

AMERICAN ADVERTISING AWARDS

JUDGING RULES

The objective of the American Advertising Awards program is to recognize and reward creative excellence in the field of advertising. Entries at every level (local, district and national) should be considered and/or judged as they relate creatively to the other work entered in the competition. Awards should be made, therefore, with consideration for the relative merits of the entries at each of the three respective levels of competition (local, district and national) during the specified time frame of one year. Gold American Advertising Awards and Silver American Advertising Awards may be awarded in each category at the discretion of the judges.

Should you have any questions about the judging policies and procedures or the implementation of any judging method please call your district American Advertising Award chair, your National American Advertising Awards Committee (N3AC) representative or the AAF office for more information. In addition, be sure you review thoroughly the manual for the Online Entry & Judging Software, the Rules and Guidelines and the American Advertising Awards How-To Manual. These tools are designed to assist your club in having a successful awards competition.

Selecting a Judging Chair and Committee

One of the most critical steps in the American Advertising Awards process is the selection of the judging chair. The judging chair must:

1. Be experienced (a judging chair can never be too experienced).
2. Understand and believe in the American Advertising Awards competition process.
3. Know all of the competition rules.
4. Know what judges look for in a creative competition.
5. Be familiar with the market.
6. Be comfortable with the judges.
7. Be able to make decisions.
8. Anticipate all questions; know all answers.

In general, the judging chair should be able to clearly communicate with the judges as a peer and guide their selection process. If at all possible, choose a judging chair that has been a judge. Judges' experiences (either good or bad) will significantly increase their ability to relate.

The Judging chair should then select a committee to help with the process. It is a good idea to create three teams:

1. **Drop-Off Committee:** This group will be responsible for helping the American Advertising Award and judging chairs receive all work.
2. **Screening Committee:** This group aids in making sure all entries meet guidelines, are entered in correct categories and are legitimate and/or eligible contenders. At the district level, this committee will help sort the auto-forwarded entries and prepare them for judging. This should be done one or two days prior to judging.

District judging may require you to engage volunteers who are not local or from the city/club hosting the judging. The biggest difference between local and district judging weekends is the number of entries. In some districts, you can easily have 600+ entries and judging usually takes two days, even if you send broadcast and interactive out ahead of time.

3. **Judging Weekend Committee:** Selecting the appropriate judging weekend committee depends on how large your show is. A good rule of thumb is 4–6 people for every 400 entries. This group (led by the American Advertising Award and judging chairs) should consist of the following: at least one online entry person (good typing and computer skills), one AV person, and two runners. Involving students is a great idea.

For more information on committees, please see the American Advertising Awards How-To Manual available at www.AmericanAdvertisingAwards.com

Selecting the Dates and Locations

- A. Once you have selected your judging dates, secure your judges at least 90 days prior to judging (see notes on “Selecting the Judges” below).
- B. Allow plenty of time between your final Call for Entries deadline and your judging weekend (at least three weeks). You will need this time to get organized for the judging weekend.
 1. Organizing all entries into appropriate categories
 2. Screening to ensure pieces are in the correct category
 3. Reviewing online data
 4. Separating the following:
 - a. Digital division—entries which will be judged remotely
 - b. Broadcast, radio, animation—entries which will be screened for the judges

Big Time Savers

The two most effective and efficient ways to make your judging weekend go smoothly are:

1. Preview every electronic entry and prepare downloaded media for playback.
2. Use the AAF's Online Entry & Judging Software to combine all website entries and send to your judges at least 10 days prior to judging allowing them to pre-score the week before the judging weekend. Although you will still need to have the ability to review online materials at your judging site for reviews and Best of Show discussions, pre-scoring this work will be the single most beneficial thing you can do to make your weekend easier. (*NOTE: refer to the American Advertising Awards Online Entry & Judging Software User Guide for instructions.*)

The Judging Location

The judging location is a major factor in the success of the judging experience. Try to make the location convenient for the committee. If at all possible, choose a location that will allow for all of the following in one place:

- A. Entry drop-off**
- B. Screening**
- C. Judging**

This will avoid too much moving, damaging entries and unnecessary labor. If the judges can also be accommodated at the same location, the process will flow even better.

