



International Plastic Modelers' Society

2026 General Contest Rules

I. ELIGIBILITY

A. The IPMS/USA National Contest is open to members of IPMS/USA and other international IPMS branches. Current IPMS members can enter any number of models in the National Contest.

B. To enter the contest, a member must be registered for the IPMS National Convention.

C. An IPMS Member in good standing with a Family Membership, who registers for the Convention, is also entitled to have every member listed under that Family Membership enter the contest. Each family member is assigned a unique Contest Entrant Number for model registration.

D. IPMS members in good standing may also serve as a 'proxy' to enter models for an absent member not attending the Convention. The member wishing to have their models entered by proxy must also be a member in good standing. Entry fees for absentee/proxy entrants will be determined by the Host Chapter.

E. All entries except Chapter/Group entries must be the sole work of the individual whose name is on the model-entry form. **Commercially built and/or finished models** not requiring significant additional work by the modeler **are not eligible**.

F. Juniors.

Juniors are IPMS members 17 years and younger. Junior categories are split into two age groupings:

1. **Pre-teen** for ages through 12 years; and,
2. **Teen** for ages 13 through 17 years.

Junior members may choose to enter any or all of their models in regular categories. Models entered in regular categories are not eligible for any Junior awards.

- a. Junior modelers may be supervised and/or coached by an adult during building. The adult cannot **complete or re-do any part of the model**. All hands-on work on any junior entry must be the sole work by the junior builder.
- b. There is an exception to the age limit for members who have an intellectual disability. The parent or guardian of a member with an intellectual disability can request Junior status with an email to the 2nd Vice President.

G. Prior National Model Contest winning models **may not be entered** in any subsequent IPMS/USA National Model Contest, except as follows:

1. Past contest winning models may be included as part of a Collection or Group Build as long as they comprise no more than 40 percent of the entry's total models.
2. Previous award winners may be entered as one of the three models that are part of any Triathlon entry.
3. A model included as part of a Collection or Group entry that wins an award, may be entered individually in subsequent IPMS/USA National Model Contests.
4. If major modifications are made to a prior winner, such as a major conversion, adding additional details, repainting and adding new decals, the model may be entered. A model strictly

undergoing major repairs following significant damage for various reasons is not eligible.

H. **Pre-Production/Home-Production Models.** Pre-production kits (whether from major or limited-run manufacturers) may be entered in the contest. A preproduction kit is one which is not yet generally available for retail purchase.

I. Home-production models (specifically, home-produced 3D-printed models) may also be entered in the contest. They are entered in regular class categories but not as 'scratch-built' models. (see also Rule 4-A. below). No distinction is made between a model designed and printed at home, versus a model designed by the modeler but sent out to a third party to print the model/parts.

J. **Inappropriate Entries.** The Chief Judge will exclude/remove from competition any entry considered by Contest officials to be inappropriate or offensive to generally acknowledged standards of taste and acceptability. The following are prohibited in competition and may not be placed on display at any IPMS event:

1. No depiction of excretory functions depicting any human being or animal.
2. No depiction of sadomasochistic activity, equipment, settings or situations, to any degree, regardless of whether there are figures in the model and regardless of whether any figures present in the model are clothed.
3. No depictions of explicit sexual conduct, bilateral or autoerotic, regardless of degree and regardless of the clothing-status of the participants that involves the touching of the breasts or genitals or other erogenous zones of any depicted figure.
4. No depiction of any nude human male or female figures where the genitalia of the figure are exposed where the clear intent of the same is to portray a sexual scene.

The following may be entered in the competition or put on display but can be presented only behind opaque screens or similar visual barriers.

Anyone planning on entering models as described below must notify the Host Contest Coordinator to request that screens or barriers are set up. Visitors must be provided with a fair description, in written format, of the contents of the models behind the screen that must be written by the modeler and approved by the Host Contest Chairman. This screened presentation covers competitors and the general public, but no person younger than 18 will be admitted except in the presence of an adult responsible for the young person, subject to the provisions of governing local law:

1. Depictions of any nude human male or female figure, subject to the provisions of J-1, above.
2. Models or dioramas of historic events (e.g. general dioramas or specific depictions of the result of the activities of the communist Cambodian Pol Pot regime, a Soviet Gulag, or a Nazi death camp) where the suffering of human beings, or the result of a pogrom (an organized massacre of a particular ethnic group), is depicted.
3. Where the theme, content or subject matter of presentations is graphic or would violate any provisions cited above, then the presentation is prohibited in any setting.

