



# SPEECH ARTS

*Ever since humans started sitting around campfires to tell stories, we've been practicing Speech Arts. It is as central to our lives now as it was then.*

*Every person needs to read, and every person needs to speak – practicing this art is a way to develop both of those skills. It gives students a performance opportunity and a creative outlet, as well as a practical life skill.*

## What are Speech Arts?

Speech Arts makes literature come to life! Speech arts is a discipline or skill that includes speech writing and public speaking; improvisation; storytelling; literary analysis; and the dynamic and effective performance of poetry, prose, and drama. It includes the study of vocal variety, body language and physicality, eye focus, characterization, and emotional awareness, in addition to speech structure and the organization of ideas.



## Saskatchewan Music Festival Association

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***Providing excellence in music and speech arts through competitive festivals.***

**[www.smfa.ca](http://www.smfa.ca)**





## “Speech Arts” can be:

### **CHORAL SPEAKING**

A group performing a piece of poetry or a story together. The group is conducted, and the piece may include everyone speaking together, mixed with individual (or small group) spoken lines.

### **POETRY**

This is the best place to start! Choose a poem, memorize it, and perform it in a way that will communicate the poet’s meaning to your audience.

### **PROSE**

Prose is anything that is not a play or a poem. It might be a short story (performed for memory) or a portion of a book. Be sure to pick a portion that stands alone well without the rest of the book around it!

### **PUBLIC SPEAKING**

Student prepares a speech on a topic of their own choosing, and delivers the speech to an audience. Prompt cards should be used.

### **SACRED READING**

A passage is read from the Bible or other sacred works. Specific passages to select from are available in the Syllabus and selections do not need to be memorized.

### **SOLO SCENE**

A part of a play is performed where only one person speaks.

It can be from Shakespeare or from any other play....but keep your audience and setting in mind and be sure to choose something appropriate. Costume and (limited) props may be used.

### **STORYTELLING**

Selections may be from a book or from oral tradition. The piece should not be memorized but should be told naturally.

## What is the Saskatchewan Music Festival Association?

The Saskatchewan Music Festival Association (established in 1908) is committed to promoting excellence in music and speech arts by providing performance and educational opportunities through competitive music festivals in the Province of Saskatchewan. In addition to the production of 47 district music festivals, SMFA provides a provincial Syllabus, workshops, entrance to the annual Provincial Competitions, Concerto Competition and Opera Competition. Local festivals are organized by volunteers and judged by qualified professional adjudicators.

## Why get involved in Speech Arts?

Speech arts directly align with the three goals of the Saskatchewan K-12 English Language Arts curricula.

1. **Comprehend and Respond (CR)** – Students will develop their abilities to view, listen to, read, comprehend, and respond to a variety of contemporary and traditional grade-level-appropriate texts in a variety of forms (oral, print, and other media) from First Nations, Métis, and other cultures for a variety of purposes including for learning, interest, and enjoyment.
2. **Compose and Create (CC)** – Students will develop their abilities to speak, write, and use other forms of representation to explore and present thoughts, feelings, and experiences in a variety of forms for a variety of purposes and audiences.
3. **Assess and Reflect (AR)** – Students will develop their abilities to assess and reflect on their own language skills, discuss the skills of effective viewers, listeners, readers, representers, speakers, and writers, and set goals for future improvement.

*(Ministry of Education, 2010)*

## For students of any age and level of ability!

Through preparing for and performing in speech arts, students develop their ability to speak with purpose to an audience. The SMFA Syllabus has speech arts classes beginning at 8 years of age and continuing through to the senior level (up to age 28 competitively, but there is no age limit on performing for adjudication only). Some District Festivals have added classes for students as young as 5 years old!

# How does Speech Arts Enrich Students?

- Speech arts studies help students gain the skills and techniques that will enable them to become more confident speakers and give them an increased awareness of the power and flexibility of their natural voices. Because speech arts use the tools of literature and theatre to practice good vocal and performance habits, they also help students become more critical and creative thinkers and encourage them to explore and express their creativity.
- Learning speech arts gives students the skills and confidence to be clear communicators in a variety of speaking situations, from conversation to interview settings to professional presentations and appearances. The fear of public speaking has long been understood as the number one phobia among individuals across society, which can make it difficult for even the most skilled, talented, and innovative individuals to express themselves before an audience. Speech arts studies help students to channel and control that fear and give them the confidence that will make them stand out among academic, personal, and professional settings. Speech arts students gain an awareness of the impact they can have on the world through the expression of their ideas.
- Speech Arts nurtures creativity and artistic expression and provides a performance opportunity for students! It is another area of excellence (like music or sports) which a student may pursue – a discipline where the end result depends on the effort applied.
- Speech Arts makes literature come to life! For those who love literature, this can be a joyful activity. For those less drawn to literature, turning it into a living-out-loud art can help them to understand its value. Like acting, like drama, **speech arts is just FUN!**

