This document provides suggestions encouraged by CCA for coaching Individual Events but does not create mandatory requirements. The *IE Criteria & Competitor Standards* (CCS), *Judge Instructions*, *Ballots*, and *CCA Code of Conduct* provide the official standards for competition. However, by also applying the guidance in this document, coaches may help competitors become more effective in communication and at CCA tournaments.

This document assumes knowledge of the standards and intends to avoid unnecessary repetition. Read all coaching tips in the context of the Biblical Foundation section of the CCS and all other standards detailed in the documents noted above. Also, read all coaching tips in the context of the *Guiding Principles for Unity in Competition.*

TIPS FOR ALL EVENTS

First Impression

A first impression can be formed before a competitor even begins speaking. Neat and conservatively styled **appearance** (in addition to attire/grooming requirements in the *CCA Code of Conduct*) may build enhanced credibility and avoid distracting the audience from the speech. Generally, faddish clothing, messy hairstyles, and excessive makeup and jewelry will not benefit a competitor. **Behavior** also impacts credibility. A competitor has the opportunity to make a positive first impression by sitting respectfully while waiting for the round to begin and by giving full attention to the other competitors' speeches.

Vocal Delivery

A dynamic speaker uses variety in volume, rate, and pitch to create rhythm and tone to convey his or her message. Through subtle changes, the speaker's voice carries both emotional and intellectual impact.

Volume refers to the degree of loudness with which a person speaks. It is possible to be too loud, but the more common concern is being too quiet. A speaker struggling in this area may be directed to research physical voice projection techniques. The effective speaker uses a careful balance of louder and quieter volumes within an appropriate range.

Rate refers to the speed at which a person speaks. Coaches are advised to encourage competitors to speak at a comfortable rate. Speaking too slowly loses the audience's attention; speaking too quickly keeps them from understanding words or processing concepts. However, occasionally slowing the rate strategically will aid in making certain words, phrases, and consequently, ideas, stand out to an audience. Rate also involves **pausing,** a technique that aids in emphasis of words or ideas. Well-placed pauses can make the difference between an effective and an ineffective speech.

Pitch refers to the highness and lowness of the voice. Varied pitch creates interest and allows the words to make an impact.

Advise speakers to avoid **unnatural rhythm**. It is extremely easy for a speaker who has a script memorized to fall into a monotonous vocal pattern. Another temptation is **overemphasis** of words or phrases in an effort to demonstrate significance: too much volume, too abrupt a change in pitch, or too lengthy a pause. Remember, natural sounding speakers are more effective.

Physical Delivery

Stray gestures or wavering eye contact can communicate lack of professionalism or control. All movements of a successful speaker's body are intentional.

Eye contact is the easiest way to make the personal connection needed to help an audience receive a message. Ideally, a speaker gives every member of the audience several seconds of uninterrupted eye contact numerous times throughout the speech. This may not be practical with large audiences, but it is best to advise speakers to make an effort to slowly scan the crowd. Also, in the competition setting, spending a larger percentage of time making eye contact with the judges is advised.

Facial expressions are a crucial way to convey the meaning of words. Facial expression also reflects a speaker's emotional connection with the material. As with overemphasis in vocal delivery, it is easy to be too dramatic with facial expressions. Encourage speakers to employ expressions consistent with the tone of the presentation.

Gestures are recommended to be similar to those used in everyday conversation. Coaches are advised to recommend carefully planned hand movements, without allowing them to become stiff and robotic. Encourage smooth hand movements, used only when needed to draw subtle attention to the thought being spoken. Avoid repetitive gestures. Coaches also may advise speakers to avoid a position with elbows pinned to the body (termed "T-Rex arms" in public speaking), as this prevents more natural and expansive arm gestures.

Whole body movement in successful speeches is precise, without random movements or pacing.

Finishing Well

Following the final words of the speech, it is advised that the competitor hold eye contact (or focal point, if applicable for Oral Interpretation) and **pause** for a few seconds. A speaker can diminish the impact of a speech's last words by too quickly changing physical stance or walking away. After an appropriate pause, the CCA competitor then typically approaches the judge(s) and additional person timing (if applicable) to shake hands and **thank** them.

ORAL INTERPRETATION
GENERAL TIPS

Selecting Literature

Quality and Appropriateness

While the CCS requires selection(s) with **literary merit** (see CCS Glossary) for the Prose and Poetry Interpretation events, speakers in all Oral Interpretation events are encouraged to consider the **quality** of the literature selected. The style, vocabulary, and message of a selection can stay with a competitor for years. Classic literature is timeless and often universal in its appeal to an audience, while themes found in newer works may be particularly relevant.

To avoid violating key CCS rules regarding **appropriateness** of selections, it's best if coaches err on the side of caution when giving approval: when in doubt, throw it out. With that in mind, be careful not to overcorrect by avoiding appropriate humor. (Humorous events are to go beyond "cute" or "clever" – make the audience laugh!)

Other Key Considerations

Story/Theme - Seek a selection with a story or theme the speaker can get behind; a speaker who does not enjoy presenting the selection(s) will generally not compete well. Selections are encouraged that will help the speaker learn and grow. Coaches are advised to consider competitor age and ability when helping evaluate suitability of a literature selection. A children's book written in a juvenile style may be an appropriate selection for a JR competitor, but not a JV or Varsity competitor. Conversely, a selection with particularly difficult vocabulary or writing style may exceed the ability level of some Varsity competitors (or be a poor choice for Oral Interpretation in general).

Ensure the selection can connect to a variety of audiences on a variety of levels. Keep in mind that overused selections, even if quality literature, may not have the desired effect on the audience.

For Prose, Poetry, and Bible Interpretation, the CCS permits a competitor to use multiple selections of literature from the same genre to develop a shared theme. Coaches are advised to encourage competitors to ensure that multiple selections (if used) are not too similar. For example, several similar poems with a nearly identical message can become boring. Instead, advise that selections connect to and build upon each other in development of the theme.

Length - Choose selection(s) that can be cut (see Cutting/Organizing section below) to fit the 10-minute maximum required by the CCS. The competitor may choose a short story, poem, single scene, or chapter that is already the desired length. However, be aware that using a single scene from a longer work may not allow for enough character development (where applicable) or emotional connection to the theme. Cutting a novel or full-length play while maintaining a complete story is a more difficult process but can be

well worth the time. Note that, while approaching the maximum time is generally recommended, young speakers or those with learning differences may be better served by a shorter selection or cut.

Characters/Narrators - Choose selection(s) possible to be portrayed (see Cutting/Organizing section below) within a number of characters/narrators that fits the speaker's skill level and comfort level. While too many characters with their distinct voices and body language may be challenging to maintain throughout a presentation, portraying more than one character provides a speaker the opportunity to display variety in characterization in events where this is required. Note that portraying characters of the opposite gender can be difficult and unnatural, so consider choosing selection(s) with a limited number.

Note that Prose, Poetry, and Bible Interpretation (see *Ballots*) allow but do not require use of characters, allowing competitors to focus on interpretation solely through one or multiple narrator(s), where warranted by the selection(s). Many selections of literary merit do not include characters, nor do many impactful scriptural passages. (See Character/Narrator Development section below.)