K. **Oversized or Special Display Requirements.** Modelers entering pieces that exceed three feet in either width or length, or that require power support or special placement, **must notify the Host Contest Coordinator at least 60 days in advance of the Convention**. The limited space for the Contest requires pre-planning for such entries.

Failure to provide advanced notification for such models could result in the model being away from its category or not having access to power. It is not the Host Committee's responsibility to plan for your model- it is yours! Contact the Host Contest Coordinator via e-mail to make the required arrangements. Include a photo and dimensions.

L. Contest Duration

1. **IPMS Members who enter the contest are required to leave their models in the Contest Room until the Awards Ceremony is concluded and the Contest Room has reopened. Any entrant who removes their model from the Contest Room before the Awards Ceremony is concluded and Contest Room opened is subject to disqualification.**
2. **If an entrant chooses to leave early, they have several options. a. They can register their models to be placed in the Tiger Meet, which will allow their models to be removed at any time. b. In the event of an emergency such as serious illness or death in the family and the modeler must leave early with their model entries,, they can arrange for someone to pick up any award the model may win. The entrant must fill out an Early Removal Request Form. This form is available from the Chief Judge or his designees. The form must be submitted to the NCC Judge or his designee in the Contest Room who will endorse the form. The form is then placed in the space occupied by the model when it is removed. The Award will be placed on the form. Awards are never mailed. c. If the model is missing when the Awards are placed and no Early Removal Request is visible, the model is considered disqualified and no Award is issued. Otherwise, if an entrant must leave early, they will be disqualified from obtaining any awards if their models are removed before judging is complete.**
3. **If no arrangements are made and models are left on the contest table following the Awards Ceremony and at the end of the convention, the models will be considered abandoned and will be discarded. Any award connected to the model forfeited. IPMS/USA and/or the host chapter(s) are not responsible for any reimbursement for discarded models.**
4. **Category winning results will not be released until the awards presentation Saturday evening or at the time specified by the Host Contest Committee. The Best-in-Class Award Winners will have small markers displayed by their models on Saturday morning as has been done the past few years**

M. Tiger Meet. Tiger Meet is the new display area for IPMS/USA National Conventions. Space for Tiger Meet is determined by each Host committee. You must be a registered member of the Convention to place a model on display at Tiger Meet. There is no charge to display at Tiger Meet, but we do ask you register your model so we can keep track of what is on display.

2.JUDGING

A. Judging. Models will be Judged for skill in construction, finish, realism, and scope of effort; accuracy may be used as criteria for determining final ranking for similar models. Additional criteria are considered for special categories such as Dioramas, Collections, Conversions, and Triathlon. Models are Judged as three-dimensional objects and are examined as such.

B. Entries Moving models for proper category placement or judging may be required. Modelers may be asked to move models prior to judging, for correct category placement or when categories are split. Judges will attempt to contact **the** member prior to moving **the** model. If the modeler does not respond the model will be carefully handled, and only by designated Judges.

C. Display Cases. Models in the Contest Room may be covered by cases while on general-public display, but such cases should be

removed from models for judging. Judges will not remove cases from models. Models can be Judged in the case, but the case could impede the Judges' ability to see features and detail in comparison other to models on the table.

D. Judges. Any IPMS/USA national member in good standing can and should volunteer to work as a national-contest Judge. Only IPMS members registered for the Convention are eligible to Judge

1 The Chief Judge will brief all Judges before contest judging begins. **All Judges must attend that Judges' briefing before the actual judging begins.** Any Judge who fails to attend the mandatory Judges' briefing is ineligible to Judge. A member who has a valid reason for missing the Judges' Briefing can receive a tabletop brief by the Chief Judge, their deputy, or the 2nd VP.

2. Junior members may not serve as voting Judges but may be assigned to judging teams as participating observers.

3. At the conclusion of the Judges' Briefing attendees will be issued at Judges' Ribbon. Only Individuals with Judges' ribbons are allowed entry to the contest room once judging begins

4. Judges may not Judge a category in which they are entered. **THERE ARE NO EXCEPTIONS TO THIS RULE!** Contest entrants may not attempt to solicit Judges to select their entries to receive any awards, at any time during the annual Convention, nor may any contest entrants attempt to solicit the public-at-large to select their entries to receive votes for Most Popular Model, at any time during the annual Convention (in this case, the public-at-large function as de-facto Judges).

