

Wisconsin Forensics Coaches' Association



New Coach Handbook

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I. Introduction

What is the WFCA?

The Wisconsin Forensic Coaches' Association is one of two statewide organizations that governs and sanctions forensic events in the state of Wisconsin.

Local invitational tournaments are sanctioned by the WFCA between January and March every year, where students gather to compete against and learn from each other. Competition on every weekend occurs in all corners of the state.

Each April, the organization hosts the WFCA State Tournament at Ripon College, bringing together over 70 schools and crowning individual champions in 20 events and team sweepstakes awards across three divisions.

The WFCA awards several scholarships each year to graduating seniors, in addition to the Hintz Memorial Coach Award, and the Hall of Fame Award. Together, these two awards recognize coaches who very often have given many decades of their life to this activity.

The WFCA further endeavors to responsibly administer the rules of each category, involve new schools and coaches in our activity, and bring excellence in speech and communication to Wisconsin High Schools. We operate on the belief that improving our communication skills is inherent in striving for a better civic democracy, and in making a better world. We hope you'll join us.

What is forensics?

Forensics, often known as *speech*, is a competitive public speaking activity. In Wisconsin, that includes 20 individual categories of competition—each with a different purpose and rules. These categories are usually divided into three groups: speech, interpretation, and limited preparation.

Students attend Saturday tournaments that are sanctioned by the WFCA from January through March, leading up to our State Tournament. This handbook includes helpful summaries of each category, with the hope that it will give you an overview and basic understanding of each category. Our yearly WFCA handbook includes the rules sheets for each category, which can be found on our website, wfcaforensics.org.

At each tournament, students will compete in three preliminary rounds, presenting their piece or performance to a judge and peers. The judge ranks the students in the round, and after three rounds, the students with the top cumulative scores advance to a final round, whereafter a champion is crowned.

This activity requires creativity, dedication, and hard work. The outcome of this hard work is immeasurable and critically important. Students who participate gain more than friendships and fun memories—they build an arsenal of communication skills and strategies that reap immeasurable benefits over their careers.

The ability to prepare and present live performances, to organize thoughts into cohesive and logical oratory, to interpret literature, to think on one's feet—these are the goals and accomplishments of a forensics team.

Why coach forensics?

Maybe you just love cranky teenagers. Maybe you don't like being at home. Maybe you normally get up at 5:00am on Saturday mornings. Or maybe, you realize the value of this activity and its potential to change lives.

You won't get paid enough. Your school won't appreciate you. Your peers will wonder why you even do it. But, when a student makes their first power round, when another comes to you for 'life advice,' when a graduate comes back to thank you—you will know that any frustration, any uncertainty is eclipsed by the incredibly vital role you've filled in these student's lives. And you'll know it was all worth it.

Coaching a forensics team is a journey. As you get to know your students, share in ridiculous jokes, teach life lessons, and become a role model—you will see exponential growth in the poise, self-confidence, critical thinking, and literary appreciation of your students.

As a forensics coach, you are not only giving students the tools they need to succeed in their personal, professional, and academic lives—you are providing them an outlet for their creativity and curiosity, a chance to mature gracefully, and to perform for an audience who cares about what they have to say. For a high school student, this is an opportunity that opens up the world and allows them to find their voice.

And thank you—for taking the time, and courage, to become a speech educator.

II. Category Summaries

Below is a brief overview of each WFCFA category. Full rules available at wfcaforensics.org. Note: Listed time limits don't include a grace period. All categories allow 15 seconds of 'grace' for a student to finish without being penalized. The exception is Radio.

Demonstration Speaking (Speech)

Type: Speech
Time Limit: 10 minutes (including set up and tear down)
Number of People: 1-2 (ONE speaker is judged, an assistant may NOT speak)
Memorized? Yes (but notes are allowed)
Props? Yes (costumes are allowed)
Summary: A speech demonstrating a process. Should be engaging, relatable, and clear. Props and a partner may help demonstrate the process.

Duo Interpretation

Type: Interpretation
Time Limit: 10 minutes
Number of People: 2
Memorized? Yes
Props? No
Summary: Two people act out a story or situation that is interesting and engaging. Must be published material. Eye contact is off-stage so students CANNOT look at each other, they also may not touch.

