



Judging Etiquette and Responsibilities of an OAAS Judge at the Fair

A Judge: One appointed to make decisions at a contest or competition, an arbitrator to decide, has the prestige to make decisions acceptable to others. To form an opinion or reach a conclusion through reasoning and information.

“Judges are like umpires. Umpires don’t make the rules. They apply them. The role of an umpire and a judge is critical. They make sure everybody plays by the rules. But it is a limited role. Nobody ever went to a ballgame to see the umpire.”

-John Roberts

1) Duties of the Judge:

- ❖ Keep up to date in your area of expertise. Take new courses outside of OAAS. Be aware of any potential problems and stay informed about new and upcoming ideas and crafts. Attend a local craft show and see what is new and popular.
- ❖ Must attend a judging school at least once every 3 years for each Category to maintain their certification in that Category as per the **“Requirements and Information for OAAS Certified and Apprentice Judges”** document. A copy is located on the OAAS website - <https://ontarioagsocieties.com/judging-requirements-and-information/>
- ❖ A good Judge does not allow personal preference to enter into their decision. They maintain a high standard of workmanship and is realistic in their expectations.
- ❖ **Point to consider** - once the judges leave the fair after judging, the fairgoers will only see the exhibits and the results of our work with the placings. If we do not do our job well, the committees will ask questions to justify our work. Our judging ability reflects not only on ourselves, but the Fair that hired us.

2) Accepting the invitation to judge – Preparation & what is next?

The agricultural society or one of its members will contact the judge to ask if the judge is interested and available to judge classes at their fair.

IMPORTANT: A judge must never solicit judging assignments.

Confirm the following information:

- Date, time and location of the judging (fairground address and building where judging takes place);
- Arrival time and where do you report, e.g. fair or secretary’s office, judging location/specific building, etc.
- Categories and classes to be judged
- Contact person at the fair – including name, phone number and/or email
- Confirm they have the correct spelling of your name and correct email, phone number and address
- Meal – depending on the time of judging – is one provided, or should you bring your own food?
- Compensation fee. This will vary from fair to fair. Some fairs may cover mileage.

IMPORTANT: If you are unable to fulfill your judging assignment at the fair, contact/phone the agricultural society **immediately**. Please give the agricultural society as much notice as possible so they can find a replacement.

- Be prepared to suggest a suitable replacement if the Society asks.
 - **NOTE: If you are unable to judge at a fair, DO NOT book a substitute judge unless the fair representative specifically asks you to do so.**
- ❖ You should then receive from the fair a letter (via email or postal mail) with all of the above information included. The fair may ask you to sign a contract and return it. Please return it promptly.
- ❖ A prize book from the fair will be part of the package received, or you will be directed to the prize book link on the fair website.
- ❖ It is the judge's responsibility to obtain and thoroughly read the fair's prize book and all its rules, and ask the fair for clarification if you have any questions. Be sure to also review the OAAS Judging Standards before judging at a fair. Be familiar!
- ❖ If a judge is planning on working with an apprentice judge, the judge must confirm and ask permission of the agricultural society prior to the fair.

3) Arrival at the Fairgrounds – Judging day arrives!

- ❖ Arrive early on the day of judging – at least 30 mins **unless stated otherwise in your agreement with the fair**, report to the location indicated and confirm what area(s) you are there to judge.

If the fair is paying mileage, the fair secretary would appreciate receiving the mileage at this time. That way, the cheque can be ready at the end of the judging. There might be a coffee break or lunch served, and/or time to talk with the directors or other judges. Each fair will be different.

- ❖ Be courteous and considerate to fellow judges, agricultural society committee members and exhibitors.
- ❖ **Dress Code:** Certified and apprentice judges are representing the OAAS and are expected to present a professional appearance while judging. If you will be working, speaking with, or presenting reasons to the general public (known as Public Judging), it is particularly important that you are dressed professionally.
- Be well-groomed and dressed appropriately for the classes you are judging
 - No shorts, tank tops, sweatpants, yoga pants, baggy T-shirts, etc.
 - Wear comfortable shoes, appropriate to the facility or building you will be working in. Dress in layers! Prepare for any environment or weather.

