

Speaker Points: A Rationale

A lot of discussion has occurred on how speaker points should be assigned. What follows is an attempt to make the criteria more uniform.

Rankings vs. Speaker Points

Rankings should indicate how a speaker did in relationship to the round in which they competed (i.e. if they were the 3rd best speaker out of 6, they would receive a 3). In contrast, speaker points should be an indication of how a speaker did in relationship to people in the event as a whole, not just the round (i.e. if they received a rank of “2” but were, in fact, no better than average, then “25” may be an appropriate assignment of speaker points).

Shouldn't the person who gets a rank of “1” always get 30 speaker points?

No. Not unless you felt the speaker was not only the best in the round but could, in fact, also be the absolute best at a tournament. If all speakers with a “1” automatically get 30 speaker points, then these points lose all meaning. A “30” on speaker points should indicate perfection (or near perfection). Many times a person receives a rank of “1” and is far from perfect.

Speaker points defined

At the college level and in other states at the high school level, speaker points are actually called “quality” points. They are used to help indicate if the person received a certain rank in a weak or a difficult round. Thus, if a student received the following ranks/points, it would actually make sense:

	Rank	Points
Rd. 1:	4	25
Rd. 2:	5	25
Rd. 3:	1	26
Rd. 4:	3	25

*The *ranks* may change because the rounds varied in difficulty, but the speaker points are fairly consistent, meaning that all four judges felt the quality of the performance was in that range.

What would not make as much sense is the same ranks with pre-determined speaker point values:

	Rank	Points
Rd. 1:	4	27
Rd. 2:	5	25
Rd. 3:	1	30
Rd. 4:	3	28

*Now the student feels the judging is inconsistent and they can't determine where their performance actually stands. One judge found them to be “perfect” while another judge gave them a “5”.

The goal of speaker points

The reason speaker points exist is to help break ties when determining who should make a final round and/or win a tournament. Always giving a “1” and a “30” and a “2” and a “29” doesn’t help with breaking ties at all. As a matter of fact, it makes it so there are more ties:

	Speaker A			Speaker B	
	Rank	Points		Rank	Points
Rd. 1:	1	30	Rd. 1:	2	29
Rd. 2:	2	29	Rd. 2:	1	30
Rd. 3:	2	29	Rd. 3:	2	29
Rd. 4:	1	30	Rd. 4:	1	30
TOTAL	6	118		6	118 (TIE)

But, if speaker points actually reflected the quality of the performance....

	Speaker A			Speaker B	
	Rank	Points		Rank	Points
Rd. 1:	1	30	Rd. 1:	2	26
Rd. 2:	2	29	Rd. 2:	1	27
Rd. 3:	2	29	Rd. 3:	2	27
Rd. 4:	1	30	Rd. 4:	1	28
TOTAL:	6	118		6	108

Now, speaker A wins, which appears appropriate as all four judges felt that speaker was of a quality of 29-30, whereas no judges felt speaker B was of a quality that high.

Isn't it being “tougher” on the students?

No. There’s nothing tougher on a student than assigning speaker points that don’t help them understand where their performance stands. In fact, by making a “30” mean something, they might actually appreciate it, as opposed to feeling like the judge was obligated to give a “30”

I've heard I should have “spread” in my speaker points? Should I?

Only if the quality of the round dictates it. If the top three speakers in the round were all good, but not great, it would make sense to give a 1/28, 2/28, and 3/28. Similarly, if there was one standout in a round that was otherwise drab, you might give a 1/30 and then a 2/25. The key is to make the speaker points mean something. Spread will naturally occur from there.

A good rule of thumb

Give out “30” speaker points to a person you think you’d be fine if they received 1st place at the entire tournament. Give them “29” or “28” if you wouldn’t mind seeing them place at the tournament. Reserve “27” or lower for people who probably are not of the quality that you feel they should place at the tournament.

