

General Judging Guidelines

Contest entries are judged by industry professionals. Affiliates should understand that judging is a subjective process and will not always be in line with what is taught in a high school production classroom. This is a real-world experience. STN contest judges are not teachers, they are professionals who have volunteered their expert opinion and feedback, based on years of work experience in the TV/Film industry.

Entries are evaluated using a combination of criteria that is specific to the contest being judged. There are no point scores. The **BEST** entries that follow the rules will win the contest. Criteria are evaluated using a scale ranging from **NEEDS WORK** to **AVERAGE** to **EXCELLENT**. STN judges work hard to make sure every entry receives feedback including a bar graph that reflects how an entry performed in the contest's specified criteria.



The Judges will ask the following questions when evaluating student entries:

- **Camera/Direction** – Do the visuals tell the story? Are shots steady, focused and well composed? Are there compelling sequences using creative angles? Did you take me some place I can't go?
- **Lighting** – Are the visuals crisp and clear? Did the videographer avoid poor lighting situations? Did the videographer adjust the lens to optimize the picture? Was there any creative lighting?
- **Audio** – Are the sounds and voice tracks clean and clear? Are the soundbites clean and clear? Is the segment leveled properly? Are sounds balanced, or do they compete?
- **Nat Sound** – Did the story start with great nat sound? Are there nat sound moments and pops incorporated into the story? Does the natural sound help tell the story?
- **Editing** – Does the editing distract away from the story? Are the sequences and transitions smooth? Were common editing mistakes avoided (jump cuts, flash frames, etc...)? Was there any creative editing techniques used to help tell the story?
- **Drama/Human Interest** – Did the story appeal to the emotions? Was the story compelling? Was the main character memorable? Was the story covered from a unique angle or perspective?
- **Storytelling/Script** – Does the story have good structure and flow? Beginning, Middle and End? Was the reporter track written clearly and conversationally? Active verbs were used? Were there smooth transitions between the main points of the story? Did you tell me something I don't know?
- **Integrity/Courage** – Is the story fair and balanced? Accurate? Did the reporter remain objective? Were people, places and things pronounced correctly? Did the reporter take any risks by covering a difficult story? Did the reporter stay focused?
- **Topic Newsworthiness** – Is the topic relevant or current? Did the story localize a bigger issue?
- **Closeness to Topic** (Only When Topics Apply) – Did the reporter understand the topic? Did the story stick to the topic? Did the visuals fit the topic? Did the script make a compelling connection?
- **Creativity** – Is the idea original or presented in an original manner? Does the production have a unique take or perspective? Were there surprises or unexpected outcomes?
- **Complexity** – Does the video have a high production value? What is the level of production difficulty for the entry? Was there an effort to move beyond simple production techniques?
- **Talent/Acting/Performance** – Did the talent perform in an appropriate manner for the production? Did the talent use proper enunciation and inflection? Did the talent have on-camera presence?
- **Graphics/Effects** – Did the Graphics/Effects add to the production? Were Graphics/Effects used appropriately? Were textual elements balanced and grammatically correct?
- **Followed Directions** – Did the entry meet the contest objectives? Did the entry follow all the rules and procedures? Did the entry's total running time stay within the time limit? Was the entry shot within the designated contest map? Did the entry make use of copyright music or images? Did the entry follow STN's creative contest policies?