



The Eddie Rickenbacker Chapter
of the
International Plastic Modelers' Society / USA

Contest Handbook

How We Judge

An IPMS contest, at any level, should be guided by the premise that every entry is a modeler's creative work of art. Not quite the same as a great painting or famous musical composition, but art nonetheless. Pieces are assembled, painted, and finished, producing a result in which the builder takes pride. In a contest, each piece needs to be evaluated. The question of how to evaluate art has been around for centuries. As all judging is done within the framework of the biases, opinions and preferences of the human mind and since that framework varies from person to person, all judging, by definition, is subjective.

For that reason we do not use a system of numbers to measure quality. Numbers are often used to create the appearance of objectivity, but the assignment of a 4 or 7 to an entry by a judge is essentially subjective as it is that judge's opinion. We look at the whole model and try to determine how well the modeler did in bringing his project to completion. In addition, there is also no "National Standard" against which all models are compared. The best model in a category on any given day is just that, no more, no less. There may be other models somewhere that are better, but that does not matter. Only what is present on the contest table can be judged. The final result of the judging says only that, of the models entered in this particular category on this particular day, this one is better than that one.

IPMS/USA determines this ranking by using odd numbered person teams to avoid ties in instances when the team's decisions are not unanimous. IPMS tries to have each team made up of judges from different sections of the country to avoid any appearance of impropriety such as two pals from one chapter giving a friend an award or to avoid any category being skewed by a locally favored technique. In one area, for example, it may have become quite the rage to heavily weather or shadow-paint a model. In another area, the current fashion might be sparkling new finishes. While neither of these is "right" or "wrong", we don't want the contest results skewed by these kinds of constantly changing fashions. Another reason we judge in teams is so that the preferences/biases of one judge are balanced out by those of the other two. When evaluating a model, a judge may think that "X" is a more important on an entry than is "Y" on another. However, the other judges on

the team may have different opinions and through the ensuing discussion a consensus is sought to pick the better entry.

Throughout the judging process, the first and most important things the judges consider are the **basics**. The judges first identify models that exhibit flaws in basic construction and finishing and then through a series of "cuts", eliminate entries with flaws. They continue narrowing the field until the winners have been decided. Only when the basics don't allow for a clear-cut ranking do the judges begin to look deeper.

As a modeler works on his model, he should keep in mind that the level of workmanship should be consistent throughout the model. In other words, the modeler who adheres to the basics throughout his model will be judged more favorably than one who does not. It's not ok to detail the cockpit but not blank off the engine intakes because that's "not as important". With the basics, it is all important.

Which leads to the question: What are the criteria used for judging models? For specific classes of models, such as ships, automotive, etc., these are outlined in sections later in this document. However, some criteria that apply across classes. These are listed in the section entitled "Modeling Basics" and apply to **every** class of model.

An IPMS Contest brings many different kinds of models and modelers together in a single competition. Since it's not just for aircraft, or cars, or any other single kind of modeling, we've tried to evolve a set of rules and standards that enable us to have a contest that's consistent across this broad range of classes, skills, and interests. That's not always easy to do, but we will continue to strive to maintain the broadest and most integrated modeling society in the world.

The Modeling Basics

These basic construction/finishing criteria are held in common by ALL CLASSES OF MODELS. Note, however, that each class also has additional basics criteria specific to that class. These are listed under each class's individual section further below.

Construction

Flash, sink, mold, ejector-pin marks, Trade Marks and any provisions for motorization, etc. are eliminated.

Any openings are blanked off or have the field of vision obstructed (a figure that blocks the view through an armored vehicle's open hatch for example.) to prevent a "see-through" effect or if not, show the appropriate detail inside.

Seams are filled unless present on the actual prototype. If depicting a subject with visible seams, such detail should be uniform and to scale throughout the model.

Correct cross-section of round/cylindrical/oval parts is maintained.

All components are appropriately aligned.

The underside of the model, if visible, should have the same attention to these criteria as the rest of the model.

Any clear parts present (i.e. windshields, vision blocks, canopies, etc.) should be free of glue marks or scratches/cracks unless they are part of the weathering of the subject.

Detail removed while filling seams, removing sinkholes etc. is restored to a level consistent with the rest of the model.

Aftermarket parts and kit bashed or scratch built additions/changes should blend in with the rest of the model.

