

Guidelines for OFMC Festival Judges

Thank you for agreeing to adjudicate in Oregon Federation of Music Clubs' Junior Festival. We appreciate your time and expertise! Your comments and interactions with our students will make a lasting impression on them, and we thank you in advance for the energy and enthusiasm you will bring!

National Federation of Music Clubs

JUNIOR FESTIVALS – INFORMATION FOR JUDGES

The NFMC Federation Festivals provide musicians of all ages and abilities the opportunity and encouragement for continued musical growth. Performers do not compete against each other, but are rated on individual merits. The Festivals are for musicians at all levels of capability, not just the exceptionally talented.

The purpose of the NFMC Festivals program is to promote study and stimulate interest in American music and composers and to encourage each performer to reach a high standard of musical achievement. The goals are to

1. Encourage interest and involvement in music study
2. Educate participants through evaluation.
3. Motivate them to continue music study at a high level of musical achievement.

Format of Festival

- Students are grouped into classes usually of 4 to 8 students. Classes are structured around skill level and sometimes age. Since students begin their study at different ages, it's not uncommon to find "older" beginners participating in a class with younger students, but at the same skill level.
- Students take turns playing. They begin with their required piece, and then finish with their choice piece. Teachers will have told students to wait between pieces while you write comments. You may need to remind the younger students of this.
- After the last student has finished playing, you address the group as a class to discuss their music. (See Masterclasses below.)

Ratings

We aim for a uniform grading scale across the state. The rating will be an average for the overall performance of two pieces for each student, except for concertos. Students prepare well for Junior Festival, and most will receive a Superior or an Excellent. Occasionally, someone has a bad day and earns something less.

Students are graded on their own merit. Festival is not a competition between performers.

Do not adjust or make personal additions to the official ratings indicated by NFMC at the bottom of the rating sheet.

Do not compare student performances when assigning ratings.

The term “judge” is used even though the event is non-competitive.

Scores can be expanded by use of the plus and minus system, which we encourage you to use.

The judge will give each performer a rating:

- **Superior:** An outstanding performance which is consistently musical, stylistically correct, and accurate. Careful attention is given to dynamics, phrasing, and musical expression. Memorization is secure with rapid recovery from minor slips. Errors do not detract from the participant’s interpretation. A complete performance. (Approximately comparable to academic 91% - 100%*)
- **Superior +** **A performance that is above the norm, showing a total command of the music in both technique and expression.**
- **Superior -** A complete, musical performance with small errors that do not detract from the overall performance. The student may have a few memory slips, but handles and recovers from them, and continues with ease.
- **Excellent** A strong performance that is musical and stylistically correct. The performance shows accomplishment and very good potential, but there are some discrepancies in rhythm, dynamics, phrasing (within the context of the age and level of student), and/or interpretation. Hesitation and/or memory slips slightly detract from the participant’s presentation. A promising performance. (Approximately comparable to academic 81% - 90%*)
- **Excellent +** A strong performance. However, some memory slips have occurred along with errors in rhythm, dynamics, phrasing, or interpretation. Example: A student gives a complete performance, but had to re-start more than once.
- **Excellent -** An overall strong performance that has been marred by significant memory slips or errors in rhythm, dynamics, phrasing or interpretation.

A situation may arise when it is not clear if a student should receive an E+ or an S-. This distinction is important, as S’s and E’s yield a different number of points, and students earn gold cups based upon how many points they attain. If you are truly on the fence between an S- and an E+, we encourage you to give the student the benefit of the doubt with an S-.

- **Satisfactory** - Shows accomplishment; however, there are numerous errors in the performance. Additional work in one of more areas is needed in order to achieve a convincing presentation. Examples: 1) A student takes a piece too fast and her fingers stumble repeatedly over the notes. 2) A student gets lost in the middle of a piece and is able to finish only after several tries and false starts. (Approximately comparable to academic 71% - 80%*)
- **Fair** - Some positive aspects in performance and preparation are present but severe deficiencies in fundamentals (for example, rhythm, notes, memory, etc.) are also apparent. Not fully ready for performance. (Approximately comparable to academic 61% - 70%*)
- **Needs improvement** The participant is obviously poorly prepared and not ready to perform. (Approximately comparable to academic 60% or less*)

* Please note: NFMC ratings are not tabulated using percentages or through the use of any other numerical method of calculation. The above percentages are only given as general guidelines to provide judges with an analogous example to better understand the scope of the ratings used by NFMC.

Class Considerations – Significance of evaluation:

- **PP to P4** To 1) Encourage 2) Motivate 3) Educate
- **E1 to Medium** To 1) Motivate 2) Encourage 3) Educate
- **MD1 and above** To 1) Educate 2) Motivate 3) Encourage

Adjudicators should take into account a participant's age in such developmental skills as rhythm and expression. Older students should not be penalized for their age if at beginning levels. Rate performers in terms of what can reasonably be expected at their class/age level and in the event entered.

