MICHIGAN DECA™

Competitive Event Training Handbook

Written for Student Members
by Student Members

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INTRODUCTION TO DECA

The DECA Basics

Aryan Shah, 2022-2023 Michigan DECA Vice President of Career Development

Hello! My name is Aryan Shah, and I am the Vice President of Career Development at Michigan DECA. Annika Yoder, our president, and I have put together this handbook to better prepare students for DECA competition. But before we jump into it, we should start from the basics:

What is DECA?

> *DECA prepares emerging leaders and entrepreneurs for careers in marketing, finance, hospitality, and management in high schools and colleges around the globe. With a 75-year history, DECA has impacted the lives of more than ten million students, educators, school administrators, and business professionals since it was founded in 1946. Their strong connection with our organization has resonated into a brand that people identify as a remarkable experience in the preparation of emerging leaders and entrepreneurs. DECA's programs and activities have constantly evolved as we use the latest technology and apply cutting-edge educational research. Our core focus has remained consistent and is captured in our mission.*
>
> *DECA is organized into two unique student divisions, each with programs designed to address the learning styles, interests and focus of its members. The High School Division includes more than 173,000 members in 3,200 schools. The Collegiate Division includes over 4,000 members in 200 colleges and universities.*
>
> *DECA Inc. is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit student organization with more than 177,000 members in all 50 United States, Canada, Guam, Puerto Rico and Germany. The United States Congress, the United States Department of Education and state, district and international departments of education authorize DECA's programs.*

There's all the facts right off of the DECA website. And that might be what DECA is from a factual standpoint, but DECA's magic comes from what you make it mean to you.

For me, DECA gave me confidence and purpose. I know better than ever who I am and what I want to do because of DECA. After that, I realized the potential effect that DECA can have on students. I applied for the chapter development side of my DECA school board. I led my school's training program and worked to prepare students for competition better. Today, I'm here, making this training handbook for every DECA member, so more people can get from DECA what it gave me. I've seen DECA's effect on a person firsthand, and I treasure the platform.

In short, the essence of DECA is the competence, innovation, integrity, and teamwork that has the potential to develop your character. Throughout this handbook, our Michigan DECA officer team will be doing our best to bring the essence of DECA to you!

What Does DECA Competition Look Like

Annika Yoder, 2022-2023 Michigan DECA President

Role-plays

Role-plays are the most popular events to compete in within DECA. They are also the best option for new members because they allow members to study a specific category, and hone-in on their presentation, and overall competition. Role-plays are interview-style competitions ranging from 20 minutes for an individual event to 30 minutes for a team event. In an individual event, you are given 10 minutes to review the topic and problem and to come up with a solution to said problem. The last 10 minutes are for the actual presentation portion. A competitor will go over performance indicators, present their solution to a judge, and will be graded based on a rubric. A team role-play event can be done by two members rather than one and works very similarly to an individual event. In team events, competitors are given 15 minutes to prepare, and 15 minutes to present. There are fourteen individual role-play events and ten team role-play events, meaning that no matter what a member's interests are, they will be able to find an event they are passionate about.

The DECA Exam

DECA exams are a staple of DECA competition. All role-play events require an event, while many written events also require an exam as well. Exam content will be dependent on the event a member is competing in, with tests made up of specific information related to the event. For example, if a student is competing in Marketing Communications, the test they will be given is the Marketing Cluster Exam. Tests are made up of 100 questions and Michigan students are given 100 minutes to complete the exam (90 minutes for an exam at the International Career Development Conference). DECA tests work similarly to the SAT where wrong answers do not count against the tester, so it’s important to answer EVERY question, even if you are not sure of the answer. There are various methods to prepare for DECA Exams which we will explore later.

Written Events

Written events can come in many different forms ranging from 10-page papers to 20-page papers. They can be done individually or in teams of up to three. Similar to role-plays, written events include a presentation to a judge; however, they differ in their preparation time. While role-plays are given 10-15 minutes, written events consist of a paper that members are given months to write, dependent on when members begin writing. Some written events require a DECA test as well. However, not all of them do, so if a member is looking into doing a written event, that is a factor to consider early on. We recommend that written events should be saved for older members and more established chapters as they are an event that requires more responsibility, knowledge, and experience. There are also multiple different written events, so members have the opportunity to participate in an event they have an interest in.

The Importance of Public Speaking

One last basic idea of DECA competition is public speaking. No matter what event a member decides to compete in they will always need to have public speaking skills. For younger members, this can be a difficult skill to cultivate, however, the benefits are incomparable. Members can study for tests, and write outstanding papers, but if they do not have the public speaking skills to match they will not reach their full potential. It's incredibly important that chapters highlight this fact, and make an excessive effort at growing members' confidence and public speaking. Members should never forget the power they hold with their words, and the impact their words can have.

