

Schedule permitting, every ensemble attending an NSBA sanctioned contest is given a chance to attend a short session with their adjudicators from that day's preliminary performance. Critique is an opportunity for instructors and judges to share insights relative to the day's performance. While all should participate in the dialogue, critique ultimately belongs to the instructors. The instructional and design staff should guide the conversation. The following tips can help you transform your critique sessions from a seemingly compulsory recap of pre-recorded feedback into an invaluable educational experience. You are encouraged to make the most of it.

### **Preparing for Critique**

- Watch your ensemble from the perspective of the judges.
- Study and know the scoring system and philosophy.
- Listen to all commentary prior to critique.
- Organize your thoughts, questions, and discussion points in writing prior to coming into critique.

### **Use Critique to**

- Clarify comments (any that were confusing or unclear).
- Discuss places in the show in which the judge did not respond favorably.
- Discuss the score received relative to the criteria.
- Inquire about the issues and/or qualities that lead to your ranking.
- Inquire about the areas in your show that need the greatest focus or attention for continued growth.

### **What to do during Critique**

- Greet the adjudicator and introduce yourself
- Remember that body language and tone of voice communicate a great deal.
- Remember that time is limited; get down to business quickly.
- Keep conversation focused on the show, their skills, and their immediate growth and development.
- Questions about your score or rankings are perfectly acceptable and appropriate; just remember that prolonged conversations about numbers may not be the most effective use of your ensemble's time.
- Actively listen to feedback from adjudicators; take notes as necessary.
- Don't be surprised if the judge's recall is hesitant. Give the judge as much information as possible to get you both targeted on the same topic.

### **What Not to do During a Critique**

- Don't arrive unprepared.
- Never ask "What did you think?" or "Tell me more." Adjudicators have already done both with the commentary they provided.
- Avoid 'micro detail' discussions. Questions about specific phrases typically cannot be answered to an instructor's satisfaction after a full day of judging.
- Don't dwell on unproductive avenues of dialogue; move on to the next topic.
- Avoid unprofessional behavior or personal attacks (they do more damage than you could ever imagine).

### **What to do after Critique**

- Reflect on what went well, what didn't go well, and what you'd like to do differently next time.
- Use the NSBA surveys to provide feedback on the adjudicators and commentary. Your insight is very valuable, and will help NSBA in deciding who to continue to invite to Nebraska.

---

We should also dispel a myth surrounding critique. Some instructors and designers feel they will offend an adjudicator if they choose not to attend critique. The only time that this is really true is when an instructor has arrived at critique unprepared to effectively use the time. If there's something to be gained by participating, make the most of it; if there's little to discuss, don't waste anyone's time.

Our final piece of advice is to learn from one another. This kind of feedback loop is highly unusual in activities such as ours. One-on-one time with adjudicators has become rare. Treasure the educational opportunity, work hard to maximize the value this occasion affords, and keep an open mind.