

AHA/BJCP Sanctioned Competition Program

Judge Procedures Manual

Introduction

The American Homebrewers Association (AHA) and the Beer Judge Certification Program (BJCP) have been involved in sanctioning and running thousands of homebrew competitions. The information in this manual is based on many years of experience with homebrew competitions. The intent of this manual is to clarify the roles of judges and stewards in order to accomplish three primary goals for homebrew competitions:

1. To give the entrants valuable feedback on the quality of their brew as perceived by the judges in order to enhance the quality of homebrewing.
2. To provide training for aspiring beer judges.
3. To maintain valid standards of judging.

Judge and Steward Definitions

Judge Director

The judge director manages all judging operations for the competition. The judge director recruits judges, assigns judges to categories, and handles all other judging issues. In many cases, the competition organizer is also the judge director, but for large competitions, it is best to split the two jobs. Once underway, the judge director may be able to judge if he has no knowledge of entries and entrants.

Head Judge

Each flight of judges should have one judge designated as the head judge for that group of judges. The head judge's responsibilities include reviewing all scores and paperwork for accuracy. The head judge should review the style guidelines for the categories being judged and go over the scoring guidelines with the other judges. The head judge should take the lead in discussions to form a consensus on scores. Once judging is completed, the head judge should make sure score sheets, cover sheets, and flight sheets are turned in to the judge director or competition organizer.

Judge

A judge is any participating person whose scores count in evaluating entries. BJCP judges are participants in the Beer Judge Certification Program who have taken the BJCP exam. It is recommended that novice judges be paired with BJCP judges.

Novice Judge

A novice judge is someone relatively inexperienced at judging beer in competition who has been approved to evaluate entries by the competition organizer. Participating in a homebrew competition with experienced judges is an excellent educational opportunity for aspiring judges.

Steward

A steward serves to help the judges. Whenever possible, a steward should be assigned to each flight of judges. Most flights have between two and four judges; three is optimal. Stewards ensure that the judges have all of the judging materials they need including judging forms, pencils, cups, bottle openers, water, and bread or crackers. During the judging, they double check all of the competition forms to be sure they have been properly filled out and that the math has been done correctly.

Judging is an intensive process, and the stewards play a key role in making sure all goes smoothly. Serving as a steward is an excellent means of learning about beer evaluation and is usually the first step in becoming a beer judge.

Guidelines for Conduct

Judges, stewards and other volunteers must maintain uniform standards.

Participant Conduct, Responsibilities, and Expectations

Competition judges and volunteers should behave in a civil and forthright manner. Follow these guidelines to make competition judging fair and fun for everyone involved:

- Be prompt to all sessions.
- Do not become intoxicated during any portion of a judging session or event while serving as a judge.
- Do not use tobacco, perfume, cologne or aftershave in the judging room.
- Speak in a hushed conversational tone to avoid distracting others.

Judges

- Do not judge in a category you have entered.
- Review the style guidelines for the category you are judging before you begin.
- Discuss the general characteristics of an entry, but do not attempt to influence opinions of other judges. Be patient, tactful, and respectful of others. The head judge may approve continued discussions if appropriate.
- Seek guidance from the judge director if you notice another judge practicing any questionable behavior.
- Strive to maintain anonymity of entries.

Novice Judges

Novice judges may evaluate entries only as authorized by the judge director. Follow all other guidelines for judges.