DECA+

One other great additional resource is DECA+, which Michigan DECA is providing to all chapters. DECA+ provides recommended competition practice schedules, vocabulary and performance indicator flip cards, practice exams, and more resources to help DECA members get the edge.

" If you don't know what you want to achieve in your presentation your audience never will" -Harvey Diamond

All about Career Clusters

Caleb Grimshaw, 2022-2023 Michigan DECA Vice President of Public Relations

After joining DECA, one of the most important parts of selecting your competitive event is your Career Cluster. What is a career cluster you might ask? DECA has four main career clusters: Marketing, Business Management and Administration, Finance, and Hospitality and Tourism. There are also multiple events in Entrepreneurship as well. Picking the right career cluster is important because you will be spending lots of time preparing and practicing for your event. Therefore, you should pick a career cluster that aligns with your interests and passions.

Marketing- Events in Marketing relate to the promotion or selling of a product, so If you have an idea to market a fashion line, an automotive industry, or even a professional sports team, there is an opportunity for you. Since DECA is centered around marketing, it makes sense there is the largest variety of events in this category.

Business Management and Administration- Events in Business Management and Administration relate to the complete oversight and operation of a business. These events can range from Human Resources to United States Business Law and Ethics. If you have leadership and complex problem solving skills, this could be the perfect career cluster for you.

Finance- Events in Finance range from the stock market, acquisition of capital, to general accounting principles. If you are a person who is economically minded and enjoys working with numbers, definitely consider this for your career cluster.

Hospitality and Tourism- Events in Hospitality and Tourism relate to hotel management and restaurant and food services. These events overall focus on customer service interactions and managing the operations of hospitality related businesses. If you enjoy customer service and travel, this could be a great option for your career cluster.

Entrepreneurship- Events in Entrepreneurship incorporate identifying opportunities and creating value out of them. If you have ever wanted to start your own business, or can identify markets of people well, then an event in this career cluster would be ideal.

TYPES OF COMPETITIVE EVENTS

Team Decision Making Events

Nithin Jayaraju, 2022-2023 Michigan DECA Vice President of Chapter Development

Team Decision Making Events are a way to work with another to analyze one or a combination of elements essential to the effective operation of a business in a specific career area in DECA. It is designed for two participants and comprises two major parts: the written cluster exam and the role-play with a judge. These events are a great way to improve your teamwork abilities and give the opportunity to meet new people or work with friends.

Scoring - At the District Conference, both competitors will take a written cluster exam. The average of the two scores is worth one-third, and the role-play is worth two-thirds of the total score. Both teammates will take a written cluster exam, and the average of their two scores is worth one-third. The team will participate in one role-play at the District Conference, and two role-plays at the State and International Career Development Conferences. Each role-play is worth one-third of the total score.

Written Cluster Exam- The exam will consist of 100 multiple choice questions. For the District and State Conferences, the exam will be administered by the chapter online prior to the conference. For the International Conference, the exam will be administered on-site during the event briefing. In TDM's, both competitors will take the same 100 question multiple choice test separately.

Preparation Time (30 Minutes) - The participants will receive the written scenario and will have 30 minutes to read the written scenario and create a presentation for the judged presentation. The written scenario will contain the prompt that the presentation should answer, both the roles the participants will play, and the role that the judge will play. The written scenario will also contain performance indicators—tasks that the participants should accomplish during the role-play, as they will be judged on those performance indicators.

During this time, the participants work together to create a cohesive presentation to the judge. They are allowed to make notes, drawings, or any other aids that can be achieved with a writing utensil and paper. Only items created during the preparation time may be given to the judge.

Presentation (15 minutes) - At this time, the participants will speak to a judge and present their ideas and solutions to the prompt given in the written scenario. Participants should remember the roles that they and the judge are supposed to be playing. There will not always be a warning when the time limit is almost up—remember to stay mindful of the time so that the presentation is not cut off. After the presentation, the judge will collect all aids and tools used (if applicable) and score the presentation using a rubric of the performance indicators and presentation skills out of 100 points.

Individual Series Events

Kristin Choi, 2022-2023 Michigan DECA Vice President of Community Service

Individual Series Events are the most common type of competitive event in DECA. It is designed for one participant and is composed of two major parts: the written cluster exam and a role-play with a judge. Some individual series events are sponsored by companies and offer cash prizes for placing within the top-three competitors at ICDC.

Scoring - At the District Conference, the written cluster exam is worth one-third, and the role-play is worth two-thirds of the total score. At the State and International Conferences, the written cluster exam is worth one-third. The participant will participate in two role-plays and each is worth one-third of the total score.

Written Cluster Exam - The exam will consist of 100 multiple-choice questions. For the District and State Conferences, the exam will be administered by the chapter online prior to the conference. For the International Conference, the exam will be administered on-site during the event briefing.

