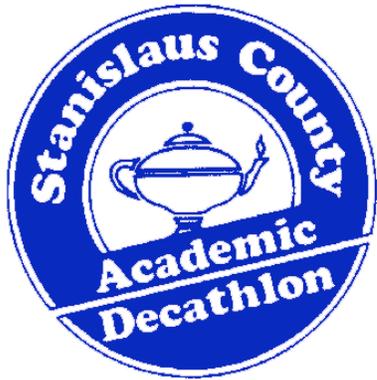


A Contest of Academic Strength

*Providing academic competition to
encourage, acknowledge and reward
academic excellence through teamwork
among decathletes of all achievement levels.*



Stanislaus County ACADEMIC DECATHLON

INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

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Since 1968, the Academic Decathlon has grown into the premier scholastic competition in America. The Academic Decathlon was created to provide opportunities for high school students to experience the challenges of rigorous team and individual competition. Designed to provide a forum for celebrating and acknowledging scholastic achievement and academic excellence in the context of a team environment, the Academic Decathlon provides high school students the opportunity to participate in an educational forum that fosters a deep respect for knowledge, cooperation, and self-esteem.

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INSTRUCTIONS FOR INTERVIEW JUDGES

PREPARATION FOR THE INTERVIEWS

1. SET UP

- A. The decathlete will wait outside until the Lead Judge for their interview appointment invites them in. This procedure will ensure that there will not be an interruption while interviewing a decathlete.
- B. Ensure the room is set-up according to the interview diagram in Lead Judge packet.

2. REVIEW PROCEDURES

Before the first decathlete enters the room, review the following procedures as well as the student schedule with the other judges on your team:

- A. Lead Judge will monitor the questions and time during each interview session and facilitate the judges between interviews.
- B. **STAY ON SCHEDULE.** It is essential to stay on schedule. Try to refrain from repeating a question after a decathlete has responded unless you require clarification to his/her response. Do not debate or dispute with a decathlete's ideas, or get into a discussion with the decathlete by stating your ideas.

DISTRIBUTION OF MATERIALS BEFORE EACH INTERVIEW & JUDGING PROCESS

1. Lead Judge will be responsible for distributing the pre-slugged Scantron to the rest of the judges. Scantrons are in the Lead Judge's packet (manila envelope with schedule). Check to make sure the speaker ID code (on student's name tag) matches the one on the schedule and is the same code on all judges' Scantron forms.
2. Print your name on Scantron form where indicated (Judges Name). You do not need to enter a "Volunteer Number."
3. Lead Judge invites Decathlete into the interview room. Cordially greet the decathlete and introduce her/him to the rest of the judging panel (see "Judge's Script"). The judges will then individually introduce themselves to the decathlete. If a judge knows a student, he/she has the option to be excused from scoring that speaker if they feel they cannot impartially judge the student.
4. Begin the interview process. Allow seven minutes per decathlete. When six minutes have passed, the judge keeping track of the time will announce that one minute remains and ask for final comments.
Note: There is no penalty if the decathlete reveals his/her city or school name.
5. Allow time for judges (two minutes) to enter their scores (independently). Before bringing in the next decathlete, if necessary, judges should address any concerns regarding question content and provide an alternate appropriate question(s) for consideration to ask a decathlete.
6. Collect all scored Scantrons and check for completeness. Place them inside the manila Score Envelope. Deliver envelope as indicated. Record absent students on envelope.
7. Reserve the higher scores (9 or 10) for exceptional speakers.

CONDUCTING A SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEW

General Recommendations: The success of the interview depends on how well and how quickly you can create a pleasant understanding with the decathlete, treating them at all times with respect.

1. **Determining Environment.** Manner, attitude, and tone of voice are important in creating the proper interviewing climate. In the short time available, establish a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere in which the Decathlete is assured of your sincere interest and attention. Encourage the Decathlete to talk about himself/herself.
 - Ensure privacy without interruptions - closed door, etc.
 - Maintain an attitude of pleasant receptiveness, quiet confidence, and intelligent objectivity.
 - Establish rapport and put candidate at ease.
2. **Managing Interview.** The judges are in charge of the interview process. Control, direct, and guide the interview. Set a steady pace and ask the questions according to the structured interview format.
 - Keep initiative but be responsive.
 - Cover all of the topics and devote enough time to each part.
 - Conduct the interview so the Decathlete plays the dominant role and the interviewer is the stage manager.
 - Steer the conversation without intruding on it--refrain from expressing your personal opinion or values--be objective.
 - Encourage Decathlete to talk openly and freely.
 - Pace questions so that Decathlete can give adequate replies without dwelling on irrelevant information.
 - Indicate when the interview is coming to a conclusion.
3. **Listening Intelligently.**
 - Concentrate on what the Decathlete is saying.
 - Allow Decathlete to complete remarks without interruption or second-guessing.
 - Listen attentively.
 - Show interest.
 - Give Decathletes the time they need to think of examples and answer the questions.
4. **Coming to the Conclusion.**
 - Empathy, fairness, and good judgment are working tools for a good interview.
 - Bring interview to an end gracefully and naturally without rushing to a close.
5. **Silent Gaps.**
 - Summarize points made by the Decathlete and lead into the next question.
 - Keep asking for specific examples.
 - Give encouragement by rephrasing question.

