

Section 1 - Introduction

What is forensics and what is a moderator?

A good definition of forensics is an activity to promote public speaking, argumentation, and interpretation of good literature. Commonly known as speech teams, debate teams, public speaking clubs, etc., these organizations have been around high schools for many decades and are a vital tool in helping to teach some of the necessary skills that are central to the survival of a democratic country. Study after study has shown forensics to be positively correlated with high achievement later in life. Many lawyers practicing today have stated emphatically that forensics should be required for all pre-law students. Over fifty percent of major corporate leadership was found in one study to have had forensics training. Media personalities such as Oprah Winfrey, Shelley Long, and Rush Limbaugh are former forensics competitors, and political figures like former president Lyndon Johnson and Attorney General Janet Reno chose forensics as one of their most important formative experiences. The formats have changed over the years, but basically forensics still exists to accomplish the same goals as always.

Forensics is usually an after school activity with most schools. Some lucky coaches will have class time during the day to work with the vital skills of speaking, research, and understanding of theory. Others will be dependent upon meeting with the team both as a group and individually after school. Usually at least one afternoon (2 hours) per week is a bare minimum, depending on the size of your beginning squad. The larger the squad, the more time is needed. If your squad grows beyond your ability to hear, then recruitment of additional teachers, parents, alumni, or older students to coach is necessary.

Most squads start with a coach and little else. (Moderator is used in some quarters to describe the person in charge of the forensics group.) To recruit students, hitting the honors classes and recruiting from your own classes is the best option. Extra credit entices many to join, but the fun they encounter makes them stay. Once a team gets started, it keeps going on its own momentum, even though bribery may have been necessary in the beginning. Look for bright students, not necessarily the high grade point averages. Start small (too many new coaches believe that a big squad is necessary). Begin with really interested students and let them help you recruit. Set up standards and expectations of work and behavior and enforce them. It is hard to cut half of your team for discipline reasons, but letting them stay will cause other to join for the wrong reasons. Recruitment in your junior high feeder school is always good if planned carefully. Classroom visits from team members and personal letters to the parents can work also. Have a recruit meeting occasionally once the year is begun to invite new people.

This manual is intended to just get you started thinking about what you want to do with your group. Most of the materials in this manual come from the experience of seasoned coaches and the league manuals of the New Orleans Catholic Forensic League and the Louisiana High School Speech League. Rules may vary slightly, and the prudent coach will become familiar with these manuals and ask questions of other coaches concerning such variations.

Section 2 – Description of Events

Dramatic Events

Oral Interpretation – Students prepare no more than ten minutes of a prose selection and ten minutes of poetry which they perform in alternating rounds with a manuscript in hand.

Humorous Interpretation – Students memorize and perform a humorous selection from a play or literature without benefit of props or costume in ten minutes or less.

Dramatic Interpretation – Students memorize and perform a serious selection from a play or literature without benefit of props or costume in ten minutes or less. Restricted movement is allowed.

Duet Acting – Students memorize and perform a cutting from a play or literature with two actors without benefit of props, setting, or costumes in twelve minutes or less. Movement is used.

Duo Reading – Students perform a cutting from a play or literature with two actors using a manuscript in ten minutes or less.

Forensic Events

Original Oratory – Students write and memorize an original speech, persuasive in nature, with a ten-minute time limit.

Declamation – Students memorize an award-winning or published speech written by another speaker and perform it as if it were their own speech. With an introduction, the piece should be no longer than ten minutes.

Extemporaneous Speaking – Students choose one of three possible current events topics and are then given thirty minutes to write an informative or persuasive speech no longer than seven minutes in length.

Cross-Examination Debate – Students must divide into teams of two and prepare to debate both sides of the year's proposition which recommends a change in policy.

Lincoln-Douglas Debate – Individual students prepare to debate both sides of a proposition which deal with opposing values.

Student Congress – Students debate proposed bills in a “house” or “senate” setting using parliamentary procedure.

Section 3 – Professional Memberships

Three organizations promote forensics. It is important that you eventually join all three. One is your local chapter of the Catholic Forensic League (open to ALL schools), one is the state speech league, the third is the National Forensic League. You can participate at any tournament without being a member of any of these organizations, but membership means that you will be mailed invitations, sent calendars, and qualify your students for the district or state tournaments when they succeed in competition. If your student qualifies for the district or state tournaments, then he/she can only attend if your school is a member of that organization. At a minimum, you need to join the LHSSL, the CFL, or the NFL immediately because belonging to one of these organizations opens avenues to further opportunities for your students and for you, professionally. The NFL allows schools to join as associate members which brings you a monthly magazine and incentive programs that help you to build up your squad strength.

