



# State 4-H Public Speaking Contest 2026

## Participation

Public speaking contests are offered on the county/city level, and qualifying youth are eligible to compete at the state level. Youth who received Champion placings at their county/city level public speaking contest in the categories are eligible and encouraged to participate in the State 4-H Public Speaking Contest.

## 4-H Public Speaking Philosophy

One of the many life skills that 4-H offers youth is effective public speaking. This skill, along with many others, helps to build confidence and leadership. Public speaking fosters creativity, critical thinking skills, leadership abilities, poise, and professionalism, which are valuable for the job market and life. Public speaking is an individual development experience. The speaker's own growth, measured against their own previous experience and accomplishments is the most important feature of the program. Although the 4-H structure does identify "winners" in the competition, the primary objective is to develop strong communication skills in individual members.

Confident, responsible self-expression is a goal of the communication program. Public Speaking helps members to organize and present ideas, opinions and information, in a logical and persuasive manner. They are building confidence in self-expression and taking responsibility for the most important skill of adult life - communication.

Judging their efforts provides valuable guidance to these young speakers. Judges' comments reinforce and reward their efforts. An unbiased observer can identify strengths and pinpoint areas needing attention. Judging speeds growth and development by presenting a clear, honest reflection to the speaker.

## CONTACT

Navonne Owen - [nowen@umd.edu](mailto:nowen@umd.edu)

Michelle Harman - [mharman2@umd.edu](mailto:mharman2@umd.edu)

## DATE AND TIME

April 25, 2026, 10:00 am

Awards Program at 3:00 pm

## LOCATION

University of Maryland College Park,  
Edward St. John Building

## REGISTRATION

4HOnline by April 10, 2026

## AGE CATEGORIES

Junior: 8-10

Intermediate: 11-13

Senior: 14-18

## Contest Rules

1. A contestant may only compete in one category. If a contestant wins more than one category at their County/City level Contest, they must choose which category to compete in at the State Contest.
2. **Previous State 4-H Public Speaking Contest Champions may not enter the same category and age group a second time.** (For example, a 4-H member who is the state Junior Prepared Champion cannot compete in Junior Prepared the following or future years). However, past state champions can enter the same category once they have advanced to the next age level (Example: a past Junior Prepared Champion can enter as an Intermediate Prepared contestant once he/she has advanced to the Intermediate age level).
3. **Contestants should not introduce themselves as part of their presentation. This will be done by an room Host/Hostess.** If there is no Host/Hostess then the speaker will be directed to introduce themselves and this introduction will NOT be judged or timed. It will NOT be considered a part of the speech!



### DEMONSTRATION

Step 1 Step 2 Step 3 Step 4

A Demonstration is a presentation where the contestant shows step by step how to do or make something. Some examples include: how to groom a rabbit for show, how to make a corsage, how to make balloon animals, etc. The contestant would prepare and bring all the supplies needed for their "how-to" demonstration. Supplemental materials such as posters with instructions, take-home directions, and samples for taste testing, etc. are encouraged.

- **Time Limits - Juniors, Intermediates & Seniors: 3-15 minutes**

### EXTEMPORANEOUS SPEECH

An Extemporaneous Speech is one that is done on the spot. The 4-H member will draw three different topics from those provided and will decide on one topic to speak on.

Juniors & Intermediates will have 30 minutes to prepare their notes and presentation. Seniors will have 15 minutes to prepare their notes and presentation. Contestants may use one side of up to four, or both sides of up to two, 5 x 8 inch note cards for their key word outline. Extemporaneous speakers will be shown colored time cards at correctly timed intervals indicating "1 MINUTE", "30 SECONDS" AND "STOP".



- **Time Limits – Juniors & Intermediates: 2-3 minutes; Seniors: 3-5 minutes**

### INTERPRETATION

An Interpretation is a memorized oral presentation of selected narrative from published works. Unpublished works are not permitted. Interpretation has three subcategories which include dramatic, humorous, and poetry. For interpretation, contestants may choose to wear a costume and opt to sit for the presentation. Examples of source material include books, scripts, monologues, plays, etc. The contestant must provide at least one typed/photo copy of the presentation to judges.

- **Time Limits – Juniors: 1½-3 minutes; Intermediates: 2-4 minutes; Seniors: 3-5 minutes**



## PREPARED SPEECH



A Prepared Speech is a speech on any topic chosen by the 4-H member. Choose a topic that interests you; consider things like 4-H projects, hobbies, passions, school, community service, etc. Topics that might be considered controversial should be approved by the county 4-H staff in advance. 4-Hers should write, prepare, and practice their speech well in advance. Note cards containing a key word outline are permitted. Only juniors may use a complete script. Memorization is not encouraged.

- **Time Limits – Juniors: 3-5 minutes; Intermediates & Seniors: 4-6 minutes**

## RADIO SPOT

A Radio Spot is an exactly 30 second "public address" or "public service announcement" you would hear on the radio. Radio spots may include a musical or sound effect introduction and/or background, but may not include a spoken introduction or "tag" by anyone other than the contestant. If music or a sound effect



is used, the contestant must provide and operate the sound-making device. The contestant must provide a complete written script (including notations about music/sound effects) to the timekeeper to aid in timing accuracy. Musical/sound effect introductions and endings are

considered a part of the radio spot and must not cause the 30 second time limit to be exceeded. The spot should relate to 4-H, be original, and be created by the contestant.

- **Time Limits – Juniors, Intermediates & Seniors: 30 seconds**

## VISUAL PRESENTATION

A Visual Presentation is a presentation using props (such as charts, PowerPoint slides, posters, animals, etc.) that help illustrate and accentuate the presentation. The props allow the audience to see and understand facts and concepts shared in the speech. Contestants should construct a speech like they were doing a prepared speech, and include pauses/breaks to point to a prop, hold up a poster, show slides, etc. These pauses should be factored into the overall time of the presentation. Contestant must provide all necessary props/equipment.

- **Time Limits – Juniors, Intermediates & Seniors: 3-15 minutes**

