



2026

Prepared Public Speaking

2026 Updates

Below is a summary of updates to the Prepared Public Speaking CLE Handbook for the 2026 convention cycle. We plan to release handbook changes that may impact instruction in June of the year prior but may finalize smaller updates through February of the competition year. All updates and changes aim to provide a positive, relevant experience for all competitors.

HANDBOOK UPDATE:

JULY 2025

JANUARY 2026

Policies and Guidelines

I. Eligibility of Students

- Added — Eligibility is based on the National FFA membership year (August 1–July 31)—not a school's academic calendar or "rising grade" designation.

***Rationale:** Clarifying that a student must be a 7th-grade member on the date of the qualifying event to compete or qualify at a state qualifying event. A student who is still a 6th-grade member on that date is not eligible to qualify and may compete for 7th-grade consideration only in qualifying events held on or after August 1.*

- Cover page includes the speech title, participant's first name and last initial, state, and year.

***Rationale:** This adjustment is intended to ensure student safety by limiting the personal information of members.*

- Clarified language on breaking ties.
"Ties will be broken based on the greatest number of low ranks as follows: the tying participant with the greatest number of first-place ranks shall be declared the winner. If there is no winner or there is a tie, then the typing participant with the greatest number of second-place ranks shall be declared the winner. If there is no winner or a tie remains, the participant with the greatest number of third-place ranks among the tied participants shall be declared the winner."

***Rationale:** Provide a clear process for the tiebreaker "greatest number of low ranks" and document the current process for future reference.*

Refer to the National FFA Career and Leadership Events webpage on [FFA.org](https://ffa.org) for the most up-to-date career and leadership development handbook edition.

Contact

Career Development Events
Education Specialist
National FFA Center
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FFA Vision

Growing the next generation of leaders who will change the world.

FFA Mission

FFA makes a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education.

FFA Code of Conduct

FFA members participating in National FFA programs understand and agree to abide by the National FFA Code of Conduct at: <https://ffa.app.box.com/s/x6l2lkovv4x9tgiegy73mei30zvli5j>

Guiding Principles

National awards and competitive events should:

1. Inspire members to explore, learn, and be prepared for future careers related to the AFNR career pathways and FFA AFNR Value Chain.
2. Recognize achievements in skill development and knowledge, including:
 - a. leveraging relevant technologies
 - b. utilizing creative problem-solving
 - c. meeting developmentally appropriate learning objectives (Bloom's Taxonomy)
 - d. utilizing employability skills (teamwork, communication, collaboration)
3. Be accessible and engaging for all students and FFA members.
4. Provide awards and recognition opportunities for students at all levels.
5. Work with other groups to utilize or partner with existing experiences.
6. Provide feedback that promotes personal and professional growth.

Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources (AFNR)

Career Cluster Content Standards

The National Council for Agricultural Education has provided permission to the National FFA Organization to use the National AFNR Career Cluster Content Standards in the development of their educational resource materials. The National Council for Agricultural Education is the owner and developer of the National AFNR Career Cluster Content Standards © 2016 and reserves all rights to the original material used here with permission. In addition, the National Association of State Directors of Career and Technical Education/National Career Technical Education Foundation (NASDCTE/NCTEF) has provided permission to use the Common Career and Technical Core (CCTC) Standards in support of this project. NASDCTE/NCTEF are the owners and developers of the Common Career and Technical Core (CCTC) Standards © 2012 and reserve all rights to the original material used here with permission.

The National FFA Organization has adopted the AFNR Career Cluster Content Standards and integrated them into the national award and recognition programs for the benefit of members, school administration, and agriculture as a whole. For a complete set of the standards, please visit the [2016 AFNR Career Cluster Content Standards](https://ffa.app.box.com/s/hrxlqv7q6zo54xfi5x5kyltlyusqihy0). You may access the standards alignments for this event at <https://ffa.app.box.com/s/hrxlqv7q6zo54xfi5x5kyltlyusqihy0>.