CATHOLIC FORENSIC LEAGUE – Dues \$40.00 annually in the fall. This organization is composed of both Catholic and non-Catholic schools. It is a national league organized parallel to the Dioceses of the Church. Two dioceses exist in Louisiana, New Orleans and Lafayette. The New Orleans CFL holds meetings thrice yearly. The Lafayette organization is somewhat less formal. In mid-March, both organizations have all qualifiers (New Orleans and Lafayette use differing qualifying systems) compete at the Diocesan tournament to decide who goes to the CFL Grand Nationals in May.

LOUISIANA HIGH SCHOOL SPEECH LEAGUE – Dues \$40.00 annually by September 10. This league legislates the rules and regulations that govern debate and speech contests throughout the year and publishes both a calendar of sanctioned tournaments and an address list of members. The league sponsors a season-ending state championship tournament called the Tournament of Champions (TC). Over a three-year period, that tournament rotates across the three regions of the state: North, Southwest, and the Southeast. The league sanctions invitational tournaments as qualifying tournaments for the TC. If a student places first, second, or third at a sanctioned tournament, it will qualify the student for TC. The state tournament is usually in late March or April.

NATIONAL FORENSIC LEAGUE – Dues \$99.00 annually due in the fall. Its rules have been the model for most of the CFL and LHSSL rules, but technically NFL rules only apply at the District Tournament at the season's end. You must be a National Forensic League member school to enter students at Districts, and your students must also be NFL member. The extensive rule book that they send you when your school becomes an affiliate tells how your students qualify to compete at Districts. The National Forensic League has a very prestigious national tournament. Even if your school does not compete at the NFL District Tournament or qualify students for the National Speech Tournament, membership in NFL is still a good idea because it has a point system set up to give points to all speaking activities of a student who is a member. This is a great incentive to the student.

NATIONAL FEDERATION INTERSCHOLASTIC SPEECH AND DEBATE ASSOCIATION- Dues \$10.00 annually due in the fall. Members receive \$1,000,000.00 liability insurance policy, discount codes for hotels and car rental agencies, two editions of the **FORENSIC EDUCATOR**

a year, and nine monthly issues of the **NATIONAL FEDERATION NEWS** (the same magazine that all of your school's athletic coaches get if they belong to the coaches' association).

KEY ADDRESSES FOR LOUISIANA SPEECH ORGANIZATIONS

The following organizations, discussed on the previous page, may be contacted by writing to or calling the directors listed below:

LOUISIANA HIGH SCHOOL SPEECH LEAGUE

Judy Hadley – President
Lafayette High School
3000 West Congress
Lafayette, LA 70506
(337) 984-4327

NATIONAL FORENSIC LEAGUE

Cheryl Gilmore – District Chair
Acadiana High School
315 Rue du Belier
Lafayette, LA 70506
(337) 988-3893

NEW ORLEANS CATHOLIC FORENSIC LEAGUE

Barbara Fontenot – Diocesan Director
Ben Franklin High School
2001 Leon C. Simon Drive
New Orleans, LA 70122
(504) 286-2600

LAFAYETTE CATHOLIC FORENSIC LEAGUE

Sandra Broussard – Diocesan Director
Comeaux High School
100 West Bluebird Street
Lafayette, LA 70508
(337) 984-5125

Section 4 – Tournament Calendar

Every school year the calendar of tournaments is submitted at the Tournament of Champions for the next year. It is revised at the fall convention in late August. (The New Orleans Catholic Forensic League also publishes a calendar of its sanctioned tournaments that is set at the spring meeting and finalized at the fall meeting.) Various schools across the state host tournaments. They may have 5, 6, or all of the events that it is possible to offer. Some tournaments are only on Saturday and probably do not offer debate. Other tournaments cover two days (Friday and Saturday) and offer everything. Usually it is not necessary to miss school if the tournament is in the same town as you are. There are approximately 10-15 tournaments held in New Orleans, for example.

