

SoCal Junior Forensic League Handbook:

What you need to know to have a successful year in speech &/or debate



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A. Welcome to SCJFL

Our organization wishes to provide opportunities for middle school students to compete in forensics in the greater Los Angeles area. This handbook is a guide for schools, students, coaches, and families of those involved in this activity, to help understand how our tournaments are set up and what to expect in the league.

B. Membership Fees

Annual dues for SCJFL member schools are \$200. The board will keep track of how these funds are used. The fees would be used to pay for software, and other supplies needed to run our tournaments. Membership fees will be waived for schools that cannot afford to pay membership fees.

C. What is the NFL and NJFL

Some SCJFL schools are members of the National Junior Forensics League, or NJFL. The NJFL is the little brother of the NFL, or National Forensics League. The NFL is a nonprofit Honors Society for high school students, and its goal is to promote speech and debate across the country. The NJFL is part of the NFL, and does the same things the NFL does, but for middle schools.

The NFL and NJFL have a national tournament in June each year. The coming year's dates are slated for June 18 to June 21, in Birmingham Alabama. Many SCJFL schools also participate annually in a "warm-up" tournament, in preparation of that tournament. The "Warm-Up" will be in Glendale, California on April 13th and 14th, 2013. See Appendix A for a list of tournament opportunities.

D. Code of Honor

The NFL has a code of honor and, as a member of SCJFL, participants are **expected to follow this honor code**. Whether or not you are an NJFL school, this code of honor helps to keep our competitors, coaches, and families focused on *healthy* competition values. This is part of good sportsmanship and participating schools are encouraged to support this code and to nurture these values among their students.

The code:

I pledge to uphold the highest standards of integrity, humility, respect, leadership and service in the pursuit of excellence.

Integrity: An NFL member obeys the highest ethical standards and adheres to the rules of the League. NFL members recognize that integrity is central to earning the trust, respect, and support of one's peers. Integrity encompasses the highest regard for honesty, civility, justice, and fairness.

Humility: An NFL member does not regard him or herself more highly than others. Regardless of a person's level of success, he or she always looks beyond oneself to appreciate the inherent value of others.

Respect: An NFL member respects individual differences and fosters diversity. He or she promotes tolerance, inclusion, and empowerment for people from a variety of backgrounds.

Leadership: An NFL member influences others to take positive action toward productive change. NFL members commit to thoughtful and responsible leadership which promotes the other core values in the NFL Code of Honor.

Service: An NFL member exercises the talents he or she has been given to provide service to his or her peers, community, and the League. At all times an NFL member is prepared to work constructively to improve the lives of others."

E. Debate Events

There are several different styles of debate. Students may participate in one debate event at league tournaments.

1. Public Forum

Public Forum involves teams of 2. Each debater gives 2 speeches, one 4 minutes and one 2 minutes long. Topics change every month and are generally about current events. There is one topic per tournament and debaters must debate on both sides of the topic.

2. Lincoln Douglas

Lincoln Douglas debate is a one-on-one format of debate. Each debater speaks for 13 minutes, and there is preparation time in between speeches. At the most competitive level, Lincoln-Douglas debate moves away from a communication-based activity towards an intellectual game, but there are still many avenues for communication-based competition.

3. Policy Debate

The original debate. In Policy Debate, two teams (of 2) debate a policy proposed by the affirmative team. A resolution limits the range of plans to a general topic area, but the focus of the debate is on the specific affirmative plan and not the resolution as a whole. Each student gives two speeches—an 8 minute constructive and a 5 minute rebuttal. The longer rounds and variety of plans demand more in-round strategic decisions than do other forms of debate. The resolution lasts for one school year.

F. Speech Events

Speech events (also called IEs, or individual events) are the other half of “speech and debate.” Students may compete in one speech event per tournament. Below are the speech events currently offered by the SCJFL. Four or five events will be offered per tournament. The events rotate each tournament so that each student has the opportunity to learn different events throughout the year. Students are not permitted to use the same piece in more than one league competition.

