
INTRODUCTION

The *FBLA Competitive Events Study Guide* has been developed to enhance the National Awards Program events guidelines. One purpose of the FBLA Competitive Events Program is to foster students' self-esteem by helping them to feel confident in their knowledge of specific areas. The more prepared students are for competition, the better the experience will be for those students.

This study guide is to be used as a resource for preparing students for FBLA competition. It is written from the perspective of a competitor at the national level, but the concepts and information should translate easily to assist with preparation for district/region or state competition. Participants should always obtain the specific guidelines and rules governing the particular event in which they will be participating.

The national competitive events guidelines are found in the *FBLA Chapter Management Handbook*. Each year the National Awards Program committee reviews a portion of the competitive events, and there may be changes to the guidelines and competencies. It is important to check the latest handbook revisions. In addition, the current competitive events guidelines can be found on the FBLA-PBL Web site. Go to www.fbla-pbl.org and click on FBLA and select Competitive Events. The current topics, competitive events guidelines, and Format Guide can be viewed and printed.

Most states also have a state handbook. It is important to look at the state handbook for any competitive events guideline modifications when competing at the district/region or state level.

The broader the base that is used to prepare students for competition—studying from multiple texts, coaching from people who have expertise in the areas needed—the better prepared the students will be. Studying from a variety of sources will help more than just testing to make students better prepared in that subject.

The following acronyms are used throughout the study guide:

- CMH—Chapter Management Handbook
- NAP—National Awards Program Committee
- NLC—National Leadership Conference

This study guide provides the following information about the various events:

- Focus of the event
- Competencies for testing and judging
- Procedures and tips for student preparation and event participation
- Sample questions, case studies, speech topics, and documents for skill events
- Resource Web sites (remember the URLs can change)

The National Awards Program exemplifies the range of activities and focus of Future Business Leaders of America-Phi Beta Lambda, Inc. Competitive events are based on projects developed from the goals of FBLA-PBL and the curricula of business-related programs.

June 2010

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COMPETITIVE EVENTS TIPS

1. Dress for Success—Gentlemen must wear collared shirt with tie, dress pants, dress shoes and socks. Consider also wearing a jacket. Young ladies should wear appropriate suits, pants with jacket, dresses, and appropriate shoes. Review the Dress Code regulations found in the *CMH*. If you question if you are properly attired, then change.
2. Read and follow explicitly the state and national competitive events guidelines. Be aware of differences between state and national guidelines.
3. Replace new guidelines each year in the *CMH*.
4. Check the status of membership dues. Students must be dues-paid members by March 1 to compete in national competition. The sooner dues are paid; the sooner members will receive FBLA benefits.
5. All materials must be received by the national center by the second Friday in May. Normally the state sends these materials, but some states request the local chapters send in their reports, Web site URLs, programs, etc.
6. Remember, when competing at the district or state levels, materials are not sent to the national office.
7. Become completely familiar with the procedures to be followed for participation in each type of event at both the state and national levels.
8. Determine from the rating sheets and guidelines the areas that will be judged and the weight given to each area.
9. Obtain a variety of updated information on different subject areas and provide access to students for study.
10. Contact former and current chapter members who have competed in previous years for suggestions.
11. Find mentors and other experts who can help members prepare for competition. Involve faculty, advisory committee members, businesspeople, community volunteers, and parents in study sessions and event preparation.
12. Try to recreate as realistically as possible the conditions under which the competition will take place and PRACTICE.
13. Make certain that copies of materials to be submitted to judges are error-free and in the proper format.
14. Refer to the FBLA-PBL Web site to have the updated events, task lists, and changes. The Web site is <http://www.fbلا-pbl.org>.

Letter of Application and Résumé

The following suggestions have been collected from judges' comments and are presented to help eliminate the technical errors that can lead to lower scores and/or disqualification.

- Letters must be addressed exactly as stated in the event guidelines.
- Letters of application are limited to one page and résumés to no more than two pages.
- Photographs must **not** be submitted.
- Letters of recommendation should **not** be included with the materials.
- Letters are generally preferred in block format.
- All documents must be error-free.
- Some judges have stated their preference for résumés that list an objective.
- Résumés should emphasize the skills that contribute to the position for which one is applying.
- Materials are to be submitted in six (6) file folders properly labeled (see *CMH* for details).

