



UConn 4-H Fact Sheet

4-H Public Speaking Evaluator Guide



UConn | EXTENSION

The purpose of the 4-H Public Speaking contest is for youth participants to acquire skills, confidence and poise in speaking to an audience by the public delivery of a topic of their choosing. Through preparation and presentation, they expand basic knowledge on the selected topic, learn research skills and the tools to crafting a persuasive argument, and how to successfully share their knowledge with others in a public setting.

Your Job as an Evaluator

Your priority as a 4-H Public Speaking judge is to evaluate and provide constructive feedback to youth presenters. Your emphasis should be to motivate 4-H members to continue their participation in public speaking and advance their skills from year to year. Following these guidelines will help you to accomplish this.

Accent the Positive – Compliment the presenter on something favorable about their presentation, then go on to suggest ways of improving in the future. Keep in mind that the young people who are presenting may be doing so for the first time or are relatively inexperienced in the art of public speaking. Although the event is competitive, comments should remain constructive and positive. Your comments should encourage youth to want to continue learning about communication and the art of speaking in front of an audience.

Accept and Respect – Each young presenter comes to this event with special interests and a unique perspective. Try to see the presentation through the eyes of the youth as well as from your own viewpoint. It is important to NOT let personal tastes influence your evaluation. Your opinion on the topic should not be reflected in the score in any way.

EXAMPLE: If you are lactose intolerant, and a person is presenting on ice cream, you cannot let your personal situation dictate how you score the presentation. Understanding that ice cream may not be good for you doesn't make it bad for everyone else.

Focus on the Presentation – Praise should be sincere and in line with achievement. Critical comments should not portray disapproval of the presenter or overemphasis of unimportant details. Evaluate each presentation with consideration of how well the presenter has prepared and their understanding of relevant information and principles of presentation. Avoid comparing one presentation to another. Keep in mind that more is expected from older youth who in most cases have been practicing public speaking longer.

Ask Questions – As a judge, you will have an opportunity at the end of each presentation to ask a follow up question for clarification. This is an opportunity to test the presenter’s understanding of “why’s” as well as “how’s”. Through your questions, encourage a continuation of learning. Some participants may need higher goals to challenge them, while others might need easier goals that they can achieve without getting discouraged. Positive experiences encourage further learning and desire to continue.

Special note: In past contests, some judges have expected presenters to repeat the question asked before providing an answer. Our rules do NOT require this to occur, therefore no points should be deducted for this occurrence. This helps to ensure that scoring is consistent among all judges and levels of competition.

Encourage Self Evaluation – Help the presenter take a deeper look at their own presentation, considering ways they might improve it in the future. Focus on specifics as outlined on the scoring rubric.

When you are the evaluator

- Review the “4-H Public Speaking Guidelines” for the contest you are judging
- Review the scoring rubric prior to the contest. Be sure to ask any questions of the contest host for clarification.
- Arrive early so that you can meet with the contest host and other judges to review and clarify procedures prior to the event start.
- Judges should work independently when scoring. One score sheet per presenter, per judge.
- The timekeeper or contest host will notify judges of any timing penalties and subsequent points to be deducted.
- Judge each entry on its own merit, while considering the age and experience of the presenter.
- Acknowledge all that was done well before making suggestions for improvement.
- Written statements should be constructive but not harsh, with concrete suggestions for improvement. They should also focus on the accomplishments to foster positive youth development.
- Use judging as an opportunity to motivate youth and help them grow and learn.
- Notify contest host of any concerns or questions you may have before tallying your final scores.
- Emphasize the educational value of the experience. Winning the competition should not be the primary goal of the presenter.
- You may be asked at the end of the contest to provide general comments to the audience on behalf of yourself and other judges.
- Evaluators should not judge more than one 4-H public speaking contest per year whether it be at the county or state level.