(Below are short descriptions of the SCJFL events. Full descriptions can be found in the league rules.)

Dramatic Interpretation – A student performs a memorized cutting of a dramatic nature from a play, novel, or short story. (Maximum 8 minutes)

Humorous Interpretation – A student performs a memorized cutting of a humorous nature from a play, novel, or short story. (Maximum 8 minutes)

Prose Interpretation – A student performs a prose piece or cutting from a

manuscript with limited body movement. The piece may be humorous or dramatic in nature. (Maximum 7 minutes)

Poetry Interpretation – A student performs a poem or collection of poems from a manuscript with limited body movement. (Maximum 7 minutes)

Original Prose/Poetry – A student performs a memorized original short story, poem, or collection of poems. (Maximum 8 minutes)

Thematic Interpretation – A student performs, from a manuscript, a cutting from multiple novels, short stories, essays, and poems arranged around a common theme. (Maximum 8 minutes)

Storytelling – A student performs a memorized story aimed at a young audience. (Maximum 8 minutes)

Duo Interpretation – A pair of students performs a memorized cutting of a humorous or dramatic nature from a play, novel, or short story. Contestants may not touch or look at each other. (Maximum 8 minutes)

Duet Acting – A pair of students performs a memorized cutting of a humorous or dramatic nature from a play, novel, or short story. Contestants may interact with each other and use two chairs and one table. (Maximum 8 minutes)

TV Duo – A pair of students performs a memorized original “news broadcast.” Contestants are encouraged to play multiple characters and include feature stories and commercials, but the piece must include coverage of real news stories. (Maximum 8 minutes)

Creative Duo – A pair of students performs an original piece written for two actors. Contestants may not touch or look at each other. (Maximum 8 minutes)

Expository Speaking – A student performs a memorized original lecture of an informative nature. Contestants are allowed to use props and a visual aid. (Maximum 8 minutes)

Original Oratory – A student performs a memorized original speech of a persuasive nature. (Maximum 8 minutes)

Original Advocacy – A student performs a memorized original speech of a persuasive nature that advocates a legislative action. (Maximum 8 minutes)

Declamation (a.k.a. Oratorical Interpretation) – A student performs a memorized speech originally given by another person in a public setting. The introduction

must specify the original orator and occasion. (Maximum 8 minutes)

Impromptu Speaking – A student performs a spontaneous speech on a topic selected in the round. (2 minutes to prepare, maximum 5 minute speech)

Extemporaneous Speaking – A student selects a topic and has thirty minutes to prepare a speech on a topic on a current issue of foreign or domestic policy. (Maximum 7 minutes)

Sight-reading – A student is handed a selection of literature and interprets the piece spontaneously and with creative expression. A new piece of text is given each round.

G. Hosting a Tournament

INVITATION

An Invitation should be sent out to the league schools approximately 3 weeks before your tournament hosting date. The invitation should include address, parking, directions, tentative schedule, lunch arrangements, logistics (like if there's construction or anything tricky that will be an issue at your site...), the events offered, and a reminder of how and when to register for the tournament by – on our www.forensicstournament.net. Please try to provide the league with a campus map and attach one to your invitation if possible.

IN PREPARATION OF THE EVENT

Meanwhile, the host school should be working with administration and district to securing room us. This requires clearing use of the multipurpose area or general assembly area, in some cases getting teacher permissions, and making sure that custodians have been notified. These events require custodians to make sure the rooms are opened early and then locked at the conclusion of your event.

Teacher reminders are strongly recommended. A few days prior to your event, email staff, reminding them of the event, explaining what will be happening in the teacher's room, and thanking them for the use of their classroom. This reminder often serves as a helpful hint for teachers who want to put their most prized possessions out of sight.

Walkie-talkies are not essential but they can be very helpful if you need to get a hold of a custodian quickly (locked doors can hold up a tournament...).

