



Manitoba 4-H Council Inc.

4-H Communication Competition Tips

What the Judge is Looking For

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At public speaking and visual presentation competitions the judges are evaluating you both on your speech content and your delivery. Let's first look at what will make your speech or presentation a winner.

The subject matter must be broad enough that you will be able to research it and have enough information to talk about it for the required amount of time. Yet it must be specific enough that you are able deliver the message to your audience in a clear and concise manner.

When the judge is listening to you, his/her first task is to identify what your purpose is: Is it to inform, to motivate or to entertain. Make this clear in your introduction without actually saying "Today I will attempt to inform you of the different methods of making bread." Something like "As times change and our society evolves, so does our way of making bread" allows the audience to know your purpose without having it told directly to them.

The more original your topic is the better. The 4-H communication program is designed to help you feel more comfortable speaking, teach you effective communication, and to promote individual creativity.

Good speakers are exact in their choice of words and use vivid descriptive language. Correct grammar is very important. The judge will be listening for these qualities in your speech or presentation.

The judge needs to be able to hear a logical sequence to your message. This is most easily done through having an introduction where you explain what you will be talking about, a body where you logically explain your facts, stories, etc., and a conclusion where you summarize your points.

Once your speech is written and rewritten, the wrinkles have been ironed out and you have practiced, it is time to work on your presentation skills. This is often the more difficult part of the task. The key is to act natural (which can be hard at first, because you are speaking in an "unnatural" environment).

Your voice should be loud enough to be heard, yet not overpowering. It should also be pleasant, clear and easy to listen to. Pitch should vary as speaking in a monotone can decrease the effect you will have on the audience. Correct enunciation will increase your presentation quality. You must speak at a comfortable rate, not too fast and not too slow. Lastly, your voice must sound natural, sincere, conversational and expressive.



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Body language plays a very important role in presentations. The judge will begin to evaluate you from the time you rise from your seat until you return. By maintaining eye contact with the whole audience and using natural gesturing you can increase attentiveness. The judge is evaluating your use of body language. He/she is watching for good posture and that you're not swaying, fidgeting or leaning against the podium.

Sometimes the "speaking" part of public speaking is the easiest. It is important to realize that every word, action and expression you use while presenting will affect how the judge will evaluate you. Remember to relax, act natural, have fun and you will do fine.