Cutting/Organizing

Cutting involves **removing** (and sometimes reordering) an author's chapters/scenes, sentences, or words. Coaches may need to remind speakers that cutting does not involve adding words (even one!) not found in the work of literature.

When a competitor chooses to present multiple selections for Prose, Poetry, or Bible Interpretation, the most common way of **organizing** the literature is to progress from one selection to the next. An advanced alternative is to break up the selections and weave the parts into a coherent presentation.

In applying the CCS rule for **author's intent** in the cutting and organization of selection(s), it is helpful to ask competitors: "Are your choices contradicting the work's original themes or changing the author's meaning or overall vision?" (Per the CCS, also note any cutting requirements of the publisher, where applicable.)

Most competitors' Oral Interpretation selections (or combination of selections) are best cut to a **length** of 9:30. This can often be achieved with 3-4 full-sized typed pages of prose or 6-8 pages of a play (depending on font and competitor speaking rate).

Since the CCS requires a **single storyline or theme**, it's recommended to begin by identifying what the speaker most wishes to highlight. Most stories have two or more themes or mini storylines within a major storyline. While the obvious theme need not be chosen as the *speaker's* theme, it is important to choose one and edit around it. This may require sacrificing good parts of a story to keep the audience engaged with the theme.

Coaches should advise cutting/organizing in a manner that maintains **progression**, with a beginning, middle, and end appropriate for the presentation (see individual event *Ballots*). Cutting should result in some form of **resolution** appropriate to the work(s) of literature. If a story is left unconcluded in the original work, it is best to

advise the competitor to still resolve the theme for the audience. Speakers may be encouraged to study formal plot structure and use it at a basic level when cutting/organizing.

Where applicable, it's recommended to keep only the **characters** needed to further the theme. If author's intent remains, a minor character's lines may be given to another character or cut from a scene altogether. Most **dialogue tags** such as "said Jane," or "John proclaimed loudly," can be cut. It is more effective to adopt the characteristics of a character to *show* the audience who spoke the line and how he/she spoke it, rather than tell them. Similarly, descriptions of **mannerisms** may be cut and instead demonstrated in the physical portrayal.

Consider cutting difficult, archaic, awkward, unnecessarily repetitive, and extraneous **language**, as long as doing so maintains author's intent.

Occasionally a plot will prove **too complex** to be cut within the maximum time. Before recommending restarting with another work, coaches may consider whether the first part of the plot can be briefly summarized in the Original Introduction (see below).

Teaser

Most Oral Interpretations include a teaser before the Original Introduction to pique the audience's **interest**, often by introducing character(s), conflict, and/or theme. However, if it does not pull in the audience and make them want to keep listening to the rest of the story, a competitor is better off without a teaser.

If used, the teaser is sometimes chosen from the first **portion** or sometimes from a later portion of the competitor's cut selection of literature. The words of the teaser are sometimes repeated in the portion of the presentation that follows the Original Introduction.

Original Introduction

Though the CCS simply requires **identification** of the title(s) and author(s) of the selection(s) in the introduction, cleverly working them into the introduction *twice* is recommended to ensure the judge doesn't miss this important information.

A good introduction also prepares the audience to receive the message of the presentation. While sharing the **theme** of the literature selection(s) is recommended, this is best done without summarizing the selection(s). Some competitors effectively quote a saying, verse, statistic, or story to highlight the theme, while others simply describe the implications of the theme to the audience.

Consider whether **background/context** is needed in the introduction to help the audience understand the cut selection(s). This may include a brief introduction to characters, setting, and/or key plot events from the portion of the work of literature preceding the selection.

Preparing the Notebook

The best **source** CCA has found for a Forensic Notebook (binder and inserts that meet CCS requirements, referred to as the "notebook") www.theblackbookdepot.com. Inserts, especially, are more cost effective when purchased in bulk for a group. If the binder is sourced elsewhere, seek a version with rings mounted to the spine, not the back cover, as this type is easier to hold. Coaches may wish to ask graduating competitors to donate binders and/or inserts. Inserts are often reused for many years.

It is best to include competitor and parent **names and contact** information in the notebook in case it is misplaced during a tournament.

When printing the cut selection for the notebook, best practice involves advising the competitor to strategically plan **page breaks** for desired page turns (see Presentation section below, under Notebook Technique).

Character/Narrator Development

Using a stereotype or caricature to portray a character or narrator may be acceptable in humorous events if not in conflict with author's intent. However, when attempting to evoke a serious emotion, a stereotype is seldom the best way to convey the unique facets of a character or narrator.

Character profiles are a helpful tool in discovering who the characters are. Consider asking: How old are they? What do they look like? What do they like to do? What were their childhoods like? How do they respond to conflict? How do they feel about the other characters? Ask anything and everything needed to create realistic, honest portrayals. Some questions will be answered by the text, some are implied by the text, and others may be imagined beyond what you know about the character from the text. Physical and vocal characteristics may be developed based on the traits and emotions discovered in character profiling. Ask competitors to consider how they have seen and heard real people react when experiencing the emotions a character is feeling.

Narrator considerations may require less creativity (though no less precision) when a presentation has many characters. In these cases, the typical speaking voice and mannerisms of the competitor are often (but not always) sufficient for the narrated portions. However, especially when a presentation includes little or no character dialogue, coaches may encourage speakers to focus on creative, impactful, and nuanced vocal/physical delivery for the narrator(s).

If presenting a single-narrator selection with no characters, a skilled competitor will use aspects of these delivery techniques to effectively differentiate scenes. Coaches may encourage identification of these "scenes" based on implied changes of emotion or intent between portions of a selection. This identification will drive interpretation considerations.

For both characters and narrators, because the CCS requires interpretations to be **original** and not mimic actors' portrayals, coaches are advised to encourage competitors to avoid viewing or listening to cinematic or theatrical rendition(s) or adaptation(s) of the

selected work of literature, whether professional or amateur. To maintain integrity in original interpretation, competitors would also do well to avoid selection(s) where they are already quite familiar with such renditions.

In applying the CCS rule for **author's intent** in the interpretation of selection(s), it is helpful to ask competitors: "Does your interpretation contradict the original themes of the work?" and, where applicable, "Does your interpretation contradict the author's portrayal of this character or type of character?"

Presentation

Vocal Delivery

The successful competitor often slows down when introducing title(s)/author(s) in the **introduction**. This allows the judge time to write this information on the competitor's ballot without missing other key introductory content.

Careful use of **pitch, rate, and volume** is key to implementing vocal characteristics developed in character profiles and/or narrator considerations (see above). As most people find it uncomfortable to listen to high-pitched voices for extended periods, coaches may advise an intentional high pitch be used sparingly and with discretion. The same can be said for an unnaturally low pitch.

Consider competitor ability to properly replicate **accents** before committing to them in an interpretation. It is better to portray a character or narrator using the speaker's own accent than to present a well-known accent poorly. Subtle consistent accents are preferred to strong inconsistent ones. Also consider whether a particular accent's portrayal (or manner of portrayal) may be culturally objectionable to the audience.