Suggestions for Creating a Good Résumé

- The résumé should show a clear match between your skills, experience, and activities with the event.
- Highlight your major accomplishments.
- Information on the résumé should be listed in order of importance; e.g. for Job Interview list your work experience (paid or unpaid) first and for Future Business Leader your FBLA involvement.
- Highlight the important skills that make you stand out for the award.
- Make a good first impression—no typos or incorrect grammar.
- Information in résumé must be truthful.
- List your extracurricular activities that relate to the event.

Interview Process

- Turn off all electronic devices.
- When walking into the room, introduce yourself to the judges stating your name, school, and state.
- Don't bring in materials to the judges—they already have your résumé.
- Practice your handshake—it should be firm and not lingering.
- Speak professionally, have good eye contact, smile, and ask questions. This is your time to tell the judges why you deserve to be number one.
- Dress professionally—follow the established dress code. Conservative is better. Ladies, watch the length of your skirts and type of shoes. Gentlemen, always wear jackets. Give careful attention to personal hygiene and coordinated accessories including well-polished shoes. Keep jewelry to a minimum. Use fragrances sparingly.
- If you don't know an answer to a question, please ask the judges to restate the question to give you time to compose an answer.
- Review the Rating Sheet found in the *CMH* to make sure you know what the judges will be rating.
- Do not present judges with thank-you notes or gifts of appreciation.

WRITTEN PROJECT & REPORT

American Enterprise Project, Business Financial Plan, Business Plan, Community Service Project, Local Chapter Annual Business Report, Partnership with Business Project, and State Chapter Annual Business Report

FBLA encourages chapters to cooperate on projects during the year; however, each chapter involved in the project must write and submit an independent report.

The same chapter project may be used for different events. Make certain, though, to focus the report on specific elements addressed by the guidelines for each event. A community service project, for instance, conducted jointly with a local business might qualify in both the Community Service Project and Partnership with Business Project events. The Community Service Project should focus on the planning, implementation, and outcomes of the service aspects of the project. The Partnership with Business Project should focus on the interactions with local businesses and the outcomes of these contacts.

Tips

- Begin early in the year to select a topic for your project. Be creative. Your topic should be researched for need and not chosen just because the chapter wants to do it. Make sure it is appropriate for the chapter report selected.
- Set up project committees, and the committee members should have a variety of interests, such as organizing, writing, designing, and publishing the report. Involve as many members as possible because many talents are necessary for a winning project. The report must be prepared entirely by FBLA members, with advisers serving only as consultants.
- Develop a project time line. Post the time line on a bulletin board; include pictures of members responsible for meeting each deadline.
- Review the report rating sheet found in the *CMH* to make sure the written report covers all aspects of the rating sheets. The report should be assembled according to the categories on the rating sheet. If your report doesn't cover all the categories on the rating sheet, indicate that in the written report. This is what the judges will use to evaluate the report.
- Reports should be written on one project in detail rather than a laundry list of activities; however, the project may have many activities.
- Follow the guidelines list for report covers, table of contents, page limit, etc. Points will be deducted if the guidelines are not followed.
- If your project is not new, the report should clearly identify how the current year's version differs from the previous year's, particularly with the scope and intensity of the project.
- The length of the document is not always an indicator of quality or success. Don't make the judges read more than is necessary. The guidelines speak to a maximum page count—not a minimum.
- Fonts smaller than 11 point should not be used.
- Reports should be written in language that does not overwhelm the judges, and reports should reflect the appropriate writing style of students. Words with more syllables are not always the most impressive.
- Two (2) reports must be submitted to the national center for judging by the second Friday in May.

Report Presentation Tips

- Videotape your presentations for additional review. You cannot get too much practice.
- All eligible entries will compete in a preliminary seven (7) minute performance.
- If using equipment, the school is responsible for bringing a computer and LCD projector for each event.
- Students (not advisers) have five (5) minutes to set up the equipment. If it takes longer than five (5) minutes, the time is deducted from the preliminary presentation. The national center provides a screen, cart, and electric power.

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- If the equipment fails, be prepared to present your project.
 - Review the performance rating sheet for the individual events to make sure all the points are covered in the presentation.
 - In the oral performance presentation, visual aids and/or presentation graphics are encouraged for a more powerful delivery; however, they should be relied on to assist, not to be, the presentation.
 - It is important that the presenters are well acquainted with their projects, especially during the question-and-answer period. The judges don't know anything about your project. Don't rely on your multimedia presentation to tell your story, but verbally tell the story of the project.
 - Make eye contact with the judges, speak in a clear voice, and emphasize the important points.
 - Introduce the team to the judges, giving the name of the school and project.
 - All team members must contribute during the performance.

