

FREQUENTLY-ASKED JUDGE'S QUESTIONS

- Q. Do you have information on all of the fairs in Wisconsin so I can contact them?*
- A. Contact the Wisconsin Association of Fairs for a copy of a brochure called "Schedule of Wisconsin County and District Fairs." It will give you the date, location and name of each fair, as well as the name, address, phone number and web address of each contact person.
- Q. How often can I judge in a year?*
- A. Wisconsin's Dept. of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) does not put a limit on the number of fairs you can judge in a year. It's not unheard of for some judges to judge as many as 10 fairs in a year. You're only limited by your schedule and marketing skills.
- Q. What counties can I judge in?*
- A. When you're registered in Wisconsin, you're eligible to judge in all 76 county and state-aided fairs in the 71 counties. Also, there are about 15 other community fairs in the state, such as Amherst, Colfax, Hillsboro and Stoughton that you can apply for. Get a copy of the annual Schedule of Wisconsin Fairs brochure or contact county Extension offices.
- Q. Should judges have background checks, since they work with and around youth?*
- A. Judges are "temporary" resources in a public area. They are never alone with the exhibitors so judges are not required to take the Youth Protection Program or become a certified 4-H volunteer leader. However, it is recommended that judges become 4-H volunteer leaders in the projects where they are registered to judge.
- Q. How often is the certified judge's list updated?*
- A. The certified judge's list is updated once a year, around December 1 so it can be printed in time for the Wisconsin Association of Fairs convention in January. DATCP maintains the list, but the list is only as accurate as the information that the department receives. If someone dies or moves or no longer wishes to judge, DATCP doesn't know that unless someone sends them a letter or calls them with the updated information. Periodically DATCP sends out letters to update the list, but if a letter is returned due to wrong address, it is DATCP's policy not to delete the person. A name is not deleted until DATCP is told to do so.
- Q. If I sign up to judge a department, but I don't know all about all the subjects, what do I do? What do I do when I'm asked to judge a project or exhibit that I don't feel very qualified to judge?*
- A. Be as prepared as you can be. Go to the county Extension office and get copies of the current 4-H curriculum. If you do your homework, you shouldn't have many surprises on judging day. County fairs do not expect you to be perfect or to be an expert in everything you judge. Let the county fair know before you sign the contract if you feel you are not qualified to judge some projects within a department. The county can then decide if it will hire another judge for those projects. If you *are* surprised and you don't do as well as you would like, learn from it and do better next time.
- Q. How do we ensure an orderly flow of exhibits during judging?*
- A. The best advice is to work closely with your superintendent and clerks to develop a system that works well for you. Many times you'll find that the superintendent is a veteran who has been helping in this department for years and has perfected the flow of exhibits. But if you have suggestions, speak up. It takes good communication to work out the best flow of exhibits.
- Q. Who should disqualify an entry if it does not meet fair book guidelines: the superintendent or the judge?*
- A. The judge and superintendent share the responsibility. Generally the superintendent or the clerks will spot an exhibit like this when youth are checking in. If you see that an exhibit doesn't meet the requirements or fit the class guidelines, then meet with the superintendent and together make a decision. The consequences will vary from county to county. Sometimes exhibits are disqualified, with the judge asked to make comments on the exhibits. More often, they are dropped a placing or given a fourth place.
- Q. How can exhibits be marked or checked so they don't show up at future fairs?*
- A. Sometimes exhibits can be reentered, such as a "progressive" exhibit like a camera collection where youth can add a certain number of

cameras or lenses each year. Assuming that's not the case with the class you're judging and you have suspicions that an exhibit was not created since the last county fair, alert the superintendent. But seldom is that necessary because you'll find that superintendents do a great job of screening for ineligible exhibits before they reach you.

Q. How should I judge a simple project made by an older youth in a beginning level project?

A. Make your evaluation based on the ability of the youth. Certainly you should expect an older youth that is starting in a project to produce a better exhibit than a 9 or 10 year old. But remember the older youth is still a beginner. Obviously a simple exhibit normally would not represent much effort and therefore would not earn a very high placing. But you need to determine if the exhibitor has a disability and the work represents his or her best. You also need to determine how much the exhibitor learned in making the exhibit. If you find out during the interview that the youth learned a great deal, even if they did not have the time or desire to put effort into making the exhibit, you might place the exhibit a little higher than you normally would.

