

Slam rules for the Northeast Slam Spectacular - 2007 Association of College Unions International (ACUI)

Rules are subject to change prior to start of the tourney in relation to the number of teams who register.

These rules are borrowed, with minor adaptations, from Poetry Slam, Inc (PSI) and should be used for regional, national, and international tournaments. These rules will govern the College Unions Poetry Slam Invitational (CUPSI).

"I have to submit to much in order to pacify the touchy tribe of poets."
— Horace, 14 B.C.

These rules, in conjunction with the NPS Code of Honor, constitute a body of standards by which we agree to engage each other in this wacky thing we call Poetry Slam.

I. Poems and performance

- 1) Poems can be on any subject and in any style.
- 2) Each poet must perform work that he or she has created.
- 3) No props.

Generally, poets are allowed to use their given environment and the accoutrements it offers — microphones, mic stands, the stage itself, chairs on stage, a table or bar top, the aisle — as long as these accoutrements are available to other competitors as well. The rule concerning props is not intended to squelch the spontaneity, unpredictability, or on-the-fly choreography that people love about the slam; its intent is to keep the focus on the words rather than poets who inadvertently use a prop (for example, a timely yet unwitting grab at a necklace) can be immediately penalized two points if the emcee of the bout deems the effect of the violation to have been appreciable but sufficiently lacking in specific intent. A formal protest need not be lodged before the emcee can penalize a poet or team in this way; however, the decision of the emcee can be appealed after the bout. Poets whose use of props in a poem appears to be more calculating and the result of a specific intent to enhance, illustrate, underscore, or otherwise augment the words of the poem will be given a retroactive score for the poem equal to two points less than the lowest scoring poem in that bout. This deduction, which can only be applied after a formal protest has been lodged against the offending team, will not be made by the emcee, but by a special committee assembled for this purpose. No musical instruments or pre-recorded music. No costumes. Further clarification of this rule was considered, but rejected as being niggling and ultimately unnecessary. The rule stands as is: No costumes.

Sampling

It is acceptable for poets to incorporate, imitate, or otherwise "signify on" the words, lyrics, or tune of someone else (commonly called "sampling") in their own work. If they are only riffing off another's words, they should expect only healthy controversy; if on the other hand, they are ripping off another poet's words, they should expect scornful contumely.

The No Repeat Rule

A poem cannot be used more than once in the tournament. Violations of the no repeat rule disqualify the poet and the poet receives a zero for his/her rotation. If we use the Option B schedule, we recommend each poet should plan on bringing at least 3 original poems to compete **(in case of tie breakers in the preliminary round)**.

The Three-Minute Rule

No performance should last longer than three minutes. The time begins when the performance begins, which may well be before the first utterance is made. A poet is certainly allowed several full seconds to adjust the microphone and get settled and ready, but as soon as she or he makes a connection with the audience ("Hey look, she's been standing there for 10 seconds and hasn't even moved"), the timekeeper can start the clock. The poet does not have an unlimited amount of "mime time." Poets with ambiguous beginnings and endings to their performances should seek out the timekeeper at each venue to settle on a starting and ending time. After three minutes, there is a 10-second grace period (up to and including 3:10.00). Starting at 3:10.01, a penalty is automatically deducted from each poet's overall score according to the following schedule:

- 3:10 and under – no penalty
- 3:10.01 - 3:20 -0.5
- 3:20.01 - 3:30 -1.0
- 3:30.01 - 3:40 -1.5
- 3:40.01 - 3:50 -2.0
- and so on [-0.5 for every 10 seconds over 3:10]

The announcement of the time penalty and its consequent deduction will be made by the emcee or scorekeeper after all the judges have reported their scores. The judges should not even be told that a poet went over time until it is too late for them to adjust their scores.

II. Teams

Team eligibility

Each ACUI region is invited to send a team for competition. If there is a region without a team, additional opportunities for regions to send multiple teams exist. College teams unaffiliated with ACUI may also participate, but they must pay the higher registration fee tier. Regions are encouraged to hold a regional tourney to assist in the development of a team. Ultimately it is at the regions' discretion on how they select a team while embracing the value of inclusivity and the notion of "Everyone's voice is welcome." The team should be developed from at least one open competition (your top four high scoring poets). Some regions may conduct a regional tournament to select the team from the region.

