

Massachusetts Forensic League

Manual
For New Coaches



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Welcome

Starting a speech or debate team can be exciting and rewarding. It is also a lot of work and can be quite confusing at first. We have created this manual to help you get started. In addition to the information in this booklet the entire MFL Board stands ready to assist you in any way that we can. Some of us have been coaching for years and some of us have only recently started teams ourselves, so we can offer you many perspectives on how things can be done. We have assembled the following information to let you know the kinds of things you need to consider as you start your team. Don't try to do everything at once. The most successful teams started small and then grew over time.

Let us know if we can help you in any way and we will do our best to help you get started.

The Massachusetts Forensic League (MFL)

The purpose of the Massachusetts Forensic League is to stimulate interest in speech training and to promote participation in interscholastic debate, oratory, interpretive speaking and interpretative oral reading. It is comprised of many Massachusetts high schools, with affiliate schools in other New England states. The league sponsors several tournaments in both debate and public speaking each year, and its member schools are the major components of the New England NFL district and the Boston and Worcester dioceses of the CFL.

You can find out information about the MFL, including a calendar of tournaments at www.massforensics.org

Joining the Massachusetts Forensic League

The Massachusetts Forensic League welcomes any interest from new members wishing to join us in speech, debate, and congress. Forensics teaches skills and abilities that serve young people for the rest of their lives, from quick thinking and analysis in public address and debate events, to dramatic expression and presentation in the interpretative events. A solid education in speech and debate is an essential experience for any student.

Technical details of joining

To register for tournaments, sign yourself up for MFL mailing lists, and be listed as a chapter member of the MFL, first you must create yourself an account on our online database. Visit the MFL website to sign up for an account and to add yourself to our mailing list. (Instructions are on page 13.) www.massforensics.org

How do I get started?

Teaching good public speaking and debate is by no means an exact science. The MFL offers a periodic Coaches Convention for coaches of the MFL to discuss techniques and curriculum from some of the experts within the MFL and from beyond. Ask the President (email below) for details about the Coaches Convention. The Chairs of Speech, Debate and Congress also serve as curricular resources for their particular areas of expertise. We are in the process of working on video materials, online guides, and further material for the benefit of new programs.

Dues and fees

Tournament fees are set by the individual tournaments themselves and are specified in the tournament invitations. All MFL Tournament invitations are posted to the MFL website a few weeks before the tournament, under the links to each tournament listed on the schedule. The invitation will explain any particulars behind registering for the tournament, limits or restrictions on entry, and further information.

In addition, MFL member school dues to the League are \$50 per year. You may attend a tournament or two before committing to full MFL membership if you are a new school to the MFL. Once you have signed onto the online system, you will receive an invoice for dues. The deadline for paying dues for any given school year is December 1. After that, a late fee is imposed.

Further questions?

If you have further questions, the President of the MFL (president@massforensics.org) and the Secretary (secretary@massforensics.org) are specifically there for new program outreach. Feel free to email either or both of them with any questions.

You can contact the entire board at once by sending e-mail to: board@massforensics.org or you can reach an individual board member by typing their first name [@massforensics.org](mailto:christopher@massforensics.org). For example, to send e-mail to Chris, type chris@massforensics.org.

Officers of the MFL from 2011-2013.

President: Debbie Simon (Milton Academy)

VP/Secretary: Lisa Honeyman (Newton South)

Treasurer: Rob Croteau (Catholic Memorial)

Congress Chair: PJ Wexler (Needham)

Debate Chair: Bill Cooper (Manchester-Essex)

Speech Chair: Joyce Albert (Natick)

At-Large Members

Massachusetts Forensic League Event Rules

Children's Literature (KL)

This event requires the use of a manuscript. The student should present material designed to read to children so that it may be understood and appreciated by a young child or children. (Note: This does not mean the literature must fall under nursery level only). The selection must be from a single published fictional or non-fictional story, play, a single long poem or a program of poetry. Material from more than one source is not allowed. The author's words as published in the literature may not be altered for this presentation with the exception that cutting is permitted. The student may use vocal skills, facial expressions, and/or hand gestures to develop a narrator and character/s. The presentation should include an introduction that cites the name of the piece and the author. The cutting should provide a cohesive scene or storyline (containing a definite beginning, middle and end). No costumes or props may be used in the presentation.

Time: 10 minute maximum including introduction [30 second grace]; no minimum.

Dramatic Performance (DP)

This is a memorized event in which the student presents a memorized selection of literature. The presentation should include an introduction that cites the name of the piece and the author, and should develop the narrative and/or character(s) via vocal and physical techniques. The selection must be from a single published play, a fictional or non-fictional work, or a poem or program of poetry. Material from more than one author is not allowed. The author's words as published in the literature may not be altered for this presentation with the exception that cutting is permitted. No scripts, costumes, or props may be used in the presentation.

Time: 10 minute maximum including introduction [30 second grace]; no minimum.

Duo Interpretation (DUO)

Duo is a unique, memorized event challenging two performers to render a dynamic moment utilizing appropriate vocal expression, gesture, and interaction between partners. As a unit, the two performers will vocally and physically respond to each other's verbal and non-verbal cues while maintaining an off-stage focus. Thus, the scene requiring disciplined interplay between partners and the environment is created in the minds of the audience. The students may only touch and make eye contact during their own written introduction. If lines from the selection are used in the introduction, the contestants must adhere to the rules of the event. The presentation should include an introduction that cites the name of the piece and the author. The selection must be from a single published play, a fictional or non-fictional work, or a poem. Material from more than one source is not allowed. The author's words as published in the literature may not be altered for this presentation with the exception that cutting is permitted. Speakers may not take lines belonging to one character and apply them to a different character in the performance. The material may be humorous or dramatic, or may combine both tones, depending on the work selected. Performers may play more than one character if they choose, but it is not required. No scripts, costumes or props may be used in the presentation

Time: 10 minute maximum including introduction [30 second grace]; no minimum.

