ESU COMPETITIONS HOST GUIDE



ENGLISH-SPEAKING UNION

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CONTENTS

Welcome to the ESU Competition Host Pack 3

What you need to do & when 4

- Week of the heat 5
- Day of the heat / After the heat 6

General Information / Communication 7

Refreshments / Judges and MCs 8

Final Touches / Room Layout 9

- Public Speaking Competition 10
- Performing Shakespeare Competition 11
- Schools' Mace Debating Competition 12

Thank You! 13

WELCOME

Welcome to the ESU competition host pack, your complete guide to running a successful competition heat at your school. This pack has been designed to walk you through every stage of hosting, from confirming your date to setting up the room and submitting your expenses afterwards.

Inside, you'll find:

- Step-by-step timelines outlining what to do immediately, in the weeks before, and on the day of your heat
- Practical guidance on room layouts, refreshments, and communication with participating schools
- Key contacts and procedures so you know exactly who to reach out to and how to keep the event running smoothly
- Competition-specific setup instructions for Public Speaking Competition (PSC), Performing Shakespeare and Schools' Mace.

You can use this document as both a planning tool and a quick reference on the day, ensuring you have all the essential information in one place. Keep it to hand, share it with your team and refer back to it at each stage of your hosting journey.



WHAT YOU NEED TO DO & WHEN

Immediately

- Complete the host school survey to confirm:
  - Three preferred hosting dates
    - The ESU will aim to honour your first choice but may allocate an alternative
  - Venue capacity, accessibility and parking

Once date is confirmed

- Reserve:
  - A main room with seating for at least 40 people
    - This space will host the competitors, teachers, judges and supporters
  - A private space for judges with at least three chairs and tables for deliberation
  - For the PSC, students can prepare in the main competition space, however, an alternative location in your school can also be used (must be able accommodate at least 20 students)
- Consider involving your school community:
  - Invite staff, students and parents to attend
  - Encourage a student to act as MC or timekeeper (optional)

Two weeks before

- ESU will send you a list of participating schools and teacher contacts
- Use this form to introduce yourself to the other competing schools and confirm:
  - Arrival time and check-in details
  - Parking, dietary needs and number of attendees (if needed for your venue)
  - Additional guests attending with their group (parents are encouraged to accompany their child during the heats)
  - Copy competition@esu.org in all communications

Week of the heat

- Ensure:
    - You have enough seating and tables
    - Judges have a separate space to deliberate
- Organise refreshments (tea, coffee, biscuits etc.)
- Print documents provided by ESU. These are available on the Competitions Hub (link provided in your Welcome Pack)
    - Marking sheets
    - Speaker order list
    - Judge feedback forms
- Safeguarding and Site Safety
    - Please consider how participants, judges and visitors will move around your site safely, particularly if your school has a large campus or multiple buildings.
        - Plan arrivals and departures: If parking is some distance from the competition venue, or different areas of the event are in separate buildings, consider arranging additional staff to escort participants and visitors between these areas, particularly at the beginning and end of the heat.
        - Signpost facilities: Make sure toilets, refreshments and other key facilities are clearly signposted so that visitors can navigate the site easily.
        - Alert site staff: If a porter, reception or security team is available, make them aware that the competition is taking place and ask them to assist anyone who appears lost or unsure where to go.
        - Check everyone has left safely: At the end of the heat, please ensure that all participants, teachers, judges and visitors have safely left the premises or reached the designated parking area before you leave.

Day of the heat

- Set up tables, seating and refreshments
- Ensure your phone is on and fully charged (your Competition Lead may contact you)
- Expect judges and the Competition Lead to arrive 30 mins early
- Welcome guests and enjoy the event! The Competition Lead runs the show

After the heat

- Submit your refreshment Expense Claim Form - ESU.xlsx form within 48 hours:
    - Email subject: [Heat Code], [School Name], [Date], Expense Claim Form
        - For example: 'PSC.SW.2.1, Rydell High School, 15.11.25, Expense Claim Form'
    - Include completed form and separate receipts
    - Send to competition@esu.org



GENERAL INFORMATION

- You will receive regular emails with:
  - Heat date and timings
  - Lead teacher contact details
- Use your heat code in all communications:
  - Example: PSC.SW.2.1 = Public Speaking, South-West, Round 2, Heat 1

COMMUNICATION

- The ESU will share your contact details with competing schools
- Contact them early to confirm logistics
- Always copy competition@esu.org
- Your details will be shared with the ESU Competition Lead for the day
  - They will contact you before the heat to introduce themselves



