

Proposal to change the Informative Speaking time limit to 10 minutes

Submitted by John Rademacher, Madison West

Current Rules:

5. Maximum time limit: 6 minutes, with an allowable 15-second grace period. There is no minimum time requirement. Any entry exceeding the grace period may not be ranked first in the round. If all entries in a round exceed the grace period, no first rank shall be given in that round.

Proposed Change:

5. Maximum time limit: **10** minutes, with an allowable 15-second grace period. There is no minimum time requirement. Any entry exceeding the grace period may not be ranked first in the round. If all entries in a round exceed the grace period, no first rank shall be given in that round.

Rationale:

1. Elimination of redundancy: The rules of Informative Speaking are identical in every way to the rules of Moments in History, with the obvious exception that Moments in History must address a topic relevant to the annual time periods. Increasing the Informative Speaking time limit creates a more significant difference and differentiates the two categories.
2. Greater depth and clarity: clearly a longer time limit allows for more content to be presented. Students can explore more aspects and implications of their information, and not feel as pressured to cut out essential elements or increase their rate of speech.
3. More creative use of visual aids: A longer time limit can accommodate the display and explanation of visual aids to further clarify the information being presented. Often students display VAs but do not sufficiently reference or explain them. Ambitious students can also use the added time to use more elaborate or interactive visual aids, as seen in informative speeches given in other states.
4. Consistency with NSDA rules: The National Speech and Debate Association time limit for Informative Speaking is 10 minutes with a 30 second grace period. This is standard for Informative Speaking at all speech events outside of Wisconsin. While many of our member schools do not compete outside of this state, being consistent with national rules is a draw for schools outside of Wisconsin to attend our tournaments. It is also worth noting that we changed the time limit on Solo Acting Humorous and Serious from 8 minutes to 10 minutes, and eliminated all notes in Oratory in order to be consistent with NSDA rules, and these categories are still quite popular.

In the past an argument against increasing the time limit for Informative was that it would discourage new students from participating in a speech category or from participating at all. There are seventeen other categories, including six other speech categories - Demonstration (10 min), Extemp (7 min), Impromptu (5 min), Moments in History (6 min), Oratory (10 min), and Special Occasion (6 min). In our organization we do not have novice or beginner categories. If we as coaches persuade our new students to enter certain categories because they are perceived as "easier", we are doing the students and the category a disservice. Informative

Speaking is the most-entered original speech category, just as prose and poetry are the most-entered interp categories. They are the most-entered in part because there is a perception that they are easier. This also makes them the most competitive, as the students who have done the same category for four or more years dominate the competition. In fact, these categories are not easier to win, but just easier to enter with little or no preparation. The idea of entering beginning students in these categories to find competitive success is counterproductive, as they have very low odds of doing so. If coaches want beginners to have a better chance of advancing to final rounds, they are better served by steering students into the less-entered categories. If raising the time limit on Informative Speaking to 10 minutes really is a deterrent to students, the other speech categories may see an increase in their numbers, creating a more even distribution of entries across all the speech categories.