

2026 ACS Public Speaking Rules

Updated July 2025

1. **Rationale:** Participate in interschool competition that celebrates the academic competencies of ACS students. Public speaking builds confidence, improves communication and enhances critical thinking. While participants are encouraged to 'give it a go' the final competition (i.e.: presentation of speeches in competition against other ACS schools) should be the best representatives from each school.

A revitalised competition should be more dynamic and engaging. It should celebrate the art of public speaking and the skill set on display in prepared speech delivery.

2. **Statement Regarding use of AI:** The ACS Public Speaking Competition promotes original thinking and connection with the audience. AI should be used ethically and effectively as a tool to enhance, not replace, human performance. This includes ensuring transparency in its use, addressing potential algorithmic biases, and prioritising human-to-human interaction.
3. **Format of the Evening:** The 2025 ACS Public Speaking Event has undergone a format change to revitalise the competition by introducing an impromptu speech component to commence at the conclusion of the prepared speech sections. Please refer to the details below.
 - A microphone and stand will be available, but they are not compulsory to use
 - Students must wear full school uniform
 - 3.1. **Prepared Speeches:** Speakers from each of the Junior, Intermediate and Senior sections may choose a topic of their choice. Please reference to the criteria for adjudication as guidance.
 - 3.2. **Impromptu Section:** A key word/phrase or topic will be selected by the ACS Public Speaking Review Group Team for inclusion in the speech in the Impromptu section. Students will have 4 minutes to prepare.

4. **Adjudicators:** Adjudicators will be arranged through a professional public speaking organisation or staff from ACS member schools. (Wynspeak, PESA, alumni, ACS school staff).

Number of Adjudicators Required:

- Junior: 3
- Intermediate: 3
- Senior: 3
- Impromptu: 2

Adjudicators will be professional and adhere to the criteria of adjudication. Please respect their decisions as they will be final.

5. **Host School:** The host school will supply the timekeepers and a bell to notify speakers of time. An announcement with instructions regarding timekeeping and bells shall be communicated to speakers before each section.
6. **Criteria for Adjudication:** Elements of criteria for adjudication include but are not limited to: content quality, structure and organisation, clarity and articulation, confidence and composure, time management.

Please refer to the rubric on the following three pages which is composed of the three sections listed below. All speeches will be adjudicated according to this rubric.

- Manner
- Matter
- Method

COMPETITION INFORMATION			
SECTION	TIME / VENUE	REQUIREMENTS	DETAILS
Intermediate	5.00 pm – 5.48 pm	ONE speaker from either year 9 or year 10 is to represent each school. The speech will be of 4 minutes duration. A bell will be rung at three and a half minutes and two rings at four minutes. Students may complete the sentence after two rings, but they may not continue after this.	6.30 pm: Adjudicators consideration/Refreshments
			6.40 pm: Adjudicators will give brief feedback to the Intermediate students
			6.45 pm: All students, staff and spectators will remain in The CPA Theatre for the Impromptu speeches
Junior	5.50 pm – 6.30 pm	ONE speaker from either year 7 or year 8 is to represent each school. The speech will be of 3 minutes duration. A bell will be rung at two and a half minutes and two rings at three minutes. Students may complete the sentence after two rings, but they may not continue after this.	6.30 pm: Adjudicators consideration/Refreshments
			6.40 pm: Adjudicators will give brief feedback to the Junior students
			6.45 pm: All students, staff and spectators will remain in The CPA Theatre for the Impromptu speeches
Senior	5.00 pm – 6.10 pm	ONE speaker from either year 11 or year 12 is to represent each school. The speech will be of 5 minutes duration. A bell will be rung at four and a half minutes and two rings at five minutes. Students may complete the sentence after two rings, but they may not continue after this.	6.10 pm: Adjudicators consideration/Refreshments
			6.25 pm: Adjudicators will give brief feedback to the Senior students
			6.35 pm: All students, staff and spectators will move to The CPA Theatre for the Impromptu speeches
Impromptu	6.45 pm – 7.15 pm	ONE speaker from either the Junior, Intermediate or Senior sections is to represent each school. The speech will be of 2 minutes duration. A continuous bell will sound at 2 minutes inviting the speaker to leave the stage. 4 minutes preparation time will be allocated for each speaker. The revealing of the phrase or topic and timing of preparation time will be managed by the host school.	7.10 pm: Adjudicators consideration/Refreshments
			7.20 pm: Adjudicators will give brief feedback to the Impromptu section students.
			7.25 pm: All students, staff and spectators will remain in The CPA Theatre for the announcement of final results
Final results	7.25 pm – 7.45 pm	Announcement of all results in the Junior, Intermediate, Senior sections section; and Impromptu Speeches from eighth to first place.	Awards for Junior, Intermediate & Senior sections include the perpetual trophy for first place & replica trophy for the student
			All four sections will receive medallions for second & third place First place in the Impromptu section receives a medallion