Professional Integrity

FFA members participating in national FFA programs and events understand and agree that all work must result from their own effort and ability, created, and completed alone (except for partner or chapter applications). When outside sources (direct quotes or phrases, specific dates, figures, or other materials) are used for a project, document, or application, the required reference citation must be completed according to the rules specified by the applicable handbook.

While participating in National FFA programs, FFA members are prohibited from:

- Plagiarizing
- Violating copyright
- Cheating
- Falsifying information
- Using another person's results or thoughts as their own, even with this person's permission. This includes work done by a family member or a mentor.
- Using information or data obtained from the internet without proper citation.

Any attempt to gain an unfair advantage will not be tolerated. Non-compliance represents plagiarism and will automatically disqualify a member.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for National Programs and Events

Artificial intelligence (AI) refers to computer systems capable of performing complex tasks that historically only a human could do, such as reasoning, making decisions, or solving problems. As AI continues to evolve, it can be a tremendous tool to help companies, organizations and individuals enhance their productivity and work. Therefore, the National FFA Organization allows the use of AI tools. FFA members may use AI tools, such as ChatGPT, Gemini, and CoPilot, to assist them in their learning.

Appropriate uses of AI may include:

- generating ideas for any FFA-related assignments, projects, contests and award applications
- checking facts of a phenomenon
- checking for and correcting grammatical errors in a paper written by a member

For more information, please see the [Standard Operating Procedures on the Use of Artificial Intelligence \(AI\) for National Programs and Events document](#).

Member Safety

At National FFA, we're committed to creating a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment for all members— students, educators, and families alike. We believe in fostering premier leadership, personal growth, and career success, and that starts with a community built on respect and professionalism. These guidelines outline the expectations for behavior and conduct across all FFA activities and spaces. By upholding these principles, members help ensure FFA remains a place where everyone can thrive.

Please take a moment to review these policies, [here](#) (Member Safety at FFA.org), which includes an agreement to abide by the [National FFA Code of Conduct](#). Adherence is essential—violations may result in disciplinary action, including restricted access to events.

2026 CAREER AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT EVENTS GUIDELINES

POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

I. Eligibility of Students

- a. Eligibility is based on the National FFA membership year (August 1–July 31)—not a school’s academic calendar or “rising grade” designation.
- b. Each student must be a student FFA member on the current roster in good standing with the local chapter, state FFA association, and the National FFA Organization during the school year in which the student qualified to participate at the national level.
- c. If a student’s name is not on the chapter’s official roster, please work with the National FFA membership team to update the membership before the national event.
- d. The student, at the national event, must be:
 - i. A secondary education (grades 7–12) FFA member during the school year in which the participant qualified to participate at the national level as determined by the roster at the time of qualifying.
 - ii. A graduating senior is eligible to compete in state and national career and leadership development events up to and including their first national convention following graduation.)
 - iii. Participants in the Creed Speaking and Conduct of Chapter Meetings LDEs must qualify as a 7th, 8th, or 9th grade member.
- e. If a student moves to a different chapter or a different state once the student has qualified as a state representative in an event, that student may be allowed to compete in the national event with the school they qualified with during the qualifying year.
- f. A student may only participate in the same official CDE/LDE once. No student may participate in more than one National FFA event each year.
- g. Each student participating in a national event must complete an online Waiver and release of Liability through the convention registration system.

