



Judging 4-H Presentations

Overview

The Judge's Role

Your most important role is that of a teacher and encourager. It is critical that you give both verbal and written feedback.

A presentation judge is expected to:

- Rate each presentation according to the 4-H guidelines. You should have read all the presentation curriculum on the state website.
- Give reasons for your judging decisions.
- Offer constructive suggestions for improvement.

Types of 4-H Presentations are defined as follows:

- Demonstration: Show how to do something with a finished product at the end.
For individuals or teams
- Illustrated Talk: Sharing of information with the use of visual aids.
For individuals or teams
- Public Speech: Informative or persuasive talk with **no** visual aids.
For individuals only
- Impromptu Speech: Similar to public speech but with no prior preparation.
For individuals only

Suggested Time Limits

	County Contests	State Fair	Spring Horse Classic
Demonstrations and Illustrated Talks	10-20 minutes for Intermediate & Seniors 3-10 minutes for Juniors	10-20 minutes	10-15 minutes
Public Speeches	7-10 minutes for Intermediates & Seniors 3-8 minutes for Juniors	7-10 minutes	7-10 minutes
Impromptu Speeches	3-5 minutes for Intermediates & Seniors Not recommended for Juniors	3-5 minutes	N/A

Judging Guidelines

Rules vary from contest to contest. Be sure to read State Fair or Spring Horse Classic rules on the state website or ask for rules for the county contest you will be judging. There are also different evaluation sheets for the different types of presentations. Make sure you use the appropriate one.

It is important to dress and act professionally. We ask our 4-Hers to be neat and clean, and they expect the same of their judge. Listen attentively while they are presenting. Don't socialize with contestants or parents during the contest.

Although you may have your own preferences, be sure to allow leeway for a member's personal style and creativity. There may be many ways to do something and make a point. What is important is that speakers accomplish what they set out to do.

Take into consideration the limitations of the room or location of the contest. Especially at State Fair, the 4-H members should not be held responsible for power failures or distracting noises from fair visitors or other sources. You also need to be flexible in the contest time schedule. Many presentation contests happen at the same time as other events, and kids need to be able to juggle their times a bit in order to show in everything.

Before the Presentation

Take a minute or two to talk to the contestants before they begin presenting. Most will be nervous. You can help put them at ease by smiling and chatting with them a few seconds. Verify their name, age division, and presentation title. (This should all be written on the evaluation sheet.) You might ask if this is their first time giving a presentation. Let them know what the procedure will be (setting up, taking down, talking with you afterwards, etc.).

Let them begin when they are ready. Be sure you make note of the start time.

After the Presentation

Most contests will allow you time after each presentation to give individual, verbal feedback to the contestant. It is your job to personalize the comments to meet the needs of the speaker. Try to put them at ease and have them relax a bit before you begin giving your comments. You want them to be in a receptive mood.

Always start with a few positive comments. Let them know what you liked and what you thought worked well. If there are several things for the speaker to work on, select only two or three of the most important to discuss with them in person. Don't be afraid to give a hands-on demonstration. Show them how they could handle posters, move around the room, or fluctuate their voice. This is a wonderful opportunity for them to learn.

Show compassion. If the presenter is showing signs of becoming upset, stop what you are saying, restate the positive aspects of their presentation, and end the interview.

Finish up the interview by thanking them for giving a presentation and encourage them to do one again next year.

In addition to your verbal feedback, it is critical that you provide as much written feedback as you can on the evaluation sheets. Don't just mark the boxes! Write comments as well, using the back of the sheet if more space is needed. Most contestants are too emotional at the feedback interview (either from nervousness or relief at being done!) to really remember what you tell them. Your written suggestions will be of much more use to them when they read the evaluation sheets at a later time.

When Judging Demonstrations:

- Organization is crucial. Steps must be easy to follow. It helps if all equipment/items are arranged in the order they will be used and are visible to the audience, but remember this is not always possible.
- Workmanship is important. Members should be proficient at what they are demonstrating.
- If time prevents all steps from being done during the contest, it's all right if they bring some things already completed. However, they should fully explain the missing steps.
- Presenters should not attempt to involve the audience in the demonstration. Presentations are not a hands-on learning experience for the audience.

When Judging Illustrated Talks:

- Ask yourself if the information was presented in an interesting, engaging manner. Give credit for creativity!
- Visuals should have a purpose.
- If video is used, the speaker should talk while the video plays. The video should not be the presentation.
- Once the presentation begins, only the contestant(s) should handle visuals including equipment. No one else should start or stop a video, tape recording, etc.

When Judging Public Speeches:

- The speech must be informative or persuasive. They should not be simply for entertainment.
- Absolutely NO visual aids can be used.
- Speeches are usually not the best type for complex topics.
- Organization and transitions are critical because there are no visual aids to help the audience follow along.

- Contestants may be passionate about their topic, but their emotions must not overpower the facts.
- Speeches often have a personal tie-in, but this is not mandatory.

When Judging Impromptu Speeches:

- No visual aids are used unless the presenter is given an object to talk about.
- Organization and transitions are very important.
- The speaker should not wander too far from the given topic.

A Few Specific Considerations

Dress

There is no standard dress code for giving presentations. As long as the contestants are neat and clean, you should not mark down for what they are wearing. You may, however, reward them for going beyond the basics and presenting a “complete package.” Those who wear clothing that fits their topic, who coordinate a color scheme with clothes and posters, or who carry appropriate props have demonstrated depth of thought and careful planning, and you should give them credit for that.

Introductions

Encourage those who are willing to try innovative techniques when beginning their presentation. Reward those who have an attention getting strategy before they give their name and club/county. If they omit this part, share options with them to try in the future. Many styles are described in the handout “Parts of a Presentation” (211-200C).

Topic

The topic does not have to be controversial or earth-shattering. A complex topic should not automatically score higher than a common, everyday topic. Many times, the everyday topic will present more useful and practical information that everyone can take home and apply. Take into consideration the age and experience of the presenter.

Visual Aids

Stress the difference between a presentation poster and an educational display. Give credit for visuals that are carefully constructed and creative. If a live animal is used, safety must be a priority.

Cohesiveness

The best presentations will have all aspects tied together into one cohesive package. The conclusion will relate back to the introduction. The visual aids will fit in smoothly. A color

scheme will be followed, and the speaker's dress will support or complement the topic. The audience will be able to follow a logical organization pattern and be brought full circle from the start to the finish.

Team Presentations

Both members of the team should demonstrate equal speaking ability and talk for approximately the same amount of time. One person should not dominate or "carry" the other, and they should rotate between speakers fairly often. Give credit to teams that can play off of each other and interact with each other, and that take the care to dress alike or to complement each other.

Questions

At the end of their presentation, speakers should always ask for questions. The contestant should repeat the question before answering OR incorporate the question into the answer.

Many contests allow only the judge to ask questions. You should make sure you ask each contestant at least one or two questions. Be sure to phrase your questions as simply as possible. It is NOT your task to try to trick the speaker or find questions they might not know the answer to. Don't embarrass them by saying their answer is wrong. If they don't know the answer, it is better for them to give you some ideas of where to find the answer than to tell you they will "look it up and get back to you."

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