Discovery Speaking Rules

Objective

To develop the ability of young FFA members to competently express themselves as they assume the responsibilities of leadership within the agriculture industry.

A. Rules and Regulations

1. The event is open to all FFA members in good standing who are regularly enrolled in an agricultural education course at the seventh or eighth grade level of the current school year and who have not placed first in the state Discovery Speaking Leadership Development Event (LDE) previously.
2. Each district will determine the number of individuals per school allowed to compete at the district level. Ribbons may be awarded according to the guidelines on the results sheets. The top four participants shall be ranked, regardless of their ribbon assignment. Up to three receiving a purple ribbon rating at the district level may advance to the state round of competition. Advancing speakers are to be of high quality. Any identified alternate must have received a purple or blue ribbon rating.
3. Each participant shall wear the official FFA dress as defined in the FFA Manual: a white collared shirt or blouse, official FFA tie or scarf, black trousers or skirt, black shoes, and FFA jacket. Points may be deducted for variance from official dress.
4. In addition to the Discovery Speaking LDE, the participant may compete in the Conduct of Chapter Meetings event. They are not eligible to compete in any other individual (not team-based) Leadership Development Event in the same year in which they participate in Discovery Speaking.
5. Each speech shall be a maximum of four minutes and a minimum of two minutes in length. A time indicator shall be provided at three minutes. One point will be deducted for each second that the student speaks over time or under time. A maximum of three minutes of additional time will be allowed for each participant to answer questions asked by the evaluators.
6. A bibliography in APA or MLA style must be included as part of the speaker's manuscript and direct quotes from any other source of information must be in

quotes on the manuscript and identified with the bibliography. Charts and other visual aids are prohibited.

7. The participant's use of a manuscript while speaking is prohibited at the district and state events; index cards are acceptable.

8. State-Qualifying Manuscripts
    a. State LDEs
        i. A state-qualifying participant will submit an electronic typed copy of the complete manuscript, including the cover page and bibliography, for the state event.
        ii. Starting Fall of 2026, a rolling submission deadline for all state qualifying manuscripts will be implemented as follows:
            i. Due dates:
                a. District LDEs held in November, manuscripts due December 15
                b. District LDEs held in December, manuscripts due January 15
                c. District LDEs held in January, manuscripts due February 12
        iii. State manuscripts may only be submitted once.
        iv. All state-qualifying manuscripts will be scored PRIOR to the state convention.
        v. Judges will not judge the speech on accuracy of the speech based on the manuscript.
        vi. All state-qualifying manuscripts will be screened by an AI and plagiarism checker. If more than 30% is reported plagiarized, it will be manually reviewed. If it is still reported as plagiarized, the manuscript will lose 67 points on the rubric and be reported to the judges.
    b. District LDEs
        i. District event coordinators shall determine and communicate the number of copies required for the district level of competition. The cover page shall be included at the front of the speech manuscript, and it must include the participant's name, chapter, "Discovery Speaking Leadership Development Event", and the title of the speech. The copies must be brought to the district event as instructed by the district event coordinator.

9. A middle school member may choose to address any current and relevant topic of the agriculture industry's pathways: agribusiness systems, animal systems, environmental services and natural resources systems, food products and processing systems, plant systems, or power, structural and technical systems. Discovery speeches may be *either* informative or persuasive.

10. Recording of LDEs
    i. State LDEs
        i. There will be no state association hired media that record the LDE event in its entirety.
        ii. The use of tripods or devices that are larger than a handheld recording device (i.e. a cellphone) are prohibited.
        iii. As a public event with an audience present, individual competitors must realize that audience members may be recording their LDE presentation. The FFA Association and the FFA Board of Directors will not monitor the use of recording devices.
    ii. District LDEs
        i. Recording of LDEs at the district level is at the discretion of the district.

A. Suggested Guide for Conducting District Event

Prior to the Event

1. The order of appearance to be used shall be determined in advance of the event.
2. Provide one of the following to each evaluator:
    a. Discovery Speaking Rules (this document)
    b. Judges Scoring Reference Sheet
    c. Score Sheet – One per Participant
    d. Official Results Sheet
    e. Order of Appearance Sheet
    f. Manuscripts of Speeches

Start Event

1. Each participant shall be introduced to the evaluators by the individual coordinating the event. Introductions will include the participant's name and chapter. Example: The following speaker is Alex Degree from the Blue and Gold FFA Chapter.
2. No one shall enter or leave the speaking room while the speaker is presenting.
3. After the participant is finished, the timer will record the time and forward it to the evaluators.

4. Each participant is to be allowed a maximum of three minutes of questioning by the evaluators following the speech. These questions are to be based on the speech content.

After the Event

1. Each evaluator shall total each participant's score and arrive at the placing. Discussion between evaluators is allowed and encouraged. Audience members and participants shall not be present during evaluator discussion.
2. Ribbons may be awarded according to the guidelines on the results sheets. The top four participants shall be ranked, regardless of their ribbon assignment. Up to three receiving a purple ribbon rating at the district level may advance to the state round of competition. Advancing speakers are to be of high quality. Any identified alternate must have received a purple or blue ribbon rating.
3. A scoresheet with feedback shall be completed for each participant.
4. One copy of the results should be completed on the form provided to the judges. List the name and chapter of each participant. Fill out the digital results sheet from the State FFA Office.

B. *Official Score Card*

Topic Relevance	65
Explanation of Topic that is Persuasive or Informative	15
Logical Order and Unity of Thought	30
Spelling and Grammar	35
Quality of Resources	30
Manuscript Written According to Guidelines	15
Non-verbal and Oral Communication	500
Response to Questions	300
	Total 990

Time Penalty: one point is deducted for each second under time or over time.

