

IESA Music



IESA Judge Instructions General Instructions for Music Judges

This material has been developed to guide judging at Illinois Elementary School Association (IESA) events. This information is not intended to replace the IESA Music Terms & Conditions. The purpose of this information is to emphasize the overwhelming importance and responsibility that judges have in evaluating and critiquing the performance of our youth. The preparation time that students and staff have devoted to these performances deserves your very best efforts.

Judging Philosophy

The philosophy of the Music Advisory Committee and the IESA Board of Directors has been to embrace the encouragement of young people toward participation. Since judges are the intended testing guide, students' future activities are often determined by the decision of judges. Participants should not be served by judges on a professional or highly restrictive basis, but rather with an open mindedness that recognizes the junior high range of ability and training.

As an IESA Judge, you are to be: knowledgeable of the events, positive and encouraging, receptive with a constructive and promotional attitude, and prepared to present the student and director with a tactful justification for any given rating.

At the end of the day, contest is about creating a positive experience for the greatest possible number of developing performers. Over the course of years, the students who end up continuing their participation may not be the ones who won first or even placed in contest. Therefore, the job of an adjudicator is to encourage as much as possible, realizing that parents and teachers are relying on you to create enough of a positive experience for students that they will return to the arts for as long as possible.

Ratings

Judge Philosophy

**PLEASE MAKE SURE TO REVIEW
THIS SECTION ON RATINGS. THIS
IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT
INFORMATION.**

01 Review the Evaluation recommendations.

02 Review the adjudication criteria.

03 Remember to have a kind heart.

Evaluation Recommendations

Be consistent in evaluating the contestants. The following criteria for judging are recommended:

Div. I- For an exceptionally fine performance with few, if any, flaws.

Div. II- For an acceptable performance, but with noticeable flaws in the performance.

Div. III- For a fair performance- many flaws technically, tone, rhythm, dynamics, or in general a much lower degree of musicianship.

Keep in Mind the Adjudication Criteria

Adjudicators must let go of whatever preconceived notions they may have about a piece and instead focus on the presentation before them. Admittedly, this is hard; but the adjudication is not about what you think; instead, it is about the performance in front of you, what these young musicians are doing, and how that is scored within the criteria.

Have a Kind Heart

Young (and old) musicians are baring themselves for a performance. They are putting themselves onstage in front of their peers, family, and community to perform – which can be terrifying for anyone, let alone a junior high school kid. Be conscientious about how tone can color comments; something that is well-intentioned may come off as simply mean-spirited. And for all of us – young or old, novice or experienced – we want our work to be valued and recognized. Adjudication is a difficult task and should be wielded with great care, and the honest but kind adjudicator will always be more respected than the honest but brutal one.

The most important function of the adjudicator is to serve as an educator. The adjudicator should use professional skills and experience to make each contest a pleasant and richly educational experience in the lives of young people as they seek to understand more fully the art of performance.

Judging Ethics

The professional ethics connected with judging warrants the commonsense approach; for example, if students are expected to dress appropriately for contest, we should expect judges to set an example by being appropriately dressed.

Be attentive and interested. A judge should always be attentive and interested in all students as they compete for ratings. This means he/she should display a friendly smile and show he/she is a caring person. A judge should exhibit a desire to assist the student in becoming a better person through the speech experience.

Patience. A judge must show patience while in a contest situation. There is no reason for a judge to show apparent disgust toward a student appearing late or out of order since, generally, it is not the student's preference, but rather a necessity, that precipitated the change.

The Committee suggests making all students feel as comfortable as possible when they are competing. The judges who attain that goal are the ones most respected by the students and their music directors.

We are all working to improve the skills of the students and encourage their continued participation in the activity. Please keep this in mind when crafting oral and written comments.

Day of Contest Instructions

We are pleased that you have accepted the responsibility of judging the contestants in a State Music Contest sponsored by the IESA. To assist you in your preparation, we have prepared the following list of instructions and suggestions.

- ❖ **Required pre-contest judge meeting.** You must meet at the contest site with the assigned contest host prior to the start of the contest. The contest host will review the judging details and answer any questions you may have. Please review the IESA Music By-laws and General Instructions prior to this meeting. If questions arise during the contest day, consult your contest host for clarification.
- ❖ **Arranging the contest room.** When you enter your assigned room, take control of it—arrange it how you wish, making sure you have a clear “front” view of the performers. Remove confusing furniture or other performance obstacles. Review etiquette expectations with the audience and remind them to turn off or mute their cell phones.
- ❖ **Judge each contestant on the performance of the selection on each of the criteria listed on the adjudication form. WE EXPECT YOU TO WRITE SOME CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK FOR EVERY STUDENT.** Explain in your comments what is weak/strong and briefly offer suggestions for improvement.
- ❖ Consider the grade and year in contest of the student or organization as indicated on the adjudication sheet. Remember these are children you are judging. They need your suggestions for improvement, and they need your encouragement. In some cases, this may be their first attempt at public performance. Both director and participant need specific, concrete comments they can use to improve. Both oral and written suggestions are encouraged. Your comments to the students are probably the same things their director has been saying for weeks, but today they will mean so much more.
- ❖ Be consistent in your evaluations. Your comments should support the rating given.