Extemporaneous Speaking

Type: Limited Prep
Time Limit: 30 minutes of preparation time, 7 minute speech
Number of People: 1
Memorized? Yes, but a single 4x6 notecard may be used during speech
Props? Students refer to articles during prep only and may use a stopwatch.
Summary: A student draws a several current events questions, chooses one, and has 30 mins to prepare a speech that answers the question. Cited sources give credibility to the speech. After 30 minutes preparation, the student gives the speech to the judge.

Farrago

Type: Interpretation, reading
Time Limit: 10 minutes
Number of People: 1
Memorized? No
Props? No
Summary: A reading event where contestant chooses a theme and at least 3 pieces of different genres (non-fiction, poetry, play, song, prose, monologue, etc) which reflect upon that theme through emotion.

Four Minute Speaking

Type: Speech
Time Limit: 4 minutes
Number of People: 1
Memorized? Yes (but notes are allowed)
Props? No
Summary: A speech on any topic designed to inform, not persuade or demonstrate. Should be well organized and interesting.

Group Discussion

Type: Limited Preparation
Time Limit:50-minutes
Number of People: Compete individually, but work as a group with other competitors
Memorized? No
Props? Notes, sources are acceptable
Summary: The group is presented with a question that they must define and propose solutions to. Each individual is judged on their teamwork skills, how well they listen to others and how they help with problem solving. Weekly topic questions are chosen by the WFCA and are available on the website.

Group Interpretive Reading

Type: Interpretation
Time Limit: 12 minutes
Number of People: 2-5
Memorized? No
Props? No
Summary: A group of people uses a script to convey the message of a published piece. Touching isn't allowed; group members may not make eye contact. Sound effects and rhythms are often used.

Moments in History

Type: Speech
Time Limit: 6 minutes
Number of People: 1
Memorized? Yes (but notes are allowed)
Props? Yes, no costumes or worn props
Summary: A time period is designated at the beginning of the season. Students must give a speech on any person, place, thing or idea that existed/was developed during the time period.

Oral Interpretation of Literature

Type: Interpretation
Time Limit: 10 minutes
Number of People: 1
Memorized? No
Props? No
Summary: Students alternate between prose and poetry pieces, performing one each round. Pieces need not be related. Rules and goals are the same as those in prose and poetry.

Original Oratory

Type: Speech
Time Limit: 10 minute
Number of People: 1
Memorized? Yes
Props? No
Summary: A formal, persuasive speech intended to address a problem. Students persuade that a problem exists and present a solution. Organization, logic, and cited sources are important.

Play Acting

Type: Interpretation
Time Limit: 12 minutes
Number of People: 2-5
Memorized? Yes
Props? No (chair and table may be used, if available in room)
Summary: Students must put on a portion of a play using good physical performance skills, facial expressions and vocal delivery. Students may touch and make direct eye contact.

Interpretation of Poetry

Type: Interpretation, reading
Time Limit: 8 minutes
Number of People: 1
Memorized? No
Props? No
Summary: Interpretation of a poem or poems. The collection of poem should be linked by a common theme or author. Good pace, vocal variety, and emotions should be displayed.

Interpretation of Prose

Type:	Interpretation, reading
Time Limit:	8 minutes
Number of People:	1
Memorized?	No
Props?	No
Summary:	Interpretation of a selection or selections of prose, such as one or more short story or portion of a novel. The prose program should be linked by a common theme or author. Good pace, vocal variety, and emotions should be displayed.

Public Address

Type:	Speech
Time Limit:	8 minutes
Number of People:	1
Memorized?	Yes
Props?	No
Summary:	A student must answer one of the predetermined questions and persuade audience using good organization, cited sources, and logic. Questions are set by the WFCFA before the season begins and are available on the website.

Radio Announcing

Type:	Limited Prep
Time Limit:	30 minutes of preparation time, 5 minutes of speaking time
Number of People:	1
Memorized?	No
Props?	A stopwatch and radio packet (student must bring own stopwatch)
Summary:	Students have 30 minutes to cut a series of written articles into a cohesive 5-minute radio show. The show should have call letters, include national, state, local news, weather, sports, and commercial. Only vocal skills are judged, not facial or physical expression.

Solo Acting Humorous

Type:	Interpretation
Time Limit:	10 minutes
Number of People:	1
Memorized?	Yes
Props?	No
Summary:	Present a published piece and convey a humorous presentation that interprets the text's characters and events using facial expressions, vocal skills, and physical presence.