Physical Delivery

Strategic use of both subtle and overt **movement** allows a speaker to implement physical characteristics developed in character profiles and/or narrator considerations (see above). Consider using posture, facial expressions, gestures, and miming of actions to accomplish this.

When applying the CCS limitation for presentation **space**, it is recommended to move freely, smoothly, and naturally within the square, though jumping and leaping are discouraged. Moving to (or toward) a different location in the presentation space can communicate mood and characters, add depth to a scene, and/or add emphasis or stylistic appeal. However, it is often better to not move to a different location for narration and simple character dialogue. Many effective performances do not need to take a step at all.

Off-Stage Focus

When fulfilling the CCS requirement of off-stage focus for character dialogue, competitors typically **differentiate** characters by giving them unique focal points. This involves focusing the eyes on a chosen spot in the room, commonly on the wall behind the audience, for each character. A main character's focal point is often straight ahead,

with a minor character's to one side. (Avoid focal points beyond 45 degrees left or right of center, or the audience may not receive the full benefit of a competitor's facial expressions.) Another technique is to use a "column," placing some characters' focal points higher or lower than others. This method can also be used to communicate a height difference between characters.

Use of off-stage focus limits a speaker's opportunity for **eye contact** with the audience to the Original Introduction and when speaking as a narrator. Audience eye contact is generally considered appropriate if a character narrates or makes an aside.

For narrator-only selection(s), coaches may encourage speakers to consider if a selection (or portion thereof) is best suited to audience eye contact or off-stage focus.

Notebook Technique

As part of the art form of Oral Interpretation, the notebook acknowledges the written words of the author. However, the more effective competitor has the selection **memorized** and does not read from the notebook during the presentation.

A prepared speaker is deliberate in **holding the notebook**. It is recommended to hold the notebook lower on the binding, open in a "V" shape. Avoid letting the notebook lie flat or flop open. Keep it as symmetrical as possible.

Periodic **page turns** aid in the progression of the presentation. Coaches may encourage competitors to carefully place page turns at scene or selection changes, shifts in mood or tone, or as a special effect. Sometimes a crisp, fast page turn is most effective, while at other times a slower, more thoughtful page turn is warranted.

The CCS permits **creative use** of the notebook, but also instructs competitors to consider whether this will enhance the presentation (and avoid uses that distract from the presentation). Slapping the notebook shut as a sound effect is often overused. Coaches do well to advise competitors to carefully evaluate whether this is the best dramatic choice for the selection before implementing.

ORAL INTERPRETATION
EVENT SPECIFIC TIPS

Poetry Interpretation

Though speaking in a **rhythmic pattern** determined by meter or rhyme scheme may seem the obvious way to present some poetry, this sometimes serves as a distraction more than an aid. Whether presenting metered/rhyming or free verse poetry, consider seeking the ideas within the phrases and delivering them like a selection of prose.

Dramatic/Humorous Interpretation, Dramatic/Humorous Duo Interpretation

Locating appropriate play scripts can be more challenging than locating the prose, poetry, or scripture passages required for other events. Competitors are encouraged to seek **traditionally published** scripts, starting with the library. Some classic plays can also be found online.

As the CCS also allows play scripts **published online** to be used for these events, some competitors have purchased scripts from sites like www.playscripts.com, www.dramaticpublishing.com, and www.lazybeescripts.co.uk. *Please note: If used, parents and coaches should monitor these secular resources. The content of many of the scripts is inappropriate for our league, and in some cases graphic. Caution is needed.*

Dramatic/Humorous Duo Interpretation

Consider the **balance** of dialogue and action between Duo partners, especially avoiding one partner presenting the great majority of the dialogue.

While Duo partners may initially find it challenging to implement CCS prohibitions against **looking** directly at one another (except during the introduction) and **touching** each other, creative character interactions can quickly become one of the most fun elements of the interpretation. For example, if the characters shake hands, each competitor shakes the invisible hand of the other character out in front of them, timing it so that if they were facing, they would actually be shaking each other's hands. Carefully align the timing of this type of action, which may include handing each other things, pointing at the same item in the room, or laying a hand on the other's shoulder. In addition to following focal point guidance for all Oral Interpretation, Duo partners may also consider focal points angled in front of each other for characters with key dialogue.

The CCS rule allowing partners to share **presentation spaces** (and/or switch places) may be visually interpreted as Duo competitors combining their individual squares into a rectangular space. While this larger space can be a great asset, continue to use discretion in deliberate movement choices.

Duo partners almost always turn their **pages** simultaneously, though there may be carefully planned occasions when one partner turns separately.

Note that the CCS does not require Duo partners to attend the same **club**. In such cases, each partner's own coach/leader signs his/her *Script Submission Cover Page*.

PUBLIC ADDRESS
GENERAL TIPS

Plagiarism and AI Generation

To avoid **disqualifications** for plagiarism (per the CCS), coaches are advised to:

- Instruct speakers about plagiarism and/or directing them to www.plagiarism.org
- Ask to see a list of direct quotations to support a thesis prior to giving the go-ahead for speech writing (understanding that all may not be directly quoted in the speech, but instead used as the basis for indirect quotations)
- Encourage credible sources (unlikely to include plagiarism themselves)
- Teach proper citation (see Citing Sources section below)

Both coaches and parents are advised to plan ahead for oversight of the research and writing process, as they will eventually need to sign the *Script Submission Cover Page* **certifying** that speech preparation is the competitor's work.

Signature of the *Script Submission Cover Page* ("**I alone researched/wrote** this speech, except for reasonable input from my coaches") precludes use of AI-generated text in the writing of the speech. AI may be used where appropriate to help direct a competitor toward credible sources.

Choosing a Topic and Thesis

Topics are intended to be both **interesting** and **relevant** to the audience, while following all CCS standards of appropriateness. (A speaker is best encouraged to establish relevancy *within* the speech, as opposed to relying on the topic to legitimize itself.) Coaches may consider encouraging competitors interested in niche topics without wide appeal to seek aspects of those topics that a general audience would find interesting and relevant. Thesis development is best done after significant reading on a topic.

The CCS defines a thesis as a **claim** (arguable, debatable position, not merely a statement of fact) focusing on a **specific** topic. In applying this, coaches are advised to help the competitor verify (before speech-writing) that the thesis is **clear**, makes a claim about a specific **aspect** of the chosen topic, and fulfills event-specific requirements. Claims too broad for a 10-minute presentation are unlikely to be successful. Avoid an overused or unoriginal thesis.

A **succinct** thesis is preferred both to give the competitor clarity in seeking supporting evidence and to assist audience understanding of the thesis when presented. Avoid a thesis written in first person or phrased as a question.

Coaches benefit competitors by encouraging them to ensure the **available research** is sufficient to support the thesis *before* any serious work is done on the speech. Credible evidence sufficient for a 10-minute speech on a particular thesis (or overall topic) may not exist or be accessible to the competitor.

Planning Main Points

The CCS identifies main points as statements which each directly **support the thesis**, further narrow it, serve as a mini-thesis for one major portion of the speech, and will be **directly proven** by evidence. The CCS also indicates that background and applications are usually not appropriate main points.

