



The Southwestern District

SOUTHWESTERN DISTRICT

Association of Chapters Barbershop Harmony Society

OFFICIAL CONTEST RULES

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**SOUTHWESTERN DISTRICT
Association of Chapters
Barbershop Harmony Society**

OFFICIAL CONTEST RULES

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I. PREAMBLE

The Rules set forth here represent a compilation of the original Rules and all amendments, changes, and additions effective as of 1 May 2025. All previous editions of the Southwestern District Contest Rules are superseded. Should any conflict arise between these rules and BHS Contest and Judging rules, BHS Contest and Judging rules shall take precedence. The Southwestern District Representative for Contest and Judging (DRCJ) must approve exceptions to any rules found herein with the concurrence of the Southwestern District President.

The Southwestern District fully supports Everyone in Harmony while valuing the rich traditions of the all-male barbershop society that set the foundation upon which Everyone in Harmony could be built. In addition, The Southwestern District embraces the “E” in SPEBSQSA, and strives to Encourage all barbershop singers to enjoy making harmony with other barbershoppers. For this reason, in 2022 the Southwestern District Board of Directors chose to include gender-based district championship awards along with an overall district championship award for both quartets and choruses. By including gender-based awards, the Southwestern District honors high performance in each ensemble classification and encourages the establishment of ensembles of all gender classifications.

II. GENERAL PROVISIONS

A. Overall Contest Rules

1. Quartet and Chorus Contests held in the Southwestern District shall be conducted as provided in the “Official Barbershop Harmony Society Contest Rules” (found in the Contest and Judging Handbook of the Barbershop Harmony Society), and other provisions of the Contest and Judging Handbook (including Determining Expense Allowance for Members of Judging Panels) EXCEPT as provided in these Rules or otherwise modified by the Southwestern District Board of Directors and House of Delegates.
2. Ensemble classification shall be determined as described in the “Official Barbershop Harmony Society Contest Rules.”
 - a. **Gender Identity:** members are classified by their individual self-identification in the Society Member Center database.
 - b. **Men’s:** all singers in the ensemble identify as male. The gender identity of the director is not relevant to chorus classification.
 - c. **Women’s:** all singers in the ensemble identify as female. The gender identity of the director is not relevant to chorus classification.
 - d. **Mixed Harmony:** any ensemble in which the singers identify as a combination of gender identities that are not all-male or all-female.
3. All contestants, including directors, in any District or Division Contest must have purchased a full registration package for that Convention.

B. Leadership Responsibilities

1. The DRCJ is responsible for the judging program of the District and for the conduct of all contests. As such, the DRCJ shall work closely with the District Director of Events (DE), the Convention Chairman, the District Board of Directors, and the Panel Chair of each judging panel.
2. The DE shall coordinate all conventions held within the District in accordance with the SWD Convention Manual
3. The DRCJ shall draw the order of appearance, by lot or other method approved by District Board of Directors, for contestants in all sessions. The draw for a Finals session may, at the discretion of the DRCJ, be “live” (from the hat) or may be taken from the computer program used by the Panel Chair.
 - a. The draw for orders of appearance for the first-round sessions shall be made by the DRCJ not later than 25 days prior to the first contest of the convention.
 - b. For chorus sessions, the host Chapter may choose to sing first or last or be included in the draw. The DRCJ will adjust the draw for any such request.
 - c. All other choruses in the session will be drawn either randomly or by the number of riser sections the chorus requests.
 - i) If by number of riser sections, the draw will be by the choruses requesting the fewest number of sections and proceed to the choruses requesting the greatest number of sections.
 - d. The official draw may be modified by the DRCJ in order to separate quartets and choruses which have members in common or for any other reason deemed necessary by the DRCJ.
4. The announcement of contest winners will be made by a person named by the DRCJ in consultation with the District President. Should there be a lack of consensus, the decision of the DRCJ, or in his absence the Panel Chair, will prevail. (The intent is that a person who will bring excitement and the proper sense of reward to the occasion be selected to make the announcements. It may properly be a District official, the Master of Ceremonies, or a member of the judging panel.)
5. The DRCJ shall post these Rules on the SWD Website and/or the Southwestern District C&J Home Page with links from one to the other. Revisions to these Rules shall be annotated in the current Official District Publication.