Extemporaneous Speaking (VX)

The students will draw three topics of current interest from the material prepared by the tournament director. Usually topics are based on articles taken from recent issues of publications from major media outlets. The student must pick one of the three topics to prepare for a presentation. The students will have a 30 minute preparation period during which personal information files of books, magazines, and/or newspapers may be used to put together the presentation. After the preparation period, the student should deliver a speech to be evaluated for content and delivery. A single note-card with no more than 50 written words is permitted. If a note-card is to be used, the judge must review it prior to the presentation. Any note-card violation should be brought to the attention of the prep room coordinator prior to the speech; or, the student may choose to proceed without the use of the note-card. The topic slip must be presented to the judge in the round. No visual aids are allowed. A 3-minute cross-examination period will be included in the final round of varsity extemp.

Time: 7 min. maximum [30 second grace]; no minimum.

Group Discussion (GD)

Group Discussion is an event in which students discuss and argue a topic set at the beginning of the round. The topics will present an issue, designed to introduce a variety of conflicting opinions. Students will be given the generic nature of the issue in the invitation, with a specific focus to be discussed at the start of the round. Students should research the topic in advance and may bring notes and outside resources into the competition. After the topic is revealed, students will be given 5 minutes to formulate their argument, draw for speaking order, and then each shall be given 2 minutes to deliver an opening statement. Then an open discussion period of up to 15 minutes shall follow in which the issue is discussed and criteria for a resolution or recommendation are established, followed by another period of open discussion of up to 15 minutes to present and discuss possible solutions that meet those criteria. The students will then have 1 minute to prepare their final arguments and 2 minutes to present their final argument in the reverse order of their opening. *Time: See description above*

Multiple Reading (MULT)

This event requires the use of a manuscript. A group of 3-8 students will present a scene or scenes from published material (play(s), work(s) of prose, and/or work(s) of poetry. The material may be either serious or humorous in nature. The students may use vocal skills, facial expressions, and/or hand gestures to develop a narrator and character/s; however, the focus of the performers should be off-stage. The students may only touch and make eye contact during their own written introduction. If lines from the selection are used in the introduction, the contestants must adhere to the rules of the event. The presentation should include an introduction that cites the name(s) of the piece(s) and the author(s). The cutting should provide a cohesive scene or storyline (containing a definite beginning, middle and end). The material must be found in printed literature. Props, costumes, and other theatrical devices are prohibited; however, reader's stands or stools may be used.

Time: 12 minute maximum including introduction [30 second grace]; no minimum.

Novice Extemporaneous Speaking (NX)

Same as Extemporaneous Speaking. Limited to first year forensic competitors ONLY. (No cross-ex in finals.)

Novice Reading (NR)

This event is limited to first year forensic competitors ONLY and requires the use of a manuscript. The student will present material either from prose, poetry, or drama. Children's literature is acceptable in this category. The student may use vocal skills, facial expressions, and/or hand gestures to develop a narrator and character/s. The presentation should include an introduction that cites the name of the piece and the author. The selection must be from a single published play, a fictional or non-fictional work, or a poem. Material from more than one source is not allowed. The author's words as published in the literature may not be altered for this presentation with the exception that cutting is permitted. No costumes or props may be used in the presentation. Students may only enter Novice Reading if they meet the MFL criteria for novice status. Students who advance to finals in Novice Reading twice at MFL tournaments may not enter Novice Reading again. Novice Reading is NOT a State Finals event.

Time: 10 minute maximum including introduction [30 second grace]; no minimum.

Oratorical Declamation (DEC)

Declamation is a memorized event in which the student delivers a speech written by some other person. The speech must have been presented as a public address and found in print, on video, DVD or on an audio recording. Speeches that have been used only for forensic competition are not acceptable, even if they can be found in print. The presentation should include an introduction that provides the title of the speech and the author, and should include relevant information about the theme and date of the oration or its historical significance. Dialects of the original speaker need not be mimicked. No scripts, costumes, or props may be used in the presentation.

Time: 10 min maximum [30 second grace]; no minimum

Original Oratory (OO)

Oratory is a memorized event in which the student presents original thought and commentary on a topic of his/her choice. Generally, but not always, the speech is of a persuasive nature. No manuscripts may be used during the presentation. A maximum of 150 directly quoted words is allowed in the oration. Students will be judged on their delivery skills and ability to discuss the topic effectively and intelligently. No scripts, costumes, or props may be used in the presentation.

Time: 10 min. maximum [30 second grace]; no minimum.

Play Reading (PL)

This event requires the use of a manuscript. The student should present a scene or scenes from a published play. The material may be either serious or humorous in nature. The student may use vocal skills, facial expressions, and/or hand gestures to develop a narrator and character or characters. The presentation should include an introduction that cites the name of the piece and the author. The selection must be from a single published play. Material from more than one source is not allowed. The author's words as published in the play may not be altered for this presentation with the exception that cutting is permitted. No costumes or props may be used in the presentation.

Time: 10 minute maximum including introduction [30 second grace]; no minimum.

