

Rules for Scottish FIRE Sanctioned Competitions

I. GENERAL

Scottish FIRE sanction is obtained to assure that all Scottish fiddle competitions in the U.S. use the same rules and performance standards. Scottish FIRE sanction is extended by the President to competitions meeting the criteria below

- A. A Scottish fiddle competition will be considered FIRE sanctioned if:
 - The organizers agree to use FIRE rules and FIRE certified judges.
 - The organizers give information about the competition to Scottish FIRE when requested to do so.
 - The organizers assure that all open and junior open competitors will become members of Scottish FIRE and show evidence of their membership before they compete in any FIRE sanctioned competition. (See section II.C below)
 - The organizers send a competition report form and complete contact information for all competitors to the Vice President for Competitions immediately after the competition. The Vice President for Competitions will forward the results to the webmaster and organizer or steward of the U.S. National Scottish Fiddling Championships.
- B. The name of the competition is approved by Scottish FIRE in advance and does not duplicate or approximate the title of any other Scottish FIRE sanctioned competition.
- C. The rules of the competition and its conduct assure that no competitor has a competitive advantage over any other competitor as a result of anything other than ability as demonstrated during the performance in the competition.
- D. The rules of the competition, performance standards, judging guidelines and rubric should be distributed to all competitors before the competition.
- E. The sponsor/host should provide at least one person on its organizational staff (preferably a resident in the area of the event and in proximity to the key logistics officials) whose duties are to serve as steward for the event. See “Guidelines for Competition Organizers and Stewards” for the details of specific responsibilities.

II. STAGING AND CONDUCT OF THE COMPETITION

- A. The event should be staged in an area which, for the duration of the competition, is relatively free of significant conflicting noise (i.e., bagpipes, drums, whistles, horns, heavy machinery, or loud engine noises).
- B. On the day of the competition, the sponsor will provide a sheltered area at or near the site of the competition where the contestants may warm up and relax. This area may also be used by contestants who want to demonstrate the art of Scottish fiddling to interested observers. The location of the site should be made know to the fiddlers and to the public.
- C. Competitors are encouraged to become FIRE members. **Membership in FIRE is mandatory for all competitors in the Junior Open and Open classes for all competitions.** Competitors in these classes are required to be current Scottish FIRE members in order to compete at any Scottish FIRE sanctioned competition. Stewards of individual competitions may require FIRE membership for all competitors if they choose to do so. [Please note that FIRE may be joined easily through our online membership form available through the FIRE website. A Paypal receipt from FIRE membership will qualify as proof for competitions.]
- D. Competitors in FIRE sanctioned competitions need not be U.S. Citizens, nor need they be residents of the U.S. in order to compete.
- E. Order of competition
 - Competitors are grouped by classes. All competitors in a class perform before competitors in the next class begin.
 - For regional competitions, the competition may choose either to choose the order of play by lottery or by reverse order of registrations date within each class. (That is, competitors whose entries were received first play last, and those who were received last play first.)**For the U.S. National competition:** The order of play for the U.S. National competition will be chosen by lottery.]

- F. In Scottish style competitions **open, intermediate, and junior class competitors** will first play an air, followed by a pause. Then the competitor will play without pausing between the tunes a march, a strathspey, and a reel, in that order. **Novice class competitors** will play three tunes, either [1] an air, followed by a pause, then a strathspey and a reel, or [2] a march, strathspey, and a reel played without pausing between tunes. (See part IV performance standards. These should be distributed to all competitors.)
- G. The air/march/strathspey/reel open class competition should be supported by prizes or awards significantly greater than those provided for any supplemental competitions. Prizes may be given for individual tunes within the air/march/strathspey/reel competition, (for example best air, best march, best strathspey, and best reel). Other separate supplemental competitions could include laments and slow tunes, jigs, hornpipes, etc.
- H. No substitution of other types of tunes will be permitted in air/march/strathspey/reel competitions. Please see Part V. Judging Guidelines, for types of tunes permitted in each category.

