

## Cutting Material for Speech Competitions

By Lindsey Petropoulos, Rice Middle School, TX

---



Oral interpretation material can come from a variety of sources. Plays, short stories, poems, novels, and biographies are some sources to consider.

**Think about the following standards when looking for a selection**

**1) Quality of literature**

Good literature generally has a theme that connects to human experiences such as love, anger, joy and pain. The theme may be presented in a new or different way

**2) Audience appeal**

The audience should be able to connect to your selection. Is your literature appealing to the age, concerns and feelings of your audience?

**3) Appropriateness**

Can your selection be clearly communicated to your audience in one reading? Is the language difficult to understand? Is it good "read-aloud" material?

**4) Interpreter appeal**

As the interpreter, do you feel a connection to the material? Does it remind you of your own feelings or experiences? Are you excited about performing the selection?

Once you have found a selection you love, it is likely you will need to "cut" it to meet performance requirements for your event.

# 4NG Fanatics

## Reasons for Cutting

- 1) Too much material for time allowed (check your rules for your time limit!)
- 2) Certain parts of the selection are inappropriate
- 3) Need to create a program with a coherent theme

## Ways to Cut

- 1) **Lateral Cuts** - taking pieces of each scene throughout the work
- 2) Consider whether 2 or more scenes can be joined together.
- 3) **Sectional Cuts** - using one major scene for the work

## Cutting Guidelines

- 1) First read the entire piece.
- 2) Always cut in, not out -- build your cutting around important lines.
- 3) Find the moment of climax -- then cut around that
- 4) Eliminate dialogue tags -- Cut "he/she said"
- 5) Cut minor characters who are not necessary for the story
- 6) Cut inappropriate material and vulgarity
- 7) Cut elaborative description
- 8) Cut references to events you cannot fully explain
- 9) The cutting must reflect the author's original intent.  
You have an ethical responsibility to the author, text and audience.
- 10) The cutting must still contain plot elements: exposition, climax, and conclusion
- 11) The cutting must have a moment of impact.

## Technical Stuff

- 1) Always copy the literature and cut on this copy (never cut in the original script)
- 2) Always cut in pencil
- 3) Read cutting aloud and time it to ensure it is not too long or too short
- 4) Write source information (including page numbers) on the copies  
Author, Title, where found, etc.
- 5) If the cutting is still too long . . . cut again . . . cut some more
- 6) Remember to allow time for introduction (approximately 30-90 seconds)

### Source:

<https://sites.google.com/a/pisd.edu/rms-speech-and-debate/oral-interp/cutting-material>