Poetry Reading (PO)

This event requires the use of a manuscript. The student will present material chosen from published poetry. Students may present either a single, long poem or several shorter poems connected either by theme or by author. The student may use vocal skills, facial expressions, and/or hand gestures to develop a narrator and character/s. The presentation should include an introduction that cites the name of the piece(s) and the author(s). The poetry need not have a rhyming pattern. Free verse poetry is acceptable in this event. Verse dramas such as *For Colored Girls . . .*, including the plays of Shakespeare, are not classified as poetry. The material must be found in printed literature. No costumes or props may be used in the presentation.

Time: 10 minute maximum including introduction [30 second grace]; no minimum.

Prose Reading (PR)

This event requires the use of a manuscript. The student will present material chosen from a single published short story, novel, or essay, fictive or non-fictive. The material may be either serious or humorous in nature. The student may use vocal skills, facial expressions, and/or hand gestures to develop a narrator and character/s. The presentation should include an introduction that cites the name of the piece and the author. No costumes or props may be used in the presentation.

Time: 10 minute maximum including introduction [30 second grace]; no minimum.

Radio Broadcasting (RB)

Radio broadcasting is a public address event in which a student presents a classic "top-of-the-hour" news broadcast in the voice of a single professional broadcaster. In this event, each student will receive a packet of news-copy or a newspaper. The student will report to a preparation room where s/he will have 30 minutes to select and organize the material into a 5 minute radio news broadcast. Judges will listen to (not watch) the presentation. Throughout the broadcast, the timekeeper or judge will keep the student informed of time. Students may use minimal introductory remarks and transitional material. Advertising, including sponsorship taglines, is not allowed even if it is included in the copy provided by the tournament staff. Radio Broadcasting will be an official MFL event through the 2007-2008 season. After that, it will be replaced by Impromptu.

Time: 5 minutes; 5 second grace over or under time.

Student Congress

In this event, students simulate a working House of Representatives or Senate of the US Congress. Students debate legislation they have written, conduct the rules and regulations of the chambers, and vote on enacting bills and resolutions. Students do not pretend to be members of the real US Congress, but instead speak for themselves and debate their own viewpoints. Students should debate the issues with eloquence and strong analysis and research on the legislation, as well as answering and countering the arguments of the opposing side where appropriate. Students should also conduct themselves fairly and responsibly in the workings of the chamber, and may be penalized for inappropriate or disruptive actions therein. The Student Congress will be run under the direction of a league official called the Parliamentarian. The Congress Chair will maintain guidelines and rules of conduct for the Student Congress.

NATIONAL LEAGUES

There are two national leagues that you can join in addition to the MFL (state league). One is the National Catholic Forensic League (NCFL) and the other is the National Forensic League (NFL). Both sponsor national tournaments in the spring. In order for students to enter the national tournaments the school that they attend must be a member and they must qualify. Qualifying tournaments for the NCFL and NFL are held in February and March, respectively. The event rules for these two leagues are a little bit different from the MFL and from each other. This can be a bit confusing when you are first starting out. If you plan to enter the qualifying tournaments, be sure to check the NFL and NCFL websites for the most recent updates of their rules and for copies of their ballots. Read them carefully so you can advise your students knowledgeably. If you have any questions, contact one of the league moderators of the NCFL or a member of the district committee for the NFL.

The National Catholic Forensic League (NCFL)

The National Catholic Forensic League is a national league that was originally created for parochial schools. Many years ago they opened up membership to all schools in the country. Most schools in the MFL participate in the Boston Diocese or the Worcester Diocese, depending up where they are located. There is also a Providence Diocese to which a few schools close to the Rhode Island border belong.

Boston Diocese Moderator – Greg Cunningham (Hull High School) : gregcjr@hotmail.com

Worcester Diocese Moderator – Sarah Donnelly (Natick High School): sdonnelly1013@yahoo.com

Providence Diocese Moderator – Mike Grossi (Pawtucket): 401-487-9220

If you are not sure which diocese you should join, contact one of the diocese moderators and they will help you find out. The diocese lines are set by the Catholic Church.

You can learn more about the NCFL at their website: <http://www.ncfl.org>

Each year the NCFL conducts a national tournament. In order to enter, students must qualify. The Boston and Worcester diocese conduct a combined Boston/Worcester qualifier at Shrewsbury High School in February each year. You must be an NCFL member school in order to enter the qualifier. Dues are \$50.

NCFL events are:

- Dramatic Performance (Includes DI & HI)
- Oratorical Interpretation (Both Prose & Poetry required)
- Declamation (9th & 10th graders only)
- Duo Interpretation
- Original Oratory
- Extemporaneous speaking
- Congress
- Lincoln-Douglas Debate
- Policy Debate
- Public Forum Debate

The National Forensic League (NFL)

The National Forensic League is a National Speech Honor Society. Prominent NFL alumni include President Lyndon Johnson, Vice President Hubert Humphrey, Academy Award winner Don Ameche, Emmy award winner Daniel J. Travanti, actress Shelly Long, television host Oprah Winfrey, news anchor Jane Pauley, Justice Stephen Breyer and thousands of other leaders in politics, business, education, law and public service.

The NFL holds a national tournament each June for which students must qualify. All MFL schools that are NFL members are part of the New England District. Dues to become an Affiliate or Charter Member of the NFL are \$99. The New England District Committee for 2006-2007 includes:

District Chair:

Marc Rischitelli (Shrewsbury High); e-mail: charc98@hotmail.com

District Committee:

Lisa Honeyman (Newton South)

Lynne Coyne (Lexington)

Debbie Simon (Milton Academy)

PJ Wexler (Needham)

Many schools that do not choose to compete in this national league join the NFL anyway, because it is a National Honor Society. Students earn points when they compete in speech and debate contests. When they earn 25 points, they are eligible to become NFL members. They receive a nice certificate and can continue earning higher degrees through competition. Colleges are knowledgeable about the NFL and seem to take membership seriously. To learn more about the NFL, visit their website: www.nflonline.org

If you are interested in becoming an Affiliate or Charter Member of the NFL, get in touch with Marc Rischitelli or anyone on the District Committee. They will help you get started.

