

Original Oratory General Information

Guide to Original Oratory:

[The Complete Guide](#)

- Hit control f (or command f on Mac) and search “original oratory”

Rules for OO:

(excerpted from [here](#))

1. **Purpose:** The general purpose of the speech is to persuade. Any other purpose such as to inform or entertain shall be secondary.
2. **Contest:** This contest comprises only memorized orations actually composed by the contestants and not used by them during a previous contest season. No visual aids are permitted.
3. **Subject:** Any appropriate subject may be used, but the orator must be truthful. Any non-factual reference, especially a personal one, must be so identified.
4. **Length:** The time limit in Original Oratory is **ten minutes with a 30-second “grace period.”** If there are multiple judges in the round, all must agree that the student has gone beyond the grace period. Should a student go beyond the grace period, the student may not be ranked 1st. There is no other prescribed penalty for going over the grace period. The ranking is up to each individual judge’s discretion. Judges who choose to time are to use accurate (stopwatch function) timing devices. **No minimum time is mandated.**
5. **Quotation:** **Not more than 150 words of the oration may be direct quotation** from any other speech or writing and such quotations must be identified in a printed copy of the oration supplied prior to registration. Extensive paraphrasing from other sources is prohibited.
6. **Script:** The orator’s script must identify the quoted materials, state the number of quoted words, include a work cited page in APA or MLA format, and both the orator and the coach must attest by signature that the oration is the original work of the contestant. It is the responsibility of the contestant to have a script ready upon request should the speech be challenged. At the National Tournament, all quarterfinalists in OO are required to turn in a printed, typed copy of their manuscript, including a works cited page, to the ombudsperson before noon on the third day of competition.
7. **Re-Use:** A student may not use an oration the student used in district or national competition in any previous contest year.

Good Speeches to Watch:

["Simply Put"](#)

["Won't You Be My Neighbor"](#)

["Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Purpose"](#)

- As you watch these speeches, try to identify the common patterns in speech structure, delivery, etc.. Figure out what the speakers do to make their speeches successful!
- You can find all OO national final rounds (1983-present) [here!](#) (need an NSDA account to access)
 - You can also find oratory speeches and performances of other events on the [NSDA youtube channel!](#)

General Tips:

For writing:

1. Choose a topic that you are passionate about. Remember, you will likely use this speech throughout the season!
 - If you no longer feel interested in your topic, change it! It can show in your delivery that you don't feel completely vested in your argument.
 - However, try not to change your topic mid-season!
2. Try to start planning, researching, and writing your speech EARLY. Preferably, try to start over the summer!
 - You will have much less time to work on your speech during the school year, so try to at least have a topic/general outline of your speech by the time school starts.
3. OO speeches are **much more informal** than traditional English essays. Make sure this is reflected in your word choice and tone!
4. Take full advantage of [East's library database](#). You can find research papers, journal articles, etc., completely free!
 - East also has a subscription to *The New York Times*! If you don't have an account already, click [this link](#) and enter your CHCLC email address.
5. Your introduction is arguably one of the most important parts of your speech. You will have to grab the attention of your audience (and your judge!) quickly.
 - Humor is a very effective attention getter, however you risk getting potentially "stonewalled" (where no one reacts to your speech).
 - Other good attention-getters include anecdotes, a "dramatic entrance," etc. Try to experiment and present in front of test audiences!
6. You should have between 2-4 main points in your speech.

7. Your conclusion can involve restating your main points and a “final thought” on your topic (see example speeches to see how this is done).
 - If you’re pressed for time, you don’t have to restate your thesis! Just have a few sentences that organically bring your speech to its end.
8. Allusions can be included in your speech (whether it’s referencing popular culture, literature, etc.) but keep in mind you do not know who your audience will be!
9. Keep track of your sources! Make sure to have a bibliography (this can be in MLA or APA format) with all the sources you’ve used for your speech.
 - If you found your sources online (especially if it’s from East’s database) make sure you permalink them!
 - Citation help can be found [here](#).
 - Don’t stress too much about the bibliography—this is only needed if your speech gets challenged.
10. You should NOT completely rewrite your speech between competitions. This greatly increases the risk of memory lapses!
11. If you get judge comments suggesting that you change some of the content in your speech, do NOT change anything (if you don’t want to) unless it has been pointed out by multiple judges across multiple competitions.
 - However, if you feel like something isn’t working in your speech and it’s affecting your performance, change it! Just make sure you memorize the change in time for the next competition!