1. Eligibility for team members is limited to those who currently pay tuition to attend a college/university (students) and those who are currently employed by the college/university (faculty, staff, etc.) affiliated with ACUI. Colleges and universities not affiliated with ACUI may participate as "AT-LARGE" teams and will pay an additional fee.
2. There must be at least two or more students serving as primary poets on each team.

Team pieces

Duos, trios, and quartets (otherwise known as team, group, or collaborative pieces) are allowed, even encouraged, so long as all of the primary authors perform them. Refer to Section V (Definitions) for further clarification on primary authorship. The writer/performer who offers up his or her individual spot on stage to accommodate a group piece must be one of the primary authors of that piece. Thus, a poet whose only appearance on stage during a bout is as part of a team piece must be one of the primary authors of that team piece.

A group piece with more than one primary author does not have to be used in the same primary author's slot each time it is performed in the course of the competition. But a group piece with only one primary author must only and always perform during that writer/performer's slot. Group pieces may not be repeated in subsequent years unless all of the primary authors are present and on a team with one another again.

III. Judging and scoring

Judging

All efforts shall be made to select five judges who will be fair. Once chosen, the judges will: 1) be given a set of printed instructions on how to judge a poetry slam, 2) have a private, verbal crash course by the emcee or house manager on the do's and don'ts of poetry slam judging (where they can ask questions), and 3) hear the standardized Official Emcee Spiel (rewritten and tweaked each year by the host city of the competition), which, among other things, will apprise the audience of their own responsibilities as well as remind the judges of theirs. Having heard, read, or otherwise experienced these three sets of instructions; a judge cannot be challenged over a score. Complaints, problems, and/or disagreements regarding the impartiality of the judges should be brought privately to the attention of the emcee or house manager BEFORE the bout begins. Having heard and understood the complaint, the house manager or emcee will then make a decision (also privately) that cannot be further challenged.

Scoring

The judges will give each poem a score from 0 to 10, with 10 being the highest or "perfect" score. They will be encouraged to use one decimal place to preclude the likelihood of a tie. Each poem will get five scores. The high and the low scores will be dropped and the remaining three scores will be added together. Team scores will be displayed or otherwise publicly available during the bout.

Getting to Finals- for Option B Schedule Only

If we use the Option B schedule-The first place teams from each preliminary bout will earn a berth to the finals on Saturday night February 10, 2007. Teams who tie for first place will have a tie-breaker to determine who makes it to the finals.

Please keep in mind the No Repeat Rule will still be in affect.

IV. Officials

Emcees

The emcee will announce to the audience each poet's name and the team he or she is from. He or she will also require that all judges hold their scores up at the same time and that no judge changes his score after it is up. He or she is expected to move the show along quickly and keep the audience engaged and

interested in the competition. Since he or she must be completely impartial, any witty banter directed at individual poets, poems, teams, or scores is inappropriate. Even genuine enthusiasm has to be carefully directed. The safest thing to do is encourage the audience members to express their own opinions.

V. Definitions

Team piece: A poem performed by two, three, or all four members of the same team.

Primary author(s): Those writers/performers whose contributions to a particular group piece are so fundamental that they have at least as much of a right as any other writer/performer of the piece to claim ownership of it at any time. Primary authors must perform their pieces; if a writer/performer is watching other members of his team perform a group piece, then any contributions he or she might have made to it must not be significant enough to constitute primary authorship.

Bout: A competition between two or more teams.

Order: The schematic that determines the order in which teams will read.

Prop: An object or article of clothing introduced into a performance with the effect of enhancing, illustrating, underscoring, or otherwise augmenting the words of the poem.

Rotation: When each team's first poet has read in a bout, the first rotation is over. There are as many rotations in a bout as there are poets on a team.

Round: A complete set of bouts in which every team that is still eligible to compete does so. Eligibility to compete in successive rounds may be contingent upon success in earlier rounds.