Category-specific attire

- **Food/Culinary Arts:** dressed in white smock or full apron, no nail polish and have controlled hair or a hair net.

- **Quilting/Needlecrafts/Crafts/Sewing/Knitting/Crocheting/Antiques/Photography/Woodworking:** dressed in white smock or full apron. (A white jacket, blazer, sweater or top is also acceptable).

NEW – White gloves are required for any classes that involve items made from fabric, yarn, wood, and for some antiques, such as quilts, sewing, needlecrafts, knitting/crocheting, and wood crafts without finishes, as well as fragile antique documents, among others.

IMPORTANT: Be aware of jewelry, especially rings, while judging knitting, crochet, wood crafts, antiques or other items that could be damaged.

- Avoid using hand lotion or perfumes, as they may transfer to the exhibits.
- ❖ Prepare and carry a fully stocked Judge's Kit.

4) Judging – Let's get started!

- ❖ All cell phones and electronic devices must be turned off before judging begins and remain off until all judging is completed.
- ❖ Do not smoke or vape, eat, chew gum or drink any beverages other than water while judging.
- ❖ Be respectful of people's work. Offer positive and constructive feedback.
- ❖ OAAS **strongly recommends** that Judges with any food allergies or any food-related health issues refrain from judging food items. If you choose to do so, you do so at your own risk.
- ❖ Judge must be knowledgeable of the **OAAS Judging Standards Handbook** and must follow those Standards and not their personal preference in judging decisions.
- Judge's decisions should be made with priority given to individual fair/committee policies and rules in their prize book.
The only exception is for Provincial Competition classes, and the rules listed on the OAAS website must be followed.
For example, judges should abide by the fair rules/standards, not the OAAS Provincial Competition rules for quilt measurements in disqualifications for fair classes. The Provincial Competition rules must be met for any quilts to be considered for the District/Provincial Competition.
- ❖ Items should be clean, freshly laundered if they have been worn or used and free from distinct /strong odours (i.e. smoke, moth balls, excessive fabric softener, etc. **NOTE:** Some fairs specify that items must be new. Otherwise, the items should have been disqualified by the Committee. If they haven't been disqualified, the Judge should discuss with the committee, disqualify and note the reason on the back of the tag and notify the Convenor.
- ❖ Disqualify all entries not complying with the prize lists.
IMPORTANT: If this action is necessary, **always take the time to put a note of explanation on the back of the tag** for all disqualifications and discuss with the committee and/or the Homecraft Director.
- ❖ You must be able to support your decision with substantial reason if asked.

- ❖ **Always** offer constructive criticism whenever possible. A small legible note printed in pencil by the judge on the back of the tag means a lot to an exhibitor.
- ❖ **DO NOT LET COMMITTEE COMMENTS INTERFERE WITH YOUR DECISION.**
- ❖ If there is a class that you have difficulty judging, ask the opinion of another judge.
- ❖ If you finish judging early, ask the Committee Chairperson if assistance is required in another area. You may not be qualified to make the final decision, but you can help narrow the entries in each section.
- ❖ When judging is completed, the Judge should sign the Judging book stating the placements of the winners. It is at this time the judge should receive their payment before leaving the fair. Depending on the fair, the judge may be asked to return to the fair office to collect their payment.
- ❖ If requested by the committee, judges may give assistance to Fair Directors by suggesting new classes or sections or ones that should be omitted or combined.
- ❖ In order to remain impartial, it's strongly recommended that a judge does not accept judging jobs in areas where they and their immediate family live.
- ❖ **Public judging:** When asked to judge in public, be prepared to explain the criteria for judging and your reasoning for placings. Explain any unfamiliar terms. You must be able to support your decisions.