Preparation Time (10 minutes) - The participant will receive the written scenario and will have 10 minutes to read the written scenario and create a presentation to the judge. The written scenario will contain the prompt that the presentation should answer, the role the participant will play, and the role that the judge will play. The written scenario will also contain performance indicators—tasks that the participant should accomplish during the role-play, as they will be judged on those performance indicators. During this time, the participant is allowed to make notes, drawings, or any other aid that can be achieved with a writing utensil and paper.

Presentation (10 minutes) - At this time, the participant will speak to a judge and present their ideas and solutions to the prompt given in the written scenario. Participants should remember the roles that they and the judge are supposed to be playing. There will not always be a warning when the time limit is almost up—remember to stay mindful of the time so that the presentation is not cut off. After the presentation, the judge will collect all aids and tools used (if applicable) and score the presentation out of 100 points.

Principles of Business Administration Events

Jecholiah Marriott, 2022-2023 Michigan DECA Vice President of Leadership Development

Description - DECA's Principles of Business Administration Events are events meant to assess a first-year DECA competitor's knowledge and skills deemed necessary for success in the areas of marketing, finance, hospitality, and business management and administration. Competitors will have the opportunity to compete at the district and state levels, with goals of making it all the way to the International Career Development Conference.

Competition Format - Principle Events allow for only one competitor, a business administration core exam, and one role play. At the International Career Development Conference, a second role-play is only required if the competitor qualifies as a finalist. Competitors are given ten minutes to prepare for the role play, and ten minutes to present in front of their judge.

Career Clusters: There are four competitive areas for the Principle Events:

- **Principles of Business Management and Administration:** This area will comprise of language, and questions, related to careers in Administrative Services, Business Information Management, General Management, Human Resources Management, and Operations Management.
- **Principles of Finance:** This area will comprise of language, and questions, related to careers in Accounting, Banking Services, Business Finance, Insurance and Securities, and Investments.
- **Principles of Hospitality and Tourism:** This area will comprise of language, and questions, related to careers in Hotels, Restaurants, and Tourism and Travel.
- **Principles of Marketing:** This area will comprise of language, and questions, related to careers in Marketing Communications, Marketing Management, Marketing Research, Merchandising, and Professional Selling.

Choosing Your Event

El Auria Atienza, 2022-2023 Michigan DECA State Secretary

The range of options DECA offers can make it difficult to decipher the best DECA competitive event for you. Using either the QR code below or the following link https://brushe.jebbit.com/ts71oiza, you can narrow down which competitive event you may thrive in. As you take the quiz, keep in mind that the results can inspire you to try a new competitive event, or may guide you towards other events that expand your understanding of marketing, finance, hospitality, and management. Remember to answer truthfully in order to receive the best results. Have fun and we hope this simplifies determining a competitive event.

THE DECA EXAM

Test-Taking Strategies

Reese Blackenge, Wyandotte Roosevelt High School

Taking your DECA comprehensive exam can be a nerve-wracking experience. However, there are many strategies to help make the process less overwhelming. Follow these tips and you will be prepared to ace it!

First, the best thing you can do before a test is study. The most important tip to keep in mind when prepping is to take advantage of the practice tests that DECA has to offer. These practice exams are set up the same way your test will be, and they involve very similar questions. When thinking through these questions, you will apply the same concepts that you will use on the test. If there are concepts you don't understand, be sure to write them down and study them before test day. Luckily, for all DECA members, there is a personalized practice test for each event. Use this resource to refine your knowledge prior to test day.

On test day, there are still ways you can help yourself succeed. On the morning of the test, make sure to eat a well-balanced breakfast to stay focused through the duration of the exam. Do your best to sit in a place with no distractions. Not only can distractions shake your focus, but they can also increase stress. Take a deep breath, you got this!

When the exam begins, you will have 100 minutes (for the District and State Career Development Conferences, and 90 minutes for the International Career Development Conference) to complete 100 multiple-choice questions.

Remember these strategies when working on your test:

1. Read questions through twice: pick out all the words you find important to gain a better understanding of what the question is truly asking you to do.
2. Use the process of elimination and common sense: you know more than you think you do! If an answer makes zero sense to you, there is a good chance you can eliminate it. A lot of the

time, correct answers have a standout word that relates to a word or concept in the question, be sure to watch for connections.

