

Hendrick Hudson

Speech & Debate Handbook

For Students and Parents

This handbook is an attempt to centralize some of the pertinent information about the Hen Hud Forensics team and to codify some of the procedures, for both parents and students. Some of it may sound positively draconian, but things like this do tend to look worse than they are. The point is not to scare people away, but to have everyone understand exactly what is going on with a complex activity that does require much travel away from home.

Parents/Guardians: Please complete the medical release form (2 pages) on the team website and return it to your coach as soon as possible in order for your student to participate in upcoming tournaments. The submitting of the signed release form explicitly demonstrates that you have read the rules of the team and discussed them with your student.

Coaches

Speech: Kathy Sponseller Home phone: 914-736-6729; cell phone: 914-523-9097 email: kathyrspenseller@gmail.com

Debate: Jim Menick Cell phone: 914-471-6351 email: jim.menick@gmail.com

Team Internet Connections

Team home page: <http://www.jimmenick.com/henhud/index.html>

The Forensics Team web site is maintained by JM, and includes a wealth of interesting information about the activity. It is expected that students will consult it regularly and take advantage of what it

has to offer. Parents are also strongly encouraged to check the site out, especially as it contains the latest, most up-to-date schedule of our activities.

Additionally, there is a team mailing group, henhudforensics@googlegroups.com. Because the coaches are not on-site at Hen Hud, it is imperative that communications be maintained on a remote basis. In other words, **ALL TEAM MEMBERS MUST BE SIGNED UP FOR THE GOOGLE GROUP**. If you are not a member, you are not on the team. Additionally, databases at the group site are used for all tournament sign-ups. The sign-up period will close out on the date listed on the database. There is also a calendar with specific alerts of upcoming deadlines. (Parents are welcome to sign up for the listserver to monitor activity.)

To sign up for the listserver: Send a message to jim.menick@gmail.com with the subject line speech or debate. Content of the message should include student's full name, cell phone, home address, parent names, home phone, parent cells, parent emails. In return you will receive an invitation to the group.

Speech & Debate Events

We offer three main divisions of forensics:

If you like a good argument on big, important issues, there are two styles of **Debate**, one where two students compete directly one-on-one (Lincoln-Douglas) and one where a team of two students faces an opposing team of two (**Public Forum**). In LD, the resolutions change every two months, and usually deal with broad concepts such as the basic rights of individuals in society. All debate students start with LD as novices. In PF, the resolutions change every month, and usually deal with a specific issue of current events. PF is open to any student after an LD novitiate.

In **Speech** there are the Interpretation activities, aimed at the more theatrical student, including a number of solo and duo variations, both humorous and dramatic, where students literally interpret scenes from plays by taking on the roles—sometimes multiple roles—of characters in those plays. Or you can do dramatic readings of prose and poetry pieces. Or you can pursue Original Oratory, where you develop your own speech on any subject out of your own experience, to make whatever points you want, then bring that speech to tournaments to inform, entertain and enlighten a panel of judges. An event called Declamation, where you present a speech written by someone else, is a starter event in Speech. And finally, in Extemporaneous Speaking, you select a recent news topic and in half an hour prepare an informed, meaningful speech on that topic. It is expected that students in Speech participate simultaneously in a number of individual events, to enjoy a complete forensics program.

Schedule

The schedule of our activities is actively maintained on the jimmenick.com website. Included in the information for all tournaments will be dates and location the activities being offered when the buses are leaving where we'll be staying (if it's an overnighiter requiring motels). Other relevant information will also be included as necessary.

Tournaments

We attend a variety of different tournaments. The main season stretches from late September through March, with a few possible events after that for those who have qualified competitively. Students are expected to attend a reasonable number of tournaments, a minimum of three a year for speech, a minimum of six a year for debate. All new team members must compete at the first possible local tournament; if you haven't competed early in

the year, you've missed the boat (especially in debate). School work always comes first, but we have found that students who wish to can participate in forensics vigorously without negatively impacting their school work (quite the opposite, actually—forensics makes the brain grow, not shrink).

Specifically, our tournaments include:

MHL (Metro-Hudson League) tournaments for debaters and CFL (Catholic Forensic League) tournaments for speech (and occasionally debate). These are all local, one-day events, comprising three or four rounds in one day. Major northeast high school tournaments, usually only debate but occasionally including speech, take us from Newark, NJ, to Manchester-On-the-Sea in Massachusetts. These are two-day events; students are housed by the families at the host school (we reciprocate the favor with our own Hen Hud tournament in November) .

College tournaments include Yale, UPenn, and Princeton, among others. There are half a dozen or so of these; students stay in designated hotels, up to four to a room. National tournaments are the major tournaments at the end of the school year; their locations vary, and require a top level of achievement for a student to gain entry. We usually qualify students for every major national event.

Once a student commits to a tournament, the commitment must be met. The cut-off date is usually about two weeks before a two-day tournament, and one week before MHLs and CFLs. If a student drops out after the cut-off date (which, by the way, is established by the tournaments, not the Hen Hud coaches), our team must still pay that student's registration and often a fine as well. Therefore, these very real expenses will be transferred to the students; if a student signs up for a tournament and drops out, incurring a charge and/or fine from that tournament, that charge/fine will be passed to the student, and it must be paid (check payable to Hendrick Hudson High School) before that student can compete again. Fines

also apply to students who do not honor multiple-entry commitments; if you register for more than one activity, and don't compete in all of them, you must cover the cost of the ones you dropped. Illness is accepted as a reasonable excuse, of course, for missing a tournament.

