

The 79th Tokushima Prefectural Senior High School English Speech Contest

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This year, the Tokushima prefectural speech contest was held on Sunday, October 12th, 2025. Once again, high school students from all over Tokushima prepared speeches, meeting at the Tokushima General Education Hall for this section of the competition. 21 students in total met to share their thoughts and ideas on various topics. The guidelines for the speech give a baseline for what the students should consider when making their speeches. Only 30 percent of the speech is judging what I consider the fundamentals of the English language. That is, the students should aim to have intelligible pronunciation, while trying to follow natural stress, rhythm, and intonation. It may surprise the students to see that only 10 percent of that 30 percent goes to proper grammar. After months of writing and revisions, this is rarely the area where students lose points which explains why it is weighted so lightly. The next 20 percent goes to the student's delivery. While things like props and gestures are not considered when judging, the student's performance is certainly considered. This goes beyond the foundational aspects of stress and phrasing, but how engaging are the students to listen to. The remaining 50 percent of the speech is what separates the winners from the rest. Here the students need to display their skill in the format of English speeches specifically. That is to say the student may be highly skilled in conversation, even to a native level, but this would not score highly. Instead, the students must consider their audience when preparing. A personal anecdote that supports their point personalizes their topic and helps the listener follow along easily. On the other hand, if their entire speech is telling an anecdote, there is no point of action for the listener. This is more like storytelling than a speech, which never scores very well, no matter how well delivered. Likewise, the students that excel are the ones that go beyond the personal, sharing statistics or topical information beyond themselves to the local community, country, or globe. In addition to this, the students need to consider that they are making an argument. They need to convince the audience of their point, which requires critical thinking. Is there an obvious problem to their solution that they ignore? Does their information support their idea, or are they disconnected? Does their speech move in a logical order that is easy for the audience to follow when listening only once? These are the points that elevate a good speech to a winning speech. A trend that I noticed several of the high placing students this year was the use of counterpoints. These students made sure to address any problems the audience may have with their idea. This ability to guess and consider opposite ideas is seen often in debate clubs, but translates very well when applied to speech contests. Each year the students surprise us with their ideas, topics, and innovations. I look forward to seeing how they develop in the future.