Ask to have a podium and a sound system set up for stage if possible. Otherwise, just plan how to quiet everyone down between rounds so that you can make

Ask for tables to be set up to sell lunch or dinner tickets or snacks or both. Have a designated eating area and arrange parent volunteers or high school volunteers to help coordinate this aspect of your event.

You will need a couple reams of paper, an extension cord/power strip, a printer and a table set up somewhere for TAB. Email TAB staff to make sure you have what they will need when they come onto campus the day of your event. Have an extra printer cartridge on hand just in case.

MORNING OF

Arrive on your campus early to make sure everything is set up. Make sure parent volunteers know where they are going to be and what they will be doing. Teams will find the general assembly area and will congregate in there until the event is to start. The host should address the guest schools and make any and all important announcements (about bathrooms, where the judges' lounge will be, keeping classrooms clean and undisturbed, leaving doors opened if need be, any classrooms that are difficult to find, etc.). All announcements should happen BEFORE postings. This is a good time to remind everyone about ballots being turned in on time, about competitors being good to one another, etc... Remind everyone that there will be a judge training after students leave to their first round (if applicable to your event) and that EVERYONE should reconvene in the general assembly area after each round in case there are announcements.

AWARDS

After the last round starts, arrange a table in the front of the assembly with the awards to be given out. When students return to the assembly room and TAB has finished their work, they will hand the host the list of trophy recipients. Announce these in reverse order leading up to the champions. Thank everyone for their participation and dismiss the schools. It is always helpful to remind students to take all personal belongings with them and to please clean up any trash on their way out.

STUDENT VOLUNTEERS

Try to arrange to have volunteers to stay after the tournament and help clean up to go quickly and smoothly.

H. Judging

Each school attending a league tournament should provide judges. Traditionally, judges have been high-school students, but parents, adult volunteers, and teachers make excellent judges as well. Coaches are expected to help run the tournament and are usually not in the judging pool.

Ideally, each school in attendance will provide no fewer than 1 judge for every 4 debaters or 6 IE entries. Currently, there are no financial penalties for failing to meet this requirement, but there may soon be either financial penalties or entries dropped from the tournament for failing to provide enough judges.

I. Frequently Asked Questions for Parents

Q. Why should my child debate?

A. Debate helps students to develop speaking, thinking, and listening skills. Students who debate become more engaged in the world around them and develop sophisticated knowledge about a wide range of current events and complex ideas. Debate in the middle grades prepares students for success in high school, college, and beyond, while providing immediate benefits for academic success. Debate is valuable for gifted students and so-called “at-risk” students alike, helping students of all ages take active responsibility for their own learning in a challenging and dynamic atmosphere. **(This answer is directly quoting forensics experts Kate Shuster & John Meany, in their terrific book, SPEAK OUT.)**

Q. When will tournaments be held?

A. The league has put together a tentative schedule for the year which we will try our best to adhere to. Not all schools will attend all tournaments. An invitation will be issued to the different coaches, and then forwarded to their eligible participants. The invitation will include the site details such as address, directions, and other important information for that day’s events.

Please see Appendix A for the 2012-2013 Tentative Schedule.

Q. Where will tournaments be held?

A. Different host schools will volunteer to accommodate the league when possible. See Appendix A for the different tournament locations for 2012-2013.

Q. How long will tournaments last?

The invitations will always include a tentative schedule. Running a tournament, however, is a tricky thing. Thus, we ask that participating families and schools be patient as the schedule will sometimes change as the day progresses. Remember that it only takes a single ballot not being turned in to the ballot turn-in table for the entire tournament to be delayed.

Speech tournaments have been scheduled for mid-week, starting as soon as the host school can clear the campus and ready the rooms. See individual invitations throughout the year for specific schedules. Debate tournaments have been scheduled for Saturdays so that we may have 4 preliminary rounds and up to 3

out-rounds, to determine champions in the different events. A good guess would be 3:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. for speech and 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. for debate. Keep in mind that students who do not advance into out-rounds will know by the end of the lunch break. Thus, they may be free to go. Please consult your coaches as each school may have a different policy about this. For example, one school that I know of will encourage students to stay and watch rounds, as a learning tool.