Solo Acting Serious

Type: Interpretation
Time Limit: 10 minutes
Number of People: 1
Memorized? Yes
Props? No
Summary: Present a published piece and convey a dramatic, serious presentation that interprets the text's characters and events using facial expressions, vocal skills, and physical presence.

Special Occasion

Type: Speech
Time Limit: 6 minutes
Number of People: 1
Memorized? Yes
Props? Yes
Summary: Student gives a speech as if they were at one of the predetermined special occasions (wedding, funeral, graduation, etc). Students may present any scenario to make the event come to life, but should still give a well-organized speech. Topics are determined by the WFCA before the season begins and are available on the website.

Storytelling

Type: Interpretation
Time Limit: 8 minutes
Number of People: 1
Memorized? Yes
Props? A chair must be used, no other props or costumes allowed
Summary: Student prepares four stories that fit each topic. During a round, the judge chooses which story the student will perform; no story can be performed twice in one day. Students use voice, physical movement, and facial expressions to convey the story. Topics are determined yearly by the WFCA and are available on the website.

Category Name	Type of Event	Time Limit	Number of people	Memorized?	Props?	Special Notes
Demonstration Speaking	Speech	10 minutes, incl. setup & tear down	1	Yes (notes permitted)	Yes (incl. costumes)	A
Duo Interpretation	Interpretation	10 minutes	2	Yes	No	
Extemporaneous Speaking	Speech, Limited Prep	7 minutes (30 minute prep)	1	Yes (1 note card permitted)	No	B
Farrago	Interpretation	10 minutes	1	No	No	C
Four Minute Speaking	Speech	4 minutes	1	Yes (notes permitted)	No	
Group Discussion	Discussion	í €Á ã ~ ¢•	1	No	Reference materials allowed	D
Group Interpretation	Interpretation	12 minutes	2-5	No	No	E
Moments in History	Speech	6 minutes	1	Yes (notes permitted)	Yes (but no costumes)	
Oral Interpretation of Literature	Interpretation	F€ minutes	1	No	No	F
Original Oratory	Speech	10 minutes	1	Yes	No	
Play Acting	Interpretation	12 minutes	2-5	Yes	Chair & table only	
Interpretation of Poetry	Interpretation	8 minutes	1	No	No	
Interpretation of Prose	Interpretation	8 minutes	1	No	No	
Public Address	Speech	8 minutes	1	Yes	No	
Radio Announcing	Limited Prep	5 minutes (30 minute prep)	1	No	No	G
Solo Acting Humorous	Interpretation	10 minutes	1	Yes	No	
Solo Acting Serious	Interpretation	10 minutes	1	Yes	No	
Special Occasion	Speech	6 minutes	1	Yes	Yes	
Storytelling	Interpretation	8 minutes	1	Yes	No	H

Special Notes:

- A) Speaker may have an assistant to help demonstrate or set up/take down. Assistant may not speak and is not considered a contestant.
- B) Student may use magazines, newspapers, and other print resources during preparation but not during speech presentation. Use of a stopwatch during speech is allowed.
- C) The student must identify the genre of each selection within the presentation.
- D) Discussion topics are predetermined for each week and are available on the WFC A website.
- E) Material may come from prose, poetry, or essay sources (or combination of these genres), but NOT drama (plays, scripts).
- F) Tournament rounds alternate between prose and poetry. Tournament host will indicate whether first round is prose or poetry.
- G) Facial expressions/gestures are not judged; only vocal presentation is judged.
- H) Speaker must sit in a chair - student's backside must be on chair at all times.

PLEASE NOTE: All categories, EXCEPT RADIO, include a 15-second grace period beyond the time limits listed above.

III. Glossary of Forensics Terms

Forensics is filled with jargon, catchphrases and acronyms—here’s some of the lingo you will hear often. Category nicknames are listed here, but category explanations can be found in the previous section.

Break: to advance to the next level of competition (such as a power round)—to make the break round(s). For example, students will break to a semifinal or final round.

California clap: often used at award ceremonies—a single clap after each name is called instead of full applause.

Code: Each student receives a code that serves as his or her ‘name’ at a tournament. Usually this includes a way of signifying their team and category. Judges are blind to what each code means so they are unable to judge a student based on their school affiliation. An example: 36H2. 36 is the school code (so say school 36 signifies West Bend East), H is the category code (for example, Prose) and 2 means they are the second competitor from that school in that category.