5. Judging teams will be composed of multiple Judges, preferably representing different regions. **Members of the same club shall not serve together on any judging team.** Strict impartiality will be observed, and violators will be removed from Judges' lists for future National Conventions. Any Judges disqualified for cause may not assume any role related to the contest judging at future IPMS/USA National Conventions and may not be present in the room during the judging for any reason. This will include, but not be limited to, administrative, scoring, photographic and other support responsibilities.

5. The Chief Judge and Class Head Judges will be working the contest room prior to judging to ensure all model entries are in the proper categories for judging. They are also responsible to see that models are moved to appropriate categories/moved for "splits" in the larger categories.

6. Contest entrants may not lobby Judges to select their entries to receive any awards, at any time. Contest entrants will not solicit people to select their entries for Most Popular Model.

7. Modelers choose a category for their entries during online model registration. Final category determination is at the discretion of contest Judges. Judges will contact entrants to move models for a category change or split. If the modeler doesn't respond in a reasonable time the Judge will move the model themselves.

8. Determination of awards is the job of the Judges in accordance with the rules approved by the NCC and the E Board. Judges' worksheets (results) are checked by Class head Judges and/or their assistants. Worksheets are submitted to the Contest Recorder's team. *The recorded results are final.*

E. Rules and Categories Governance. The IPMS/USA National Contest Committee (NCC) is responsible for the creation, modification, addition and deletion of all Rules and Categories for the IPMS/USA National Contest. All Rules and Categories are submitted to the 2nd Vice President. The 2nd Vice President will review and submit each document for approval by the E Board. The E Board is the approval authority for all IPMS/USA National Contest Categories and Rules.

1. The Host Chapter can submit for consideration category/rule changes for their Convention. These changes are due to the 2nd Vice President by October 1st the year prior to their Convention.

F. No liability or entitlement. No liability for loss or damage to contest entries is implied or assumed by IPMS/USA, the Host Chapter, the Convention hotel, or the contest Judges. No entrants are "entitled" to receive awards. No entrants are "entitled" to compensation for costs incurred (whether actual or perceived) to attend the National Convention and Contest. No entrants are "entitled" to compensation as noted above should their entries win no awards or are damaged in any way.

G Waivers. The Chief Judge, with the concurrence of the 2nd Vice President, may waive any rule if circumstances warrant.

3. AWARDS

A. No monetary value. No awards associated with the contest will have any intrinsic monetary value beyond the cost of their materials and production. Monetary awards, money certificates and scholarships tied to placement in the contest are **expressly prohibited**.

1. Manufacturers sponsoring "Best ACME Model"(model of their manufacture) can include one or more kits or related items along with the award. They must also sponsor one regular trophy package.

B. No Sweeps

1. First, Second, and Third place awards will be given in each category. Contestants are eligible for only one award per category. This rule applies to all categories with three or more contestants, no matter how many models are entered.
2. **However, if any Adult or Junior category contains models built by fewer than three individuals, then a contestant can earn more than one award.**

C. Provision of Awards. The Host Chapter is responsible for procuring trophy packages to account for all categories, preplanned splits as well as additional splits. For 2026 there are **226** regular trophy packs. The total number of trophy packages required, and the approved list of Categories will be available in January of the year of the Convention. The 2nd Vice President is the officer responsible for providing the Host Committee the required information.

D. Junior Awards Junior winners receive the same awards as the regular categories. The Host Chapter is encouraged to make use of incentive awards or other non-trophy items to develop and encourage participation in the Junior categories.

E. Theme Awards. Theme awards are created by the Host Chapter. Up to five theme awards can be created for the Convention. Additional theme awards may be approved by the NCC and 2nd Vice President. Additional theme awards must be identified by October of the year prior to the Convention. Theme awards do NOT constitute new categories but are assessed across all contest entries. **Theme awards will be Judged by the Host Chapter.**

F. Special Interest Awards Various manufacturers or organizations and interest groups can present awards each year. These awards must conform to Rule 3-A. Awards should be announced by IPMS and the manufacturer prior the Convention. IPMS will advertise these awards on social media. **All Special Interest Awards should be designated prior to 1 March of the year of the Convention so the award can be placed on the model entry form.**

1. All Special Interest award suppliers must also sponsor a regular trophy package.
2. The screening/selection for these awards is done by the **sponsor's selected teams** and is **not accomplished by IPMS/USA judging teams**. Special awards will be chosen while the contest room is open to normal viewing. The award may be placed next to model Saturday morning. The Award is recognized with a slide during the Awards Presentation.