Stewards

- Assist organizers and judges as needed.
- Make sure all required materials are present at the assigned judging table.
- Ensure that everything required for judging, including openers, cups, pencils, score sheets, ice, dump buckets, water, and crackers/bread is at the assigned table prior to the scheduled start for the judging.
- Bring beer for the given flight to the judging table. Double check to be sure all of the entries assigned

- to the given flight are in your box. Arrange the bottles in sequential order, as specified by the judges.
- Remember that some beers will contain sediment—treat them gently.
 - Maintain proper serving temperatures during judging. 50o F is a good temperature for ales. Lagers may be served colder. Use ice as needed to maintain proper serving temperature.
 - Replenish bread, water, cups, forms, etc. as needed.
 - Empty dump buckets as needed or at the request of the judges.
 - Check score sheets, cover sheets, and flight sheets to be sure they have been fully and accurately filled out. Staple the cover sheets to the score sheets.
 - Do not empty opened bottles or discard bottle caps until instructed to by the judges. Some entries may need additional evaluation at the end of the flight.
 - The judges may permit stewards to sample the entries along with them, however, stewards must refrain from attempting to influence the judging.

Preparing For Judging

Before you can evaluate a brew, prepare yourself. Try to be well rested, mentally fresh and eager for the evaluation session. Be aware that some medications may impair your ability to perceive certain stimuli. If you are taking medication that could negatively influence your ability to judge, please inform the judge director that you are unable to judge.

Avoid eating very spicy or greasy foods; applying cologne, perfume or aftershave; and using lipstick or lip balms several hours before you begin a judging session. All of these substances can markedly alter your perception of beer characteristics.

Brush your teeth, gums, and tongue before judging. Try to avoid strong flavored toothpastes, which can alter your perception of beer flavors (you can substitute water and baking soda for toothpaste). Do not use mouthwash or antiseptic rinse before judging.

Be sure not to underrate the less aggressive beer styles while evaluating them. Commercial products used for calibration beers are intended help judges narrow their scoring to within an acceptable range prior to commencing with the judging. Calibration beers are not intended to serve as a standard against which entries should be judged, instead entries should be judged based on the standard set by the style guidelines.

Mechanics of Judging

Judge Director

Allow 2 ½ hours for each session. Experienced judges can evaluate 12 entries in two hours—approximately 10 minutes per entry. Try to limit flights to 12 or fewer entries. Judging more than 12 entries per flight can lead to palate fatigue. Arrange flights so judges evaluate more delicately flavored and lighter-bodied beers first and the most assertively flavored and full-bodied beers last. Select the most qualified judge in each flight to be the head judge. This person is in charge of assigning the consensus score to each entry. Prior to the start of judging, the Judge Director should lead an “judges’ instructions” session, covering the rules and judging procedures for the competition.

Judges

- Head judge should read aloud from the BJCP Beer Style Guidelines all aspects of the styles being judged. Judges should discuss and reach consensus on the guidelines before commencing judging. Judge only according to the style guidelines, regardless of any personal knowledge or opinions of the

styles being judged.

