

CONTEST TIPS

For Contestants and Judges

Contestant's objective: to convince an audience of the validity of the pro-life position; to convince to respect lives that are under threat due to abortion, infanticide, euthanasia/assisted suicide *or* stem cell research.

Projected audience: a. may or may not be religious (or open to religious perspectives), b. may be undecided about pro-life positions, or c. may consider themselves pro-life without understanding how important these issues are.

Appropriate language:

Terminology should not dehumanize a person or undermine the message.

Phrase things positively, but use words with significance:

unborn or preborn child, fetus (but define and use appropriately as stage of human development)

mother/expectant mother (not mother-to-be)

abortionist (rather than "doctor")

Pro-abortion (rather than pro-choice)

Pro-life (much more positive and inclusive than "anti-abortion")

birth canal or womb are appropriate substitutes for more technical language (always age appropriate)

Tone And Manner:

You will be speaking, at times, very frankly about something that is horrific and gruesome. One can sound callous in speaking of the horrors of abortion. It is ok to allow some feeling, within reason. Be calm, speak your message clearly and rationally. Exude confidence in your message; in the truth.

Attitude:

Be compassionate: Speak matter-of-factly, since you will be giving factual, truthful information, but also try to help the audience *think through the issue for themselves*. This will enable the audience to better remember the argument and to defend it in the future.

Don't make blanket generalizations. Remember that there may be people in the audience who have been affected by or involved in abortion. Show your concern for the victims of abortion; the unborn, the mothers, the fathers, even the abortion providers.

A judgmental demeanor will turn off people.

What supporting information should be used?

- Can I include information about God or the Bible?
It's likely that your respect of human life is framed by your belief in and love of God, however, your "audience" may not be religious. Pro-life arguments can be made from a natural law, logical point of view (because God's laws are "written on our hearts.") Some people may not be ready for a lot of religious persuasion; they need a little at a time. Avoid sweeping religious statements and too many statements of opinion. (This is something state and national judges seem to especially consider.)
- Quotes, testimonies and anecdotes are appropriate to use, but should not comprise a large portion of the speech or be too lengthy. Summarize and paraphrase stories.
- *Too much* information, lists, statistics, definitions can be hard to follow orally. Such supporting information is recommended, but should not comprise the entire speech. Speech should have a different tone than a research paper, a bit more conversational.
- Works cited page is not needed. Source of statistics should be mentioned (i.e. "according to...").

Some common mistakes include:

- Illogical conclusions and/or illogical order/organization.
- Lack of smooth transition between thoughts (ie. each paragraph does not flow from the previous one). Use of transitional words and phrases helps.
- Sentences that are too complex. A plain, simple speaking style is suitable for speeches.