NFL events are:

- Dramatic Interpretation
- Humorous Interpretation
- Duo Interpretation
- Original Oratory
- Domestic Extemporaneous Speaking
- International Extemporaneous Speaking
- Congress
- Public Forum Debate
- Lincoln-Douglas Debate
- Policy Debate

National Federation of Interscholastic Speech and Debate Association. (NFISDA)

You can join NFISDA for \$20 per year. As a member, you receive \$1,000,000 insurance coverage for when you are working with students or accompanying them to speech or drama activities (such as tournaments) outside of school hours. You can get an application and see the details of what they offer at: www.nfhs.org (select [professional organizations] from the menu on their homepage and then “Speech, Debate and Theater Association.”) Through NFISDA schools that have debate programs can vote on the national Policy Debate topic for each competitive year.

GETTING STARTED AT SCHOOL

The first thing you need to do if you are going to start a team is to find some students who are interested in participating. Recruit students from your classes and the drama group if there is one at your school. Forensics offers wonderful performance opportunities for the theatrically inclined. Ask history teachers if they have any students that are particularly interested in government or current events. They might like to do debate, congress or extemp. You will want to keep the group small at first because you will all be learning. Once you feel confident about what you are doing, you can let the team grow. Many teams hold an information meeting at the beginning of the year to recruit new students.

At first, you may not feel ready to have captains, but eventually you will want to create a leadership structure so that you can delegate some of the work to students. In the beginning, students can help put posters around the building publicizing the team and can help organize refreshments at practices and fundraising activities. As they become more skilled, they can be very helpful when it comes to recruiting new members and coaching one another.

Once you have found some interested students, you will need to gather some information from them in order to travel. Work with the school administration to be sure you have filed the necessary paper work to take students to tournaments. Many schools require that you file a general permission to take a ‘trip’ and then that each student has written permission in order to participate. You will also find it helpful to have an emergency contact/information sheet for each student. Although most MFL tournaments are in-state, some can be more than an hour away from your home community and in the event of a serious medical emergency you will want to have information about allergies and medications students are taking to give to paramedics or emergency room physicians. You will also want to have contact numbers so you can reach parents/guardians quickly.

TOURNAMENT SEASON

During the year, there are many tournament opportunities. The MFL calendar is posted on the MFL website. Most new teams limit their participation to league tournaments and perhaps NCFE or NFL nationals if their students qualify, but there are a number of travel opportunities within reasonable distance (Yale, U-Penn, Columbia etc.) if your students are ready for competition outside of Massachusetts. There is no requirement that you attend every tournament. Pick the ones that fit your schedule and budget.

In the MFL, most tournaments offer either debate or speech events, but not both. There are a few exceptions, but you really need to decide what events you will offer and therefore which

tournaments you will attend. If you chose to offer both debate and speech events, you may end up at tournaments during almost every weekend from October through mid-April. Most coaches choose to coach one or the other. Some schools offer both speech and debate programs, but they usually have more than one coach sharing the responsibilities.

Tournament invitations to MFL tournaments are posted on the MFL website 3-4 weeks in advance. Every MFL Speech tournament will offer the 16 official events and many have additional offerings. Once the invitation is posted, take a look at the events that are offered, what the rules are if there are non-MFL events, and what the judging requirements are. This will help you and your students decide what event(s) they would like to enter. The invitation will also tell you how to register and what the deadlines are as well as any fees that will be charged for participation.

FINDING COMPETITION MATERIAL

Finding good material is always a challenge, even for the most experienced coaches and students. To help students in DI, HI and Play Reading, sign up to be on the mailing lists of major theatrical publishing companies such as Samuel French, Baker's Plays, Dramatists Play Service and Dramatic Publishing. All of these companies have websites where you can do on-line searches for material.

Students are often an excellent source for material. Have them think about whether a book or short story they are reading might make a good speech piece. Visit libraries and ask the librarians for suggestions. Novels can be a challenge to cut if you try to tell an entire story, but often one chapter can stand alone and make for a compelling piece.

If you build a library of scripts and other source material (books, poetry anthologies etc.) be sure to keep a record of what you have and then set up a system for signing out material. As your team grows, you can start creating a cutting file so future students can draw from material that previous students have used successfully.

Extempers and Debaters will find the internet is a valuable source of information. Services like Infotrack and Lexis-Nexis allow students to search based upon specific topics. If your school does not have subscriptions to these services, check with the local public library. Usually members of the community can log on to the public library sites from home and use their search engines. Magazines such as *The Economist* and *Newsweek* can give extempers a good idea of what the main news stories in the world are so they know what to research to update their files. You might consider getting a subscription to a magazine like that to get them started.

MFL SOURCE MATERIAL RULES FOR INTERP

The intent of the MFL is that all materials presented in interpretation events must be available to all members of the league. All coaches should be able to produce an original source with an ISBN, ISSN, or IFFN. If the manuscript does not have an ISBN, ISSN, or IFFN, then, upon challenge, the coach or supervising adult must be able to show that the source was purchased or obtained commercially; i.e. from a literary agent or publisher or bill of sale. Material that is publicly available by internet with documented URL and retrieval date is also acceptable. All material for interpretive events must be published in print form: it is not acceptable to transcribe interp material from movies, DVDs or VCR tapes.

