

A. Poems and Performance

1. Poems can be on how Maya Angelou has influenced you, about her in general, or one of her pieces of work.
2. Each poet must perform work that he or she has created.
3. No props. Generally, poets are allowed to use their given environment and the accoutrements it offers — microphones, mic stands, the stage itself, chairs on stage, a table or bar top, the aisle — as long as these accoutrements are available to other competitors as well. These things will be provided.
4. Poets may not use musical instruments. However, they are allowed to use background music INSTRUMENTALS (do not contain words/lyrics)
5. No costumes.

B. Sampling

1. It is acceptable for poets to incorporate, imitate, or otherwise "signify on" the words, lyrics, or tune of someone else (commonly called "sampling") in their own work. If they are only riffing off another's words, they should expect only healthy controversy; if on the other hand, they are ripping off another poet's words, they should expect scornful contumely and to receive the same repercussion as if using a prop. This includes a retroactive score of two points less than the lowest scoring poem in that bout following a formal protest enforced by the protest committee.

C. The Three-Minute Rule

Single Performances

1. No performance should last longer than three minutes.
2. After three minutes, there is a 10-second grace period (up to and including 3:10.00). Starting at 3:10.01, a penalty is automatically deducted from each poet's overall score according to the following schedule:
 - o 3:10 and under = no penalty
 - o 3:10.01–3:20 = -0.5
 - o 3:20.01–3:30 = -1.0
 - o 3:30.01–3:40 = -1.5
 - o 3:40.01–3:50 = -2.0
 - o and so on [-0.5 for every 10 seconds over 3:10]
3. There will be one timekeeper recording time.

2 or More people

1. No performance should last longer than TWO minutes per performer.
2. After two minutes, there is a 10-second grace period (up to and including 2:10.00). Starting at 2:10.01, a penalty is automatically deducted from each poet's overall score according to the following schedule:
 - a. 2:10 and under = no penalty
 - b. 2:10.01–2:20 = -0.5
 - c. 2:20.01–2:30 = -1.0
 - d. 2:30.01–2:40 = -1.5
 - e. 2:40.01–2:50 = -2.0
 - f. and so on [-0.5 for every 10 seconds over 2:10]

D. Language

1. Adult content may be used, but NO profanity may be used.
2. The words "Damn" and "Hell" are accepted.

E. Judging

1. All efforts shall be made to select four judges who will be fair. However, should it be impossible to select four impartial judges after following the Protocol for Judge Selection, either by lack of persons or disagreements from the teams during the "look see," three judges may be used rather than five. In this case no scores shall be dropped and these three judges make up the score out of thirty points. This should be the absolute last resort after all of the Protocol for Judge Selection has been followed.
1. Upon confirmation, the judges will: (i) be given a set of printed instructions on how to judge a poetry slam, (ii) have a private, verbal crash course by the emcee or house manager on the do's and don'ts of poetry slam judging (where they can ask questions)
2. Having heard, read, or otherwise experienced these three sets of instructions; a judge cannot be challenged over a score. Complaints, problems, and/or disagreements regarding the impartiality of the judges should be brought privately to the attention of the emcee or house manager BEFORE the bout begins. The "look see" qualifies as before the bout begins. Having heard and understood the complaint, the house manager or emcee will then make a decision (also privately) that cannot be further challenged.

F. Scoring

1. The judges will give each poem a score from 0 to 10, with 10 being the highest or "perfect" score.
2. They will be encouraged to use one decimal place to preclude the likelihood of a tie