

# Smithville Fiddlers' Jamboree Contestant Rules and Regulations

The Smithville Fiddlers' Jamboree exists to perpetuate traditional Appalachian and Old-Time music, while recognizing the Bluegrass influence on our mountain music culture. This is an Old-Time Appalachian Festival, and therefore, old-time rules will prevail.

*Revised June 2019*

## THE COMPETITION

The Competition consists of Preliminary Events throughout the day, during which each contestant will either play one tune or dance one time. The top three contestants will return that evening after the Preliminary Events are finished to compete in the finals. Each contestant will perform one song during the finals (with the exception of the Junior and Senior Fiddle categories, the Band categories, and the Fiddle-off...see below). Contestants who register first will perform last in both the preliminaries and the finals.

## PLEASE NOTE

The commercial use of any portion of the Jamboree program by film, video or audio is strictly prohibited by law without the written authorization of the Jamboree Board.

## PARTICIPANTS

All amateur musicians and dancers are invited to participate - no professionals please! *Professional Musician Guidelines:* We consider professional musicians as those who play regular or select dates with nationally recognized bands well known to the industry. Nationally-recognized bands are those who have commercial recording contracts, receive regular air play on popular radio stations, etc. To maintain the integrity of our festival and the bluegrass industry, you should consider yourself a professional musician as well if you meet these criteria.

The Jamboree Coordinator, Officers, Board members, committee members and entertainers paid by the jamboree may not compete in the competition.

## I. GENERAL GUIDELINES:

1. Electric amplification, drums, or any percussion instrument (other than the hammered dulcimer) will not be permitted to enter or be used as a back up for the contestants. Also, no taped music is allowed in any category.
2. If a competitor plays the same song in the Preliminaries and Finals, a point deduction will be assessed.
3. In the "individual performer categories" each contestant may perform unaccompanied, or accompanied by no more than 2 instruments. The accompanists shall not double the melody line with any contestant. With the exception of the Flat Top Guitar category, accompanists must play a different type instrument than the contestant.
4. The integrity of each competitive category will be protected, and each contestant will be responsible for entering the correct and appropriate category. A contestant may enter each category once.
5. The decision of the Judges will be final.
6. Contestants winning a category for two consecutive years must sit out one year before competing again.
7. The Smithville Fiddlers' Jamboree reserves the right to make changes at any time.
8. Vocals are not permitted in any instrumental category.
9. Broken performances (false starts, sound system problems, instrument failure, environmental difficulties, etc...) may be replayed or questioned only with the express permission of the judges.
10. If a string breaks during the competition, the contestant will have the option to continue or stop at that point. If the tune is completed, it will be judged as played. If the contestant stops play, he/she will be allowed to begin again with that tune and complete his/her program without penalty. A reasonable amount of time will be allotted for a string replacement. If another instrument is available and given to the performer to continue, that will be allowed.
11. Contestants must remain behind or beside the stage entrance until they are called. Practicing near the judging area will not be permitted.
12. A contestant's failure to appear after three (3) calls to the stage will result in disqualification. It is the contestant's responsibility to hear the event called from the stage.
13. Clowning or showboating may result in loss of points.
14. In the event of a tie, a replay will be necessary.
15. A medley of tunes is NOT acceptable.

16. The Jamboree Board reserves the right to reduce prize money if too few contestants register.
17. Because of the varying number of participants in each category, time limits may sometimes be necessary. Please check rules on your event.
18. In all categories, you must play a complete tune to be awarded prize money even if the field is limited to 3 entries. Judges may not award prize money if participants are just filling category.
19. Unsportsmanlike conduct will not be tolerated. This is a family friendly event. Cursing, swearing, or any unsporting act can result in removal from the festival and a ban from entering the following year.

## II. SPECIFIC GUIDELINES:

### 1. Old-Time Appalachian Folk-Singing (solo only)

Maximum of 3 minutes. Event will be timed. Violation of time limit will result in deduction of points on score. Only Old-Time Appalachian Folk songs may be sung. Newer songs may be disqualified. Contestants will be judged on vocal ability, not instrument skills.

### 2. Junior Clogging (ages 13-39)

Emphasis on rhythm, timing, energy, appearance of dress, expression, and authenticity. Shoes must be worn. This is NOT a restricted dance. Dancers will dance only one time in both eliminations and finals.

### 3. Junior Buck Dancing (ages 13-39)

Emphasis on feet as well as rhythm, timing, energy, appearance of dress, expression and authenticity. Foot, arm, and upper body movement should be limited. The feet should not be higher than 6" off the floor during the entire dance performance. Arms should not be flounced but should be held loosely at the sides of the body, keeping the head and shoulders as level as possible. Shoes and taps must be worn.