I. Definition of classes of competitors:

There are 6 possible classes of competitors:

For competitors under the age of 18:

Junior Novice (assuming separate Junior and Senior categories)

Junior Intermediate (assuming separate Junior and Senior categories)

Junior Open

For competitors 18 or older:

Novice (assuming separate Junior and Senior categories)

Intermediate (assuming separate Junior and Senior categories)

For any competitor who wishes to enter, any age:

Open

Novice: Junior Novice and Novice (or Novice Senior) categories are for those fiddlers new to the art of Scottish fiddling. When a novice competitor has won first place in three novice competitions, the competitor will be required to enter in intermediate or open classes. Each regional competition may decide to host a single novice class or to divide the novice class into Junior Novice, for those under 18, and Novice, for those 18 and above.

Intermediate: Junior Intermediate and Intermediate (or Intermediate Senior) classes are for those fiddlers who have had some experience in Scottish fiddling but are interested in gaining experience in competitions before entering the open class and thus potentially advancing to the Nationals. When an Intermediate class competitor has won 6 Intermediate class competitions, the competitor will be required to enter in Junior Open or Open class. Each regional competition may decide to host a single intermediate class or to divide the intermediate class into Junior Intermediate, for those under 18, and Intermediate, for those 18 and above.

Junior Open and Open: Competitors entering these classes can qualify for entry in the U.S. National Scottish Fiddling Championships. The **Junior Open** class is open to any fiddler under the age of 18. The **Open** class is open to anyone of any age who wishes to compete in this class. Fiddlers wishing to compete in any FIRE sanctioned competition in these two classes must be current members of Scottish FIRE. (See the website, <http://www.scottishfiddlingrevival.com> for membership information.)

- J. Competitors may enter any one class for which they are qualified in any single competition. The judge will assign the competitor to the appropriate class if there is a question about which class is appropriate. The judge may assign the competitor either before or after they play.

K. Eligibility for U.S. National Scottish Fiddling Championships

Please note: All Nationals competitors must compete on a **4-string violin**. The violin may be tuned as the performer wishes, including scordatura.

- The eligibility rules for both Open and Junior Open classes, the only classes that compete at the Nationals, are similar, except that Junior Open competitors must be under 18 at the time they compete in the Nationals.

Below are the rules that apply to both classes.

1. First, second, and third place winners of the U.S. National Competition from the most recent past 5 years are eligible.
2. All first-place winners from any FIRE sanctioned regional competition held after the most recent past U.S. National Competition is eligible for the finals.
3. Competitors who win a FIRE sanctioned regional competition within two weeks prior to the date of the U.S. National Competition have the option of competing in the finals the same year of their first-place win or in the U.S. National Competition held the following year.
4. The second-place competitor in a FIRE sanctioned regional competition is eligible for the finals in the following instances:
 - a. The first-place winner was the current U.S. Open or Junior Open National Champion.
 - b. OR there was a playoff for first place and the judge recommended that the second-place competitor be allowed to compete in the finals. In a playoff, the competitors play any strathspey and reel set to assist the judge in making a fair determination of the players' ranking.
5. The organizer of the U.S. National Competition may stage a preliminary competition immediately before the U.S. National Competition, held specifically for the purpose of allowing competitors to qualify for the Nationals if they were unable to do so in other local competitions. Only junior open and open class competitors will compete.
 - Eligibility for the local competition held at the Nationals site immediately prior to the Nationals is limited to any competitor who has not previously qualified for the finals in any way.
 - At this special competition, the judge/s may advance any competitors to the finals that they feel should be eligible to compete. There is no predetermined limit to the number of competitors who may be advanced to the finals from this special competition only.

Additional rules for Junior Open U.S. National Competition Eligibility:

- The 5-year eligibility rule for Juniors (#1 above) applies until the competitor becomes 18 years old.
 - Competitors who qualified for the junior open class finals of the U.S. National Competition, but who are over 18 at the time of the Nationals, may compete in the open class in the year they become 18 only. Thereafter, they must qualify for the open class finals in regional competitions.
 - Competitors who are under 18 who have qualified for the finals in both the open and the junior open classes at regional competitions, may choose to compete in either class at the finals, but may compete in only one class.
 - Competitors who are under 18 who have won an open class regional competition, may compete in either open or junior class at the U.S. National Competition.
 - Competitors who are under 18 who have qualified for and played in the open class in the U.S. National Competition, may choose to compete in either junior open or open class in subsequent U.S. National Competitions if they are eligible for the finals.
- L. The use of written music in competition is limited to novice class (any age competitor) This rule is intended to encourage new fiddlers who may need written music; Open, Intermediate, and Junior competitors should memorize their music.
- M. The steward's decision to accept or reject late entries will be final.
- N. Highland attire for competitors (kilts for men, kilted skirt or dress with tartan sash for women) strongly preferred and encouraged.