- ❖ **SCORES AND MEMORIZATION:** You are to be provided with an original score (or a receipt if purchased online and downloaded) of the music with measures numbered. If they are not numbered, please put an X in the bottom of the Rating Code Box.
 - All vocal solos and ensembles are to be memorized.
 - An extra point is awarded if instrumental solos are memorized. You should mark this on the adjudication form.
 - Instrumental ensembles do not need to be memorized.
- ❖ It is permissible to help students tune if they are having a difficult time with contest room pianos. **HOWEVER, A JUDGE SHOULD NEVER ACTUALLY PLAY A STUDENT’S INSTRUMENT.**
- ❖ **IMPORTANT:**
 - A student may NOT ask to have the audience cleared from a room for a performance.
 - Encourage students who can stand to do so during their performance. Standing is not required by rule; so, you should not give a lower rating if the student does not stand.
 - Please do not converse with other judges on performances while judging Organization events.
- ❖ Complete the adjudication form for the contestant before allowing the next contestant to start. You may listen to four or five selections before a runner collects your adjudication forms. Do not hold back forms for comparative purposes.
- ❖ **DETERMINING FINAL RATINGS FOR MUSIC ORGANIZATION EVENTS.**

Individual Judge Rating			
Judge 1	Judge 2	Judge 3	Final Rating
I	I	I, II OR III	I
I	II	II OR III	II
II	II	II OR III	II
III	III	I, II OR III	III

- ❖ **SCALES ARE NOT REQUIRED:** If performed, scales will be awarded as a one-point bonus on the adjudication sheet. ***This bonus point option is only available for SOLOISTS and no additional points will be awarded for memorization.*** Students can bring scale requirement sheets with them to read during their performance.
 - **INSTRUMENTAL:** Judge may choose two of the four concert major scales (B \flat , F, A \flat , E \flat).
 - **VOCAL:** Judge may choose ascending and descending one octave major scale and of a major or minor triad. STUDENT WOULD CHOOSE THE STARTING PITCH.
 - **PERCUSSION:** Judge may choose two of the four concert major scales (B \flat , F, A \flat , E \flat) ascending and descending one octave or two of the four percussion rudiments (paradiddles, 5 stroke rolls, flam taps, single drags).
 - **PIANO:** Judge may choose two of three major scales both hands (C, F, G) ascending and descending.
 - **STRING:** Judge may choose two of four major scales (D, G, C, A) ascending and descending one octave.
- ❖ **BEST OF DAY FOR S&E:** At the end of the day, **each judge will select one “Best of Day” for their room.** Please fill out the form for this honor and return it to the host school. Contest managers will then submit these winners to the IESA Office. The individual or ensemble will receive a certificate from the IESA designating this honor.

Tips for Music Adjudicators

❖ TECHNIQUE

- **TONE QUALITY**- proper production, breath support, clarity, purity, breath control, head tone verses, chest tone, appropriate tone for the style of the music
- **ARTICULATION OF NOTES**- staccato, legato, accents
- **INTONATION**- accurate pitch, especially in a cappella selection
- **PRECISION AND ACCURACY**- accurate notes

❖ RHYTHM

- **TEMPO**- Is the tempo appropriate for the musical composition? Is it steady and maintained? Should it be faster or slower? Scores submitted by the director should be marked carefully regarding any changes or specific indications of flexibility in the tempo whether specified by the composer or the conductor's rhythmic interpretations.
- **ACCURACY**- correct performance of rhythmic patterns, correct rhythmic proportions between quarters, eighths, triplets and sixteenth notes.
- **PULSE**- students should know the difference between tempo and pulse. Do the students sing the rhythm like a series of accented metered measures or are they singing with the rhythm of the phrase? Do the students sing with a continuous flow of rhythmic phrases?

❖ INTERPRETATION

- **TEMPO**- How well are the rhythmic effects produced by changing the tempo? How skillfully does the conductor and performers employ fermatas?
- **DYNAMICS**- use of dynamics regarding the manner in which the intensities are changed, use of accents and any subtleties of nuance.
- **PHRASING**- Is the accuracy of phrasing in keeping with the composer's and conductor's indications, the skill with which the conductor and performers show the relationship of the phrasing to the form of the composition?
- **STYLE**- How well does the conductor and the performers understand the style of the composition? Is there distinction between melody and the counter-melody or melodies? Is there balance between the melody and harmony parts? Are stylistic elements emphasized that are appropriate to the particular music being performed? How well is this done?

