

Quilt Judging: Elimination System Tutorial

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The Elimination or Ranking System:

Judges first quickly view all the quilts in a category, then evaluate each on an individual basis, and finally select the best in each category for 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and Honorable Mention Awards. This is the system by which a majority of certified judges prefer to use.

Advantages:

- Quilts are evaluated with similar quilts in categories (Pieced, Applique, Mixed, Art, Modern, Clothing, Other, for example)
- Quilts are ranked within the category (1st, 2nd, 3rd, HMS)
- There still can be more than one quilt in each ranking depending on ribbons provided by guild
- Judges make both positive and constructive comments
- Judges will factor in the Degree of Difficulty, Complexity of Design, and WOW factors of quilts
- No arbitrary numbers used
- Special Awards can still be determined
- “Cream rises to the top”
- Volunteers on judging day learn a great deal!

Considerations:

- Entrants may feel comments don't cover every aspect of evaluation
- The quality of comments may vary among judges
- A smaller number of ribbons may be awarded
- Quilts need to be organized into categories before judging
- Best held on a day previous to hanging that is dedicated to the judging process in a large, well-lit space
- Extra volunteers are need to help scribe, fan, fold, move quilts

Elimination System Requirements

- First and foremost, a well-designed Entry Registration form, which details the rules for competition.
- Depending on the number of quilt entries, one to three certified judges
- A large, spacious, **well-lit** room
- Many volunteers, a dozen or so of which are available at any one time throughout the day
- Zillions of well-sharpened pencils, pens, and paper pads. Alternatively, a well-designed software program for transcribing judges' comments
- Official guild comment sheets, onto which judges' comments will be transcribed and returned to entrants
- A minimum of a dozen clean cafeteria-sized tables
- Chairs for scribes and other tired volunteers
- "Strengthening agents" for all involved: water, fruit, munchies
- Clean, white gloves worn by quilt wranglers
- A person blessed with the patience of a saint and the organizational skills of Martha Stewart to coordinate all of the above!

Quilt Entry Form Considerations

A well-designed Entry Registration form, which details the rules for competition, is the foundation for an organized show. It should contain such details as:

1. Eligibility of Quilts and General Information
 - a. Definition of quilt (ex. 3 layers? Tied or no ties? Yes or no to kit quilts?)
 - b. Limit on age of quilt
 - c. Limit on previously judged, awarded, and/or displayed quilts
 - d. Must quilts be made by members-only?
 - e. Quilts must be “Show-Ready”, ie. clean and odor-free
 - f. Requirements regarding hanging sleeve
 - g. Number of entries allowed per quilter or category
 - h. Entry fee
 - i. Label covers
 - j. Process for quilts entered in a wrong category (“Show organizers/judges reserve the right to place quilt in an alternate category”)
 - k. Judged v. Display-only option
 - l. Quilt size
 - m. Description of quilt
 - n. Design source
 - o. Quilt value
 - p. Names of all people who worked on quilt
 - q. Quilter’s name and contact

Quilt Entry Form Considerations (Cont.)

2. Well-Defined Category Designations

Categories may be chosen by:

- A. Quilt-top construction techniques
 - Minimum for 50 quilts or less:
 - Pieced
 - Appliqued
 - Other or Mixed Technique
 - For shows with more than 50 quilts:
 - “Other”: Yo-yos, Cathedral Windows, Whole Cloth, etc.
 - Embellished
 - Surface Design
 - Kits

- B. Use (Good for shows expecting more than 50 quilts)
 - Bed quilts, large
 - Bed quilts, small
 - Wallhangings
 - Miniatures
 - Wearable
 - Domestic or Household items

- C. Quilting Technique
 - Hand
 - Stationary Machine
 - Long-arm quilted
 - Mixed
 - Tied

- D. Other Divisions
 - Pictorial
 - Group Quilt
 - Juvenile
 - Challenge Quilts
 - Theme Quilts
 - Heritage or Antique
 - Original
 - Traditional
 - Innovative
 - Master/Professional

Quilt Entry Form Considerations (Cont.)

