



PUBLIC RESOURCE

OCA Competitive Format Library

A discipline-neutral taxonomy for competition design, adjudication, scoring, voting, advancement, and hybrid event structures

Open formats. Transparent rules. Competition without artificial boundaries.

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GAME FOR ANYTHING.

Purpose

This library gives organizers, rulemakers, discipline communities, and competition designers a broad, modular vocabulary for representing competitive events across disciplines. It is intentionally not limited to sports, dance, performance, academic, creative, technical, or judged competitions.

1. Design Philosophy

FORMATS SHOULD BE COMPOSED, NOT CONSTRAINED

No finite catalogue can anticipate every competition an organizer may invent. The named formats in this library are reference patterns, not limits.

Any competitive event can be understood as a combination of: who competes, what unit is evaluated, who evaluates it, how evaluations are expressed, how results are aggregated, how ties are resolved, how competitors advance, and how stages connect.

1.1 Core Format Dimensions

Dimension	Possible approaches
Entrant structure	Individual, pair/duo, fixed team, variable roster team, relay/sequence team, temporary partnership, side/faction, or mixed entrant classes.
Encounter structure	Independent performance, shared heat, direct head-to-head, multi-party match, pool, round robin, bracket, ladder, asynchronous submission, continuous leaderboard, or open field.
Evaluation authority	Adjudicator panel, single judge/referee, jury, technical officials, peers, competitors, audience/public, experts plus audience, algorithmic measurement, objective timing/counting, or weighted combination.
Evaluation expression	Rank, placement, numeric score, rubric dimensions, points, pass/fail, recall, preference vote, approval vote, tokens, pairwise choice, deduction, time/distance/count, deliberative verdict, or classification.
Aggregation	Sum, mean, median, trimmed mean, weighted mean, rank aggregation, majority, supermajority, skating/ordinal rules, best/worst discarded, consensus threshold, match points, wins/losses, or custom formula.
Progression	No advancement, cut by rank/score, fixed number, percentage, threshold, judge recall, quota by group, bracket win, cumulative points, repechage, wildcard, audience save, jury save, or other disclosed progression.
Stage architecture	Single round or multi-stage path. Every stage may be independently named and may use a different evaluation and advancement method.
Result granularity	Overall result, subcategory awards, per-discipline/task result, team and individual result, panel-specific result, audience result, or composite result.

1.2 Entrant Units

- Individual: one competitor is the scoring unit.
- Duo or pair: two competitors are evaluated as one entry.
- Fixed team: a defined roster competes collectively.
- Variable-roster team: eligible roster exists, but active members may change by round, match, task, or discipline.
- Relay or sequential team: team result is assembled from member performances in sequence.
- Temporary partnership: individuals are paired, drafted, rotated, or randomly matched for part of the event.
- Faction or side: large groups compete through multiple constituent entries or matches.
- Mixed-class event: individuals, pairs, or teams may coexist if the rules normalize or separately classify results.

1.3 Evaluation Authorities

- Adjudicated: one or more qualified judges score or rank.
- Officiated objective result: time, distance, quantity, completion, accuracy, or another measurable outcome determines result.
- Deliberative jury: evaluators discuss before issuing a collective verdict or score.
- Audience/public vote: spectators determine some or all of the result.
- Peer vote: competitors or participating teams evaluate one another.
- Hybrid authority: separate judge, technical, audience, peer, or objective components are combined under disclosed weights.
- Veto or certification authority: one body scores while another can validate, overturn, penalize, or disqualify under defined rules.

2. Standard Competitive Formats

THE WORKHORSES

These are conventional competition architectures. Each can stand alone or serve as a stage inside a larger competition.

Ranked Field / Ordinal Placement | Ranked

Judges place competitors in relative order rather than assigning absolute quality scores.

Mechanics: Each judge submits an ordered list, full placement, or partial ranking. Placements are aggregated by an announced ordinal method.

Best suited to: Dance finals, judged performance, exhibitions, livestock, artistic or presentation competitions.

Variants: Full ranking; top-N ranking; forced ordering; ties permitted or prohibited.

Numeric Score | Scored

Competitors receive one or more numeric scores on a defined scale.

Mechanics: Judges enter a total score or component scores; results aggregate by sum, mean, weighted mean, median, or another published formula.

Best suited to: Gymnastics-style judging, presentations, showcases, skill contests, technical demonstrations.

Variants: 0–10; 0–100; fractional scoring; maximum-points model; additive components.

Rubric / Criterion Score | Scored

Evaluation is decomposed into named criteria with independent scales or weights.

Mechanics: Each criterion receives a score, rating, placement, or descriptor; weighted criteria produce a composite.