When coaching from this definition, it is often helpful to advise a speaker to gather researched quotes/evidence to support the overall thesis and then look for clear groupings within that evidence to **narrow the thesis** into the strongest main points. Evidence not fitting with these groupings/points may be excluded.

To ensure that main points directly support a thesis, a coach may ask the speaker to write out the thesis three times and add a narrowing phrase to each. **Parallelism** of both grammatical structure and intent is recommended for the narrowing phrases. This will achieve main points in their basic logical form, providing the speaker with three mini-theses under which to assemble the grouped quotes/evidence in an outline of sorts.

Speakers may then be directed to assess whether the proposed points have **balance** (roughly the same amount of evidence per point) and **distinction** (providing unique evidence that does not overlap), as well as whether more evidence is needed. Seeking more sources then the CCS three-cited-source minimum is recommended.

Finally, before beginning to write the speech, coaches may encourage speakers to consider the best **flow** (logical order of the main points). In some speeches, a chronological flow makes the most sense. In others, evidence in one main point may necessitate presenting that point first (allowing deeper audience understanding of subsequent main points). Some successful competitors prefer to end on the main point with the strongest evidence.

Writing and Editing the Speech

Competitors may find it helpful to draft a speech of around four double-spaced pages, as a starting point, comprised of approximately 15% introduction, 75% main body, and 10% conclusion. With a well-planned thesis and main points, some speakers find it effective to draft the main body first, followed by the introduction and conclusion.

Introduction

As the *Ballot* requires the introduction to capture the audience's attention and create interest, coaches may encourage competitors to carefully consider how to "hook" the audience within the first few seconds. This **hook** might be a short narrative story, quote, statistic, rhetorical question, or statement that invites curiosity. An effective hook leads right into the topic itself and is not clichéd.

To meet the *Ballot* requirement to **justify** significance of the topic, it is helpful to direct a competitor to answer, "Why should the audience care?" Sometimes the hook provides or leads directly into this justification. Otherwise, it may be separately communicated.

Because the *Ballot* distinguishes between presenting the **thesis** and previewing points, it can be advantageous to present these requirements as two separate sentences at or near the end of the introduction. The simpler the **preview of points**, the better. The points may be more memorable to the audience as fragments or simple phrases. Use of alliteration can benefit some speeches.

Main Body

Each section of the main body should include a sentence serving as a **mini-thesis** (see Planning Main Points section above) and reflecting back to the overall thesis. Each section typically includes cited evidence, as well as the competitor's own original words and ideas. Effective **transition** statements and/or phrases between and within main body sections will help logical flow and overall cohesiveness of a speech.

Conclusion

In a speech's conclusion, the *Ballot* requires the competitor to **review** the thesis and main points, as well as provide **closure** and a **memorable ending**. Coaches may encourage competitors to strategically choose their last words to the audience. One suggestion is to reference the hook used in the introduction. This could be completing a story that was started, referencing a rhetorical question, or reflecting on a quote or other piece of information shared. Whether this or another effective closing technique is used, an effective competitor strives to give the audience a noteworthy lasting impression.

Editing and Improving

While there is no minimum length to a Public Address, competitors typically **add or cut** material until the speech is a length of approximately 9:30. If cutting is necessary, it is best done in a manner that maintains the balance between main point sections.

When **editing**, it can be helpful to seek power verbs, avoid excess "decoration" with adjectives/adverbs, avoid overused phrases, and ensure quotes are presented as succinctly as possible.

Coaches and speakers are advised to study Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and apply it in the speech feedback and editing process. Aristotle identifies the "means of persuasion" as **ethos, logos, and pathos**, used to establish credibility, appeal to the reasoning of an audience, and connect to an audience's feelings and experiences. Use of these tools is not limited to persuasive categories. Aspects of these tools may be used appropriately in informative speeches to help an audience understand and engage with a topic.

Studying **figures of speech** (schemes and tropes) helps speakers understand how to use words in distinctive and powerful ways in a speech.

Speakers using these and other techniques are best directed to still choose words appropriate to their age/experience and subject matter. Seeking **middle ground** is recommended, avoiding both common/"flat" language and flowery, overstated language.

Citing Sources

In the Speech

The CCS identifies failure to properly cite research (beyond common knowledge) as grounds for disqualification. The following examples indicate how CCS-required citation information might be phrased in a presentation:

Citation for Direct Quotation:

> According to Kelsey Sheehy's June 1, 2013, US News and World Report article titled *Homeschool Students Ripe for College*, "Parents and students from the home-schooling community say the nontraditional method yields teens that are more independent and therefore better prepared for college life."

Citation for Indirect Quotation:

> The previously cited article by Kelsey Sheehy indicates that homeschool students achieve higher GPA's in college than public and private school students.

The indirect quotation example above also demonstrates that when the same source is cited later within the speech, a **partial citation**, stating author *or* publication title, is acceptable if the words "previously cited" are included. Ensure this is done in such a way that similar sources remain distinct to the listener. Most CCA speeches include both direct and indirect quotations, as well as a few partial citations.

In cases where an online article shows no publishing date, the CCS requires its citation to instead include the **date accessed**. However, before including this date (plus the necessary words "accessed on…") in a citation, the competitor should be encouraged to take the time to be certain a publishing date cannot be found. An article's publication date is not usually the same as its website's overall copyright date.

Though academic writing guidelines may recognize reduced citation needs for certain material considered common knowledge by those familiar with a particular area of study, CCA judges are the arbiters of the audience's **common knowledge** in the tournament setting. While excessive citations (every sentence or two) can make a speech unwieldy, a speech that's well-cited throughout is less likely to raise judge concerns.

In the Script Submission

The CCS requires a **Works Cited or References** page (MLA or APA format suggested) listing all directly or indirectly quoted sources. For assistance with compiling this information, competitors may be directed to online writing aids such as https://owl.purdue.edu and/or citation generator websites like www.easybib.com or citethisforme.com.

Note that while the CCS requires that **at least three sources** be used and cited, coaches are strongly advised to encourage competitors to use and cite more than three.

Presentation

Delivery

The section on Presentation Tips for All Events (found at the beginning of this document) provides delivery suggestions for Public Address. Use of the speaker's triangle (see CCS) is highly recommended.

Optional Visual Aid(s)

When helping a competitor decide whether to use visual aid(s) under CCS guidelines, coaches are advised to ask the competitor the **purpose** and **benefit** of the particular visual aid(s) being considered. For example, if a Cultural Criticism artifact is a form of visual media (such as a trending advertisement), depicting it with visual aid(s) may help the audience understand the artifact more completely than is possible with only a description in the speech. It is best to discourage images already part of the audience's common knowledge or of little direct consequence to the thesis or impact of the speech.

If used, it is best to advise that visual aid(s) look **professional**. For adequate color contrast, consider advising the mounting of dark images on light cardstock before affixing to the required presentation board(s). Computer generated text or vinyl letter stickers are recommended over handwritten text. Most importantly, coaches are advised to ensure that images and text are large enough to be properly seen/read by the audience.