II. Selection/Certification of State Teams

- a. Each state will submit a team declaration form by July 1, before the national FFA convention. Participation in each declared event will incur an entry processing fee. [State Staff Declaration Instructions](#)
- b. Each team will be composed of the number of members determined by the specific event rules and formats. The members of a state team must be from the same chapter.
- c. All students must be certified online by the designated deadline of Sept. 1 or within 10 days of the qualifying date if after the deadline. Advisors or state staff must certify members in each event by the certification deadline. [How to certify a team or member Instructions](#)
- d. Once the original certification has been completed, no member may be added without first deleting a member. (See III. Drop/Add Process).
- e. State staff shall approve students are eligible (See I. Eligibility of Students). [State Staff Certification Approval Instructions](#) If an ineligible student participates in any career or leadership development event, the member will be disqualified, which may also impact the team’s ranking.
- f. States may approve teams comprised of fewer members than the required members.
- g. Substitutions of any student or team are subject to the determination and approval of the state association.
- h. If reputable international competitions invite teams to competition the national organization will certify National FFA Career and Leadership Development Event winners for international competition when states request. This is with the understanding that the state team will provide their travel expenses.

III. Drop/Add Process

- a. If a student needs to be substituted or dropped, the online drop/add process must be used to substitute or drop the team member. A team member must be dropped before another team member may be substituted. [How to Drop/Add a team member Instructions](#)
- b. The Drop/Add must be submitted one hour before the first event component or official activity of an event as listed in the schedule of events. Changes will not be permitted after this time.
- c. Members added to any team must meet all the eligibility and membership requirements described in this Guide's other sections.
- d. Substitutions may be allowed after the online document submission date (See individual Event Handbooks for details).

IV. Disqualification

- a. FFA members participating in national FFA programs and events understand and agree that all work must result from their effort and ability, created and completed alone (except for partner or chapter applications). Details about Professional Integrity, the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for National Programs and Events, and the National FFA Code of Conduct are included in event handbooks.
- b. Any verbal or non-verbal communication between students during an event that is not part of the event will be sufficient cause to eliminate the team member involved from the career development event.
- c. Teams or students arriving after the career development event has begun may be disqualified or penalized. This includes a zero or lower score for that team or student for the missed section of the career or leadership development event.
- d. Any assistance given to a student from any source other than the career development event officials or assistants will be sufficient to disqualify that student from the career and leadership development event.
- e. Event superintendents may stop any student if they deem their manner hazardous to themselves or others. Such action may result in a zero or lower score for that student for that section of the career or leadership development event.

- f. Students who start an event and do not complete it without notifying event officials at the time of departure may be disqualified. This can affect the overall team rank and position; in some events, it could also disqualify the entire team.
- g. Students will not be allowed to utilize personal electronic communication devices other than those approved by the event officials during the entire event. Students who access personal electronic communication devices without prior approval from the event officials may be disqualified from the national event.
- h. Any CDE/LDE student, team, advisor, or coach who is proven to have gained access to event materials intended for or utilized by the event committee during the competition will be disqualified from the national event.

Purpose

The National FFA Prepared Public Speaking Leadership Development Event is designed to develop leadership, communication, and citizenship skills by providing member participation in agricultural public speaking activities.

Event Rules

Review the Career and Leadership Development Event Policy and Guidelines for information on eligibility, selection, certification, team member changes, disqualification and more.

[General Information for National Competition](#) can provide general guidance on preparing for national competition.

General

- Participation will be limited to one participant from each state association.
- It is highly recommended that participants wear FFA Official Dress for this event.
- Manuscripts and presentations must be on a current subject of an agricultural nature, which may include agribusiness, animal systems, plant systems, environmental services, food products and processing, natural resource systems, biotechnology systems and power, and structural and technical systems.
- Participants are expected to participate in a virtual pre-event orientation, which will occur approximately two weeks before the event. Details of the orientation will be available in the event orientation materials on FFA.org.
- Participants shall report to the event at the time designated. At this time, additional orientation will be held, and the participants will be placed together in a holding room before their oral presentation. Only participants will be allowed in the holding room. No cell phones or other communication devices will be allowed in the holding room without express permission from the event superintendent.
- After a participant has made their oral presentation, the participant may observe other participants' presentations.
- Recording or videotaping oral presentations is permitted unless the event superintendent determines that such activity unnecessarily distracts the participant, judges, or observers or poses an advantage or disadvantage to the speaking participant.
- Participants shall submit a Statement of Authenticity at the time of manuscript submission, verifying that the manuscript results from the participant's work. A sample Statement of Authenticity is provided below:

'I certify that all materials presented here are of my creation and that any work adopted from other sources is duly cited and referenced as such.' — signature
- Each state with a participant will provide a judge for the event's preliminary round. An advisor with a student competing in the event may not serve as a judge.