OBJECTIVE TEST EVENTS

Study Tips

- All objective tests are done online and consist of 100 multiple choice questions.
- Ask your teachers to share with you the different textbooks they use as resources. Look over the end-of-chapter summary and the glossary words.
- For events such as Business Math, Business Calculations, Economics, etc. find other teachers in the school who can give you possible resources to use to study.

Test-taking Tips

- Avoid talking to others as you enter the room.
- Instructions for online testing will be given to you in groups before sitting at a computer.
- A basic calculator will be provided or you may use the calculator function on the computer.
- If the equipment doesn't work, raise your hand until help comes.
- Go to the following Web sites to review test-taking tips.
 - <http://www.westbloomfield.k12.mi.us/testing2/tips.html>
 - <http://www.swccioowa.edu/Assessment/TestPrepTips.html>
 - http://www.charliefrench.com/test_tips.htm

COMPUTER PRODUCTION TIPS

Accounting II, Computer Applications, Database Design & Applications, Desktop Publishing, Spreadsheet Applications, and Word Processing I & II

- The FBLA-PBL Format Guide may be used for Computer Applications and Word Processing I & II. For these events you are working for the company FBLA-PBL and this is the style manual used in the office.
- Any software may be used to complete a production test.
- Each production event is comprised of two parts—computer production test at a test site designated by the state and an objective test administered at the National Leadership Conference. Check the guidelines found in the *CMH* to find out the weight for each part of the event.
- Proofread!
- All national production tests must be received at the national center by the third Friday in May.

PERFORMANCE EVENTS Case Study & Interactive/Role Play

Banking & Financial Systems, Business Ethics, Client Service, Help Desk, Emerging Business Issues, Entrepreneurship, Global Business, Management Decision Making, Management Information Systems, Marketing, Network Design, and Parliamentary Procedure

Tips for Events Involving a Case Study or an Interactive/Role Play

- Students will be given a case study and/or role play scenario for review prior to the performance. Check the *CMH* to find out the time allowed for practice in your particular event. Time varies for the events.
- Students will be given note cards to write on in practice, and they may be used in the performance.
- Do your homework and look at the performance rating sheet for your event. The judges will be using the rating sheet to score each individual or team.
- For case study events, the individuals or team presents and then the judges will ask questions.
- In an interactive/role-play event, the judges will interact during the presentation and still may ask questions at the end.
- Review the Performance Indicators when reading the case study or role play scenario.
- All members must participate in the presentation.

Sequester Procedures (final only)

- Students are sequestered in the final round of the events listed above. The preliminary round of events is not sequestered.
- Participants must report to the holding room prior to the first scheduled performance as indicated in the events guidelines.
- A participant or team is disqualified if they arrive after the first participant or team starts the performance.
- Sequestered participants must be escorted from room to room.
- Students may listen to music in the holding room. No text messaging, e-mail, Internet use, or phone calls are allowed.
- Food and drinks may be given to the event coordinator to distribute to the individual participants.
- Sequestered participants may not communicate with outside individuals.
- The above infringements may lead to disqualification.

SPEAKING EVENTS

Impromptu & Public Speaking

Tips for Speaking Events

- Check the *CMH* for time allowed and penalty deduction if you go under or over the allowed time.
- Practice, practice, practice
- Penalty points are given if speech is under or over the time limit as indicated in the *CMH*.
- If possible, time your speech.
- Eye contact is important.
- Do not read from your notes.
- When developing your speech topic (Public Speaking), make sure the speech reflects at least one of the FBLA-PBL Goals.
- Impromptu Speaking students will be given a prompt to develop and then present.
- FBLA-PBL Goals
 - Develop competent, aggressive business leadership.
 - Strengthen the confidence of students in themselves and their work.
 - Create more interest in and understanding of the American business enterprise.
 - Encourage members in the development of individual projects that contribute to the improvement of home, business, and community.
 - Develop character, prepare for useful citizenship, and foster patriotism.
 - Encourage and practice efficient money management.
 - Encourage scholarship and promote school loyalty.
 - Assist students in the establishment of occupational goals.
 - Facilitate the transition from school to work.

Remember

FBLA members and advisers must recognize the value of competitive events, maintain a professional attitude toward the events, and keep them in proper perspective. While competitive events are an important element of FBLA's overall program, events are just a portion of the many other activities and programs that build a successful organization.