



RULE BOOK 2026



Word - The Front Line Rule Book

Registering a team:

- A team consists of 4-6 members that all go to the same high school (years 9-13)
- Teams must be registered prior to Regional Heats with 2 teams maximum per school.
- If your team makes it through Regionals, the team roster can be adjusted prior to Semi Finals.
- If you have a team of 4 or 5 you can top your team up to 6 members, as long as they are registered prior to Semi Finals.

If team members drop out of the competition:

- At any stage of the competition if team members need to drop out they can be replaced under the following conditions:
 - As long as you have the minimum requirement of 4 members, you do not need to replace them to continue in the competition
 - A team of 4 can replace 1 team member
 - A team of 5 or 6 can replace up to 2 team members



Regional Heats:

- Each team is required to perform 3 poems.
- Poets must perform their own work and cannot read a poem on behalf of someone else. Plagiarised material will result in disqualification.
- At least 3 poets from each team must perform at regional heats. Teams can perform solos, duets, or group pieces. Although duets and group pieces are not necessary for Regional Heats, it will be for teams that advance to Semi-Finals and Grand Slam.
- Poems do not need to be memorised at this stage of the competition.
- Each poem should be between 1-4 minutes. Poems outside of this time frame will not receive any penalties, but may be difficult to judge if they are too long or too short.
- No accompaniment by sound, props, or costume is allowed.
- Poems which have been performed in previous years of Word – The Front Line competitions cannot be used in the current Word – The Front Line competition.
- Bullying, heckling, or intentional disruption of another team's performance will result in disqualification.



Stand Up Poetry Open Mics

For many poets, Word-The Front line may be the first time they have performed publicly. In order to be prepared for the Semi Finals Teams will want to take the stage before they compete. Not only does this help with nerves but it also gives you a chance to try out new work in front of an audience. Therefore ALL TEAMS are required to attend one of our Stand Up Poetry Open Mic Nights OR a related event.

Semi-Finals & Grand Slam:

- Each team will perform in 1 semi-final heat.
- There will be 3 rounds in each heat. Each team will perform 1 poem in each round.
- By the end of a heat, all team members need to have been represented in both writing and performance. This means that each team will need at least 1 team piece per heat. This is so every team member will be represented on Stage.
- A team piece is defined as any poem with more than one voice including duos, trios, or up to full team poems.
- At the end of each Semi-Finals, the top 3 teams will make it to the Grand Slam.
- Once teams have reached the Grand Slam they are allowed to repeat any poems from the Semi-Finals. This means that teams will need a minimum of 3 poems for the entire competition.
- There will be 3 rounds in the Grand Slam. Each team will perform 1 poem in each round.
- All team members (4-6) need to have performed by the end of round 3. This means you will need to use at least 1 team piece in the Grand Slam.
- Poems should be between between 2:50-3:10. After this, a 10 second grace period will be given. Poems outside of this time frame will be incur point deductions as follows:

Poem Time	Point Deduction
2:10-2:19	3
2:20-2:29	2
2:30-2:39	1
2:40-2:49	0.5
2:50-3:20	No Deduction
3:21-3:30	0.5
3:31-3:40	1
3:41-3:50	2

- Poems must be memorised and performed, not read off phones or paper.
- Plagiarised material will result in disqualification.
- Sampling or quoting other work within your poems is ok, as long as credit is given to the source. E.g. Maya Angelou once said “there is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you”

Semi-Finals & Grand Slam Continued:

- Poets cannot use props in their performance, this includes objects, recordings, instruments, costumes, and performers outside of the team.
 - **Objects:** Only objects that are readily available to everyone can be used (i.e. the microphone, mic stand, the stage itself). No items brought onto stage on your person can be used to enhance your performance (i.e. an article of clothing, jewelry, wallet, phone etc.)
 - **Recordings/instruments:** Everything must be performed live. Beat boxing, singing, stomping, clapping are allowed. No instruments permitted.
 - **Costumes:** A costume is defined by any article of clothing that is worn by a performer that directly enhances the material in their poem. Articles of clothing that hold significant religious or cultural meaning that are worn by the performer on a regular basis are permitted. Changing clothes between rounds to enhance the message of your poem is a violation of this rule. School uniforms, or dressing in a uniformed way is fine.

***If there are any doubts around this rule, please seek advice from your coach.**

- Bullying, heckling, or intentional disruption of another team's performance will result in disqualification.
- Poems which have been performed in previous years of Word – The Front Line competitions cannot be used in the current Word – The Front Line competition. This includes at the Regional Heats.
- An original poem performed at the Regional Heats can be used in Semi-Finals and Grand Slam, as long as they adhere to all of the rules.
- Word – The Front Line is an uncensored space, however hate speech will not be tolerated. This includes racism, sexism, xenophobia, homophobia, or discrimination of any kind purposefully directed in a harmful way. This will result in disqualification.
- **HAVE FUN.**