REFRESHMENTS

- Provide basic refreshments (tea, coffee, water, biscuits)
- Optional: light snacks (e.g. cake or sandwiches)
- Reimbursement:
    - Up to £75 for rounds one and two
    - Up to £100 for regional finals
- Submit your expense claim form within 48 hours to competition@esu.org:
    - Completed expense claim form
    - Receipts (as separate attachments)

JUDGES AND MCS

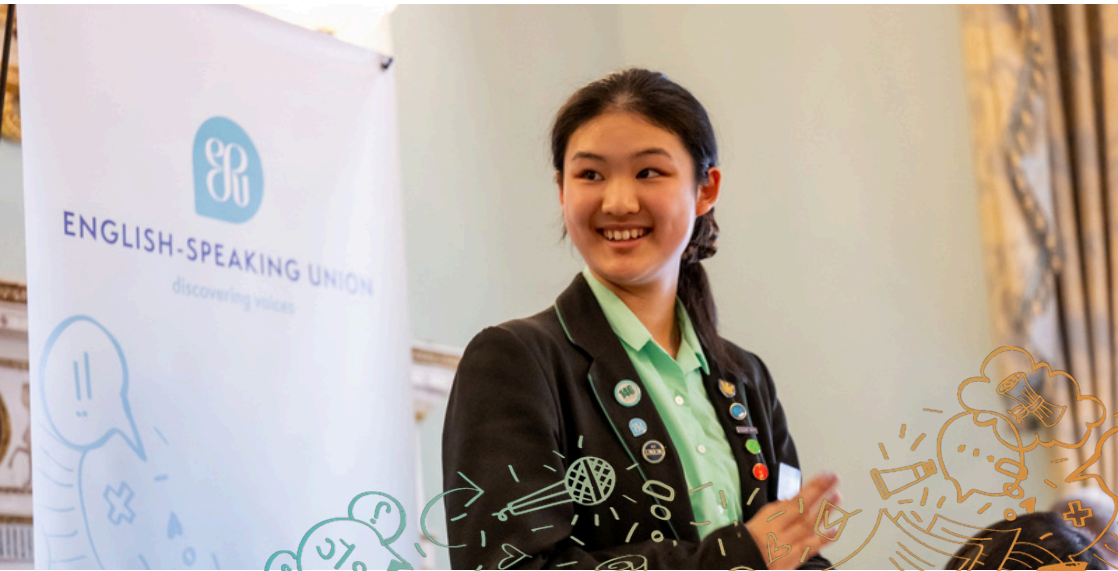
- The ESU provides:
    - Up to 3 judges
    - A Competition Lead who will run the event
    - Observers - potential judges or competition leads looking to learn from experienced members
- If available, a student MC or timekeeper is encouraged
    - The ESU provides sample scripts and timings
- You can find these resources in the Competitions Hub using the link that you received in your welcome pack
-
    - Contact us at competition@esu.org for more information
- Judges and the Competition Lead will arrive 30 mins early for set-up

FINAL TOUCHES

- Promote the event within your school- all are welcome!
- Encourage attendance from staff and families
- Check IT setup in case a school needs to join via Zoom due to emergencies

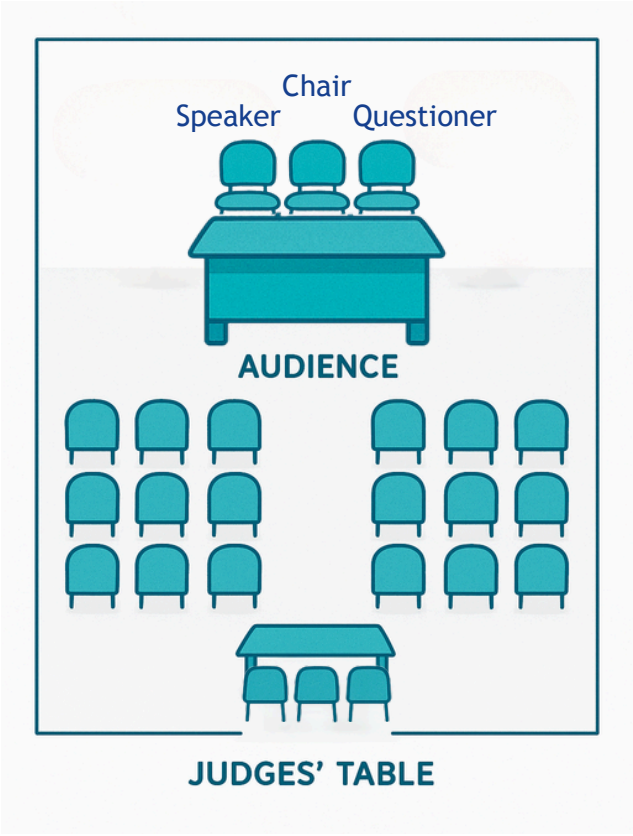
ROOM LAYOUT

- For each competition, there should be a performance space in the front of the room with audience seating facing it.
    - This performance space can be on the same level as or above/below the audience on a raised or sunken stage.
    - Make sure there is enough seating for at least 40 audience members
    - Feel free to use whichever event space works best in your school!



