

All About Cosplay Contests

LyddiDesign Costumes



AGENDA

- ✧ Breakdown of different contest types
- ✧ What to expect during judging and how to present your costume well
- ✧ How to be an effective performer
- ✧ What judges commonly look for when choosing winners
- ✧ Picking the right competition costume and construction tips

WHAT IS A CRAFTSMANSHIP CONTEST?

- ✧ A costume contest where scoring is based solely on craftsmanship, not your looks. NOT performance based!
- ✧ MUST be made by you, or the maker must be present at judging. Percentage varies. (60% and up usually)
- ✧ There will usually be a separate judging session, then a catwalk on stage later. Most craftsmanship contests don't allow skits, and if they do, the judges do not score it.
- ✧ So you can fall flat on your face and its totally okay, all the winners have already been decided!



WHAT IS A MASQUERADE?

- ✧ A costume/cosplay contest where scoring is based on performance and usually also craftsmanship.
- ✧ If you choose to be judged for craftsmanship, same rules usually apply as craftsmanship contests. If not doing a performance, you are generally referred to as a “walk-on”
- ✧ If only doing a performance, you won’t have to do any private judging, and can wear costumes not made by you. Looks can be a factor, and being in character is very important.
- ✧ Really pay attention to the rules for things like skit limits, music selection, and rehearsals!
- ✧ Falling on your face might be a bad idea. :3

WHAT IS A CLOSET COSPLAY / LOOK-ALIKE CONTEST?

- ✧ A costume/cosplay contest where you wear “found item” aka closet costumes, and scoring is based on acting/looking like a character and costume creativity.
- ✧ Doesn't really have skits, but you do get a chance to really strut your stuff.
- ✧ Looks matter most here. Acting is even more important- you must be in character!
- ✧ Convince the judges that you ARE the character
- ✧ There are probably no rules for construction. Be creative with your found items! Do not need advanced techniques.



JUDGING



BEFORE JUDGING: CRAFTSMANSHIP

- ✧ READ THE CONTEST RULES! (So many people do not do this)
- ✧ Plan your judging time wisely. Know you can be there on time.
- ✧ Don't wear your costume at the con until judging if possible. (But make sure to give yourself plenty of time to change.) This minimizes mishaps that may happen while wearing it.
- ✧ Plan out the route to the judging room ahead of time. And realize people will try to take your picture on the way there. Having a handler helps.
- ✧ See if you can find out who the judges are. Some cons post this info on their webpages or social media. Who knows, you may know about the judge and what techniques they like. (And please do the right thing by reporting possible conflicts of interest.)



IN THE JUDGING ROOM: CRAFTSMANSHIP

- ✧ You will be presenting in front of a certain number of judges, often in a small room off to the side at the con.
- ✧ You may have total privacy, or there may be other contestants with the same time block watching you nearby.
- ✧ Be prepared for judges to get up close and touch and inspect your costume (hopefully they ask before touching).
- ✧ Also be prepared for them to just stare at you from behind a table. Don't get psyched out, they may be overwhelmed or tired.



IN THE JUDGING ROOM: CRAFTSMANSHIP

- ✧ Have a speech prepared! PRACTICE
- ✧ Know your time limit ahead of time and account for it. You often get 1-3 minutes, which is not nearly enough time.
- ✧ Make a list of key/important points to cover quickly, especially unique factors that show extra effort and creativity. They only know what you tell them!
- ✧ Only focus on the positive. DO NOT talk about mistakes or negative things! This is very tempting, but do not do it! (unless they bring something up or its not possible to ignore, like a mishap at the con)
- ✧ Be confident and proud of your work. (But don't act like a hot shot).
- ✧ Don't ramble about your character's backstory. The costume is the only important thing. IF YOU HAVE EXTRA TIME, describing backstory is a good thing for original characters

PORTFOLIOS

- ✧ For any competitive competition, a portfolio is a good thing to have, and sometimes required.
- ✧ Have a **MINIMUM** of one reference photo (most contests require this) but 3-5 images of different views and angles is best. Do this whether or not you make an actual portfolio.
- ✧ In the portfolio, include progress pictures. This proves you made it, and shows how complex some of your methods may have been.
- ✧ Organize it in a way that the judges can flip through it quickly to get the point. Large images, placed easy to view, use very little text, etc.
- ✧ Include photos of handmade undergarments that they can't see in judging
- ✧ Level up – Include fabric swatches. Bind it in an interesting way that matches your costume.

PORTFOLIOS

✧ Example



PERFORMING



BEFORE STAGE PERFORMANCE

- ✧ READ THE CONTEST RULES! (Seriously!)
- ✧ Plan your skit in advance and practice practice practice! It is obvious when you make something up the day before. Do research on what is popular or overdone. Try to be original. If you do a comedy skit, make sure its something most people will understand. (boo inside jokes)
- ✧ Don't wear your costume before performance if possible for mishap reasons, but also you can spoil the "surprise" factor (some contests actually have this as a rule!).
- ✧ If you have the option, be smart about when you go relative to other skits. Try not to go back to back with a similar skit for example.
- ✧ Plan out the route to staging ahead of time. And realize people will try to take your picture on the way there. Having a handler will help.
- ✧ Make sure to eat and drink water ahead of time! You may be stuck in one place for hours. Bring food/water in your costume or have a handler. Also plan how to go potty in costume (SUPER IMPORTANT).

