

2017 Contest Rules

1. High school juniors and seniors in that grade February 1 of the year of the national contest are eligible to compete. In case of advanced students, non-traditional students, or home schooled students, the school must recognize the student as a junior or senior or the year the student will enter college will be used to determine eligibility.
2. Students who have competed in their junior year may compete the following year as seniors (with an entirely new speech) except if the student has won first place in the national contest. Second place winners may compete again.
3. Contestants are to research, write, and present an original pro-life speech on abortion, infanticide, euthanasia or stem cell research. The speech should address one of these topics directly.
4. The speech is to be 5 – 7 minutes in length. A contestant will be disqualified if the speech is timed to be under 4 minutes or over 8 minutes in length. Judges are instructed to use their judgment regarding under or over time limit speeches. It is at the judges' discretion how the 4-5 minute and the 7-8 minute speech will reflect in the score.
5. Appropriate gestures are allowed. Props are not allowed.
6. Speech content may not be significantly changed as a contestant advances. Fine-tuning for minor corrections or to adjust time is allowed and encouraged. A written copy of the contestant's speech must be forwarded to the national contest.
7. The contestant should use up-to-date factual information.
8. The style should be appropriate to the message of the speech. A dramatic presentation is not acceptable. A dramatic presentation is considered anything that is read or preformed that has been previously written by another author; a short story, a poem, etc. Although quotes to support a position or statement are appropriate, they may not dominate the speech, and should be appropriately cited. Dramatic presentations are also defined, for the purposes of this contest, to include acting as a thing or another person, such as acting out the life of an unborn baby. This rule is not to be interpreted to rule out the use of emotion.
9. The judges' background and qualifications differ, although all are pro-life, the speech should appeal to a broad audience.
10. No copyrighted speeches shall be used in the contest.
11. The contest may be videotaped or recorded, if so, tape will remain the property of National Right to Life.
12. Contestants may use notes.
13. The use of a podium is optional but it is possible that a podium will not be available. If there are not enough podiums for all of the contest rooms, podiums will not be available to any of the contestants.
14. The use of microphones will not be allowed. The Contest Director may make an exception if the contest room creates a necessity for the use of microphones.

15. The Contest will consist of several rounds. There will be at least one preliminary round depending on the number of contestants. For the preliminary round contestants will be assigned to rooms with 4-7 contestants to compete. The 2 contestants from each room with the highest scores will proceed to the next level until there are 4 contestants in the final round.
16. Each room will have 3 judges and a timekeeper.
17. Speaking order for the preliminary round will be determined before the contest by drawing. In following rounds speaking order will be determined by scores in the previous round.
18. The judges score the contestants in 4 areas; introduction, content, presentation, and conclusion. Contestants are given a score of 1-10 (10 being the best) in each area. The scores are added together (40 being perfect). The judges' scores are added together for the grand total. The grand total will determine which contestants move to the next level.
19. The judges' decision will be final.
20. All efforts are made for accuracy. In the event of a mistake, every effort will be made to correct it.
21. Ties will be handled by the Contest Director.
22. These rules apply only to the National Right to Life – Jane B. Thompson Oratory Contest. No other rules from any national, state or local speech contest or groups apply.
23. Any concerns or issues shall be dealt with by the Contest Director.
24. The decision of the Contest Director concerning the application of these rules or the contest will be final.