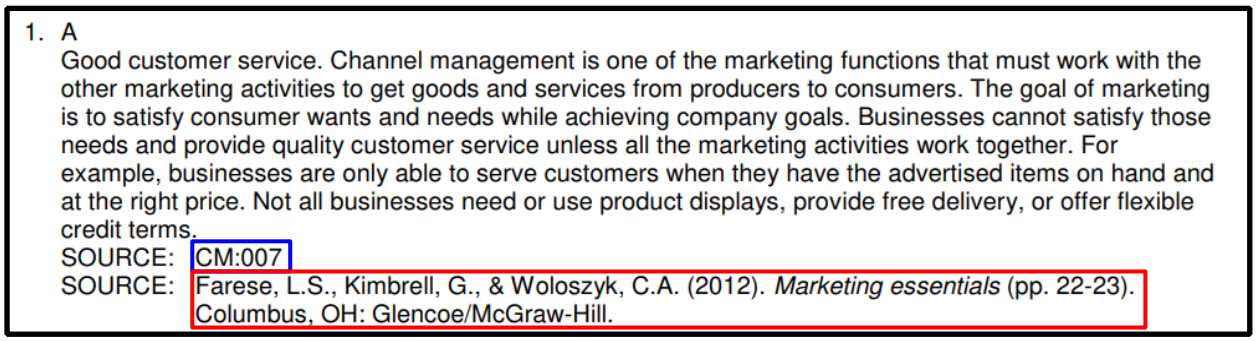
3. If you are stuck, move on: if you find yourself stuck on a problem for a significant amount of time, move on to the next one and come back later. There is no point wasting time on one question you may get wrong, when there are ninety-nine others you may get right.
4. Take a deep breath: you will be fine. Don’t let your test anxiety rush you or increase your nerves- you got this!

Using DECA Tests to Study

Laasya Vadrevu, Northville High School

The best way for you to study for a DECA exam is to take practice tests using the resources available on deca.org, in DECA+, and Michigan DECA's practice test portal Using those exams, simulate the testing environment by giving yourself 100 minutes to finish the exam while sitting in a quiet environment. The exam will be conducted through the AnswerWrite platform, so you should practice with that if your school chapter gives you access (ask your Advisor how to login to Michigan DECA's practice test portal).

Aside from simulating the exam conditions, one of the main benefits that you get from taking a practice exam is that you can familiarize yourself with the types of questions asked, as several may reappear on future exams. However, the biggest advantage of using a practice exam to study is the answer key that is provided at the end of every DECA exam. As shown in the image below, every question has an explanation of why that specific answer is correct.



1. A
Good customer service. Channel management is one of the marketing functions that must work with the other marketing activities to get goods and services from producers to consumers. The goal of marketing is to satisfy consumer wants and needs while achieving company goals. Businesses cannot satisfy those needs and provide quality customer service unless all the marketing activities work together. For example, businesses are only able to serve customers when they have the advertised items on hand and at the right price. Not all businesses need or use product displays, provide free delivery, or offer flexible credit terms.
SOURCE: CM:007
SOURCE: Farese, L.S., Kimbrell, G., & Woloszyk, C.A. (2012). *Marketing essentials* (pp. 22-23). Columbus, OH: Glencoe/McGraw-Hill.

Using the first two letters of the code under the answer explanation (referred to in the blue outline), you can identify the instructional area of the question that you missed by referencing the letters with the table below. For example, the code in the question above is *CM:007*. Using the table, you can identify that this question is from the *Channel Management* instructional area. If you consistently have trouble with questions from a certain instructional area, it may indicate that you need to specifically study that instructional area.

Performance Indicators

Instructional Area	Relevant Code
Business Law	BL
Channel Management	CM
Communications	CO
Customer Relations	CR
Economics	EC
Emotional Intelligence	EI
Entrepreneurship	EN
Financial Analysis	FI
Human Resources Management	HR
Information Management	NF
Market Planning	MP
Marketing	MK
Marketing-Information Management	IM
Operations	OP
Pricing	PI
Product/Service Management	PM
Professional Development	PD
Promotion	PR
Selling	SE
Strategic Management	SM

An additional resource to use can be found through the second source found under each exam explanation (outlined in red). Every DECA exam question comes from a specific text, so it could be beneficial to study from those texts. Otherwise there are several other resources that you can use to study for specific instructional areas on your exam, such as Quizlet and Competition University. Overall, the exam can be a very powerful tool to use to study, as long as you know how to use it properly.

