

MISSOURI SOIL AND WATER ASSOCIATION

Rules for FFA Prepared Public Speaking

2026– “Soil. Where It Begins” December TBA, 2026

Purpose

The purpose of this contest is to promote a stronger interest and clearer understanding of the many aspects of natural resource conservation, to provide opportunities for our youth to gain knowledge, appreciation, and understanding of Missouri’s natural resources and help to promote their many values and virtues.

Eligibility

1. The MASWCD FFA Speaking Contest will be open to all FFA students who are regularly enrolled in vocational agricultural education classes and who are active members of chartered FFA chapters in good standing with the State Association.
2. Each local FFA chapter will determine the local representative to the district contest. Missouri is divided into six FFA districts. Each district is eligible to send one district winner to the state contest.
3. Props or equipment are not to be used.
4. A participant will be permitted to use notes while speaking, but deductions in scoring may be made for this practice if it detracts from the effectiveness of the presentation.
5. The state FFA Public Speaking Contest will be held in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Missouri Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts. The 2026 MASWCD meeting will be December ____ at Margaritaville Tan-Tar-A Resort in Osage Beach, MO. All participants are required to wear official FFA dress when delivering their speech.

Topic

1. Each participant will prepare a speech based on the topic MASWCD selects for each year.
2. Official judges shall disqualify any participant who speaks on a topic not related to the selected topic.
3. All speeches used must be of the problem-solution type.
4. Ten days prior to the contest, four typed copies of each speech must be forwarded to the contest superintendent.
5. The oral presentation by each participant should follow their written speech.
6. Each participant’s speech is to be the result of his or her own efforts.

Note

Credit must be given to others when any direct quotes, phrases or specific dates are used in order that the participant is not guilty of plagiarism. The Boards of National Officers and Directors of the FFA at the October 1960 meeting in Kansas City, Missouri, adopted the following:

"A bibliography MUST be included as part of the public speaker's manuscript, and direct quotes from any other source of information must be marked in 'quotes' on the manuscript and be identified in the bibliography. Failure to do so will automatically disqualify a participant. This applies to all speeches above the local level."

Time Limit

1. A timekeeper shall be designated to record the time used by each participant in delivering their speech, noting under-time or over-time, if any, for which deduction should be made.
2. Each participant must speak a minimum of six minutes in length and a maximum of eight minutes.
3. Deductions of 20 points per minute, or a major fraction thereof, will be made from the score of each judge for speeches less than six minutes or over eight minutes in length. (To prevent being penalized, a participant must speak over five minutes 30 seconds, but less than eight minutes 30 seconds).
4. Time commences when the speaker begins talking.
5. The participant's speech will be followed by a five (5) minute period, during which the judges will ask them questions relating to their speech. The time for the question period will begin when the first judge begins asking a question.
6. At the end of the five-minute question period, the timekeeper(s) will call time. When time is called the speaker, if interrupted, may complete the sentence they were saying or they may stop in mid-sentence with no penalty.

Method of Selecting Winner

1. Participants shall draw for order of speaking. The room host shall then introduce each participant by name and speech title. Applause shall be withheld until all participants have spoken.
2. Three competent and impartial persons will be selected to judge. When possible, the judges should have an agricultural background.
3. During the presentation, the judges will score each participant upon the delivery of their presentation, using the score sheet provided.
4. Judges will be furnished typed copies of the participants' manuscripts, which they will read and grade on content and composition prior to the contest.
5. Each judge shall formulate and ask questions that pertain directly to the speaker's subject. All judges will ask at least one question.
6. Questions containing two or more parts should be avoided.
7. Judges will score each participant on their ability to answer all questions asked by all judges.
8. The full five minutes for questions should be used.
9. When all participants have finished speaking, each judge will total their score on each participant. The timekeepers' records will be used in computing the final score for each participant.
10. Participants shall be ranked in numerical order by each judge without consultation with any other judge.
11. If any judge's scoring results in a tie between two or more speakers, the judge shall be asked to re-score so as to avoid the tie.
12. After a judge has broken all ties in total score they will rank all participants in numerical order without consulting any other judge. The rankings of the three judges shall then be added and the winner will be the participant whose total of rankings is the lowest. Other places shall be determined in the same manner (Low point score method of selection).
13. If a tie occurs when adding the rankings of the three judges, the individual who has the highest grand total score shall be ranked higher.

This contest is sponsored by The Jerry Litton Foundation and the Missouri Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

EXPLANATION OF SCORE SHEET POINTS

Prepared Public Speaking		Points
A. Official Dress: Male - Black dress shoes (not tennis shoes), black socks, black dress pants (not jeans), white collared (or light colored), button-down dress shirt, dark colored tie, and Official FFA jacket. No hats of any kind. Female - Black closed-toe dress shoes (no tall boots), black nylons, knee length black skirt or black dress slacks, white collared (or light colored), button-down dress shirt, FFA scarf, and Official FFA jacket.		100
B. Content of the Manuscript includes:	Importance and appropriateness of the subject Suitability of the material used Accuracy of the statements included Evidence of purpose Completeness and accuracy of bibliography	200
C. Composition of the Manuscript includes:	Organization of the content Unity of thought Logical development Language used Sentence structure Accomplishment of purpose -- conclusions	100
D. Voice includes:	Quality Pitch Articulation Pronunciation Force	100
E. Stage presence includes:	Personal appearance Poise and body posture Attitude Confidence Personality Ease before audience	100
F. Power of expression includes:	Fluency Emphasis Directness Sincerity Communicative ability Conveyance of thought and meaning	200
G. General effect includes:	Extent to which the speech was interesting Extent to which the speech was understandable Extent to which the speech was convincing Extent to which the speech was pleasing Extent to which the speech held attention	100
H. Response to questions includes:	Originality of response Answer demonstrates a familiarity with the subject An ability to think quickly	200
Total		1100

Note: Judges should meet prior to the contest to prepare and clarify the questions to be asked.

FINAL RANKING SHEET

PREPARED PUBLIC SPEAKING

When all contestants have finished speaking, the chairperson will assemble the score sheets from all judges and timekeepers. Totals shall then be compiled. The chairperson should then complete the "Final Ranking Sheet" **USING THE RANKING ONLY, NOT THE ACTUAL SCORES.**

Rankings taken from judges' score sheets

Order of Speaking								
Contestant's Name or Code Number								
Judge #1								
Judge #2								
Judge #3								
Total of Judges' Rankings								
Final Ranking								

Note: In arriving at final rankings, the lowest total of the Judges' rankings receives first place, the next lowest total is second, etc. However, if two of three judges rank any contestant first, that contestant shall receive first place regardless of the opinion of the third judge. If a tie occurs when adding the rankings of the three judges, the individual who has the highest grand total score shall be ranked higher.

Judge's Name or Number: _____

Missouri Soil and Water Association

Judge's Score Sheet – FFA Prepared Public Speaking

		Order of Speaking							
		Names or Code Numbers of Participants							
Items to be Scored	Points Allowed	Points Awarded to Participants							
1. Official Dress	100								
2. Content of Manuscript	200								
3. Composition of Manuscript	100								
4. Voice	100								
5. Stage Presence	100								
6. Power of Expression	200								
7. General Effect	100								
8. Response to Questions	200								
Total Points (Gross) (All ties must be broken)	1100								
Less over-time or under-time deductions for each minute or major fraction	20 points each								
Total Points (Net)									
Contestant Rank									

*The final ranking sheet included with the rules shall be used to summarize judges' score sheets.