

# BJCP COMPETITION HANDBOOK



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## Introduction

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Homebrewing has grown and changed over the years. It has gone from a necessary chore back in pioneering days to a hobby and even an obsession in current times. Mankind has the tendency to be competitive, so it is not a big surprise that homebrewing and competition go hand-in-hand. Since 2006, the American Homebrewers Association (AHA) and the Beer Judge Certification Program (BJCP) have combined to sponsor the AHA/BJCP Sanctioned Competition Program (SCP) and have been responsible for sanctioning and overseeing homebrew competitions. With increasing interest in homebrewing, there has also been an increase in the number of competitions that are available to enter. Although there may be many ways to organize and run a competition, there are some strategies and techniques that have proven to produce an efficient and smooth-running competition. These ideas are described in great detail to assist anyone interested in organizing a new or existing competition. This guide is set up to walk the reader through a competition step-by-step, starting with the planning stage all the way through the final reporting of results to the BJCP. We hope this guide proves helpful to you, whether you are a novice or veteran organizer.

### **Background: The BJCP**

The BJCP examines and certifies judges skilled in evaluating and judging beer and the related fermented products, mead and cider. The details of the BJCP program can be found in the exam study guide<sup>1</sup>. To summarize, there are levels of beer judges from Recognized, Certified, National, Master, and levels of Grand Master. Judges progress in rank as they gain experience and show increased knowledge. Judges receive credit for their experience judging by the points they earn while judging. These points often will draw judges to your competition.

While reading this document, refer to the Glossary of Terms in the Appendix.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.bjcp.org/docs/BJCP\\_Study\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.bjcp.org/docs/BJCP_Study_Guide.pdf)

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## Competition Planning Overview

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Planning and running a high-quality competition that provides good feedback to entrants and enjoyment for participants is hard work. There are a great number of tasks that need to be executed competently that can make or break a competition. This section provides a brief overview of some of these major tasks. The remainder of the document addresses these tasks and others in detail.

Every competition has an organizer who is responsible for pulling the competition together, overseeing all aspects of planning and running a competition, paying attention to all details, and tying up the loose ends afterwards. The organizer can work solo or have the support of a committee. In general, the organizer and/or staff selects a venue, sets a date, determines competition-specific rules and regulations, sets entry fees, registers the competition with the BJCP, and publicizes the event. Competition supplies and awards are purchased, judges and stewards are recruited and confirmed, and entries are registered, received, unpacked, sorted, and stored until competition day. Information is then entered into the database being used so judging and stewarding assignments can be set. If food is to be served during the competition, details need to be ironed out in advance and confirmed. On competition day, the judging room needs to be set up as desired, judges registered, entries further sorted and delivered to appropriate judge teams, who then judge them in a blind tasting format. Winners need to be determined by award category and best-of-show winners selected. At the close of the competition, the room must be returned to its original state, all paperwork collected and scores entered into the database, and all supplies packed and ready to store for future use. After the competition has been completed, all scoresheets and awards must be sent to individual brewers and the on-line BJCP competition report completed in a timely manner.

### Sanctioned Competition Requirements<sup>2</sup>

The BJCP sanctions competitions, but does not operate them. Competitions are run by independent organizations that may or may not involve BJCP members. Any competition sanctioned by the BJCP must agree to follow these few general rules:

1. Organizers have the right to run their competitions as they see fit, consistent with these rules. Organizers have wide latitude to create a unique competition experience. This handbook provides good guidance and advice, but is not binding. Just keep in mind that experienced judges anticipate a certain rhythm to competitions, so be sure to advise judges when the competition has unusual or out-of-the-ordinary elements.

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<sup>2</sup> The latest version of these competition rules can be found at <http://www.bjcp.org/rules.php>.

2. Organizers have the right to select the judges and staff needed to run their competition. No judge has a right to be seated at any competition, session, or panel. Judges may not “pull rank” to get a judging slot.
3. Organizers have the right to remove or replace disruptive or non-performing judges or staff at their discretion, and to optionally ban them for cause from future competitions they run.
4. Organizers have the right to exclude scoresheets from any judge who are clearly not performing their duties.
5. Competition-specific rules must be published and not be changed from the time registration is open until the competition concludes. Unpublished rules cannot be enforced. If any entries are not eligible for any award, these criteria must be explained in advance.
6. Judging must be fair to all entrants. Competition rules must be applied and enforced uniformly. Competitions must be run in a spirit of fairness, even as unique characteristics are incorporated.
7. Blind tasting must be used. Judges must not be given the identity of the brewer or entrant. Competition staff are allowed to judge provided that they do not know the association between entries and entrants. Judges may enter competitions in which they judge provided they do not judge any competition category in which they have entries.
8. Entries must be judged to published styles. The most recent version of the BJCP Style Guidelines<sup>3</sup> are preferred, but any other published guidelines may be used provided that entrants and judges are using the same guidelines. If styles require additional information, organizers must provide this information to the judges.
9. Judge panels must have a minimum of two judges and a maximum of four judges, including any non-BJCP or provisional judges. Excess judges should be encouraged to steward or observe the judging, provided they are not a distraction and that adequate sample volume exists for judging.
10. Judges must always pick the best beer from those eligible. Judges, not organizers or staff, determine scores, ranking, and winners. Winners must not be selected on score alone when scores were determined by multiple panels of judges.
11. Feedback must be given to the brewer or entrant. BJCP Judging Forms<sup>4</sup> are recommended, but are not mandatory. Scoresheets must be returned promptly to entrants.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.bjcp.org/stylecenter.php>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.bjcp.org/compcenter.php>

12. An organizer’s report must be filed with the BJCP within 21 days, preferably using the BJCP Organizer Reporting System<sup>5</sup>. The BJCP Experience Point Award Schedule<sup>6</sup> must be followed.
13. The BJCP Privacy Policy<sup>7</sup> must be followed. Judge data may only be used to run the competition, and not be used for other purposes or shared with third parties.
14. The BJCP Disability Policy<sup>8</sup> must be followed.

Organizers not abiding by these rules may be penalized. Organizer points may be reduced or withheld. Subsequent competition registrations may be denied. Discipline of individual BJCP members involved in violating rules may be addressed in accordance with BJCP policies and guidelines.

Rule infractions should be brought to the Organizer’s attention immediately. Escalation to the BJCP Competition Director or BJCP Regional Representative can be undertaken, but attempts to resolve problems must be made locally first. The BJCP will work with those who escalate issues to the BJCP Competition Director or other officers or staff towards a satisfactory explanation or resolution, but Organizers are encouraged to properly manage their competitions and work with those with report issues.

These rules can change from time to time; check the BJCP website<sup>9</sup> for the most current rules. As you can see, there are relatively few rules for running a competition. Competition organizers have wide latitude in creating a unique competition experience, and are fully responsible for running their events according to the overarching SCP principles. Ideas for competition-specific rules are located in the “Rules and Regulations” section of this document.

## **Competition Roles**

Many successful competitions have been organized and run with a single organizer, but it is often easier when the organizer is part of a committee—this is especially true for larger competitions. When this is done, the myriad tasks are shared, leaving no individual overburdened. However, this introduces the requirement for the organizer to communicate and coordinate with others. The committee can be as large or small as the organizer feels is appropriate based on the size of the competition, people resources available, amount of work individuals can manage, and the amount of time available to devote to planning.

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.bjcp.org/apps/comp/comp\\_info.php](http://www.bjcp.org/apps/comp/comp_info.php)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.bjcp.org/rules.php>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.bjcp.org/privacy.php>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.bjcp.org/disability.php>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.bjcp.org/rules.php>

The number of staff points that can be awarded varies based on the size of the competition. See BJCP Experience Points Award Schedule on the rules page<sup>10</sup> for details. The tasks that staff members perform may also vary based on the number of members, their strengths, and the amount of work the organizer wants to take on directly. An example of a functional staff includes the organizer, registrar, judge director, and head steward. Each of these staff members has specific tasks to complete prior to, during, and after the competition. The duties to be performed are what is important, not necessarily who does them; therefore, tasks can be combined as needed in a way that works for your club/group. These roles are briefly described below:

- **Organizer** – The organizer is basically responsible for planning and running the competition, including making sure that every aspect of the competition is completed on schedule and according to the rules. Some of the duties performed may include setting the date for the competition (which may be done with staff input), securing a venue and handling all venue issues, registering the competition with the BJCP, advertising the competition, setting up competition guidelines (with input from staff, if desired), setting up and troubleshooting the on-line entry process if one is being used, ordering awards, procuring prizes if a raffle is being held, fielding questions, and overseeing task progress and completion by staff members. During the competition, the organizer oversees the competition as a whole and pitches in where needed. After the competition, the competition report must be completed filed, and scoresheets/awards sent to the entrants. Any of the above tasks can be delegated to other staff members, or additional staff may be added to complete some of the tasks.

The organizer should not judge, but can help in an emergency provided that the organizer does not have knowledge of the association between entries and entrants. In any event, no additional points are awarded to the organizer for judging or performing any other role. Organizer points are the only experience points awarded to the organizer.

- **Registrar** – This staff member’s duties include maintaining a database of entries registered and received. This database should include information about the brewer, the entries, payment, entry numbers, and results. On competition day, the registrar should check in walk-in entries (if allowed by the competition), and enter scores and winners into the database. This individual must not judge at the competition, and must not divulge this information to anyone involved in judging. This person may also be the organizer or share responsibilities as Judge Director.
- **Judge Director** – This staff member recruits judges and assigns them to judge specific categories, determines whether categories must be combined or split, and creates and schedules flights. During the competition, the judge director will shift judges as needed to

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.bjcp.org/rules.php>



cover no-shows, determine eligible judges, and assign them for the Best-of-Show (BOS) round. The judge director may also judge, provided the director has no knowledge of the association between entries and entrants, and that the judging will not interfere with the direct duties of the judge director role.

- **Head Steward** – This individual is essentially the operations manager for the competition, running the logistics of the competition itself. The head steward recruits, trains, and assigns stewards to various competition tasks. During the competition, the head steward is responsible for all entries entering and leaving the cooler, coordinating the tasks of the stewards, ensuring that entries are accurately sorted into flights and delivered to the appropriate judge team, and accurate completion of paperwork prior to turning it in to the registrar for entry into the database. The head steward is often the liaison between the judges and the organizer and registrar, answering questions and responding to issues as needed. In small competitions, the organizer may perform this role directly. This is a staff position; the Head Steward may or may not actually perform stewarding duties during the competition, depending on its size. Some competitions also create a Cellarmaster position to manage the entries and the cooler and to allow the Head Steward to handle other tasks. Individual tasks can be delegated, and jobs can be combined, shared or split. But all the roles must be addressed in order to successfully run the competition.

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## Getting Started

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Whether or not your competition will utilize a committee or a single organizer, a variety of tasks need to be completed in timely manner. The first of which is to decide when and where the competition will be held. These tasks are not as simple as they may first appear. A great deal of research and investigation are required in order to find an ideal time and place to hold the competition. It is important to realize early that not all dates and venues are created equal.

### Selecting a Competition Site

When searching for a competition site, a number of factors must be considered, including space, location, amenities, price, and the ability to bring homebrew onto the premises. There can also be legal issues in many states, particularly when the competition venue has a liquor license—check your local laws before proceeding. Even small competitions tend to take up a great deal of space, so a large room or open area with a lot of light, preferably natural, is necessary. The site has to be easily accessible on foot, by car, or public transportation. A remote location, regardless of size or amenities will likely not draw an adequate number of judges for a quality competition. The space must be available for an adequate amount of time to judge all the entries. Depending on the number of entries, this could be eight hours or more.

The amenities a venue has are critical for the success of a competition. The venue must be able to provide a private room for judging that is large enough to accommodate all the tables, chairs, and people needed for the size of competition. The tables available for the room must be large enough to accommodate all of the entries, judging supplies, paperwork, and still provide each judge enough personal space to perform the task of judging comfortably. The room itself needs to have ample lighting, preferably natural light, be quiet, and devoid of strong odors such as smoke, cooking smells, cleaning products, and bar or brewing smells.