Painting

The model's surface, once painted, should show no signs of the construction process such as glue, file or sanding marks, fingerprints, etc.

Unless irregularities in the actual subject's finish are being duplicated, the finish should be even and smooth. Exceptions should be documented.

There should be no brush marks, hairs, lint or dust in or on the finish.

There should not be any "orange peel" or "eggshell" effect and no "powdering" in recessed areas. Any exceptions on the actual subject should be documented.

There should be no differences in sheen of finish or whitening caused by the misapplication of final clear coats or glossiness caused by washes.

Paint edges that should be sharp are sharp (i.e. framing on aircraft canopies) with no effects of bad masking. Edges that are supposed to be soft or feathered should be in scale and without overspray.

Dry-brushing should not be apparent as such.

Paint colors can vary due to variations from paint batch to batch, different operating environments can change colors in different ways, paints fade from the effects of weather and sunlight, and viewing distance can change the look of virtually any color. Poor initial application and subsequent maintenance compound these problems. Therefore, **color shade should not be used to determine a model's accuracy**. Models with unusual colors or color schemes should have appropriate documentation.

Any bare plastic, resin, etc., that is visible should not be recognizable as such. If the plastic is the correct color for the model, even if a modeler does not paint the model, he should apply a gloss and/or dull coat to make the plastic "look" painted.

"Weathering" is inherently neither good nor bad. When comparing a model with a weathered finish to a model with a pristine finish, the judges will concern themselves with the degree of success achieved by each builder in depicting the intended finish. An exception is in the diorama categories where appropriate weathering may be necessary to render appropriate realism.

Decals

Decals are aligned properly. If the real prototype had a markings anomaly, the modeler should document it.

There is no silvering or bubbling of decal film.

Decals "snuggle down" around detail/corners smoothly.

Decals blend in with the rest of the finish to look painted on.

Decals have the same sheen as the rest of the model unless they are simulating a different type of surface such as a glass window on a brick building.

Class Specific Basics

Aircraft

These are specific to this category and are in addition to those listed in the section on Modeling Basics.

Construction and Painting

Construction

- Wings/tail planes have the same dihedral or anhedral on both sides.
- Wings and stabilizers are aligned correctly with, and identically on both sides of, the centerline.
- Fin to stabilizer angles are correct and aligned with each other in front and side views where appropriate.
- Engine nacelles/cowlings lined up correctly in front, side, and plan views.
- Landing gear components are properly aligned with the airframe and with each other in front, side, and plan views.
- Ordnance items such as bombs, rockets, pylons, etc, are aligned correctly with the aircraft and with each other.

Painting and finishing

- Weathering, if present, should show concern for scale (e.g., size of chipped areas), be in accordance with the conditions in which the real aircraft was operating and its age (a factory-fresh interior would be unlikely on a 100-mission aircraft) and be consistent throughout the model
- Some modern aircraft use decals rather than paint for standard markings. If the real aircraft suffers from problems with decal application, such anomalies should be documented if duplicated on the model.

Detailing

- Contour errors have been corrected.
- Wing trailing edges, ordnance fins, landing gear doors, edges of open panels, etc. are thinned to scale or replaced
- Gun barrels, exhaust stacks, intakes, vents, and similar openings are opened.
- External stores are built to the same level of quality as the model to which they are attached.
- Stores/weapons combinations on a model represent only those combinations actually carried by the real aircraft.

Armor/Military Vehicles

These are specific to this category and are in addition to those listed in the section on Modeling Basics.

Construction

- Any gap/overlap at the point where the track ends join is eliminated.
- Machine guns, main guns, exhausts, vents, etc. are drilled out/opened up.
- The track pattern faces in the proper direction on both sides of vehicle.
- The suspension parts such as idler, drive, and return rollers on tracked vehicles are in correct alignment and sit appropriately on the track.
- The tracks are vertical (i.e. not leaning in or out when viewed from the front or back of the vehicle) and parallel (i.e. not toed in or out when viewed from top of vehicle).
- All wheels/tracks sit appropriately on the ground.