Be certain that your location has the following:

1. Ample tables and space to move around (never make judges view work on the floor)
2. Ample light and room. Avoid shuffling judges from small room to small room
3. Proper facilities/equipment for AV needs
4. DSL, cable, T1 or wireless internet access (avoid dialup at all costs)

Selecting The Judges

The panel you bring in to judge your entries can make or break your show. Here are a few tips on judges:

1. Start early. Most experienced judges fill their calendars quickly.
2. Ask your peers around the country (other American Advertising Award chairs) for good judges they have worked with or visit www.AmericanAdvertisingAward.com where you will find a list of AAF approved judges. The N3AC recommends having at least one judge with American Advertising Award judging experience to help the process along. Districts should consider inviting judges with regional and/or national judging experience.
3. Don't be afraid to politely ask for references or lists of other shows they have judged.
4. Be very clear with the judges about dates, times for arrival and departure, costs that the club will cover, number of entries, style of judging, etc. It is best not to have any surprises. (See sample letters later in this guide.) If you purchase airline tickets for your judges, be sure to pay the small extra fee for cancellation insurance. This will allow you to recover your money in the event a judge cancels their trip.
5. Although the judging chair and committee should drive the process, it is a good idea to share your selections with your board. This will help keep everyone advised and all parties involved should a judge not live up to expectations.
6. The only thing that your judges should have in common is experience. Aside from that, try very hard to include a cross section of disciplines (designer, broadcast, copywriter, art director, digital/interactive and creative director). In addition, try to vary the gender, age and ethnicity of your judges. Try and get a mixture of judges from small and large agencies, big cities and smaller towns.
7. Five judges are ideal. You should never have fewer than three or more than five judges (unless you plan on splitting them into teams).
8. To protect the integrity of your show judges must NEVER be selected from within your market. If at all possible select judges from outside your district as well.
9. Avoid judges who have limited exposure and/or have experience in only one medium.
10. Avoid tying up your panel with creative teams from the same agency.
11. Treat the judges with courtesy. Demonstrate your gratitude and make them feel comfortable.

The Delivery/Drop-Off

With a little extra work, the way you receive entries can make a big difference later on. First, make sure you have the right people to help and the tools and supplies you might need. Since money is involved, have your club's treasurer on hand to manage the finances. You'll also need a good supply of strong hands to carry the work to a central location where it can be sorted. Calculators, permanent markers, blank entry forms and invoice/manifests, various sizes of clear plastic and paper envelopes, blank labels, tape and some spray adhesive are always handy for this event. If your club has separate pricing for members and non-members, have a list of paid members available, along with membership enrollment forms. This can help determine if the entrant is paying the correct price and can also increase your membership on the spot.

As the work is dropped off, confirm the following:

1. Invoice/manifest matches entry forms and money equals invoice/manifest
2. Each entry is clearly labeled with a label
3. Each entry has the form(s) inserted into the clear plastic or paper envelope.
4. Make sure the entry was created in your market and is entered into the proper American Advertising Awards competition.
5. Check each entry for the date it ran or was distributed to make sure it is eligible in this year's competition.

NOTE: If entries are not labeled or identified properly, provide the necessary supplies to the entrant and have them fix it right there. This should not become your committee's burden. Also make sure that your Call for Entries clearly states the following: "All entries become the property of the (your club name). No entries will be returned."

Once the work has passed inspection, quickly move it from that area and into a holding room where a separate team receives the work and begins to separate all entries into sections in numerical category order for easy review.

The Screening Process

After all entries have been received and categorized, invite a group of representatives (your screening committee) to help you review the work. These folks can be one of the single greatest assets to ensure that your judging weekend goes smoothly. Make sure that they are seasoned industry veterans. Consider including representatives from a good cross section of your largest and smallest shops (especially any groups that have expressed concern over the process in the past). Allowing these groups to assist in reviewing the work empowers them and makes the "judging mystery" seem less ominous and secretive. Prior to their arrival the judging and American Advertising Award chairs should prescreen the entries and pull any questionable entries for early review. Also, make sure each committee member is provided with a copy of the most up-to-date Rules & Categories.

Once the committee arrives, go around the room and quickly review each entry for the following:

1. Category and Entry ID can be clearly seen through the clear plastic envelope or is mounted on the front right-hand corner of a paper envelope
2. Entry ID label is firmly affixed to back of entry in upper right hand corner. Two copies of entry form are included in envelope.
3. Entry fits the description (e.g., is it a b/w newspaper ad?)
4. If it is an element of advertising (e.g. an illustration), is there a sample of use provided for reference?

If something seems questionable, pull it and discuss.

Once a problem list is established, the screening committee should make a recommendation, which generally falls into two categories:

- A. The entry is in the wrong category and should be moved, or
- B. The piece does not qualify under the American Advertising Awards rules and must be removed.

It may be cumbersome to have the entire committee review all radio, digital, and TV entries. However, these must be screened before judging. It is extremely important that the entrants be consulted and informed of any changes. Remember, our mantra of no surprises. This does not mean that the entrant has the final word on eligibility. The rules are very specific by design. If it does not fit in a category you have two choices. Either consider its validity and worth to your show then consider adding a Local-Only category for it, or disqualify it and refund the entry fee.

