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ROTARY SPEECH CONTEST:
The 4-Way Test
MANUAL

FOR CLUBS
DISTRICT 7450
2025-2026

ABSTRACT
Everything you need to know to
initiate and conduct a successful
4 Way Test Speech Contest for
your club



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4 Way Test Speech Contest

WHY DO IT???

Benefit to students

1. Promote critical thinking and ethical decision making among high school students.
2. Provide a forum for high school students to showcase issues that they care about.
3. Allow high school students to practice their public speaking skills.
4. Encourage scholarship and academic research.

Opportunities for your club

1. Gain exposure for Rotary and the local club among the youth and school personnel.
2. Afford an opportunity to invite prominent community and business leaders to participate in a club project and increase their awareness of Rotary, the club, and what we do.
3. Increase Rotary awareness in the community by hosting the parents of the student speakers.
4. Give the club an opportunity to promote a worthwhile project and itself in the local newspaper and other media outlets.
5. Encourage interaction of the Rotary Club with students in schools where the Club sponsors an Interact Club, and/or to expand the Club's interaction with the student body in schools where they may not yet sponsor an Interact club. All students should be encouraged to participate, regardless of their affiliation with Interact.
6. Engage club members to participate as judges, timekeeper, teller, and chair of the project.
7. Partner with a local business, such as a law firm, bank, or accounting firm that may wish to sponsor a project that promotes ethical decision making.

Important Items for Consideration

- Each Club in the district may promote ONE or TWO students from each high school they are sponsoring to the semi-finals UNLESS a decision by the district committee is made on a timely basis that enough clubs are participating that promoting two students is unworkable.
- If you are working with more than one high school, you may opt to hold a contest for each high school or opt to hold one contest sending the highest ranked student from each high school on to Semi-Finals.
- If you have just one student from your high school interested, PLEASE HAVE THAT STUDENT PRESENT TO YOUR CLUB BY APRIL 17, and please make sure the student has followed all the rules for the contest. Then after hearing the presentation, please submit their registration forms as described below.
- If you have more than 6 students interested in participating, you may wish to work with the school to determine how to narrow the numbers down – we find it is very difficult to hold a contest with more than 6 students.

Dates and Timeline for Participating

Sept through December

- Appoint a club member to chair the contest.
- Discuss the contest with appropriate coordinating teacher or administrator (school facilitator) at each school in your area.
- Supply posters and brochures to the school contact person.
- Be prepared to make a presentation to the school and students about the contest; ask someone from the district committee to accompany you.
- Make sure the appropriate faculty member or administrator has a copy of the Contest Rules and Student Entry Forms.
- Schedule Club Contest(s) to occur ideally before April 10, but absolutely no later than APRIL 17.
- Determine prizes for club contestants (if any, but suggested)

January

- Confirm with the schools the number of student participants (no more than 6 for a club contest is recommended).
- Prepare club level certificates, plaques, trophies, etc., at club option, for students.
- Publish club level contest date in club bulletin and encourage high attendance.
- Identify 3 judges, a teller (someone to tally the judges scores) and a timekeeper.
- Arrange newspaper coverage.
- Confirm student and parental attendance either with the school facilitator or directly with the student (if applicable) and confirm their registration papers (the student entry forms that are to be submitted to their advisor or the Rotarian in charge of the club contest).
- Make sure the student and family understand that the winner of the club contest must be available to participate in the Semi-final and Final competitions.

One week before the contest

- Confirm that the judges, teller, and timekeeper will be present and understand their instructions and have received their score sheets for review.
- Confirm newspaper coverage.

The Day of the Contest

- Arrange seating for contestants and guests.
- Greet the contestants and their families and guests (if applicable)
- Have prepared a method of randomly determining order of speakers, e.g., drawing cards or numbered slips from a hat.

Register your winner(s) for the semi-finals.

For each of the top contestants (from each school if more than one represented and you are sending more than one student), complete the google form for the 1 Semi-final Registration form, and the club entry form, and mail the \$75 per entrant fee (paid by club) by **APRIL 17** to:

Mailing Address: 146 Willits Way, Glen Mills, PA 19342

The regional Semi-final Round will be held on **APRIL 25 via **zoom**.**

The Final Competition will be held on **May 9, at the Phoenixville **YMCA****

THIS DOCUMENT WILL BE EDITED WITH THE LINK FOR THE GOOGLE FORMS FOR THE REGISTRATIONS WHEN AVAILABLE

First Timer's guide to Communicating with the School

A positive initial contact with either the school principal or designee is critical to the success of the speech contest in the school. Use the following script, especially if this is the first year of school contact or participation, which has been prepared with the advice of a "school insider" to present the speech contest in terms relevant to an educator.

