



Intros, Teasers and the Tournament-Day Parent Checklist.

For interp performers and their parents. Write a strong introduction and optional teaser, learn what judges look for, and use a tournament-day checklist so the day runs smoothly.

Introduction versus teaser

In interp events you typically give a short introduction in your own words before the performance, and NSDA rules require you to name the author and the book or magazine during the performance. Some pieces also start with a **teaser**, a brief selection from the piece performed just before the introduction. Whether a teaser is allowed, and how it counts toward time, varies by league. The NSDA textbook counts the introduction inside the time limit.

PART	TYPICAL LENGTH	PURPOSE
Teaser (optional)	Short; the NSDA textbook describes about 1 to 2 minutes	Hooks the audience with a striking moment
Introduction	30 to 45 sec	Names the piece and author and frames the message
Performance	The rest	The cutting itself

Invented example of an introduction. 'Everyone has been the new kid. In this story from Title by Author, a girl finds out how far a smile can travel. This is Title, by Author, performed by Your Name.' Note how it names the idea, the source and the performer without spoiling the story.

Intro template

- 1 Hook.** A question, image or short statement about the theme.
- 2 Bridge.** One sentence tying the hook to the piece.
- 3 Credit.** Title, author and, where required, your name.
- 4 Pause.** Step back into neutral stance, breathe, then begin.

- ☐ It sounds like talking, not reading.
- ☐ It matches the mood of the first scene.
- ☐ It does not repeat lines from the cutting.
- ☐ It fits within my league's introduction rules.

What judges look for

Ballots differ by league, but most judges comment on the same things:

AREA	WHAT A JUDGE MAY NOTICE
Material	Is the piece appropriate, well cut, and clearly structured?
Characters	Are they distinct and believable?
Voice	Variety in pitch, pace, volume and clear diction
Body	Purposeful movement, good posture, clean transitions
Emotion	Truthful, controlled, with a visible build
Rules	Time, memorization, no props, and event requirements

Reading a ballot

Look for patterns across rounds, not a single comment. If two judges say 'slow down your opening', that is the first thing to fix.

Tournament-day parent checklist

Check the tournament invitation for the schedule, dress code and rules. These are general suggestions; follow what your tournament tells you.

- ☐ Confirm the event, start time, location and parking the night before.
- ☐ Pack formal clothes that allow free movement, plus comfortable shoes.
- ☐ Bring a printed copy of the script and the source, in case they are requested.
- ☐ Pack water, a healthy snack and a phone charger.
- ☐ Arrive early so your student can find the room and warm up.
- ☐ Check postings for room, section and order of performance.
- ☐ Offer calm support: one hug, one encouraging line, no last-minute rewrites.
- ☐ If you are allowed in the room, sit quietly, silence phones and do not record unless permitted.
- ☐ After each round, ask 'What did you like about that one?' before any critique.
- ☐ Read ballots together later, after a meal and a rest.

Nerves and recovery

- ◆ Breathe in for four counts and out for six before entering the room.
- ◆ If you forget a line, pause, breathe and return to the next beat. Judges value recovery.
- ◆ Treat each round as a new chance. Do not replay the last one.
- ◆ Keep the focus on telling the story, not on winning.

Want a plan built around your performer?

Book a free consultation at the link below.

Built from public guidance: NSDA High School Unified Manual (speechanddebate.org) · NSDA Speech and Debate Glossary · NSDA Interpretation of Literature textbook (Kiger and Newman). Rules change by league and tournament, so always confirm against your tournament invitation and current league rules.

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