



TOPANGA BANJO•FIDDLE CONTEST

JUDGING CRITERIA

www.topangabanjofiddle.org

The methodologies used by the contest have developed over the years and will continue to do so as new suggestions are received and considered. Beginning with an article on Banjo and Fiddle Judging by Allan Hjerpe, subsequent refinements have been contributed by Bill Jackson, JoEllen Lepidus, Howard Yearwood, Dorian Keyser and others.

IMPORTANT: *Note the changes for timing considerations effective in 2010 and the changes in Singing for 2011. Exceeding allotted time will suffer a ten point deduction and sound will be cut off. For more info and winning strategy see Shelah Spiegel's "Playing in the Contest" on the Contestant Registration page.*

Judging is based upon a 100-point scale using the following guidelines:

INSTRUMENT CATEGORIES

Scoring

<u>INSTRUMENTS</u>	Banjo	Fiddle	Guitar	Mandolin	Other Instruments
Pitch	10	25	10	10	15
Rhythm	25	25	25	25	25
Musicianship	25	10	25	25	25
Technique	30	30	30	30	25
Stage Presence	10	10	10	10	10

CONSIDERATIONS

Pitch: Instrument tuning and proper bridge placement

Rhythm: Measure-to-measure as well as the entire number (speed-up / slow-down). It can be very difficult for a judge to determine if tempo changes are intentional.

Musicianship: Based upon the overall performance. Was it tasteful and dynamic? Was it entertaining?

Technique: Technical competence including fingering, bowing, picking, etc.

Stage Presence: An average score of five is enhanced or diminished depending upon presentation.

Other Considerations:

Timing: Numbers **MUST** complete within three (3) minutes or judges will deduct ten (10) points and sound will be cut.

Back-up: While no extra credit is given for the presence of a superior back-up, points may be deducted for a poor performance.

Original Material: Since the judges may have no way of knowing the origin of music or style, only the performance may be considered.

Difficulty: Judges will consider the difficulty of the piece as performed when deducting for mistakes.

Fiddle : When competing in the Fiddle category, no other fiddle may be played on the stage at the same time.

BAND

A band consists of at least three members including at least one banjo or fiddle. Each band shall play two numbers, one of which shall be an instrumental. The other shall have two or more members singing in harmony with instrumental back-up, and may include breaks and runs. Entries deviating from this requirement shall have no score awarded. Both numbers **MUST** complete within six (6) minutes.

Scoring

INSTRUMENTAL NUMBER		SINGING NUMBER	
Pitch/Rhythm	20	Vocal Pitch/Rhythm	20
Technical Ability	30	Instrumental Support	20
Musicianship	30	Harmony Blend	40
Performance	20	Performance	20

CONSIDERATIONS

Performance: Entertaining, connect with the audience, stay within the time constraints, comfortable on stage

Timing: **Numbers MUST complete within six (6) minutes or judges will deduct ten (10) points and sound will be cut.**

INSTRUMENTAL:

Pitch/Rhythm: Instruments in tune with clear tonal qualities. Maintain a good steady tempo that others are able to follow

Technical Ability: Technique, degree of instrument proficiency of each of the band members, difficulty of piece

Musicianship: Group instrumental blend, back each other up well, play well together to create a "band sound," use of microphones, song selection

VOCAL:

Pitch/Rhythm: Everyone sings in tune, voice quality, good steady tempo

Instrumental Support: Proficient backup, tasteful, create a good blend, good solos/breaks, timing, nice fills and runs

Harmony Blend: Blend is what makes a great vocal band - complexity, smoothness, tasteful, original "band sound"

SINGING

Any song may be performed but in general, songs should be chosen that will allow the judges to rate your performance and the quality of your singing.

Contestants are judged on Pitch, Enunciation, Sound Quality, Rhythm, Style, Material and Stage Presence.

- Songs should not be profane, rushed or excessively loud.
- Lyrics should be clear and understandable.
- Objectionable material or interpretation will result in performance termination and disqualification.
- All Songs **MUST** complete within three minutes.

NOTE: If you desire to be judged in Singing while competing in an instrument category, then you must compete in the morning elimination contest to qualify to be judged in Singing on the Main Stage. If you score at least as well as the lowest-scoring finalist that has entered in Singing only and advanced to the Main Stage, then you may be judged in Singing on the Main Stage while competing in an instrument category.

Scoring

Pitch	15
Enunciation / Sound Quality	25
Rhythm	25
Style / Material	25
Stage Presence	10

CONSIDERATIONS

Timing: **Numbers MUST complete within three (3) minutes or judges will deduct ten (10) points and sound will be cut.**

Enunciation: Can the words be understood?

Pitch: In tune with instruments? Absolute pitch if unaccompanied. Instruments in tune?

Rhythm / Pace: In time with back-up? Pace suitable for chosen song?

Style: Is the style consistent with the song and its traditions?

BACK-UP INSTRUMENTS

	<i>GUITAR</i>		<i>OTHER</i>	<i>BACKUP</i>
Pace / Rhythm	25		Pitch	15
Chords / Chord Changes	25		Rhythm	25
Fits into the group	25		Musicianship	25
Runs	15		Technique/ Fits into group	25
Breaks / Runs	n/a		Stage Presence	10
Pitch	10			n/a

CONSIDERATIONS

The back-up instrument should provide a steady rhythm, pace and complementary runs. Attempts to 'dazzle' detract from the performance of the contestant.

Fiddle: If a fiddle is to be judged in any category, there must be only one fiddle being played on stage.

SUGGESTIONS

Pick material that is within your capabilities. Even though difficulty is considered, the point system penalizes mistakes and unevenness far more than it rewards dazzling technique.

Keep an even tempo. Start on the slow side and try not to speed up. Rehearse, with your back-up if applicable, before coming to the stage.

Observe how others utilize the microphones. Crowding them causes distortion, but you must be heard to be judged.

If you wish to improve your performance for next year, send a request to the registrar to have your scores sent to you. It is valuable to know in which areas you were strong or need improvement, and to see how you fared compared to the winners in your category. Requests may be called in to the Hotline or requested via e-mail at registrar@topangabanjofiddle.org after the contest.