Format Fremdsprachenwettbewerb BHS Englisch

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Introduction

This guideline is aimed at providing an overview of the dates, aims, and methods to be used in the 2026 Vorarlberg BHS English Language Competition.

Florian Wiesbauer

Date

February 24th, 2026, 8.30 – 13.30

Place

Room A 16 (Lefthand wing of the building)

WIFI Dornbirn

Bahnhofstraße 24

6850 Dornbirn

Conditions of Participation

- **New in 2026: Teachers** must register their contestants via the official application form by **January 26th, 2026**.
- Registrations are limited to **two (2) participants plus one (1) substitute per BHS**.
- **Students whose L1 (first language) is English cannot participate** in the competition.
- **New**: **Winners of the previous competitions** are no longer allowed to sign up **if**:
    - They have **won the Austrian English Language State Competition**, or
    - The Austrian English Language State Competition has been **suspended the previous year**.
    - **Neither condition has been met in 2025, so this rule does not come into effect in 2026.**

Requirements

To put their skills on display, participants will be given the opportunity to prove their English proficiency in a variety of contexts. As such, they must have sufficient command of the language to perform the following acts on-stage:

- **Introduce themselves** and **explain** their relationship with English in a brief self-presentation.
- Give authentic, spontaneous **reactions to visual stimuli**.
- **Participate in a group debate** about a given topic.
- Give a **prepared speech** about a given topic.

Topics

The topics chosen for this competition will be in line with the National Austrian BHS Curriculum 2014. As such, they may be selected from areas pertaining to **cultures, societies, politics, economy, ecology, technology, work and travel, the world of work, current societal issues**, and **personal experiences**. **Sample topics will be provided on pages 7-10.**

Procedure

- **New in 2026: Round 0: Introduction Round** (Self-Presentation)

  - **No preparation time** provided.

  - Participants will **all be on stage together**. The organizer brings a bowl on stage, from which the participants will **draft a starting number**. This number is used to **determine starting order** and topic choice for all subsequent following rounds.

  - Speakers will have 2-3 minutes to **present themselves and their relationship with the English language.**

  - **This round is not yet scored by the jury**; rather, it serves as a "calibration tool" for the jury to make themselves familiar with the overall language level of the competitors.

  - This sequence will last approximately **3 minutes per participant.**

  - After finishing their presentations, participants will be guided into the preparation area.

- **Round 1: Impromptu Round** (Reaction to Visual Stimuli)

  - Participants will be **guided back on stage** by the organizer one by one. **The order is determined by the starting number drawn in Round 0.**

  - Speakers will then be **confronted with an image**. They must produce **spontaneous language output** relating to this image and **engage in an impromptu roleplay** with the presenter. This sequence will last approximately **two (2) minutes**.

- **Jury Intermission 1**
  - Jury members will judge the participants based on the criteria outlined below. Depending on the total number of participants, the best **9 or 12 contributors will advance into Round 2.**
  - The jury decisions will be narrated by the presenter and visualized on-screen by the organizer.

- **Round 2: Debate Round** (Panel Discussions)

  - **New in 2026: Preparation time starts during jury intermission 1.** Participants are provided with the topics in a **staggered** manner to ensure equal amounts of time**.**

  - Participants must prepare in a separate back-stage room.

  - **Separated into three (3) groups** of equal size, speakers will **participate in panel discussions** moderated by the presenter.

  - Speakers must give an **opening statement** of around one minute that may not be interrupted by the other debaters and that outlines their stance on the given topic.

  - The topic will be introduced by the presenter. **Opening statement speaking order is decided by the starting number drawn in round 0.**

  - The presenter or organizer may intervene to ensure that proper debating etiquette is maintained.

  - The discussions last for **10 minutes each**. The presenter will ensure that all candidates are provided with ample opportunities for contribution.

- **Jury Intermission 2**
  - Jury members will judge the participants based on the criteria outlined below. Depending on the total number of participants, the best **5 or 6** contributors will advance into Round 3.
  - The jury decisions will be narrated by the presenter and visualized on-screen by the organizer.

- **Round 3: Oration** (Individual Speeches)

  o The speech topic will be given to each participant individually and in a staggered manner to ensure equal preparation time for all.

  o Speakers must **choose between two (2) topics** provided.

  o **15 minutes of preparation time** provided.

  o Participants must wait their turn and prepare for their speeches in a separate back-stage room.

  o The topic will be revealed to the audience by the presenter.

  o The speeches last for **4 minutes each**. Performance assessment will be based on the criteria outlined below.