SETTING UP AN ACCOUNT AT MASSFORENSICS.ORG

In order to get on the MFL mailing list and to register students to attend MFL tournaments, you must set up an account at tabroom.com. You do this once, when you first become involved with the MFL. From then on you just enter your e-mail address and password to log on to the system.

Here are the steps:

1. Go to <http://massforensics.weebly.com>
2. Select [Login] on the menu at the right
3. Select [Create a new account] at the top of the screen
4. Fill in the requested information. Your e-mail address will be the primary means of communication between you and the league, so use one that will be active during the season. The phone number should be one where we can reach you if there are questions about your entry or if we need to contact you about tournament cancellation or delay due to snow or other such emergency.
5. Select [View Chapter] after you have established your account.
6. Enter your roster of students by selecting [View Roster]. You must do this before you can register for tournaments.
7. Enter each student on your team. If a student has not competed in high school forensics before, remember to select the novice box so s/he will be eligible for "Top Novice" awards. Once students are entered into the system, you never need to enter them again. They will stay from season to season unless they graduate (which is why the Year of Graduation is important.)

REGISTERING FOR TOURNAMENTS

Once you have set up an account and know who wants to attend a tournament, select the tournament you would like to attend from the menu in the middle of the page. You can only do this once registration is open, usually 2-3 weeks before a tournament will be held. Once the registration deadline passes, you will no longer be able to add or drop students on your own. At that point you will need to follow the instructions in the invitation about drops.

Students need to know that once they agree to participate, they have made a commitment. Most tournaments charge drop fees for students who do not show up. Have a clear policy about how you will handle drops and who will be responsible for extra charges. Emergencies happen and can be handled. Problems arise when students do not feel a sense of commitment and are not held accountable.

JUDGES

In order to compete at speech tournaments, teams must bring judges. Most MFL tournaments require one judge per five entries in individual events and one judge per two entries in debate. You can act as one judge, but unless your team is really small, you will need to recruit and train others.

Finding Judges

1. **Parents** – They are your primary source for judges
2. **Teachers** - talk with the English and History department chairs and see if they will help you recruit.
3. Once your team has been running for a year or more, you can draw on **graduates** from your program when they return for vacation from college.

Many teams have a parent volunteer who coordinates judges.

Whatever you do, be absolutely sure you arrive at the tournament with the number of judges you are supposed to have. When you register for the tournament you will also have to register the names of your judges. Do not write “TBA” for a judge. A name is needed. You can swap names when you get to the tournament if you need to make last-minute changes.

Be sure that each judge has a timer (stop watch) with them at the tournament. A wristwatch is not sufficient and a wall clock is unacceptable as a timing device. Every event has time limits and judges need to be able to accurately time the contestants. Most coaches buy a supply of timers to lend to judges at tournaments. They are usually not available at the host sites. It is your responsibility as a coach to be sure your judges come prepared.

Training Judges

It is your responsibility to train judges prior to bringing them to tournaments. The MFL can provide you with a booklet that includes the rules for every MFL event as well as a section with questions and answers for judges that will be helpful. Sample ballots for every event can be found on the MFL website so you can show the judges what they look like and how to fill them out before they arrive at the tournament. You can also get a copy of a DVD that includes the 2005 state champions in each competitive event from the MFL free of charge if you are a member school. You can show segments of performances to your judges so they know what to expect from students. Judging is not hard, but most folks want to do a good job and it will help decrease their anxiety the first time they come to a tournament if they know what to expect.

Please be sure that all judges understand that they **MUST** write comments to the students on their ballots pointing out positive aspects of their performances as well as areas where they can improve. This is a requirement for judges at MFL tournaments. If a judge is not willing to do this, please do not bring them to tournament.

If you need help training judges, please get in touch with the MFL board and they will try to assist you.

CORI CHECKS

Massachusetts state law requires that every individual aged 18 or older that may find themselves alone in a room (including a bathroom) with a student must have a criminal background check performed every three years. This check is free of charge to public schools and is called a CORI. It is your responsibility as a coach to be sure every adult that comes to a tournament in Massachusetts with your team has had a CORI evaluation. This means that every judge, chaperone, and visitor must be checked. (This includes college students who are 18 or older.) All public school employees are routinely checked, so you do not need to worry about them. Your school administration will tell you how they handle this for others. Most require that the volunteer fill out a form and produce some sort of picture ID to prove they are who they say they are. Schools often want at least a week to run a check prior to an individual working with students.

STATE FINALS

In order to participate in State Finals in speech events, a student must qualify by earning two bids at MFL sanctioned tournaments during the season. In order to earn one bid, a student must place in the top 30% of students who entered their event, or be in finals. Debaters must have competed in at least one MFL tournament during the season in order to participate in States.

You will probably want to keep track of bids for students on your team so they know when/if they have qualified for States. You will also be able to check on-line towards the end of the season so you know who is eligible to enter States.

MONEY

There are a variety of expenses associated with running a forensics program. There are league dues (MFL = \$50, NCFL = \$50, NFL = \$99), entry fees at tournaments (usually \$5 per entry), transportation costs, expenses for resources such as scripts, binders, magazine subscriptions, extemp/debate tubs, stop watches etc. See what your school will offer you in the way of support. Many programs must do a significant amount of fundraising. If you are able to set up a parent group that can assist with this, it will be very helpful.

Thanks to school and state auditing requirements, all school activity sponsors handling money usually have to deal with activity accounts. This means paperwork, so be prepared. The main reason for all this paperwork is to protect money raised by students as well as any school funds transferred into an activity account. Your principal or the bursar will be able to explain what you need to know. Learn the procedures. Keep good records for your own protection. Also, learn how long it takes to get checks processed so you know how soon you have to get requests in when you need funds.