DI: An acronym for Dramatic interpretation—an alternate name for Solo Acting Serious.

Draw room: Room where limited prep events (radio and extemporaneous) draw their questions or get their packets.

Draw time: Time listed on the schedule where a limited prep competitor draws their question/packet. They then have 30 minutes of prep time before they speak.

Speak time: Time listed on a schedule for a competitor in a limited prep event when they will give the actual speech (30 minutes after their draw time).

Extemp: Short for Extemporaneous Speaking.

Flighted rounds: When a round is divided into two groups (flights), such as flight A and flight B. One judge usually judges both flights. This helps large categories create realistic sized rounds and uses fewer judges and/or fewer rooms. Flighting is often used in short categories like four minute informative.

Introduction: All interpretation events require an introduction near the beginning of the performance (sometimes after a teaser). An introduction briefly sets up what the performance will be about as well as introducing the title and author (and sometimes genre) of the piece. Some categories will have multiple short transitions, such as between pieces in farrago or if a series of poems is used in poetry. All introductions must be memorized.

Large school: A division for team awards at most tournaments. Usually a team with more than fifteen entries constitutes a large school. This division is usually ranked by total points of its top 25 entries.

Group disco: Not a dance. Short for Group Discussion.

HI: Humorous interpretation—an alternate name for Solo Acting Humorous.

Judge's Lounge: Where judges relax between rounds, see postings and get assigned rounds to judge. Also a great place for free food!

NCFL: the National Catholic Forensics League. This league hosts a large competitive national tournament each year. Teams must pay and enroll in their local NCFL district, which holds a district qualifying meet for the national tournament. Categories include: oratorical declamation, duo interpretation, extemporaneous speaking, dramatic interpretation, original oratory, Lincoln Douglas debate, public forum debate and policy debate. For more visit: www.ncfl.org.

NFL: the National Forensics League. This league hosts a competitive national tournament each year. Membership in this league also serves as an honor society, awarding students for participating and competing at all levels. The NFL is divided into districts, each which holds a qualifying meet for students to attend nationals. Categories include: Lincoln Douglas debate, Policy debate, public forum debate, domestic extemporaneous speaking, international extemporaneous speaking, duo interpretation, humorous interpretation, dramatic interpretation and original oratory. For more visit: www.nflonline.org.

OIL: Short for Oral Interpretation of Literature.

OO: Short for Original Oratory.

Points: Refers to points earned by students for their team at competitive tournaments. A student earns 5 points for each rank of 1, 4 points for each rank of 2, 3 points for a rank of 3, 2 points for a rank of 4 and 1 point for a rank of 5. Points are totaled to determine team awards. For example, a student who went 1, 3, and 5 in three different rounds earns 9 points. Points are also tabulated for each student for NFL recognition.

Postings: Refers to the time after preliminary rounds are completed when tournament officials post the codes of students advancing to power rounds.

Power round: Also known as a break round or an out round or a final round, this is a round composed of the best students in each category who compete for individual awards. Power rounds usually have between 4-8 students and are determined by who has the best overall ranks in prelims (therefore the highest point totals).

Quality point award: A system of determining team ranking by averaging the total number of team points divided by how many entries the team had.

Showcase: Some tournaments hold a showcase round during power rounds (after preliminary rounds). These usually consist of students who just barely missed breaking in their category. The round combines a variety of categories and is a good way for the audience to see examples of different categories.

Small school: A division in most tournaments for school with under fifteen entries. Quality points usually determine placing in this division.

Speak time: Time listed on a schedule for a competitor in a limited prep event when they will give the actual speech (30 minutes after their draw time).

Top 25: For large teams, a maximum of 25 students' point totals may go toward team points. Some tournaments allow teams to choose these 25 students ahead of time, but most simply take the top 25 scores on any team, thus eliminating a coach's role in team points.

Rank: How a student placed in a single round. A rank of one signifies the student was the best in the entire round—placing first in that judge's eyes.

Teaser: Often used in interpretation events, a teaser is the first part of a performance and comes directly from the piece. The teaser is intended to grab the audience's attention, but it totally optional. Following a brief teaser there should be the customary introduction, and then the student will return back to the piece.

Varsity team: When a tournament allows the schools to pick their 25 students that will compete toward team points, this team of 25 is designated the 'varsity team' within the team.

WFCA: the Wisconsin Forensics Coaches Association. Organizes and regulates Wisconsin forensics, categories and rules. For more, visit www.wfcaforensics.org.