Manuscript

- Upload manuscripts in PDF format by the designated deadline, as published on FFA.org. Upload instructions are on FFA.org.
- Late submissions will be assessed a penalty of 20 points (10 percent of available manuscript points) by the judges scoring the manuscripts.

- Manuscripts received later than the third Friday in September will receive zero points for the manuscript score. Still, such participants will be allowed to participate in the presentation and questions portion of the event if the manuscript is provided no later than one week before the event.

Manuscript requirements

- Formatted to fit 8 1/2 x 11-inch paper, double-spaced with a 1-inch margin.
- Cover page includes the speech title, participant's first name and last initial, state, and year.
- 12-point size, using Times New Roman, Cambria, Arial or Calibri font.
- References and in-text citations documented.
- A reference list at the end of the manuscript, which provides the information necessary for a reader to locate and retrieve any source cited in the body of the manuscript. Each source cited in the manuscript should appear in the reference list; likewise, each entry in the reference list should be cited in the manuscript text.
- Manuscripts not meeting these guidelines will be penalized, per the Manuscript Content and Composition Rubric.
- A signed [Statement of Authenticity](#).

Presentation

- Speeches should be a minimum of six minutes in length and a maximum of eight minutes. Participants will be penalized one point per second on each judge's score sheet for being under six or over eight minutes. No time warnings will be given for the presentation section. Immediately after the speech is presented, the participant will be allowed five additional minutes to be asked questions relating to their speech and/or manuscript content.
- Participants are expected to deliver their presentation in a way that is consistent with their manuscript. Major deviations between the oral presentation and the manuscript should be avoided.
- Time for the presentation starts when the participant utters the first word and ends when the participant concludes the presentation.
- Time for the question-and-answer section begins when the participant starts the first answer to the first question. When five minutes have elapsed, the timekeeper will call "**TIME**," at which time the participant should immediately cease speaking, and should a judge be asking a question when "**TIME**" is called, the judge will stop the question.

Event Format

Manuscript

- Manuscripts will be submitted, with the signed Statement of Authenticity, at a time and in a manner designated by National FFA and posted on FFA.org.
- Manuscripts will be judged before the event.
- Preliminary presentation flights will be seeded based on manuscript scores.
- National FFA will provide judges' feedback reports after the event.

Presentation

- The eight (8) preliminary flights will be announced, typically with six to seven speakers in each flight, approximately one to two weeks before the event.
- Preliminary flights A, B, C, and D will make oral presentations on the first morning of the event, followed by preliminary flights E, F, G and H.
- The time and locations of the preliminary flights will be communicated to the advisors and posted on FFA.org.
- Event officials will randomly determine the speaking order and ensure each participant is introduced to the judges and observers before the presentation begins.
- Participants will be permitted to use notes while speaking; however, deductions in scoring may be made if it detracts from the effectiveness of the presentation.
- No props of any sort are allowed. Participants will receive a zero (0) score on the presentation and questions for using a prop. A prop is “a portable or movable object the speaker uses to benefit or enhance the oral presentation.”
- Presentations will be given in a room typically large enough for approximately 100 observers. The participants will be able to view the room before their presentation. A podium will be provided if requested by the participant. It is not anticipated that a microphone will be needed for the preliminaries and semifinals.
- The participant will be escorted to the speaking room from the holding room when it is time for their presentation.
- The speaking rooms will be staffed by one or more committee members serving as room coordinators and timekeepers. No time warnings will be given during the speech presentation. The timekeeper will call “TIME” in the question-and-answer section after five minutes.
- Typically, there will be three to six judges in each preliminary and semifinal flight and four to five judges in the final.
- No prompter will be provided during the participant’s speech presentation. Help or assistance to the participant from the audience or observers during the presentation is prohibited.
- The audience will be asked not to applaud after a presentation.
- The judges will be furnished with a copy of each participant’s manuscript to formulate questions to be asked to the participant during the question-and-answer section.
- Judges will be encouraged to use the entire five minutes for questions/answers.
- The top two participants in each preliminary flight will advance to the semifinals, to be held on the afternoon of the first day of the event. The top two participants in the two semifinal flights will advance to the final. Announcements of those advancing to the semifinals will be posted outside the door of the room in which the presentation was given. National FFA will also publish the results through the convention app. Announcements of those advancing to the finals will be announced at the Award Ceremony.
- National FFA will provide judges’ feedback reports after the event.