**Hmm....my students would love to perform in the music festival! How can I tie that experience into what we are already doing in my classroom?**

## Your local music festival can help

- You can do Speech Arts anywhere – to entertain your family and friends, at social events in your community, at events in your school, and at your local MUSIC FESTIVAL.
- Speech Arts and Drama has been a part of music festivals in Saskatchewan and throughout Canada since their early years a century ago. Entering your local music festival in Speech Arts gives you a chance to work towards a goal, improve your skills, have fun, and to perform in front of an audience and an adjudicator who will give you advice and helpful hints about your performance!
- The music festival has specific guidelines around choosing a piece and entering it, so go to [www.smfa.ca](http://www.smfa.ca), choose "Syllabus" and scroll to the end for the information about speech arts where you will find everything you need to know!



## Choosing selections:

- The Royal Conservatory of Music offers exams for speech arts, so they have lots of suggestions of material that is appropriate for each age. The Syllabus can be found on <http://rcmusic.ca> (under examinations). For age-appropriate selections, choose something from the list for the grade below your school grade.
- SMFA Speech Arts Resource Manual is available at [www.smfa.ca](http://www.smfa.ca).
- Consider performing literature you are currently studying at school.
- Saskatchewan has a topnotch province-wide library system, and all you need is a library card. Order a book online from any library in the province, and it will be shipped to your local library.



## Preparing your selection – turning literature into a performance

*There are lots of things to think about as you practice your piece. Here are some of them:*



### How to get started

- Choose works that appeal to you/your students. A short poem is a good place to start.
- Start with reading the selection aloud. You will find that your feelings about the piece are more clear doing it this way rather than silently. Poems, in particular, have sound devices that are more enjoyable when spoken aloud.
- Memorize the selection.
- Practice the presentation to fine-tune the performance.
- Consider having a classroom competition as practice and invite a parent to judge. Child development experts point out that a little healthy competition can be good for students.
- Encourage students to enter your local music festival (<https://smfa.ca/district-festivals>).
- Consider doing two choral group selections with the entire class and then have each student do a solo selection.
- Adjudicators will be able to provide some feedback and encouragement.

*Have fun with  
Speech Arts!*

- **Meaning!** Be sure that the student knows what they are talking about...they must understand every word.
- **Rhythm/Rhyme/Emphasis:** If the poem has rhythm, choose words to emphasize because of their meaning. (Emphasis can be anything that makes that word different – louder, softer, longer, shorter, higher lower....)
- **Punctuation/Pause/Line Ends:** Punctuation is a gift from the author so you have a chance to breathe! Pauses should enhance meaning and give the audience time to absorb your thoughts.
- **Speech Arts is Acting:** Think about emotions and characters! Students should think about how they want the audience to *feel*, and make choices about speed, volume, pitch, and facial expression based on that.
- **Character/Focus:** If the selection involves different characters, use a different style of speech or posture for each one. It also helps if students choose an area on the back wall to focus their eyes when speaking as one character, and a different spot for another. (This is called “character placement focus”.) If the speaker is alone, don’t make eye contact with the audience – look slightly above them (“closed focus”). If speaking as a storyteller, do make eye contact (open focus).
- **Movement/Gesture/Actions:** Movements should enhance or add meaning and should appear natural. Remember, the WORDS are always the most important thing.
- **Poetry Out Loud:** Poets choose words not just for their meaning, but for their sound as well. Notice and enjoy sharing those sounds with the audience.
- **Be heard:** Ensure the student is speaking loudly, slowly, and clearly enough to be heard and understood.
- **Introductions:** Always introduce the selection by saying the title and author. For a scene or a piece of prose, explain a little bit of the story to help the audience enjoy the selection.
- **Your VOICE matters!** Have students use their voice in a healthy way by standing in alignment, with both feet on the floor and head floating up, let the breath go deep inside the body, and think about projection and resonance to make the voice louder – without shouting.



Public Speaking is a skill that is used throughout your life!