WHSFA: Wisconsin High School Forensics Association. Similar to the WFCA in organization and in categories. Affiliated with ONE ACTS? The major difference between the two is the type of competition—the WHSFA hosts festivals, which are less competitive and have no power round. Rounds are also judged on a point system instead of rank.

IV. Where do I begin?

Coaching a forensics team can seem like a daunting task. The key is organization (equally daunting!). Below is a rough checklist of some things to think about as the season approaches.

Summer

- Start reading materials! Even if your school can't afford a large forensics library, be familiar with poems, plays and prose pieces that your students may be interested in purchasing or checking out from a library.
- If the team has current student officers/captains in place consider treating them to coffee or dinner to introduce yourself and learn a bit about your team.

September

- Learn about past programs at your school. Talk to old coaches (glean any materials, sheets, rosters that you can!), your activities director and students (seniors, if you can) to figure out what they're used to and expecting. Questions to ask:
 - o Where does the team meet?
 - o How often are students used to meeting?
 - o What materials are available? (can magazines, books, plays be ordered and fit in the budget?)
- Prepare handouts for the first team meeting (samples available on the WFCA website). These should include:
 - o An emergency contact sheet for each team member for your records and/or a permission slip
 - o A sheet for parents explaining the activity, its benefits and the commitments required to be on the team
 - o A list of categories and their specifics for students to choose from
 - o A season schedule of practices and meets you will be attending
 - o Copies of category rules (from the WFCA website)—even if you don't hand them out right away, always have copies handy!
- Be aware of activity fairs and parents nights.
 - o Many schools host activity fairs or other ways for students to learn about what their school offers. Don't miss this opportunity to advertise!
- Travel: if you need overnight accommodation for travel tournaments or state, start booking and thinking NOW! Talk with your school about their policies on this.

October

- Think about organizations to join, prepare dues and fees
 - o WFCA, NCFL, and NFL
- First team meeting: make announcements, post flyers, email students and tell anyone you know at the school to talk it up!
- At the meeting, distribute materials, get kids' names and email addresses/phone numbers, and discuss future meetings and practices
- Inform students of any team fees you or your school charge for participation.

November/December

- Make sure you paid your organization dues!
- Start piece picking meetings/practices: finding a category and piece is often the most frustrating part of the season. Some helpful ideas:
 - Have a meeting at a local library where literature is widely available
 - Have an open house after school where students can peruse material and bounce ideas off you without any pressure
 - Have optional one-on-one meetings with interested students (forced meetings can be a bit intimidating for students if they don't know you) where they can tell you about past experiences and inclinations so you can guide them toward a category
- Lay out expectations: Consider what you want from your students and enforce it from the start—be firm but fair. Do you require:
 - A minimum number of practices each week?
 - Written excuses for 'no-shows' or missed practices?
 - A meet dress code? (competition dress is usually business casual—tell students this early so they have time to shop!)
 - An activity or team fee?
- Have a judges meeting: have them fill out any paperwork the school requires for payment, familiarize them with your expectations and policies and train them in judging (for more on judging, see the 'what will I need?' section)
- As winter break nears, most students should have categories decided and start thinking/working on pieces. If not, this can be a good 'homework assignment' for break!
- Have fun! Try hosting a holiday event, or some other get together for team members to meet you and each other.

January

- Begin regular practices (as soon as possible after holiday break): tournaments come up fast—students should begin putting together solid pieces, writing drafts and practice performing what they have. At best, students should have pieces memorized (if needed) and fully cut a week or two before the first meet.
- Hold a parent meeting (a great place to find volunteers!)
 - Meet with parents to discuss team policies and what the year will look like
- Consider attending a workshop: check the WFCA website for workshops that help students pick categories and become familiar with forensics
- Meet sign up. However you choose to have your students sign up for meets, make sure it is:
 - Done in advance: meet entries are usually due a week to two weeks before they occur
 - Important: if you treat sign ups lightly, you may have no shows—make sure students know this is a firm commitment
 - Confirmed: A week before the meet, post/verbally confirm with those students who are signed up to attend—they should know where and when to meet for transportation

- February

- Competition begins (late Jan/early Feb)! Did you:
 - o Order a bus?
 - o Send in your entry?
 - o Confirm with your students?
 - o Tell them the bus departure time?
 - o Tell your school to process the entry fee check and send it to the school?
 - o Hire judges?
 - o Get your confirmation and code from the host school?
 - o Pay your judges?
 - o Pay the bus?
 - o Pay the tournament host?