Best suited to: Academic contests, culinary events, design, cosplay, performance, innovation competitions.

Variants: Analytic rubric; holistic rubric; required minimum per criterion; category-specific panels.

Points Accumulation | Scored

Competitors earn points for actions, achievements, placements, or milestones.

Mechanics: Points are added and penalties subtracted during one encounter or across many encounters. Highest published total wins.

Best suited to: Games, skills circuits, multi-event meets, quizzes, season standings, decathlons.

Variants: Static schedule; escalating values; bonus points; negative points; carryover points.

Pass / Fail or Qualified / Not Qualified | Threshold

The result is categorical rather than ordinal.

Mechanics: A judge, panel, measurement, or rule determines whether the entry meets a defined standard.

Best suited to: Certification rounds, technical inspections, qualifying attempts, safety gates, auditions.

Variants: Binary; qualified/conditional/not qualified; multiple mandatory gates.

Threshold Qualification | Threshold

Competitors advance by meeting or exceeding a numeric, categorical, or time-based standard.

Mechanics: Any entrant satisfying the threshold advances, subject to caps or quotas if published.

Best suited to: Track-style qualifying, skills tests, technical standards, preliminary screening.

Variants: Hard threshold; threshold plus top-N cap; different thresholds by class.

Recall / Selection Ballot | Selection

Judges select competitors to advance without ranking all selected entries.

Mechanics: Each judge marks yes/no, recall/not recall, approve/disapprove, or selects up to a quota. Marks are aggregated and a cut is applied.

Best suited to: Large preliminaries, auditions, dance qualifying rounds, talent selection.

Variants: Fixed recalls per judge; unlimited approval; weighted recalls; minimum judge support.

Single-Elimination Bracket | Bracket

A competitor advances by winning a direct match; one loss eliminates them.

Mechanics: Pairs are seeded or drawn into a bracket. Winners progress until a champion remains.

Best suited to: Combat, games, debate, esports, races, battles, direct-comparison events.

Variants: Seeded/unseeded; best-of series; byes; third-place match.

Double-Elimination Bracket | Bracket

A competitor is eliminated after two losses.

Mechanics: A winners bracket and elimination/lower bracket operate in parallel and converge in a final.

Best suited to: Games, esports, combat, head-to-head technical contests.

Variants: Bracket reset final; no-reset final; modified lower bracket.

Round Robin | League / Match

Every competitor or team plays every other competitor in the group.

Mechanics: Standings are based on wins, losses, draws, match points, score differential, or published tiebreaks.

Best suited to: Leagues, debate, games, team sports, small fields.

Variants: Single round robin; double round robin; home/away; partial round robin.

Pool Play | League / Match

Competitors are divided into groups that compete internally before advancement.

Mechanics: Each pool may use round robin, mini-bracket, points, or another method. Top entries advance into later stages.

Best suited to: Large tournaments, team sports, debate, esports, multi-stage events.

Variants: Balanced pools; seeded pots; geographic pools; random draw.

Swiss System | Pairing

Competitors play a fixed number of rounds against opponents with similar records without full round robin.

Mechanics: Pairings update after each round using standings and repeat-opponent constraints. Final standings use match score plus published tiebreaks.

Best suited to: Chess, card games, esports, debate, large head-to-head fields.

Variants: Accelerated Swiss; score-group pairing; team Swiss.

Ladder / Challenge | Continuous

Competitors occupy ranked positions and challenge others under defined eligibility rules.

Mechanics: Results move entrants up or down the ladder. Competition may run continuously rather than in a single tournament session.

Best suited to: Clubs, gaming, racquet sports, ongoing skill challenges.

Variants: Fixed-position challenge; Elo-like ladder; king-of-the-hill ladder.

Time Trial / Best Performance | Objective

Competitors perform independently and are ordered by an objective measured result.

Mechanics: Best time, distance, count, accuracy, weight, or other measure determines placement.

Best suited to: Racing, speed tasks, strength, precision, technical challenges.

Variants: Best of attempts; average attempts; aggregate attempts; inverse scoring.

Heat-to-Final | Progression

Large fields compete in heats, with qualifiers advancing through successive rounds.

Mechanics: Entries are distributed across physical or logical heats; advancement can be by place, score, time, recall, or mixed rules.

Best suited to: Racing, dance, auditions, large judged fields.

Variants: Top-N per heat; fastest/next-best across heats; seeded heats; balanced heats.

Multi-Event Aggregate | Composite

A single championship result combines performance across multiple component events.

Mechanics: Each component generates points, ranks, normalized scores, or category results that feed an overall standing.

Best suited to: Decathlon-style events, multi-dance, academic olympiads, all-around awards.

