

Sometimes, as the year extends pieces and speeches begin to feel a little stale. Keeping them exciting to the judges is sometimes about keeping them exciting to the students. These exercises are designed to limit that mid year slump. They can be applied to most public address and interp events.

Meaning in a Minute:

In this short exercise, gather a group of students and let each student take turns getting up in front of the group individually for a brief period of time (typically one minute, or maybe 2 minutes). During their minute, each student should talk about what his/her piece is about and - most importantly - why it matters. This is meant to force students to find the essence of their piece - to be able to recognize its key components and its meaning.

Group Deep Dive & Discussion:

This exercise is malleable in terms of time, and it can take as few as 10 minutes for each piece, but as long as you feel is necessary to really dive into the piece (on average, 30 minutes per piece is normally an effective length of time). Typically this exercise will occur in a group setting with multiple students contributing to the discussion of each other's pieces - students should have seen each other's pieces at least once. This group exercise can be specific to students in one event, or it can be an exercise for a group from a mixed bag of events (i.e. a group of 5 OI students, or a group with one OI student, two OO students, and one Dec student). In this exercise, one student's piece will be the topic of discussion for a set period of time (for OI, discuss each piece separately).

Begin by allowing students to ask questions of the student who performs the piece - these questions can be of almost any kind, and you can set your own rules. Some in the past have included: "How do you feel about your topic now that you have performed this piece?" "What do you think about X aspect of your topic?" "Have you thought about what X part of your piece means?" "What do you think the takeaway(s) of your piece is/are?" Then, the coach can ask questions of the student in order to hit points that the coach sees as important/necessary to improve the student's connection with and understanding of their piece. Overall, this is a very laid back and flexible format for exploring pieces, but the coach can apply as much or as little structure to the exercise as desired.

Piece Swap:

One basic yet interesting exercise is to allow students to swap pieces with each other and perform those pieces before the group. Instruct the student to perform their teammate's piece not as the teammate typically performs it, but as *they* would perform it if it were *their* piece. By doing this in front of the student whose piece it is, that student will be able to see unique patterns of inflection and ways of delivering their piece that differ from their own typical way of performing. This can allow new perspectives on the delivery of a piece that may have become routinely patterned over time.