Tournaments usually begin in late September, take a break for Christmas (and Mardi Gras in New Orleans and Lafayette), and conclude in early April. Most weekends will offer more than one tournament, but can also be free many weekends if you decide to restrict your tournament-going to one region of the state.

It is vital to attend as many business meetings of the LHSSL and local CFL to keep on top of what is going on. Changes in the calendar may be made at these meetings. If you cannot come, then SEND A SUBSTITUTE. INFORMATION IS VITAL!

Section 5 – Files to be Maintained

INDIVIDUAL EVENTS CUTTINGS

Pieces done in competition or scripts ordered from companies need to be kept in order by event such as humorous, dramatic, prose, poetry. It 's also helpful to record on the file folder the name of the student(s) who have used a particular piece in competition and the year in which it was used. Catalogs on scripts need to be renewed yearly.

EXTEMP FILES

The three new magazines (NEWSWEEK, TIME, US NEWS & WORLD REPORT) constitute the basics for an extemp file and you will probably want to order them for the extemp file. (However, if funds are tight, you may be able to appeal to students to bring you copies that they receive at home once their families are done with the magazines.) Also a quote book, dictionary, thesaurus, atlas, etc. are helpful.

BALLOT FILES

You should keep all tournament ballots for one year if space permits because verifying qualifications for season-ending tournaments and obtaining NFL points from these records is much more reliable than trying to have students remember their finishes.

TEAM RECORD BOOK

After, or during the progress of, each tournament enter each member's rounds, records and scores in a record book. (See the sample Speech Competition and Debate Record sheets on the next two pages as means for maintaining accurate records on your students performances.) This book is invaluable when writing recommendations, doing NFL points for your report sheets, and doing registration for the qualifying tournaments.

LINCOLN DOUGLAS FILE

Philosophical books are useful as well as analyses of certain values related topics. A file or bibliography would be helpful as well as certain key articles or chapters from textbooks on philosophy.

JUDGES FILE

Keep names and phone numbers of all potential judges and possible judges. Recruit teachers and administrators and expect parents to help.

Section 6 – Finances

Some expenses of the team the school will need to guarantee. These include: fees for dues to the various organizations and as much photo-copying or duplication as you can squeeze them to provide.

Other areas not provided by the school, can be picked up by fund raising or individual contribution.

Some of these expenses are:

Scripts, plays

Awards for NFL membership, CFL participation, letters, etc.

Funding for in-town tournaments is very reasonable: \$10.00 for a team entry and \$5.00 for individual entry. These entry fees can be paid by the school, fund raising, or the individual student. Remember to get the fees from the students well in advance. They must also remember to bring lunch money on tournament days.

Out of town tournaments become more expensive. If the school does not help in funding, then fund raising is essential unless the student body is well off. Entry fees can range from being the same as in-town tournaments to five to ten times as much. Motel rooms can run \$45.00 to \$65.00. The coaches and judges necessary need to have their room and food provided for by the budget or students. The students also need to remember food money (\$15.00 per day is probably a minimum). Most tournaments provide adults with snack food and that helps to cut costs. On out-of-town trips, rooming with fellow coaches can help to cut expenses. Pack as many students as possible into their rooms to help keep expenses down. Most hotels allow up to 5 with a roll-away bed.

Some rough estimates

	Basic	More Expanded Team
Administrative	100.00	200.00
Books	100.00	400.00
Awards	100.00	300.00
In-Town Tournaments	300.00	1,000.00
Out of Town Tournaments	1,000.00	7,500.00

Section 7 – Team Structures

Many moderators refer to themselves as coaches. Some speech clubs are “teams” rather than clubs or squads. Whatever name you choose has a link to whatever you are trying to “cash in on” in your school. With schools that have high spirit for the school and good respect for athletics, then “team” may be more enticing than “club.” Some clubs have presidents, secretaries, et., as their structure. Teams tend to have captains and co-captains. Using the students to relieve you of paper work is rewarding for them as well because it teaches them how

to run their own organization. They learn responsibility for the “team” or “club”. Some functions that (with training and time) they are capable of performing are: Records Librarian, Extemp File Manager, Publicity, Treasurer, and Secretary.

You can appoint leaders or have elections, whichever seems to be appropriate. Some coaches appoint at first, then have elections for the top posts.

Section 8 – Parental Involvement

It is always helpful to meet with parents early in the school year to explain several things. They need to know the tournament schedule, how much fees will cost, how much money the school is providing, your expectations of research and after school practices, disciplinary rules and regulations, etc.