The site must have adequate cooler space to store all of the entries and the ability to receive them at the facility and hold on to them for up to two to three weeks. A walk-in cooler is desirable for all but the smallest competitions. Portable on-site coolers can be used during the competition, provided the beers are staged in a walk-in cooler somewhere on the premises. The proximity of the cooler to the judging room and unlimited access to the cooler on competition day are also critical.

A sufficient number of tables and chairs should be available for judging or the ability to have them brought in is important. There also needs to be somewhere nearby to dump opened entries and access fresh drinking water, if bottled water is not to be provided. Water and glasses need to be free of chlorine or other sanitizer smells, or bottled water should be provided. Restroom facilities should also be adequate and readily accessible.

Most competitions run at least two sessions, morning and afternoon, with a break for lunch in between. Allow at least 2½ hours per session, an hour for lunch, an hour of prep work before the

competition, and a half hour of clean up after. The site needs to be able to provide ample time to complete all tasks without rushing. If the competition will take up the better part of a day, the venue must have some means for providing food, either prepared on site or brought in. Good candidates for judging sites include brewpubs, breweries, and bars or restaurants with banquet halls or meeting facilities.

Unless funding for the competition is unlimited, price plays a large role in the selection of a venue. Look for places that may defer the room charge if food is purchased or those that are willing to work out a price reduction or some kind of package deal. Craft breweries and brewpubs are generally supportive of the homebrewing community and are frequently willing and able to work with competition organizers to make their facilities affordable. If located in your area, these establishments are great first choices. Banquet or meeting rooms in restaurants, union halls, or community centers are other options to consider.

## Setting a Date

Choosing a date is not as simple as opening *your* calendar and pointing to an open Saturday. In order to get sufficient quality judges to volunteer their time at your competition, it is important to find a date when there are no other activities that may compete for their attendance. If you have some dates in mind, check to make sure no other competitions or major beer events are scheduled for that weekend, or for the weekends before or after.

Check the BJCP Competition Calendar<sup>11</sup> to determine if other competitions are planned. People are often hesitant to work at competitions on back-to-back weekends. Avoid holiday weekends and spring breaks, as well.

If you will be relying on judges from outside of your area, expand your circle of research to include the areas from which you will draw your volunteers. Once you have some cleared dates in mind, choose one when your venue has availability for as long as you need the space or start with a handful of dates from your chosen venue and see which of them might be clear on the beer calendar.

Do not be tempted to pick a firm date and then find a venue that has availability on that date. A compromise in amenities will likely have to be made which compromises the overall quality of the competition.

Avoid weekends when beer festivals or other major beer events are held. Consider local sporting events or other large activities that may impact traffic or parking. Keep in mind that other conflicting events (not necessarily beer competitions) will impact judge availability.

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<sup>11</sup> [http://www.bjcp.org/apps/comp\\_schedule/competition\\_schedule.php](http://www.bjcp.org/apps/comp_schedule/competition_schedule.php)

## Choosing a Name

The new competition needs to be given a name. This name is used when registering your competition with the BJCP. It can be something simple like using the organization's name followed by the word *challenge*, *brew-off*, or *cup*. Or it can be more creative like using a play on words or something associated with the organization's logo. When possible it is nice to get input from members. A naming contest is a fun and easy way to get this task done.

## Registration and Publicity

Once a venue and date have been chosen, the competition should be registered using the BJCP Online Registration System<sup>12</sup>. Registration should take place at least 90 days prior to the date of the completion and should be completed on-line. There is a small fee (currently US\$30 – but authenticated, active BJCP members are eligible for a US\$5 discount) associated with registration that must be paid using PayPal. Once registered, the competition is added to the AHA and BJCP calendars both on-line and in *Zymurgy* magazine, if registered early enough.

Visibility on the BJCP calendar or on your organization's website is not enough to get homebrewers interested in your competition. Real work needs to be done to get the word out. Creating a flyer and sending/emailing it out to all of the homebrew clubs in your area, state, or region is a good start. A simple email without a flyer may work just as well, but doesn't provide a visual or handout for clubs to provide at their meetings. A list of registered homebrew clubs is available from the American Homebrewers Association website. Making flyers available at local homebrew shops, and publishing in beer-related magazines such as *Brew Your Own* and posting on the AHA or BJCP Forums can also be helpful.

After registering your competition, you will be sent by email your competition ID and password for filing the required organizer report. Along with that we will provide you with an Excel spreadsheet of active BJCP judges and their contact information so that you can mail, email or call them to judge in your competition.

After the first year, generating interest becomes less like cold-calling. Emails can be sent to the previous years' entrants in addition to the clubs in the area. If entrants were satisfied with their experience with your competition, they are likely to re-enter and tell friends. Word of mouth is great advertising.

## Rules and Regulations

A civilized society cannot function without rules and neither can a homebrew competition. Rules give parameters for brewers to follow when entering the competition and help to create a smoother running competition from start to finish. Rules and regulations must be posted where they can be accessed by those wishing to enter the competition. Once rules are in place, they

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<sup>12</sup> [http://www.bjcp.org/apps/comp\\_reg/comp\\_reg.php](http://www.bjcp.org/apps/comp_reg/comp_reg.php)

should be followed. When special treatment is given to one individual or in one situation, word gets around to other entrants who then have expectations of similar favors. Therefore, it is a lot easier to simply abide by the rules that are put in place.

The BJCP gives competition organizers broad latitude in setting competition-specific rules. This can create a unique and interesting competition experience. Following are some of the major decisions that need to be made to create the rules for your competition:

- **Type of Competition** – Most competitions accept all BJCP styles<sup>13</sup> from the most recent guidelines, although some do not include meads or ciders. Other competitions are more specialized and may only accept a specific type of beer such as high gravity styles. Some clubs add a featured category or two to set their competition apart from others and/or to increase the level of entertainment. Often these extra categories are related to the name of the competition such as the Menace of the Monastery for specific high gravity styles, the Smashed Pumpkin, a worst of show award, or an Eis-anything category. The best practice is to state the version of the style guidelines being used, and if any specific styles are added or excluded from the competition.
- **Entrant Eligibility** – In general, homebrew competitions are open to all homebrewers who brew their entries on their home equipment. Beers brewed at commercial facilities on commercial equipment or brew-on-premise locations are usually not allowed. Professional brewers are sometimes excluded, even if they make the beer on homebrew systems. Competitions might limit entrants to only their local club members or to state residents, but this is up to each competition and organizer. The BJCP does sanction competitions for commercially-made beers so long as the BJCP rules<sup>14</sup> are followed. There is no ethical problem with an entrant also being a judge in the same competition, provided that the person does not judge the same categories they enter.
- **Number of Bottles Per Entry** – At minimum, two bottles will be needed for judging; one for the initial round where the entry is tasted and given scores and a second for the Best-of-Show (BOS) round, where the top beers from each category meet head-to-head and an overall winner is chosen (assuming there is a BOS for the competition). When the number of entries in a single category exceeds 6 to 10, the category should be split into two or more as needed.

In order to determine the best beers in split categories, up to three entries from each flight in the category move on to a mini-Best-of-Show (mini-BOS). A panel of judges comprised of the top two or three judges selected from the representative flights choose the three beers that best depict that particular style, awarding first through third places. The beer that remains in the bottle from the initial judging can be used for the mini BOS,

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.bjcp.org/stylecenter.php>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.bjcp.org/rules.php>

but should be recapped immediately after pouring. If, in these situations a fresh taste is desired, a third bottle would be used. This, however, would require all entrants to send three bottles, just in case.

Things to consider when deciding between holding a two- or three-bottle competition are the additional cost in shipping for the brewers, the space need for the increase in number of bottles, and the significant amount of unopened bottles left over at the end of the competition.

- **Bottle Size** – 10 to 14 ounce bottles are standard so as to increase the convenience of storing them in standard beer case boxes. Any size or shaped bottles that do not easily fit in standard case boxes are generally not allowed; oversize bottles are difficult to store and may lead to breakage. However, large (16 oz., 22 oz. or 750ml) bottles are often accepted for meads, ciders and some beer styles. Any lettering or graphics on the caps should be completely obscured with a black marker so as to maintain anonymity. Raised lettering on the bottles is not typically a problem, and the color of the bottle should not matter, as long as they do not obviously associate an entry with a specific brewer. Some competitions do not allow swing-top bottles to be used. Some competitions accept beer in any size container, which benefits brewers who keg their beer.
- **Entry Fees** – Some competitions have a single cost per entry regardless of how many beers an individual enters. Other competitions utilize a multiple entry discount where the first entry is one price and all subsequent entries are a lower cost per entry. The savings is typically one dollar per entry. Still others charge a single fee for a specified number of entries after which all additional entries are free. No one wants to lose money on a competition so fees should be set to offset anticipated costs, without becoming prohibitively expensive for brewers. Check into the costs of other competitions in the area before setting a price in order to be competitive. Charging more for a competition, especially a new one, will deter brewers from entering. Typical entry fees are US\$5 to US\$7 per entry, as of this writing.
- **Entry Deadline** – Brewers are generally given up to a four-week window of time to register their entries on line. At the end of the entry window, the entry forms or link to the online registration site should be removed from the website to prevent the creation of late entries. To keep storage of entries to a minimum, acceptance of deliveries at specified locations should be limited to a few weeks. This period is generally the last one or two weeks prior to the unpacking date. For convenience and to save local brewers shipping costs, drop-off locations may also be made available. Local homebrew shops or venues for beer club meetings are good options for this service.
- **Entry Cap** – The popularity of homebrewing continues to drive competitions to an ever larger size. Left unrestrained, many competitions would wind up with hundreds of entries more than they could reasonably judge in their planned sessions. If you are constrained

by the number of judging days, judging sessions, available judges, room size, or any other factor, consider introducing a limit to the total number of entries your competition will accept. Monitor the entries and cut off registration when you've reached your limit. Be sure to publicize the limit on your website so entrants will not be surprised.

- **Late Entries** – Any entries received after the deadline are considered late. The organizer or committee needs to determine how they will handle these entries. Accepting them into the competition with full rights is one option, but defeats the purpose of having a deadline. Another option is to include the entries in the competition, but having their late status make them ineligible to win prizes or be included in the BOS should they qualify for those honors. Yet another option is to not include them in the competition at all. Regardless of how late entries will be handled, the policy should be clearly stated in the rules and regulations and the brewer of any late entries informed of how his entries were handled.
- **Walk-in Entries** – Having to label entries and put them with other entries of their categories minutes before judging is a lot of work and can be very stressful. When there are a lot of walk-ins, getting them all processed and in their proper places can delay the start of judging, which starts the competition off on a bad note. The difference in temperature between walk-in entries and the ones stored in the same cooler for days can be significant. This may affect the characteristics of the entries, affecting the judging process. Some competitions, therefore, do not accept walk-in entries.

Other competitions allow walk-in entries from judges coming from out-of-town as a thank-you for their support and assistance. All other entries must be shipped or delivered by the deadline given. Note that walk-in entries only mean the actual bottles are walked in. All entries must have been registered by the deadline and payment received like any other entry.

- **To Mead or Not to Mead** – Some people have real issues with having meads and ciders in a beer competition. Even more problematic for some is the possibility of a mead or cider winning a BEER competition. These concerns have resulted in some competitions that accept beer entries only. Other modifications have been made to other competitions resulting in a separate BOS round for meads and ciders. In either case, published regulations should be clear on how meads and ciders will be handled if they are or are not to be accepted.
- **Awards** – Regulations generally include a statement on awards; frequently this is first, second and third place from the categories judged and the overall winner, Best-of-Show. Some competitions include an award for the second Best-of-Show, while still others also have one for third BOS. If meads and ciders will not be included in the BOS round, but their own BOS will be held, awards to be presented to them should be specified. Also,

awards to be given for any featured category the competition will include should also be noted.

- **Scoring Limits** – The AHA currently allows only one entry per brewer in any given subcategory at the National Homebrew Competition (NHC). This rule is often adopted by local homebrew competitions as well, although some competitions allow multiple entries per subcategory but limit the brewer to winning only one medal per subcategory. This allows brewers to submit the same beer with different yeast or of two different vintages and get the same panel of judges to compare them and express a preference.

