

2024 Contest Rules

Western Open Fiddle Championships



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GENERAL CONTEST RULES

A Registration and Entry Form must be completed and fees paid before competing.

A division is closed when the first contestant goes on stage. Extenuating circumstances may be presented to the Contest Chairman for consideration.

Order of Play is by random selection. The results of the draw are posted one-half hour before each division begins. If a contestant is not ready to play when called:

- ✓ they will forfeit their order of play;
- ✓ be moved to the end of their division; and,
- ✓ will be assessed a **10-point penalty**.

ACCOMPANIMENT / ACCOMPANIST

Contestants may play without accompaniment, or with a maximum of three accompanists, no more than two of which may be standard guitars. Having more than two standard guitars results in a **5-point penalty**.

Accompanists must be listed on the Contestant's tune sheet to receive credit toward the Accompanist Award.

Accompanists may not play the melody of the tune(s).

CONTESTANTS

In addition to the General Contest Rules, Contestants must adhere to rules that are unique to the Division in which they are competing.

Hit list of what **NOT** to do . . . Guido is watching!

- ✓ Contestants 18 and older may not play any tune more than once on the contest stage.
- ✓ A contestant must play without assistance other than accompaniment.
- ✓ Contact microphones and amplified instruments are not permitted on stage.

- ✓ No sheet music may be displayed while competing.
- ✓ No trick or fancy fiddling is allowed during regular contest appearances.
- ✓ There may be no cross-tuned instruments on stage.

JUDGING

All 13 Divisions have five Judges. 12 Divisions are judge in four various categories. Each category has a 25-point value for a maximum score of 100 points per Tune.

One Division, Picking, is judged in categories valued at 20, 20, and 30 points per tune for a maximum score of 70 points per Tune.

All scores are cumulative from the preliminary round into the finals. Points will be deducted, or disqualification may occur, for violation of the Contest Rules.

The Judges' decisions are final.

PLACEMENT TIES

The formula below will be used across the board for the top qualifying placements in any Division; for example:

If there is a tie for 5th Place, the contestants in the top four positions and the contestants who have tied will all compete in the Final Round.

In the event of a tie after the Final Round, a high scores comparison between Round 1 and the Final Round is reviewed. The contestant with the highest score in the Final Round is declared the winner.

However, if after the review the scores are still tied, the contestants share the placement and split the prize money for that place and the one below it.

PLAYING TIMES

The total Playing time for three tunes is four minutes and fifteen seconds. There is no grace period

Timing will start when the contestant, or any accompanist, plays any note on stage.

Two points will be deducted for every ten seconds, or a portion thereof, over four minutes and fifteen seconds.

ROUNDS OF PLAY

Except For the Celtic, Swing & Waltz Divisions, there are two rounds of play:

Round 1 is an elimination round and in the Final Round contestants win medallions and money. Depending upon the Division, the top three, five, or ten scoring contestants from Round 1 will move on to the Final Round.

If a string breaks or there is other “equipment failure,” the contestant may choose to stop or to continue and complete the round. If the contestant chooses to stop playing, he/she will move to the end of the Order of Play for that round and then play a complete round, regardless of whether or not any tunes were completed before the incident.

CONTESTANTS WINNING THREE CONSECUTIVE YEARS

Open Division – may not compete in the Open Division, or any other Regular Fiddle Division, for at least one year.

Senior, Senior-Senior, Adult, and Junior Fiddle Divisions – automatically move into the Open Division the following year.

Junior-Junior and Pee Wee Fiddle Divisions – may choose to move into the next higher age division or play in the Open Division the following year.

Junior Twin Fiddle, Specialty Picking, and Jukebox Divisions – may move up and compete in their respective Open Divisions.

Open Twin Fiddle, Specialty Picking, and Jukebox Divisions – may not compete in their respective Open Divisions for at least one year.

Swing Fiddle, Celtic, and Piano Divisions – may not compete in these Divisions for at least one year.

CONTEST VIOLATIONS

Any contestant appearing intoxicated on stage may be disqualified from the competition.

Protests must be submitted in writing to the Contest Chairman, and be signed by not less than three contestants involved, within three hours of the incident being protested. All decisions from the Contest Chairman are final.

CONTEST RULES UNIQUE TO EACH DIVISION

REGULAR FIDDLE DIVISION

(Pee Wee, Jr. Jr., Junior, Adult, Senior, Senior Senior, and Open)

A contestant may only enter one Regular Fiddle Division.

During each contest round, tunes must be played in the order of Hoedown, Waltz, and a Tune of Choice that is not a hoedown or a waltz. Any danceable folk tune played in old-time fiddle style is acceptable.