The CCS-required **floor easel** can generally be found at an art or office supply store. Ensure the competitor can quickly and easily set up and tear down the easel, as this will happen in the round directly before and after the presentation.

Leaving at least one side of one presentation board blank (free of visual aids) is recommended. Displaying a blank side will meet the CCS requirement for visual aids to be **covered** at the beginning and end of the speech. This board may then be **reordered** or **flipped** when appropriate during the speech. If multiple display boards are used, they are generally reordered on the easel (and flipped, if desired) as the speech progresses. Advise competitors to practice managing the display board(s), as well as consider where to stand to avoid blocking the audience's view of the visual aid(s).

PUBLIC ADDRESS
EVENT SPECIFIC TIPS

Persuasive

Persuasive public speaking can be considered an art form: the art of using words to influence an audience. The CCS requires the Persuasive competitor to call the audience to a state of action or shift in belief, prohibits advocating for an already widely-held belief, and encourages controversial topics or ideas.

As a result, the CCS assigns a violation if the thesis is not primarily persuasive. Coaches can generally help competitors avoid this by recommending strong and clear persuasive language in the thesis. This might involve words or phrases such as "should," "must," "need to," or "ought to." A successful speech continues this type of language throughout, in addition to using a variety of other persuasive techniques.

As the *Ballot* requires the speech to end persuasively, making clear a specific desired outcome, it is best to encourage the competitor to finish with a compelling charge to the audience.

Note that while the Persuasive event in general encourages controversial topics, this does not preclude the need for coaches to point the competitor to the *Guiding Principles for Unity in Competition* if a proposed topic relates to a theological distinctive not commonly held across Christian traditions.

Informative

The CCS requires the Informative competitor to educate the audience by taking a position on a topic not widely known by the general public, in order to meet a general information need of the audience. Persuasive and motivational topics are to be avoided, but the CCS encourages topics with compelling implications.

As a result, while an Informative speech ought not ask the listener to act or have a significant change of mind, its thesis still needs to make an arguable claim beyond statement of fact. While persuasive thesis language like "should" and "must" is to be avoided, language of degree ("unique," "significant," etc.) can sometimes assist in moving an informative claim beyond a simple statement of fact. It can be helpful for a coach to ask, "Is your thesis worded in such a way that a reasonable person might make a somewhat different claim on this topic?" The coach is then advised to direct the competitor to ensure all evidence in the speech supports (proves) the thesis.

The *Ballot* requires the speech to end with closure and reinforcement of significance. It is recommended the competitor avoid finishing the speech with a direct charge to the audience (a technique more suited to a speech with a persuasive thesis). The coaching resource document *Planning an Informative* provides CCA thesis and point examples (and may be used as a handout, if desired).

Biographical Informative

The CCS requires the competitor to take a position on some aspect of a significant individual's life not widely known by the general public (e.g. the individual's impact, motivation, or character).

As a result, while not intended to move an audience to act (or have a significant change of mind), a Biographical Informative must still make an arguable claim. Language of degree ("important," "greatly," etc.) can sometimes assist in moving the claim beyond a simple statement of fact. It can be helpful for a coach to ask the competitor, "Is your thesis worded in such a way that a reasonable person might argue a different position about this aspect of the individual's life?"

The coach is advised to direct the competitor to ensure all evidence presented supports (proves) the thesis. While other facts used sparingly may give general context, generally avoid facts (even key facts) about the individual's life that do not help prove the claim.

Just like any Public Address, points need not be chronological if another structure is preferred and accomplishes logical flow. For example, a competitor proving a laudable character trait of an individual may choose to separate the evidence into points based on the individual's vocations (each including evidence from throughout the individual's life).

The coaching resource document *Planning a Biographical Informative* provides CCA thesis and point examples (and may be used as a handout, if desired).

Cultural Criticism

Cultural Criticism is a persuasive speech following the general structure of all Public Address speeches but requiring more specific argumentation and focus within that structure. It may be best suited for a competitor who has previously written a speech for another Public Address category.

The CCS requires the competitor to identify an artifact in the introduction and then take a position on how a Christian should interact with that artifact. More effective speeches result when a competitor avoids too broad of an artifact (like Instagram), instead narrowing it to an aspect of the broader trend or movement (such as a specific influencer trend). The position itself is intended to be persuasive. For example, the competitor might claim that Christians "should," "must", or "ought to" avoid the artifact, change thought or behavior regarding the artifact, interact with the artifact in a certain way, or feel free to participate in activities involving the artifact.

Coaches are advised to encourage the competitor to select an artifact without obvious implications. For example, little analysis is needed to claim that Christians should avoid media that applauds sexual violence. The better speech analyzes media that seems generally positive but includes underlying messages inconsistent with Biblical truth. Keep in mind, however, that an artifact is a poor choice if it is not reasonably able to be evaluated from a biblical worldview (for example, quinoa as a trending food item).

While all Public Address introductions must justify significance of the topic (as discussed above), the Cultural Criticism *Ballot* requires the introduction to justify significance of the artifact itself. Therefore, rather than only considering "Why should the audience care?" it is recommended that coaches ask the Cultural Criticism competitor "What evidence can you give that this artifact is significant to current secular American pop culture?" Often, successful competitors cite an appropriate statistic from a recent news article to serve as this justification.

The *Ballot* and *Judge Instructions* require the main body of the speech to present a clear analysis of the artifact, use scripture plus multiple outside sources, and include implications for Christians. Effective competitors will include *all* these components in *each* section of the main body. Coaches do well to remind competitors of the CCS requirements to identify *specific* scripture passages and use them to *analyze* the artifact, with a violation for failure to use scripture as criteria. When choosing additional sources, direct competitors to the CCS requirement that the evaluation be done through an explicitly biblical worldview.

The *Ballot* requires the conclusion to challenge the audience concerning the artifact. Competitors may be encouraged to think of this charge as the final step in the process of persuasion, as implications of the artifact for Christians are best discussed throughout the main body. It is best to go beyond the proven thesis to a personal challenge, or call to action, to a specifically Christian audience.

LIMITED PREPARATION
GENERAL TIPS

Ethics and Variety

The CCS requires that "content a competitor invents or is unsure about must not be presented as fact." Coaches are advised to specifically plan Limited Preparation instruction with a **focus on ethics**. Coaches may advise competitors to use language like "a few hundred years ago" or "in the last decade" if unaware of an exact date. Similarly, competitors may use "it has been said…" if unsure of the source of a quote. If a competitor presents a common or imagined personal situation as a hook or example, it is best to clearly identify it as such. A statistic not remembered exactly should be presented with a qualifier (e.g."approximately" or "I believe"). Coaches are encouraged to consider other ways to intentionally promote a culture where ethics is always given higher priority than appearing knowledgeable.

Because prepared outlines are prohibited by the CCS for all Limited Preparation events, coaches are advised to train competitors to **avoid repeating hooks or examples** again and again. Seek to alert competitors if they begin falling into a pattern in their presentations.