Before the Judges Arrive

One way to expedite your judging process is to send all broadcast and website entries to judges in advance. Use the AAF's Online Entry & Judging System to send website entries (See manual). Be certain to have resources available on-site to allow judges to review work again as a group (or if in contention for Best of Show), if needed. (See the sample letter provided in the American Advertising Awards How-To Manual.)

Want to go the extra mile and be considered an American Advertising Award superstar? E-mail the judges before the weekend and ask about their favorite snacks, gum, sodas, etc. Have these available during the judging to make the judges feel at home with plenty of water, painkillers, etc.

It is also very helpful to remove duplicate or unsubmitted entries from the software. Doing this ahead of time can eliminate scrambling to try and find "missing" entries.

When a judge calls that day and says "I can't make it"

First, don't panic. Politely tell the judge how important this is and ask if there are any options (taking a later flight, arriving the next morning, etc.). If not, ask if the judge will find a co-worker to take his or her place (and make sure you ask politely if they can help compensate the club for any fees associated with changing the ticket). As a last resort, call your district N3AC representative. They can help you find a replacement (perhaps even within driving distance) to fill in.

The Big Weekend Checklist:

1. Are the judges confirmed? Flights? Rooms? Who is picking up judges at the airport? Do not make a judge wander the airport looking for you.
2. Don't ask a judge to arrange his or her own transportation from the airport. They are your guests, treat them that way.
3. Are your committee members on call to be at the judging site at least one hour prior to start of judging?

When the Judges Arrive

After your judges have been taken to the hotel, let them have some time to relax prior to the first meeting. The first meeting should be private, in one of the judge's rooms (if space allows), in the hotel lounge, etc.

At this first meeting, your American Advertising Award and judging chairs should execute the following:

1. Introductions
2. Judging criteria and expectations

3. Judging system
4. Number of entries (as well as breakdown eg. 40 percent print, 30 percent TV, 20 percent interactive, 10 percent radio/other);
5. Schedule
6. Market history and unique attributes
7. Best of Show and Special Judges

Awards Expectations

Do not be afraid to tell the judges what you want. Open the floor for any questions. If time allows, consider letting judges wander the “screening area” and flip through the entries. This helps them get acquainted with the markets strengths and weaknesses.

The Judging Day

All volunteers should arrive early. Lay out two or three of your largest categories first. This will allow judges to get in the groove, and also to see a better representation of your market’s skill level.

Avoid reviewing radio and website entries for the first time during the judging weekend. They should be sent to judges and scored before the big weekend. However, you still need a way for judges to review sites for discussion or review (especially if the pieces are in contention for Best of Show status). Use the AAF’s Online Entry & Judging Software to review website entries. Never make a judge type URLs in. (*NOTE: refer to American Advertising Awards Online Entry & Judging Software User Guide for instructions.*)

Judging of broadcast entries also deserves special attention. Try to avoid judging this type of work right after lunch (nothing is worse than a full stomach, a dark room and a sleeping judge). Schedule these prior to lunch and get them moving around (and on their feet) after lunch.

Plan ahead. Try to avoid working judges longer than nine hours in one day. Typically, 400–600 entries can easily be reviewed in one day.

Other recommendations:

1. Many times, depending on the number of entries (workload), it might be advantageous to have lunch brought in for the judges rather than losing valuable time by going out.
2. It is extremely important to keep a tight schedule (move thoroughly, but swiftly) to assure that the later categories receive the same attention as the earlier ones.
3. Photos should be taken during the judging process for use in the program, social media & PR, records/files, club achievement notebooks, etc.

Immediately After the Judging

Often the committee is so exhausted after the judging that they are tempted to say good-bye and let the judges fend for themselves with room service. Even if only one club representative attends, judges should be taken out on the town and entertained. This does not require a four-star meal, just good food and conversation. The next morning, most judges will happily agree to take the hotel shuttle for departure, but be sure your club arranges the lift and pays with tip in advance.

The Days After

After the show, be sure to thank the participants for entering; tell them how the club or district uses entry fees and encourage them to continue to support the American Advertising Awards competition.

Notify the press of the winners, unless they are kept secret until the awards presentation, in which case, you would notify the press immediately after the presentation.

Thank the judges. Notify them of the winners and arrange for appropriate expressions of gratitude.

After the show, arrange a member meeting, or separate committee meeting open to all entrants. Ask them for input of future shows.