DECA

ROLE-PLAYS

Instructional Areas and Performance Indicators

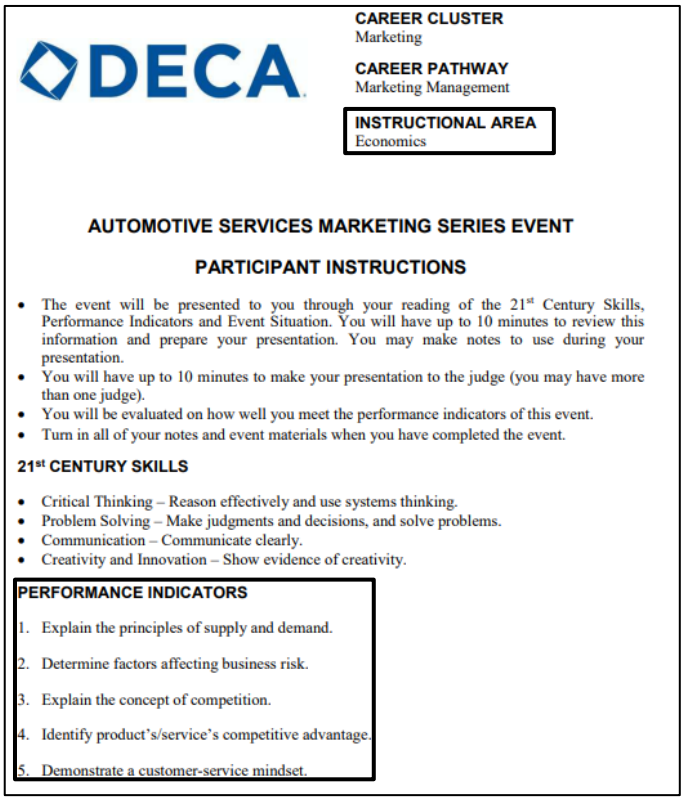
Laasya Vadrevu, Northville High School

You may remember the term “Instructional Area” from when we were discussing exam strategies and exam blueprints. A successful business must do many internal functions to ensure the success of their company. DECA separates these different functions of business into “Instructional Areas” which are used to organize the different types of case study you can encounter in a DECA role-play or exam. Within each of these instructional areas, there are set “Performance Indicators” that outline a specific principle that is essential for that instructional area. Each cluster has its own specific instructional areas and performance indicators that are listed in a document found on DECA.org.

Knowing your performance indicators is very important, especially for a role-play. Every role-play is assigned a specific instructional area that the situation described is from (outlined in red below). There are also 5-7 different performance indicators (outlined in blue below) that you need to discuss during that role-play, so it is very important to know your performance indicators. It may at first seem intimidating to learn every performance indicator in the Cluster Guides, however once you know how to navigate them, what specific areas to look for, and what resources you can use it becomes much easier to navigate.

You can download sample events from

https://www.deca.org/compete



DECA

CAREER CLUSTER
Marketing

CAREER PATHWAY
Marketing Management

INSTRUCTIONAL AREA
Economics

AUTOMOTIVE SERVICES MARKETING SERIES EVENT

PARTICIPANT INSTRUCTIONS

- The event will be presented to you through your reading of the 21st Century Skills, Performance Indicators and Event Situation. You will have up to 10 minutes to review this information and prepare your presentation. You may make notes to use during your presentation.
- You will have up to 10 minutes to make your presentation to the judge (you may have more than one judge).
- You will be evaluated on how well you meet the performance indicators of this event.
- Turn in all of your notes and event materials when you have completed the event.

21st CENTURY SKILLS

- Critical Thinking – Reason effectively and use systems thinking.
- Problem Solving – Make judgments and decisions, and solve problems.
- Communication – Communicate clearly.
- Creativity and Innovation – Show evidence of creativity.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

1. Explain the principles of supply and demand.
2. Determine factors affecting business risk.
3. Explain the concept of competition.
4. Identify product’s/service’s competitive advantage.
5. Demonstrate a customer-service mindset.

Starting off, every guide is organized by Tiers that determine which events use which Performance Indicators. This means that events like Team Decision Making have different Performance Indicators than Individual Series events. Every event type,

including the Principles events, uses Performance Indicators from Tier 1. This essentially is the Business Administration Core Performance Indicators, and Principles events only use this Tier of Indicators. Tier 2 includes Performance Indicators included in all other role-play-based events, such as Team Decision Making and Individual Series. This tier includes performance indicators specific to each Career Cluster. Finally, Tier 3 is specific to Individual Series Events. It includes performance indicators specific to the Career Pathway of the role-play event you are in. The pathway specific to your event can be found in the beginning of Tier 3 in each guide. Each Cluster guide includes many performance indicators, but you will not have to encounter every performance indicator in the guide for your specific event, so you should only study the relevant performance indicators for your event based on the Tier and Career Pathway.

Additionally, every fall DECA announces the Instructional Areas for the District Competitions happening that year. DECA tells you exactly what Instructional Area you will get in the role-play for a Principles and Team Decision Making Event. For an Individual Series Event, DECA gives you two potential Instructional Areas that your Districts role-play will fall within. It is important to know all Performance Indicators for your event because if you advance to the State Competition or even the International Competition, you can receive role-plays from any Instructional Area for the Career Pathway your event is in.

Although there are many performance indicators in every Career Cluster, it is very manageable to learn them. There are many different study sets with Performance Indicators on Quizlet that are found by searching for the DECA career cluster. Also, if your chapter has a subscription for Competition University, there are many practice quizzes and videos for every Instructional Area. Also, just by searching a Performance Indicator on Google you can find many additional resources that can help you. Knowing all of the Performance Indicators within your instructional area is essential for success in competition, so understanding what they are and how to navigate them is the first step to winning that DECA glass at ICDC!