Memorization

- Memorization is required of junior entrants in most piano solo and concerto events. Each instrument has its own guidelines. Consult the Festival Bulletin for details on each event.
- Specially Capable Musicians may use scores. Festival chairmen will advise judges in this situation.
- Entrants in piano ensembles may use scores.
- *If an entrant fails to meet the memorization requirement for one or both pieces, they may perform for comments only. No points will be earned, but the student will be able to receive feedback for what they have accomplished. (per NFMC Bulletin)*

Choice of Material Required and choice compositions must represent the same level of musicianship.

Rating Chart - The rating chart is to be filled in with checks and minuses. These checks and minuses will support the assigned rating. Indicate specific strengths and weaknesses by using as many of the rating sheet categories as appropriate.

Written Comments Written comments must support the assigned rating. They should be specific and not too wordy and should be tailored to the age of the student. Always mention positive aspects of a performance while giving constructive criticism and suggestions for improvements.

For example, for a score of Excellent, the written comments might include, "I heard legato in measures 3 through 10 where the music indicates staccatos," and the chart would include a minus for articulation. Or, "Can you make the swells (crescendos immediately followed by diminuendos) indicated in the music, rather than all forte in those sections." That chart would include a minus for dynamics. Or, "You have a wonderful feel for this piece; a few more weeks of slow practice could help your accuracy, memory, and overall ease in performing it." The chart would include minuses for accuracy of notes and memorization.

Personalizing a difficulty can help put students at ease. For example, "I try to remember to always take the time to think of my first phrase, check where my hands are, think of my opening tempo, and breathe before beginning a piece. This helps me start accurately when I'm nervous."

For a score of Satisfactory, you might say, "I could tell that you really worked on this piece, but maybe today just wasn't your day. Perhaps you and your teacher can work on ways to help you recover when your mind suddenly goes blank."

Masterclasses

* Adjudicators are encouraged to hold mini-masterclasses.

* Any constructive comments should be addressed to the entire group. Do not point out any negative comments on a specific performance/student.

- Keep all verbal comments and suggestions concise and to the point.

- Demonstrate at the instrument when appropriate.

- You may call the students up to the instrument, but only as a class, not individually. You may ask the class if there is anyone who wants to demonstrate.

- Avoid singling out a student in a negative context: e.g., “Johnny didn’t have a steady beat.”
- Avoid comparisons. Remember, Festival is not a competition.
- Avoid “This is how it’s done” statements. Instead, perhaps, “You might want to try…”
- Avoid belittling a composition. “This is not well written.” (The student did not write it.)
- Avoid belittling an interpretation. “I think you should interpret this differently.” There are multiple ways to interpret most music, and students should be encouraged to try alternatives to see what works for them. “Have you thought of trying to play this piece a little more slowly?” or, “What would happen if you played this passage very softly?” and, “See what you think when you try different ways to play it.”
- Make comments that are appropriate for the age and skill of students!

Always, always, always tailor your verbal presentation towards positive reinforcement, constructive criticism, and suggestions that serve to **encourage, educate, and motivate**.

Festival Protocol

In rare circumstances, matters may require consulting your Festival Chairman before a grade is given.

1. Student brings music up to the piano. Memory is required for many solo classes.
2. Please review SPECIALLY CAPABLE MUSICIANS (SCM) in the Festivals Bulletin, P.4.
3. Photocopied music in the audition room. Please review SCORES and PHOTOCOPYING PROHIBITION in the Festivals Bulletin, P.4 - 5
4. Repeats and omissions: Please review REPEATS AND OMISSION in the Festivals Bulletin. (This would not affect a student’s rating.) P.6
5. Photography/Video of performances: Not allowed during a performance under any circumstances. If you see it, please notify the area chairman.
6. A parent or a teacher addresses you about a grade. At no time during the festival should a teacher or a parent question you about a grade. If this happens, please simply say that you are not allowed to discuss grades and ask them to speak with the festival chairman. Be diplomatic if it happens.
7. Area chairman addresses you about your grading. This is allowed. However, no other teacher present during the Festival may discuss grading with you or influence how you

grade in any way. You may approach and discuss your grading in general terms with your area chairman if you feel that you need some feedback.

8. There is to be no re-rating of a student due to parents or teacher being unhappy with the rating. The rating you assign is final. However, if something occurred during performance that was outside of anyone's control and both you and the area chairman agree that it affected the student's performance, that student may be allowed to reschedule to play either within your Festival or in another Festival Area (e.g., piano lid slams shut, baby screams, earthquake, etc...)

10. DISQUALIFICATION OF A STUDENT: If you observe something that you feel disqualifies a student (e.g., incorrect choice of literature, photocopies, etc.), do not assign a grade, as all grades are final. Instead, notify the area chairman first. The student may be rescheduled to another time in the current festival, or the teacher may enter the student in a different Festival area at a later date. Ideally, errors that disqualify a student will be caught well before the student performs at Festival. Students are not penalized for teacher errors.