Variants: Equal weighting; weighted disciplines; best-N components; mandatory components.

Best-of-N Series | Series

Competitors contest repeated matches or performances; the first to a required number of wins, or best aggregate, wins.

Mechanics: A series can stop once the outcome is mathematically decided or continue for placement/statistics.

Best suited to: Playoffs, games, duels, judged battles.

Variants: Best-of-3/5/7; aggregate-score series; home/away legs.

Two-Leg / Aggregate Match | Series

Competitors meet more than once and the combined result determines the winner.

Mechanics: Scores or points from multiple legs are summed or otherwise combined.

Best suited to: Sports, debate exchanges, design phases, remote/on-site hybrid contests.

Variants: Home/away; technical plus performance leg; weighted legs.

Placement-Point Championship | Composite

Placements in component contests convert to championship points.

Mechanics: Each event awards points by finishing place. Totals determine the overall result.

Best suited to: Series championships, multi-discipline festivals, school/team competitions.

Variants: Linear points; Formula-style points; inverse placement points; discard worst results.

Consensus / Majority Verdict | Deliberative

The panel decides a winner, classification, or outcome by collective decision rather than score averaging.

Mechanics: Judges may deliberate, then vote; result may require simple majority, supermajority, unanimity, or consensus.

Best suited to: Debate, mock trial, awards juries, qualitative evaluation.

Variants: Secret ballot; open vote; chair casting vote; ranked deliberative ballot.

Panel Split Decision | Deliberative

Each judge independently selects a winner; majority of judges determines the result.

Mechanics: Commonly expressed as unanimous, majority, or split decision.

Best suited to: Combat, battles, debate, head-to-head performance.

Variants: Winner vote; scorecard then winner; draw allowed.

Audience Vote | Voting

Audience members directly determine placement, advancement, or an award.

Mechanics: Votes may be one-person-one-vote, ranked, approval, token allocation, or weighted by verified eligibility.

Best suited to: Talent events, fan awards, showcases, community competitions.

Variants: Live venue vote; online vote; QR vote; limited-window vote.

Judge + Audience Composite | Hybrid

Professional adjudication and audience input are combined.

Mechanics: Each authority produces a normalized score, rank, or vote which is combined under defined weights.

Best suited to: Talent competitions, performance events, innovation showcases.

Variants: 50/50; audience save; judges rank + audience points; separate awards.

Technical + Artistic Composite | Hybrid

Objective/technical metrics and subjective/artistic judging combine into one result.

Mechanics: Technical points, execution deductions, performance scores, or compliance values are independently recorded then combined.

Best suited to: Performance sports, design/build events, culinary competitions, maker contests.

Variants: Base value + execution; technical threshold + artistic score; weighted components.

Penalty / Deduction Scoring | Modifier

A base score or performance result is modified by penalties, faults, deductions, sanctions, or bonuses.

Mechanics: Officials record incidents tied to rules; deductions apply before or after aggregation according to policy.

Best suited to: Gymnastics, racing, technical events, judged performances, compliance-heavy contests.

Variants: Fixed penalties; percentage deductions; judge-specific deductions; centralized technical deductions.

Qualifying Attempt / Best Attempt | Attempts

Competitors receive multiple attempts, with one or more selected for result.

Mechanics: Rules determine whether best, average, median, last, first successful, or sum of attempts counts.

Best suited to: Field events, skills, coding challenges, shooting, performance auditions.

Variants: Best-of-3; cut after attempts; progressive elimination; sudden-death attempts.

Ranking by Measurement | Objective Ranked

An objective measurement is converted directly into an ordered field.

Mechanics: Results sort on a measurement with published direction and tiebreak precision.

Best suited to: Speed, distance, weight, repetitions, accuracy, resource efficiency.

Variants: Single metric; lexicographic metrics; normalized composite measurement.

3. Advancement and Stage Patterns

Advancement is its own design layer. A “semifinal” need not behave like any other semifinal, and a stage called “Showcase Night” can function exactly like a quarterfinal if the organizer wishes.

- Fixed Cut: advance exactly N entrants, highest-ranked or highest-scored first.
- Percentage Cut: advance a published percentage of the eligible field.
- Threshold Cut: advance all entrants meeting a standard.
- Quota by Heat/Pool: advance N from each group, optionally plus next-best entrants across groups.
- Recall Cut: advance based on aggregate recall/selection marks.
- Match Win: winner advances; loser exits or enters another path.
- Cumulative Standing: advancement is based on results accumulated over prior stages or components.
- Carryover Score: some or all earlier score carries into the next stage.
- Reset: prior scores are discarded and the next stage starts from zero.
- Partial Carryover: a published percentage, points value, rank bonus, or seeded advantage carries forward.

