now, she was speaking with the best Christian teen speakers in her state.

She was nervous, but not for the reasons you would think. With all her heart, she wanted the people that heard her to understand the truth of the words she would speak. So, she was going to give it her all. Today, she was speaking for God and that was all that really mattered.

Youth Speakers Tournament

The Youth Speakers Tournament is a ministry for youth in grades 10-12 and is designed to encourage growth toward Christian maturity. Teens are challenged to think seriously about their commitment to Christ.

Speakers in the tournament are judged on the composition and delivery of their speeches. This booklet will help you guide youth as they prepare their speeches.

Youth Speakers Tournament helps teenagers express their faith verbally. It demands serious time and effort, but the pay-off is tremendous. Youth grow spiritually when engaged in the research, study, prayer, and practice of preparing a speech.

If a church does not have a Discipleship Training program, youth may participate in the tournament with the help of an adult church member.

Today's speakers will be ready to stand for Christ in their churches, at school, in their work places, and in their communities. They will develop the skills to articulate truth in a way that people will hear and can understand.

Step-by-step . . . a suggested planning outline

You will need to provide training for the adults you enlist to assist in your church tournament.

Enlistment needs to be completed at least one week prior to the training session. Be available for speakers to get feedback on their scores.

Do not use names of judges but help youth understand ways they might improve their speeches/presentation, especially if they will be going on to the state tournament.

October

- Enlist the support of your pastor and church staff. Consider requesting a small budget to cover expenses for materials and speaker recognition.
- Secure the dates for the state tournament. Set a date for the church tournament (at least one month before the state tournament date). Include all dates on the church calendar.
- Order copies of the official speech titles for all active youth.
- Order copies of this guide for all adult sponsors and judges
- Enlist two or three adults to assist you as a training and preparation team. Provide a copy of this guide for each member of the training group.
- Designate a time when all youth will be present for emphasizing the tournament and its purpose.
- Call other churches in your area. Ask for the names of youth who have participated in Speakers Tournament. Invite area youth to speak to your group. Save time for questions and answers.
- Work with youth ministers in the association to schedule ways to feature youth who are preparing for the tournament.
- Enlist youth. Provide each with the Speaker's Tournament Topics.
- Enlist one adult sponsor for each participating youth. Provide each adult sponsor with a copy of this guide.

January-February

- Consider offering a speakers clinic where rules and helpful advice are given to potential speakers. Speech and English teachers at local schools can provide valuable guidance.
- Enlist youth to make posters promoting the church tournament. Place articles in the church newsletter to generate interest and give support to the speakers.
- Begin enlistment. See detailed information below.
- Youth will be preparing their speeches during this time. Support and encourage them.

March-April

- Provide opportunities for youth to speak before different groups in the church. Adult classes are good options and they can be an encouragement to speakers.
- Consider how you will recognize the efforts of speakers. A certificate of recognition or a small gift would help them remember the event. Some churches plan a special banquet for recognition. Whatever you decide, include all participants, not just the winners.
- Enlist at least three judges. If possible, enlist judges from outside your church membership who have had some training in the field of speech. Avoid enlisting parents of speakers. One judge will have the additional responsibility of serving as chairman and will (1) tally the final scores and (2) report to the tournament leader the names of first, second, and third place speakers.
- Each judge will need:
 - (1) a copy of this guide,
 - (2) a copy of the official list of topics
 - (3) score sheets (one sheet per five speakers)

March-April (continued)

- Enlist a timekeeper. The timekeeper will record the time of each speech on the score sheet beside the speech title. The timekeeper needs a stopwatch to accurately call time.
- Enlist a prompter. (Secure a typed manuscript from each speaker.)
- Enlist the minister of music and a pianist to lead congregational singing between the speeches while the judges are recording scores.
- Enlist ushers. They will assist late-comers in being seated. In order to assure that the speakers are not disturbed by people moving in or out during a speech, the ushers should seat people only between speeches.
- Enlist someone to be responsible for the sound system and microphone for the speakers.
- Conduct a training session at least three days before the tournament for judges and others who will assist with the church tournament. Go over the score sheet, criteria for judging, and specific duties of judges, timekeeper, prompter, ushers, etc. Be sure the minister of music and pianist understand that music will be needed between each speech.
- Schedule a room where the judges can go to tally scores.
- Gather items for the tournament:
 - numbered cards (with straight pins) for speaker identification
 - pencils
 - score sheets
 - calculators
 - stopwatch
 - copies of list of topics
 - item of recognition
- Conduct the church tournament.

