



# El Cerrito High School Speech & Debate

The ECHS Speech & Debate Team (also known as EC Forensics) empowers students to find their voice, think critically and speak out, in a supportive and inclusive community where all are welcome.

Founded in 1965, the program enjoys a long history of success including championships at both the state and national levels. Our team is vibrant, diverse, close-knit, and we nurture and build student voice and expression.

## JOIN US

We welcome students at all levels to join the team and compete in speech and debate tournaments.

[Complete the Interest Form](#)

## What We Do

Students participate in the team in two ways. First, they attend practice, usually twice a week after school, where they develop skills in public speaking, logic and argumentation. Second, they compete in tournaments against students from other schools. Students can qualify to compete on the state and national level. We are part of the [Golden Gate Speech Association](#).

New teammates or “novices” compete in a separate division at most tournaments. Students advance to varsity after they place in the final round of a tournament, complete their first year or at the coaches discretion. Competing in tournaments is not a requirement for being on the team. Our coaches work with the students throughout the school year to improve their abilities, build their confidence in public speaking, and work with them to be competitive at tournaments.

## Speech & Debate Categories

(Events can vary year to year depending on student interest and the experience of the coaches)

### Parliamentary Debate

This structured debate is a two-person team debate that emphasizes a combination of persuasive speaking, logical reasoning, and knowledge of current events. In this debate format, tournament officials assign a different topic for every round. The two teams have limited preparation time, usually 20 minutes, to plan arguments for the side they were assigned: either “Government,” which argues in favor of the resolution, or “Opposition,” which (surprise, surprise) opposes the resolution.

## Speech

- **Dramatic Interpretation (“DI”)**

This is an individual category in which the selections are dramatic in nature. Selections can be from published novels, short stories, plays, poetry, or any other published materials. Students will work with their coaches to determine the right piece to work on. Presentations must be memorized, without props or costumes. The time limit is ten minutes.

- **Duo Interpretation (“Duo”)**

This is a two-person category similar to DI and Hi above, in which the selection may be either humorous or dramatic in nature. Duo has very specific rules about how the performers may interact with one another; for instance, the two performers may not touch each other or look each other in the eye. Duos tend to be well “blocked” (choreographed) and very dynamic. The time limit is ten minutes.

- **Expository Speaking (“Expos”)**

The student gives a speech to inform the listeners about a subject of interest. Students are encouraged to use visual and/or audio aids.

- **Extemporaneous Speaking (“Extemp”)**

This is an individual event in which the student draws three topics on current events and then has 30 minutes to prepare and deliver a seven-minute speech answering one of the topics. This is sometimes offered as two events, one featuring National topics and one featuring International ones.

- **Humorous Interpretation (“HI”)**

This is an individual event similar to Dramatic Interpretation but selections are humorous in nature. The time limit is ten minutes.

- **Impromptu Speaking (“Impromptu”)**

This is an individual event in which the student is given a list of three topics and then has two minutes to prepare an original speech (of up to five minutes) about one of the topics. The event gives the speaker the opportunity to be creative and imaginative. An impromptu speech should reveal the student’s ability to “think on their feet” and to organize his/her thoughts in a logical manner.

- **Oratorical Interpretation (“OI”)**

Oratorical Interpretation is an individual event that requires you to find a published speech that was actually delivered in a public forum. This speech event encourages you to understand the relationship of an oration to the times that inspired it. You must analyze and understand the goals and motivation of the original speaker, and interpret the oration with a whole new voice

to a whole new audience. It is not an impersonation; it is an interpretation. The time limit is ten minutes.

- **Original Oratory (“OO”)**

Orators are expected to research and speak intelligently, with a degree of originality in an interesting manner about a topic of significance. Although many orations deal with a current problem and propose a solution, there are other options. Your oration may simply alert the audiences to a threatening danger, strengthen its devotion to an accepted cause, or eulogize a person. An orator is given free choice of subject and will be judged on the effectiveness of development and presentation. Time limit is ten minutes.

- **Original Prose & Poetry (“OPP”)**

Students write and present a piece composed of original prose and/or poetry. The material may be humorous, dramatic, or a combination. The competition in this event is challenging because the material varies so widely. OPP combines the originality of oratory and the creativity of interpretation. The time limit is ten minutes.

- **Thematic Interpretation (“TI”)**

In Thematic Interpretation competitors weave content from three or more published works into a theme of their choosing. Most interpretive events focus on one selection with one tone throughout, but TI can mix together comedy and tragedy, fiction and nonfiction into a unique program. Note that in some tournaments this is also called Programmed Oral Interpretation, or “POI.” The time limit is ten minutes.

For more information:

- Golden Gate Speech Association at: [ggsa.org](http://ggsa.org)
- California High School Speech Association at: [chssa.org](http://chssa.org)
- National Speech and Debate Association at: [speechanddebate.org](http://speechanddebate.org)

## Friends of El Cerrito Forensics

This group is made up of parents to fundraise and coordinate support for the Speech and Debate Team. We are fiscally sponsored through the ECHS Student Activity Fund (“SAF”). EIN 91-1935426. Reference EC SAF/EC Forensics. Contact us at [ecforensics@gmail.com](mailto:ecforensics@gmail.com)

## Support us

The team is made possible by generous donations from our community of family, friends and supporters. The program does not receive financial support from the West Contra Costa Unified School District. The costs of coaching, tournament fees, and materials are covered by the Friends of El Cerrito Forensics and their donors.

If you would like to support the team:

- **Zeffy:** We offer Zeffy as an electronic option to donate using Apple Pay, Google, credit cards or ACH/bank transfer. [Donate to EC Forensics via Zeffy](#). You are welcome to zero out the processing fee. It is not required and 100% of your donation will go to us.

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