

The Contest MC

(Excerpt from the Society MC manual)

Being asked to MC a contest is an honor.. But a contest is different from an annual show or a sing-out. There are more restrictions placed on the contest MC. In addition to your craft, you must also accomplish the following tasks:

1. To attempt to MC a contest without knowing the rules and structure of the event is foolish. There are specific rules that apply to our Contests. These are found in the Society C&J manual and in various District publications.
2. You should learn the correct pronunciation of the contestants' names. Write them phonetically on your script. If in doubt, ask the contestant(s) how to pronounce the name. Clear all announcements with the Contest Administrator. He is your supervisor for the contest. Check on the contestants throughout the contest. Contestants have been known to withdraw from the contest before their stage time.
3. Before the contest starts. Check the signal system at the lectern before the contest starts. Be sure you know how to operate it and understand how to read it. Talk with the Stage Manager to understand his role in the contest.
4. Check out your microphone before the contest starts for sound level, blast filter (foam rubber cap) and set the height. Will your script/notes fit on the lectern?. Is there a light for you to see? (There may be extra Judges lights you could use).
5. Know your audience and their expectations. Have a variety of material ready to use. If one type is not working, use something else. Always bring more material than you think you can use. Delays often occur.
6. Identify the type of contest to the audience while you are explaining the contest rules. (See letter from Contest Administrator). Explain what it means to the contestants (a District championship, a chance to compete at International, etc.) so the audience can identify with it.
7. Condition the audience. Let them know what is expected from them. Persuade them to treat each competitor like a champion for one of them will be. Reinforce this attitude throughout the contest.
8. Be impartial with each contestant. Introduce each of them in exactly the same way with as much enthusiasm as you can.
9. Be complimentary to the contestants, the audience and the judges. You only hurt your own image by ridiculing others.

10. Prepare the audience for the mic testers. Inform the audience of the purpose of for testing the microphones. Let the audience know there will be people walking around listening for the sound and that the mic testers may be stopped during their presentation to adjust the sound levels or lighting focus.
11. Be at ease.. Put the contestants and the audience at ease with your behavior. You are usually the last person a contestant sees before he is on stage, and you are definitely the last one he hears. Your manner can influence their performance.
12. Be brief and concise... Talk slow and speak clearly.
13. Keep your sense of humor. Allow the audience to have some fun. Do not use jokes that are in-house or stories that are local or private. Humor is ineffective if the audience is shut out. Do not anticipate laughs, either. They rarely ever come exactly where you expect them during a contest.
14. Do not match wits with a heckler. One contest at a time is enough. As tempting as it may be to fire back at the heckler, realize that you only diminish your professionalism as a result. Eventually the audience will tire of his antics, and their support of your efforts will far outweigh any attempt at getting even.
15. Use silence wisely. There is no need to fill every moment with planned activity during a contest. Allow the audience a few moments to discuss the previous performance and event “judge” it for themselves. During that time talk to the next contestant, organize your thoughts or take a little break. When you return to the lectern the audience will be ready to listen attentively.
16. Use a marker or crayon to cross off the names of each contestant after you have made your introduction. Avoid repeating yourself and causing consternation among the audience.
17. Expect the unexpected. You can bet that something will go wrong. (Remember Murphy’s Law!). But did you know Murphy was an optimist.
18. NOTE: In L O’L we try to have a Stage Manager at every Contest. Use him as your assistant to keep you informed of the next competing unit.
19. (Last and most important). The Contest Administrator has final jurisdiction over the actual contest and its operation. Everything within the realm of Judging is his responsibility and he will make the decision on all points. The MC **must** consult with the Contest Administrator should any abnormal or unplanned incident occur during the contest. From the time the contest starts until it ends he is in charge and he has authority over any incident that may happen.