Suggested Agenda for Conducting the Youth Speakers Tournament

Before the Tournament Begins

- Meet with the speakers.
- Collect typed manuscripts.
- Allow speakers to draw numbers or any method you choose appropriate to determine the order of speaking.
- Pin a numbered card on each speaker. Index cards are a good size. Numbers should be easy to read for the leader and the judges. Refer to the speakers by their numbers, not by name.
- Instruct the speakers where to sit (on the platform or in a specified area). Tell them that after each speech, the pianist will play a few moments to allow the judges to mark their score sheets and late-comers to be seated. When the music stops, the next speaker will go to the microphone. After all have spoken, speakers may return to seats with the audience.
- Allow speakers to ask questions. Lead in prayer for the speakers' clarity of mind and ability to communicate the message God has given them.

The Tournament

- Welcome
- Begin the tournament with prayer for speakers, judges, and the audience, that all may feel the assurance of God's presence and be open to God's leadership throughout the tournament.
- Explain the rules briefly.
- Ask the audience to refrain from applause until all speeches have been delivered and not use flash photography. This will help to minimize distractions.
- After the last speech, dismiss the judges. While judges are compiling scores, introduce the speakers, their parents, and adult sponsors and give the audience an opportunity to express their appreciation to all involved.
- Announce the third, second, and first place winners. Emphasize that all participants are winners.

Criteria for Judging - Participants will be scored as follows:

- 2 = poor
- 4 = fair
- 6 = average
- 8 = good
- 10 = excellent

Speakers will be judged on the basis of 100 points. Content/composition will count 50 percent and delivery will count 50 percent. Each item on the score sheet will receive a numbered score from each judge, one being the lowest score and ten being the highest score. Scores will be added to reveal a first, second, and third place winner.

A speaker is disqualified only for such major reasons as not being in an eligible grade at school, using a speech that is not his own, or not being a member of a church's Discipleship Training program (if the church has a Discipleship Training program).

Content/Composition

1. Originality/Related to Subject. Does the speech deal with the subject? Does the speech seem to reflect the participant's own convictions? Does the speech give evidence of original and creative thinking by the participant?

2. Organization/Logical Sequence. Is the content arranged in such a way that the audience has no difficulty in following the speech? Is the speech designed to develop the content in an orderly way?

3. Structure/Grammar. Does the participant use complete sentences, and are the sentences grammatically correct?

4. Choice of Resources and Credit for Quotations. Are a variety of good sources used? When using resources, do they reflect an adequate understanding of the various facets of the subject? Are resources used in a way that add strength to the content of the speech? Does the delivered speech indicate that the material used is being quoted?

5. Purpose Accomplished. Does the speech do what it is intended to do as evidenced by the subject and content?

Delivery

1. Extemporaneous Delivery. Does the speaker rely on notes? Does the speaker require prompting?

2. Articulate/Expressive Communication. Does the speaker speak in a clear, conversational manner? Does the speaker speak with directness and sincerity? Is the speech convincing, interesting, and understandable?

3. Poise/Posture/Confidence. Does the speaker appear to be composed and at ease? Does the speaker appear to believe in himself and his message? Does he/she speak with passion?

4. Personal Appearance. Is the speaker well-groomed? Is clothing appropriate and in good taste?

5. Within Time Allotment. Does the speaker stay within the four-to-six minute time allotment?

Participants will be penalized 2 points for every 10 seconds that a speech is over or under the four-to-six minute time allotment.

Speakers Tournament Rules

1. Speakers will prepare a four-to-six minute speech on a topic chosen from the current list of official titles. Speeches must be the work of the individual speaker. Plagiarism or having the speech or any major portion of it written by someone other than the speaker is grounds for disqualification. The purpose of the speech may be to inform, inspire, persuade, or create concern.
2. Speakers Tournament focuses on the speaking ability of students. Music and drama are not considered "speech" and should be avoided. It is appropriate to quote part of a song, poem, or play, but not to perform these. Speakers should strive to be creative in their speeches, using tools such as stories, vocal variation, clever phrasing, and personal experiences.
3. Speakers are encouraged to use a variety of sources for their research. Brief quotations are appropriate with the author and location of the quotations cited in the speech. Information (quoted or not quoted) gleaned from any source should be footnoted (endnotes or parenthetical references are acceptable) in the final manuscript. A bibliography for all consulted resources is optional.
4. Gestures and movement on stage are appropriate if they support the purpose of the speech. Movement that is distracting or overly dramatic should be avoided.
5. Good taste should be used in clothing. Casual clothing is acceptable, however, jeans and t-shirts are discouraged. Costuming for the speech is not appropriate.
6. A manuscript of the speech is to be presented to the person coordinating each tournament. Speakers will not be judged on their ability to recite their speech word for word. The purpose of the manuscript is to provide an accurate script for the judges. The manuscript should be a complete transcript of the speech, not just an outline.
7. Use of a microphone is acceptable, however use of pulpit, notes, props, charts, or diagrams should be avoided. If a speaker chooses to use notes, he or she should not be tied to those notes. Speakers should strive for an extemporaneous delivery of the speech (that is, a comfortable, conversational tone).