G. Additional sign-up is required for entrants who want their entries considered for various Theme or Special Interest awards. This will be done via checkboxes

contained on the individual entry form. The model registration team will create lists of each Theme/Special Interest entry Friday afternoon for the various judging teams. The 2nd Vice President in conjunction with the Host Contest Chairman are responsible for ensuring each Theme/Special Interest has a judging team.

H. Honorariums. Special awards may be named in honor of individuals, with the approval by the NCC and E-Board. Such awards will remain named for a period of three years, after which they will either be renewed for another three-year period, be renamed in honor of another individual, or revert to their standard-class name. Selection criteria will be very high and named awards will remain the exception. Anyone wishing to nominate an Honorarium should submit the name of the individual, suggested award, and justification in writing to 2nd Vice President by November of the year before the Convention. This gives the NCC and E Board time to consider the nomination prior to categories being released the next January.

I. Class Awards. Besides the **Judges' Grand Award** and **Most Popular Model Award**, *Best of Class* awards will be presented for each class in the contest and are listed below.

1. The 'Best' entries in each class will be determined by a vote of the Judges assigned to that class, led by the Class Head Judge.
2. The Judges Grand Award will be chosen from among the Class Best award recipients by vote of the Class Head Judges, led by the Chief Judge.
3. **Show and Class Award Names.** The following 'Best' Awards will be presented at the National Convention in 2026. Note that honoree names may change at three year cycles in accordance with Section H above:

- A George Lee Judges' Grand Award
- B Jim Sage Most Popular Model Award
- C Tom Kolk Best Junior Model Award
- D Ken Robert Best Aircraft Award
- E Art Gerber Best Military Vehicle Award
- F Best Figure Award
- G Best Ship Award
- H Best Automotive Award
- I Best Space or Science Fiction Vehicle Award
- J Best Miscellaneous Award
- K Best Diorama Award
- L Best Gunpla
- M Best Use of IPMS Convention-Special Decals

4. General Contest-wide Definitions

All entries must be entered into the categories that best describes the entry and its build composition, documentation must be included to verify additional work and/or additions to verify category placement. **With the exception of Class VI, Space and Science Fiction Vehicles**, entries meeting conversion or scratch-built composition must be entered in that designated category. Any entries that are entered into categories other than the ones that best describes the entry will be asked to move to the appropriate category. Judges have the final decision to determine build composition and appropriate categories.

A. Composition. The use of plastic is encouraged; however, the use of other modeling materials is allowed as the builder sees fit. 3D-printed models may be entered in the appropriate standard-subject Class. An entirely 3D-printed model is not considered to be 'scratch-built' (per Rule IV-B), even if the modeler is the designer of the model. 3D kits, conversion sets, and detail parts are considered the same as other aftermarket products - be they plastic, resin, or metal. Judging standards of finish, attention to detail, and authenticity will be the same, regardless of the materials used.

B. Scratch-Built Scratch-built models will be entered in the proper scratch-built category. Scratch-built models may incorporate parts from other kits, but these should be generally unrelated to their original identity, except for minor parts such as wheels, guns, etc. Computer-design/programming and 3D-machine printing are not considered as "scratch-building" for defining Scratch-Built entries in the national contest. Replacement of kit parts with similar scratch-built parts does not make the entry scratch-built, where the majority of the entry is still kit-based.

C. Conversion Entries must represent a version different from that provided by the basic kit. The conversion must contain significant structural modifications to the basic kit involving extensive changes in contour or configuration. In addition to the normal judging criteria, Judges of the Conversion Category will give special consideration to the complexity of the conversion. A conversion accomplished with primarily commercial aftermarket parts will be at a disadvantage, against a conversion accomplished primarily by the builder's craftsmanship - assuming both are finished to similar standards. Simple conversions should be entered in regular categories. Extensive conversions must be entered in the appropriate conversion category. The builder should describe in detail the changes made to the base kit on the entry sheet or accompanying documentation.