ACS PUBLIC SPEAKING RUBRIC: MANNER					
Score:	5	4	3	2	1
Time	Presentation completed on time. Speakers may finish their sentence after two bell rings.	Speaker finishes 15-30 seconds before timing is complete	Speaker finishes 30-45 seconds before timing is complete OR continues more than one sentence after the two bell rings.	Presentation is delivered but not completed.	Presentation not delivered
Eye Contact & Body Language	Establishes eye contact with everyone in the room. Stands straight. Relaxed and confident.	Establishes eye contact with everyone in the room. Stands up straight.	Establishes some eye contact. Sometimes stands up straight.	Does not look at people during the presentation. Slouches.	No eye contact during presentation. Uncomfortable body language.
Articulation, Volume & Expression	Volume is loud enough to be heard by all audience members throughout the presentation. Speaks clearly and distinctly all (95-100%) of the time.	Volume is loud enough to be heard by all audience members at least 90% of the time. Speaks clearly and distinctly most (95-100%) of the time, and rarely mispronounces words.	Volume is loud enough to be heard by all audience members at least 80% of the time. Speaks clearly and distinctly most (85-94%) of the time. Mispronounces some words.	Volume often too soft to be heard by all audience members. Often mumbles OR cannot be understood OR mispronounces many words.	Presentation is inaudible.
Fluency and Pace	Speaker spoke at a natural rate that was clearly understood and made accurate pauses to add effect.	Speaker spoke at a natural rate most of the time and tried to make pauses to add effect.	Speaker spoke fast and did not make pauses to add effect	Speaker spoke very fast and was difficult to understand.	Speaker was incoherent.
Audience Engagement	Speaker presented an animated speech engaging the audience for the duration.	Speaker engaged the audience for some of the speech.	Speaker attempted to engage the audience.	Limited evidence of audience engagement during speech	Speaker did not engage the audience.
Palm Cards	Speaker delivered speech without palm cards or without referring to them.	Speaker used palm cards but rarely referred to them.	Speaker often read from palm cards and was intermittently looking at the audience.	Speaker had palm cards but read directly from them without looking at the audience.	No evidence of palm cards, speaker read from a piece of paper and did not look at the audience.

ACS PUBLIC SPEAKING RUBRIC: MATTER					
Score:	5	4	3	2	1
Originality, Relevance to the Topic	Sustained and effective use of appropriate language; is emotive and appeals directly to audience. Shows a full understanding of topic.	Uses some appropriate language to move the audience effectively; is not sustained. Good understanding of topic.	Uses some appropriate language to effectively move the audience. Only has a limited understanding of topic	Uses limited or no appropriate language OR provides no appropriate points OR has no understanding of topic.	Uses no appropriate language to support their AND has no understanding of the topic.
Suitability of Vocab & Language	Deliberate language choices and vocabulary is purposeful. Student uses all words in context.	Deliberate language choices and specific vocabulary used to enhance meaning	Language is used to reinforce structure and purpose.	Simple Language. Language often not related to the topic.	Very simple Language. Language not related to the topic.
Intention, Purpose & Point of View	Speech clearly demonstrated speakers point of view and considered others' opinions.	Speech demonstrated speakers' point and attempted to consider other's opinions	Students' point of view was demonstrated and speaker did not consider others' opinions.	Speaker attempted to demonstrate their point of view however did not consider or others' opinions.	Speaker did not demonstrate their point of view or others' opinions.
Examples & Justified Reasons	Speech contained evidence of research and examples used to reinforce point of view.	Speech contained some examples and attempted to use these to reinforce the view	Speech attempted to include examples but did not use these to reinforce their point of view.	Speaker attempted to justify reasons.	Speech did not contain justified reasons.

ACS PUBLIC SPEAKING RUBRIC: METHOD					
Score:	5	4	3	2	1
Creative Structure & Sequence	Speech is organised, logical and stays on topic all (100%) of the time.	Speech is organised, logical and on topic (90-99%) of the time.	Speech lacks organisation (list of ideas) OR only stays on topic (70-89%) of the time.	Speech has limited structure and it is hard to tell what the topic was.	Speech has no structure and the topic is unclear.
Inferences, Emphasis Coherence & Cohesion	Student delivered a clear and coherent speech that clearly linked to the topic and made sense.	Student delivered a coherent speech that made sense and linked to the topic.	Student delivered a speech that made sense and attempted to link it back to the topic	Student delivered a speech that did not link to the topic.	Speech did not make sense