- Wildcard: one or more non-automatic qualifiers are selected by a disclosed judge, audience, rule, statistic, or random method.
- Audience Save: audience rescues one or more entrants who would otherwise be eliminated.
- Jury Save: panel rescues or advances an entrant outside the ordinary cut.
- Repechage / Second Chance: eliminated or near-cut entrants enter a recovery stage with a path back into the main competition.
- Consolation Path: non-advancers continue into placement, plate, B-final, or classification events.
- Challenge-In: a waiting entrant can replace or displace an incumbent through a qualifying challenge.
- Bye: entrant advances without contest because of bracket size, seed, withdrawal, or rule.
- Random Draw Among Qualifiers: eligible entrants are selected by lottery when qualification exceeds capacity.
- Quota / Representation Rule: advancement reserves places by region, category, class, roster, school, heat, or another disclosed grouping.
- Conditional Advancement: advancement requires both competitive placement and another condition such as technical compliance, safety approval, submission completion, or minimum score.

3.1 Stage Naming

Competition rules should not depend on conventional stage labels. Preliminary, Round of 64, Quarterfinal, Semifinal, Final, Audition, Showcase, Challenge Round, Championship Flight, Jury Room, Cook-Off, Demo Round, Gauntlet, and organizer-created titles may all describe a stage. The rules should state what that stage actually does.

4. Voting and Adjudication Modes

Competition design should separate the identity of an evaluator from the ballot language they use. A certified adjudicator, audience member, peer competitor, technical official, or jury can all use different ballot types and different weights.

- Full Ranking Ballot: evaluator orders all eligible entries.
- Partial Ranking Ballot: evaluator ranks only a top subset.
- Single Choice: evaluator selects one winner/favorite.
- Multi-Select / Approval: evaluator selects any number or up to N acceptable entries.
- Recall Ballot: evaluator selects entries to advance.
- Score Ballot: evaluator assigns one total numeric score.
- Rubric Ballot: evaluator scores named criteria separately.
- Pairwise Preference: evaluator chooses between two entries.
- Token / Budget Allocation: evaluator distributes a fixed number of points, chips, stars, or credits among entries.
- Cumulative Voting: evaluator may assign multiple votes to one entry or spread them among several.
- Ranked Choice: evaluator orders preferences; transfer/elimination logic resolves result.
- Quadratic / Costed Vote: additional support for the same entry costs progressively more from a fixed budget.
- Prediction / Confidence Ballot: evaluator selects an outcome and optionally states confidence.
- Pass-Fail Gate: evaluator certifies whether a standard is met.
- Veto / Red Flag: evaluator can flag an entry for technical review, safety review, rule violation, or disqualification consideration.
- Deliberative Verdict: panel discusses and enters a collective official result.
- Independent Vote then Deliberation: initial ballots are preserved; panel then deliberates and records a final collective result.
- Comment-Only Evaluation: evaluator provides qualitative feedback without affecting result.
- Shadow / Training Ballot: ballot is recorded for education, calibration, or audit but excluded from official totals.
- Public Exhibition Vote: vote produces a separate audience award without affecting the official championship.

4.1 Panel Architectures

- Single adjudicator or referee.
- Uniform panel: all judges evaluate all criteria and entrants.
- Split panel: judges are assigned to different heats, pools, matches, or entries.
- Specialist panel: different judges score different criteria or disciplines.
- Rotating panel: judge assignments change between stages or sessions.
- Chair + panel: chair may manage procedure, break ties, validate results, or also score.
- Technical panel + performance panel: distinct authority types feed one result.
- Jury + public: expert decision and public decision coexist or combine.
- Large jury with shortlist: broad panel narrows field, smaller panel determines later rounds.
- Anonymous or blinded panel: entrant identity is withheld where appropriate.
- Conflict-managed panel: judges may abstain or be excluded for specified entrants.

5. Experimental and Alternative Formats

THE SANDBOX

These formats are deliberately more adventurous. Some already appear in specific communities; others are composable concepts organizers can use to design purpose-built competitions.

King / Queen / Champion of the Hill | Challenge

One incumbent remains active until defeated; challengers rotate in.

Mechanics: Winner stays; challenger exits or cycles; streaks, time limits, or maximum defenses may apply.

Best suited to: Battles, games, improvisation, rapid skill contests.

Variants: Multiple hills; capped streak; audience-selected challenger; seeded incumbent.

Gauntlet | Challenge

An entrant must defeat or outperform a sequence of opponents, tasks, or standards.