TRANSPORTATION

Find out what your school's policies are for transporting children to/from tournaments. Many large teams use buses. But, buses are very expensive, so smaller programs often use school vans (if they have them) or have parents drive students to tournaments. Each community has its own rules, so find out what they are for you.

If you ever use your own car to transport students, be sure to check with your insurance agent to see whether or not your policy will cover students you are transporting. Also be certain your limits are high enough to protect you.

PUBLICITY

In order to increase membership and also to gain support for your team, publicity is very important. Find out if your school has a PTA/PTO-type organization. They often have newsletters that are sent to parents in the community. If they do, see if they will include a regular report about how the team is doing. Get in touch with the local newspaper. Perhaps they will run an article about your forming team and their progress. Do what you can to get information out to the school community about what you and your students are doing. It will be very helpful when you need support from the administration (financial or otherwise) if they know what your program is and how it is benefiting their students.

One way to let the school community know what you are doing is to have a performance night. Parents love to see their children perform (often it is the only time they get to see what their children are doing on the team) and it is an opportunity for others to come see what the team does. Some schools do more than one evening of performances during the year. Some use it as a fundraiser.

TOURNAMENT ATTIRE

Speech tournaments are formal events. Students generally wear business attire. For boys, a sport coat and tie or a suit are commonly worn. Girls usually wear a business suit (skirt or pants) or a professional dress or skirt/sweater combination. Jeans and sneakers are generally not appropriate at a speech/debate tournament in the MFL. Some students like to bring a comfortable pair of shoes to wear between rounds. Students need not feel that they must have an expensive suit in order to compete. Many find attractive outfits at second hand shops and discount department stores.

Judges can get away with being a bit more casual. However, they should project a professional demeanor.

WHAT TO EXPECT ON TOURNAMENT DAYS

Prior to Arrival

Call the morning call-in number listed in the invitation to report any last-minute changes to your registration. Even if you have no drops, you must call to let the TAB room know that. This will help keep things running on time.

Arrival

Plan to arrive at the host school about 45-60 minutes before the opening meeting is scheduled. (For speech tournaments this is generally between 8:00-8:15.) Send your team to put their stuff on tables in the cafeteria. Send a student to find an empty room where your team can do warm-ups.

Meanwhile you should register. Pay the fees. Confirm any drops (these need to be called in by 8:00 before you arrive at the tournament). Pick up your packet of schedules, maps, judge handbooks etc.

There will be a competition number for each student and each judge in your packet. Be sure every student and every judge knows his/her competition number(s) so they can check the schematics when they are posted.

Give the judges their schedules (if you have them) and a stop watch if they don't have one of their own. At most tournaments there will be a judge meeting at 8:30. So, send the judges off to their meeting at the appropriate time. If your judges are meeting you at the tournament site, have them meet you at 8:15 so you have time to give them their information and they can get to the meeting on time. After the meeting, be sure to be around to answer questions your judges may still have.

After your judges are taken care of, either attend the judge meeting yourself or go to the warm-up room and finish warming up with your students. Be sure the students are back in the cafeteria, auditorium or wherever they're supposed to be at the designated time. (Usually 9:00 am)

Opening Meeting

At most tournaments there will be a brief opening meeting around 9:00 am. At this time the tournament hosts will explain about any building rules you must follow. They may announce changes to the schedule and they will often explain how to navigate their building. It is very important that all students attend this meeting and that they listen carefully to all information presented.

Schematics

After the TAB room finishes making adjustments to the schedule required due to drops and changes, they will print out schematics and post them around the building. It is important that students know their correct competition numbers so they can check what rooms they will compete in during the 3 preliminary rounds. They should take a pencil with them when they check the postings so they can record their room assignments.

If there are any problems with schematics (for judges or students) be sure to get them straightened out before things get underway.

Preliminary Rounds

Students will compete in three preliminary rounds at three different times in individual events. Debate schedules are a little bit different, so check with the tournament about specifics. Once the opening meeting is over, students and judges should go to their first rounds. At this point, you should either do your own judging assignment (if you have one), go watch a round or get some work done.

Between rounds, talk with students and parents and have fun.

You may want to leave yourself unscheduled as a judge. This is entirely up to you.

Advantages: If there is an emergency, you are free to deal with it.
 If there is a problem with one of your judges, you can take over.
 You can grade papers etc. during rounds.

Disadvantages: It's boring.
 You don't get to learn about the various events yourself.
 You need to find one more judge.

There is often a lot of down-time between rounds, especially between the last prelim round and finals. Bring something to do and encourage the students to do the same.

Food

Food is usually available throughout the competition day. Host sites usually sell breakfast foods (coffee, bagels, donuts etc.) in the morning and pizza, sandwiches, and snacks etc. later in the day. Most host sites provide a good selection of foods and beverages that students and adults can purchase when they get hungry. Many students grab lunch between rounds. Some prefer to wait until their preliminary rounds are over.

Breaks to Finals

After the preliminary rounds are over, there will be a break while the TAB room determines who will advance to finals. (Many students eat lunch during this break.) Once breaks are announced, students should either go to their rounds to compete or they should watch a final round. It is important that students watch their teammates to support them. Students can also benefit from attending finals in the event they entered or one they think they might like to enter at a future tournament in order to learn what it takes to get to finals. No one should be wandering around the building during finals.