Auto Forwarding

All Gold American Advertising Award winners at the local level will be forwarded to the district level of competition, with entry fees paid by the club. Entrants may forward their Silver American Advertising Award winners to district at their own cost. Be sure to do this physically AND in the software. (See American Advertising Awards Online Entry & Software User Manual for detailed directions.) At the district level, Gold American Advertising Award winners will forward onto the national level with fees paid by the district. Entrants may forward their Silver American Advertising Award winners at their own cost.

AAF's Online Entry & Judging Software

The AAF's Online Entry & Judging Software is an essential component of the competition. It offers the tools you need to facilitate your judging competition. It is extremely important that you follow the instructions. It is also recommended that you use the site to facilitate a successful competition and ease the amount of work necessary to get the job done. Instructions and passwords are given to American Advertising Award chairs along with information on where and how to access and use the software.

Selecting a Judging Method and the Judging Process

The AAF recommends the use of the numerical judging system explained below. Ultimately, you should choose a system that works best for your club, as long as it is fair and in keeping with the expressed intent of the AAF rules to recognize creative excellence.

Regardless of which system you choose, it is important to closely monitor the process. The key is to intervene as quickly as possible if things seem to be taking a turn for the worse. This intervention can avoid many lost hours and much frustration for you and your judges.

Numerical Judging System

The numerical judging system is based on scores given to each entry by each judge. The judges independently score each entry on a scale of 1–100 (100 being the highest score) in each of the designated criteria. This system requires silent judging. Judges should not be allowed to confer with each other on any entries during the judging process (exception: determining Best of Show and any other special judges' awards, which is discussed later). If a judge determines that an entry is in the wrong category or has any question about an entry, then he or she is directed to the judging chair. After the judges have independently scored each entry in a category, the individual judges' scores are totaled, which determines the numerical ranking of the entry within the parameters set by each competition within the software.

Selection Judging System

If you have a large show, this method of judging could save you time. Categories are laid out on tables as usual. The judges then make an initial pass over each category examining each piece for merit. Judges place a marker, such as a post-it note on superior work, selecting the pieces they want to score. The unmarked pieces are removed from the table and judges proceed with numerical scoring of the remaining marked pieces. There is no limit to the number of pieces, which can be selected by the judges in a category. Judges should not be allowed to confer with each other. Each category is judged in this manner.

For the online scoring software, a score of 40 may be entered for pieces which were not selected. Scored pieces receive the numerical score given by each judge.

Recommended Scoring

Although some clubs use a 1–10 system, the N3AC strongly recommends a broader range like 1–100. This makes assessing scores and adding curves, which are sometimes needed, much easier.

When scoring entries from 1 to 100, the following parameters are suggested:

(You are, however, free to set your own parameters within the software.)

90-100: Excellent! I wish I had done that. Top of its category. Gold American Advertising Award material.

80-89: Above average work for the market or category, good Silver American Advertising Award material.

60-79: Average work for the market or category.

1-59: Below average for the market.

Determining Winners

When all the scores are computed, setting the qualification levels for the Gold American Advertising Awards and Silver American Advertising Awards can determine the winners. Entries with average scores above either of these levels will qualify for an award. If no entries in a category have average scores above the Gold American Advertising Award qualification level, then no Gold American Advertising Award should be awarded. The same is true for the Silver American Advertising Award qualification level. It is then possible that if the scoring is low, there would be no awards given in a category. Silver American Advertising Awards may be awarded in categories in which no Gold American Advertising Award is awarded and vice-versa. Should a tie for a Gold American Advertising Award occur, it is generally appropriate to award two or more Gold American Advertising Awards.

The N3AC suggests the following parameters for determining how many Gold and Silver American Advertising Awards to award in your competition: In general, recognize approximately 20% of all entries with Gold or Silver American Advertising Awards. Of the 20%, approximately 1/3 should be Gold and 2/3 should be Silver.

Determining Best of Show

Once all entries have been judged, pull all Gold American Advertising Award winners in Broadcast, Print and Digital and lay them out for the judges.

Entries submitted in the following categories are not eligible for Best-Of-Show:

Advertising Industry Self-Promotion

Public Service

Instruct the judges that you would like them to determine from these winners a Best of Show winner. The best method for choosing Best of Show is by consensus of the judges. If the judges cannot come to a consensus, however, you may need to take a majority vote to determine the winner.

You may also consider awarding multiple Best of Show awards based on medium: print/collateral, broadcast/electronic and/or interactive.

Use of the elimination procedure (placing tokens/beans, etc. on the favored entries) in a first-pass selection effort can be a real time saver as you work with judges to secure Best of Show awards.