Mechanics: Success may be based on survival, number cleared, total score, or time to completion.

Best suited to: Skill exhibitions, gaming, technical tasks, physical challenges.

Variants: Boss stage; escalating difficulty; team gauntlet; timed gauntlet.

Battle Royale / Last Competitor Standing | Elimination

Many entrants compete simultaneously or iteratively while eliminations occur until one remains.

Mechanics: Elimination may happen at intervals, after failures, by votes, or by bottom-ranked cuts.

Best suited to: Games, improvisation, performance, endurance, novelty events.

Variants: Lives system; periodic cuts; audience eliminations; immunity.

Progressive Cut Showcase | Elimination

A shared field repeatedly performs while the bottom segment is cut after each cycle.

Mechanics: Scores may reset or accumulate between cycles.

Best suited to: Dance, music, pitching, performance, skills showcases.

Variants: Bottom one; bottom percentage; judges nominate then audience eliminates.

Survivor / Lives Format | Elimination

Entrants begin with lives, strikes, or shields and lose them through poor results or match losses.

Mechanics: The last entrant with remaining lives wins, or standings use remaining lives plus score.

Best suited to: Games, trivia, improvisation, skills, audience events.

Variants: Three strikes; immunity token; earn-back lives.

Drafted Team Competition | Team Formation

Individuals register separately, then are drafted or allocated into temporary teams.

Mechanics: Draft may be random, captain-selected, auction-style, seeded balance, or organizer assignment. Team results may coexist with individual statistics.

Best suited to: All-star events, social competition, hackathons, creative games.

Variants: Snake draft; live draft; hidden draft; skill-balanced assignment.

Random Partner / Rotation | Temporary Partnership

Individuals repeatedly compete with changing partners or teammates.

Mechanics: Pairings rotate by matrix, random draw, role category, or no-repeat constraints. Individual result aggregates performance across partners.

Best suited to: Social dance, games, doubles skills, collaborative challenges.

Variants: Jack-and-jill style; luck-of-draw; mixer; rotating trios.

Pro-Am / Mentor-Paired Aggregate | Mixed Roles

Entrants of different role or status classes form pairs, with results attributable to pair and/or one constituent member.

Mechanics: One role may be the ranked competitor while the other is attached as partner/mentor; or both may receive results.

Best suited to: Dance, education, maker events, mentorship competitions.

Variants: One mentor with multiple entrants; team mentor score; instructor championship.

Relay of Disciplines | Team Composite

Different team members complete different tasks or competitive disciplines sequentially.

Mechanics: Component results combine into team time, points, rank, or weighted score.

Best suited to: Academic olympiads, maker competitions, physical relays, multidisciplinary festivals.

Variants: Fixed order; strategic assignment; substitute windows.

Choose-Your-Events Championship | Composite

Competitors select a subset of available component events from a menu.

Mechanics: Overall score may count best N, normalized scores, category quotas, or point budgets.

Best suited to: Festivals, academic contests, gaming, maker events, all-around championships.

Variants: Best 3 of 5; one from each category; optional bonus event.

Drop-Your-Worst / Best-N | Composite

Only an entrant's best N component results count toward the overall result.

Mechanics: The rules identify which results count and which are discarded.

Best suited to: Season series, multi-event meets, leagues, artistic festivals.

Variants: Best 5 of 7; drop one round; mandatory finals plus best prelims.

Handicap / Equalized Competition | Normalized

Raw results are adjusted using a declared handicap, classification, baseline, or normalization formula.

Mechanics: Adjusted result determines placement while raw result remains recorded.

Best suited to: Golf-like formats, mixed-skill leagues, age/class equalization, accessible competition.

Variants: Static handicap; dynamic rating; percentage adjustment; class factors.

Improvement / Personal-Best Competition | Normalized

Entrants compete on improvement relative to their own baseline rather than absolute performance.

Mechanics: Score equals change, percentage improvement, standardized change, or threshold achievement.

Best suited to: Education, fitness, skill development, community challenges.

Variants: Baseline average; season-opening benchmark; improvement bands.

Target-Matching / Calibration | Accuracy

Best result is closest to a target, prediction, specification, or reference rather than simply highest/lowest.

Mechanics: Absolute error, squared error, tolerance bands, or categorical match determines score.

Best suited to: Forecasting, design, fabrication, estimation, culinary precision, calibration games.

Variants: Hidden target; self-declared target; moving target; multi-variable target.

Auction / Bid-to-Perform | Strategy

Entrants bid points, resources, time, difficulty, or constraints before attempting a task.

Mechanics: Successful high-risk bids may score more; failed bids may incur penalties.

Best suited to: Coding, engineering, trivia wagering, strategy games, creative constraints.