While judging scores range from 0 to 50, many competitions also mirror the NHC by having a minimum score entries have to achieve to place/receive an award. This score is generally 30. Competitions may also determine a minimum that any entry can score. A minimum score of 13 is sometimes used as a courtesy so as not to completely discourage entrants even if they have submitted a problematic beer, but this is not a BJCP requirement.

## **Awards**

Awards are no small detail; the organizer or committee needs to decide what awards they will provide to the category and BOS winners. The quality of awards given out can make or break a competition, so going ultra cheap is not necessarily better. To help offset competition costs, some competitions find sponsors for specific categories, places awarded, or Best-of-Show winners. Frequently used options include ribbons, plaques, medals, and trophies of some sort (glasses, cups, etc.).

Ribbons and rosettes come in a variety of sizes and colors for first, second, and third places. They can be easily customized with logo, place awarded, year, and competition name as desired. Cost varies greatly depending on the size, but is typically quite affordable. Ribbons are also lightweight and generally take up limited space, so mailing them to entrants who are not in attendance at an awards ceremony is relatively inexpensive. Plaques and medals tend to be more expensive and weigh more, adding to mailing costs, but are a nice change of pace when they can be afforded. Trophy shops are a good source for awards, but whatever type of award is chosen, order early and allow ample time for creation and delivery.

## **Prize Procurement**

Some competitions include a raffle that provides both entertainment on competition day and revenue to help defray costs incurred for the competition. If the competition will include a raffle, a few months should be allowed for the procuring of prizes. This is definitely not the easiest job. There is no set rule for who, when, and how to contact, or how persistent to be when attempts go unanswered. The key to success is to recognize that these are business with many tasks to perform and that patience, persistence, respect, and gratitude are required to get the job done without alienating business and organizations.



Breweries, brewpubs, local beer bars, maltsters, yeast suppliers, hop producers, and the like are all good places to solicit. Although some people ask for specific gifts from the businesses they solicit, it is often best to allow the business to decide what they have available and are willing to part with. Gifts of apparel, glassware, books, signs, mirrors, gadgets, extracts, flavorings, grains, hops, certificates or other products are all great items for a raffle.

It is always a good business practice to include the names of the businesses that donated on your website as sponsors of the completion or to utilize some other form of public acknowledgement of their generosity.

## **Recruiting Judges**

The quality of judging is one factor that determines the success of a competition. Having a sufficient number of experienced BJCP judges is critical. Teams of two judges with at least one BJCP judge is the minimum ratio to shoot for, although the more experienced judges a competition can recruit the better. If teams contain three judges, then at least two of them should be BJCP judges. A team of two BJCP judges is often more preferable than a team of three judges that includes inexperienced or non-BJCP judges; a person desiring judging experience should first volunteer to steward before attempting to judge. Often a team of three judges will judge at a slower pace than a team of two judges, so this should be taken into consideration when planning flights and schedules. A list of BJCP judges with contact information is available through the BJCP when a competition is registered.

The timeframe for recruiting judges is not set in stone, but sufficient time for working the competition into judges' calendars is necessary. Soliciting too early often results in some judges forgetting that they signed up. Wait too long and judges' calendars get filled up. The timeframe used will also vary by season. Calendars fill up faster in summer and near holidays and spring break, so more advance notice may be required. Even after judges have confirmed their desire to volunteer for a competition, follow up must occur as the date nears since plans often change without notice to the recruiter.

Policies established for the competition can have an affect on judge recruitment. Offering walk-in delivery for entries is a nice benefit for out-of-town judges, if this can be accommodated logistically. Some competitions also offer some expense reimbursement or subsidy for out-of-town judges (offering to provide some gas money, discounted hotel rooms, offering spare beds with local judges, free admission to related festivals or events, etc.) is frequently a good draw for judges. Policies that restrict judges from entering the competition will have a negative effect on judge recruitment.

The BJCP has a Disability Policy<sup>15</sup> in effect for judges. Competition organizers should be aware of this policy, and make reasonable attempts to accommodate disabled judges who volunteer. See the Competition Day section of this document for more details on specific accommodations.

## Estimating the Number of Judges Needed

One question most new competition organizers ask is *how many judges do I need?* The answer isn't simple but it's not overly complex either. Here are some thoughts that will help organizers answer this for themselves.

The following definitions from the Glossary of Terms are applicable to this discussion:

**SESSION** – An uninterrupted time period when at least one panel of judges sits to judge one or more flights of entries. Typically, *morning*, *afternoon* and *evening* are considered sessions at most competitions.

**FLIGHT** – A single grouping of entries that are combined for the purposes of judging, that are evaluated by a single panel of judges, and that result in a ranked ordering for purposes of determining awards. In large competitions, a single category may be divided into multiple flights with the overall winner determined in a Mini-BOS round.

Competitions need a minimum of two judges per flight. The number of entries per flight can range from a low of 6 to a max of 12; however, as a general rule try to limit the number of entries in a flight to 6 or 8. It takes approximate 10-15 minutes per entry to judge and fill out the judging form, so judges can judge 4 to 6 entries in an hour (although many are faster). Therefore, even slow judges should be able to reasonably evaluate 10 entries in about 2 to 2.5 hours. If a category has multiple flights (for example, 3 flights of two judges each to judge 32 porters), then allocate another 15-30 minutes for the mini-BOS that will determine the overall winning entries from the top three selected from each of the three flights. Note that some experienced judges may judge at a faster rate while inexperienced judges may take longer since they tend to be less sure of the styles and spend more time looking up the details of the style in order to judge accurately.

What this implies is that two judges can judge 10 entries in at most 2.5 hours, so estimate 2.5 to 3 hours for a session; this takes into account bathroom breaks and mini-BOS judging. A session starting on time at 9:00 am should conclude by 12:00 noon, if all the flights have about 10 or fewer entries. A 1:00 pm flight should finish by 4:00 pm. A Best of Show judging starting at 4:30 pm should finish in about an hour, so your competition judging should conclude about 5:30 pm, if the flights are kept to a reasonable number of about 10 entries max.

The number of judges needed is derived from the number of entries to be judged and number of sessions in which judging will occur. Average-sized competitions typically have a morning and an afternoon judging sessions on a Saturday or Sunday. Most judges will show up for both

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<sup>15</sup> [www.bjcp.org/disability.php](http://www.bjcp.org/disability.php)

sessions, although sometimes there are no-shows or judges can only stay for one session, so take this into account when you finalize the number of judges needed.

You will have to make an initial assumption about the number of entries you will receive in order to estimate the number of judges needed. Using historical competition data or entry counts from similar competitions might help. Also take into account any potential entry cap, since this gives you a maximum number of entries. By closing the entry period a week before the competition, you can have an accurate count of entries and give yourself time to organize flights and create judging panels. The final number of entries received might be lower due to breakage and/or no-shows.

For example, assume a competition with 144 entries, which must be divided into judging categories. You might get 20 IPA entries, which would require two flights to judge. You might collapse some style categories that are lightly entered into fewer award categories. The goal will be to have about 10 in each judging flight. The 144 entries can then be judged in 14 or 15 flights. If you had an abundance of judges, this could all be done in the morning or the afternoon in one session. Typically, this judging will be done in two sessions in one day. So half the flights will be in the morning and half in the afternoon, unless you know you will have more judges in one session than another. In this example with 15 flights, we might schedule 8 flights in the morning and 7 in the afternoon. With two judges per flight we need 16 judges to judge all day, and extra judges can always be assigned as a third judge on a panel or be used to fill-in for no-show judges. With two judging sessions, the easy estimate is you need one-tenth the number of judges as the number of entries. Round up and always have an even number of judges. For judging to be completed in one session you need one-fifth the number of judges as entries. For three judging sessions, then one-third of the flights are judged in each session so you need a third as many judges, 10 for each session. The simple formula:

**$((E/L) \times P)/S$  = number of judges needed per session** (rounded up to next highest even number)

Where:

E = # of entries

S = # of sessions

L = average entries per flight (assume 8)

P = desired number of judges per panel (assume 2)

Of course things do not work out so perfectly. The entries will not divide up evenly into exactly 8 per flight. There will be no-show judges. Not all judges will be able to stay a full day. So always be sure to round up. Have extra judges on hand, and invite a few more to account for no-shows. Seat each flight with at least one of the most experienced BJCP judges and then the second judge in each flight can be less experienced. If you then have extra judges, you can seat three judges for some flights in order to utilize everyone who has given up their time to help you out. Consider the least experienced of the judges present as the third judge on some flights. Try to only put three judges on those flights that will not be involved in mini-BOS judging, so there

is enough beer left for mini-BOS judging if the same bottle must be used for both judging and mini-BOS.

When you estimate the number of entries you will receive and the number of judges required and find that you may not be able to recruit enough judges to judge in the days and sessions available to you, then you should consider introducing an entry cap or adding additional judging sessions. Some larger competitions judge some of the smaller flights during the evenings preceding the competition.

These guidelines will help you to have sufficient judges to conduct a successful competition. Some competition software can help by limiting on-line entries as set by the organizer. New competition organizers are urged to solicit the aid and support of a local experienced BJCP judge as a key staff member to help with the organization to ensure that the competition meets the BJCP and judges' expectations and goes well for you and all concerned.

## **Recruiting Stewards**

Stewards can also make or break a competition, so having an adequate number of experienced or trained stewards is important. The number of stewards necessary will depend on the size of the competition and the number or type of tasks they will be expected to complete. Smaller competitions can be run with one steward for every 2 to 3 flights. For larger competitions, one steward per category is ideal since this better supports queued judging. Specific stewarding tasks and information on queued judging can be found later in this document. Stewards are often non-judge club members or other local beer enthusiasts or those who would like to one day become a judge.

Many judges suggest to interested parties that they volunteer to steward at competitions if they think they would like to learn how to judge. It is best for a brand-new person to first steward a few times before attempting to judge so they can learn the mechanics of judging. Do not seat judge volunteers with zero experience as judges without first recommending that they steward instead.

## **Selecting Competition Software**

Two types of software are commonly used for homebrew competitions. A web-based application is used for on-line registration of entries and a computer-based application keeps track of judges, stewards, entries and entrants, scores, and places awarded. The computer-based software chosen should allow for the formatting of address labels and pull/flight sheets. Using a spreadsheet or database program such as Excel, Access, or Filemaker to organize, manipulate, and print out various information as needed helps a competition to run more efficiently and smoothly, leading to a successful competition. More fully-integrated web-based systems are becoming available,

and can be used instead of the separate components. Links to competition software members have recommended to us can be found on the BJCP website<sup>16</sup>.

The BJCP does not supply competition software, but does provide information about compatible software where possible. Whatever type of competition software is used, keep in mind all the various functions that must be performed during a competition and try to select products that will allow you to run the competition the way you want. Some competition management software requires an active Internet connection to use; this may be an issue if the judging venue is remote or lacks modern infrastructure.

Some software products automate the production of an organizer's report to the BJCP. If you use such a program, make sure the BJCP supports the format. It is still your responsibility to make sure you are awarding points in compliance with the award schedule listed on the BJCP website. The BJCP's Organizer Reporting System enforces these rules automatically, and is the preferred method for entering points, even if competition software can create a report. The BJCP's reporting system will notify judges that their points have been awarded, which can cut down on the amount of email you get from curious or impatient judges.

## **Creating Entry Number Labels**

Entries at homebrew competitions are judged anonymously. Nothing can be left on the bottles that might give away the identity of the brewer. So that entries can be tracked, they are all given numbers at the time of unpacking, which are entered into a database with the brewers' information. The numbering system used is completely up to the organizer, but generally consists of three- to five-digit numbers (e.g., 101, 102, etc. or 10001, 10002, etc.), used in sequential order. It should be noted numbers generated completely at random do not provide information to the stewards as to category. One numbering scheme which will provide category information is to use four digit numbers and the first two digits are the category and the last two are the entry number (e.g., 0101 is the first entry in Light Lagers (Category 1), 2315 is the fifteenth entry in Specialty Beer (Category 23), etc.). This numbering system allows the stewards and judges to immediately know if they are judging an entry from the correct category. It should be noted if you will have more than 100 entries you will need to move to a five-digit number with the first two being the Category and the last three being the entry number.