SAB Meetings

After finals there will be another break while the TAB room does final tabulations. During this time there is often an SAB (Student Advisory Board) meeting. Encourage a few of your students to attend this meeting. It is where students are given an opportunity to discuss issues that they feel are important for the MFL Board to consider. Even if your students don't feel ready to contribute, they will benefit from finding out what is going on in the league and what other students in the league feel is important.

The Awards Ceremony

After finals there will be an awards ceremony where final placements are announced and trophies are presented to the winners. In the MFL, all students who advance to finals will receive some sort of tangible recognition, usually a trophy. The “top novice” in each non-novice event usually receives an award as well. At many tournaments ‘sweepstakes’ awards are given. These recognize entire teams for doing well. The sweepstakes formulas differ from tournament to tournament, so read the invitations carefully if you want to know how the final placement for schools will be determined.

Unfortunately, not everyone can win a trophy or plaque. Students should understand that reality when they enter a competitive activity. They should also understand that self-control in the face of disappointment or victory is a mark of true maturity. As a coach, you can make it clear to your students what you expect and why you have those expectations.

The final awards ceremony is a time when good-sportsmanship is important and mature behavior is expected. Please be sure your students understand that a speech tournament is not a ball game. Cat calls, booing, wild screaming etc. is not appropriate. Students should applaud the student receiving an award. For example, when the 2nd place winner is announced it is time to applaud that student, not the one who is 1st but has not yet been announced. There is a tradition in the MFL that we stand and applaud to recognize the 1st place winner in each event.

Picking up Your Ballots

After the awards ceremony is completed, be sure to send a school representative (or yourself) to pick up your packet of ballots. You can take these back to your school and distribute them to your students. Some coaches like to read them first, others give them to their students and go over them later. That is up to you. As a general rule, the MFL will not mail ballot packets to schools that leave tournaments early. It is far too expensive and too much work. Plan to stay for the entire day or make arrangements for the tournament director to bring them to another tournament at a later date so you can get them then.

Glossary of Speech League Terms

abbreviations for events	<p>DEC = Declamation DI = Dramatic Interpretation (NFL event) DP = Dramatic Performance DUO = Duo Interpretation USX = Domestic Extemp (NFL event) GD = Group Discussion HI = Humorous Interp (NFL event) IX = International Extemp (NFL event) KL = Children’s Literature (aka: Kiddie Lit) LD = Lincoln Douglas Debate MULT = Multiple Reading</p>	<p>NR = Novice Reading NX = Novice Extemp OI = Oratorical Interp (NCFL event) OO = Original Oratory PFD = Public Forum Debate PL = Play Reading PO = Poetry Reading POLICY = Policy Debate PR = Prose Reading RB = Radio Broadcasting VX = Varsity Extemporaneous Speaking</p>
ballot	<p>While competitors are performing, judges make notes on ballots. Each judge fills out one ballot for each student in each round. Judges are supposed to give constructive criticism as well as note where performers have done well. Judges’ comments can be of varying quality, but can often be very helpful as students strive to improve their performances. In addition to comments, the judge will record the rank in the round and quality points (at tournaments which use them) on the ballot. You will get your ballots at the end of a tournament.</p>	
break	<p>After preliminary rounds are completed, the TAB room uses ranks to determine which students will advance to the next round. Those who advance are said to “break” into the next round. The breaks are sometimes announced and sometimes posted on the wall. So, while it sounds like you wouldn’t want it to happen, breaking is good at a speech tournament. Students who do not break to finals will benefit from attending a final round. This is one of the best ways to learn about what it takes to get to finals.</p>	
car talk (aka: van talk or bus talk)	<p>If you have anything to say about your competitors, your judge, your own performance etc. that should not be heard by others, you should wait until you are on your way home from the tournament. We call those things that should not be said in public “car talk” because we wait to talk about them until we are in a car with the doors closed, driving away from a tournament so there is no possibility of being overheard.</p>	
competition number	<p>When a student competes at a tournament, s/he is assigned a competition number, which is used to identify them throughout the tournament. This ensures that they are anonymous to their judge so that their opinion is as objective as possible (no “you have my best friend’s name”, “You’re from our rival school”, etc.). Students get a different number for each event they enter and at each tournament they attend. It is very important that they remember their number(s) accurately so they can check the schematics (postings) and go to the correct competition rooms.</p>	
cume	<p>Short for cumulatives. Each time a student competes his/her ranks are recorded on a cume sheet by the TAB room. After the tournament is over, you can look at the cumes and see how your students did relative to everyone else in their events.</p>	
drops	<p>After registration is complete, a student may need to drop from the tournament. Sometimes students become ill at the last minute or a family emergency arises. In this case, you must communicate with the tournament director so that s/he can make the necessary adjustments. Often there is a fine attached for drops that occur very close to the start of the tournament because it creates extra work and can delay the start of competition while last-minute changes must be made.</p>	
double entry	<p>Many tournaments allow students to enter more than one event. Sometimes they may enter any two events and are responsible for competing in one event early in the round, leaving and then going to their other event. Some tournaments split the events in half</p>	