Variants: Difficulty bidding; time bidding; point wagering; resource auctions.

Risk-Reward Difficulty Selection | Strategy

Entrants select a difficulty tier with corresponding maximum value or penalty exposure.

Mechanics: Judges score execution while difficulty modifies available points.

Best suited to: Performance, technical challenges, stunts, quizzes, engineering tasks.

Variants: Declared difficulty; judge-verified difficulty; dynamic escalation.

Mystery Task / Reveal Round | Challenge

Task, theme, ingredient, prompt, opponent, or constraint is revealed at or shortly before the round.

Mechanics: Ordinary scoring applies after reveal, but preparation conditions are controlled.

Best suited to: Culinary, creative, improvisation, coding, debate, design.

Variants: Random draw; common reveal; individualized reveal.

Choice Architecture Round | Strategy

Entrants choose among multiple tasks with different values, risks, or scoring criteria.

Mechanics: Result includes task-specific score plus published value multiplier or category balance.

Best suited to: Academic, technical, maker, gaming, creative events.

Variants: Easy/medium/hard; category board; hidden value.

Bounty Format | Strategy

Specific opponents, tasks, records, or achievements carry bonus points or prizes.

Mechanics: Base competition proceeds normally; bounties add points or separate awards.

Best suited to: Gaming, racing, debate, hackathons, festivals.

Variants: Defeat top seed; first perfect score; audience bounty; rotating bounty.

Checkpoint / Mission Competition | Progressive

Entrants complete a sequence or network of tasks, unlocking later tasks or scoring at checkpoints.

Mechanics: Progress, completion time, quality, and optional branches may all affect result.

Best suited to: Adventure races, hackathons, scavenger events, educational competitions.

Variants: Linear path; branching path; optional side missions; hidden checkpoints.

Escape / Resource-Limited Competition | Resource

Entrants receive a finite resource budget that must be allocated across tasks.

Mechanics: Score depends on outcome plus resources remaining or efficiency.

Best suited to: Engineering, business simulation, games, maker challenges.

Variants: Time budget; currency budget; materials budget; hints cost points.

Market / Prediction Tournament | Forecasting

Entrants make predictions over time and score based on accuracy or calibrated confidence.

Mechanics: Scores update as outcomes resolve; entrants may revise predictions within published windows.

Best suited to: Forecasting, finance education, sports prediction, research tournaments.

Variants: Brier score; log score; rank accuracy; portfolio of forecasts.

Pairwise Crowd Tournament | Voting

Large fields are evaluated through repeated A-vs-B comparisons instead of full ballots.

Mechanics: Pairwise wins feed a published ranking or tournament method.

Best suited to: Art, design, photography, naming contests, large public votes.

Variants: Random pairs; adaptive pairs; Swiss pairs; seeded pairs.

Approval-to-Shortlist, Jury-to-Winner | Hybrid

A broad audience or panel creates a shortlist through approval voting; a smaller jury selects final placement.

Mechanics: Different evaluation authorities control different stages.

Best suited to: Awards, festivals, grants, creative competitions.

Variants: Public shortlist; expert shortlist; reciprocal model.

Jury Rank + Audience Save | Hybrid

Judges rank the field, but an audience mechanism can rescue or advance one or more entrants.

Mechanics: Official cut is modified by a separately defined save rule.

Best suited to: Talent, performance, fan-engagement events.

Variants: One save; weighted save; save from bottom group only.

Hidden Score / Reveal Finale | Presentation

Scores accumulate but are concealed until a designated reveal.

Mechanics: Standings are calculated under ordinary rules; publication is delayed or selectively disclosed.

Best suited to: Televised-style events, festivals, suspense formats.

Variants: Reveal by component; reverse order; sealed envelope.

Live Leaderboard | Presentation

Scores are published in real time as performances or matches occur.

Mechanics: Standings update after every result.

Best suited to: Racing, skills, coding, golf-like events, exhibitions.

Variants: Provisional leaderboard; official-after-review; audience-only view.

Blind / Identity-Masked Evaluation | Integrity

Judges evaluate entries without selected identity information.

Mechanics: Entries use codes; identity is revealed only after scoring or finalization.

Best suited to: Writing, design, grants, auditions, research, culinary where feasible.

Variants: Single blind; double blind; partial masking.

Adversarial Challenge / Protest Round | Review

Competitors can challenge a result, solution, claim, or technical ruling under formal rules.

Mechanics: Challenge may trigger review, replay, re-score, or a published consequence for unsuccessful challenge.

Best suited to: Debate, technical contests, games, judged sports.

Variants: Limited challenges; deposit/point cost; panel review.