The number of labels needed per entry depends on how many bottles are required and if you will be unpacking and labeling all at once and doing the data entry later. In a nutshell, a minimum of two labels are needed per bottle, one for the neck and one for the cap. Placing a label on the cap is sometimes overlooked, which is a major mistake. Cap labels are critical to the efficiency of the competition. Scanning for numbers in cases is a lot faster than handling each bottle looking for numbers. One extra label can be used for the paperwork that accompanies the entries (generally a

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.bjcp.org/compcenter.php>

bottle label with brewer information) to use for data entry later. It is recommended to have all entry information available for easy reference during the competition (either printed or electronic). Sorting these by entry number makes locating the entry information for any given entry easy to find should there be questions from the judges during the competition.

## **Unpacking and Sorting**

Unpacking and sorting can be done all at once, or over a period of time. If desired, the entries can be unpacked as they are received, and the packing materials discarded. The entries can be stored temporarily in mixed cases until sorted, which typically takes place a week or so before the competition date and/or immediately after the delivery window is closed. This option requires fewer volunteers, allows for division of labor, takes up less working space, and provides the opportunity to dispose of material over time. On the other hand, each entry is handled more times and by more individuals. Labeling of entries can occur either at the time of unpacking or sorting. If unpacking and sorting are completed together, the two tasks would be completed in the timeframe for sorting noted above.

Generally, there are two basic ways of sorting the entries, each of which has its advantages and drawbacks. The first is to keep all bottles of an entry together in a case. Depending on the number of bottles required, a case would hold (12) 2-bottle or (8) 3-bottle entries. This method makes locating entries for the mini-BOS or BOS round easier because they are already on the competition floor. The entries that move on can be pulled at the completion of that round without searching through cases in the cooler. Drawbacks include the greater amount of space (2 to 3 times) needed in the judging area to accommodate the larger number of bottles, increased opportunities for error in serving (opening more than one of any given entry), and the greater variation in temperatures of bottles at BOS time.

The second way of sorting involves separating the entries into categories and rounds. For this sorting process, multiple cases for each BJCP category would need to be created. For competitions with 2-bottle entries, one box would be for the initial judging and the second for the BOS. For competitions with 3-bottle entries, three cases can be created for each category so that the initial round, mini-BOS, and BOS round each have its own case. Another option is to separate the bottles into two cases with the mini-BOS bottles either combined with the initial round or BOS bottles. Cases are differentiated by rounds either by using numbers, letters, or different colored paper attached to the front of the box. Advantages to separating the initial round bottles from the second and third bottles include the reduced number of bottles to be handled on the judging floor at any given time, less space needed in the judging area, accuracy of serving (all bottles in case get opened), and similar serving temperatures and conditions for all BOS entries since all BOS bottles remain in the cooler. The main drawback to this method is the additional time necessary to return to the cooler to search for BOS entries.

Whichever method of sorting or timeframe for unpacking is chosen, the same basic steps for unpacking, labeling, and repacking can be followed. Depending on number of entries, space and number of volunteers available, some modifications may need to be made. In general, once the window for receiving entries is closed, unpacking can occur. While there are many ways in which unpacking can be completed, recruiting a team of volunteers and assigning tasks to each individual allows for efficient completion of unpacking, labeling, and categorizing in assembly line fashion.

***Materials needed for unpacking:***

*Box cutters/pocket knives*

*Pre printed entry number labels*

*Pens/markers*

*Case boxes*

*Six-pack carriers or bottle dividers*

*Sheets of 2 -3 different colors of paper (optional)*

*Packing tape/tape guns (optional)*

Even large competitions can be unpacked and repacked in a few hours on a single day when some basic procedures are followed.

On unpacking/sorting day, three areas should be set up. The unpacking area will consist of the packaged entries and at least one work table, if possible. The labeling area will require a few tables and chairs for the labelers. The final area will be the sorting area, consisting of case boxes for sorting the entries by category.

If sorting by rounds, two (or three) different colors of paper can be taped to the front of each box, separating first and final round entries. Alternatively, a large “1” or “2” (or “A” and B”) could be hand written on a front corner of each case, but bright paper is easier to spot in a hurry. Also on each case, written in large numbers should be the category numbers. The pairs of cases, filled with six-pack carriers or internal bottle dividers, should be arranged on the floor in numerical order, each with the same color case (or round number/letter) in front of the second case of the same category.

The assembled group of volunteers can then be separated into four smaller groups, each with a specific function. These groups include unpackers, movers, labelers, and sorters.

**Unpackers** – Members of this group are responsible for opening packages of entries, moving the entries and any entry paperwork on to the next group, and disposing of packing materials. It is important to open packages carefully to prevent breakage and possible injury when breakage occurs during transport. Only one individual should open and unwrap entries from a single brewer. All entries from a single brewer should be move on to the next station as a unit, keeping the bottles for a single entry together.

As entries are unwrapped, all bottles should be checked for damage and ensure that each has a brewer label secured to the bottle. If a bottle comes without a label, look through the packing materials before discarding the trash. Any broken bottles, missing or wet labels, missing payments, odd-sized bottles, entries with too few bottles, or other concerns with entries should be brought to the attention of the lead labeler who is typically the registrar or organizer. If rules and provisions for how to address these situations have not already been determined, decisions will need to be made at this time and documented. Some resolution options to consider include:

- For broken bottles – If time permits, the entrant can reship entries. If one bottle is intact, it can be judged during the competition but will not be eligible for a medal. If there is nothing to judge, entry fees can be refunded or not.
- Odd-sized bottles can be disqualified on the spot and the beers disposed of properly. If allowed into the competition, provisions will need to be made for storage. The entry can be judged, but given the penalty of not being allowed to move forward or earn a medal. If accepted, reserving one or two cases specifically for odd-sized bottles makes for easier handling.
- Entries with too few bottles can be disqualified on the spot and the beers disposed of properly. If allowed into the competition, the entry can be judged, but given the penalty of not being allowed to move forward or earn a medal. If there is a missing bottle for an entry, say one of the two bottles was broken in shipping and could not be replaced, then put the one bottle in the “A” case for judging with a note that it is a single bottle entry. A similar slip of paper in the corresponding location in the “B” case serves as a reminder that there is no second bottle and not a lost bottle.

Entrants should be informed of any decision regarding their entry either separately or through the scoring process.

**Movers** – This small group, if needed for larger competitions, is responsible for moving the entries from the unpacking area to the labelers, keeping entries from a single brewer together and with their appropriate partner. Once labeled with preprinted entry numbers and completely processed, members of this group then move the entries down to the sorters, checking to make sure the entry numbers and category/subcategories match.

**Labelers** – Members of this group work with sets of entries one entry at a time. Each set of bottles must be checked to make sure that the brewer and category information is the same. For this section, category refers to categories listed in the BJCP Style Guidelines or other style guidelines being used. Then the style number and sub-category letter are hand-written on pre-printed entry number labels. Having the style number on the cap makes sorting into the appropriate category box easier. One of these labels is then affixed to the cap and another to the neck of both bottles, wiping the bottles dry if needed to ensure that the labels stick. If using an on-line entry system an entry number label with the same entry number may be affixed to the upper right hand corner of the brewer label from one of bottles of an entry. If entries are not entered on line, the entry number can be affixed to the brewer entry form that was sent in instead. During the competition, the bottle labels with the entry numbers are saved by the stewards and used for data entry purposes at a later date. The bottles for that entry can then be moved forward to be collected by the movers and placed in six -pack carriers at the sorters’ station. One labeler should be responsible for labeling all entries of a single brewer. Entry numbers should be assigned in a numerical fashion. This is especially important when brewers have multiple entries.



Should an entry only have one bottle, this should be noted on the label retained by the labeler and the sorters informed of the status of that entry.

Accuracy and legibility are critical. Labelers should double check to make sure that they are labeling a matched set of beers AND one of the labels with the same number. The correct category number and letter should be written on the pre-printed labels in a legible manner so that they can be accurately categorized in the case boxes.

**Sorters** – This very small group is responsible for taking the labeled bottles and placing them in the appropriate case by category, noted on the entry label. Prior to placing entries in case boxes, it is important to double check that the entry numbers and category/sub-categories of a pair of bottles match. Also make sure that the category/subcategory numbers written on the entry number labels are the same as those noted on the brewer label. Then the bottles can be placed in the appropriate category cases, one in the front box and the second bottle in the back box, if separating by round. It is helpful to place bottles in the same space in each case, filling the left half first, from front to back. This allows for easier consolidation of cases later on, if necessary. When boxes are filled in this manner, all boxes in a category should look identical to each other. If they do not, the sorter will know that an error has occurred and can work on correcting the problem before the process has gone too far. In the case of a single bottle entry, the single bottle should be placed in the front box and the same spot left empty in the back box. If keeping all bottles of each entry together, leave a space where the missing/broken bottle would have gone so that subsequent entries are not split apart. This entry will be judged in the first round, but will be ineligible to move on to the best of show round.

When all of the packages have been unpacked and all entries labeled and placed into their appropriate cases, consolidation of cases can take place as needed. This is accomplished by combining smaller categories with other small categories within a case box and marking the additional category numbers on the front of the case. It is critical to combine the second cases of beers in the same manner as the first and marking them as well. If some styles are to be judged at a different time from the main competition, make sure that those styles are combined in cases as needed during this consolidation process. Once consolidation is complete, cases can be closed and stacked in the cooler, with second round boxes on the bottom or further back in the cooler.

Once the unpacking process has been completed, entry numbers can be entered into the database being used to keep track of brewers, entries, and winners. If on-line registration is required, it is a simple task to add the entry numbers to the entries already in the database. If on-line registration is not required, entry numbers along with brewers' information will need to be entered. All of this info must be entered prior to the start of the competition.

For smaller competitions, entry labels can be affixed to bottles when they are unpacked either as they come in or on a specified packing day. If unpacking and labeling is done over time, a final sorting should be completed once all entries have been received and unpacked. Smaller competitions could also use pre-assigned entry numbers that could be attached to the appropriate bottles as they are received if on-line registration is used. Conversely, entrants could be required

to affix labels to their entries themselves. This would entail providing entrants with their entry numbers and informing them how to label their bottles prior to shipping.

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# Preparing for the Competition

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## Gathering Essentials

### ***Supplies needed for competition***

*Cups or Glasses*  
*Mechanical pencils with erasers*  
*Staplers and staples*  
*Calculators*  
*Bottle openers*  
*Corkscrew (at least 1)*  
*Dump buckets*  
*Paper towels*  
*Small flashlights (optional)*  
*Required paperwork*  
*Palate cleansers*  
*Water (bottled or pitchers)*  
*Ice (or refrigerated space)*  
*Style Guidelines*  
*Tables and chairs*  
*Table signs*  
*Plastic trash bags*

Many of the necessary supplies can be purchased for the first competition and stored away for future use. The number of each type of supply needed varies by size of competition and may vary over time. There are a few suggestions to consider when purchasing supplies. Mechanical pencils should be plentiful enough for every judge, steward, and staff member to have one, with a few extra for when some run out of lead. Ideally there would be one stapler and one calculator available for each judge team, but one per table should work with judge panels sharing. One dump bucket per table is generally adequate if the reach is not too far from the judges. Two per table is easier for judges. Small paint buckets from home improvement stores make good dump buckets and stack nicely for storage. Small penlight flashlights are handy to have for checking color and clarity of entries. Many judges bring their own flashlights, but it is nice to have a

couple on hand for judges to use, but they are not a necessity. If they are used, remove batteries during storage to preserve the life of the battery. Prior to any competition, supplies should be checked for quantity and condition, adding to or replacing as needed.

## Required Paperwork

No competition would be complete without paperwork. A competition package that includes all of the required forms, except for the BJCP Style Guidelines, can be downloaded from the BJCP website in a single zip file for convenience<sup>17</sup>. Also in the package are examples of the Entry/Recipe and Bottle ID forms that entrants complete.