Citing Sources

The CCS does not provide specific requirements for citation in Limited Preparation speeches (other than requiring one full citation of the NA prompt). As a result, coaches may choose to advise Limited Preparation competitors to present information more conversationally than is required in Public Address. Examples include:

- "Amelia Earhart once said…"
- "CNN recently reported…"
- "Augustine wrote…"
- "According to the book of Romans…"
- "The Bible tells us…"

A competitor may choose to include a more detailed citation, when known. Successful competitors consider citation format impact on **credibility, speaking style, and time**, depending on the Limited Preparation event and the purpose of the citation therein.

In-Round Prep Time

Coaches are advised to help all Limited Preparation competitors consider how best to produce clear and **efficient** notes during in-round preparation. Neatness is only necessary to the degree that a competitor can read the notes easily when speaking.

LIMITED PREPARATION
EVENT SPECIFIC TIPS - *Impromptu*

Pre-Tournament Preparation

Competitors best prepare for Impromptu by both broad exposure to and deeper **learning** about historic/political/ biblical individuals/events, fictional characters/events (from well-regarded authors), discoveries/technologies, and even personal interests (sports, music, nature, etc.) Encourage competitors to consider which topics they already know – and to keep Impromptu in mind whenever encountering new knowledge.

Some competitors find it helpful to maintain a small **notebook** with a running list of topics and anecdotes with which they are familiar. Maintaining and reviewing this notebook on a regular basis provides the competitor with a mental "general idea list" to assist in planning a speech under short time constraints. Entries may be marked off the list if they begin to become overused by the competitor.

Daily Impromptu **practice** (with family, if possible) builds skill and provides exposure to a range of topics. Practice prompts need not rely solely on classic authors and orators. Lines from movies and songs are also an option. After speaking, a competitor may be encouraged to brainstorm information he/she could have used in the points, introduction, or conclusion. Sometimes it is helpful to present the speech again, this time implementing the new ideas (as well as listener suggestions, if applicable).

Coaches may find it helpful to start **new speakers** with a more basic speech structure: read the prompt aloud, state a basic thesis and preview of points, present examples/illustrations detailing the points, review thesis and points, and read the prompt again. It can be helpful to first work toward consistently doing this (even if speeches are short at first). This usually leads to the eventual skill and confidence to flesh out examples more fully and add other key elements to the speech. If speakers struggle with a particular prompt during practice, consider extending the prep time, brainstorming together what to write on the note card, and then having one speaker present. Sometimes having each competitor write out an "Impromptu" speech during practice can assist them in understanding how to best structure the speech.

Choosing a Thesis

The CCS defines thesis as a **claim** (an arguable, debatable position, not merely a statement of fact) focusing on a specific topic. In the case of Impromptu, the topic is determined by the quote or saying provided on the prompt. Coaches are advised to encourage the competitor to form a **succinct** thesis by stating the **underlying meaning** of the prompt in the competitor's own words **OR** by making a statement to **oppose the underlying meaning**. Adhering to a prompt (per the CCS) may mean disagreeing with it.

Consider the underlying meaning of Shakespeare's "All that glitters is not gold." If used as a prompt, a competitor would not be expected to create a speech discussing the different materials that may be mistaken for the chemical element Au. Instead, an

appropriate thesis indicating the underlying meaning might be "Attractiveness can be deceptive" or "Not everything is as valuable as it seems." Many appropriate options exist.

As competitors become more comfortable with Impromptu, coaches are advised to encourage them to **avoid first-person** in the thesis. Wording such as "I agree that [message of prompt]" or "I disagree that [message of prompt]" is allowed but not recommended in the speech. These phrases can be helpful as a competitor considers his/her position on a prompt.

In the competition setting, occasionally a competitor is unable to understand the meaning of a prompt. Coaches may want to advise the **best-possible** approach: a thesis based on the portion (even a word or two) of the prompt understood. In this case, the competitor will likely lose points and may receive a rank deduction. However, it will be a better learning experience for the competitor (and a better experience for the judge) than the other option of presenting the prompt and abruptly ending the speech.

Structuring the Speech

An Impromptu speech is structured **like a Public Address** (see Public Address General Tips section above on Writing and Editing the Speech). Due to the nature of Limited Preparation, as well as the reduced speaking time, an Impromptu will generally be less polished and contain less evidence than a Public Address.

The Impromptu *Ballot* broadens the Public Address requirement to justify significance in the introduction, instead allowing "**significance, context, and/or interpretation** of the topic." Coaches may encourage competitors to briefly explain the meaning of the prompt and/or why the general topic of the prompt matters to the audience. Competitors with knowledge of the actual context of the prompt may add credibility by also/instead sharing this information. (For example, one competitor may be able to discuss the play from which the above Shakespeare quote was taken. Another competitor might provide context about Shakespeare's general work or time period.) Presentation of significance, context, and/or interpretation may be successfully presented separately from or integrated into the hook.

The most typical Impromptu structure develops two or three main points structured around the required **examples/illustrations**. Occasionally a speaker will use the 2x2 structure: two main points, each with two sub-points. Variations include a 2x3 and 3x2 format. Coaches are advised to encourage competitors to strive for **adequate point development** while discouraging rambling and unnecessary repetition. The most successful competitor presents Impromptu main points with a degree of **parallelism, balance, distinction, and flow** (see applicable portions of Public Address General Tips section above on Planning Main Points).

To support (prove) a version of "Attractiveness can be deceptive," a competitor might consider examples/illustrations from a wide range of subject areas: Samson and Delilah, the Trojan horse, Mr. Wickham's attentions in *Pride and Prejudice*, Turkish Delight in the *Narnia* books, the music/pageantry of Nazi parades, etc.

The *Ballot* offers points for a competitor who "limits personal examples/ illustrations" in the main body; the *Ballot* does not exclude **personal examples** entirely. Coaches sometimes suggest use of strong personal example(s) when a competitor is unable to call to mind enough applicable non-personal examples to effectively fill most of the available presentation time. Also, note that while the *Ballot* prioritizes credible non-personal examples/illustrations in the main body, it does not suggest limiting use of personal references in the introduction/hook.

In-Round Prep Time

Impromptu prep time is usually best spent thinking, writing only a few notes. Successful competitors typically write the **thesis word-for-word** on the note card. It may be helpful to write out the initial main point sentences, as well. Coaches do well to encourage competitors to keep other notes short, written briefly in **phrases** that will jog the competitor's memory during the speech.

Delivery

The section on Presentation Tips for All Events (found at the beginning of this document) provides delivery suggestions for Impromptu. Use of the **speaker's triangle** (see CCS) is recommended once a competitor is able to execute it effectively in an unpracticed presentation. Coaches are advised to provide feedback on whether **note card use** seems natural to the competitor's individual presentation style.

LIMITED PREPARATION
EVENT SPECIFIC TIPS - *News Analysis*

Topics

The CCS provides the NA category/categories of current events for each tournament (Domestic, International, Economic, or all three). Coaches are advised to help competitors, especially beginners, identify the major trending topics within each of these categories.

Pre-Tournament Preparation

Successful competitors typically prepare for NA by reading the news regularly over the course of the competition year and practicing evaluation of articles.

