



Persuasive Style and Delivery for World Schools.

Style is worth 40 percent of a World Schools speaker's score. This guide gives students concrete habits for voice, body, language and notes, plus drills that fit into 15 minutes a day.

What judges look at in style

NSDA judging guidance describes style as **how** content is presented. It is not about accents or language ability. It covers clear and effective language, body language (eye contact, gestures, movement, stance), voice and tone (variety, volume, speed, pauses), and demeanor (suitable humor or emotion; rudeness persuades no one). It also says no single style is superior, so judges reward whatever works for that speaker.

Notes

Notes should help the speech, not block contact with the audience. Use short keyword notes, not a written script.

Style toolkit

SKILL	TRY THIS	AVOID
Voice	Vary pace; slow down on key points; pause after a big idea	Monotone, or racing through the last minute
Eye contact	Look at the judge and the room in thirds	Reading from the page
Gestures	Open hands, one clear gesture per idea	Fidgeting, pointing at opponents
Language	Plain, concrete words, short sentences, one image or story	Jargon, or sweeping vague claims
Signposting	"My first argument is..." "Now to the other side..."	Jumping between points unannounced
Tone	Confident and respectful, humor only if natural	Sarcasm, interrupting, eye-rolling

Structure that sounds good

- 1 Hook.** A one-sentence opener: a concrete scene, a question, or a surprising fact you can verify.
- 2 Roadmap.** Tell the judge how many points are coming.
- 3 Point, reason, example, so what.** Repeat for each argument with a clear verbal signal when you move on.
- 4 Compare.** Say why your point outweighs theirs, using words like "even if they are right about..."
- 5 Close.** A short summary line you would like the judge to write down.

Before and after. Weak: "Schools are bad for kids, many studies say." Stronger: "Picture a student up at 5:45 every morning. By second period, that student is struggling to focus. Our first argument is about attention."

Daily 15-minute drills

- ◆ **Pause practice (3 min):** read a paragraph aloud pausing after every sentence for two seconds.
- ◆ **Pace swing (3 min):** same paragraph, slow, then medium, then fast; choose the pace that sounds best.
- ◆ **One-minute story (4 min):** tell a true short story that illustrates a point, with no notes.
- ◆ **Mirror or phone video (5 min):** record a one-minute argument; watch with the sound off to check body language, then with eyes closed to check voice.

Parent feedback prompts

- ☐ Could you hear every word without strain?
- ☐ Did the speaker look up more than down?
- ☐ Did you notice which point mattered most?
- ☐ Was there at least one moment of vivid example?
- ☐ Was the tone respectful throughout?

ONE STYLE GOAL FOR NEXT WEEK

Built from public guidance: NSDA World Schools Norms (2023) · NSDA World Schools Adjudicator Guide · NSDA World Schools Ballot and Judge Instructions. Rules change by league and tournament, so always confirm against your tournament invitation and current league rules.

NOTES

Want a plan built around **your** debater?
Book a free consultation. The short intake takes about a minute and opens right away.

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