### ***Required paperwork***

*Beer scoresheet*  
*Mead scoresheet*  
*Cider scoresheet*  
*Judge Instructions*  
*Entry Cover Sheet*  
*Flight Summary Sheet*  
*Checklist scoresheets (optional)*  
*Judge Registration Waiver (optional)*  
*Judge Competition Evaluation*

Scoresheets are used to document judges' evaluations of entries. The criteria for judging beers, meads, and ciders differ so there are specific scoresheets for each. In general, the number of scoresheets needed is 2-3 times the number of entries for beer, mead, and cider (depending on whether using two- or three-person

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.bjcp.org/docs/comp.zip>

judge teams). If there will be a calibration round, one more sheet will be needed for every judge in the competition. Although not necessary, it is helpful to print mead and cider sheets each a different color so that it is easy to differentiate them from beer scoresheets at a glance, or finding them quickly when needed.

The beer scoresheet that comes in the competition packet is used for all but the largest competitions. When there are a very large number of beers to judge in a relatively short period of time with a limited judge pool, some organizers may opt to use the Beer Checklist instead of the full evaluation form. This checklist is exactly that – a simple checklist of sensory information that provides minimal feedback to brewers. If this checklist is to be used as a scoresheet, judges *must* provide additional written feedback in the comments section to justify the scores awarded and to provide explanation for boxes marked. Judges should be notified in advance and provided the Checklist Instructions and Beer Faults Troubleshooter if this method of evaluation is to be used, so they can familiarize themselves with it and get in a little practice. The Checklist, Instructions, and Troubleshooter can all be found on the BJCP website<sup>18</sup> at the Competition Center under the heading “Alternate forms for specific uses.”

A judge instruction sheet is available as a guide to assist judges with their judging duties. If you have a number of novice or apprentice judges, it is helpful to have these forms available to them so that they are aware of their expectations.

Each entry needs one cover sheet whether beer, mead, or cider. Cover sheets provide a quick synopsis of each entry, its category and subcategory, score, and place awarded when applicable. Copy as many as needed so that every entry has one. Some software packages allow for the printing of cover sticker labels that are used in place of full page cover sheets.

Every judge team needs a flight summary sheet for each flight they judge. This form helps judges keep track of the entries their team has judged, their scores, the order in which they were judged, and places awarded. Completion of this form is frequently delegated to the steward assigned to team, but should always be checked for accuracy and signed by the lead judge before being turned in. Copy as many as needed so that one is available for every flight judged. Be sure to provide an additional summary sheet if a flight will have more than twelve entries.

The judge registration form was originally designed to assist the organizer/judge director with contacting and confirming the attendance of judges for the competition via mail delivery. With increased use of the internet in soliciting and confirming judges, the form now is filled out at the start of the competition and simply helps keep track of the judges and stewards who worked at the competition. Use of this form is optional as long as another method for checking in judges and stewards is used. If this form is to be used, enough copies need to be available for each judge and steward to complete one.

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.bjcp.org/compcenter.php>

Competition evaluation forms were intended to be filled out by judges at the end of a competition to gather feedback that organizers and staff could use to improve future competitions. In most cases, the intended benefit has not played out in reality, so the form has become optional. However, judges should always be encouraged to bring concerns or praise directly to the organizer. If used, these evaluation forms are NOT returned to the BJCP; they are for the use of the organizer to make improvements in subsequent competitions.

*Note: Once the numbers of all the forms have been calculated, make as many copies of each form as needed and then make a few additional copies. It is better to have too many copies than too few.*

## **Setting up Flights and Judging Assignments**

After unpacking has been completed and the database updated with all of the entry numbers, flights can be created. Remember that if the competition is accepting walk-ins, they should be pre-registered and an entry number assigned to each so that these entries can be included in the flight printouts. A spreadsheet works well for creating the flights/judge assignments.

Assigning judges and creating flights go hand-in-hand. To complete either task, it is important to consider the space available, total number of entries, and the number of entries in each category. Then the number of judges that can be used per flight, the number of flights that can be judged per session, and the number of sessions required can be determined. If judging space is limited, it may not be possible to accommodate the number of judges needed to properly evaluate all entries in a single day.

For very large competitions, it is also possible that, even with sufficient judging space, time does not allow for evaluation of all entries in one day. In situations like these, smaller categories may be judged at other times and at other sites prior to competition day. If judges are to be paid for their service or reimbursed for travel expenses, which occasionally occurs, the budget available for this purpose would also dictate the number of judges a competition can use.

Organizers need to ensure that judges have adequate sample sizes from the size bottles provided. This becomes particularly important when a mini-BOS is planned. Limit extra judges if only one bottle is available or a mini-BOS will be performed. Judges should also be reminded that a mini-BOS is being used so that they don't consume extra samples, or provide samples to non-judges before all judging of the category is complete. Single-flight categories can handle more judges than multi-flight categories. If using a single bottle on multi-flight categories, two judges per panel is the maximum size recommended.

Regardless of the number of sessions to be used and number of judges required, it is important to make final confirmations with judges prior to making judging assignments. The judge coordinator must be aware of which judges have entries in which categories so that these judges do not evaluate their own entries in the competition. It is helpful to assign these judges first and fill in with the judges without entries, as they have more flexibility. It is also helpful to know if

judges have greater expertise in one category over another. Placing them in the position to judge styles they are most familiar with increases the overall quality of judging. The caveat is that if they have expertise with a style, they often brew that style and may have an entry in the competition.

When creating judge panels, it is also important to include a BJCP judge on every judge team. Even better would be to put any non-BJCP judge on three-judge teams with two other BJCP judges, or recommend that they steward instead. Then the organizer has the option to not include the scores from non-BJCP (including provisional) judges when determining results. The policy to be followed should be clearly explained to all the judges at the onset of judging.

Having a few three-person teams also makes easy work of modifying the schedule if a judge cancels at the last minute or simply does not show up. Some competitions assign two-person judging teams and keep extra judges in reserve until the competition begins so then they can be seated where needed. BJCP judges should always be seated if at all possible.

When assigning judges, it is often helpful to list judges in order of experience and begin to pair judges at the top and bottom together as the most experienced with the least experienced, with the caveats above considered. Then continue pairing more experience with least until all judges have been assigned for the session. Each judging session is assigned similarly.

Select the most qualified and/or experienced judge in each flight to be the head judge. This person is in charge of assigning the consensus score to each entry. The head judge is not necessarily the judge with the highest BJCP rank.

If a non-BJCP judge requests to be paired with an experienced judge that can help train them, take this request seriously and try to find a judge with not only the suitable experience but also the desire and temperament to train a new judge.

Creating flights is easy when there are sufficient entries, minimum of six, in a given style category. Each category then could then have its own flight. When there are fewer entries, the category would need to be combined with one or more other categories that are similar in some way. The 2015 BJCP Style Guidelines contain tags that describe characteristics for styles (pale-color, standard-strength, malty, western-europe, pilsner-family, etc.) that may be useful for this purpose. Note that competition categories can be created from groupings of individual styles; it is not necessary to group style categories. The BJCP Style Guidelines provide additional guidance on this process, including some examples of alternative groupings. In general, try to group beers with similar perceptual characteristics since this is easier on the judges' palates.

For small competitions, many or all of the judging categories may be combined and renamed rather than using straight BJCP style categories. When judging a combined category, each entry is judged as the category/subcategory in which it was entered, using the BJCP criteria for that category. When comparing them to entries from other BJCP categories within the judging category the judges need to consider if one entry is a better example of that style than another entry is to its own style. "Is this Blonde Ale a better blonde ale than this Munich Helles is a

Munich Helles?” is how the thinking should go. This is the same process used on the Best of Show table, incidentally.

**It is not necessary to judge all beers in a major BJCP *style* category within a single *competition award* category.**

**Competitions can combine BJCP subcategories to create their own competition award categories.**

It is not required that all subcategories in a major BJCP category be judged together – they can be split into multiple competition categories. Subcategories from different major BJCP style categories can be grouped together to create a competition award category. Keep in mind that *you* are responsible for creating the competition categories for your competition, and for assigning BJCP subcategories (styles) to those competition categories. **Competition categories and style guideline major categories are *NOT* the same thing.** Some competition software may try to impose this restriction – if this is the case, choose other competition software.

When categories have more than 10 to 12 entries, it is generally best to split the category up into multiple flights. The size of each flight is generally as equal as possible. For example, if a category has 24 entries, it could be split into two flights of 12 or even better three flights of 8 or four flights of 6. It is generally better for judging purposes to have fewer entries whenever possible.

Flights with 6 to 8 entries are ideal. Smaller flights tend to save time and the judges’ palates. When splitting categories, it is generally best to include entries from each subcategory represented in each flight rather than separating by subcategories. Split categories require a mini-BOS round which immediately follows the initial judging of all the entries in the category and utilizes a panel of judges pulled from the judges that evaluated the split category.

Queued judging makes judging a split category more efficient. Mini-BOS and queued judging are discussed in detail in the “Judging Split Categories” section of Competition Day. Once all categories have been combined and/or split as needed, the flights can be scheduled. When scheduling flights, it is important to schedule split categories together and first. Once the large split categories have been scheduled, the smaller flights can be added in for the remaining judge teams. For the judges’ sake, it is nicer to schedule lighter beers earlier in the day, saving the higher gravity and more intensely-flavored beers for the afternoon.

The judge director and registrar then create flight sheets or pull sheets that list all of the entries in a particular category or judging category. For most categories, the sheet will list the entry numbers, and category/subcategory both by number and name. For categories that involve special ingredients and/or processes such as Specialty-type beers (fruit, spice, smoked, wild, historical, etc.), or meads and ciders, supplemental information should be provided by the brewer/entrant when registering these entries. This additional information should be included on the flight sheet to assist the judges in understanding how to evaluate each entry, as long as the

information does not uniquely identify the brewer. The BJCP Style Guidelines specify what information is required for each style.

Generally, the entries are sorted by category and subcategory on the pull sheet. If the category is being split and queued judging is being used, which is preferable, a single pull sheet with all entries in the category should be provided. If queued judging is not being used, the entries can be split into separate flights for individual judge teams, with entries from each subcategory represented in each flight, if possible. If separate flight sheets were not provided, splitting of entries can be completed by the steward or lead judge. Again, this method is not recommended. For more information on queued judging, check out the BJCP website<sup>19</sup>.

Although not necessary, it can be helpful to have assignments for stewards set up in advance, outlining categories to cover and/or specific tasks to complete. This is especially helpful for larger competitions. When stewards are made aware of expectations before they arrive, any questions they have can be answered prior to the competition so when they walk through the door on competition day they can get right to work.

Many large competitions have a set of unassigned judges for each session (often called a “bullpen”). If there is a no-show judge on any flight, one of the unassigned judges can take their place. If there are excess judges, it can then be possible to create additional judging teams for larger flights using queued judging, or to add a third judge to flights with only two judges per team. Regardless, scheduling additional judges for each session gives the organizer great flexibility in dealing with unexpected last-minute events and inevitable no-show judges.

When grouping flights into judging sessions, arrange flights so that judges evaluate more delicately-flavored, lower alcohol, and lighter-bodied beers first and the more assertively-flavored, higher gravity, and fuller-bodied beers last. Judges will use the same process within flights to set the flight judging order.

## **Accommodating Judges with Disabilities**

When a judge with a disability contacts you and requests to judge in a competition, discuss the extent of their disabilities with them and determine what possible accommodations can be made. If reasonable means of accommodation can be achieved, then inform the judge they may be seated at your competition and then coordinate the accommodations with the judge and your competition staff.

Accommodate judges with disabilities whenever possible, but you must consider if their participation will affect the quality of your competition. Therefore, the competition organizer has the authority to deny requests from individuals for such allowances. Remember that the competition organizer is ultimately responsible for the quality of the competition and the selection of judges. Non-BJCP judges can be used if needed, but too many judges on one flight

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<sup>19</sup> <http://www.bjcp.org/compcenter.php>



can slow down a competition. No judge (disabled or not) has a right to be seated. Refer to the BJCP Competition Rules for specific authority and guidance.

If reasonable means of accommodation cannot be achieved, then politely inform the judge that it is not possible for them to judge at your competition, and provide supporting justification if requested. However, do not turn away a potential judge without considering potential accommodations. The fact that it may take some additional effort is not a satisfactory excuse.