Every attempt will be made to get our students home at a reasonable time and to keep the tournaments running on time. Please understand that tournaments can run over-time. We are getting better and better at this so there is hope for a tournament that runs on time – it's inevitable!

Q. Will there be lunch at the tournament?

A. The league leaves lunch arrangements up to the host school to coordinate. We ask that the host school include the different lunch (or dinner) options in the invitation to help the participants to know what to expect, so they may plan accordingly. Most schools will provide a snack stand and a meal option of some sort at a nominal cost.

Q. How can I help my child to succeed in debate?

A. One way is to encourage great sportsmanship. Also, you can talk to your child about the different issues in the news. Discuss these subjects informally and allow your child to voice his/her opinion. Offer your own viewpoint and point out where your child's reasoning seems weak. If you observe your child in round, then please be a passive participant. As much as you want to applaud or send a hand signal or such, this is not appropriate. You may sit and observe but reserve comments or "coaching" for after the round. Be POSITIVE with your child about his/her performance. These students are engaged in public speaking and they should be commended for their efforts. (I suggest cutting this because it perhaps stresses the competitive aspect too much.)

Q. What should my child wear to tournaments?

A. Different schools may have different policies. But most schools ask that students wear suits or similar "business formal" attire.

Q. What will the students debate about?

A. Please see Appendix A for the tournament schedule for the 2012-2013 season. Topics and events are listed there.

Q. How can I help out at the tournament?

A. Coaches will be helping the host to run the tournament so parents are greatly needed to help keep the teams in order. Please see coaches for how you can specifically help out at tournament. Many parents wish the coaches could be

observing their child in round, and giving them immediate feedback. However, this may not happen if the coach is needed to help keep the tournament running on time. The league relies on the coaches to help with the many tasks that comprise running a great event. Thus parents are encouraged to ask coaches how they can be of assistance on tournament days.

Q. What should I do when there is a problem?

A. If your coach is not available because he or she is helping to run the tournament, then you should go to the ballot check in table and explain the problem. They will then explain the problem to TAB. The TAB will then decide if the board needs to convene and issue a decision about the specific problem. Please remember that the tournament will do everything it can to run on time. If a problem can wait until after the tournament to be dealt with, then that may be the resolution. However, grievances WILL be dealt with and you WILL get a definitive answer from the board at their earliest convenience. The league expects students to follow a code of ethical behavior. Some mistakes could just be a coach who was misinformed, or a student who unknowingly does something wrong. The board will do everything it can to be fair and to encourage students to continue to participate in the activities.

Q. Will my child win an award?

A. The league asks host schools to provide the top students with trophies. The cost of these trophies is usually recouped with the registration fees and snack sales profits. League schools are encouraged to acknowledge all of their students who have participated in a tournament in some way. Some schools do certificates of participation at the end of the year at a team banquet. Other schools may choose to announce student participants' names over the public address system. All students who choose to engage in this activity are deserving of positive recognition.

Q. What if my child isn't successful?

A. Any child who participates in these forensics activities is successful. They say that public speaking is feared more than death. Thus, a child in these formative years who is willing to take on this skill-set is automatically a winner. The focus of our league is to provide competition for students so that they may learn and improve. With time, any child can achieve great success in forensics. For some, it may take longer to build confidence and to learn the structures and how to research, choose selections, cite evidence, refute arguments, etc.

Q. What if I don't feel comfortable judging?

A. Even if you never serve as a judge, it will help your child if you participate in one of the judge trainings. If for no other reason, then you will at least understand what your child's critic is going to be asked to do, in order to issue a decision. At tournaments, after students go off to their first round, parents, older

students, and anyone else who would like are encouraged to stay in the general assembly area and participate in a judge training session. These sessions will be run by one or two of the coaches. There are certain guidelines that help judges to be optimally effective. See Appendix B for the SCJFL Judge Guidelines.