Student American Advertising Awards

The N3AC recommends that student work be judged using the same numerical scale as for professional work. Where entries are limited, consensus may be more logical. If time allows your professional team of judges should be used to score this work. If logistics or time is an issue a team of local judges should be secured to score this work and evaluate the merits using the same numerical scoring method. Details about the Student Awards can be found in the current Student American Advertising Awards Rules & Categories at www.studentaddys.com.

American Advertising Awards Judges' Charge

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a judge for our annual [CLUB NAME] American Advertising Awards competition. We have asked you here to determine the best advertising created in [LOCAL MARKET] during the past year.

The American Advertising Awards program is designed to reward creative excellence in advertising. It is, therefore, a creative competition. Of course, there are no absolute measures for creative excellence, no devices that can be laid beside a piece of work to determine its worth. The judging of good or effective advertising, versus bad or ineffective advertising, is a difficult task, at best. Like other selective processes, which call for opinions, it is extremely subjective.

In the American Advertising Awards competition, we do not attempt to judge the worth of an ad or commercial by any measure of actual results (sales, leads, inquiries, etc.). We can only judge the entries in the competition based on the apparent extent of their creative achievement (theme/idea, execution and follow-through).

Although the judging process is not an easy one, the one constant that will serve us well today is that all of you possess strong credentials for determining what constitutes good and/or effective creativity in advertising. So, based on your experience, knowledge and expertise, the yardstick that we will employ is your learned perceptions of creative excellence.

The American Advertising Awards competition encompasses a considerable number of categories. We will present one category at a time. Each will be considered in its entirety before moving on to the next. Please approach each category looking for the strongest creative work.

The American Advertising Award winners in this competition are eligible to compete in a multi-state district competition, and if successful there, proceed to the national round of the American Advertising Awards competition.

Sample Invitation Letter to Judges

This is a sample only. Variations should include specifics about your local market, the club, etc. Keep letters as brief as possible, but remember to provide all the pertinent facts a judge needs to accept the invitation.

Date [120 DAYS PRIOR]

[JUDGES NAME]

[TITLE]

[COMPANY]

[ADDRESS]

[CITY, STATE, ZIP]

Dear [PROSPECTIVE JUDGE]:

On behalf of the [CLUB NAME] we invite you to serve as a judge for the [LOCAL/DISTRICT] American Advertising Awards competition for creative excellence in advertising.

This program, recognizes and rewards creative excellence in [MARKET], and is the first step in a three-tired competition. The winners of our competition advance to a district competition, and if successful there, are eligible for the national judging round of the American Advertising Awards.

Each year, [CLUB NAME] secures the participation of [#] senior creatives to serve on a panel to judge the [CLUB NAME] American Advertising Awards competition. This year's judging session will be conducted on [MONTH, DAY], beginning at [TIME], and will conclude at [TIME].

For your review, enclosed is our American Advertising Awards Call for Entries, which outlines the guidelines and categories of competition. Also enclosed is a response sheet which we request you return to us no later than [DATE - THREE WEEKS LATER].

Your commitment to serve as a local American Advertising Awards judge will be greatly appreciated. We are confident that you will find it a rewarding experience. Please call us if you have any questions at [CONTACT INFO].

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[CLUB PRESIDENT AND/OR American Advertising Award CHAIR]

Enclosure: Call for Entries

Response Form

Sample Confirmation Letter

Date [90 DAYS PRIOR]
[JUDGES NAME]
[TITLE]
[COMPANY]
[ADDRESS]
[CITY, STATE, ZIP]

Dear [JUDGE]:

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a judge for the [CLUB NAME] American Advertising Awards competition. We look forward to your participation on [MONTH AND DATE.]

The judging will take place at the [JUDGING SITE], which is located [STREET ADDRESS, CITY]. The [JUDGING SITE] is near the [AIRPORT], and we suggest that you use this airport when making your flight arrangements. Judging will begin at [TIME] and should conclude at [TIME].

We have arranged for judges to stay at the [HOTEL]. We will meet you at the [SPECIFY ENTRANCE] of the hotel at [TIME] on [DAY] to take you to the judging site.

So that we can coordinate our arrangements, please apprise us of your travel times, your anticipated length of stay and whether or not you will be traveling with a companion. We will be hosting a reception and dinner on [DATE] and need this information for our planning.

In addition, please send us a photograph and a brief biography to use in our printed promotional materials.

For your review, attached are judging criteria. We will also review this information during the briefing session just prior to the judging.

Please call me at [PHONE NUMBER] if you have any questions, or if I can assist in any way.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

[American Advertising Awards CHAIR]

Enclosure: Judging Criteria