



Preparing the Manuscript

Since UIL prose and poetry contests are reading events, a manuscript should be used for competition. Preparation of that manuscript is a vital part of the process as a whole. Rules of the contest state that “The contestant should perform the selections using manuscripts or copies of the selections that are in a binder. Students shall not read from books or magazines.”

Most competitors use a black 9” x 6” stiff-backed 3-ring binder as their manuscript folder for several reasons:

1. Black is less obtrusive than other colors. You want the focus of the audience and judge on your performance, not your binder.
2. 3-ring binders make page turning easier. Avoid binders with back-mounted rings. They should be mounted in the spine.
3. 3-ring binders allow greater flexibility in arranging your manuscript.
4. 3- ring binders easily accommodate “slicks” (plastic sheet covers).
5. The 9” x 6” size is easy to handle and less obtrusive than other sizes.
6. Most binders have pockets to accommodate documentation. (Before standing in front of the audience, be sure to empty the binder of everything but the selection you are about to perform.)

Many competitors have turned to the 9” x 6” binder with the plastic sheets because it facilitates the handling of the manuscript. Not only do the “slicks” keep the manuscript intact and prevent it from falling out of the folder, but they also add a stiffness that allows you to turn pages smoothly, one page at a time. Slicks and binders can be ordered from office supply stores or **The Black Book Depot** (<http://www.blackbookdepot.com>).

Mounting your manuscript on black construction paper or black card stock before insertion into the slick is advantageous because it provides some rigidity for the page and it allows the eye to focus more readily on the page.

The binder is meant to serve as a constant visual reminder that the words you relay to the audience are not your own but those of the author of the literary work.