Rotary Four Way Test Speech Contest

How-To Guide for Clubs

2026-2027

Lori Richardson Glovier

District 5790 Four Way Test Speech Contest Coordinator

Loririchardson1@earthlink.net

817-296-9124 (cell)

Please e-mail, call, or text for HELP!

Why Should a Rotary Club hold a Four Way Test Speech Contest?

1. Exposes high school students to a moral code/compass which can be utilized throughout their lives regardless of background or religion.
2. Re-energizes the Club members around the meaning and utility of the Four Way Test in our own daily lives.
3. Provides a unique opportunity to high school students to formulate ideas into a coherent and impactful speech often delivered to people unknown to the student. This is a skill set which is useful in the working world.
4. Exposes students to the Rotary organization.
5. Exposes parents, teachers, and community to Rotary.
6. Exposes the Club to younger potential members.
7. Offers cash awards to winners.

CLUB PREPARATION

1. Designate a Four Way Test Speech Contest Coordinator.
2. The Club Contest Coordinator sends the Club participation form to the District Contest Coordinator by e-mail. This indicates the club intends to hold a contest and therefore will have a contestant for the Regional contests.
3. **Key:** The Club Coordinator develops a relationship with a local public and/or private high school. A local home school association could also be contacted.
    a. Involve the principal(s), appropriate teacher(s) by meeting with them and explaining the Four Way Test itself. Then explain the rules of a speech created using the Four Way Test.
    b. The documents on the District website which detail the rules of the contest and judges score sheet can be given to the school contact(s). This is a direct link: https://www.rotary5790.org/sitepage/4-way-test-speech-contest
    c. If you do not have the direct link available, please note you do not have to be logged in as a member to access this. The speech contest is listed under Services Training>Vocational Services.
4. Work with the school(s) to find a convenient date in February or March which will work for both the club and the school calendars for holding the speech contest.
5. Decide what the maximum # of contestants your contest can handle.

    a. Often this number is around 4 but could vary. This will depend on school circumstances and club capacity.
    b. Some schools have a preliminary contest to weed out the better speeches from a larger pool. (e. g. 12 prospective student speakers have a contest at the school to determine which 4 will be candidates at the club contest.)
    c. Make sure to clearly communicate this # to the appropriate school personnel.
6. The coordinator works with the Club Board to determine a budget for the contest. This could include:
    a. Food, if necessary
    b. Water, especially advisable for student speakers
    c. Certificates and cash awards for students
    d. Miscellaneous costs for producing judging packets (see below).
7. Recruit 4 judges and 1 timekeeper for the day of the contest.
    a. A minimum # of judges should be 3 and an ideal # is 5.
    b. Judges do not have to be Rotarians but need to be very familiar with the Four Way Test and what a good Four Way Test speech is.
8. Educate the judges and timekeeper on the time constraints and rules of the contest as outlined on the official rules published on the District website.
9. Prepare packets for the judges with a judge scoring sheet for each contestant. If you feel they need to have the rules of the contest, include this in the packet. Optional: provide a pen and pencil in the packet.
10. Timekeeper needs to have a method of communicating when the student has 1 minute left, 30 seconds left, 0 minutes

left. Timekeeper is also responsible for documenting whether the student incurred a penalty by exceeding the 30 second grace period (after the 5 minute 30 second point). This information needs to be communicated to the judges who will calculate in the 5% deduction from the final score. (See contest rules.)

11. Judges need to be aware that only one student is eligible to move on to the Regional contest. In other words, there can be no ties.
12. The club should be kept in the loop on the day and date of the contest. Full club participation should be encouraged as the students should feel supported.
13. Depending on time and location of your contest, parents, friends, and community can be welcomed. This can be a good advertisement for Rotary.
14. Suggestion: The contest application is used for the students moving onto the Regional contest. However, this can be used at the club level as well. Once your winner is declared at the club level, you need to forward a copy of this application to the District Four Way Test Contest Coordinator, and your photo-video consent form will already be signed.

DAY OF CONTEST

1. Set up your venue the way you would like it for judges seating, timekeeper positioning, and student seating as well as club/community member seating.
2. Give your judges their packets and timekeeper paper for logging times.
3. Check in your students.
4. Have the students draw speaking order.
5. Start your contest promptly at the advertised time.
6. Suggestion: Do not introduce speakers or have them introduce themselves until after the contest. They can come up in the order of the number drawn.
7. Make sure the judges have a few minutes in between speakers to complete their notes.
8. Suggestion: do not allow clapping after the speeches so it doesn't seem like a personality contest. BUT have lots of clapping after the speakers are done!
9. NO flash photography, no noisy phones or pagers. Eliminate any significant ambient noise if possible.
10. After all speeches are done, allow the judges to deliberate.
11. Announce winners and associated awards!
12. Make sure to thank judges, teachers, families, students, and club members for making it a great event.

POST-EVENT

1. The Club Speech Contest Coordinator sends the winner's student application to the District Speech Contest Coordinator as soon as the contest is over. The District Coordinator will contact the student with details of the Regional Contest. This communication will always copy the Club coordinator so the Club can be as involved in the Regionals as desired. This step is crucial. Without this, the student may not get all the information needed to go to the Regional level AND the District Coordinator does not know to expect this student at the assigned Regional Contest.
2. Ensure the winning student can attend the Regional contest and has transportation.
3. Initially, the clubs will be assigned to a Regional contest (usually there are 3). If the student cannot attend the Regional contest to which the club is assigned, please contact the District coordinator to determine if the student can attend one of the other Regional contests.
4. Advise the student that family, friends, teachers can attend the Regional contest. Club members should attend if possible.
5. NOTE: The information about Regional and District contest venues is updated on the District website as soon as it becomes available. Additionally, the District coordinator notifies the Club Contest Coordinators of any updates by e-mail.

CONSIDERATION FOR SMALLER CLUBS

- Join with another small club to co-host a contest.
- Contact another club to help you with judging. Some clubs do not have contests but have members who would be interested in helping with judging for your contest.

- If your club cannot hold a contest, contact another club to see if you can be of assistance in judging or timekeeping.

CONSIDERATION FOR ALL CLUBS

- To the extent you can create an opportunity to involve the community, this can be a recruiting tool for clubs as you can be interacting with parents, community members, and civic leaders. Everything can be a membership opportunity! Ask community members to judge!
- Outstanding speech contestants can be a source of candidates for RYLA.

FORMS

1. All forms in this handout are found on the District website: https://www.rotary5790.org/sitepage/4-way-test-speech-contest
2. Look on the left-hand side of the page for the blue links. These are updated annually. Please use them!
3. Additionally, these forms are sent attached to an e-mail to all club Presidents and the club coordinators from the prior Rotary year in October.
4. These forms are not changed in the middle of a Rotary year.
5. List of forms:
    a. Rotary Club Participation Form
    b. Student Application Form including photo-video consent
    c. Four Way Test Speech Contest Rules
    d. Judges Documentation Sheet