Some coaches find it helpful to provide targeted NA training in the fall semester during or outside of club time. Coaches, parents, and competitors are encouraged to provide a variety of news articles for competitors to repeatedly practice synthesis and thesis development (see section below on Synthesizing the Article and Choosing a Thesis), as well as identifying the main components of a speech (see section below on Structuring the Speech).

Seeking a broad scope of **current news** content is recommended to follow the major trending topics identified within each category, while also monitoring emergence of new topics. Coaches are advised to encourage competitors to look for a variety of perspectives, details, and conclusions on each topic. It is best to familiarize competitors with articles of both the news report and opinion styles. Opinion articles generally build to a conclusion which overtly seeks action or change of thinking. In contrast, news reports generally summarize the most important information first and follow it with evidence, details, and related background information. Coaches are encouraged to help competitors identify intent, **bias**, and/or persuasive techniques in all articles, though presented less overtly in news reports than opinion articles.

Coaches may also help competitors develop an understanding of each topic's historical **context**, as well as context within its overall NA category. Consider: "How did this topic become an issue? What consequences has it caused leading up to today? How has the issue been perceived and dealt with in the past?"

The CCS allows each NA competitor to prepare a note card file box containing his/her own **research** cards, which may be used during prep time only. A well-organized box of succinctly written/printed cards is advised, as competitors who choose to use it during a round may need to find and apply information to the topic of the article in mere seconds. Coaches may encourage opinions from experts in the field, as well as statistics relevant to the topic (e.g. a percentage of how much crime has increased, how much a bill will cost, or a one-to-two sentence quote on a topic). Sometimes, a very brief outline summary of a news article can be helpful (though prepared outlines of a competitor's *own* ideas are not allowed by the CCS). Coaches may also suggest competitors consider

including other types of relevant research, such as a list of applicable Supreme Court cases and/or definitions of logical fallacies.

While the CCS allows partial citation of research in the speech (see "Citing Sources" under Limited Preparation General Tips above), coaches are advised to encourage the best practice of writing the publication, author, and date on each card.

Coaches are also advised to help competitors **practice** full NA speeches (see In-Round Prep Time section below) using previous year NA prompts shared by the IE Committee and/or current news articles pre-cut to a length of approximately 250 words.

Some coaches meet with competitors before each tournament or regularly throughout the spring semester. In addition to practicing NA speeches, coaches are encouraged to review *Ballot* feedback from prior tournaments, address ways to improve, and discuss current news stories. It may also be helpful to review the contents of competitors' file boxes, leading competitors to express full and clear understanding of each card (and ensuring no prepared outlines, per the CCS).

Coaches do well to assist competitors in practicing **pronunciation** of names, places, and unfamiliar terms relevant to current major news, as well as any included on their research cards.

Synthesizing the Article and Choosing a Thesis

The CCS requires an NA introduction to synthesize the provided article's information and claims, combining them into the **author's overall point** (not simply a summary or restatement, but rather analytically forming multiple parts into a complex whole). This occurs before and is integral to thesis formation. When synthesizing an article, competitors may be encouraged to consider what the author wants readers to believe or do as a result of the article.

Per the CCS, in the introduction the competitor should then interpret the meaning of the author's overall point and present a separate thesis, which is the **competitor's position** on the author's overall point. The thesis may be simply that the author's overall point is true, wrong, necessary, or dangerous. However, a speech simply arguing the truth of an article may not be compelling if the article includes little bias or persuasion. Coaches may encourage competitors to present a thesis specifically indicating significance or a need for action. For example:

- "The author's stance on X is significant to today's political environment."
- "The author's stance on X should prompt us to do Y."
- "Flaws in the author's stance on X should prompt us to do Z instead".

Structuring the Speech

An NA speech is structured **like a Public Address** (see Public Address General Tips section above on Writing and Editing the Speech), except for the requirement that an NA introduction include a synthesis rather than a justification of significance. Significance is instead communicated throughout the NA speech, with a *Ballot*

requirement that the Main Body "demonstrates clear understanding of larger context of the topic of the article.

Coaches are advised to encourage competitors to strive for **adequate point development** while discouraging rambling, unnecessary repetition, tangents, and tirades of personal beliefs. Successful competitors frequently **reference the article** while presenting main points directly supporting the thesis, also considering parallelism, balance, distinction, and flow (see applicable portions of Public Address General Tips section above on Planning Main Points).

The *Ballot* requires that the Main Body "presents clear and credible analysis of the article" and "evaluates author's perspective, claims, and assertions." Coaches are encouraged to point out to competitors that the event name implies a primary focus on **analysis** of the author's claims in a particular news article, NOT a primary focus on relating all the competitor's knowledge on the topic. A good speech will, where applicable, address key aspects of an author's incorrect information, logical fallacies, and/or poor understanding of the larger context of the topic. Outside sources are recommended when statistics and expert opinions are relevant in directly addressing "the accuracy of the information" in the article, as per the CCS. However, as a competitor addresses "the validity of the claims," the use of effective **logical reasoning** to discredit or support these claims is often even more significant to an effective NA.

In-Round Prep Time

The CCS allows each NA competitor to determine how to divide his/her allotted 10 minutes between prep time and presentation time. Coaches may recommend new competitors start with 5 minutes of prep time, eventually progressing toward shorter prep to allow more speaking time. Each competitor is different, but it usually takes about a minute to read the article, meaning preparation can rarely be completed in under 2 minutes.

The article (prompt) also serves as note paper for the speech outline and notes created during prep time. Coaches are advised to encourage competitors to clearly mark or underline talking points in the article during the first reading.

The marked article may also lead the competitor to choose research card(s) from the file box. Since the CCS does not allow use of the physical cards during an NA presentation, the competitor will need to note any necessary information from the card(s) on the article paper. Familiarity with research cards reduces the detail a competitor needs to note from them during prep time to jog his/her memory during the presentation.

Coaches may help competitors develop their own methods for using the article to create an outline for the speech. One way is to number both the underlined and noted information on the article paper to coincide with their intention to use it in main or supporting points of the speech.

Competitors often benefit from using a brief portion of prep time to determine reasonable pronunciations for unfamiliar words to be quoted in the speech, especially the article's title, author, and source.

Delivery

The section on Presentation Tips for All Events (found at the beginning of this document) provides delivery suggestions for NA, with the exception of whole body movement and expansive arm gestures not applicable to the seated presentation style of NA. Coaches are advised to provide feedback on whether use of the article seems natural to the competitor's presentation. Coaches may consider advising competitors to analyze the presentation style of various news commentators.

LIMITED PREPARATION
EVENT SPECIFIC TIPS - *Extemporaneous Apologetics*

Topics

Coaches may find it helpful to explain to families that CCA's four-year *Extemporaneous Apologetics Topic Rotation* is intended to address a broad range of Christian theology topics. The selected topics bear the names of many of the section and chapter titles of Wayne Grudem's *Bible Doctrine* (a layman's summary of Grudem's larger work, *Systematic Theology*, widely used as a seminary textbook in some Christian traditions). Due to the variety of Christian traditions represented in the league, CCA has not included in the rotation the topics on election, baptism, the Lord's Supper, gifts of the Holy Spirit, and end times. Grudem's book is not required for participation in EA. However, it serves as a guide to the topics covered in the topic rotation.