Q. Are students participating in a tournament allowed to go watch rounds when they are not competing? Sometimes tournaments are flighted, meaning there is a round 1A and a round 1B. If a student is not debating until round B, can he or she go watch a debate during the other hour?

A. Yes. Students may watch rounds. The SCJFL rounds are open to audiences. Some people may feel this is "cheating" or "unfair" because a team that is observing may end up competing against a team they observed, and thus, may have heard their arguments and anticipated answers for those arguments. Scouting, as it is referred to sometimes in forensics, is NOT cheating and it is NOT unfair. The SCJFL encourages students to participate in good debates in which there is a lot of "clash" on the arguments. A student who debates another student who has answers to his or her arguments becomes a better debater. If a parent does not understand this rule or disagrees with this rule, then please speak with your coach. Do not accuse students of being cheaters. They are observing, learning, and becoming a better debater. No coach asks their student to rely purely on the element of surprise. We ask our students to learn to think on their feet and to weigh arguments, and to explain why their arguments are better than their opponents' arguments. The league's position on this is clear: it does not encourage or discourage students from scouting. Scouting can also work against a student by "psyching them out" or making them feel intimidated going in to the round.

APPENDIX A – TENTATIVE SCJFL TOURNAMENT SCHEDULE

Date	Tournament	Host School	City
November 8, 2012	Fall Speech	Jefferson Middle School	San Gabriel
November 10, 2012	Fall Debate	Ridgecrest Intermediate Sch.	Rancho Palos Verdes
February 2, 2013	Winter Debate	Ribet Academy	Glendale
February 7, 2013	Winter Speech	St. Rita's	Sierra Madre
March 23, 2013	Spring Debate	Sierra Prep	Santa Ana
March 28, 2013	Spring Speech	Nicolas Middle School	Fullerton
April 13-14, 2013	Glendale Warm-up	Glendale CC	Glendale
May???	4th League Debate Tournament	La Puente	La Puente
May???	4 th League Speech Tournament	Sierra Prep	Santa Ana
6/16/13-6/21/13	NJFL Nationals	Birmingham, AL	ALABAMA

APPENDIX B – DEBATE TOPICS

Date	Tournament	Host School	Topics
11/10/12	Fall Debate	Ridgecrest	Policy: Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially increase its transportation infrastructure investment in the United States. LD: Resolved: The United States ought to extend to non-citizens accused of terrorism the same constitutional due process protections it grants to citizens. PF: Resolved: Developed countries have a moral obligation to mitigate the effects of climate change.
02/02/13	Winter Debate	Ribet Academy	Policy: Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially increase its transportation infrastructure investment in the United States. LD: Resolved: The United States ought to guarantee universal health care for its citizens. PF: Resolved: The United States should prioritize tax increases over spending cuts.
04/23/13	Spring Debate	Sierra Prep	Policy: Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially increase its transportation infrastructure investment in the United States. LD: NFL topic for January/February (released December 1st) PF: NFL topic for March (released February 1st)

4/13/12- 4/14/12	Glendale Warm-up	Glendale CC	Policy: Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially increase its transportation infrastructure investment in the United States. LD: NFL topic for March/April (released February 1st) PF: NFL topic for April (released March 1st)
May???	4th League Debate Tournament	La Puente	Policy: Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially increase its transportation infrastructure investment in the United States. LD: NFL topic for March/April (released February 1st) PF: NFL topic for April (released March 1st)
6/16/13- 6/21/13	NJFL Nationals	Birmingham, AL	Policy: Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially increase its transportation infrastructure investment in the United States. LD: NFL nationals topic (released May 1st) PF: NFL nationals topic (released May 1st)