Scoring/Judging

The manuscripts will be individually scored before the event, without collaboration, by three to five qualified individuals using the official Manuscript Content and Composition rubric. Manuscript scores will be averaged and supplied to the judges after scoring the oral presentation.

At the time of the event, each presentation judge, without collaboration with others, will use the official Presentation and Questions rubric to score each participant on the presentation of the speech and response to questions.

When all participants have finished speaking, each judge will total the score on the manuscript, presentation and response to questions for each participant, deducting any applicable penalties.

The judges' rankings of each participant shall then be added, and the winner will be that participant whose total ranking is the lowest. Other placings will be determined in the same manner (low-rank method of selection).

Activities	Points
Manuscript	200
Presentation	500
Response to questions	300
Total Points	1,000

Tiebreakers

Ties will be broken based on the greatest number of low ranks as follows: the tying participant with the greatest number of first-place ranks shall be declared the winner. If there is no winner or there is a tie, then the tying participant with the greatest number of second-place ranks shall be declared the winner. If there is no winner or a tie remains, the participant with the greatest number of third place ranks among the tied participants shall be declared the winner.

If a tie still exists, the event superintendent will rank the participants' responses to questions. The participant with the lowest rank in response to questions will be declared the winner.

The participants' raw scores will be totaled if a tie still exists. The participant with the greatest total of raw points will be declared the winner.

Awards

Awards will be presented at the awards ceremony to individuals based on their rankings. Advisors of cash award recipients will receive information about claiming their award following the convention. Guidelines for amounts and recipients of cash awards can be found [here](#). Corporate partners help grow the next generation of leaders through supporting AFNR pathways awards.

References

The following list of references is not intended to be all-inclusive. Other sources may be utilized, and participants are encouraged to use the best instructional materials available. Participants should use discretion when selecting website references by only using reputable, proven sites. The following list contains references that may prove helpful during event preparation. The most current edition of resources should be used.

- Past CDE materials, finals hall footage and other resources are available on [FFA.org](https://www.ffa.org)
- APA Style Guide (most current edition), www.apastyle.org
- Speak Well. (most current edition.) Liz O'Brien. McGraw-Hill Higher Education.
- Purdue's Online Writing Lab – APA Formatting Guide, <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