March

- Continue competition and practices
- Start thinking ahead to the end of the season:
 - o Will you have an end of the year season summary/banquet?
 - o Do you have all accommodations, food, travel arranged for state and/or national travel?

April and May

- Prepare for any end of the year banquets
- Hold elections for any officer/captain positions in the following year
- Wrap up the season, recognize your seniors, congratulate your team
- Make note of any things you wish you'd done throughout the year, changes you wish you'd made
- RELAX!

V. What will I need?

A new coach can be overwhelmed by all the supplies he/she must gather. Here's a list of some essential things you will need to run a team.

1. Physical supplies: running a team takes STUFF! Try to invest in:
 - a. Office supplies: paper, notecards, pens, pencils, tape, scissors, a three hole punch, etc.
 - b. Binders/construction paper: some way for reading category students (like prose) to professionally mount and present their piece.
 - c. Periodicals: if you have students in extemporaneous, up-to-date periodicals should be available to them. Some common ones: Time Magazine, US News and World Report, Newsweek, Christian Science Monitor, other newspapers, online subscription.
 - d. Organizational Supplies: tubs for extemporaneous students to carry news sources in, cabinets for your files, etc.
 - e. Food: Snacks can be a helpful way to lure students to practice and to keep them awake! Having people bring donuts or bagels on Saturday mornings is also nice.
 - f. Literature: A good team has good pieces. Read as much as you can and purchase collections of short stories, poems, fairy tales, and novels for students to read and possibly use for their presentations.
2. Good communication: however you choose to do it, make sure your students know how to contact you.
 - a. Be familiar with your school's announcement system.
 - b. Make sure kids check their email often.
 - c. Ask if there is a bulletin board or door you can use to post your signs and announcements on—try to make it close to where you practice and meet.
 - d. Give a phone number to parents or students can call you at on tournament days if they are sick or an emergency arises.
3. Supportive parents: parents are often willing to lend a hand, so ask for volunteers at the beginning of the season and stay in touch with them as the season progresses. Parents can:
 - a. Run errands for you, purchasing snacks, supplies, etc (hopefully your school can reimburse them with a receipt).
 - b. Serve as judges.
 - c. Organize social events such as potlucks and pre-meet 'carbo crams' (and host them in their homes, not yours!).
 - d. Donate supplies or money (especially if they work for a company that is generous).
 - e. Help with fundraising.
 - f. Communicate with other parents (sometimes getting a call to volunteer from another parent is more effective than from a coach).

4. Judges: for each five entries you bring to a tournament, you need a judge. Coaches can, and often do, serve as judges. But, as your team grows, having a strong judging base can really help.
 - a. Solicit judges from your team's previous judges, from parents, and even from alumni.
 - b. Train judges by hosting a judge's training meeting. At this:
 1. Familiarize them with how tournaments work and how your school proceeds at them.
 2. Make sure they get a copy of all the category rules and you walk them through each category specifically.
 3. If possible, have a student perform or show a video (the WFCA has many available) and have them practice writing critiques.
 4. Have them fill out any paperwork your school requires for payment. Most judges earn between \$65-\$100 per meet.
5. An athletic director: make your 'boss' your friend. Familiarize him/her with your coaching policies, update him/her on your successes and progress. Your director may be able to offer you school tax exemption numbers, discounts at certain stores and other 'secrets' your school has to offer you.
6. Practice space. You need a place to work each week. Look for rooms with plenty of open space at the front for performances. If you don't have a classroom, find a closet or corner to store your materials in. Access to a computer lab and library can also be helpful for research, writing speeches and preparing materials.

VI. What will they need?

Just like you, your students will need a few essential things to compete in forensics.