Detailing

- Parts are made to be of scale thickness and texture.
- Weld marks are simulated where applicable.
- Small detail parts such as rivets, nuts, bolts, tie downs, grab handles, windshield wipers, hatch and storage compartment handles/latches, valve stems, etc. are added/simulated.
- Stowage, such as tarps, bedrolls, chains, fuel cans, etc. have been added and have some method by which such items are attached to the vehicle such as a hook, rope, or tie down.
- Photo-etched parts that require forming are precisely shaped and any surfaces requiring building up to a thicker cross-section should be smooth and uniform.
- Cable and electrical lines are added to lights, smoke dischargers and other electrical equipment where appropriate.
- Molded-on parts that simulate things separate from the subject such as tools, cables, etc. are undercut or removed completely and replaced.
- Molded on screening has been replaced with real screen.
- Track "sag" on tracked vehicles is duplicated where appropriate.
- Head, tail and spotlights are hollowed out and have lenses added.
- Instrument faces on dashboards have detail picked out or added and lenses added.
- All crew positions in open topped vehicles have been appropriately detailed. e.g. Gas and brake pedals, gearshifts, etc. for drivers' positions.
- Molded on grab handles, tie downs, hatch levers, etc. have been replaced with separate parts.
- Any parts with inaccuracies in shape and/or contour have been corrected and/or replaced.
- Weathering is not required. However, if present it should be consistent throughout the model and be in accordance with the conditions of how and where the real vehicle was operating. Extreme examples should be documented. Weathering should not be used to hide flaws in construction or finishing.

Automotive

These are specific to this category and are in addition to those listed in the section on Modeling Basics.

Construction and Painting

Construction

- If not found on the actual vehicle, seams are filled. This is especially important on the car's body.
- The mold seam is removed from rubberized kit tires that have one.
- Gaps between the body and chassis are eliminated as applicable.
- Where applicable, external items such as mirrors, exhaust pipes, etc, are aligned appropriately.
- Internal items (e.g., seats, some engine/drive components) aligned properly.
- All wheels touch the ground and aligned properly when viewed from the front or rear of the vehicle.
- If turned, the wheels should be aligned in the same direction.
- Painting
- Chrome parts should be correctly represented and should be just as free of surface blemishes and evidences of the construction process as the painted components.
- Although weathering is gaining more acceptance in the automotive ranks, especially with some trucks and certain types of racing cars such as the Rally types, it is not standard practice. Most auto modelers build what is considered a "show" car or restored car, and because of this, weathering will be the exception rather than the rule. If present, however, weathering should show concern for scale, be in accordance with the conditions in which the real vehicle was operating, and be consistent throughout the model.

Detailing

- Contour errors are corrected.
- Exhausts, intakes, vents, and other objects that have openings are opened.
- Detail added to the vehicle, such as door-lock buttons, tire valve stems, dashboard gauge detail, fabric surfaces on interior components, etc, should be as close to scale as possible.
- Engine and chassis detailing is consistent with the level of detailing on the rest of the model. (i.e. do not completely plumb and wire an engine but not add the gearshift and driver's pedals.)
- Working parts, if any, such as opening hoods or doors, should match the level of workmanship of the rest of the model. Such parts should operate realistically and the operating mechanism(s) should be in scale if visible.

Ships

These are specific to this category and are in addition to those listed in the section on Modeling Basics.

Construction and finishing

- Superstructure components (platforms, cabins, funnels, etc.) aligned with the vertical when viewed from stem to stern.
- Masts parallel to the vertical axis of the ship when viewed from stem to stern. Rake of masts uniform, unless the real vessel's masts had varying rake angles. Rigging tension must not cause the masts and spars to bend.
- Paint should have a matt finish, unless a different sheen is being used to create a special effect
- Color schemes should be correct for the era being modeled.
- Weathering should be kept to a minimum because of the small scales involved.

Detailing

- The ship's configuration should be correct for the time depicted by the model.
- Contour errors corrected.
- All small parts (including masts, bulwarks, splinter shields, railings, and rigging) should be as close to scale as possible.
- Small details sanded off during construction should be replaced with scratch-built or aftermarket material.
- Gun barrels and vents should be drilled out whenever possible.
- Sailing ship rigging and lines should be correct for the era being modeled.
- Deadeyes should be right side up, and rigging lines and blocks should be in proportion to each other.
- Photo-etched parts:
 - Nubs and burrs where parts are removed from fret must be eliminated.
 - Parts should not be unintentionally damaged or bent.
 - Glue marks and buildups should not show.
 - Parts (e.g. rails and stanchions) must not overlap.
 - All railings should be straight, no wavy railings.
 - Railings must line up horizontally and vertically where they join.
 - Corner seams created when parts are bent to shape should be filled.
 - Paint should cover brass completely including areas at bends and cuts.

