



Public Speaking Contest Rules



Contest Friday – Feb. 7th

Registration Due Friday, January 30, 2026

There are TEN categories:

(A) Prepared Speech, (B) Extemporaneous Speech, (C) Radio Spot/Public Address, (D) Dramatic Interpretation, (E) Poetry Interpretation, (F) Humorous Interpretation, (G) 4-H Pledge – Juniors & Clovers only, (H) Clover Show and Tell
(I) Demonstration (J) Visual Presentation

General Rules

1) Age Divisions

a. Clovers -- ages 5, 6 & 7 as of January 1, 2026 – May participate in the 4-H Pledge or Show and Tell categories. Participation ribbons will be awarded.

b. Juniors -- ages 8-10 as of January 1, 2026 – all categories except Show and Tell

c. Intermediates -- ages 11-13 as of January 1, 2026 – all categories except 4-H Pledge, and Show and Tell

d. Seniors -- ages 14-18 as of January 1, 2026 – all categories except 4-H Pledge, and Show and Tell

2) One Champion and up to 2 ranked Reserve Champions may be selected in the Junior, Intermediate and Senior divisions in each of the categories. The Champion is invited to participate in the State contest.

3) Visual aids, including posters, are only permitted in the Show and Tell, Demonstration and Visual Presentation category.

4) Appropriate gestures are encouraged. Podium use is optional, but judges may deduct points for excessive movement or hand gestures that distract. It is the delivery of the spoken word that is evaluated.

5) Contestants may compete in only one category.

6) All participants must complete the registration by January 30th

7) State champions may not enter the same category and age group a second time.

8) Contestants **should not introduce** themselves as part of their presentation. This will be done by an MC or room Host/Hostess.

9) Judges may deduct points for presentations not meeting or exceeding time limits. (Exception: 4-H Pledge & Show and Tell categories – no time limit.)

10) Judges may ask questions of contestants. Due to time constraints, questioning should be limited to two to three minutes per speaker. (Exception: No questions will be asked in the Radio Spot/Public Address)

Category Rules

(A) Prepared Speech:

1) Length of Speeches - (a) Juniors 3-5 minutes; (b) Intermediates & Seniors 4-6 minutes

2) Topic: May relate to 4-H club work or any subject about which you feel comfortable speaking. It may be wise to discuss topics that could be considered controversial with your 4-H leader or educator before the contest.

The speech may be written for a specific audience, such as a 4-H club, PTA, Rotary Club, etc.

3) Note cards containing a key word outline may be used when delivering your speech. Only Juniors may use a complete script. You should not read your speech and memorization is not encouraged. **RULE:** Note cards are to be given to the judges at the end of the speech. (At the County contest, note cards will be given to the judges, but they will be returned during the awards presentation.)

(B) Extemporaneous Speech:

1) Contestants will draw three topics and choose one topic for their speech.

2) Preparation Time: Juniors and Intermediates may have up to have 30 minutes to prepare. Seniors may have up to 15 minutes to prepare their talk.

2) Length of Extemporaneous Speeches - (a) Juniors & Intermediates 2-3 minutes; (b) Seniors 3-5 minutes.

3) Contestants may use one side of up to four, or both sides of up to two, 5x8 inch note cards for their key word outline. (Pencils and note cards will be provided.)

4) Extemporaneous speakers will be shown time cards at correctly timed intervals indicating “1 MINUTE”, “30 SECONDS”, and “STOP”.

(C) Radio Spot/Public Address:

1) Length of Radio Spot - Juniors, Intermediates and Seniors – exactly 30 second in length.

It may include a musical or sound effect introduction and/or background, but may not include a spoken introduction or “tag” by anyone other than the contestant. If music or a sound effect is used, the contestant must provide and operate the sound-making device. Musical/sound effect introductions and endings are considered a part of the radio spot and must not cause the 30 second time limit to be exceeded.

2) Your Radio Spot/Public Address needs relate to 4-H, be original, and be created by the contestant.

3) The contestant must provide a complete written script (including notations about music/sound effects) to the timekeeper to aid in timing accuracy.

4) Contestants will deliver their radio spot using a microphone and will be screened from the audience and judges!