Writing & Delivering the Speech (Helps for the youth participant)

OK, you're ready to write your speech. Now what? Here are some ideas to help you get started.

Title

Contact your state convention discipleship training office for a list of annual titles. Choose a title from the list. Think about possible subjects. Consider the audience. Will they be interested? What will they know about the subject? What will be their attitude toward the subject?

Objective

Determine your aim or objective. Consider whether you want your speech to inform, persuade, create interest, or create concern. Write a clear, one-sentence statement describing what you want to accomplish. Avoid the use of conjunctions (and, but) in your sentence. You may need to rework your objective later, but this will drive your preparation.

Research

Read extensively before you begin the construction of your speech. Take notes on what you read. Think about the subject before you start reading so you won't be overwhelmed with more ideas than you can use. Research, observe, and talk with others. Consult your church, school, and public libraries for resource material. List Bible references and other references that support your speech. Your pastor or speech coach may be helpful in seeking these.

Outline

Outline your speech. Ask yourself questions about the subject. These questions could form your speech outline. Consider the introduction, the body, and the conclusion. You may wish to use a simple formula such as: (1) past, (2) present, (3) future; or (1) problem, (2) possible solutions, (3) your plan, and (4) why it's the best plan.

Example:

- I. Introduction
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.

- II. Body
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.

- III. Conclusion
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.

Introduction

Write a creative introduction that let's your hearers know the purpose of your speech.

Body (Here's where you use a lot of paper.)

Use your outline to write the content of your speech word for word. Select words that express exactly what you mean. Include quotations, questions, illustrations, comparisons, and contrasts.

Conclusion

Write a conclusion that accomplishes your objective.

Before the Tournament

- Good speeches are not just written, they are "re-written." Once you've completed your manuscript, practice sharing it. Ask objective people to listen and give you suggestions for improving your delivery. Practice, practice, practice. Do not memorize your speech. Practice it with a key-word outline until the key-word outline is not needed. Using notes is discouraged and will be taken into consideration by the judges.
- Time yourself so you will consistently stay within the official time allotment. Remember, you will be penalized points when you go over or under the four-to-six minute time allotment.
- When you practice, stand straight and use only gestures which are natural. Support your voice from the diaphragm. Keep your jaw loose and throat relaxed.
- You are required to present a typed (double-spaced) manuscript of your speech to the chairman at every tournament.

Criteria for Judging

You will be judged on the basis of 100 points. Content and composition will count 50%. Delivery will count 50%.

Content/Composition

- Originality/Related to Subject. The speech should reflect your own convictions, deal with the subject, and give evidence of creative and original thinking.
- Organization/Logical Sequence. Arrange the content in such a way that the audience will be able to follow your thoughts.
- Structure/Grammar. Double-check your sentences. Make sure they are complete and grammatically correct.
- Choice of Resources/Credit for Quotations. If resources are used, they should reflect an adequate understanding of the various facets of the subject, and be used in a way that they add strength to the content. If resources are quoted, the written speech needs to give proper credit for the material used. The delivered speech should indicate the material used is being quoted.
- Purpose Accomplished. Does your speech do what you intended?

Delivery

- Extemporaneous Delivery. Avoid using notes.
- Articulate/Expressive Communication. Speak in a clear, conversational manner. Make your speech convincing, interesting, and easy to understand.
- Poise/Posture/Confidence. Try to relax. Believe in yourself and your message.
- Personal Appearance. Give thought to what you will wear during your presentation.
- Time Allotment. Practice timing yourself. You will be penalized two points for every 10 seconds that your speech goes over or under the four-to-six minute time allotment.