### 4. Old-Time Appalachian Folk-Singing (duet, trio, quartet)

Please refer to Rule # 1. Emphasis on harmony. Contestants may only enter this category once.

### 5. Dobro (resophonic) Guitar

Emphasis on clarity of tone, rhythm, timing and style. Finger picking only, no flat picking permitted.

### 6. Mountain Dulcimer

Traditional style of playing with noter and pick is encouraged in keeping with the Appalachian theme of the contest, but not mandatory. Emphasis will be on sound, rhythm, timing, tuning, and execution. Chromatic dulcimers will not be allowed, however the 6 1/2 fret will be accepted. Other 1/2 frets, such as the 1 1/2 fret, will not be allowed.

### 7. Hammer Dulcimer

Only American Hammered Dulcimers will be permitted. No related instruments will be permitted. Emphasis will be on sound, rhythm, timing, tuning, and execution.

### 8. Novelty

Anything novel in keeping with the Old-Time Appalachian theme (jug bands, jug blowing, spoon clacking, washboard, tub, saw, etc.) No recorded music.

### 9. Autoharp

Fingerpicks, flat picks, or bare fingers will all be allowed. Lap style or Appalachian style of holding the instrument is acceptable.

### 10. Gospel Singing (solo only)

A cappella or accompanied by a maximum of 2 instruments. Emphasis on authentic gospel songs. No more than 2 complete verses may be sung.

### 11. Country Harmonica

Use of chromatic or double-reed instruments will not be permitted - single-reed instruments only.

### 12. Old-Time Banjo

Emphasis on authentic mountain style. Picks are not permitted.

### 13. Youth Square Dancing (average age of 7 of the 8 members must be 16 or under)

• Judges will look for square dance routines in keeping with preservation of old style. (not modern, precision dance styles)