Anatomy of a Role-Play

Aryan Shah, 2022-2023 Michigan DECA Vice President of Career Development

and Annika Yoder, 2022-2023 Michigan DECA President

Introduction

First impressions are always important, especially when you are limited in time to 10-15 minutes. You want to make sure your introduction is clear and concise yet friendly. So, start with some type of greeting, then move onto your name. Next, you want to introduce some type of purpose or schedule for the meeting. Here is an outline:

Greeting: Hello, how are you?

Name: My name is FIRST NAME, LAST NAME

Purpose: Thank you for meeting with me today to discuss…

Performance Indicators

Performance Indicators are the targets you need to hit during your role-play. Think of them as the main ideas. If you were writing an essay, they would be your body paragraphs. A good rule of thumb is to have 2-4 bullet points under each Performance Indicator as sub-points to talk about when describing the Performance Indicator. Additionally, you cannot expect to know everything your performance indicators may be mentioning. It is ok to not know everything. A big portion of role-plays when you first begin is faking it until you make it.

Visuals

There are endless examples of visuals you can create during your preparation time to better your role-play. One important factor of role-plays is creating a sense of realness, and visuals do that. Adding visuals adds a sense of validity to whatever argument or point you are trying to make. Visuals do not need to be based on facts, since you cannot prepare these prior to your preparation time (only items created during your preparation time can be handed to a judge), they are just there to strengthen the argument you are making.

Examples of visuals include:

- Graphs
- Studies cited from a reliable source (*like the American Marketing Association or Better Business Bureau)*
- Brochures
- Pie Charts
- Business Cards
- Examples of social media posts
- SWOT Analysis
- Any other Business Analysis

Closing

There are a few key points to hit when you close your role-plays. The judge has some predefined questions for you that are written on the judging sheet. When you are finishing up with the role-play, make sure to ASK THEM if they have any questions (you know they're going to) and leave time for that in the end. One of the worst things that could happen is not having time for questions, because your answers to the questions are accounted for in your score. Regardless, it's good to ask the judge their questions before they ask you because they're going to ask you no matter what. Another thing that's important to do when you're closing up your role-play is to thank the judge for their time and to be polite. Don't take your judge for granted, and really make an effort to show them that you appreciate them.

21st Century Skills

Ashwit Mathur, BISV - California DECA

In DECA role-plays, 21st-century skills are aspects of your presentation which are graded based on your critical thinking, communication, creativity, and innovation. Critical thinking involves the processes of reasoning effectively and using systems thinking. In DECA role-plays, showing a logical line of reasoning is vital to success. This can be done by creating examples that are applicable to real life by assessing the business situation and proposing solutions. The second part of critical thinking is using systems thinking. Systems thinking involves understanding how every business decision has a direct impact on success and analyzing the big picture by connecting different parts of a business.

One of the most important 21st-century skills is communicating clearly to your judges in your role-plays. Proper communication will greatly help your role-plays, as your judge will be able to better understand what you are saying, and this will result in higher scores. The easiest way to effectively communicate with judges is by having a positive attitude and acting like you are truly in the shoes of a businessperson who is trying to solve a problem. Taking this one step further, you can incorporate visual gestures into your presentations in order to emphasize certain points and make your role-play more sophisticated.

In order to distinguish yourself from the competition, having creativity and innovation is extremely important. An example of exemplifying creativity in a presentation is doing something such as making a business card out of a piece of paper from your note sheet. Innovation doesn't always have to be visual; it can also be in what you say in the presentation itself. Creating acronyms or using other forms of wordplay are simple ways to impress your judge and get points for creativity.

All of these 21st-century skills helped me elevate my role-plays, and without them, I would have never won glass at ICDC. Throughout my presentations, I incorporated new ideas and styles to use 21st-century skills. One example of this is in my role-play at ICDC in which I created an acronym and then framed my entire role-play around the acronym. This helped me earn points for creativity and take

my role-play to the next level overall. By following the 21st-century skills in my role-plays, I got more points and improved my role-plays.

Confidence During a Role-Play

Ishaan Jain, 2022-2023 Michigan DECA Vice President of Business Partnerships

Confidence is the key to impressing your judge during your role-play. You can be the smartest businessperson with the best business plans in the world, but without confidence and the ability to effectively communicate your ideas, your skills are almost useless.

A major part of your role-play is making the judge believe that you know what you're talking about. How do you come across this way? Try to avoid stuttering and gap phrases such as "umm". When you say a point, don't appear unsure about it but say it as if you 100% believe in it. When you practice these tips, your ideas will sound intentional and confident.

Your body language during your role-play should appear confident, comfortable, and professional. When walking in, make sure you have good posture. Try to walk in as if you own the room. Have a firm, professional handshake. When speaking with the judge, sit up straight and maintain eye contact. Using hand gestures is a great way to appear comfortable and confident. Ask questions and engage the judge to get a break from talking and demonstrate strong communication skills.