For practicing:

1. Remember, oratory is as much about delivery as it is about content! Practice and refine your gestures, tone and tonal changes, etc., often.
 - Make sure you’re gesturing throughout your speech, but don’t overdo it or make it look too rehearsed. Try to stick with gestures that make sense and further the points you’re trying to make!
2. PRACTICE IN FRONT OF A MIRROR! This is especially important when focusing on gestures.
3. When presenting, speak clearly and confidently. **Don’t rush** through your speech!
4. Memorize your speech in chunks. Start with the introduction, add your first main point, and continue until you’ve memorized it completely.
5. Make sure your speech is COMPLETELY MEMORIZED. Remember, you can’t have notecards of any kind!
6. Present your speech in front of others as often as you can, whether this is in front of a coach or a group of friends. This will allow you to get as much feedback as you can!

7. **TIME YOUR SPEECH!** There is no minimum time requirement, but you can't go over 10:30 or you will not rank first. Make sure your speech stays within this time limit!
 - Also, make sure you have enough leeway in your speech's time in case you present slower!

For competitions:

1. If you are in an in-person competition, try presenting your speech in front of a wall or mirror before your round. Don't worry, everyone else will be doing this too.
2. Competitions can be extremely stressful! Before you present, take deep breaths to calm any nerves you may have. Remember, the other speakers in your round are likely stressed too.
 - Breathing technique: breathe in for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, and breathe out for 4 seconds.
3. If you get "stonewalled" (where no one reacts to your speech) in your round, don't panic! Keep presenting your speech as confidently as you can.
4. If you suddenly can't remember the next part of your speech, **DON'T PANIC.**
 - Be completely silent as you try to remember; don't say filler words such as "um," "like," or "so."
 - This will look much better to the judge, and they may not even notice you've forgotten!
 - If you still can't remember, take deep breaths. The information will come.
 - Remember that many orators (including the competitors in your round!) have most likely blanked on their own speeches, meaning they have been through this and understand your situation.
 - To minimize or eliminate the risk of blanking, practice your speech often.
5. If you have not advanced to an (in-person) elimination round, you are able to sit in as a spectator! Competitions give you the opportunity to see more OO speeches, and viewing rounds is a great way to improve your own speech!
 - You sit in for other events as well.
6. When going to a round, bring a water bottle and your phone (leave everything else).
 - Make sure your phone is on silent during the round!

Competition Procedure/Etiquette:

In-person competitions:

- Competition attire is business/business casual. This typically includes a dress shirt and/or a blazer, formal pants or a skirt, and dress shoes.

- **To bring:** water, your phone, a charger, comfy shoes (if needed), your bibliography (if needed), snacks/lunch (if needed), money (if needed), and any homework (if you want).
 - **Water is extremely important to bring! You will be speaking a lot!**
- You will either be entered on Tabroom or Speechwire for the competition.
 - [Tabroom](#)
 - [Speechwire](#)
 - From here you can access round locations, speaker codes, speaker order, and eballots (you will get judge feedback after the competition).
 - Round locations are typically released **15 minutes** before the round starts.
- Make sure you know where and when your round starts. Try to arrive **5 minutes before start time**.
- When you get to your round (which will most likely be in a classroom) write your last name, speaker code, and speech title on the board.
 - Example: Smith, 1234, "Title"
 - If you need to include content warnings, also include them on the board.
- The judge will call your speaker code when it's time for you to present.
- Your round will typically have 4-6 other speakers and at least 1 judge, depending on the round and competition (elim rounds typically have more judges present).
- If you bring your phone to a round (whether you're competing or spectating) make sure it is on silent and you do not use it for the duration of the round.
- *If you need to leave the round for any reason, do NOT reopen the door while another speaker is presenting. Wait until they've finished, and then you can go in.*
- OO rounds typically last about an hour depending on the number of competitors present in the round.
- After competitions, you can access your eballots (which will show rankings and judge comments) on either Tabroom or Speechwire (depending on the competition)
 - Your points from competitions will go automatically into your NSDA account where you can access them at any time.