Here are some main areas of involvement:

Judging – Tournaments must have judges or students cannot compete. They cannot use the old excuse of inexperience. All judges have this complaint at first. They become experienced. If their son or daughter can learn to debate surely the same genetic pool can produce someone smart enough to judge it. We do not have a judging pool in Louisiana of primarily college students who were ex-contestants. You should offer a workshop every year to help train them. During their child’s novice year they need to start learning how to judge. Tapes are available from the NFL and the National Federation to help in training. Encourage parents to observe rounds if they are not judging to familiarize themselves with the procedure.

Transportation – They are responsible for all of the child’s transportation whether by car, bus or foot. You as coach are not the chauffeur. Don’t get into the “bring me home” trap. Have the parents take charge of their own children. Give them plenty of notice (in print) and approximate times to get their kids. Tournaments do not always run on time so reminding students to bring quarters to call home is a good idea.

Payment – If they need to pay for motel or fees, then get the money in advance. Do not extend credit because it encourages students to forget to pay you back. Make sure the parent fulfills this responsibility.

Section 9 – Travel

At some point, whether it is going to state or just an out-of-town tournament, travel and overnight stays become desirable. Here are some hints.

1. Accept early. Make your parents sign permission slips early and let them know that they are now financially obligated to go through with the trip. Letting students “off the hook” encourages last minute drops which are embarrassing and troublesome to the host school.
2. Look at the registration time for the tournament. Calculate how long it will take to get there by whatever method. Most people drive to tournaments in Louisiana. Up to 500 miles is driving distance. Over that becomes very tiresome. Amtrak is available for some cities. If you go by public transit, then calculate expenses of transportation to the hotel/tournament site. Rental vans are available at most rental agencies or leasing outfits in town. Getting a commercial driver’s license can allow you the flexibility of driving a school bus. Having parents drive a family vehicle is also a good alternative.
3. After you calculate travel costs, then make your reservations at the hotel/motel. Motel 6 is very cheap, but very plain. Days Inn is usually an affordable compromise. Days Inns have on premises restaurants which eliminates the necessity of getting up early to feed them breakfast. Econo Lodges are also inexpensive. Put as many students in a room as possible – up to 5 with a roll-away to save money. Always use the toll free numbers that are available by calling the local inn. Guarantee your reservation for late arrival with your credit card in case you arrive late to the tournament town. When you make your reservation, ask them to calculate the price per room then add sales tax. Divide this figure among your students and collect their portion of the room.
4. About two weeks before the tournament, request your checks from the school. Calculate your funds for judges’ food. You need money also for entry fees, motels, transport, etc.
5. Remind students to get assignments early from their teachers.
6. Make sure you notify everyone that you are going, especially your administration and teachers.
7. Prepare, duplicate, and send home an itinerary for your tournament trip that includes the following: (a) the tournament schedule, (b) estimated hotel/motel and food expenses, (c) other expenses, and (d) tournament site and hotel/motel addresses and phone numbers (in case of a family emergency).
8. Keep a record book on mileage for tax purposes. Keep your receipts of expenses that you pay yourself. Go over rules for curfews at motels and expected behavior. Go over expected dress and where they are to be at all times. Carry permission slips (notarized if you are traveling out of state) with parent’s emergency numbers and medical information. Make sure you take your extemp file and spare copies of debaters’ affirmatives. Remind interp people to have their scripts. Also, oratory and declamation contestants need theirs as well. Read over the tournament rules again for missed information.

Section 10 – Judging

Until your team outgrows you, you may be the only judge needed. Observe in areas that you feel inadequate until you feel comfortable judging in all areas. Be as flexible as you can. There are copies of ballots in the L.H.S.S.L. manual. Just be as fair as you can be and realize that the comments that you make will grow in sophistication as you learn more about judging. Familiarize yourself with the ethics code in the constitution as a good guide to judging.

Section 11 – Recruiting Judges

Some places to look:

Parents – They need to expect it and to serve their turn. Try to give them some observation time first, and limit their shifts to 3 hours or so.

Fellow Teachers – Your friends on the faculty are glad to help if the amount of time is kept low, like 1 – 2 rounds. Try not to impose too much. Hit student teachers and new teachers (who knows, one of them may get hooked and become a future assistant for you).