Examples of potential accommodations include:

1. Use of a computer and voice recognition software to follow the Style Guidelines.
2. Use of a computer to complete electronic scoresheets and a printer to print them.
3. Use of a magnifier to perceive the alcoholic beverage and to complete the scoresheet.
4. Use of large text documents.
5. Use of scribes, readers, sign language interpreters, or other assistants to complete the tasks.
6. Use of a side room or corner where the accommodations will not distract the other judges.
7. Use of a wheelchair-accessible facility.

## **Feeding your Judges and Stewards**

Alcohol and empty stomachs do not mix, so it is important to put food in the competition budget. If the competition is to start first thing in the morning, it is a nice gesture to provide the judges with some sort of breakfast food before they start judging. Bagels and cream cheese, donuts, muffins, and/or coffee cake along with coffee and juice would be sufficient. If an afternoon session will also be held, lunch should be provided. This can occur in a number of ways depending on whether or not the venue has cooking facilities. Lunch can be a big deal or simple fare depending on budget and organizer preference. Make sure that you work with facility staff before making any decisions about food for the competition. Do not forget to consider those who might be vegetarians, making sure that there will be something available for them as well. Some lunch options include:

- A buffet lunch prepared on site, delivered, or picked up. The menu could be anything from soups, salads, and sandwiches to trays of pasta and bread;
- Providing a coupon worth a fixed dollar amount and judges/stewards order off the menu;
- Creating a smaller menu of similarly priced items for judges to choose from, using a coupon provided;
- Sending judges out to a sandwich shop close by with a coupon for a fixed meal such as sub sandwich, chips, and a drink; or

- Food can be purchased from the competition venue, brought in by the host club, or catered.

Note that if you are having judges/stewards choose menu items, get a count of what they will be ordering by midmorning and give the order and approximate lunch time to the kitchen staff so that they can be prepared for the slam.

## Cups or Glasses?

Competitions need to provide an ample supply of cups for judging. The main requirement is that the cups be able to hold about 2 ounces (US) of beer, leaving room for both a tall head and to allow the judge to swirl the beer and smell the aroma without inhaling the beer. Cups or tumblers between 7 and 10 ounces are usually sufficient. Smaller 4 or 5 ounce cups can hold the recommended sample size, but often will cause splashing and spilling. Cups or glasses larger than 9 or 10 ounces are not only a waste of money, since fewer cups are available for the same price, but judges tend to pour excess beer into them, which may adversely affect mini-BOS judging.

The BJCP recommends that competitions use hard, rigid, clear cups for judging; these are typically made of polystyrene plastic. Avoid soft plastic cups that are usually somewhat hazy. Also avoid plastic cups that have patterns or any aromas. The recommended cups typically come 25 to a sleeve and 500 to a case. Count on having 5 cups per entry on hand, more if you are assigning three judges per flight. Estimating five cups per entry accounts for broken cups, judging, sampling by stewards, mini-BOS and BOS rounds. Better to have more rather than come up short during the competition. Excess cups can be stored for future competitions or tastings.

**Type of plastic.** Hazy, soft plastic cups are typically made of PEP plastic, are indestructible, and have a rolled lip. While cheaper, these hazy cups make determining the clarity of the beer more difficult, and they often have an objectionable phenolic aroma. The BJCP recommends that soft plastic not be used. Only hard, clear polystyrene plastic is recommended.

**Should you buy cups or tumblers?** Tumblers and cups with the same capacity will be taller with a narrower mouth than the cups which are shorter with a much broader top than bottom. Either is acceptable, but tumblers are preferred.

**Odors.** Some plastics have an inherent lingering plastic aroma which is not desirable when judging. Judges typically have to set these out to air and dissipate the odor prior to using. The best plastic to use is odor-free; this is recommended. When purchasing, smell a cup just taken from the sleeve. If there is a noticeable aroma which does not dissipate quickly, avoid these cups in favor of those without any noticeable aroma.

**How many to buy and have on hand?** Plasticware is only used once and then discarded, so it is always better to have extras than to run out. While an exact count of the number needed is hard to determine, we have found that the rule of thumb of having 5 to 6 cups per entry to be judged is

a good number. This accounts for one cup used by each of two judges in judging, extra cups used for mini-BOS judging, sharing entries with stewards, the occasional third judge on a flight, cups used for water, broken cups, and those used in BOS judging. So if a competition is anticipating 200 entries, having a minimum of 1000 cups on hand is recommended. Plasticware typically comes 25 to a sleeve, 20 sleeves to the case of 500, so two cases would be the minimum to have on hand. Unused cups can be saved for the next competition or tasting so they will not go to waste.

**Glassware.** A number of competitions have used small tasting glasses or wine glasses for their competitions. Using wine glasses for mead is especially desirable, and sometimes can be used for best of show judging. Clean, oil- and soap-free glasses are great to use for judging. However, few competitions will have a sufficient number of glasses available to use them without washing and reusing them. Competitions should take care to ensure that there are enough glasses on hand to allow them to be washed, rinsed, return to room temperature, drained, and dried before they are returned to the table for judging use. Glasses should be thoroughly rinsed and dried, and should not have any objectionable odor from cleaning products or from rinse water containing chlorine. Head-destroying detergent additives should not be used for cleaning. Whether using glass or plastic, size matters – use the recommendations for cup sizes previously described.

Some judges may ask to bring their own tasting glasses to the competition. It is up to the organizer as to whether to allow this practice, but such a glass would have to be rinsed and dried between each sample. Stewards and competition staff should not be expected to do this chore; it would be up to the judge. Those pouring the beer should also maintain a consistent sample size between judges. In general, the practice of using personal glassware is discouraged since it could be disruptive to the judging process, and a burden upon the staff and other judges in the flight. A judge who wants to do this should contact the organizer in advance for a determination, and should bring all supplies necessary to maintain their glassware in a usable state.

**Sources.** Several sources of the recommended hard plasticware are available. The price tends to be about US\$0.07 or less per cup. Wal-Mart, Costco, and BJ's are good bulk buy sources for cups. Local or national restaurant supply houses (Sysco, Restaurant Depot, WEBstaurant, etc.) are also excellent sources of cups. Organizers may have to go through a restaurant or other commercial purchaser to buy these but they typically are a very good price. When these options are not available, the party stores such as Party Land or Party City carry cups you can use. While expensive in individual sleeves, they will typically provide a very good discount of up to 50% when you purchase by the case, but you may need to ask for the case price.

**Brands and SKUs.** Here is a list of known good brands that are recommended:

- Comet T7T, 7 oz. Clear Polystyrene Classic Crystal Tall Tumbler.
- Fineline Savvi Serve 407, 7 oz. Tall Clear Hard Plastic Tumbler.
- Comet CC8, 8 oz. CC8 Tall Clear Plastic Classicware.

- PartyBasics, 7.5 oz. Disposable Hard Plastic Tumblers. *Water*
- PartyBasics, 8 oz. Disposable Hard Plastic Tumblers. *Juice*

**Reserve cups for judging.** Since sample cups are often used as water glasses, a cost savings can be realized by providing restaurant or bar glasses for water to the judges. Some competitions provide commemorative pint glasses to judges. Put those out for the judges to use during the competition; they can then take them home at the end of the day.

An additional problem with using judging cups for water is that they tend to be cleared away by stewards, resulting in even more cup use. Judges may choose to use a completely different style of cup for water, such as a red plastic Solo cup, to differentiate it from the competition cups.

If a steward is sampling along with judges, they may also be instructed to rinse and reuse their sample cup while the judges use a fresh cup for every entry.

**Recycle.** Try to properly recycle used plastic cups; avoid tossing used cups in the trash whenever possible.

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## Competition Day

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### Off and Running

Typically, the competition staff and stewards arrive at the site an hour or so before judging is to begin because a number of tasks need to be completed simultaneously in a short period of time. Stewards are generally responsible for setting breakfast food out if this is being provided, as well as configuring the tables and chairs in the manner the organizer desires.

If the room is already set up with tables and chairs as desired, the stewards can begin the task of preparing them for judging. This includes covering tables with butcher paper or tablecloths if desired, filling pitchers with ice and water (if bottled water is not being provided), cutting bread and putting into bowls, baskets or on plates. Matzo, salt-free crackers, or unsalted oyster crackers can also be used instead of the bread. One of each of these items is put onto each judging tables.

An adequate number of mechanical pencils, a stapler, extra staples, a bottle opener, calculator, dump bucket, and a flashlight (if desired) are also added to each judging table. Stacks of cups are opened, cups removed, and placed on tables for every judge team. Style guidelines, flight summary sheets, scoresheets (beer, mead, or cider, as appropriate for the category), and cover sheets adequate for the number of entries to be judged that session are added to the table as well.

Making the best use of the space and keeping teams judging split categories in close proximity, table tents or signs noting the style or category to be judged are placed on the judging tables. Table tents are simply pieces of paper folded into a triangular pyramid shape so they stand up on the table. Placing them on the appropriate tables helps the judges find their judging station and the stewards know where to deliver entries.

If walk-in entries were allowed, the registrar and an assistant check in those entries as they arrive. This includes affixing pre-assigned neck and cap entry number labels to each bottle in the same manner as was done during the unpacking process. Entries then must be sorted and moved to where the stewards will be separating beers into flights or into the cooler as needed. It is helpful to have one individual assigned to this task so that the operations of the registrar and stewards are not interrupted and entries do not get overlooked.

While all of this is occurring in the judging room, the head steward or designee and an assistant pull the cases of categories to be judged during the first session from the cooler and transport them to the judging room. With the assistance of other stewards, the entries for each category are checked against the pull lists, and any missing entries are appropriately marked. If any entries are not found in the appropriately labeled case boxes, stewards should check the stash of walk-in entries that arrived that morning prior to checking with the registrar or judge coordinator on the status of that entry.

Once a flight has been pulled and all entries are in place, the flight sheet can be placed with the category bottles and the whole flight set aside until it is time to begin judging. The crew should

keep working on organizing flights until all of the morning flights have been filled. Bottles kept in case boxes stay colder longer, so it might be advisable to keep six-pack carriers in the cases until needed for judging, unless the style such as bitters, meads, strong beers, or some Belgians benefit from serving a bit warmer. Check with the lead table judge to verify appropriate serving temperature.

As judges arrive, they may be requested to fill out a judge registration form or check in with the judge director before the competition begins. Once all judges are in place and vacancies filled as needed, the organizer or judge director opens the competition with some brief announcements. This may include a welcome to the judges, the agenda for the day, expectations of judges such as the range of scores allowed between judges on a single entry (generally no more than 5 to 7 points apart), the minimum score allowed to give an entry (often 13), the minimum score allowed for an entry to receive a medal (typically 30), and any other special rules/exceptions particular to the competition. Be sure to tell judges about logistical arrangements for the judging location, including where bathrooms are located, when lunch will be served, whether there are any parking restrictions in effect, or if the room needs to be vacated by a certain time.

Do not attempt to micro-manage the judging process at a judging table. BJCP Judges have a Judging Procedures Manual that they follow, and judge teams are typically quite good at resolving minor issues at the table. Be aware, however, that some judges may have questions or ask for rulings during a competition. Be open and available to these judges (which is one reason why a competition organizer should not judge). Use the BJCP Competition Rules, local competition rules, and sound judgment as a guide. If you are unsure of how to respond, consult senior judges in the room for their opinion.

## **Dealing with No-Show Judges**

Judges have the responsibility to notify you or the judge director when they are unable to attend judging. Judges who give no notice and who do not show up are a serious problem. However, there are some strategies to minimize the impact of this behavior.

- Make sure you have good contact information for each judge (mobile phone number for calling or texting, email address) so you can contact them on the day of the competition if they are missing. Collect this information at the time of judge registration and consolidate into a master document (spreadsheet or something similar).
- Communicate with judges to confirm their participation before the event (two or three days in advance). Have a mailing list of your judges. This is often a good time to give them preliminary judge assignments, and it reminds them of your event. Ask them to tell you if they cannot attend or if they must be switched to another judging category.
- Plan more judges than you need for the entries you have. If you plan additional judges, then the judges in reserve can be seated into the empty slots. If all judges arrive, seat those extra judges as third judges at a table of their choice.

