

Speaking Proudly Getting Started

Congratulations on deciding to take part in the Speaking Proudly 2021 oratory competition. It will bring girls from all over our state to the Minnesota State Capitol Saturday, Oct. 23, 2021.

The Speaking Proudly organizers are hard at work to give you an enjoyable and rewarding experience you will remember all your life.

Some of you have been part of speech contests before. For others, public speaking—especially speaking competitively for prize money—is a brand-new experience. But each one of you will likely appreciate a few suggestions about how you can do your best in Speaking Proudly. That’s the aim of this document—to provide information to help you get started on a successful speech.

Understanding the Process

Familiarize yourself with the competition’s [Rules and Procedures](#) that govern Speaking Proudly, and find answers to [Frequently Asked Questions](#). You will want to visit this site often as you prepare.

Take note of, and abide STRICTLY by, deadlines and time limits. Exceptions cannot be made.

Thinking About the Topic: “A More Perfect Union” – Rising to the Challenge

The Speaking Proudly 2021 topic comes from the Preamble to the United States Constitution:

*We the People of the United States, in Order to form **a more perfect Union**, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.*

An oration is a persuasive speech. Here are a few questions to ask yourself – by no means exhaustive – to start you thinking:

- Do the ideas inherent in the Constitution apply well to today?
- Perfection is an absolute; how can something be made “more perfect”?
- Are there obstacles – past, present or future – to achieving a more perfect union?
- What is needed to overcome the obstacles you see?
- What can I say to convince the judges of the significance of my issue?
- How can I inspire a response in my audience? This sometimes is referred to as the “call to action.”

Researching the Speech

Use a broad range of reputable sources of information. A speech based largely on a Wikipedia article won't score well.

You will be expected to cite sources for the information and quotations used in your speech. Crediting sources will require you to keep track of those sources throughout the research phase of your speech writing. Find a method for doing so and use that method scrupulously.

Submitting the Application

Carefully follow the process set forth in the Speaking Proudly [2021 Application Form](#).

In addition to the completed, signed application form and the \$50 deposit check or money order, you must submit a one-page speech description. This document **must be "blind," that is, it must not include any information that identifies you.**

It must include the following:

- The title of your speech
- A brief summary of your speech
- An outline of your speech

The application materials must be postmarked or received **on or before Sept. 11, 2021**. The Speaking Proudly Steering Committee will evaluate this "blind" speech description document to decide if you will be invited to compete Oct. 23. Be sure the title, summary and outline you submit can convince the committee that your speech deserves to be heard in the competition. Make it your best work.

Writing the Speech

Know how a persuasive speech (an oration) differs from an informative speech. As part of your effort to persuade, you will also inform but your task is to give a *persuasive* speech. There are many on-line resources to guide you.

Give your speech a clear structure. Online sources can help you to learn the components of a persuasive speech. As you write, highlight your speech's structure with signposting.

Remember that you are writing to be heard, not to be read. Use shorter sentences. Employ repetition and other rhetorical devices.

Work to gracefully weave source cites into the text of your speech. You must reveal the

sources of information and quotations used in your speech but do so in a way that does not interrupt the flow of your ideas. Keep in mind that a speech's source cites need not be as detailed as those in a printed document.

Practicing Your Speech

Review the [Judge's Ballot](#) to familiarize yourself with the judging criteria.

Practice establishing and maintaining a confident stance. As you begin your speech, your feet should be planted squarely on the floor, a little less than a shoulder's width apart, with weight evenly distributed on both feet.

Never yield to the temptation to cross your legs or shift your weight to one side or the other. Doing so communicates lack of confidence or disinterest.

Practice projecting your voice in rooms of different sizes. You must make yourself clearly heard in every corner of whatever space you are assigned to speak. The Capitol Complex's rooms, where preliminary and semi-final rounds will be held, are of various sizes. There will be no microphones or podiums in those rooms.

The three speakers who advance to the final round will speak in the Capitol Rotunda, which will require the use of a microphone. There will be no opportunity to practice with that Rotunda sound system. If possible, find and practice with a microphone during your preparation for the competition. The three finalists will speak from a podium, so you'll need to prepare and practice for the varying situations.

If you intend to use a script or notecards as you deliver your speech, practice so that those items do not interfere with your delivery. The script or notecards should not hide your face, impair your ability to gesture or distract from your message.

Practice until you are consistent with the delivery time for your speech. During the competition, the timekeeper in your round(s) will signal the end of your eight-minute time allowance. When time expires, you will be permitted to finish **only** the sentence you are speaking. Judges will be instructed to penalize speakers who continue beyond that point.

Use your face and body to help you communicate. Facial expressions, head movements, and hand and arm gestures should seem natural, not practiced. They should connect to and enhance the content of the speech. Likewise, movement (transitional steps) should serve a communicative purpose, for example, to point out a transition from one key point to another. Avoid random pacing.

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Competition Schedule

Plan on a full day for Speaking Proudly. The morning will begin with a welcome and all competitors will deliver their speeches three times, each time to different judges.

Before or after lunch in the Capitol's Rathskeller, you'll be given a special tour of the Capitol. The three finalists will be announced in the Rotunda at approximately 3 p.m. and will deliver their final-round speeches immediately.

More detailed information will be available closer to competition day.

One Final Thing

The organizers of Speaking Proudly are grateful for your interest in this year's competition. To speak about issues that matter to you will be, we hope, a highlight of your high school career. We are eager to welcome you and your family to the Capitol for a successful and memorable experience.