3. Awards to be Given

- Category Awards (1st, 2nd, 3rd, HM)
 - (Guild can provide multiples of each if desired)
- Special Awards - some choices:
 - Best Use of Color
 - Best Original Design
 - Youth
 - Most Innovative Design
 - Best of Theme
 - Viewers' Choice
 - Scrap Quilt
 - Best Hand Quilting
 - Best Long-Arm Machine Quilting
 - Best Stationary Machine Quilting
 - Best Overall Technical Achievement
 - Judge's Choice
- **Include the stipulation "Not all awards may be given at judge's discretion)**

4. Dates, Addresses, Contact Information

- When and where quilts should be dropped off or mailed
- When and where quilts can be picked up after show
- Mailing instructions
- Insurance Details
- Guild contact Info

5. "All decisions of the judges are final. The guild and/or judges reserves the right to reject any entry or to move a quilt into a different category."

Volunteer Roles and Duties

Sure, judges love the chance to be up close and personal with all those luscious quilts, and the free lunches aren't bad either, but what a judge most appreciates is a judging day that is well-organized and flows smoothly. This type of happy, blissful day is only made possible with the combined efforts of many volunteers who are willing to take on one of the many essential roles needed on that day. These include:

Judging Coordinator:

This organizational whiz, working alone or with a committee, coordinates all the components of judging, including the hiring of judges, obtaining all the physical requirements, setting quilt entry requirements, organizing the collection of quilts and ensuring their safety, organizing the quilts into categories, and overseeing that all jobs are being attended to throughout the judging day. She makes sure that volunteers know what will be expected of them. She prepares well-organized lists of all categories and the quilts that are entered into them, and makes sure copies are given to Ribbon Clerks and Scribes.

Remember how Fred Astaire made dancing look easy? It only looked easy because besides having natural talent, Fred put hundreds of hours of practice into a piece before it ever made it to film. To make judging day work well, the Coordinator puts much time, thought, and planning into the day before it ever draws near. But don't worry - it's usually a thankless job, too!

Award/Ribbon Clerk:

This person must be scrupulous about keeping track of the award winners in each category and making sure the proper ribbons get on each quilt after it is hung. (One clever guild immediately pinned temporary muslin ribbons to each quilt as its award was announced, replacing them with the proper ribbons once they were hung.) As quilts are released from category judging, she must also keep track of which ones are held for consideration for any Special Awards to be determined later in the day. (Again, differently colored temporary ribbons could be pinned to an exposed quilt corner, easily identifying which quilts are to be considered in the Special Awards categories.)

Scribes:

Scribes furiously scribble down the comments that the judges make on scrap paper, and then immediately transcribe them on the official comment form to be handed to entrants. Scribes need to be careful listeners, perfect spellers, legible writers, and quick to ask for clarification on a statement when necessary. It is recommended to have at least three different two-member teams of scribes to give each team the appropriate time to record and transcribe comments, changing teams as each new quilt is being judged.

Stackers/Fanners/Readers/ HOLDERS:

Stackers and **Fanners** must be “fan”-atical about folding and unfolding quilts in a consistent manner. Each quilt in a category must be stacked flat, one on top of each other in descending entry number, on the surface of adjoining cafeteria tables, so that their bottom edges are aligned. Then, starting with the quilt on top, each quilt is folded in half so that the bottom edges are reaching to the top edge of the largest quilt. When the judges are ready to evaluate the category, they stand at the bottom edge of the table as the fanners carefully and quickly unfold each quilt one at a time so that the quilts will all lay flat at category’s end. This affords the judges the ability to quickly obtain an overview of all the quilts in the category.

At the beginning of the judging of a category, a designated **Reader** announces to all the category name and number of quilts entered into that category. As each quilt is judged, the reader may also be instructed to read off the entry number and title of the quilt for the benefit of the judges, scribes, and ribbon clerk. Two **Holders** will hold up each quilt at its top corners for a brief time, so that the judges may get a better impression of the design aspect of the quilt.