To practice all this and your role-play skills, a recommendation would be to sit in front of your phone camera and record a practice role-play. Pretend as if the judge is on the other side of the camera. When recording, look at yourself speaking and try to see how well you're incorporating body language. When you're done recording, rewatch the video and figure out where you have to improve. Is it your tone, body posture, hand gestures, or eye contact?

Making your Role-plays Creative

Here are some quick tips that we've compiled from successful DECA members that they used to make their role-plays more creative and sophisticated.

- Use the DECA acronym to make sure that you answer each Performance Indicator (PI) equally and cover all the information.
    - **D**efine the term of the performance indicator
    - **E**xplain the concept of the performance indicator
    - **C**onnect the performance indicator back to the real situation that is the role-play
    - **A**dd-on an interesting visual
- Research recent trends in the industry for your event - be up to date with what's been going on so your role-play sounds more informed and relevant
- Make sure that you use the wording of the PI to make sure that they know what you are addressing and never repeat yourself since you don't have time. Always save time for questions at the end and if possible even use the DECA acronym in the questions but don't give them a speech
- Make sure to summarize the key ideas from my performance indicators before my solution and use these ideas in my role-play. Connecting back to the ideas from your performance indicators shows a complex understanding of the topic.
- Look at DECA vocabulary. DECA has words or expressions that are commonly used within role-plays. Make sure to become familiar with these phrases or words. The more you see them the more comfortable you will become with the concepts and topics. Faking it until you make it is a great strategy for starting out, but you do want to still feel prepared within your event.
- Try to make your visuals unique! Find out new graphs or other visuals that you can use to make your role-plays interesting for the judge, and not the same as other people's.
- Speak confidently and clearly, you may not always be completely sure about your solution, but confidence is key to success in a role-play!

DECA STORIES AND TESTIMONIALS FROM MICHIGAN'S TOP DECA WINNERS

Brooklyn Luscomb – Wyandotte Roosevelt High School

The PMSP category is unique in that you get to plan and execute an event or sale, then analyze it for the project. In my case, I had one partner, and we oversaw the execution of an entire event; this was beneficial in helping us write the paper and boosted my organizational and management skills.

Succeeding in this project required many steps, and many aspects make it unique from any other event offered through DECA. Because of its uniqueness, I believe this project has much to teach members about the professional world, making it applicable to your career and your future in DECA. Choosing to be a part of a PMSP project was the highlight of my involvement with my DECA chapter. I would recommend the experience to anyone with the opportunity to participate.

The uniqueness of this event comes from the fact that you don't just have to do research and write a paper, but you must also execute the sales project. This means that to be successful, you must research your market, plan a sales event that will appeal to your market, complete the event successfully, and then retell the execution of your event in a written paper and presentation. In my case, my partner and I were very involved with the event's research, planning, and execution; I would highly recommend being as engaged with these processes as possible because it makes the written paper and presentation much easier to write. I also believe marketing your sales project to the correct market is imperative to its success; this requires research, but being awarded by the success of your event makes the time spent worth it. Furthermore, the execution of the sales project is perhaps the essential part of the project; if the sales event isn't executed correctly, the entire project will not reach its potential. Because of this, it is crucial to devote a lot of time to the execution part of this project, as it is vital to its success. For example, my partner and I worked our schedules around our project's sales event for two weeks while it was happening so we could be sure of its execution and success. Overall, the most critical step to the success of your PMSP project is to put everything into it to make sure it is

the best it can be; if you focus on this, you will be left feeling content with your work no matter how far you advance into the competition.

Some tips helped my partner and I succeed throughout the PMSP project. The most important thing I would tell anyone doing this project is that time management is critical. Many aspects go into one of these projects, and keeping on top of the required work is key to executing the project well. Beyond that, communication with your partner(s) and chapter advisor will allow your project to be the best it can be. More specifically, be sure you spend ample time writing your paper and making your presentation; these are the two key factors that will allow you to succeed at SCDC and ICDC.

Be sure to take the time to learn the correct terminology for your paper and professionally present the information throughout both parts of the written project. The written paper and presentation are your only way to express to the judges how essential for successful your project was to the community, so be sure to include some emotion and thoughtfulness in the paper. Additionally, when thinking of a sales event to create for your PMSP project, think of something creative as it will stand out to the judges; the worst thing you can do is create a project that blends in, so make sure you and your project stand out to the judges in some way.

Finally, take the time to learn as much as possible through this action-based learning. Outside of DECA, the skills you develop throughout this project will benefit you for the rest of your professional life. Treat every experience throughout this project as a chance to learn something new.

Ansh Shah – Northville High School

As one of the largest clubs in my school, I joined DECA after hearing about it from my friends and mentors who always spoke about their fun experiences. I can join them in this now and confidently say that joining DECA as a freshman has helped me grow both personally and professionally. I want to highlight that DECA is more than just a club; it is an opportunity for students to learn, connect, and grow through strengthening communication skills, practicing leadership skills, and meeting students from across the country.