In Speech:

In order to perform a piece at a tournament, you must first perform it for the team, the coach, or someone designated by the coach. In order to attend a college tournament you need to have competed at:

- a) 2 tournaments, if the college tournament is before December.
- b) 3 tournaments, if a college tournament is after December. Early school year college tournaments will be based on the previous year's participation

Funding

The Forensics team is generously supported by the Hendrick Hudson School District, covering most of our expenses. In addition, our annual tournament is a major fund-raiser, and we have occasionally added a Family Night. However, not all expenses can be covered by the team.

All MHLs, CFLs, qualifying events (regionals, districts and grands) and high school tournaments on our schedule will be funded by the school. College tournaments, like Yale, Princeton, and UPenn, are considered "optional," for lack of a better designation. These are usually partially funded by the team but require subsidies from the attending students. We estimate a cost of \$150 to \$300 for each participant. Some other optional tournaments are at far-flung locations requiring airfare; for these, Hen Hud will only for the cost of registration. These are tournaments including the Sunvitational (Florida) and Glenbrooks (Chicago), among others, that our most ambitious students might

wish to attend to enjoy national-level competition. In order for a student to qualify for registration as a Hen Hud entrant, certain conditions must be met, including approved and documented chaperoning either from Hen Hud families or another team traveling to the same event. These tournaments will be arranged on a case-by-case basis. Parents with financial need should address these issues directly to the principal.

Meetings

Students are expected to attend all the meetings. There aren't that many of them, and they're important. Occasional absences will be understood, but we do expect students to show up regularly. Sites and times will be noted on the team listserver.

Travel

Because of the high cost of buses and drivers (our team has historically been one of the biggest users in the district), we try to limit bus trips whenever possible. This means that parents and coaches will occasionally be driving to tournaments. If we do not get enough parents to drive, we will be forced to cut the number of participants. All parents should count on doing their fair share throughout the year.

All of our events require at least some travel off-campus, either to local schools or various high school and college venues throughout the northeast. School rules must be obeyed at all times while attending tournaments. Coaches and chaperones may set additional rules as needed that will be treated as law, chief among these being that the adults must know where all students are at all times. Flouting of rules will be dealt with by Hen Hud administration.

When we are traveling, it is strongly recommended that you outfit your child with a cell phone to maintain whatever level of communication you see fit. The coaches too will carry cell phones, and messages can be left (the phones cannot be kept on at all times,

because we may be in rounds judging, and often schools block cells).

When students are being housed, they should bring a sleeping bag and a towel with them. It is also strongly recommended that they bring sleeping bags when we stay at hotels; at four to a room, with hundreds of other students from other schools also packed four to a room, cots are few and far between.

When returning from a tournament, we will telephone home approximately five minutes from the school. When you get the call, come pick up your student. Parents must pick up their students promptly; after a long weekend hanging around some godforsaken high school in Timbuktu, the prospect of waiting around in the cold for wayward parents to show up on their own personal schedule is not appealing. Make alternate arrangements if you cannot pick up your student. Students who are not picked up promptly will be suspended from their next tournament.

The Malcolm A. Bump Memorial Tournament

The Bump tournament is held every year at Hen Hud on the second weekend of November. It is our main fund-raising event. It is also one of the most prestigious tournaments in the country, with a long and proud tradition. To make this event a success requires the commitment of the entire team, including the parents. All students must work at the event both Friday and Saturday. Parents are expected to help out in any of a variety of ways: a meeting will be held for the parents in September to outline our needs in detail. In addition to various job assignments, families are asked to house our visitors; this boils down to finding a piece of floor for a bunch of debaters to throw their sleeping bags on for a Friday night, which is exactly what their families provide when we visit them.

Parental cooperation is what makes Bump happen, and we're counting on you to come through for the kids once again this year.

Judging

All tournaments require judges. The coaches will usually judge at tournaments they attend, but they may have other responsibilities (e.g., helping tabulate results). Also, it is not unusual for two or three tournaments to be taking place simultaneously, and even Hen Hud coaches can't be in two or three places at once. Additionally, sometimes the number of our entrants requires additional judges beyond the coaches; at least one tournament we attend requires one judge for each student. This is where parents come in: if the parents don't help out and volunteer to judge, there will be times when their kids can't compete. It's as simple as that.

Judging is not difficult, and we will train people to do it. Some activities, like PF, are designed specifically for "lay" judges, as compared to people up to their eyeballs in forensics. Parents who wish to seek relief from this judging responsibility can speak directly with the coaches, but keep in mind that our feeling is that these are your children, and it is not asking too much of you to give up a couple of weekends a year to them, even if it means taking a day off from work. (JM says: As a parent of a former debate student myself, I know that this is not that difficult if you really want to do it, and that it is, in fact, rather rewarding, as you will get a keener insight into exactly what your students are doing in their most important extracurricular activity.)

The coaches will work with the teams to plan judging assignments. If we are unable to cover all our entries, we will rotate the students who can attend; students who have brought judges to tournaments throughout the year will be given first preferences.

Institutes

Every summer there are Institutes, which are like speech and debate summer camps, usually for two weeks. There are institutes covering every aspect of forensics, some nearby, some requiring a

bit of travel. While participation at Institutes is in no way required for forensics success, for serious competitors it is a great idea if you can arrange it. The coaches can provide you with the relevant information and recommendations.