double-entry (continued)	and call each half a ‘platoon’ or ‘flight.’ At these tournaments students can enter one (or sometimes two) event in each platoon. The platoons alternate through the day, so students usually do not have to leave one round in order to get to another one.
focal point	In interp events, competitors often use focal points to help differentiate characters. A focal point is an imaginary point in the air. An interper may chose a different point for each character and turn his/her body and head slightly to look at the focal point when speaking for that character. It’s subtle and it takes practice. If there is only one character in a piece, the performer may use a focal point or talk directly to the audience. Different pieces call for different methods of presentation.
forensics	You’re probably thinking “dead bodies.” But <i>forensics</i> has more than one meaning. In this case, forensics refers to “the art or study of formal argumentation.” In other words, people on a speech or debate team participate in forensics.
morning call-in period	On the morning of a tournament, each team that is entered must call in before 8:00 am to report any last-minute drops or confirm that they have no changes to their entry. The number to call will always be listed in the tournament invitation. The tournament cannot start until all rounds are balanced after drops come in, so it is critical that all teams call before 8:00 am. Otherwise it is impossible to stay on schedule. To encourage schools to cooperate, there is a \$25 penalty for failure to call in on time.
MFL	Massachusetts Forensic League. This is our local organization. They sponsor almost all of the tournaments we attend within the state of MA as well as “States.” The MFL website is: www.massforensics.org
NCFL	Catholic Forensic League. They hold a national tournament each year over Memorial Day Weekend. In order to attend this tournament students have to enter a special qualifying tournament (this year on February 9, 2008). The top competitors in each of these events at qualifiers get to go to CFL Nationals: OO, DUO, DEC, VX, OI, DP and Congress as well as debate events.
NFL	National Forensic League. The NFL is a national Speech Honor Society. Prominent NFL alumni include President Lyndon Johnson, Vice President Hubert Humphrey, actress Shelly Long, television host Oprah Winfrey, news anchor Jane Pauley, Justice Stephen Breyer and thousands of other leaders in politics, business, education, law and public service. Members may attend the NFL National qualifier in March. The top two students from New England in each event qualify to attend a week-long tournament in June. The NFL website is: nflonline.org NFL events include: OO, DI, HI, DUO, DX, FX and Congress as well as LD, PFD and Policy Debate.
NFL points	Students may earn NFL points when they compete in forensics. These points are earned based upon ranks in competition. In most events a “1” is worth 5 points, a “2” is worth 4 points and so on. Debates are awarded a “6” for a win and “3” for a loss. Congress students earn points for each speech they give on a scale of 1-6. A student who earns 25 points qualifies to become an NFL member. They continue to earn points and advance to higher degree levels as they compete. The coach is responsible for reporting points to the NFL through an on-line system.
novice	A novice is a first year high school competitor in speech in the MFL. Novices are eligible for “Top Novice” awards in non-novice events. They can also enter all-novice events such as “Novice Reading”, “Novice LD” and “Novice Extemp.” A student who reaches finals twice in Novice Reading may not enter that event again. A student is considered a novice in extemp if s/he has not competed in that event in the previous season. Beginning in the 2007-2008 season, Novice Reading is no longer an MFL State Finals event.

one clap rule	Awards ceremonies sometimes seem endless. In order to move things along, we often use the ‘ one clap rule. ’ This is just what it sounds like. After someone’s name is announced, clap once. We always stand and give full applause to the 1 st place finisher in each event even if we are using the one clap rule for everyone else.
pop	In interp events, pieces may have several characters. In order to differentiate them, performers may adopt different stances, mannerisms and focal points for each. The rapid switch from one character to another is called a pop.
postings	See schematics.
prelims/ finals	At every tournament you attend there are a certain number of rounds in which everyone will compete. These rounds are called preliminary rounds, or “ prelims. ” In the MFL there are generally 3 prelim rounds; at national tournaments there are often more. After prelims are done, the TAB room will determine who did well enough to continue to “out rounds.” Depending upon the size of the tournament, students may advance straight to finals. If it is a big tournament, there may be a number of break rounds such as octo-final, quarter-final, and semi-final rounds.
quality points	In the MFL, quality points range from 70-100, though it is rare for a judge to give a score less than 80. They are used as tiebreakers for calculating breaks. Quality points are a way a judge can let a student know how strong a round was. A rank of ‘5’ with quality points of ‘95’ tells a student that the judge thought highly of his/her performance, but thought that others were better. A rank of ‘1’ with quality points of ‘89’ would indicate that while a student was best in the room, the judge felt that there was a lot of room for improvement in the performance.
rankings or ranks	When students compete, the job of the judge is to decide who is best in the round, who is 2 nd best, who is 3 rd best etc. Judges assign ranks of 1-6 (or 5 or 7, depending on how many people are in the round) to indicate their preferences. A rank of 1 is better than a 2, but it is important that students keep in mind, that they are ranked against the competitors in the room. Some rooms are harder than others. When students get their ballots back, they will see the rank each judge gave them for each round. These ranks are also recorded on the cume sheets that are usually posted on-line or included with your team’s packet at the end of the tournament.
schematic	Schematics are used by tournaments to inform competitors which sections of which events they are going to. Students find the schematic for their event and then look for their competitor number to determine which section they are in. They go to the room listed for their section at the appropriate time. Schematics are generally taped to walls around the school where competition takes place. It is a good idea for students to take a pencil with them when they check the schematics so they can record which rooms they will be competing in during prelims. Some people call schematics ‘ postings ’, especially when they are for final rounds.
TAB room	There is a room at every tournament where coaches hand out and collect ballots from judges and record the ranks. This is called the TAB room (short for tabulation). It is the control center for the entire tournament. If you need the answer to a question that your coach can’t answer, the TAB room is the place to go. This is also the place to go to report an emergency (after you call 911 if necessary.)
warm-ups	After teams arrive at a competition site, they usually put their things down in the cafeteria and head to a classroom for warm-ups. The purpose of warm-ups is four-fold: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To stretch muscles and wake up the body and mind. 2. To prepare each student’s vocal instrument so that s/he can speak clearly and well. 3. To help students to focus so they are ready to compete. 4. To build team unity.