Figures

These are specific to this category and are in addition to those listed in the section on Modeling Basics.

The underlying premise of a miniature (that is a figure) is that it should look like a small version of a real person. The closer the figure comes to that goal, the better the figure will appear to the judges.

Construction and Painting

Construction

- Where construction seams have been filled, creases that cross these seams are restored.
- Equipment is properly attached, (e.g., holsters not hanging in space, canteens attached to belts).
- Straps hang properly. Rifle slings, horse harnesses, etc. hang/sag properly to depict their weight.

- Feet touch the ground/surface properly.

Painting

- Cloth, leather and metal should have the proper sheen, e.g., a matt finish for wool, leather, other than in shoes, should have a slight sheen.
- Blending of highlighted and shaded areas with the basic color should be smooth, gradual, and subtle. No demarcation lines should show.
- Shadows should be present when two surfaces meet (e.g. belts over tunics) and on undersurfaces (e.g. between legs and under arms).
- White should not be used in eyes in order to avoid a pop-eyed look.
- Eyes should be symmetrical; figure should not be wall-eyed or cross-eyed.
- Weathering of feet or shoes, if depicted, should be appropriate to the ground cover.
- Headgear shadows should show on the figure's face.
- Equipment such as swords should have a shadow shown on the figure.
- Flesh tones should reflect the climate in which the figure is depicted.

Detailing

- Straps should have proper thickness.
- Gun barrels should be drilled/hollowed out.
- Accessories and equipment should be in proper scale for the figure.
- Ground bases should show footprints.
- Foliage should harmonize with the figure (e.g., no flowers present when figure is in winter clothes).
- Lapels and collars should be slightly raised whenever possible.
- Slings should be added to weapons where necessary.
- Figures shown on ground should have feet/footwear slightly indented in the earth to depict weight.
- Equipment being worn by, or slung on, the figure should be given an appearance of weight, e.g., by indenting straps slightly into the shoulder.

Note: Additional equipment such as a desk, bar, etc. will not be judged unless such equipment is included with the original figure casting/kit.

Space and Science Fiction

These are specific to this category and are in addition to those listed in the section on Modeling Basics.

Space and Science Fiction models depict a wide variety of subjects, from real vehicles to complete flights of fancy. In so doing, they run the gamut from sleek "rocket ships" to boxy satellites, from robots to alien armored vehicles. The incredible range of science fiction subjects, however, would seem at first glance to defy any attempt at systematic judging. Models of actual spacecraft are typically judged much like aircraft or vehicle models and even a model that represents a builder's total flight of fancy can still be judged on the basis of basic scale modeling skills.

Painting

- Reentry vehicles (Space Shuttle, Apollo, etc.) show some aerodynamic weathering if depicted in a post-reentry or landing mode.
- Rocket engine nozzles generally should show some sort of weathering, particularly on the inside; but check references, as such weathering can vary greatly from one nozzle to another.

Detailing

- Overly thick parts should be thinned to scale or replaced. This is especially true of the antennas supplied with many kits. Kit versions often appear too "fat" and lack detail.
- Scoops and other such openings should be blocked off to prevent a "see-through" effect.
- Weapon barrels, exhausts, intakes, vents, small thrusters, steering rockets, etc. should be drilled or opened.
- Details added to the model should be in scale or as close to scale as possible.
- Science fiction and fantasy modeling can entail a fair amount of scratch building or kit-bashing. Items or areas added in this fashion should look useful and truly part of the vehicle, and should be similar in fit, detail, and overall finish to the rest of the model. Parts used from other kits should be sufficiently altered or disguised so that their origin is not immediately apparent in order to avoid the appearance of a haphazard assemblage of spare parts (sometimes known as the "Panzer IV in Space syndrome").