Community People – Students can find these people. Lawyers, retired people, librarians, college students, clergy. College students who were in forensics are particularly glad to help.

Alumni – This will eventually become your biggest source of judging. Train them when you have them as students to judge. Keep up with them always even if they leave town to go to college. They can judge on break. They will tend to be very loyal and helpful and should be recognized and made to feel that they are still part of your organization.

Keep a file and rotate through it. Sign up judges about two weeks in advance and then give them a reminder call 2 –3 nights before they are to judge. Don't keep using unreliable people, but if they ask tell them why. If you can't get the students to find their own judges, then drop them off the team. If they can't hustle their own parents, then they can hustle grandparents, brothers, uncles, sisters, aunts, teachers, ministers, etc.

Section 12 – Publicity

Publicity for your team can be very simple or very complex. To start with, your parents should be kept informed. Your school should be informed, then your community should be informed.

1. Always try to plan an “end of the year” function which recognizes the students, parents, alumni and helpful community or school judges.
2. Let kids take trophies home for display then bring them back to school. Put them on display in as public a place as practical. Label the trophy with the winner’s name.
3. Try to get an announcement made on Monday at school. Make it sound great. They don’t know that semifinals in a field of 12 is not that awesome, but it’s still good PR.
4. Get in the school newspaper.
5. Get in the community paper if you can. Your school or school district should have a media relations person who can help (and who won’t mind having more fodder for publicizing the school).

Section 13 – Code of Ethical Conduct for Students, Judges, and Coaches

ETHICS CODE

Forensics competition is only as successful as the ethics practiced by its participants. Every member of the forensics community needs to be familiar with the following statements. Failure to observe them can result in penalties ranging from reprimands to expulsion for participation in sanctioned tournaments.

A. Contestants

...should wear dignified attire throughout the tournament, especially at award ceremonies, as a matter of self-respect and recognition of the dignity of the occasion.

...should respect all adults they encounter throughout the tournament.

...should recognize that fair play and good sportsmanship demand that they are absolutely quiet in the area of all competition and that they avoid any distracting gestures or activities either inside the competition room, or outside, during another's performance.

...should demonstrate respect for the campus, buildings, and equipment (classroom or otherwise) of the tournament host schools.

...should be respectful of other people and/or property in hotels, restaurants, etc. while representing the Catholic Forensic League.

...should appreciate the fact that judges freely give their time to serve the tournament, and thus they are entitled to a contestant's respect.

...should not approach a judge regarding a decision or performance. Instead, the student should discuss the matter with his/her coach.

...should not attempt to gain knowledge of the judges' decisions that are marked on the ballots before the official release of the ballots.

B. Judges

...should not reveal decisions to coaches or contestants unless so permitted by the tournament director.

...should direct any questions of rules or procedure to the tab room rather than to contestants.

...should read ballots carefully and mark them completely and correctly.

...should respect the dignity of the contestants in making constructive and educational comments on ballots or constructive oral criticism, if such is permitted by the tournament director.

...should not confer with other judges or anyone else before marking the ballot.

...should be attentive during the round and avoid giving the impression of drowsing, inattention, etc. during a round of competition.

...should attempt to be fair-minded in regard to a contestant's selection, not letting personal preferences prejudice the decision.

...should refrain from any oral criticism unless the tournament rules permit it.

C. Coaches

...should make every effort to serve as a positive role model for the students with whom he/she comes into contact.

...have the responsibility of supervision of students or of appointing an adult supervisor at tournament sites, on guest campuses, in restaurants, hotels, transportation, etc. throughout the length of the tournament, day and night.

...are responsible for the selection of material used by their students.

...should provide competition material that is appropriate in content, language, and situation for high school students in recognition of the not fully mature nature of the high school audience before which and by whom selection are performed.

...should direct students to avoid any distracting behavior during another student's performance

...may seek constructive criticism when speaking with a judge. However, they should not belittle, criticize, or challenge his/her decision.

...are to refrain from commenting on or discussing with a judge any matter concerning the performances he is about to hear.

...are responsible for providing the correct number of judges to cover their entry for the entire tournament.

...should bring knowledgeable judges, well-informed about tournament rules and procedures.

...are responsible for their school's attending a tournament for which they have submitted an entry, unless they have notified the tournament officials within the proper times.

...should not reveal results of competition until the end of the tournament.