

This document is intended to be used in conjunction with the Official Rulebook and Evaluation Criteria, and not as a substitute for either. Download the Official Fine Arts Rulebook and the Evaluation Criteria at [www.faf.ag.org/rules.cfm](http://www.faf.ag.org/rules.cfm).

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## **SPOKEN WORD**

### **1. VOICE INFLECTION.**

Voice inflection and variation is especially key in Spoken Word, more so than a Drama Solo or monologue. Excellent Spoken Word requires a unique rhythm and voice inflection not found in other forms of communication. Don't settle for a monologue. There must be an audible experience of the written work including sound devices, rhythm, and the way sound compliments the meaning of the written piece. Don't forget, well-timed silence can also be very effective.

### **2. CLEAR IMAGERY.**

Have something to say and say it with vivid imagery. Work to express something fresh and relatable by interesting and unique figures of speech, sound devices (alliteration, rhyme, repetition) and linguistic effects achieved through various patterns and variations in diction.

### **3. WHAT MAKES POETRY STRONG AND AFFECTIVE?**

The same rules apply to Spoken Word as written poetry – sensory details, vivid imagery, conflict, purpose, rhyme, assonance, and alliteration are all required elements.

### **4. BODY LANGUAGE/STAGING – PACING.**

Don't feel like you have to have hand motions for every word. It's usually more powerful and less distracting to keep your arms to your side. Pacing and aimless body movements are a distraction to your message. A few deliberate body moves and hand motions are far more impacting and effective than aimless wandering and overuse of arms and hands. And don't step backward, it weakens your impact.

### **5. EYE CONTACT.**

Control eye movements. When shifting, don't break character. Also, don't let your eyes reveal your nerves, "Never let 'em see you sweat" and don't let it show in your eyes. Speak with purpose and confidence and let it shine in your eyes.

### **6. MORE FACIALS.**

Practice in front of the mirror. Use facial expression that is genuine, humble, and natural to help communicate your message. Don't overplay it like a drama monologue but don't just stand there with a flat face. Engage and connect with your audience with eye contact and facial expression. Take your cues from the words you speak – "pain", "love", "joy", "fear" should affect the facial expressions used to communicate the emotion of each of those words.

### **7. MEMORIZE WITHOUT BEING FLAT.**

Memorization is absolutely the best way to achieve a full and fulfilling performance experience as long as you can perform the poetry without sounding memorized or that you're just reciting lines.

### **8. WATCH THE GOOD ONES.**

Attend or watch live performances of Spoken Word or Poetry Slam. What are other performers doing? What kinds of choices are they making with their voices and gestures? What do you find compelling about their poetry, voice inflections, and imagery?

### **9. UNDER 3 IS KEY.**

Respect the time limit in the Fine Arts Festival. Your Spoken Word entry has to be three minutes or less. You don't want to perform for only one and ½ minutes but you don't want to go for five minutes either (resulting in a time violation point deduction).

### **10. END STRONG.**

Be sure to end with intention and purpose. Don't let your voice just wander off – end well.