APPENDIX C: GUIDELINES FOR JUDGING IN THE SCJFL

1. Your ballot will have the rules for the particular style of debate or individual event that you are judging. PLEASE READ THOSE RULES. Coaches teach their students those rules and students spend a lot of team training so that they may adhere to the rules. It is important that judges be "on the same page."
2. Please time the speech pieces (or the different speeches in a debate). If someone volunteers to time for you, then they may sit next to you and read you the times during a round. This is helpful when a judge wants to take careful notes, to not have to also be responsible for time signals.
3. Please take notes of what happens in a round. When you are making your decision, it is important to go off of what was said in a round. Refer to your notes and leave your personal opinions on debate topics at the door. The only "facts" in the debate are what the teams bring forth. It is not the job of a 12 year old to change your life-long belief. If a speaker says the moon is made of green cheese and the other team does not refute that, then for the purposes of the debate, the moon is made of green cheese.
4. Nor should you "fill in" for what a speaker said. What he or she said is all that there is in the round. In other words, don't just assume, "oh, well she must have meant this...or that..." What is said in round is all that you have to go on...
5. Please try not to fraternize with the students you are about to judge or those you have judged. Try to keep interaction with them to a minimum. It is important to be neutral and to appear neutral.
6. Fill out the ballot carefully once you have made your decision. You have the power to uplift their spirits with the words you write. Students thirst to see their ballots after a tournament. They are hungry for information on how to improve. BE SPECIFIC IN YOUR FEEDBACK. They are so deserving of your words of encouragement. And just as you have the power to uplift their spirits and make them feel incredibly good, you also have the power to cast them out of the activity for good. Please try NOT to exercise that power. You should certainly point out mistakes or problems in delivery but it is so important that you be encouraging and positive with your comments. Please give feedback in a way that honors the activity for the educational and intellectual exercise that it is.
7. Some rounds will be close and you will need to make your decision in a fairly short amount of time. After you have reviewed your notes, you need to make a decision. There are no ties in debate. Please explain what the deciding factor was. When a round was extremely close, you should tell them that.

APPENDIX D: PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS AND COACHES

Academy of Higher Learning – Tiya Basilio
Chandler School – Manoj Choudhary
Emerson Middle School – Lilly Parker
Fremont School – Marta Castro
The Gooden School – Mike Kyle
High Point Academy – Gint Valiulis
Honor Academy – Jennie Lee
Jefferson Middle School – Heather Wolpert-Gawron and Alison Hussar
Kudos College of Youth Leadership – Scott Wheeler and Eric Strauss
La Puente – Heather Floyd
Larchmont Charter School – John Resendez
Magnet Learning Academy – Kathy Cantrell and Bill Eddy
New West Charter – Lennar Madlansacay
Nicolas Junior High – Stephanie Diaz and Jesus Silva
Nova 42 Academy – Mike Kyle
Perfect Score Academy – Angie Kim
Ribet Academy – Alaina Sims
Ridgecrest Intermediate School – Samantha Weiss and Virginia Yabuta
Sierra Prep Academy – Sophia Cuevas
St. Rita’s Academy – Ralph Seymour
TTI – Angela Mooney D’Arcy
UNI Institute – Daniel Kwon
Wilshire Academy – Robert Cannon

Board Members:

President: Robert Cannon
Vice-President: Eric Strauss
Secretary: Scott Wheeler

APPENDIX E: COACH ROLES FOR THE CURRENT YEAR AT TOURNEYS

At our annual summer meeting, it was decided that coaches should all help out during the tourney so that it can run smoothly. The coach of the host school should be freed up to handle any physical plant type problems as much as possible. Thus, the following coaches have volunteered to help with judges (making sure we have enough and then corralling them and giving them some brief instructions), TAB (running the software), and Ballot Check-in (checking that ballots are filled out correctly and completely to minimize results errors...). Please email the list if you want to add your name to one of these columns!

Judges	TAB	Ballot Check-In	Host School Resp.
Mike Kyle	Robert Cannon	Heather Wolpert	Awards
Ralph Seymour	Scott Wheeler	Alaina Sims	Maps, Directions
Samantha Weiss	Eric Strauss	Virginia Yabuta	Invitations

http://southerncaliforniamiddleschoolspeechanddebateleague.com/Southern_California_Middle_School_Speech_and_Debate_League/Main.html