The total playing time for three tunes is four minutes and fifteen seconds. There is no grace period. Timing will start when the contestant or any accompanist plays any note on stage.

Total playing time for the Open Division’s Final Round is increased to five minutes fifteen seconds, with no grace period.

Two Points will be deducted for every ten seconds, or a portion thereof, over the total playing time.

Judging will be based on the following categories, valued at 25 points each, for a total of 100 points possible for each tune:

- Rhythm & Danceability
- Production of Tone
- Intonation of Notes
- Difficulty

TWIN FIDDLE DIVISIONS

A contestant may only enter one of the Twin Fiddle Divisions:

- Junior 17 and under
- Open Any age

Contestants must play two tunes; one fast and one slow, in any order. A contestant may not play the same tune more than once in the Twin Fiddle Division.

Judging will be based on the following categories, valued at 25 points each, for a total of 100 points possible for each tune:

- Appropriateness of Harmony
- Rhythm & Timing (Danceability)
- Intonation & Clarity of Tone
- Difficulty

SWING FIDDLE DIVISION

This Division is open to solo performers or duets.

Each contestant must play one tune or a medley of tunes. No tune shall be played more than once during all appearances of a contestant.

Contestants are to play reasonably within the boundaries of the Western Swing style, keeping the fiddle as the only lead instrument.

The winner(s) may be invited to perform on stage during Friday evening's program.

Judging will be based on the following categories, valued at 25 points each, for a total of 100 points possible for each tune:

- Rhythm & Danceability
- Production of Tone
- Intonation of Notes
- Difficulty

PICKING DIVISIONS

A contestant may enter only one of the Picking Divisions:

- Junior 17 and under
- Open Any age

Contestants may compete with only one instrument: guitar, mandolin, ukulele, or banjo.

Contestants must play two tunes; one fast and one slow, in any order.

Judging will be based on the following categories, valued at 20, 20, and 30 points each, for a total of 70 points possible for each tune:

- Intonation & Clarity of Tone
- Rhythm & Timing
- Style & Difficulty

PIANO DIVISIONS

The three Piano Divisions are:

- Pee Wee 8 and under
- Junior-Junior 9 through 12
- Junior 13 through 17

To demonstrate the contestants' versatility, each contestant must play two different styles of tunes: A classical piece composed more than 100 years ago; and a modern tune composed in the last 100 years including contemporary, pop, ragtime, jazz, boogie, etc.

This Division has a five-minute playing time. Two points will be deducted from the total score for each ten-second interval, or portion thereof, over the time limit.

Contestants may not have printed music on stage and will play without accompanists.

Judging will be based on the following categories, valued at 25 points each, for a total of 100 points possible for each tune:

- Correct Notes & Memorization
- Tempo and Rhythm
- Tone Production & Use of Pedal, if applicable
- Difficulty

CELTIC DIVISION

The Contestant may play any acoustic instrument.

Contestants will play two distinct tunes, which vary in tempo and can be chosen from these different types: jig, stepdance, slide, march, reel, hornpipe, polka, and air.

Judging will be based on the following categories, valued at 25 points each, for a total of 100 points possible for each tune:

- Playing Techniques including:
 - quality of tone, intonation, bowing, rhythm & tempo
- Choice of Tunes, & Level of Difficulty
- Interpretation and use of bowing & ornamentation to convey the character of the tunes.
- Overall performance and stage presence

ROBERT STRAWN WALTZ DIVISION

The Contestant may play any acoustic instrument.

Contestants must play one waltz or a medley of waltzes.

The winner may be invited to perform on stage during Friday Evening's program.

Judging will be based on the following categories, valued at 25 points each, for a total of 100 points possible for each tune:

- Rhythm & Danceability
- Production of Tone
- Intonation of Notes
- Difficulty

JUKEBOX DIVISIONS

A contestant may enter only one of the Jukebox Divisions, which are limited to the first ten entrants in each division:

- Junior 17 and under
- Open Any age

Contestant(s) may be an individual or register as a group.

Tunes that are typically played in the Fiddle or Specialty Picking Divisions are discouraged.

Performance time will be limited to six minutes in total. The time includes prop and mic set-up.

In the event of a tie, the Contest Committee will determine the winner.

Judging will be done by celebrity judges. They will choose the winner based on which one was the most entertaining in their completely subjective opinion! So, it is in your best interests to be creative and wildly entertaining!



The Western Open Fiddle Championships is a California non-profit and U.S. IRS 501(c)(3) charitable corporation, formed to educate and perpetuate the art and cultural heritage of Fiddle Music