- **Jury Intermission 3**
  o Jury members will judge the participants based on the criteria outlined below.
  o Subsequently, participants will be ranked from **last to first** based on their individual scores.
  o The jury decisions will be narrated by the presenter and visualized on-screen by the organizer.

Timeline

This timeline is tentative and may be subject to change based on unforeseeable events.

Time (Approx.)	Event Stage
8.30	Ceremony Opening Speech (Organizer) Introduction of the Jury
8.35	Introductory Speech (Presenter)
8.40	**Round 0**
9.00	**Round 1**
9.40	**Jury Intermission 1** (Break and audience activities)

9.50	**Round 2**
11.00	**Jury Intermission 2** (Break and audience activities)
11.15	**Break** (Preparation time for candidate #1 starts here)
11.35	**Round 3**
12.15	**Jury Intermission 3** (Break and audience activities)
12.30	**Announcement of Rankings and Winners**
12.50	**Closing statements** (Winner, presenter, organizer)

Assessment Criteria

- **Fluency and Interaction:**
    - Interaction with other members, adherence to debate rules, spontaneity, taking initiative, identification with a given role.

- **Language Competency:**
    - Range, register, situationally adequate language use.

- **Accuracy:**
    - Vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, intonation

- **Contents:**
    - Persuasiveness of arguments, coherence, cohesiveness of speech, coverage of bullet points, relevance, subject knowledge, variety of ideas and arguments, creativity.

- **Presentation Skills:**
    - Situational awareness, body language, recovery from mistakes.

The criteria mentioned above are based on the B2 Foreign Language Assessment Scale according to the CEFR.

Team	

- Organizer: Florian WIESBAUER, HAK Bregenz

- Moderator: Bronwyn KONRAD, WIFI Dornbirn

- Assistant: TBA

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- **Impromptu Round:**

Please help! We tried to do a fist bump, and now our hands are stuck together! How can we solve this mess?

- **Debate Round:**

Observing the Observers: Is Privacy Still Possible in Our Digital Age?

Panel Discussion

By the turn of the millennium, our society had entered the digital age. This brought with it many changes to the ways in which we interact with each other: As we have become "perpetually online", our most important means of self-representation are no longer physical markers such as clothes and products. Instead, we present and advertise for ourselves on countless media platforms, and we are giving away tons of personal information voluntarily. At the same time, technology is advancing rapidly, and algorithms are being used to create accurate customer profiles of us without our own input. This leads us to the question: Can one remain a private person in the face of techno-corporations who, based on our profiles and search histories, know more about us than even our romantic partners ever could?

Discuss the following points:
- Is it possible to maintain privacy in the digital age?
- Is this self-imposed "voluntary surveillance" an overall benefit or negative for our society?
- What strategies could be used to escape the watchful eyes of techno-corporations such as Google and Amazon?

Candidates must give an uninterrupted opening statement, outlining their stance on the issue in 1 min. Afterwards, the debate floor is open.

- **Oration Round:**

o You have **15 minutes** to prepare and memorize a speech about one of the two topics given below. Your speech should last **4-5 minutes.**
o You must address the **content points** listed below the topics, but you are also **free to add your own ideas.**

o **Option #1: Declaring Independence on Lake Constance**

Thanks to climate change, it has finally happened: The Rhine River has deposited so much sand into Lake Constance that a new island has formed. Since no country has laid claim to this new speck of land yet, you have decided to plant your own flag and become the **president of this island**. In this role, you should give an inauguration speech for your own island nation, which must contain the following bullet points:

- **Address** all your nation's new citizens (though their numbers will be low!) and **declare independence**.

- Give an appropriate name to your island nation and **outline your plans** for its future.

- **Describe** its political system and relationships with neighboring nations.

o Option #2: Digital Detox

We are constantly surrounded by technology. While it is hard to escape the clutches of our cellphones, a radical solution has been proposed for those who are brave enough to be separated from their devices for an extended period of time: Digital Detox refers to the concept of restraining oneself from engaging with digital media and/or cellphones for a certain timeframe. As an **advocate for Digital Detox**, you are giving a speech in front of a secondary school in Austria.

In your speech, you should:

- **Outline** the benefits of a prolonged abstinence from digital media.

- **Explain** the detrimental effects that our (over-)reliance on cellphones can have on both our individual health and society.

- **Appeal** to your audience to join the Digital Detox Movement.