SAMPLE TOPICS FOR ORAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Conduct an objective interview by creating the same situation for each student (i.e., same judge asking the same questions of every student). Questions can be based on the students Self-Introduction or topics similar to those listed below. **THE QUESTIONS THAT FOLLOW ARE ONLY EXAMPLES:**

1. **PERSONAL OBJECTIVES & ACADEMICS**

- a. "What do you enjoy most about school?"
- b. "How do you like to spend your time after school?"
- c. "Describe your biggest challenge at school?"
- d. "Do you feel it's important to be involved in extra-curricular activities? Please explain."
- e. "What did you do as a member of _____?"
- f. "How has participation in _____ affected you personally?"

2. **ACTIVITIES (During and After School)**

- a. "Describe the type of community service activities that you are involved in or would like to be involved in?"
- b. "What meaningful experiences did you have as a _____?"
- c. "What kinds of skills have you acquired as a _____ that will help you in a future job?"
- d. "In what other activities would you like to have participated: how would they help you in the future?"

3. **COMMUNITY INTERESTS AND ACTIVITIES**

- a. "How do you feel your current activities (school and/or out-of-school activities) will benefit you in the future?"
- b. "What would you like to accomplish in the next five years?"
- c. "Perhaps you would share with us some of your dreams for the future."
- d. "What are some of the things you would like to do upon graduation?"

4. **ACHIEVEMENTS**

- a. "How did you become interested and/or involved in the Academic Decathlon?"
- b. "What is the most difficult event in the Academic Decathlon?"
- c. "What have been the benefits of being a Decathlon team member?"

5. **INFLUENCES & VALUES**

- a. "Who do you consider to be the most influential person in your life?"
- b. "How has this person influenced your personal growth?"
- c. "What values do you consider to have most strongly influenced your life?"

6. **MISCELLANEOUS IDEAS**

- a. "What personal quality do you possess that will benefit society or your community and why?"
- b. "If you could travel anywhere, where would you go and why?"
- c. "If you could solve a social problem, what would it be, and how do you think you would solve it?"

DO NOT ASK A DECATHLETE WHAT SCHOOL THEY ATTEND OR AREA THEY REPRESENT. ALSO, AVOID ANY QUESTIONS THAT PROBE RELIGIOUS BELIEFS, DATING HABITS, PARENTAL RELATIONSHIPS, ETC.

DESCRIPTORS for INTERVIEW EVALUATION FORM - RATING SCALE

Voice is the way a speaker controls volume, clarity, and distinctness of voice to gain greater audibility. Voice should have a variety in the rate, volume, and pitch to engage interest, hold attention, and convey self-assurance.

Language Usage refers to the appropriate choice of words, proper use of grammar and correct enunciation. Language should promote clear understanding of thoughts and be appropriate for the occasion.

Interpersonal Skills are measured by the candidate's ability to establish rapport with interviewers. The candidate's response should correspond to and interact with the interviewers' questions, and he/she should stimulate an involvement with the interviewers.

Non-Verbal Language refers to the manner in which the candidate uses gestures, facial expressions, and physical involvement for effective communication. It is the indirect revelation of the candidate's real self while speaking. The candidate should speak with enthusiasm and assurance, showing interest in the interviewers and confidence in his/her responses.

Through the interview process, the individual reveals:

Problem Solving Skills
Analytical Skills

Creating/Developing Skills
Interpersonal Skills

Organizational Skills
Promotional Skills

When asking questions of the candidate, keep these skills in mind. Help the candidate to develop experience in answering questions that reveal these skills.

Manner is measured through the candidate's ability to speak with enthusiasm and assurance while showing interest in the interviewers and confidence in their reactions. The candidate should be direct in his/her response.

Listening Skills refers to the ability to analyze and interpret "what is being asked." In order to answer skillfully and address the issue being considered, the candidate must listen carefully and attentively. The candidate's responses to the questions will give an indication of his/her level of attention and ability to identify, sort, and process the information being requested.

Answering Skills refers to the ability to 1) address the issue being considered; 2) present information in a clear and concise manner; 3) organize information in a logical and sequential order; 4) adjust responses appropriately to a variety of audiences; and 5) pace conversation to convey necessary information and achieve purpose. Order, logic, imagination, intelligence, and other personal qualities are reflected in the way answers are given. A well thought-out answer engages the interviewers' attention and gives insight into the candidate's personal qualities, skills, goals and experiences. Relevant examples and illustrations support the answers. All information presented should be relevant to the question being asked.

Responses refer to the quality of the answers given. The candidate should reflect on the questions to provide thoughtful and insightful responses. A well thought-out answer engages the interviewers' attention and gives insight into the candidate's personal qualities, skills, goals, and experiences. The answers are supported by relevant examples and illustrations. All information presented should be relevant to the question being asked. The candidate should speak with certainty and conviction.

Overall Effectiveness measures the 1) nature of information provided; 2) manner in which it was communicated; 3) overall impression it created, and 4) rapport established between the interviewer and candidate. Some of the questions to consider are: Did the candidate provide the information requested in a skillful manner? Was the information relevant and meaningful? Was the candidate able to achieve a positive impression of his/her skill, experiences, and personal qualities?

Appearance refers to the appropriate attire of the candidate. It is recommended that participants dress in business professional or business casual attire.