COBIS Council of British International Schools

Honorary President: Rt Hon Baroness Evans of Bowes Park

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COBIS Drama Competition 2026/27

Performance Guidelines & Frequently Asked Questions

This document provides guidance on selecting appropriate performance material, filming submissions, and understanding the competition requirements.

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1. Eligibility and Categories

Schools may enter as many or as few categories as they wish. There is **no requirement** to submit entries in all categories.

Monologue Categories

Category 1a: Junior Monologue

- Key Stage 3
- Year Group 7-9 (UK equivalent)
- Ages 11–14

Category 1b: Intermediate Monologue

- Key Stage 4
- Year Group 10-11 (UK equivalent)
- Ages 14–16

Category 1c: Senior Monologue

- Key Stage 5

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- Year Group 12-13 (UK equivalent)
- Ages 16–18

Duologue Categories

Category 2a: Junior Duologue

- Key Stage 3
- Year Group 7-9 (UK equivalent)
- Ages 11–14

Category 2b: Intermediate Duologue

- Key Stage 4
- Year Group 10-11 (UK equivalent)
- Ages 14–16

Category 2c: Senior Duologue

- Key Stage 5
- Year Group 12-13 (UK equivalent)
- Ages 16–18

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2. Choosing a Monologue or Duologue

Selecting the right piece is one of the most important factors in a successful performance.

Consider the Performer's Age and Emotional Maturity

Choose material that:

- Is appropriate for the performer's age.
- Reflects experiences and emotions they can genuinely understand.
- Allows for authentic and believable characterisation.

A strong performance comes from a performer understanding both the **content** and the **context** of the piece.

Choose Material that Provides Performance Opportunities

Look for pieces that allow performers to demonstrate:

- Vocal variety
- Changes in pace
- Emotional range

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- Use of pause and silence
- Physical characterisation
- Character development

Pieces with shifts in mood, tension, or emotional intensity often create natural opportunities for performers to showcase their skills.

Encourage Ownership

Students often perform best when they:

- Enjoy the material.
- Have helped choose it.
- Feel a personal connection to the character or story.

Teachers are encouraged to involve students in sourcing and exploring potential material.

Explore Pieces Aloud

Group read-throughs can be a valuable way to:

- Improve reading-aloud skills.
- Encourage discussion and interpretation.
- Discover the potential of pieces that may seem less engaging on paper.

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3. Source Material Guidelines

What type of texts may be used?

Preferred source material includes:

- Published plays
- Published theatre scripts

Schools are also welcome to use:

- Scripted texts currently being studied for IGCSE Drama or similar qualifications.
- Texts from films or novels written in the first person

Can material come from films or television programmes?

Published plays are preferred however, a mono/duologue from a film or programme will also acceptable. Schools should ensure that any chosen material is officially published and suitable for stage performance.

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Can a monologue come from a novel?

Yes, a published novel written in the first person may be used as a monologue, although published plays remain the preferred source material.

Can a poem be used as material?

No. However, if it is an extract of poetry within a scripted play that would be accepted, but not a standalone poem.

Can translated texts be used?

Yes. Translated works are acceptable.

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4. Adapting Scripts

Can text be adapted?

Yes. Minor adaptations are welcomed where they:

- Improve contextual understanding.
- Increase age-appropriateness.
- Help meet the competition time limit.

Examples include:

- Removing individual lines.
- Shortening sections of dialogue.
- Replacing isolated inappropriate words.

What adaptations are not recommended?

If extensive editing is required, it may indicate that the piece is not suitable.

For example:

- If a monologue would need to be reduced by half or more.
- If numerous inappropriate words require replacement.
- If the overall meaning or intention of the text is substantially changed.

In these cases, schools are encouraged to select an alternative piece.

Can inappropriate words be changed?

Yes, individual words may be replaced where necessary, provided:

- The flow of the language is maintained.
- The author's intended meaning remains clear.
- Verse or poetic structures are not disrupted.

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Can multiple extracts be combined?

For monologues, combining shorter extracts from the same published work may be considered where the piece remains coherent and dramatically effective.