Pre-Tournament Preparation

Coaches are advised to recommend three types of theological resources for EA preparation. The preeminent resource should be **the Bible**. Coaches are urged to consider 2 Timothy 2:15 the focus of EA coaching, encouraging speakers to seek to become "skilled workers who accurately handle the word of truth." Competitors will also benefit from studying each topic in **systematic theology** book(s) and **apologetics** materials. Coaches are encouraged to recommend that each family seek solid resources in line with their faith tradition, study the topics together, and involve their pastor where questions arise. Competitors who are encouraged to include EA topic study in their personal devotions and prayer time are generally more sincere in their presentations – and more prepared to take the conversation out into the world.

The desired culture for EA instruction and feedback (whether given by coaches or other parents) involves diligence to **come alongside parents** and to be sensitive to their convictions.

Some coaches have successfully offered optional EA study in homes or online. This is best done outside regular club meeting times to provide sufficient time to cover the material. Some coaches find it most helpful to offer four in-depth meetings in the fall semester (each covering one tournament's topic/topics), while others offer weekly studies. It is recommended that at least one parent attend with each competitor. Coaches are advised to assign material to be read before the meeting; some coaches also require competitors to outline the chapters of systematic theology books or other materials corresponding to the topics. A lecture format is not recommended. Instead, it is best to help competitors understand and discuss the topic, encourage them to ask questions, and guide them toward further research.

The CCS allows each EA competitor to prepare a note card file box containing cited scriptures and quotations. Because the competitor must know each topic well enough to address any question or statement that might be presented on the topic, it is recommended that the file box include a **variety** of relevant scripture verses and

quotations. Studying the work of **published authors** (rather than relying on online searches) often improves internalization of concepts and provides more credibility when quoted in competition.

Coaches may point out to competitors that the CCS does not require quotations to be from Christians or from those sympathetic to Christianity. In some cases, a **secular** quote can add insight to a defense of biblical truth in a manner that especially resonates with a hearer. It can also be used to justify the importance and impact of the topic from the hearer's view.

Recommended best practices for ease of use (and to avoid any accusation of violating the CCS prohibition against outlines) include writing/printing **only one** verse or quote per note card. It is helpful to cut each verse/quote down to a length easily **usable/readable** in the competition setting. Successful competitors also think through the most efficient manner of organizing the note cards in their file boxes.

Coaches who offer EA study outside of club often follow up fall instruction with spring semester review meetings before each tournament. Coaches are advised to begin by helping competitors provide a review of the material. Then coaches may ask competitors for their ideas on potential questions, statements, and objections relating to the tournament topic(s). The group may find it beneficial to brainstorm together analogies, examples, logic, and/or personal experiences (as required per the *Ballot*), as well as the effectiveness of each in removing misunderstandings and objections.

All coaches are encouraged to review *Ballot* feedback from previous tournaments and discuss ways to improve. It may also be helpful to review contents of the competitor's file box before each tournament and discuss the scriptures and quotes included (also ensuring no prepared outlines, per the CCS).

Frequent **practice** at home or at club using questions related to each tournament topic is highly recommended for EA preparation. It is recommended that scripture be shared and encouraged by all, noting *Judge Instructions* guidance to evaluate answers based upon reasoning, analysis, and biblical truth (and not denominational preferences).

Structuring the Presentation

Coaches are advised to help both competitors and parent judges understand that EA is quite different from Public Address, Impromptu, and NA (all of which are more similarly aligned). The EA *Ballot* includes **no sections** for an Introduction, Main Body, or Conclusion. Instead, it requires judge evaluation of Content/Reasoning, Presentation, and Tone. It is also helpful to emphasize the lack of requirements for a hook, formal thesis statement, or preview of points in EA. The competitor's answer is intended to remove misunderstandings and objections expressed in or implied by the question for the purpose of persuading the hearer that the Christian faith is reasonable and true.

The *Ballot* does expect an EA presentation to include justification/impact, organization, reinforcement/illustration of content, and a researched defense, as well as to **move the hearer** to some conclusion, application, or further consideration. As such, coaches may want to consider instructing an EA competitor to first think of an informal

summary statement answering the question, and to then organize the narrative content/defense in a logical manner that supports that underlying summary statement.

As the *Ballot* requires the competitor to **directly answer** the question/statement, coaches do well to emphasize the importance of using scripture and outside sources only where they clearly apply. Showing **respect** for a questioner (required on the *Ballot*) involves two things: First, it involves answering the question they asked, not substituting another theological topic – although related topics may sometimes be implied by (or necessary to explain to properly answer) the question. Coaches may find it helpful to ask a competitor to imagine why someone would ask a particular question and consider addressing that in the answer, as well. Second, respect speaks honestly with gentleness and humility about hard topics such as sin, death and punishment, as well as disobedience and pride. Note that a gospel presentation is not the best response for many of the questions.

The *Ballot* also requires each competitor to clearly define **unfamiliar terms**. Simple definitions are recommended. Where possible, coaches may advise avoiding unfamiliar terms. (For example, a conversational explanation of Jesus' divine and human natures can be quite impactful without the competitor ever using the term "hypostatic union.") Coaches may also find it helpful to advise competitors to define key familiar terms if sometimes understood differently (like love, hope, faith, and sin).

Unlike Impromptu (where competitors are required to limit personal examples), the EA *Ballot* requires these "analogies, examples, logic, and/or personal experience where appropriate." When studying a topic, it is helpful to advise competitors to think through these components, many of which will not be included in the file box.

In-Round Prep Time

Coaches generally recommend the competitor arrange the selected scripture/evidence cards in the **order** to be presented. This in and of itself provides "notes" for the direction of the presentation. The blank note card is best used to write an **informal summary sentence** answering the question (for the purpose of staying on topic), as well as brief **phrases** to remind the competitor of personal examples, analogies, or logical arguments he/she plans to include.

Delivery

The speaking style required by the CCS and *Ballot* indicates that EA competitors are to avoid the "giving a speech" style of Public Address, Impromptu, and NA – instead offering a presentation **more like real-life** apologetics. The tournament setting is of course an artificial means of doing so, though a coach may encourage the competitor to imagine a friend or acquaintance asking the question in a one-on-one situation or a small group Bible study. The seemingly artificial nature of a standing presenter and a seated judge may be imagined as attending a busy event and speaking to someone seated on a couch nearby. Unlike real life, where the questioner may interject, in the round the competitor answers the question fully. The competitor may imagine that the questioner is

moved to some conclusion, application, or further consideration, and the conversation might continue. Coaches are advised to warn against a "preaching" style of delivery.

Note card use also makes EA a bit artificial. Coaches are advised to encourage competitors to know their material well, practicing with competitors until **use of the note card** and scripture/quote cards is not distracting. It is best to present scripture in a way that does not break the conversational tone. The best speakers consider when use of direct quotes will give insight and credibility, thereby avoiding an EA presentation where most of the time is spent reading from note cards. Some quote cards may be best used in the round to remind the competitor of a general topic they know well and can express in their own words (for example, "C.S. Lewis liked to use the analogy of…") rather than read the quote verbatim.