

DRAMATIC INTERPRETATION

Tips for Performing Dramatic Interpretation (DI)

Dramatic Interpretation is one of the most rewarding events in speech and debate. It's a mix of performance, storytelling, and public speaking. The goal is to bring a piece of literature to life for your audience in a way that's both powerful and honest.

Here are some tips to help you succeed:

1. Know the Fundamentals

* **It's not acting:** DI is about interpreting the literature, not “becoming” the character. You're the performer, narrator, and storyteller all in one.

* **No props or costumes:** Your voice, face, and body are the only tools you get—so use them well!

* **The “black box” world:** Imagine your setting, props, and other characters in the empty space around you. Make the audience see the world you're creating, even without objects on stage.

2. Choose the Right Piece

* **Pick something you connect with:** You'll spend hours with this story—choose one you actually care about. Read plays, short stories, novels, and screenplays until something resonates.

* **Look for a strong story arc:** The best DI pieces have a beginning, middle, climax, and resolution. They take both you and the audience on an emotional journey.

* **Avoid overdone topics:** Subjects like abuse or death show up a lot. If you want to stand out, find something unique—or bring a fresh spin to a familiar theme.

* **Cut it down smartly:** Remember, you only get 10 minutes. Focus on the most important parts of the story and cut in a way that still makes sense as a complete piece.

3. Build Strong Characters

- * **Use physicality:** Each character should move and stand differently. Use posture, gestures, and even how you hold your head to separate them.
- * **Make voices distinct:** Change pitch, speed, or volume for each character so the judge can tell who's speaking.
- * **Be emotionally honest:** Don't over-act. The audience should feel like the emotions are real, not exaggerated.
- * **Show the inner thoughts:** A great DI makes the audience feel what the character is thinking, not just what they're saying.

4. Structure Your Performance

- * **Introduction:** Your intro is memorized and spoken as **yourself**. Include the title and author, a short setup of the story, and why it matters. Make it engaging—it sets the tone for everything that follows.
- * **Blocking:** Think of an imaginary 3x3 foot box as your stage. Move with purpose, and keep character spaces consistent so the audience can “see” the world you're creating.
- * **Memorization:** Learn your lines along with your blocking and voices. Practicing physically helps your body remember the words.

5. Practice, Perform, Improve

- * **Record yourself:** Watching yourself is the best way to see what a judge sees. Notice your strengths and what's confusing.
- * **Get feedback:** Perform for teammates, friends, or family. Ask what worked and what didn't.
- * **Compete often:** Every tournament is a chance to grow. Take judge feedback seriously—it's the fastest way to improve.

Remember: A great DI isn't about being the loudest or most dramatic. It's about telling a story with truth, honesty, and emotional depth. If your audience feels something real, you've succeeded.