Q. How do I judge mass-produced school or club projects that are entered at the fair?

A. It is a concern when it appears that exhibits are mass-produced in a classroom or 4-H club. All the exhibits look the same and there is little effort to show what the youth learned. Remember that you don't have to give blue ribbons or red ribbons in Danish judging. If you feel the lot deserves only whites or pinks due to lack of creativity or originality, do it. You can also encourage county fairs to require 3x5 cards with each exhibit so that the youth must spend at least some time sharing information about the process used.

Q. Should judges have a dress code? Can judges wear clothes that advertise?

A. There are no state guidelines on proper dress. If a county has a dress code for judges, it should be included in the county fair guidelines sent to you before the fair. If there is no code, use common sense. Dress comfortably and appropriately for the departments that you're judging. It is common for rabbit, poultry and horse judges to have advertising on while judging, but seldom will you see it in other departments. Advertising

is really a decision to be made by the county fair. Under no circumstances should judges drink alcohol while judging or have the smell of alcohol on their breath. In addition, if you smoke, you should only smoke on breaks and away from the judging area.

Q. How can I be kept current on new 4-H projects and other curriculum changes?

A. It's your responsibility as a judge to stay current on 4-H curriculum changes. Before the fair season starts, go to your county Extension office to get the latest information or a copy of new curriculum. You can also visit the State 4-H web site at <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/4h/> for a list of the current statewide 4-H projects and the curriculum used in each project.

Q. How can I remain upbeat during LONG judging days?

A. Each youth that you judge deserves your full, positive attention, even if it's at the end of the day. Try to maintain your sense of humor throughout the day. Probably the most important thing you can do to stay upbeat is to get your rest before and during judging day. Take your breaks. You've earned them. If you're feeling tired, get away from the crowd during your breaks and rest. Eat a wholesome lunch. Bring some wholesome snacks, like fresh fruit and vegetables or bagels for an energy boost during the day. If you have a favorite beverage, bring plenty of it along. Fairs also have the responsibility to offer you water, lemonade or soft drinks during the day. Remember to dress comfortably for a full day of work. Periodically stand or change your position. Take a minute to stretch every hour. Sometimes it helps to change the pace or order that you usually use when you judge to refresh yourself. If you feel ill, tell the superintendent.

Q. Do county fairs evaluate their judges? Should judges receive a copy?

A. No doubt most county fairs do an informal evaluation of their judges, i.e., UW-Extension and county fair staff discuss the quality of the judging among themselves and decide if they want someone to be asked back again. They also share this information with colleagues when asked to recommend judges for other county fairs. Some counties may even do a formal, written evaluation of their judges, but this information is not gathered statewide. The Wisconsin Association of Fairs and DATCP would like formal ways to evaluate judges,

record the information and share the results with counties, but the system is not yet in place.

Q. Do I judge digital photos differently than I do photos taken with film-based cameras?

A. Most counties now have classes for photos taken with a digital camera and/or printed from a computer. The state 4-H photo advisory committee recommends that digital photos be treated like photos taken by any kind of camera. But if a photo has been greatly enhanced or manipulated by a computer, the committee recommends that:

- The original photo be taken by the exhibitor, not downloaded from a clipart or stock photo file
- The enhanced photo be truly enhanced, i.e., made more interesting or colorful in some way
- The digitally “enhanced” photo be placed in a special effects class
- The original photo be attached to the exhibit to show the before and after versions
- The exhibitor describes what camera was used to take the original photo, as well as the program and computer used to make the enhancements.

Q. What if I’m asked to judge videos?

A. For many counties fairs you will not be judging videos. They are just not very popular exhibit items with youth today. But when you do have to judge a video, you’ll want to be ready. To be prepared, make sure you download a copy of the 4-H curriculum *Action! Making Videos and Movies* on the state 4-H photo project web page. Also, check out the resource in this packet called “Judging Videos.”

Q. What is the philosophy behind Danish judging?

A. Danish judging was developed so that every exhibitor was awarded some type of premium or ribbon. Basically in Danish judging 25% of the exhibitors in the class get blue ribbons, 25% red ribbons, 25% white ribbons and 25% pink ribbons. Before Danish judging, fairs used “regular” judging, where one exhibitor gets a first place, one gets second place, one third place, and one fourth place. The rest of the exhibitors in the class receive no premium or placing. Regular judging is the system still used in Open Class.

Q. How do I judge someone’s work fairly when I don’t know his or her grade or ability level?

A. Most county fairs set up their classes based on grades or ability level. In Danish judging, you can make some assumptions about the youth’s grade or ability level by carefully reading the class or lot number description, or the 4-H curriculum that the youth used to prepare an exhibit for the class. Most 4-H curricula now are divided into levels: beginning (grades 3-5), intermediate (grades 6-8) and advanced (9-12). In face-to-face settings, you should be able to find out the exhibitor’s grade and ability level through answers to your questions. If you want more information about an individual exhibitor, you can always ask the superintendent.