Dioramas

A diorama is a combination of one or more models in a believable setting that tells a story, sets a mood, or creates a charged atmosphere. In addition to evaluating the diorama's individual elements, the judges will consider the strength of the diorama's story line or mood and the overall presentation of the diorama. These three factors are equally important. A diorama with superbly modeled components but a weak story line and presentation is not as strong as a diorama with well-modeled components and strong story and presentation.

Model Components, Ground Work, Scenery, etc: The individual model components of a diorama will be judged according to the criteria specified in the Modeling Basics and the appropriate individual class. For example, armor pieces will be subject to armor judging criteria while figures will be evaluated according to the figure modeling guidelines. The basics of construction and finishing are of prime importance not only with the model elements, but also with the terrain, roadwork, buildings, and accessories that set the scene of the diorama. These are given equal importance to the primary model components and consistency of workmanship will also be evaluated. Well-done vehicles may not overcome poorly done figures and mediocre groundwork.

Presentation: The diorama base should be comprised of individual elements that combine to form a realistic and/or plausible setting for the primary model component(s). Each of the elements also should be believable in its own right and consistent with the action or mood being depicted. The degree of imagination and inventiveness used to pose the main elements will factor into the overall presentation evaluation. The base should provide a focal point for the scene and fit or enhance the story line or mood of the diorama. Dioramas with a well-defined focal point highlighting a simple story generally will have a stronger presentation than those attempting to portray an entire battlefield.

Story Line, Mood, and Atmosphere: This element is what separates a diorama from models merely set on a base. A simple derelict vehicle rusting away in a field could set a mood as well as a complete recreation of the Battle of Waterloo. The story, mood, or atmosphere created by the diorama should be obvious; the judges shouldn't have to strain to see it. Stories can incorporate historical or even humorous aspects. Imagination and inventiveness in telling a story or setting a mood can lift a diorama above the ordinary.

Youths

The Junior Class is unique in two respects. First, as opposed to the other classes where only one kind of model can be entered, any type of model, such as a car, plane or ship, is allowed. Secondly, it is the only class that has a breakdown by age of the modeler. The assumption is that the skill level of the modeler increases with age so we group modelers with similar skill/age levels together.

Because any class of model is eligible, we recommend that the modeler go to the things the judges look for in the Modeling Basics and Class Basics section of the type of model that he/she is building (i.e. aircraft, ship, etc.). Note that in the Youth Class there is much emphasis on the Basics, such as alignment, gluing, filling, painting and decaling. If you build a model that goes beyond the Modeling Basics, the additional things that are listed in the Class Basics section will be considered but remember that a model completed with attention paid the Modeling Basics stands a much better chance of doing well than one with photo etched controls added to a 1/72nd scale cockpit without the Modeling Basics being taken care of.

CLASSES OF MODELERS

As is in most model contests, ours is divided into a series of categories. These categories group models of like subject matter together to make judging easier. At the Rickenbacker contest, however, in an attempt to level the playing field so to speak, modelers can enter their models in a category in one of three classes, depending on their level of confidence. The modeler makes the decision themselves as to what level at which he or she wishes to compete. A modeler can enter one model in a category in one class, while another model can be entered in a category in a different class. The three classes are:

Master. These are more experienced modelers. They usually "go the extra mile" on their models, such as adding extra detail or correcting flaws in a kit while being meticulous about basic assembly. The competition is at a higher level in this class, but so are the awards. Plaques are given for First, Second and Third place. All IPMS local chapter or national members are encouraged to enter at this level though it is not mandatory.

Adult. These are the less experienced or perhaps just more casual modelers. They either have not shown their work much or perhaps they just build for their own satisfaction. They do a good job and build a nice model, but maybe are not as obsessed with 'accuratizing' a kit or making sure that every little thing is done correctly. They compete for ribbons for First, Second and Third place in their categories.

Teens. These are modelers between the ages of 13 to 17. They are a little older and probably have better modeling skills, so they should not compete with the **Youths**, but they may not be ready to

take on the **Adults**. They have more categories than the **Youths** but fewer, broader ones than the **Adults** and they are awarded ribbons. HOWEVER, if a **Teen** aged modeler wishes to compete in the **Adult** or **Master** classes, they may do so. At many contests, we are always amazed at the skill level of some of the **Teens**.

Youths. These are modelers 12 years old and younger and are probably still learning their modeling skills. To be fair, they are not forced to compete with older, more experienced modelers and their models are entered into one all encompassing category. They compete for ribbons in their categories. Just like any modeler, they can enter a higher level class if they wish.