5) **Apprentice Judges**

- ❖ Apprentice Judge must have successfully completed at least 1 (one) OAAS Judging School **in EACH Category** that they wish to become certified **PRIOR** to apprenticing for that Category
- ❖ After completing the corresponding judging school, the person must apprentice **in EACH Category** with at least 3 (three) different OAAS Certified Judges at no less than 3 (three) different fairs with hands-on experience, helping to make decisions on winners.
- ❖ Apprentices should endeavour to network with certified judges at judging schools to let them know you are interested in apprenticing and the Categories you are interested in.
- ❖ It is the apprentice's responsibility to contact judges to set up apprenticeships. Judges may contact apprentices.
- ❖ Apprentices **SHALL NOT** contact agricultural societies to set up an apprenticeship, as it is up to each judge if they wish to accept apprentices and/or whom they apprentice.
- ❖ An apprentice may contact agricultural societies to ask for the judges' names for specific categories so the **apprentice can contact the judge regarding apprenticing**.
- ❖ If a judge is planning on working with an apprentice judge, the judge should confirm and/or ask permission of the agricultural society prior to the fair.

- ❖ It is the expectation that a Certified Judge will work with one Apprentice Judge in each Category and the associated classes. They may work with a different Apprentice in a different Category.
- ❖ The Apprentice Judge is a volunteer who works with a paid Judge to learn and enhance their judging skills and techniques, but does not have the final authority to select the prize winners.
- ❖ The Apprentice Judge should realize that there will be no remuneration or payment, but if lunch is provided for the judges, the society may wish to include the Apprentice.

6) Judges' Kit Checklist

Certified and apprentice judges are responsible for carrying these items when attending fairs to judge.

A good idea is to keep these items in a kit at all times and have them ready for use.

Homecrafts - Culinary

- white smock/apron
- disposable gloves
- plastic cutting board
- bread knife
- pie lifter
- jar/bottle opener
- sharp knife
- multiple plastic forks, spoons
- paper plates
- lemon-based drink or water
- waxed paper
- scotch or masking tape
- twist ties
- small plastic pail
- plastic garbage bag
- paper towels
- disinfectant wipes
- tea towel
- clip board or folder
- pencil, eraser and sharpener
- paper for notes
- sticky notes
- band aids
- current OAAS Homecraft Judging Standards Manual
- facial tissues
- hand wipes
- paperwork to be signed by Fair committee to say that you have completed the judging assignment

Homecrafts – Non-Culinary

- white cotton gloves, i.e. handling quilts, sewing, needlecraft, knitting/crocheting or other items made from fabric or yarn, wood and also delicate antique linens and antique documents, etc.
- white smock/apron (may include white blazer, top, blouse, sweater or jacket)
- tape measure or ruler (extra-long tape measure suggested for quilt judging)
- magnifying glass with a light
- small safety pins
- scotch or masking tape
- paper for notes
- pencil, eraser and sharpener
- Clipboard or folder
- sticky notes
- band aids
- dark piece of material 24 x 24" (40 x 40cm)
- white piece of material 24 X 24" (40 x 40cm)
- current OAAS Homecraft Judging Standards Manual
- small calculator
- facial tissues
- hand wipes
- paperwork to be signed by the Fair committee to say that you have completed the judging assignment

Agriculture and Horticulture

- white smock/apron
- tape measure or ruler
- sharp knife
- magnifying glass
- paper plates
- twist ties or light twine
- small plastic pail
- plastic garbage bag
- paper towels
- scotch or masking tape
- paper for notes
- pencil, eraser and sharpener
- clip board or folder
- sticky notes
- band aids
- white piece of material 24 X 24" (40 x 40cm)
- current OAAS Agriculture and Horticulture Judging Standards Manual
- facial tissues
- hand wipes
- paperwork to be signed by Fair committee to say that you have completed the judging assignment