Some points to consider during the conversation with the school official

- Does the school offer a public speaking class?
- Would this contest fit as a special program within the school's Gifted Program?
- Could this be part of a Career Education program as it is related to goal setting, critical thinking, and decision making?
- Could participation and winning in this contest be a positive point in a student's resumé?
- Does this contest have a place in English, psychology, sociology, drama or speech classes?

Suggested Script for school discussion

(The objective is to schedule a time to meet and start building a person-to-person relationship, not to explain the entire program on the phone).

"Good morning/afternoon Mr./Ms. (Principal or designee),
My name is.....and I am a member of the Rotary club
of..... During the last several years Rotary Clubs in our
district have been partnering with many of our schools to offer a program
which challenges students to develop their critical thinking and ethical
decision-making skills.

This program has gotten great reviews from teachers, students and parents
and has turned out to be a good way to strengthen the ties between the
school and the local business community.

Is there a good time this week or next that we could meet to find out where
this program might best fit in your school? I will have more detailed

information with me and will also be able to answer your questions.”

“Can you tell me a little more about it?”

“Absolutely. The program engages students in grades 9 through 12. Students are challenged to identify a subject or issue that they are passionate about and to adopt a point of view of which they seek to persuade others. In doing so they are required to answer the following questions:

1. Is it the Truth?
2. Is it Fair to all concerned?
3. Will it build Goodwill and better Friendships?
4. Will it be Beneficial to all concerned?

Students develop an essay and are given the opportunity to deliver it in a 5-8 minute TED[™]-like speech in a local speech contest. The contests may provide cash prizes and recognition as well as the ability to advance to Semi-final contests to compete with students from other school districts. Is there a convenient time that we could meet to see where this might best fit in your school?”

Suggested responses to possible objections:

“We already have a speech competition that students can participate in.”

That’s great! We are finding that schools that already offer public speaking courses or competitions are the biggest supporters of our program and use it to reach an additional target audience among their students. Some examples of this are Career Education and Work Standards, Resume building and College exploration, Theatre and acting, as an add-on to the Gifted program and as part of Psychology or Sociology and English classes to nurture communication and presentation skills.

“I am not sure where this would fit in our school. I will have to get back to you.”

Sure. If I may – could I give you some examples of how other schools use this program?

We are finding that schools that already offer public speaking courses or competitions are the biggest supporters of our program and use it to reach an additional target audience among their students. Some examples of this are Career Education and Work Standards, Resume building and College exploration, Theatre and acting, as an add-on to the Gifted program and as part of Psychology or Sociology and English classes to nurture communication and presentation skills.

“The class curriculums have already been finalized”.

I understand and that’s why some schools initially offer this program to students as a completely voluntary opportunity outside of normal school hours. The school’s involvement can be limited to helping us get the word out with some posters and brochures. Even so the schools may benefit from the publicity surrounding the contests.

Contest Personnel Defined

School Facilitator

A School Facilitator is either a school faculty member or administrator who is the liaison with the local Rotary Contest Chair. The School Facilitator takes an active role in recruiting students and preparing them for the contest by reviewing the rules and dates of the contest with the students. If needed, the School Facilitator would oversee an in-school run-off contest in order to reduce the number of Club contestants to six.

Students/Contestants

Contestants must be in grade 9-12 at a public, private, charter or parochial school or home- schooled in the club's geographic area.

Judges

The Judges should possess relevant qualifications that would allow them to assess student speakers. Examples of judges include educators, lawyers, toastmasters and other professionals or businesspeople who are used to and feel comfortable with public speaking. If you can't find anyone, any club member is fine!

Timekeeper

The Timekeeper is typically a club member who feels comfortable operating an electronic stopwatch such as those typically found today on a smart phone. The Timekeeper will be positioned front and center during the contest and will use a hand signal to indicate the 5-minute mark to the speaker.