- If you know you will have trouble attracting enough judges for your competition, consider limiting (or “capping”) the number of entries to a level you can manage. If you force judges to judge huge flights, they often will not come back to future competitions.

After the event and if you have time, contact any no-show judges to let them know they neglected their duties and caused issues at the competition. They may have legitimate reasons due to emergencies. If it is due to negligence, you may maintain a list of problematic judges for future competitions. If they appear at future competitions and perform well, then consider the problem resolved. If there are recurring issues, you may avoid inviting them to future competitions or may reject their request to judge at your discretion.

Remember that communication is key and that judges also are evaluating you. Judges often avoid returning to poorly run competitions, and that includes ones where judge assignments are chaotic or that flights are excessively large. If you are asking for good communications from your judges, remember to do the same yourself and keep them informed about the competition.

## **Special Considerations for Disabled Judges**

Do not bring disabilities of any judge to the attention of other judges unless required to accomplish the task of judging entries.

Whenever possible, do not move a judge with disabilities from the location where he/she has initially been seated (especially if using special equipment). Rotate other judges to them to complete the judge pair.

A judge who cannot judge the color, clarity, head texture and retention of an alcoholic beverage should not be the lead judge in a pair, nor should that judge be paired with a Non-BJCP judge.

## **To Calibrate or Not to Calibrate**

Some competitions start off with a calibration round using a commercial beer or a homebrewed beer that is not in the competition. The calibration round is basically a practice judging session. The intent is to help judges calibrate their palates with the other judges on their team, allowing them to score more closely during the actual judging session. In many situations, the goal of the calibration round is not realized. Unless each judge team calibrates with the style of beer they will be judging in the competition, the practice is generally considered a waste of time and may even confuse the palate. Therefore, many organizers have discontinued the use of a calibration round. The decision to calibrate or not is the responsibility of the competition organizer.

If judging a calibration beer, preparations for the calibration round should begin around the time the announcements begin. Typically this means pouring at least two ounces of beer from the bottles or pitchers provided into plastic judging glasses. These glasses are carried on trays and set in front of each judge in the room. Once all the judges have a glass of the calibration beer, they can begin judging. This gives the stewards a few minutes to deliver all of the morning flights of

beers to the appropriate judge teams, matching the category beer name and/or number to the corresponding table tent on the judging tables.

As the judges finish judging the calibration beer, stewards should move throughout the room collecting completed calibration sheets and turning them in to the designated person who calculates the average score of all the judges, as well as the high and low score, and communicates that to the judges. The information provided by this practice may be interesting, but is of little use to the judges. Instead, the judges should consider their score in relation to the other judges on their own team and adjust judging practices accordingly. Once the calibration round is complete, judging of the competition beers can begin.

When there are as many stewards as there are categories being judged at any given time, stewards can be assigned or allowed to choose a single category of beer to work with during a session. Frequently, however, this is not the case and stewards may have to work with more than one category which may add up to quite a number of judge teams. In either case, the steward is responsible for keeping adequate water in the pitcher (or bottled water on the tables), bread (matzo or crackers) in the bread basket (plate or bowl), clearing away the used cups when the judges are done with them on an ongoing basis, emptying the dump bucket when it starts to get full or when a really objectionable entry is dumped, replenishing the stockpile of scoresheets as needed, and getting answers to any questions that the judges may have. Should the judges want to have the second bottle of an entry brought to the table, the head steward should be notified for resolution. In addition, the judges may also choose to have the stewards fill out the cover sheets, calculate the average score of each entry and write it on the flight summary sheet, and/or staple the paperwork together.

## **Staff and Steward Responsibilities During Judging**

Stewards are responsible for assisting judges during the judging process, and interfacing with the competition staff to preserve anonymity of entries. If judges have questions or requests during judging, handle them as best as possible including checking with the competition staff if unsure of something. One frequent request is to check competition entries against the database to ensure an entry is correct, and that all supplied information has been provided to the judges.

Stewards bring the beer to the table for judging. This can be done one bottle at a time, or multiple bottles can be brought at once (this is a common occurrence when using multiple teams on a category, or if judges think the serving temperature is too cold). Handle the judge requests as best you can. They may also request ice if they believe the entries are too warm.

Stewards should double-check the entry numbers before presenting the beer for judging. Announce the entry and category for the judges. Do not open the bottles unless requested. Most judges prefer to look at the bottles and open them themselves. Remember that beer can contain sediment, so be careful in the handling of the bottles.



Stewards should monitor the table supplies and replenish items as necessary. Remove used cups (check with judges first before touching their cups, as judges often save favorite samples for later). Empty dump buckets as they fill, or if an objectionable-smelling entry is dumped. Do not remove bottle caps without checking with judges; they may be needed to identify entries.

Judges may request assistance with paperwork, usually the Flight Summary Sheet and the Cover Sheets. Stewards who do this job for judges will be helping to speed up the competition, and deserve the thanks of judges. Regardless of other requests, stewards should check the math on scoresheets, and scan them for completeness and inappropriate comments.

In general while judging is active, defer to the lead judge at the table unless you are directed against specific competition instructions. Structure your activities so that you are doing your work while the judges are judging; this keeps things moving along. Stewards who anticipate judge needs and who pay attention to the judging process are quite valuable to competition operations.

If stewards are invited to taste while judges are judging, stewards should refrain from commenting until the judges have completed their scoresheets and turned them in, unless directly asked by a judge for an opinion. If a steward has entered the competition, the steward should not work in categories where they have entries.

## **Judging Split Categories**

When larger categories are split and judged by more than one judge team, a mini best-of-show (mini-BOS) round must occur. In these situations, judges from each team judging that category may have the steward recap and set aside up to three entries that they would like to move forward to the mini-BOS. If a flight has no entries of sufficient quality to win (say, scoring under 30), fewer beers can be passed to the mini-BOS. In no event should a beer ineligible to win be passed on.

It is critical for the steward to keep track of those bottles, preventing them from getting dumped with the other bottles that do not move on. For a three bottle competition, the second bottle of the entries would be used for this purpose. There is a box on the cover sheet that indicates that a beer went on the mini-BOS. This box should be checked for all entries moved forward to this round. Especially in big competitions, this is valuable feedback to the entrants. The flight summary sheet also has a similar checkbox; this is helpful for stewards to quickly identify advancing entries.

No additional paperwork is needed for a mini-BOS. A panel of two to three judges selected from the judges that completed the initial judging of that particular category gets together to reevaluate the entries passed forward from each judge team. It is not necessary to select one judge from each flight; the highest-ranking two or three judges from the competition category should be picked if possible. The three beers that best exemplify the style are selected and awarded first, second, and third places. These awards are noted on the cover sheets for those three entries. The

entry number of each is then listed in the appropriate place on the flight summary sheet of the senior judge. Depending on the organizer's philosophy, the final assigned scores for the top three entries can be adjusted up on the cover sheet only to be higher than the scores of all the other entries in that category.

## **Queued Judging**

When a category is split and judges are given fixed flights of approximately equal size, judge teams finish at different times. While 10 to 12 minutes is a pretty standard timeframe for judging a single entry, some judges take less time and others take significantly more. When judge teams finish earlier than the other judge teams in their category, they are forced to wait to begin the mini-BOS. The wait can be mere minutes, but often significantly longer. This can be very frustrating for the judges who finish early and it slows down the competition. A solution to this problem with split categories is *queued judging*.

The goal of queued judging is for all teams in a category to finish judging at roughly the same time rather than everyone judging the same number of entries. Queued judging requires one steward per category and a table configuration that allows the steward easy access to each of the judge teams. Briefly, in queued judging, each of the teams in a category gets their first entry at the same time. The first team to complete judging their entry gets a second one from the steward. This process continues with the steward handing out entries to the next available judge team, from top to bottom of the flight sheet, until all entries have been handed out. This will likely mean that judge teams will evaluate a varying number of entries, but they should finish their last entries at approximately the same time. The mini-BOS can immediately commence.

## **Cleaning Up After Judging**

Once judging of a category is completed, stewards should begin the clean-up process for the judging area. This includes dumping all the used glasses into the dump bucket, returning opened bottles to the six-pack carriers or case boxes and removing them and the dump bucket from the table and taking them to dumping station. The table should then be straightened up, bread baskets emptied and placed back at the bread station for refilling later, water pitchers removed and taken to the water station to be refilled. When a steward has cleared their responsible judging area, the steward should pitch in and help other stewards with their areas until all the areas are cleared.

All scoresheets should be stacked with the first, second, and third place entries on the top, placed in the folded table tent or designated envelope for that category, and given to the registrar. Alternatively, the scoresheets could be clipped together; however, they should not be held loose. Stewards should check the sheets for accuracy before turning them in, paying close attention to addition, places awarded, and final scores adjusted as needed.

The best practice when the winner is known for a category is to have the cellar master get the winning entry from the cellar and save it for the BOS round. Building the box or boxes of BOS beers as the winners are known saves a great deal of time when setting up for BOS judging.

Typically, lunch separates morning and afternoon judging sessions; however, this schedule can be adjusted if three sessions are scheduled in a single day. A meal should be offered between judging sessions, if possible. If there are teams still in the process of judging when lunch is served, those stewards should remain with their teams until they are finished or can be relieved by a steward who is done eating. About a half hour prior to the scheduled start of the afternoon session, all stewards should return to the judging room to prepare the room and the flights of beers in the same manner as in the morning. Judging also proceeds as in the morning with new flights.

## Running the BOS Round

The Best-of-Show (BOS) round determines the overall winner of the competition, and potentially additional competition-specific awards. The BOS round may include beers, meads, ciders, or any combination of the three. Some competitions may not award a BOS (such as if they are a first round qualifier for a larger competition). The BOS round is specifically comprised of the first place winners in each competition medal categories (which may be different than style guideline categories). Some competitions may set further eligibility requirements for category winners to advance to the BOS table, such as a minimum score (often 30) in the main judging round; some competitions choose to limit BOS to beer styles only. However, the fairest approach is for any entry accepted in the competition and winning a category to be eligible to win BOS.

No approach other than judging eligible first place category winners is appropriate for determining BOS. In particular, main round scores should *never* be used to determine BOS or awards that cross judging flights, since different judging teams might vary in their scoring. Winners should only be chosen through head-to-head judging in a single panel with the same judges. In the event where a category winning entry is not available for BOS, such as a broken or misplaced bottle, or the entrant shipping insufficient bottles, a second place entry should not be advanced to the BOS round. No entry for that category should be represented on the BOS table.

Preparation for BOS judging should be well underway by the time the last session is ending. Entries need to be collected and tables need to be prepared for BOS judging. The BOS round does not need special paperwork, but cups, style guidelines, pencils, bread, dump bucket, and water all need to be in place. If the BOS tables are covered with butcher paper, the judges can write their notes directly on that. Otherwise, blank sheets of paper adequate to hold the number of BOS entries need to be set out for each of the BOS judges. Using pre-printed “placemats” for the BOS round is perhaps the fastest method of all, since the entry information does not have to be transcribed, and stewards can place the beers on the table faster.

When selecting judges for the BOS panel, the organizer or judge director should follow two simple rules. The first is that the judges typically are higher-ranking judges (National or above), when they are available. The second is that a judge cannot have an entry in the BOS, so selection of BOS judges often must wait until right before that round. Note that the most experienced judges, especially those who may have travel some distance to judge, are typically invited as Best-of-Show judges. One of the BOS seats might be given to an honored guest such as a local professional brewer (particularly if the brewery is sponsoring the competition, or is brewing the winning beer).

Generally, the BOS panel consists of three or five judges, depending on the number of entries in the BOS. For specifics, please refer to the Sanctioned Competition Requirements<sup>20</sup>. An even number of judges should not be used since the possibility of a deadlock exists. The benefit of a smaller panel is that the BOS round takes less time to complete as consensus is often easier to reach. A larger panel gets more judges involved and places the responsibility of finding the entry that best fits a style on a larger group of people. BOS should not be used as a “training exercise” for interested but less experienced judges; they can steward and listen instead.