1. A time commitment. Like participating in a sport, forensics takes hard work, dedication and time. No matter how you do it, make sure your students are aware of your expectations and the consequences if they lag on their commitment. Chasing lazy kids around—calling them to remind them of meets and practices—is simply not worth it. You’re losing valuable time with kids who have the drive to be there. It’s frustrating, but sometimes you just have to let students go.
2. Free Saturdays. If your student has soccer every Saturday, forensics just doesn’t seem to be a good fit. Many students are busy, but if they can’t make most practices or meets, they’ll have to decide where their priorities lie.
3. Business casual clothing. Forensics students dress to impress. And although dress is not a part of formal judging, a clean, well put-together appearance can give a student the extra edge. Most teams have some sort of a dress code that generally includes:
 - a. Boys: dress slacks with a button down shirt. Many boys wear ties or even full suits. Make sure they wear a belt and leave the tennis shoes at home.
 - b. Girls: modesty is key—no short skirts, no awkwardly high heels, no obscenely low shirts. Most girls wear a nice skirt and shirt, or dress slacks. Many girls also wear suits.
 - c. For some unknown reason, dark colors like black or navy tend to pervade forensics attire. While this is by far not a rule, a hot yellow suit might draw some negative attention. Your face and your performance should be highlighted, not your outfit.

VII. How much will it cost?

Running a forensics team costs money. Sometimes, a lot of it. Here's a look at some typical team expenses for a team of about 15 entries.

1. Office supplies: \$100
2. Books, plays, material: \$200+
3. Snacks (for practices, donuts for bus rides, water, etc): \$100
4. Bus fees for the entire season: \$1000 (depending how far you go, and how often)
5. Judge fees: \$1000 (about \$75 per judge per day)
6. Tournament entry fees: (\$8-\$12 per entry per tournament) \$1000
7. Membership in WFCA: \$75
8. Membership in other leagues: \$100-\$300 (depending how many you join)

TOTAL: at least \$3000

Uh-oh, my allocated budget isn't that big...where do I get that money?

Finding more money is the incessant plight of a forensics coach. Here are some tips:

1. Solicit donations: it's at least worth asking.
 - a. Many parents have 'connections' through work.
 - b. Ask local merchants to donate what you need.
 - c. Ask businesses and office supply stores for supplies, etc. (who cares what the logo says?!).
2. Ask tournaments to reduce/waive your entry fee.
 - a. If your school honestly cannot afford to attend a tournament, most tournament hosts will be happy to accommodate. Remember, we all care about this activity, and will be willing to help you when you need it.
3. Ask parents to judge for free or to donate their judge pay back to the team.
4. Request extra cash from the school board. If you are a new team, the budget may not have room for you, but if you present your needs, they may be willing to help.
5. Apply for grants. Many educational grants may be interested in helping promote the skills you are teaching.
6. Have a fundraiser, have lots of fundraisers!
 - a. Many local restaurants will host a night where a percent of all the profit goes to your organization. These are very easy.
 - b. Have a bake sale.
 - c. Sell items. Take to the streets and put your students' speaking skills to the test: organizations like Schwans and Mr. Z's frozen foods will help you organize a fundraiser where a percent of what you sell goes toward your team.
7. Ask parents to bake and donate any food, water or snacks you may need.
8. Host potlucks in the school cafeteria instead of banquets.

VII. How do I do it?

There are many ways to run forensics practice. Most teams practice multiple times a week during the competitive season, but many small teams meet just once. Most meet after school, but many offer coaching sessions during the school day or in the evening. Here are some practice ideas and tips:

- Allow students to watch each other practice: they will learn to critique and you won't have to be the only one giving comments week after week.
- Run a 'practice' round—have a student perform without stopping and with written comments only, as if they were in a round.
- Have a 'stop and go' practice – simply stop the student whenever you have a comment or suggestion; don't wait until they finish performing.
- Have all students in a similar category practice together and work together, offering their own individual insights into the category.
- Have older student or student leaders run their own rooms of practice if you have a big team or limited practice time.
- Give a young student an older student 'buddy' or mentor to work with them throughout the season, watching both their performances, and encouraging team participation.
- Video or audio tape practices so students can see/hear what they actually sound like.
- Watch videotapes at practice of state or national rounds for inspiration and ideas.
- Have a coach, alum, or student from another school come in and 'guest judge' your students.
- Have English teachers proof-read students speeches and watch their performances.
- Get practice in front of fresh audiences by performing for middle and elementary schools, senior homes, or high school classes.

IX. Who can help me?

Being a new coach can be scary, but you're certainly not alone. Refer to the following for additional help and information. NEVER be afraid to ask!

Websites:

WFCA website: www.wfcaforensics.org

NFL website: www.nflonline.org

NCFL website: www.ncfl.org

People:

Most any experienced coach would be willing to answer your questions. Stop by the tab room at a tournament, contact a member of the WFCA board, or just chat in the judges' lounge.