PERFORMANCE: WALK-ON

- ✧ Walk in character. Are they usually happy? Sad? Walk in a funny way? Over exaggerate. “Perform” without doing a skit.
- ✧ Make sure to pause and pose as your character would.
People want to take pics!
- ✧ Really helps to have music.



PERFORMANCE: SKIT

- ✧ Over exaggerate your acting. If you are doing a voice over, use your body to animate along with your speaking.
- ✧ Try to face the audience more than not.
- ✧ Move around! Don't stand still.
- ✧ Please don't do a forever long costume or set change. The audience will get bored.
- ✧ And please don't go over your allotted time!
- ✧ If you mess up... **FORGET ABOUT IT, IT NEVER HAPPENED.** Most likely know one will know. Having improv skills helps with that.

AWARDS



CATEGORIES

- ✧ There is almost always an award for Best:
 - ✧ Youth (age limit depends)
 - ✧ Novice (new to contests and/or making costumes)
 - ✧ Journeyman (have experience, probably won a couple times)
 - ✧ Master/Craftsman (top level, expert, many awards)
- ✧ Other very common awards: Best Group, Best Performance, Best Craftsmanship, Judges awards, honorable mentions
- ✧ Not as common but might see: Best [insert genre, aka anime, video game], Best Accuracy, Most Original, Best Prop, runner up or 2nd/3rd in other categories
- ✧ Judges can make up awards!

CEREMONY

- ✧ If you win, congrats! Be ready to get on/off stage quickly. Be humble and thank the judges/announcer.
- ✧ Don't go too far or leave early, even if you think you did bad. You never know! Sometimes contests even allow more than one award.
- ✧ Be respectful of other contestants, try not to speculate out loud about who you think will win.
- ✧ Is okay to cheer though!
- ✧ Don't complain in front of everyone if you or your favorite entry didn't win.



**WHAT DO JUDGES LOOK FOR
IN CRAFTSMANSHIP?**



WHAT DO JUDGES LOOK FOR? CRAFTSMANSHIP JUDGING

- ❖ **Execution*** – How clean and properly made is your costume?
- ❖ **Accuracy*** – How close to the original work are you?
- ❖ **Variety** – How many different techniques did you use (properly)?
- ❖ **Use of Materials** – How properly used or clever are your fabrics and materials?
- ❖ **Practicality** – Does the costume make sense as a real life garment?
- ❖ **Durability** – Does your costume look like it won't fall apart at any moment?
- ❖ **Head to Toe** – Did you make an even effort from head to toe?
- ❖ **Proper Undergarments** – Do your undergarments properly attribute to the overall look/shape of the costume? Bonus if you made them yourself!

EXECUTION: CLOTHING

- ✧ Fit is perfect to your body. No sagging, wrinkling, stretching out, etc. Or if it's a baggy garment, the proportions make sense.
- ✧ Seams are clean and properly finished. Garment is pressed nicely, both for anti-wrinkling and for clean looking seams
- ✧ Even, consistent stitching, neat and even hemming
- ✧ Use of interfacing, interlining, and structural layers. Boning, stiff interfacing, etc.
- ✧ Fashion lining to hide seams where it makes sense
- ✧ Proper/clean application of bias tape
- ✧ And seriously, no (visible) safety pins, hot glue blobs, hanging threads, etc!

EXECUTION: ARMOR

- ✧ Smooth and clean, no wrinkles, lumps (if not in source)
- ✧ Primed/sealed properly
- ✧ Proper paint job
- ✧ Weathering for realism
- ✧ Good attachment mechanisms (no parts falling off)
- ✧ No attachment stuff showing (like velcro) unless its part of the source design (buckles/straps)

ACCURACY

- ✧ Goes beyond just “does it ‘look’ like the original”
- ✧ Using screen accurate fabrics, or using fabrics that make sense in the world if you’re having to guess for something animated
- ✧ Color matching
- ✧ Copying details exactly (embroidery, trimmings, appliques)
- ✧ Correct seam placements (applies to real world costumes like film/television)
- ✧ Weathering (i.e. if your character is battle-worn, dirty, etc. would look odd if your costume is pristine and new.)
- ✧ Having as many correct accessories as possible (weapons, jewelry, wig, shoes). Aka accuracy head to toe.

CHOOSING A COSTUME

- ✧ Choose your costume very carefully, and plan well ahead of the contest.
- ✧ Does it have enough variety? Cloth, props, leather, etc.
- ✧ Can you evenly execute every aspect of it?
- ✧ Does it line up with the competition usually seen at this contest?
- ✧ If travelling, how transportable is it?
- ✧ Is it in your budget by the time you're done with everything?
- ✧ Plan out every single step **BEFORE** you start making it. Make sure you keep in mind all execution factors at every step. Don't get lazy and leave mistakes!

QUESTIONS?

