

Book Review

HOW TO WRITE THE PERFECT BALLOT: A HANDBOOK FOR JUDGING HIGH SCHOOL SPEECH AND DEBATE TOURNAMENTS

by Genelle Austin-Lett (Kendall/Hunt 1998)

How to Write the Perfect Ballot, by Genelle Austin-Lett, Director Forensics at San Jose State University and host of the 1992 California High School State Tournament, is a valuable resource for forensics judges.

The book includes one chapter providing an overview of the judge's responsibilities, followed by chapters on judging oral interpretation, platform speeches (including spontaneous events, prepared speeches, and student congress) and debate (team and Lincoln-Douglas).

The chapters include a description of each forensics event, along with questions the judge should ask himself or herself while judging the event. These questions focus on standards that most forensics educators would agree on, such as whether an interpretation conveyed the proper mood or emotion and whether speakers and debaters provided sufficient evidence to support their claims. As the title suggests, ballot *writing* is a major emphasis of the book, and here the author does not disappoint. Each chapter includes sample ballots for dif-

ferent events, with comments. Even more helpful is an appendix, providing two ballots for the same speech. One ballot provides examples of effective comments and the other contains less useful feedback.

How to Write the Perfect Ballot is a "must read" book for any forensics teacher who is new to the activity, for volunteers who judge at tournaments regularly, and for more experienced judges who are new to a particular forensic event. New judges who are volunteering at a single tournament will not have time to read and process the entire book before their first round. However, they would benefit from the Chapter One overview of the judging process and the book's description of the event they are about to judge.

Professor Austin-Lett has done an excellent job of condensing the essential information a forensics judge needs into a manageable size for the reader (86 pages). If judges follow the advice in her book, coaches and competitors will receive ballots that reflect fair decisions and offer encouraging comments as well as useful suggestions for improvement.

Contributed by Douglas Fraleigh, CSU Fresno,

President--Northern California Forensics Assn.

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