For ALL Interpretation categories:

- 1) Length - Juniors 1 ½ to 3 minutes; Intermediates 2 to 4 minutes; Seniors: 3 to 5 minutes
- 2) Speaker is permitted to speak or interpret in the language of their choice. If using **language other than spoken English, the participant must inform the Extension Office a minimum of 10 working days** before the event to ensure appropriately qualified judges are available.
- 3) Interpretations are to be memorized oral presentations of a selection of narrative from a published permitted work. Published permitted works include dramatic or humorous plays or books, or poetry, but should not come from the script of a television show or be from any unpublished source. (For the county contest the use of notes will be allowed.)
- 4) **Contestants should bring 2 copies of the script for the judges including a complete reference citation.**
Language other than English must be translated in these documents.

(D) Dramatic Interpretation:

For Dramatic Interpretations, the contestant may choose to wear a costume and opt to sit for the presentation.
Podium use is optional.

(E) Poetry Interpretation: see above rules

(F) Humorous Interpretation: see above rules

(G) 4-H Pledge: This is a county contest only.

- 1) Clovers (ages 5-7); Juniors (ages 8-10) must memorize and recite the 4-H pledge without the use of note cards.
- 2) Contestants must also use the proper hand gestures.
- 3) Judges may ask questions regarding the meaning of the Pledge and its significance to the participant.
- 4) Clovers and Juniors will receive a Participation Award; no Junior Champion will be selected.

(H) Clover Show and Tell: This is a county contest only.

- 1) Clovers (ages 5-7) may bring a favorite item from home or an item they have made in 4-H.
- 2) Contestants will stand and tell about their item. They should try to include information that would answer the questions: Who? What? Where? How? When? Why? in relation to their item.
- 3) The judge may assist with the presentation by asking questions about the item.
- 4) Clovers will receive a Participation Award.

(I) Demonstration

- 1) Presentation where the contestant shows step by step how to do or make something.
- 2) Contestants must bring all supplies for the demonstration.
- 3) Supplemental materials such as posters with instructions, take-home directions are encouraged.
- 4) Juniors, Intermediates and Seniors: 3-15 minutes.

J Visual Presentation

- 1) Props are used for the presentation such as charts, PowerPoint slides, posters, animals etc.
- 2) Contestants conduct a speech similar to a prepared speech, and include pause/breaks to point at props.
- 3) Pauses and breaks are factored into the overall time of the presentation.
- 4) Contestants must provide all necessary props/equipment.
- 5) Juniors, Intermediates and Seniors – 3-15 minutes.

University programs, activities, and facilities are available to all without regard to race, color, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, marital status, age, national origin, political affiliation, physical or mental disability, religion, protected veteran status, genetic information, personal appearance, or any other legally protected class.





PUBLIC SPEAKING REGISTRATION FORM

Fill out the registration form and return it to the 4-H Office by **Friday, January 30, 2026**.

Mail to: 9501 Crain Highway, Bel Alton, MD 20611 or email to: dmohler@umd.edu

Contest Date: Friday, February 6, 2026 Check In – 6:45pm / Contest – 7:00pm
Location – La Plata Methodist Church.

NAME _____

AGE _____ (as of 1/1/26) PHONE _____

EMAIL: _____

CHECK IF YOU ARE A CLOVER 4-H'ER _____ (5-7 Years old)

Please circle the letter of the category and supply the requested information for that category:

A. Prepared Speech – Title _____

B. Extemporaneous Speech – (Title to be drawn at contest)

C. Radio Spot – Title _____

D. Dramatic Interpretation – Title & Author _____

E. Poetry Interpretation – Title & Author _____

F. Humorous Interpretation – Title & Author _____

G. 4-H Pledge (5-7 Years old) _____ (8-10 Years old) _____

H. Clover Show and Tell (5-7 Years old) – Name of Item _____

I Demonstration - Title _____

J. Visual Presentation - Title _____

I am an older youth and would like to help in the following way:

_____ Room Monitor _____ Door Monitor _____ Registration Table _____ Hall Monitor

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If the participant requires a reasonable accommodation to participate in any event, please contact the 4-H Program Management Specialist, Bonnie Boyden bboyden@umd.edu (301) 301934-5404 by Jan 30, 2026.