D. Bases - In General. Bases will be allowed in all categories and will not be considered in the judging, except in Small/Large Composition (vignette/diorama) categories. A base may be a piece of undecorated wood, plastic or glass or it may simulate the natural surface on which the prototype would be found. However, nothing other than that basic surface may be used. Aircraft and military vehicles may rest on simulated ground or paving, and aircraft that need beaching gear or dollies may be so equipped. Ships may be displayed in water (no dry docks). The base must not be the predominant feature of the entry and must be of a size proportionate to the model. The Contest Chairman and Judges reserve the right to exclude oversize bases. The model may include primary crew figures. (See Rule IV-3B for limits for Military Vehicles.) The addition of any other figures or equipment outside or not attached to the model (e.g., support equipment, shell splashes, or buildings) will make the model a vignette or diorama, which must be entered in the proper diorama category. Therefore, if an entrant wants to compete in a single-subject category, he/she should not try to simulate a Vignette to see how far they can push the boundary!

E. Markings. Markings will help determine the category in which a model is entered, e.g., civil vs. military, historical era, or other defining markings.

F. Out-of-Box (OOB). In most cases, these categories are designed to return IPMS to its roots, or "the 'P' in IPMS-plastic". **In Aircraft, Ships, Automotive, Space/Sci Fi and Miscellaneous Classes, only models which come with plastic parts exclusively are eligible. Exceptions apply only to the Military Vehicle Class and Ships where rigging is included with the kit and specified in the instructions..** Second, OOB emphasizes that founding principle of any IPMS model- *fit and finish*. The focus is on the basics of modeling. Construction, alignment, seams, paint, etc. Pick out your favorite kit and showcase your basic modeling skills with an Out of the Box Masterpiece!

If the model comes with metal reinforcement parts that are not visible, the model is allowed. Vinyl/Rubber tires are acceptable along with metal axle rods in the Automotive Class.. The following steps are allowed to enhance your entry..

1. Filling seams and gaps
2. Add weight to make the model sit correctly
3. Sanding off rivets and other fine details
4. Rescribing panel lines lost during construction
5. Drilling out gun barrels, exhaust pipes, grilles and the like
6. Thinning down parts such as doors and trailing edges
7. Adding antennas as shown on the box art or specified in the instructions
8. Adding simple seat belts (paper or tape).
9. Paint/finish may include brush, spray can, airbrush, metal foil, or natural plastic finish.
10. Decals other than those included in the kit may be used and modelers may paint markings and details. However, 3D decals are not allowed anywhere on the model
11. Weathering is permitted, but not battle damage.
12. Kit instruction sheet must be available for Judges.

G. VINTAGE KIT GUIDELINES (In effect for 2026 Contest)

1. **Vintage Kit Categories:** Entries are limited to any kit whose molds were created on or before December 31, 1980. Kits which have been re-boxed and or reissued after 1980 but were produced using the same molds used in the original issue are also eligible. Modelers should be prepared to document the age of their kits.
2. The primary tool for identifying the age of a kit is scalemates.com. Scalemates will show every release of the kit back to its origin. If the model is not in Scalemates alternate means of establishing Vintage may include:

A. Original copyright date

B. Dates on boxes, instruction sheets, or sometimes on the model itself.

C. Instructions must be displayed with the kit.

Judges are the sole arbitrators of any dispute on the age of a kit or whether it meets Vintage criteria

3. The guiding principle behind the Vintage kit category is to provide a venue where the skill of a modeler is not overshadowed by the high level of technical sophistication present in the manufacturing of many modern kits. All other applicable contest rules such as eligibility, judging and competition criteria, display, general construction definitions and liability apply to Vintage kit entries. Contest officials reserve the right to divide or combine categories as needed.

4. Modeler may detail, modify, and use aftermarket parts. In Vintage categories, the modeler starts with the "handicap" of an older kit and your only limitation is your imagination! Find that old diamond in the rough you always wanted to build and show us what you've got!

1. **See the specific Class Rules** for specific guidelines for Vintage models in

EARLY DEPARTURE FORM

Appendix One

In the event that early departure is necessary, and a model must be removed from the Contest Room after judging but before the Awards are laid out and results announced, the entrant must arrange for someone to pick up any award. Complete this form, sign it and have the Judge on duty in the Contest Room sign it. Place the form on the table with the model entry form when the model is removed. Otherwise, no award may be given and the modeler forfeits any possible award that the model would otherwise have won. No awards will be mailed.

Modeler Entry Number:

Specific Model Entry Number:

Model: _____

Category Number: _____

Modeler Name: _____ Cell Number: _____

Reason for early departure: _____

Name of Member picking up award: _____

Cell Phone Number: _____

Modeler Signature

Approving NCC Judge Signature

Date