III. JUDGING

- A. All judging shall be performed by people who are themselves competent in the art of Scottish fiddling, or who are internationally recognized by their knowledge of the art. Judges must be certified in advance by Scottish FIRE and are thoroughly familiar with Scottish FIRE rules, judging guidelines and the judging rubric. (see Scottish Fiddling Revival, “The Sanctioning of Scottish FIRE Judges” for the process and application to be a sanctioned judge.) A list of certified judges is available on the FIRE website.
- B. In some cases, temporary sanctioning of a well-known Scottish-style fiddler may be granted by FIRE for a competition. Stewards must request approval for the potential judge well in advance of the competition. Details about how to go about this are found in the “Sanctioning Process for FIRE Judges” document.
- C. All competitors will be judged against the pre-established criteria on the rubric judging sheet, which specifies the factors to be considered and the relative weight of be given to each factor.
- D. All competitors in any event will be judged by the same judge or set of judges. If two or more judges are used, all judges must agree on the final ranking of the competitors.
- E. If the judge/s are unable to decide the ranking of competitors from the first performance, the judge has two options:
 1. The judge/s may require a play-off. In this case the competitors concerned each play a strathspey and a reel without pausing between tunes. The competitor may choose to play any strathspey/reel set.
 2. The judge may declare a tie.
- F. The opinion of the judge/s is final as to all aspects of competitors’ performances. The points awarded during judging are necessarily somewhat arbitrary and are used as a guideline. They are not the sole deciding factor in ranking the competitors. If more than one judge adjudicates a competition, the judges must agree on how they will award points and determine winners before the competition begins, keeping in mind that performance in a traditional Scottish style is the significant element in distinguishing otherwise technically comparable performances.
- G. Following the competition, each competitor will be provided with a copy of each judge’s score sheet and comments. This may be the original, a carbon or CNR copy, or a photocopy of the original.

IV. PERFORMANCE STANDARDS AND JUDGING GUIDELINES

- A. For each tune played, the following factors will be considered and weighted as follows (see the competition performance rubric for specific details in each category):
 - INTERPRETATION/EXPRESSION, 40 points. The quality of the performance that appeals to the listeners’ feelings, reflecting the performer’s judgment and ability in capturing and conveying the sentiment of the composer or the traditional associations of the tunes. The factors to be considered are ornamentation, dynamics/color, phrasing, interpretation (overall coherence and effect) and the ending or transition (suitable to the tunes, provides an effective bridge for the listener in terms of melodic flow, tonal and rhythmic punctuation).
 - TIME, 30 points. The factors to be considered are appropriate tempo, rhythm and pulse. The tempo is appropriate to the tune chosen and to the style of execution. The rhythm must be appropriate to the tune interpretation, the pulse is appropriate to the tune, and the overall context and structure of the tune should not be lost of specific techniques of execution or expression.
 - EXECUTION, 30 points. Command of the instrument in fingering with correct intonation, stylistic bowing, and excellence of tone quality. Bowing should be judged not on specifics but on the overall effect.
- B. In all aspects, performance in a traditional Scottish idiom/regional style will be the significant element in distinguishing otherwise technically comparable performances.
- C. Fiddlers will perform without any other accompanying instruments.

- D. Comments: Judges should write as many helpful comments as they can. The idea is to encourage competitors and give suggestions about how they can improve their performance.
- E. Types of tunes permitted in each category: The main criterion for the acceptability of any particular tune in any category should be how the tune is played, not how it was originally written. Transpositions from the original key and original tunes are in the Scottish style are both permitted. Specifically permitted in each category are:
- Air: any slow air, pastoral, slow strathspey, lament, or other tune played as an air.
 - March: any march, pipe march or other, whether 2/4, 4/4, 6/8, or any other time signature, or any other tune type played as a march.
 - Strathspey: Any dance strathspey or other tune played as a strathspey.
 - Reel: any reel, Scots measure, hornpipe, or other tune played as a reel.
 - NOTE: Waltzes, jigs (6/8 and 9/8) and hornpipes played in the original manner will NOT be allowed as substitutions for any of the categories above.