Q. In Danish judging, how appropriate is it to have exhibitors assist you in placing exhibits?

A. This is certainly a possibility if the youth are present during your judging. Some judges use this role-reversal technique successfully and it can make an excellent learning opportunity for exhibitors. Some things to consider before you try it: you and the superintendent must feel comfortable with the technique; you may need some extra time to make the technique work; and you’ll probably want to offer the opportunity to all exhibitors that you meet in a class.

Q. What percent of the placing or award do you base on the discussion in face-to-face judging?

A. A good rule of thumb is that you award half for what you hear in the interview and half for what you see in the exhibit.

Q. How can I do an adequate job of judging face-to-face without falling behind?

A. Every judge faces this dilemma. You want to take enough time with each youth to do a good job of judging, but you don’t want to fall behind either. As a rule of thumb, you want to spend about five minutes on an exhibitor. But it’s easy to lose track of time. Some judges put little reminders near themselves, like a timer or a 3x5 card that says, “Stay on time” or “Five minutes.” To find out how you stand during the day, periodically ask the superintendent how you are doing with time. Ask how many youth still need to exhibit, then calculate how much time you still need. Watch the line. Is it getting extraordinarily long and are people becoming frustrated with the wait? The bottom line is: sometimes you have to spend less time with an exhibitor than you would like; sometimes you have to stay longer than you planned to finish the job.

Q. How much time should I spend with a youth who obviously doesn't have much of the basic information that I feel should be learned in the project?

A. You must realize you can't give a year's worth of information in a few minutes. Help as much as you can but you'll probably have only five minutes to give to each exhibitor. So give two or three key, basic rules or principles that the youth should know, suggest a good source of information that the youth can consult, and encourage the youth to come back next year. (Note: There could be many reasons why a youth hasn't achieved at the level you might expect, such as, disabilities, lack of resources, or lack of help. So don't assume that the youth is an underachiever. Answers to your questions should give you some clues as to why the exhibitor has not achieved and help guide you in your evaluation.)

Q. How do I judge the work of youth with developmental disabilities?

A. Many times you won't know that a youth has disabilities. That's the way the parents want it. They don't want their child being treated "special." They want their child to be treated like the other youth in the class. To them, participating is more important than winning a certain ribbon. Sometimes the parents or the superintendent will alert you that a child has disabilities and has had help with the exhibit. Sometimes a note is attached stating how much assistance was given and how much the youth has contributed to the project. In that case it makes sense to ask the youth questions – and give your placing – on the parts of the exhibit that he or she did complete, and not the whole exhibit.

Q. How do we keep from giving so many blues and reds in face-to-face judging situations? How many blues, reds, whites and pinks are appropriate?

A. Try to honor the county's philosophy on how many blues and reds it would like to see. In individual conference judging, you can't adhere to the Danish System of judging (25% blues, 25% reds, etc.). But more and more counties are becoming uncomfortable with the increasingly large number of blues being handed out in face-to-face judging. So, counties are beginning to emphasize that judges award ribbons with a standard of quality or perfection in mind. What should a blue ribbon exhibit in this class be like, based on criteria you use? And what is the

overall quality of exhibits at this county fair in this department? A good solution is to have a clear set of criteria for each placing (see "County Fair Photo Judging Criteria Rubric"). Some judges simply ask the youth to say what ribbon they deserve. Many times the youth are harder on themselves than you would be. And as you become more experienced as a judge, you'll be able to give a white or pink ribbon in a face-to-face situation, and still make the youth feel positive about what he or she has learned during the judging. And education, not a ribbon, is the goal of a judging experience.

Q. What do I do if a parent does all the talking in a face-to-face judging situation?

A. It's great that a mom or dad is there to give moral support to the child, but they should not be answering questions for the exhibitor. Generally, superintendents are good at anticipating and guarding against these types of problems if they are chronic. If you have a problem, first try talking directly to the youth, not the parent. Ask the youth the questions. If a parent starts to answer the question, simply say, "I'd like to hear what (name) has to say." If the problem persists, make it clear to the parents that you don't want to hear from them. "I really appreciate your concern for your son or daughter, but I really want to hear from them, and only them." If the problem still persists, alert the superintendent.

Created by Wayne Brabender, Wisconsin 4-H Photo Specialist.