BLIZCON Contest Rules

1. The contest is open to all modelers. Membership in IPMS/USA is not required for entry, but IPMS members are encouraged to enter the Master Classes.
2. The contest is open to all models except those placing 3rd or higher at an IPMS Region IV Convention or IPMS National Convention. Previous award winners are eligible as part of collection, group, and parent/child entries.
3. Entries may be made of any material, i.e. plastic, wood, metal, paper or any combination thereof.
4. Pre-painted entries are allowed in Junior and Youth categories only.
5. No Entries depicting nudity or other inappropriate topics for a "PG- rated" audience will be permitted. No exceptions. The Contest Chairman may decline to accept entry of a subject that may be considered offensive, lewd, or in poor taste. The decision of the Contest Chairman will be final.
6. Absentee entries are accepted if registered under builder's name. Registration fees apply.
7. The Contestant will determine the category of each entry. The Head Judge reserves the right to move entries to another Category if such move is clearly warranted. All such moves will be made following reasonable effort to notify the Contestant.
8. If a model is qualified for more than one category, the Registrars shall assist in determining in which category the model should be entered. In the event of questionable placement, the Head Judge's decision will be final.
9. Contest categories may be expanded at the discretion of the Head Judge, based on the number of entries in a given category or categories.
10. Judging shall be conducted using the guidelines set forth by IPMS/USA. Entries will be judged using the following criteria: Basic Construction, Overall Finish, Overall Accuracy, Additional Detailing, and Degree of Difficulty. Scratchbuilt detail will be favored over commercially available detail if quality is comparable. A great amount of added detail will not make up for poor basic construction. A copy of the IPMS/USA Judges Handbook will be available for review.
11. Models may be picked up during the judging process if deemed necessary by the Head Judge to determine final category or special award ranking. Reasonable effort will be made to contact affected contestants prior to handling of their affected entries. Models may be gently repositioned to allow access to entry forms, visibility of other entries, or to facilitate category splits.
12. NO SWEEPS ALLOWED. A modeler will be awarded the single highest award earned in a particular category, unless the modeler is the only entrant in the category.
13. All judges' decisions are final. Any attempts to influence judges will result in immediate disqualification of all the contestant's entries.
14. Reasonably sized bases are allowed in all categories, but are not judged except in the vignette/diorama categories. Display bases must not exceed a 30in x 30in foot print as contest space is limited.

15. All dust covers MUST be removed prior to judging. Models with dust covers on will not be considered during judging.

16. Out-of-the-Box entries must be constructed solely from the contents of the kit, with the exception of finishes and decals. Weathering, filling seams and molding flaws, adding simple paper or tape seat beats, and antennae/rigging are allowed. Gun barrels, vents and door handles may be drilled out as well. No cutting/separating/opening of hatches, control surfaces, canopies, or doors is permitted. The use of aftermarket accessories (except decals) will be cause for disqualification from the Out-of-Box category. Instructions MUST accompany the model and entry form.

17. Conversion entries must contain significant structural changes to the basic kit, involving extensive changes in contour or configuration, such work having been accomplished by the modeler. Entries using aftermarket parts as the majority of the conversion will be placed in the appropriate regular category. Entrants in this category should be prepared to provide a list of parts and materials used.

18. Scratch-built Entries must be more than 50% Contestant supplied parts. Scratchbuilt 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.

19. Open/Closed Top Vehicles. An Open Top Vehicle is a vehicle that is designed to fight open, such as an M-10 or Marder SP A/T gun. On all entries, interiors are subject to judging if hatches, doors, canopies, etc. are open. If a figure is in an open hatch blocking the view of the interior, the interior and figure are not judged, and the model will be considered as having a closed top.

20. Dioramas & Vignettes: Vignettes are defined as scenes containing 5 or fewer figures and no vehicle(s). Dioramas are defined as scenes containing 6 or more figures and/or vehicle(s). Vehicles include aircraft, tanks, ships, cars, and trucks.

21. IPMS Eddie Rickenbacker Columbus Ohio its members, agents, or officers assume no liability or responsibility in case of accidents involving attendees, equipment, merchandise, models, or displays or for property lost, stolen, or damaged during the show.