C. *Awards Recognition*

1. District Awards: Participants meriting awards shall be rated as purple, blue, red, or white and the top four participants shall by ranked by number (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th). The top four participants shall be ranked, regardless of their ribbon assignment. Up to three receiving a purple ribbon rating at the district level may

advance to the state round of competition. Advancing speakers are to be of high quality. Any identified alternate must have received a purple or blue ribbon rating.

2. State Awards: Participants in the state event will be designated as gold, silver, or bronze medal recipient.

Judges Scoring Reference Sheet: Discovery Speaking

Use this sheet as a reference to complete the Student Score Sheet with feedback for each participant.

Speech Content and Manuscript

Indicator	Very Strong Evidence of Skill is Present	Moderate Evidence of Skill is Present	Strong Evidence of Skill is Not Present
Topic Relevance	Topic addressed is relevant to the industry of agriculture	Topic addressed shows some relevance to the industry of agriculture	Topic addresses an issue that is irrelevant to the industry of agriculture
Thorough and Complete Explanation of Topic that is Clearly Persuasive **or** Informative	The topic and/or position clearly stated and ample evidence is provided	Topic and/or position is not obvious and evidence is not clearly provided	Topic and/or position is not stated and evidence is not provided
Logical Order and Unity of Thought	Clearly organized and concise with introduction, body and conc lusion layout	Good organization with few statements out of place or lacking in clear construction	Little to no organization; sometimes awkward and lacking construction
Spelling/Grammar	Spelling and grammar are of high quality with two or less errors in the document	Spelling and grammar are adequate with three to five errors in the document	Spelling and grammar are poor with six or more errors in the document
Quality of Resources	Resources are from reputable sources	Resources are from questionable sources	Resources are unreliable and invalid

Non-Verbal and Oral Communication

Indicator	Very Strong Evidence of Skill is Present	Moderate Evidence of Skill is Present	Strong Evidence of Skill is Not Present
Supporting Evidence	Examples (stories, statistics, etc.) are vivid, precise and clearly explained	Examples are usually concrete and sometimes need clarification	Examples are sometimes confusing le aving the listeners with questions
Informative or Persuasive Use of Evidence	Exemplary use of evidence to persuade or inform listeners	Sufficient use of evidence to persuade or inform listeners	Has difficulty using evidence to persuade or inform listeners
Pace	Speaks very articulately at rate that engages audience	Occasionally speaks too fast or has long unnecessary hesitations	Speaks too slow or too fast to engage audience
Command of Audience	Speaker uses appropriate emphasis and tone to captivate audience	Speaker presents speech as mere repeating of facts and speech comes across as a report	Speaker lacks enthusiasm and power to engage audience

Eye Contact	Constantly looks at the entire audience (90 - 100% of the time)	Mostly looks around the audience (60 - 80% of the time)	Occasionally looks at someone or some groups (less than 50 % of the time)
Mannerisms and Gestures	No nervous habits shown, hand motions are used to emphasize talking points	At times exhibit nervous habits, hands are sometimes expressively	Displays some nervous habits, hand motions are sometimes distracting
Poise	Portrays confidence through stance, posture, facial expressions	Maintains control most of the time; rarely loses composure	Lacks confidence and composure

Response to Questions

Indicator	Very Strong Evidence of Skill is Present	Moderate Evidence of Skill is Present	Strong Evidence of Skill is Not Present
Response to Questions	Is able to respond with organized thoughts and concise answers	Answers effectively but has to stop and think and sometimes gets off focus	Rambles or responds before thinking
Knowledge of Topic	Answer shows thorough knowledge of the subject with strong evidence	Answer shows some knowledge of the subject but lacks strong evidence	Answer shows little knowledge of subject and lacks evidence

Student Score Sheet: Discovery Speaking

Chapter: _____ Participant: _____

Speech Content and Manuscript – 190 possible points					
Indicator	Strong	Moderate	Low	Total Points	Comments
Topic Relevance *65 points max*	45-65	20-44	0-19		
Thorough and Complete Explanation of Topic that is Clearly Persuasive **or** Informative *15 points max*	11-15	6-10	0-5		
Logical Order and Unity of Thought *30 points max*	21-30	11-20	0-10		
Spelling/Grammar *35 points max*	25-35	13-24	0-12		
Quality of resources *30 points max*	21-30	11-20	0-10		
Double-spaced formatted to 8½" x 11" with 1" margins, and 12 point professional font *5 points max*	5	-	0		
Cover page with speech title, participant's name, chapter and event *5 points max*	5	-	0		
APA or MLA style for references and citations *5 points max*	5	-	0		
Non-Verbal and Oral Communication – 500 possible points					
Supporting Evidence *75 points max*	51-75	26-50	0-25		
Informative or Persuasive use of Evidence *75 points max*	51-75	26-50	0-25		
Pace *75 points max*	51-75	26-50	0-25		
Command of Audience *100 points max*	68-100	34-67	0-33		
Eye Contact *50 points max*	34-50	17-33	0-16		
Mannerisms and Gestures *50 points max*	34-50	17-33	0-16		
Poise *75 points max*	51-75	26-50	0-25		
Response to Questions – 300 possible points					
Response to Questions *100 points max*	68-100	34-67	0-33		
Knowledge of Topic *200 points max*	133-200	68-132	0-67		
				Sub-total Points	
				-1 point per second under 2 minutes or over 4 minutes by the timekeeper	
				- 67 points for plagiarism and/or AI generated writing	
				Total Points	