Manuscript Content and Composition Rubric

200 points

Name				Member Number		
Chapter				State		
Indicator	Very strong evidence of skill 5–4 points	Moderate evidence of skill 3–2 points	Weak evidence of skill 1–0 points	Points Earned	Weight	Total Points
Topic relevance	Topic addresses an issue facing the industry of agriculture.	Topic addresses an issue that may show some relationship to the industry of agriculture.	Topic addresses an issue that is unrelated to the industry of agriculture.		x 6	
Persuasive explanation of position on topic	Position is clearly stated, and ample evidence is provided.	Position is not obvious, and evidence is not clearly provided.	Position is not stated, and evidence is not provided.		x8	
Alternative viewpoints recognized	Identifies and counters alternative viewpoints	Only identifies alternate viewpoints	Does not identify alternate viewpoints		x 4	
Logical order and unity of thought	Clearly organized and concise with strong introduction, body and conclusion layout	Good organization with few statements out of place or lacking in clear construction	Little to no organization is present; sometimes awkward and lacking construction		x 4	
Spelling/grammar (sentence structure, verb agreement, etc.).	Spelling and grammar are extremely high quality with two or less errors in the document.	Spelling and grammar are adequate with three to five errors in the document.	Spelling and grammar are less than adequate with six or more errors in the document.		x 7	
Quality of resources	Resources are from reputable sources.	Resources are from questionable sources.	Resources are unreliable and invalid.		x 6	
Manuscript written according to	5–4 points	3–2 points	1–0 points			
References and in-text citations documented	Research is cited appropriately throughout the work. Citations appear wherever they are appropriate.	Research is cited appropriately in the work, but there should be more research citations. Citations appear wherever they are appropriate.	Research is not cited often, and citations appear only at the end of sentences or paragraphs. More citations are needed to support the writing.		x 3	
	5 points		0 points			
Double-spaced & formatted to 8½ x 11-inch paper with 1-inch margins. 12-point size, using Times New Roman, Cambria, Arial, or Calibri font					x 1	
Cover page with speech title, participant's name, state, and year; and Signed Statement of Authenticity					x 1	
Total Points EARNED OUT OF 200 POSSIBLE						

Presentation and Questions Rubric

800 points

Name				Member Number		
Chapter				State		
Indicators	Very strong evidence of skill 5-4 points	Moderate evidence of skill 3-2 points	Weak evidence of skill 1-0 points	Points Earned	Weight	Total Score
Oral and Non-Verbal Communication						
Supporting evidence	Examples (stories, statistics, etc.) are vivid, precise and clearly explained.	Examples are usually concrete but sometimes need clarification.	Examples are sometimes confusing, leaving the listeners with questions.		x 15	
Persuasive use of evidence	Exemplary use of evidence to persuade listeners.	Sufficient use of evidence to persuade listeners.	Has difficulty using evidence to persuade listeners		x 15	
Pace	Speaks very articulately at rate that engages audience.	Speaks articulately but occasionally speaks too fast or has long unnecessary	Speaks too slow or too fast to engage audience.		x 15	
Command of audience	Speaker uses appropriate emphasis and tone to captivate audience.	Speaker presents speech as mere repeating of facts and speech comes across as a report.	Speaker lacks enthusiasm and power to engage audience.		x 20	
Eye contact	Constantly looks at the entire audience (90 to 100% of the time)	Mostly looks around the audience (60 to 80% of the time)	Occasionally looks at someone or some groups (less than 50 % of the time)		x 10	
Mannerisms and gestures	No nervous habits are displayed. Hand motions are expressive and used to emphasize talking points.	Sometimes exhibits nervous habits; Hands are sometimes used to express or emphasize points.	Displays some nervous habits; Hands are not used to emphasize talking points; hand motions are sometimes distracting.		x 10	
Poise	Portrays confidence and composure through appropriate body language (stance, posture, facial expressions)	Maintains control most of the time; rarely loses composure	Lacks confidence and composure		x 15	
Response to Questions						
Response to questions	Responds with organized thoughts and concise answers	Answers effectively but has to stop and think and sometimes gets off focus	Rambles or responds before thinking		x 20	
Knowledge of topic	Answers show a thorough knowledge of the subject and support answers with strong evidence.	Answers show some knowledge of the subject but lack strong evidence.	Answers show little knowledge of the subject and lacks evidence.		x 40	
Total Oral and Non-Verbal Communication Points						
Total Response to Questions Points						
TOTAL POINTS EARNED OUT OF 800 POSSIBLE						
Time Deduction (-1 point/second under six minutes or over eight minutes)						
Manuscript Score						
Total Net Points						
Rank						