- Dancers will be judged according to authenticity, taste, appearance, intensity, energy, rhythm, timing, and overall expression in executing the dance.
  - Dancers will dance one time in both preliminary and final events.
  - Shoes with taps must be worn.
  - Teams will consist of 4 couples (total of 8 dancers).
  - No more than 4 couples will be allowed.
  - Teams will dance to one tune.
  - One appointed Jamboree band will play for ALL teams. Speed should compliment the grace and beauty of the dance.
  - Maximum of 4 1/2 minutes for each routine. Event will be timed. Violation of the time limit will result in deduction of points on the score. Time and Scoring begins when the team begins to dance in unison, continues through dancing routine, and ends once entire team has exited the stage. (warm ups, or anything causing your team's feet to begin to move, even without music, will signal you have begun. So be aware that you are being timed and do not need to warm up on stage...unless it is part of your routine. Dance directors need to exit with the team. To skip around the stage cheering oneself will continue to be considered part of the timed routine.) Please enter and exit in an orderly fashion.
  - Jamboree coordinator will appoint staff to time routines. Judges or committee members will not take heed to advice (other than staff) concerning timing.
  - It is not required, but we ask that dance teams leave the stage, continuing a "slow-down" movement (basic step will work) for your team. Dancing 4 1/2 minutes and stopping at once is dangerous to the heart. Keep your teams healthy and safe.
  - Loud, negative or abusive comments will not be tolerated on the grounds. Always exhibit good sportsmanship.
  - As a courtesy to all performers on stage, as well as the band, we ask that those waiting behind the stage be respectful to others. No practice may take place behind or beside the stage area (due to the noise).
  - Disrespect and poor sportsmanship will not be tolerated. No director, team member, family member, etc...may approach a judge (before, during, or after a performance). Approaching a judge will result in disqualifying your team.
  - No one may dispute the outcome of judge's scores. Judge's scores are FINAL.
- 14. Gospel Singing (duet, trio, quartet)**  
Emphasis on harmony, style, execution, and authentic gospel songs. No more than 4 instruments permitted. No more than 2 complete verses may be sung. No taped music. Contestants may only enter this category once.
- 15. Mandolin**  
Traditional old-time or bluegrass style is permitted. Emphasis on tonal quality, execution, timing, rhythm, and styling.
- 16. Old-Time Fiddle Band**  
One fiddle must be a lead instrument. Emphasis will be placed on Old-Time Appalachian style music. A band member may not play in more than one band in this same event. Failure to comply will result in no score for both groups. You will need to honor the players with clear roots in this tradition. Also judged will be repertoire, style/spirit, and instrumentation. Contestants will play one song in the preliminaries. The three finalists will play two songs: one with vocals and one instrumental only.
- 17. Junior Old-Time Appalachian Flat-Foot Dancing (ages 0-39)**  
All performers will compete individually to the same tune. Shoes must be worn. NO taps on shoes. This event should consist of authentic, old-time dancing in the true "flat-foot style." Emphasis on authenticity, rhythm, timing, and execution. Arms should not be flounced but should be held loosely at the sides of the body. The feet should be kept parallel to the floor and as close to the floor as possible.
- 18. Senior Old-Time Appalachian Flat-Foot Dancing (ages 40 and over)** Please refer to rule #17.
- 19. Senior Buck Dancing (ages 40 and over)**  
Please refer to rule #3.
- 20. Senior Clogging (ages 40 and over)**  
Please refer to rule #2.
- 21. Bluegrass Banjo**  
This tradition emphasizes the three-finger roll and may include "melodic style" and single-string interludes. Resonator-type banjos will be permitted. Emphasis on styling, clarity, intensity, authenticity, and expression. The use of a Scruggs/D-tuners are not permitted.
- 22. Old-Time Junior Fiddlers (ages 13-39)**  
Emphasis on clarity, tone, timing, execution, and adherence to Old-Time authenticity. This includes:  
a. *Authenticity*: the ability to play danceable music in a manner appropriate to the style of the music. The fiddler should have a basic respect for the structure of the tune and the tradition and style of the tune's source. Variation and ornamentation should emphasize the distinctive flavor of the tune, not distract from or obscure it.  
b. *Rhythm/timing*: the ability to set and maintain a steady danceable tempo, with no unevenness, breaks in the rhythm or dropped beats. Extra beats or measures are allowed if they are part of the tune and traditionally played. Dotted notes or syncopation, when appropriate to the tunes, are also allowed.  
c. *Execution, difficulty, tone, and mastery*: the tune's level of difficulty and contestant's proficiency. Notes should be played clearly, on pitch, with good tone.  
d. *Expression/feeling*: the ability to move or "connect" with the audience and judges.  
e. Contestants will play one song in the preliminaries. The three finalists will play two songs: a breakdown and a waltz.
- 23. Flat Top Guitar**  
Emphasis on clarity of tone, timing and rhythm. Flat top or archtop type guitars permitted. Flatpicking, no fingerpicking.
- 24. Contest Fiddle - Neil Dudney Award**  
Contest fiddling is a separate style distinct from old-time fiddling. This more contemporary style includes influences from jazz and swing (includes bluegrass, Texas swing, and performance tunes). The judges will focus on advanced bowing techniques, double stops, slides, hot licks, variations, and innovative arrangements. Trick tunes such as Orange Blossom Special, Listen to the Mockingbird, Mockingbird Hill, or Black Mountain Rag are not permitted.
- 25. Bluegrass Band**  
Bands must have a minimum of 4 members and not more than 6 members. Vocals are optional in the Preliminaries. A band member may not play in more than one band in this same event. Failure to comply will result in no score for both groups. \*Highest marks will be given to bands that creatively and skillfully combine some fundamental essence of the bluegrass music (e.g. repertoire, style/spirit, traditional blue grass vocal harmony, and/or instrumentation.) The contestants are advised to abide by the intention of the event to honor players with clear roots in the bluegrass tradition. Judges will keep in mind the "bluegrass" aspect of a performance with scoring the appropriateness of an arrangement.  
\*\*Will be judged with the following in mind:  
a. *Material selection*: difficulty, taste, authenticity.  
b. *General instrumental musicianship*: rhythm, timing, intonation, expression and dynamics for both solos and overall instrumental blend.  
c. *Vocal performance*: intonation and overall vocal quality for both leads and harmony.  
d. *Stage presence*: entertainment value, showing comfort with the audience and expertise with the music. Contestants will play one song in the preliminaries. The three finalists will play two songs: one with vocals and one instrumental only.
- 26. Old Time Senior Fiddlers (ages 40 and over)**  
Please refer to rule #22 - Junior Fiddler rules. Competitors will play one song in the preliminaries. The three finalists will be asked to play two songs: a breakdown and a waltz.
- 27. Square Dancing**  
Please refer to rule # 13 - Youth Square Dance rules. No more than 4 couples (8 dancers) to a team.
- 28. Old Time Junior and Old Time Senior Fiddlers' Fiddle Off for Grand Championship and the Berry C. Williams Memorial Trophy**  
In selecting the Grand Champion Fiddler ("Fiddle Off") from winners of the Junior and Senior Fiddle competition, each contestant will play three tunes; one hoedown or fast tune, one waltz, and one tune of the fiddlers' choice. The two finalists will draw for position. This is judged on Old-Time Appalachian style. The winner will be asked to play a crowd-pleasing victory song after the award ceremony.

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**For more information on the Smithville Fiddlers' Jamboree, call, write or visit:  
(615) 597-8500 • P.O. Box 83, Smithville, TN 37166 • [www.smithvillejamboree.com](http://www.smithvillejamboree.com)**