EVENT NAME: Charles County 4-H Public Speaking Conest

EVENT DATE(S) & LOCATION: February 6, 2026 La Plata Methodist Church

wish/my child wishes to participate as a part of the University of Maryland (UME) Maryland 4-H Youth Development Program in all activities associated with the above-named Event. If the individual participating in this event is my minor child, I give my permission for my child's participation in this event. In connection with and consideration of participation in the Event, I, on behalf of my child and/or myself, my heirs, personal representative(s) and assigns, hereby represent and agree as follows:

1. I am aware that any program activity can be dangerous, and I fully recognize and understand that there are risks and hazards, both minor and serious, associated with participation in the Event and related activities. These risks and hazards include but are not limited to: cuts, scrapes, bruises, broken bones, muscle strains, pulls or tears, head, neck, back, eye and other bodily injuries, heat prostration, brain damage, blindness, deafness, drowning, heart attacks, paralysis and death. As with any activity, there are other inherent and/or unforeseen risks and hazards associated with the Event and related activities that cannot be predicted. I also understand that risks and hazards associated with the Event may arise in various contexts including but not limited to the following:
 - Participating in activities associated with this Event.
 - Contact with animals that may be associated with this Event.
 - Transportation to and from the Event and/or Event activities by public carrier, by personal conveyance, or by vehicle driven by a UME volunteer/staff member.
 - Residing in a hotel/dormitory or other housing with adults of the same gender.
 - Use of lodging facilities pool, exercise, and/or other recreational facilities.
 - Fire and/or weather-related events.
 - Terrorism attacks while participating or traveling to and from Event activities.
2. I understand participation in the Event is purely voluntary and neither my child nor I am in any way required to participate. I want to/want my child to participate in the Event and related activities, despite the possible dangers.
3. I understand that participation in the Event and related activities may require a minimum level of fitness and/or expertise for safe participation, and that UME recommends participants have a physical examination to determine their fitness for participation. Should my child or I require emergency medical treatment or first aid as a result of illness, injury or accident arising in connection with the Event or related activities, I consent to such first aid and/or treatment. I will notify UME in writing if my child has/I have any health or medical conditions that may affect his/her/my participation and/or about which emergency personnel should be informed. I further understand that UME does not provide medical, health or other insurance for Event participants, and I represent and warrant that my child has/I have adequate medical, health and/or other insurance.
4. I understand that the personal belongings in possession or control of youth participants of this event are subject to search and confiscation by 4-H faculty/staff or designated volunteers for the health and safety of youth participants and other persons, upon reasonable suspicion that a prohibited and/or illegally possessed substance or object is contained within. Items subject to search include, but are not limited to: clothing, bags, purses, luggage, computers and/or electronic devices, assistive devices, vehicles, and their contents. Spaces assigned for personal use at this event, such as sleeping quarters, lockers, etc. are under 4-H control at all times and are also subject to search as described above. Search of property/space owned, possessed, or occupied by an adult will be conducted by law enforcement personnel, if necessary. Law enforcement personnel may always conduct lawful searches for law enforcement purposes.



5. Knowing the dangers, hazards and risks associated with the Event, and with sufficient knowledge of my/my child's physical condition(s) and limitations, I voluntarily assume all responsibility and risk of loss, damage, illness and/or injury to person or property in any way associated with my/my child's participation in the Event and/or related activities.
6. I agree that my child/I will abide by all rules and regulations applicable to participation in the Program.
7. To the fullest extent permitted by law, I hereby release and forever discharge, and agree not to sue and to indemnify and hold harmless, the State of Maryland, the University of Maryland, University of Maryland Extension and their governing boards, officers, agents, employees and volunteers from and against any and all liabilities, claims, demands and causes of action of any kind on account of any loss, damage, illness or injury to person or property in any way arising out of or relating to my participation in the Event and/or related activities, whether due to the negligence, mistake or other action or inaction of UME or any other person or entity.

I HAVE READ AND FULLY UNDERSTAND THIS LIABILITY RELEASE AND INFORMED CONSENT FORM, AND AGREE TO ITS TERMS VOLUNTARILY AND WITH FULL KNOWLEDGE OF ITS SIGNIFICANCE. I UNDERSTAND THAT AGREEMENT TO THESE TERMS IS REQUIRED FOR MY/MY CHILD'S PARTICIPATION IN THIS UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND EXTENSION 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT EVENT, AND THAT IF I CHOOSE NOT TO AGREE TO THESE TERMS I/MY CHILD CANNOT PARTICIPATE.

☐ 4-H Youth
☐ Adult (over age 18)
Participant's Status

Printed Name of Participant

Participant's Signature

*Printed Name of Parent/Guardian

*Parent/Guardian's Signature

Date

****PARENT/GUARDIAN SIGNATURE REQUIRED IF THE EVENT PARTICIPANT IS A 4-H YOUTH OF ANY AGE***