Teller

The Teller is responsible for collecting the Judges' scoring sheets along with the Timekeeper record. The Teller will then tabulate and calculate the overall scores and determine the finish order of the contestants. This can be the MC or Timekeeper, or even a judge.

Sample Club Level Contest Agenda

Once contestants have arrived, have them draw a number from a box to determine their speaking order. Students should be removed to a separate location where they will not hear their fellow students give their speeches. <this is a point of debate. Some say it's a learning experience to hear their fellow students' speeches, others say it gives an unfair **advantage** to those who go later, still others say it is a **disadvantage** to those who go later, especially if the first ones are really good. The current committee consensus is to use your own judgement!>

- The Master of Ceremonies of the contest may make the following announcements at the beginning, but you may wish to make them between the speeches, when the judges will need a moment or two to finish marking their score sheets:
 - The topic of each contestant's speech has been chosen by each contestant.
 - The purpose of the speech is to address an ethical problem using the principles of Rotary's 4-Way Test:

Of the things we think, say or do:

First: Is it the truth?

Second: Is it fair to all concerned?

Third: Will it build goodwill and better friendships?

Fourth: Will it be beneficial to all concerned?

- Speeches must be at least 5 minutes but no more than 7 minutes in length. Penalty points are assessed if a speech is too long or too short.
 - Our Top winner today will advance to the Semi-Final round on April 25
 - Significant cash prizes will be awarded (dependent on the number of Participants). The top regional semi-final contestant(s) will advance to the District Finals on May 9
- Ask for quiet for all speakers. No one should enter or exit during a speech.

Food servers should refrain from serving or bussing during a speech.

- The Master of Ceremonies should explain that each speaker will be introduced by NUMBER ONLY with no mention of names or school affiliation (if more than one school is represented and you are holding just one contest for all schools) until all contestants have given their speeches. This is to prevent any unintentional bias from judges because of last names or schools.
- Also explain that polite applause at the conclusion of each speech is permissible, but responses beyond this are discouraged so that judges are not unduly influenced by the audience.
- Also note that there will be silence between speakers to allow the judges an opportunity to tabulate their scores.
- Do not point out the judges before the contest.
- After the last contestant has spoken, invite the judges and the teller to leave the room to tally the points and rank the speakers.
- At this point, while the Judges are tallying the points and ranking the speakers, the Master of Ceremonies should invite the contestants up to introduce themselves and talk about their school activities or their aspirations.
- When the judges are done, they may come back into the room, and they can be introduced while the Teller is tallying all the points and filling out certificates (if you printed any)
- When the Teller is finished, they can enter the room and indicate that a winner has been chosen.
- The Master of Ceremonies can then do an awards presentation – usually starting with the ‘runners-up’, then second place, then winner.

Judges' Instructions

General

Judges and the teller will seat themselves apart from each other and not communicate about their evaluations of speakers until after the final awards have been made.

Each speaker will be awarded points in the three categories listed below.

Record points immediately after each speech. The contest Chair will ask the judges if they are ready before calling the next speaker.

Columns should be added, and rankings computed after all speeches have been given and the judges have left the room.

Judging Criteria

Judging will be based on a 100-point system, broken down into three categories as follows:

Content—44 points

Organization—24 points

Delivery—32 points

See the Rules document for the breakdown of points and the judging sheet.

Judging Procedures

Judges will total points for each speaker on their individual scoring sheets (or google form – see below). The Teller will get information from the timekeeper, subtract penalty points (if any) and enter net points.

The winner of the contest will be decided. The contestant with the highest total of net points on the judge's scoring sheets will be declared the winner, and so on. If a tie exists, the tie-breaker will be **a vote of the judges**. The contestant receiving a majority vote of the (three) judges will be declared the winner and the judges' decision will be final.

NOTE – if you feel comfortable with technology, there are google forms available for the judges to use which makes the tellers job simple. If you want to use the forms, please reach out to the contest chairperson at rsc7450@gmail.com

Additional Reference Documents

- Judge's Scoring Tally (for Teller)
- Judges Scoring Sheet (for Judges)
- Student Entry Form (Club level – passed on to Semi-finals)
- Student Semi-Finals Registration Form
- Contest Rules (for students and clubs)
- History of The Four Way Test (of general interest)
- Flyer (to promote to students)

Documents can be found at <https://rotarydistrict7450.org/4wtsc/>