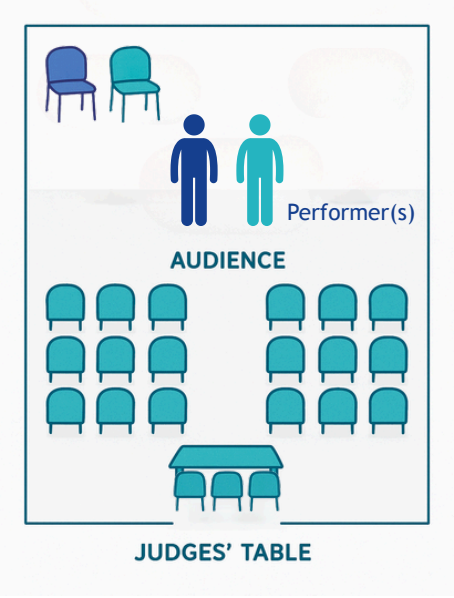
PUBLIC SPEAKING COMPETITION

- Place one table and three chairs in the centre of the performance space, facing the audience
    - Make sure there is a chair for each presenting competitor (chair, speaker and questioner)
    - The chair will sit in the middle chair, with the speaker on their right and questioner on their left
    - Speakers are welcome to present in front of or beside the table
- Place enough tables and chairs for three judges in the front or back of the audience seating, facing the performance space.
    - Ensure all judges have a surface to write on



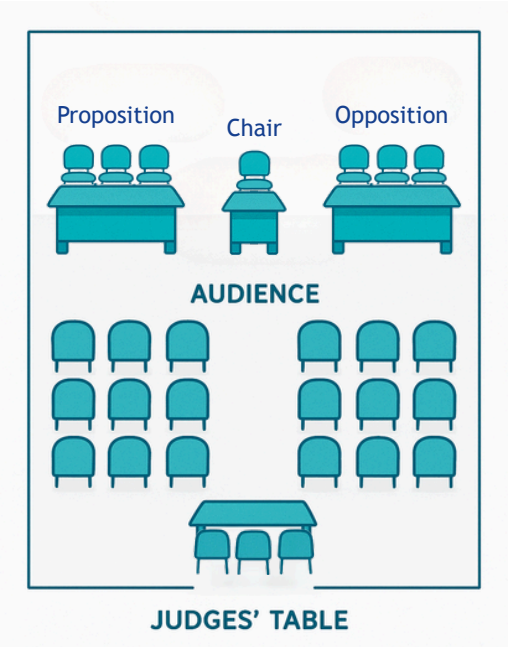
PERFORMING SHAKESPEARE COMPETITION

- Performance space should be clear, except for two straight-back chairs placed upstage right
    - These are optional props and should be returned upstage after use
- Place enough tables and chairs for three judges in the front or back of the audience seating, facing the performance space.
    - Ensure all judges have a surface to write on
- Special lighting should not be used during student performances
    - Competitors should be in shared lighting with the audience
- The stage area should be wide and deep enough for the judges to have a clear view of the performances head on
- The room should also be void of distractions, such as loud noises or bright sunlight obstructing the stage and performers
- Optional: Raised stage/platforms are not necessary, but can be used if available.



SCHOOLS' MACE DEBATING COMPETITION

- Place two tables, with three chairs each, in the centre of the performance space, facing the audience
    - The table on the audience's left is for the Proposition, while the one on the audience's right is for the Opposition
    - Make sure there is a chair for each presenter (6 total)
    - Put the tables on a 45-degree angle so they are facing each other slightly
- Place a small table and chair(s) for the MC/timekeeper either in between the competing teams or to the side of the performance space
- Please note: The MC may also act as a judge and therefore will sit at the judging table.
- Place enough tables and chairs for three judges in the front or back of the audience seating, facing the performance space.
    - Ensure all judges have a surface to write on



THANK YOU!

Thank you for hosting our competitions! They wouldn't be possible without the time, generosity and support of schools like yours.



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