Stewarding the BOS round is different from stewarding earlier rounds. In large competitions, having several stewards works best – one to open and pour the entries and the others to serve them to the judges. Some large competitions use as many as five stewards for the BOS round, one to pull and call out the entries, one to open and pour, and three to serve the entries to the judges. A flight sheet should be created for the BOS round and provided to each of the BOS judges and stewards. Ideally, the flight sheet would include all the additional information necessary for the judges to evaluate those entries with special ingredients. Providing “placemats” printed in the same order as the flight sheets with entry information for each of the BOS entries is even more efficient. Creating these “placemats,” generally six entries to a page, is easy to do when using competition or general office software (such as Microsoft Word or PowerPoint).

BOS stewards follow the order of the flight sheet beginning at the top and working their way to the bottom. It is helpful to put the entries in the same order in the case box as it is on the flight sheet, minimizing the time spent looking for entries. A sample of the first entry is then poured and placed in front of each judge. The steward tells the judges what the entry number is, the category, and subcategory. The second entry is immediately poured and handed to each judge. This process is repeated until all the entries have been served. Once the judges have sampled all the entries in silence and jotted down thoughts if desired, discussion starts. Discussions in the BOS round can be lively as judges do not always perceive the same things or agree on what is medal-worthy and what is not.

Stewards, organizers, and other judges should not interfere with BOS judging. Competitions may choose to hold the BOS round in a different room to avoid interference. Try to accommodate

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.bjcp.org/rules.php>

requests of the judges. If they feel distracted by those around the table, clear the room to help them finish faster. Some judges are not disturbed by bystanders, as long as they do not interfere with the judging. Respect their wishes. However, stewards and staff assisting the competition should not interfere with the judging, either. They may answer direct questions, such as information about certain beers, or whether a top pick is required, or if additional awards will be given. Stewards for the BOS round should not include those with entries on the table.

There are two basic ways of reaching consensus on winners. One is to begin by eliminating entries that the judges feel are less ideal. When the pool of remaining entries has been reduced to a manageable number, the panel begins to discuss the best entries, generally their top three. The other process skips the elimination phase and immediately advances the best entries. Either way works fine and BOS panels should be allowed to decide for themselves how they want to proceed, including devising any method of their choosing.

As agreement is reached that a particular entry is no longer needed on the BOS table, when individually or as the group that are not among the judges' favorites, the glasses are dumped unless the judge chooses to set it aside to drink later, or offers it to stewards or other judges in attendance. Removing cups as the entries are knocked out helps the judges know at a glance how many entries are left for consideration.

By the end of the BOS round, the best entry and any runners up are determined. This same process applies for determining BOS meads and ciders if these categories are being judged separately from BOS beer, except that one or two stewards would be sufficient since the number of BOS entries is generally significantly less for meads and ciders. Another option for a BOS round with only a few entries is for the judges to open the bottles and pour for themselves.

Once the BOS winners have been determined, an award ceremony is frequently held. The "ceremony" consists of announcing the winners to those gathered and presenting awards to winners in attendance. If awarding ribbons, it is helpful to have the backs all filled out except for the BOS ribbon, before the end of the BOS so that only the BOS ribbon needs to be completed. Doing this keeps the competition rolling along smoothly. Creating and sticking printed labels with the brewers' name and judging category on the backs of the ribbons instead of handwriting the information speeds up the process.

## **BOS and Other Awards**

Some competitions have multiple awards. If one of these awards is selected by a method other than a traditional best-of-show panel (e.g., people's choice, local favorite, brewer's pick, etc.), this panel must be separate from the traditional best-of-show process. Winners may be selected from the BOS entries, but this separate selection process must not interfere with or otherwise bias the BOS selection.

For example, sometimes a beer will be selected by a professional brewer to be brewed at their facility. That brewer may be selecting a beer based on what they are able to produce on their

system, the cost of the beer, or how the beer might overlap their current portfolio. These are not traditional criteria used by best-of-show judges who select beer based on quality and stylistic fidelity. The fact that a professional brewer (who may or may not be a BJCP judge) prefers a specific beer should not affect the traditional BOS selection process. Likewise, voting for a people's choice award should not be known to BOS judges prior to their making their selection.

## **At Day's End**

When the judging and award portions of the competition have been completed, the cleanup remains. The extent of the cleanup to be done by competition staff should be worked out with the facility prior to the competition. Should the entire responsibility for cleanup fall on the competition staff or club, there is a large amount of work yet to do.

All competition scoresheets, ribbons and prizes not awarded should be stowed safely in designated boxes or storage bins/crates. Used cups should be recycled or discarded, pitchers emptied, dump buckets rinsed and stacked, stale bread/matzos/crackers thrown away, competition supplies collected and put back in storage bins, scrap paperwork recycled, and unused competition paperwork stored for future competitions. If necessary, trash and recycling cans should be emptied into designated receptacles.

Empty bottles can be rinsed out, if possible, and recycled or put in case boxes for participants to take with them and reuse, or both. Full bottles remaining in the cooler must be removed, given away to judges, or saved for a variety of purposes at club meetings. Another option is to open them all and empty them, but this a lot of extra work and a waste of good homebrew.

Depending on the agreement made with the facility, tables may need to be collapsed and tables and chairs stacked. If there is an outstanding bill for food or beverages consumed during the competition, payment should be made unless other arrangements have been agreed upon. Before leaving, a walk-through should be completed to make sure that the room is presentable and nothing has been left behind.

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## Wrapping it Up

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Once the competition itself is over, a feeling of relief often sweeps over organizers and competition staff. After spending many weeks or months planning the event, it feels good to be done with it and have life return to normal. There are, however, still two very important tasks yet to complete. So that life can truly get back to some sense of normal, it is imperative that these tasks be addressed as soon as possible after the competition. Putting them off leads to forgetting, which may lead to anger and disappointment for entrants and participants alike. These individuals are less likely to involve themselves in a competition in the future that does not take care of the final details in a timely manner.

One of the tasks yet to complete is filling out and submitting the organizer's report to the BJCP. This must be completed on-line within 21 days of the competition date, although the best organizers complete the organizer report immediately following the competition. Accuracy in tracking data and filling out the competition report is important as this is how the organizer, staff, judges, and stewards get their BJCP points. In order to complete this report, the organizer must have all the necessary information accessible, including the names of staff members on hand and the staff positions they filled.

Staff points are allocated by the organizer out of the pool given based on the number of entries in the competition. The organizer will also need the list of judges who served at the competition and the number of sessions they judged, which determines the number of points they are awarded. The BOS is considered a bonus; those judges earn additional points. A list of stewards and the number of days worked is also needed, as this is the way points are determined for stewards. The organizer can only earn organizer points. The number of points available is based on the total number of entries in the competition. For specifics on points available for the various individuals involved in a competition, please refer to the BJCP Competition Point Award Schedule<sup>21</sup>.

The second task, organizing and preparing the scoresheets and ribbons and/or other awards to be sent back to all of the brewers, takes more time. This should be done within a week of the competition as entrants eagerly await the results. There are three common alternatives for performing this task:

1. One way to make this task easier is to share the responsibility with other staff members by doing a group mailing. Get volunteers together after the competition to sort and stuff envelopes, and then prepare for mailing.
2. A more cost-effective option is get the scoresheets ready for dissemination during the competition so that entrants in attendance at the competition can leave with their

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<sup>21</sup> <http://www.bjcp.org/rules.php>

scoresheets. Doing this leaves one less task for the organizer to complete after the competition and also saves on envelopes and postage. To make this possible, a team of workers must be formed whose main focus on competition day is to collect, organize, and stuff manila envelopes with entrants' scoresheets. This would take three to four additional volunteers, but it is well worth it.

3. One final option is to use automation. If organizers have access to copiers that creates copies as PDFs, they can copy each packet of scoresheets and save as PDF files. These documents can then be emailed to each entrant, saving significantly on postage. Any awards won, however, will need to be sent out in the traditional manner.

**Materials needed for sorting and returning scoresheets**

*File-sized storage containers/boxes*

*Alphabet dividers*

*Various sized manila envelopes*

*Brewer address labels*

*Printout of brewers and entries, sorted by entries*

*List of brewers and how many entries they have*

*Individual printouts of brewers and their entry numbers*

*Pens or pencils*

To return scoresheets the same day (option 2), the team can set up storage containers with dividers and puts each brewer address label on a manila envelope, checking the list to determine the appropriate sized envelope that is needed. Note that depending on the number of entries a brewer has entered, a larger sized envelope may be needed to

accommodate the paperwork and ribbon. Individual printouts of brewer entries are then placed in the appropriate envelope. Next, the envelopes are placed into the storage bins by brewers' last names.

Once a category has been judged, checked for accuracy, and all necessary information entered into the database, the completed scoresheets can be given to the Scoresheet Team. The scoresheets are then sorted into numerical order. The entry number on each individual scoresheet is checked against the printout of entries/brewers to determine the name of the brewer(s). That entry number is then checked off as being received. The manila envelope for that brewer is located in the alphabetized bins and the scoresheet placed in it. That entry then is checked off the brewer's list in the envelope. If the entry was the brewer's only entry, the manila envelope is removed from the alphabetized container and put into another box for completed envelopes. This process is repeated until all the scoresheets for all of the entries have been filed. Ribbons or other awards earned by some of the entrants can be added by this crew or later by the organizer/staff prior to mailing.



## Glossary of Terms

**BJCP Category** – the various categories of beer, mead, and cider listed in the BJCP style guidelines. Also known as a *Style Category*.

**BOS Judge** – A program participant who evaluates entries and selects a winner during a BOS panel.

**Best of Show (BOS) Panel** – A single session awarding top honors for a competition from at least five beer category winners or three mead and/or cider winners.

**Category** – the competition award category, not necessarily the BJCP Style Category. It is the set of beers that are judged together resulting in one award and/or one advancement to the best-of-show round. Also known as a *Competition Category* or *Award Category*.

**Competition** – An event held in a single geographical area where beer and possibly other fermented beverages are formally evaluated against a set of pre-defined style guidelines or category descriptions for the purpose of constructive feedback and acknowledgment of excellence. A competition is comprised of one or more sessions spanning one or more days.

**Day** – A calendar date when judging is held. Competitions may take place on one or more days, and the days do not have to be contiguous.

**Flight** – A single grouping of entries that are combined for the purposes of judging, that are evaluated by a single panel of judges, and that result in a ranked ordering for purposes of determining awards. In large competitions, a single category may be divided into multiple flights with the overall winner determined in a Mini-BOS round. Flights are not necessarily the same as sessions; a judge may judge multiple flights within a single session.

**Flight sheet/list** – the list of entries for a single judge team within a split category. May be used when queued judging is not being employed.

**Judge** – Any program participant who evaluates entries, completes scoresheets, and determines the final score and rank of entries in a flight.

**Mead Judge** – A person who has passed the BJCP Mead Exam. This person may also be a beer judge although taking the beer exam is not a requirement.

**Mini-BOS Round** – A subsequent flight within a session during which judges compare the leading entries of two or more separate flights in order to determine overall class or category winners. This shall not qualify as a separate session for the purpose of awarding points.

**Non-BJCP Judge** – A person who has not taken the BJCP exam, but who has been approved by the competition organizer to serve as a judge in a competition. The fact that a person is not a BJCP judge makes no statement about their skill level; the person may or may not be experienced in judging, or have a well-trained palate.

**Organizer** – The single program participant who registers the competition and who in all ways assumes responsibility for the direction of that competition – before, during, and after the competition itself. The organizer cannot receive experience points for performing any other role during a competition.

**Pull sheet/list** – the entire list of entries within a single category.

**Session** – An uninterrupted time period when at least one panel of judges sits to judge one or more flights of entries. Typically, *morning*, *afternoon* and *evening* are considered sessions at most competitions. A Session is not necessarily the same as a Flight.

**Staff** – Program participants who, under the direction of the Organizer, perform an active role in support of the competition other than as a Judge, Steward, or BOS Judge. These roles include, but are not limited to, Assistant Organizer, Head Steward, Registrar, Cellarmaster, Table Captain, Data Entry, Head Judge, Lunch Caterer, and Committee member. Direct participation is required to earn Staff points; passive participation by individuals who provide websites, software, materials, or other indirect services are not eligible to receive points.

**Steward** – A program participant who assists judges, obtains entries and supplies, handles paperwork, and manages the competition logistics at a judging table.