After each quilt is judged, and determined by the judge to be either “released” or “held,” one of these aides will quickly remove the quilt from the judging table to be refolded (folded right side out if held, right side in if released) and placed appropriately at a “held” table or released for hanging. The volunteer acting as Reader will then proceed with the reading of the next entry number and title, and so the process continues.

As each category of quilts is being judged, another set of Stackers and Fanners is quietly and unobtrusively preparing the next category of quilts on a second set of cafeteria tables.

Other volunteers need to be keeping track of all the quilts that are not currently being judged or those being prepared for judging.

Relief Pitchers:

A few extra volunteers should be on hand to step into any of the positions should people need a break.

General Guidelines for all Volunteers:

Wear no jewelry, pins, earrings, etc., that might snag a quilt.

Wear no makeup, especially lipstick, that might soil a quilt.

Wear white gloves if available when handling quilts.

Wear comfy clothes and shoes.

Work as quietly as possible at all times.

Silence cell phones.

Be competent and observant.

Quietly obtain a replacement should you need a break.

Above all else, keep

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any comments you may hear during the judging process, even
among other volunteers!

Thank You!

Quilt Categories

There should be a careful balance of the expected number of entries and the quilt categories that are available for any given show. If there are too many categories for the number of quilts entered, you might find that nearly every quilt entered is a prize winner ... and the entire process of judging has been rendered quite meaningless.

A small show expecting approximately 50 quilts should not have more than six categories. If a 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and HM were awarded in all six categories, that would total 24 winners, nearly half of all entries and a rather high percentage of award winners. It is up to the quilt show committee to make some well-thought out and difficult decisions on the approximate percentage of awards to total number of entered quilts that would be meaningful and instructive to quilters and showgoers.

Another way of approaching this decision is approximating the expected entries in each category, and narrowing or broadening each category if needed. If you expect more than twenty entries in any one category, you may want to consider breaking it down by size of entry or technique used, keeping in mind that at least four awards are given in any one category. **Please note that it may be helpful to supply more than the minimum number of ribbons so that extras may be awarded if determined appropriate by the judges.**

For instance, let's look at the following suggested entry categories for a show expecting approximately 50 entries. These categories are based on "Use" rather than "Technique Used" or "Quilting Style."

- **Bed Quilts:** Quilts of any size intended for use on any sized-bed, except miniature
- **Wall Hangings:** Quilts of any size intended for decorative use on walls
- **Miniatures:** Scaled-down versions of full-sized quilts. If blocks are used, they must be 4" or smaller along largest side. Largest side of quilt must measure 20" or smaller.
- **Wearables:** Any quilted item intended for use as an article of clothing
- **Domestic Quilts:** Quilted items intended for use in the home other than wall decoration or bed quilt (Table runners, pillow covers, pillows, dolls, placemats, etc.)
- **Group:** Any quilted item made by two or more people.

Quilt Categories (Cont.)

Should these categories be adopted for use, it may quickly become apparent that most of the entries may be clustered in the **Bed** and **Wall Hangings** categories. A decision may be made to further break-down these categories by size, ie. **Large Bed Quilts, Small Bed Quilts, Large Wall Hangings,** and **Small Wall Hangings.** Remember, each category must be clearly defined on the entry form.

As the number of expected quilt entries becomes larger, categories should continue to be broken down (See suggestions on page 7). Also consider the addition of any Special Awards.

It is also perfectly acceptable to have “Judge-Free” or “Award-Free” categories. This is strongly encouraged for any **Juvenile Quilt** categories. Rather than judging quilts made by children, a show may want to award all juvenile entrants with a Participation Ribbon accompanied by a positive written comment. Other Judge-Free categories may include **Antiques, Invitationals,** or **Previous Award Winners.**

The largest quilt shows expect over 400 entries, and may have over thirty different entry categories that sound something like “Bed Quilt, Appliqued, Hand Quilted” or “Wall Hanging, Mixed Technique, Stationary Machine Quilted.” Judging may go on for three days or more. Try to make the entry categories and number of awards meaningful to the number and types of entries you expect.