Sudden Death | Tiebreak / Elimination

Tied entrants continue through additional tasks, attempts, questions, or matches until separated.

Mechanics: Each extra cycle eliminates or resolves tied entrants.

Best suited to: Trivia, races, games, skills, judged events.

Variants: First miss; first lead after equal attempts; judge vote.

Closest-to-Consensus | Meta-Scoring

Entrants are rewarded for predicting or matching the collective judgment rather than the underlying object alone.

Mechanics: Score is distance from jury median, public consensus, or later official result.

Best suited to: Forecasting, judging education, calibration exercises.

Variants: Predict rank; predict score; judge calibration competition.

Judge Calibration / Shadow Championship | Meta-Scoring

Evaluators themselves are scored on agreement, consistency, accuracy to standard, or later consensus.

Mechanics: Their ballots are compared against benchmark or panel outcomes.

Best suited to: Judge education, certification, research, quality assurance.

Variants: Consensus distance; known-answer sets; inter-rater reliability.

Collaborative-Competitive / Co-opetition | Hybrid

Entrants earn both individual/team points and shared field objectives.

Mechanics: A common target may unlock bonuses for everyone while relative ranking still determines placement.

Best suited to: Hackathons, sustainability challenges, educational games.

Variants: Shared threshold; alliance phases; temporary cooperation.

Secret Objective / Hidden Bonus | Strategy

Entrants receive private objectives that add points if achieved.

Mechanics: Public scoring combines with hidden task fulfillment revealed after the round.

Best suited to: Games, role-based events, creative challenges.

Variants: Individual objectives; team roles; decoy objectives.

Adaptive Difficulty | Adaptive

Task difficulty changes based on prior performance or current standing.

Mechanics: The published method assigns tougher/easier tasks while results account for difficulty.

Best suited to: Education, esports, skills, testing-style competition.

Variants: Rating-based matchmaking; staircase difficulty; dynamic target.

Elo / Rating Tournament | Continuous Rating

Results update a persistent competitor rating rather than only producing one event placement.

Mechanics: Expected result and actual result alter ratings after each match under a published rating method.

Best suited to: Chess-like competition, games, debate, ongoing leagues.

Variants: Elo; Glicko-like; custom rating; team rating.

Season / Circuit Championship | Longitudinal

Multiple independent events contribute to a larger championship.

Mechanics: Competitors earn circuit points, qualifying credits, or best-N results across dates/venues.

Best suited to: Sports circuits, dance series, gaming, academic leagues, arts festivals.

Variants: Best N; mandatory majors; bonus finals; regional qualifiers.

Open Qualifier to Invitational | Eligibility

An open competition determines entry into a later restricted event.

Mechanics: Advancement creates eligibility rather than a direct next round.

Best suited to: Championship systems, esports, festivals, arts, debate.

Variants: Regional qualifiers; online qualifier; points qualification.

Multi-Winner / Portfolio Selection | Selection

The objective is to select a set of winners rather than order the whole field.

Mechanics: Rules may select by top scores, category balance, diversity of skills, team composition, or jury selection.

Best suited to: Grants, teams, showcases, exhibitions, rosters.

Variants: Top N; category quotas; jury-curated set; no ordinal places.

6. Tie Resolution Library

Tie handling should be explicitly configured, visible in the rules, and recorded with the result. Many competitions use several methods sequentially.

- Allow official tie with shared placement or award.
- Refer to a designated rubric criterion or component score.
- Use head-to-head result between tied entrants.
- Use number of first-place/highest-rank votes.
- Use majority preference between tied entrants.
- Use median instead of mean, or vice versa, as an announced secondary measure.
- Drop highest/lowest and recompute under an announced rule.
- Use best single performance, best later performance, or best attempt.
- Use cumulative prior-round score or placement.
- Use strength of schedule / opponent score / Buchholz-style tiebreak.
- Use score differential, points for/against, sets/games won, or analogous match statistic.
- Use fewer penalties/faults or higher technical compliance score.
- Use earlier achievement of the tied result.
- Run a tiebreak performance, extra task, rematch, shootout, sudden death, or additional question set.
- Use chair/jury decision under a deliberative tiebreak rule.
- Use audience tiebreak vote.
- Use random draw only when explicitly authorized as a final tiebreak.
- Advance all tied entrants if capacity and rules permit.
- Apply a cut-line-specific tiebreak that does not alter published placement among other tied competitors.

7. Status, Exception, and Integrity States

Competition is messy. A complete ruleset should distinguish what happened when an entrant did not perform normally, when a result is provisional, and when an official intervention changes the competitive state.