- Protect entries from light and agitation. Help ensure proper serving temperatures are maintained.
- Confirm that the numbers on the caps and labels match.
- Write legibly. Be sure to write your name and judging info at the top of each score sheet.
- Use clear, concise, and meaningful language when filling out the score sheet. Your comments should help the entrant improve upon his/her brewing.
- Inspect bottles prior to opening for fill level, evidence of infection (ring around the neck), or bottle conditioning. Make note of anything unusual. Bottle inspection does not affect scoring.
- Wait until all judges are ready before opening the first entry. Completely judge the entry before moving on to the next. Try to reserve some of the entry in the bottle in case the entry needs to be reevaluated when determining the top entries in the flight.
- Pour in a manner that gives each entry its optimum appearance, keeping in mind some entries may be under or over-carbonated.
- Sniff beer immediately after pouring to ensure proper evaluation of volatile aromatics. If you need to re-evaluate aroma after your initial evaluation, swirl the entry in the cup to release volatiles.
- Evaluate the appearance immediately after evaluating aroma. Make note of head, head retention, color, and clarity.
- Taste the entry after your initial evaluation of aroma and appearance. Attempt to isolate as many flavor components as you are able, making note of each of them and their appropriateness to style.
- After noting your initial impressions of aroma, appearance, and flavor, reevaluate the entry and note any changes or additions to your initial comments, then fill out the overall impression section of the score sheet.
- Once all of the judges at the table have finished filling out their score sheets, they should discuss the entry and their scoring. Keep in mind that some people are more sensitive to certain flavor and aroma compounds (e.g. diacetyl) than others. Scores should be within seven points, and preferably within five or fewer points. Adjust scoring as necessary, and note the final assigned score on the cover sheet and flight sheet. Final assigned scores are not necessarily an average of the individual scores.
- Use French-style bread or unsalted crackers and water between entries to cleanse the palate.
- Remove any offensive smelling entries (e.g. strongly skunked) from the judging table to avoid influencing judging of the remaining entries.
- Judge comments should be fair and constructive. Snide or rude comments on score sheets are absolutely unacceptable. Keep in mind that a “bad” entry could be an unfortunate contamination or inconsistency limited to a single bottle. Your comments should be extensive and aimed at helping the entrant to improve upon his/her brewing.
- Judge each entry as presented. If an entry seems to be entered in the wrong category, consult with the judge director or competition organizer to make sure it was properly sorted and entered in the database before continuing. Do not judge any entry according to a style other than the style you have been assigned. Scores and comments must reflect appropriateness to the style entered.
- Judge each entry to the best of your ability with the information provided. Entry labels and pull sheets often lack information (e.g. specialty ingredients, or base style) that would complement judging because the entrant did not include the proper information or the entry form was illegible. Judge the entry as best you can.
- Judges may not disqualify any entry. Questionable entries should be referred to the judge director or competition organizer for a final decision.

Score Sheet Comments

As a judge, the product of your work is the score sheet that is returned to the entrant. Entrants trust you to provide legible, accurate, and thorough evaluations of their entries. They have paid entry fees and possibly shipping costs to submit their entries. Keep in mind that your comments will not only affect the entrants’ impressions of you, but also of the competition and the competition organizers. Fill out score sheets as you

would have other judges fill out score sheets for your own homebrew.

Judges' comments must include:

- . Evaluations of the sensory aspects of the entry and how those aspects relate to the style guidelines.
- . Comments that are constructive and reflect knowledge of the brewing, fermenting, bottling, and handling processes.
- . Information on how to improve the entry as warranted.
- . Constructive feedback and encouragement for the entrant in all cases.

Judges' comments must **NOT** include:

- . Assumptions about the brewing process or ingredients without qualifying statements, such as "If you used..." or "Did you...?"
- . Derogatory, rude, and/or snide comments.

Supplies for Competition Judging

- . Judge registration forms
- . Score sheets, cover sheets, and flight sheets. Make between two and three copies of the score sheet per entry received, the exact number depends on how many judges are assigned to judge each flight. You will need one cover sheet per entry. Make one copy of the flight sheet per flight, keeping in mind that some categories may require more than one flight. Make extra copies of all competition forms.
- . Beer Style Guidelines. Make one-to-two copies per table. You may choose to only print the portion of the guidelines for the styles assigned to each table. Keep in mind that some categories (Fruit Beer, Spice/Herb/Vegetable Beer, Smoke-Flavored and Wood-Aged Beer, Specialty Beer) will require the entire guidelines for judging.
- . Pencils
- . Staplers and Staples
- . Clear hard plastic cups or "beer-clean" glassware. Plan on at least four cups per entry. Judging cups are often used for water, so you may want to have water glasses on hand.
- . Bottle openers (one per flight) and at least one cork screw.
- . Pitchers for water (one per table).
- . French-style bread or unsalted crackers. You will need a bread knife if using bread and plates or baskets to put bread or crackers in.
- . Dump buckets for excess beer and "gushers."
- . Ice for chilling entries as necessary.
- . Table signs denoting categories being judged at each table.
- . Plastic trash bags (sturdy enough to hold wet trash and ice without leaking).
- . Tables – generally one per category being judged in the largest judging session.
- . Paper towels, rags, or sponges for cleaning