A Simple Elimination System Comment Sheet:

NACQJ / Judge's Evaluation

Quilter's Name: _____

Quilt Title/Number: _____

1 2 3 HM Special Award: _____

Date: _____

Guild Name/Show: _____

Comments: _____

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This personal evaluation in no way guarantees, stipulates, conifers, or predicts the placement, evaluation, and award status of this quilt in any future show or competition, nor does it meet the requirements of an appraisal to determine monetary value of said piece.

Advantages:

- Quilts are evaluated with similar quilts in categories (Pieced, Applique, Mixed, Art, Modern, Clothing, Other, for example)
- Quilts are ranked within the category (1st, 2nd, 3rd, HMS)
- There still can be more than one quilt in each ranking depending on ribbons provided by guild
- Judges make both positive and constructive comments
- Judges will factor in the Degree of Difficulty, Complexity of Design, and WOW factors of quilts
- No arbitrary numbers used
- Special Awards can still be determined
- “Cream rises to the top”
- Volunteers on judging day learn a great deal!

Disadvantages:

- Entrants may feel comments don't cover every aspect of evaluation
- The quality of comments may vary among judges
- A smaller number of ribbons may be awarded
- Quilts need to be organized into categories before judging
- A special day (usually before hanging) is needed for judging
- Extra volunteers are need to help scribe, fan, fold, move quilts

NACQJ / Judge's Evaluation

Quilter's Name:

Quilt Title/Number:

1 2 3 HM

Special Award: _____

Date:

Guild Name/Show:

Comments:

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A Hybrid Elimination System Comment Sheet

Show:

Quilter's Name:		Quilt Title/Number:						
1	2	3	HM	Special Award:	Could be Improved	Mostly Good	Very Good	Superior
Standard:	Please Note: The number of check marks do not indicate placement and are purely for instructional purposes.							
General Appearance:	Clean, free from bearding, stains, markings, pet-hair, odors. No obvious holes, worn spots, or other obvious problems.							
Comments								
Design:	Visual Impact (does quilt evoke a strong emotional response?)							
	Use of Design Elements (color, line, space, shape, proportion, focal point) and Design Principles (rhythm, emphasis, balance, unity)							
	Fabric Use (scale, texture, hue, value)							
	Quilting Design (is top enhanced and complemented by quilting design?)							
Comments								
Workmanship:	Precision of Piecework and/or Applique (sharp points, precise, bulk-free intersections, stitches are firm and unobtrusive, long lines run straight, smooth curves, no shadowing, puckers, tucks, or wobbly edges)							
	Quilting (consistently-sized stitches front and back, true lines and curves, unobtrusive starts and starts, good tension, uniform amount of quilting over surface, no knots, travelers, pulls, or tucks)							
	Other Techniques (well-handled surface design, embellishments, embroidery, other decorative work)							
Comments								
Finishing:	Binding/Edge Treatment (binding filled to edge, secure, unobtrusive stitching, miters sewn closed, special techniques well-handled)							
	Back (No pulling or tucks, seams well-handled)							
Comments								
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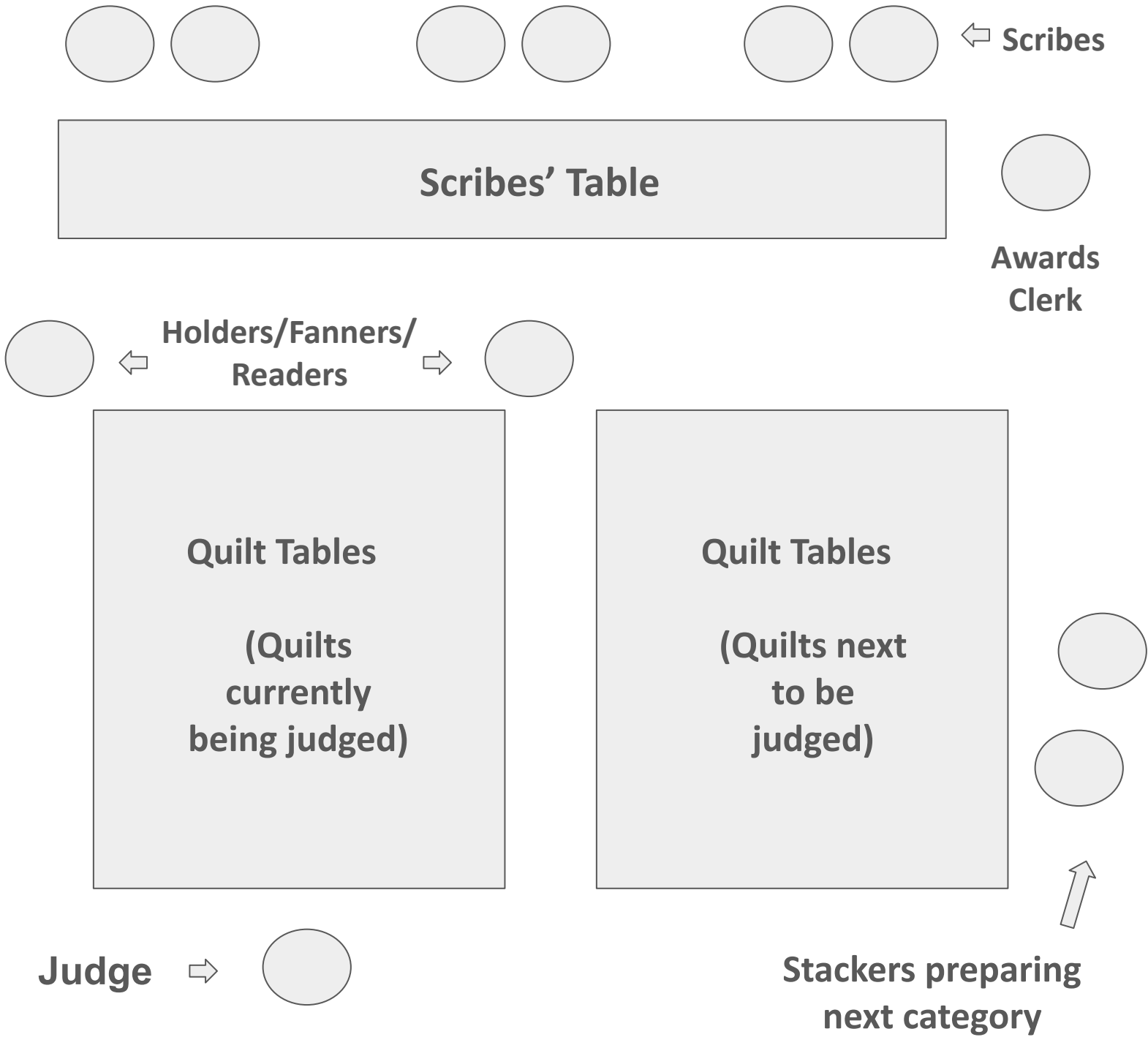
Advantages:

- Entrants get feedback on every aspect of evaluation without meaningless numbers and whether or not judges' comments are helpful
- Quilts are evaluated with similar quilts in categories (Pieced, Applique, Mixed, Art, Modern, Clothing, Other, for example)
- Quilts are ranked within the category (1st, 2nd, 3rd, HMS)
- There still can be more than one quilt in each ranking depending on ribbons provided by guild
- Judges make both positive and constructive comments
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- Special Awards can still be determined
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- Volunteers on judging day learn a great deal!

Disadvantages:

- Quilts need to be organized into categories before judging
- It is still most helpful to have a special day before hanging for judging, although judging a hung show is possible if quilts in a category are hung near each other.
- Extra volunteers are need to help scribe, fan, fold, move quilts if judging is held on a day before hanging.

Suggested Floor Layout:



Tables for placing quilts held for category and/or special awards