For duologues, schools are strongly encouraged to use one continuous scene rather than combining multiple shorter scenes. This allows performers to develop character relationships and dramatic tension more effectively.

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5. Filming Requirements

All submissions must be recorded as:

- One continuous video clip.
- Filmed using a static camera position.
- Without multiple camera angles.
- Without edited cuts between scenes or sections.

The focus should remain on the quality of the live dramatic performance rather than on film-making techniques.

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6. Performance Length

Monologues: Maximum length - **3 minutes**

Duologues: Maximum length - **3 minutes**

Schools may shorten scenes where necessary to meet the time requirement.

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7. Assessment Criteria

Performances will be assessed out of **20 marks**.

Each criterion is worth up to **5 marks**.

Assessment Area	**Marks**
Application of Vocal and Physical Skills	5
Interpretation and Creative Style	5
Characterisation	5
Audience Engagement and Impact	5
Total	**20**

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8. Validity

For an entry to be valid it must comply with the following rules:

- Video will be submitted by a school.
- Video will be no longer than 180 seconds (3 minutes).
- Video will be largely students' work.
- Videos will not feature student identifying information (e.g. student names, student ages/year group/key stage, school name, both within the video itself or in the hosting site title and descriptions, badges, or signage).
- Video will be submitted via the online entry form provided upon registration.

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9. Frequently Asked Questions

Do schools need to enter every category?

No, schools may submit a single entry in one category or multiple entries across several categories.

Can the same student submit more than one entry?

Yes, but only if they are submitting into the Monologue and Duologue categories. One student can only submit one entry to the Monologue category and one entry to the Duologue category.

Must duologue performers be from the same year group?

No, students submitting to a duologue category can be from different year groups, however they must be from the same Key Stage (e.g. if your school are entering category 2a: Junior Duologue, the students could be from Year 7 and Year 9 as they are both in Key Stage 3).

Can students perform pieces they are already studying for IGCSE Drama?

Yes, students may use scripted texts currently being studied, provided they are suitable for the competition requirements.

Is there a prescribed anthology?

No, there is no required anthology or set text list.

Schools may choose any suitable published dramatic material that meets the competition criteria.

Can we shorten a duologue to fit the time limit?

Yes, minor edits and reductions are acceptable, provided the integrity of the scene is maintained.

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Must a duologue be one continuous scene?

This is strongly recommended. Using one complete scene generally allows for stronger character development and dramatic progression than combining multiple shorter extracts.

Can translated plays be used?

Yes, translated texts are permitted.

Can performers use props?

Yes. Props may be used where appropriate, but they should support the performance rather than become the focus of it. Judges will be assessing the quality of the acting, characterisation and delivery, not the complexity of the props, costume or set. Simple, purposeful use of props is encouraged.

Can performers wear costume?

As above. Yes, students are welcome to wear costumes, but they are not obligatory and the students will not be judged on the costume, but rather the delivery of the overall performance. Students not in costume won't be penalised.

Can performers hold a script during the performance?

Students are encouraged to learn their lines off book. Without the script in hand, students have more freedom to be creative, more physical and have stronger characterisation, improving the overall performance.

Can students perform material from a novel?

Yes. A published first-person narrative from a novel may be presented as a monologue.

Can scripts containing inappropriate language be adapted?

Yes, within reason. Occasional words may be changed, but if substantial editing is required the piece is unlikely to be appropriate for the competition.

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What Makes a Strong Performance?

Strong performances often demonstrate:

- Clear and confident vocal delivery.
- Excellent diction and projection.
- Effective use of pace, pause, pitch and tone.
- Thoughtful interpretation of the text.
- Fully developed characters.
- Genuine emotional engagement.
- Strong connection with the audience.
- Understanding of the text's context and meaning.

Most importantly, choose material that challenges students while remaining achievable, enjoyable and age-appropriate.

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11. Suggested Resources

Schools looking for inspiration may wish to explore:

- Drama Online Library: https://www.dramaonlinelibrary.com/
- Previous competition recordings available via the competition website.

When selecting material, focus on finding pieces that allow students to demonstrate character, imagination, vocal skill and emotional truth within the competition's three-minute performance limit.

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