I began my DECA journey nervously talking in circles and taking a less structured approach to role-plays. As I did more mock role-plays with older members and learned to organize my thoughts, I could see a tremendous improvement in my presentation skills. The two keys to this were studying and practice. Studying KPIs and concepts related to my event helped me form a strong foundation of key business concepts, which allowed me to place as a finalist at ICDC in Principles of Marketing. In addition to that, the practice helped me develop the skills to extend these concepts to real-life business applications and deliver them cohesively in a presentation. I see myself bringing these skills outside of DECA where I am a stronger problem solver, a more effective presenter, and have more confidence in the classroom.

Aside from improving my business and communication skills, DECA shaped me into a leader. Because of my success in Principles of Marketing, last year, I am a Principles event trainer for my chapter. As a new DECA member, I was extremely nervous and confused, so I understand how other new members feel. As a trainer, I plan to use my experience to help guide students through what may seem like a scary new world of DECA. I'm extremely grateful to be a trainer, an opportunity that teaches me how to lead peers to success, and I'm eager to become more involved with my DECA chapter in the future.

The business, communication, and leadership skills I've gained through DECA are invaluable and can be applied to every aspect of life.

Along with teaching life-long skills, DECA brings together a network of people from all across the world. Going to Atlanta for ICDC this year was truly an amazing experience. Meeting other hardworking, outgoing DECA members is really eye-opening, as you can learn from different people from different walks of life. Though they sound trivial, some of my favorite memories from ICDC were trading pins while waiting for our role-play to begin and talking to strangers on the long shuttle bus rides. Aside from being just a club, DECA is a platform to connect with some of the coolest people you'll ever meet.

Joining DECA during my first week of high school was one of the best decisions I've made in my life. DECA provides all students a platform to learn, lead, and connect, an opportunity that anyone should snag. What I've put into DECA is displayed through the invaluable results I get, and I'm excited to build my future with DECA. Get the edge!

Caleb Bost - Lakeview High School

At the International Career Development Conference in 2022, I placed third place in SBE - School Based Enterprise (store operations). Not only was it the best trip of my life but one that changed it, I certainly did not expect to place that well, and I am grateful to my team of Zoe Bland and Blake Daugin for all the work they contributed. Since competing, my confidence in my own abilities has increased immensely.

My best advice to any incoming freshman or anyone new to DECA is to work on being able to communicate without needing your paper. Put down bullet points vs. writing paragraphs when preparing. This is to ensure you have more time and increase your eye contact with the judge. Don't forget to speak with confidence, the judge will never know if you mess up unless you let them know, and own everything you do. Also be sure to use visual movements, hand gestures, and eye contact which is important because they make the judge feel more connected and involved.

Finally, slow down and relax when speaking. When you speak too fast the judge will not be able to grasp what you're saying and will only focus on how fast you're speaking. Trust in the fact you know what you're talking about, and take the time to explain it correctly and clearly. That is where having confidence comes back. See? Full circle.

Aryan Shah – Northville High School

Hello! My name is Aryan Shah. I am the 2022-2023 Michigan DECA Vice President of Career Development and a senior at Northville High School. I started DECA in my sophomore year of high school. Also during my sophomore year, I won 8th place at ICDC with my partner. As a sophomore and junior, I competed in the Marketing Management Team Decision Making event. After my success during 10th grade, I began to teach others by leading the training program in my chapter. Today, with my position at the state level, I want to bring tips and training to all of DECA because strong DECA competitive skills translate to strong communication, speaking, leadership, and teamwork skills in all aspects of your life.

Here are some tips from my experience competing through the levels of DECA that can hopefully help you prepare and perform better!

Know your partner - In my case, he's been my best friend for a dozen years. But unless you get very lucky too, that will not be your case. Regardless of who your partner is, in a team event, you must be on the same page throughout the whole experience. There are a few aspects to this. One of them is good communication before and during competition. Your presentation should show a cohesiveness of thought that can only be achieved by properly communicating with your partner throughout the whole process. Another way to work smoothly with your partner is to practice with them throughout your preparation. This way, you can get used to working with them and confidently walk into your role-play.

Know what's going on - One of my favorite things to do before the competition is to read up on all the current news going on that could be related to your event. This helps you to be well-versed in the current business landscape, so you can speak to any relevant topics and relate them to your presentation. It really helps to be able to provide current and timely examples and information that

can relate to what you're saying to make your point more valid and impressive. Many times, I would connect performance indicators to current events to bring some depth and nuance to my role-plays.

Know your structure - In every role-play that I've done, I've used the following structure. One minute for introductions, eight minutes for performance indicators, and four minutes for solution and closing. Make sure to leave time for the questions at the end! Remember that these are not exact timings and depend on the role-play and the situation. The main thing is that you should have a structure with which you approach your presentation, which is adaptable to any situation that you face during role-plays.

Thank you for your time in reading this handbook, and I wish you all the best during your competition! Get the edge!