Status	Meaning
Registered	Eligible entry exists but has not yet competed.
Checked In	Entry is present/verified for the relevant session or stage.
Scheduled	Entry has an assigned heat, match, slot, task, or time.
Competed	Entry has a completed competitive result.
Provisional	Result exists but is awaiting review, certification, challenge window, or technical validation.
Official	Result has been certified/finalized.
DNS	Did not start / did not appear for the relevant contest.
DNF	Started but did not finish.
No Mark / No Score	Attempt occurred but generated no valid measurable result.
Foul / Invalid Attempt	Specific attempt is invalid but entry may retain other attempts.
Withdrawn	Entry voluntarily leaves future participation.
Disqualified	Entry is removed or invalidated under rule authority.
Forfeit	Entry concedes or is awarded a match loss without ordinary contest.
Bye	Entry advances without contest.
Walkover	Opponent unavailable; remaining entrant receives advancement/win under rules.
Abstention / Recusal	Evaluator does not score an entry due to conflict or another authorized reason.
Under Review	Result, score, protest, incident, or eligibility is actively being reviewed.
Corrected	Official result changed after authorized correction.
Reinstated	Previously removed or non-advancing entry is restored through review or rule process.

7.1 Result Publication States

- Private / scoring in progress
- Judges-only or officials-only
- Provisional public
- Official public
- Embargoed until scheduled reveal
- Partially revealed by component or stage
- Archived / historical
- Superseded by correction while preserving the prior record

8. Example Hybrid Architectures

Open Creative Championship

Stage 1 “Open Call”: blind rubric scoring, top 24. Stage 2 “Showcase”: live judge ranking, top 8 plus one audience save. Stage 3 “Final Table”: deliberative five-person jury ranks finalists; separate public choice award runs in parallel.

Technical Build Challenge

Qualification: pass/fail safety and compliance gate. Main round: objective completion score plus engineering rubric. Final: top six enter a mystery-task round with partial carryover of prior technical score. Ties resolve by fewer penalties, then faster completion.

Battle Festival

Preliminary: judges issue recall ballots from large heats. Battles: single-elimination head-to-head, each match decided by five-judge majority preference. Semifinal losers enter a third-place battle. Championship battle is best-of-three with audience vote displayed but non-binding.

Community Skills League

Season uses round-robin pods and objective match results. Standings generate circuit points. Top eight reach a seeded double-elimination championship. A persistent rating updates after every match but does not determine the championship winner.

All-Around Performance Cup

Competitors choose four of six disciplines, but must enter at least one from each category. Each discipline uses its own scoring system. Scores are normalized to championship points; best three count. Final award recognizes overall champion plus discipline winners and audience favorite.

Rotating Partner Social Competition

Individuals register by role/category. Preliminary heats rotate temporary partners; judges recall individuals, not partnerships. Semifinal repeats rotation with scores reset. Final creates random partners for each performance but judges rank individuals across all rotations.

Innovation Jury

Round 1: broad expert panel uses approval voting to create a 20-entry shortlist. Round 2: specialist panels score feasibility, impact, and design. Top five make live pitches. Final jury deliberates to select three awardees without requiring 1st/2nd/3rd; public vote selects a separate community award.

9. OCA Format Principles

1. Format transparency: entrants should be able to understand how results and advancement are determined before competing.
2. Authority transparency: rules should identify who scores, votes, judges, certifies, penalizes, or resolves disputes.
3. Weight transparency: where multiple scoring sources or criteria are combined, their weights and normalization should be disclosed.
4. Advancement transparency: cuts, thresholds, saves, wildcards, byes, repechage, and carryover should be stated in advance.
5. Tie transparency: organizers should define whether ties are allowed and, when necessary, how they are broken.
6. Auditability: official score submissions, corrections, overrides, and certifications should be attributable and preserved.
7. Role separation where appropriate: organizer, adjudicator, scorekeeper/scrutineer, technical official, and safeguarding functions should remain distinguishable even when one person lawfully holds multiple roles.
8. No false precision: organizers should not use complex formulas merely to make subjective judgment appear objective.
9. No forced ordinal result: some competitions appropriately select a cohort, certify a standard, recognize multiple winners, or issue classifications without naming a single champion.
10. Discipline neutrality: OCA format standards should define process quality, not impose one discipline's inherited customs on another.
11. Configurable nomenclature: organizers may use the stage, role, award, and event terminology appropriate to their community, provided functions remain clear.
12. Human correction with accountability: authorized officials may need to correct records or resolve exceptional situations, but corrections should be documented rather than silently replacing history.

OPEN COMPETITION ALLIANCE

Competitive formats should be limited by the rules of the event, not by assumptions about what competition is supposed to look like.