❖ MUSICAL EFFECT

- **CONCEPT**- execution, skill, interpretation effectiveness, personal projection. How effective was the group's interpretation? How effective was the personal projection of the conductor? How are the composer's feelings projected to the listener? How totally involved are the students in the performance? Do they perceive the concept of the composition as a whole and suitable relationships as part of the whole? How well are the skills of the group and conductor executed in the overall performance?

❖ PERFORMANCE POISE

- **APPEARANCE**- uniform dress is best
- **STAGE PRESENCE**- performance position, any mannerisms that may detract from the musical effect, behavior on and off stage, group discipline, group focus on conductor. Do the students project their love of music? Are they enjoying performing? Do they establish a good relationship with the audience? Do they acknowledge applause graciously?

❖ NOTES

- Pay attention to the creation of a performance that is stylistically correct.
- Students are not required to stand but can be encouraged to do so.
- Students or directors may NOT ask to have the room cleared for a performance.

❖ ASSUME YOUR ROLE

- Take your role seriously! The students and teachers really want to hear what you have to say, and most hope to take something home with them that they can work on to improve their skills.
- Keep a smile on your face and tell them something they did well.

❖ KEEP IT POSITIVE

- Positive comments interspersed with a few ideas for growth will go a long way in making the judging process a beneficial one for both students and directors.

❖ KEEP IT SIMPLE

- We need to remember this lesson well and ask ourselves if what we say is general enough to make a lasting impression on the student.

❖ WHO ARE WE REALLY JUDGING ANYWAY?

- Keep in mind that, especially in the large group setting, the student has little if any say in the decision-making process of both the selection of tunes and their musical performance. To comment on either of these is fine, remembering that the director made most, if not all, of these decisions.
- Rather than long comments on your interpretation of their music, make comments that may help the students with problems they can deal with- correct breathing techniques, technical issues on their instrument or voice, general comments on correct tone productions and the like.
- Always try to include a compliment of the work their teacher is doing- remember, the director cared enough to “lay it on the line” and bring his or her students to contest.

❖ WRITE, WRITE, WRITE

- Remember that written word is important too. This will be taken home and mulled over; it may even cause some further discussion in the classroom or studio, and it is what may cause some real learning to occur.
- Given a form on which to write- try to comment on every category, even if just to say that there are no problems here.
- The students will feel that you’ve paid attention to all of the details and taken every area into consideration when assigning that final mark or rating.

Organization Contest Judges

There will be three judges seated at separate tables for all organization events. The judge seated in the center will be responsible for notifying the director to proceed to the next selection. One of the three judges will serve as the Recording Judge.

❖ RECORDING JUDGE

- The recording judge will record verbal feedback while the ensemble is performing. The recording judge should start with a friendly greeting. The judge should identify him/herself, state the date and location of the event, and wish the group “good luck”.
 - Sample: *“Good morning, Bloomington Junior High 8th grade chorus. I am Mrs. Smith, and I am one of the judges at the IESA Organization Contest on Saturday, April 30th. I will be judging your overall performance and offering some verbal comments. Hopefully, you will find these comments helpful as you continue to improve your program. I look forward to hearing your performance and wish you the best of luck!”*
- During the performance, the judge should listen to the ensemble and make verbal comments. Use the criteria on the adjudication sheet as your guide. Focus on constructive feedback, balancing criticism with specific information that will help the ensemble improve.

- **Never compare groups to one another.** Instead, address the performance before using the criteria on the adjudication form.

❖ CRITIQUE JUDGE

- Immediately following each group's performance, one judge will talk to the ensemble and provide brief verbal feedback. The contest manager may provide you with a microphone depending on the acoustics of the room.
- Each critique will only last two to five minutes. We do not intend to add additional time to the schedule or to lengthen the contest day.
- Before starting, the critique judge may briefly confer with the other judges to determine any major areas to address.
- When talking to the group, focus on constructive feedback. It is ok to address weak areas, but the judge should follow-up with suggestions on how to improve.
- Share your overall impressions of the performance, including many positive aspects of what you have heard.

❖ BEST OF DAY

- At the end of the day, **each judging panel will select one "Best of Day"**. For example, a judging panel that has judges all the instrumental groups will choose one (1) "Best of Day" from among all the groups they have judged that day.
- Please fill out the form for "Best of Day" and return it to the host school so that all of the "Best of Day" winners can be submitted online to the IESA Office.
- Each "Best of Day" group will receive a special insignia on their award bar designating this honor.