C. Contest Entry

1. Entering a contest:
 - a. Eligible quartets and choruses enter the District and Division contests using the entry process through the means designated by the Society Contest and Judging Committee (SCJC).
 - b. Help and tutorials for the current Contest Entry system are available at <https://www.barbershop.org/contests/how-to-enter>.
 - c. Entry must be completed no later than midnight Central Time, 30 days prior to the start of the first contest of the convention. The DRCJ may, at his/her discretion, change the entry deadline date in which case, all entries must be completed no later than midnight Central Time on the published deadline date.
 - d. **Late Entries:** The DRCJ may, at his/her discretion, make an exception and accept an entry after the deadline due to extenuating circumstances.

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2. Quartets and choruses may request to enter any first-round convention session using the “Scores For Evaluation Only” option. Entering under this option means the contestant:
 - a. is scored by the judges, receives a Contestants Scoring Analysis, and receives regular Evaluation Sessions;
 - b. is not eligible for any awards and cannot qualify to proceed to a next-level contest; and
 - c. will not appear on the Official Scoring Summary except as a footnote showing participation.
3. The DRCJ at his/her discretion may allow quartets to enter the final-round session using the “Scores For Evaluation Only” option.

III. AWARDS AND QUALIFIERS

A. General

1. All members of any quartet or chorus competing for any award or qualifier must have a fully paid for registration for the convention at which that group is competing. Failure to have a registration is grounds for disqualification for the group.
2. Unless otherwise prohibited by “Official Barbershop Harmony Society Contest Rules,” a member may compete in more than one quartet competing for District Quartet and Division Quartet awards.
3. With the exception of International Quartet Preliminaries, no quartet may compete in more than one District each year and may not compete in a District Contest other than the one to which at least one of its members are assigned. (See Article 1, “Official BHS Quartet Contest Rules” for eligibility when members belong to Chapters in more than one District.)
4. The District Quartet Contests shall be open to all quartets, provided each quartet competing in a District Quartet Contest is registered with the Society Office and all members are current dues paying members of the BHS.
 - a. At least one member of the quartet must be a member of the Southwestern District.
 - b. All members of the quartet that are members of the Southwestern District must be current with district dues.
 - c. Members of a Next Generation Quartet are exempt from BHS and District membership requirements provided they are competing only for the Next Generation Quartet award.
5. Any championship quartets of prior years, regardless of ensemble classification, will not be eligible to compete again for the same type of district-level championship that it earned previously.
 - a. This rule does not prohibit organization and entry of a new quartet of not more than two members of the championship quartet, provided entry is under a different quartet name.
 - b. Any quartet that has won the Men’s, Mixed Harmony, or Women’s District Quartet Award but has not won the District Overall Quartet Award is still eligible to compete for the District Overall Quartet Award.
6. International champion choruses are not eligible to compete for any District Chorus Awards of any ensemble type for the next two International Chorus Award cycles (typically two years) following the year in which the chorus won the international championship.
7. A district chapter may have more than one chorus as long as each chorus is in a different ensemble classification (except Overall) and each chorus meets the BHS rules regarding shared members in a chorus.

B. District Quartet Awards and Qualifiers

1. District Quartet Award

1. The Southwestern District shall annually conduct a contest for a Men's, Mixed Harmony, and Women's District Quartet award.
2. In addition to the gender-based awards, the Southwestern District shall annually conduct a contest for an Overall Quartet award.
3. Quartets can enter both a gender-based contest and the overall contest unless the quartet is not eligible due to being a past champion in that classification.
4. Quartet Champions prior to 2022 are not eligible for either the District Men's Quartet Award or the District Overall Quartet Award.
5. The District Quartet Contests shall be conducted in a Semi-Finals and a Finals sessions. The Finals session shall consist of the highest scoring quartets entered in any of the District Quartet Championship sessions (gender-based and overall). The number advancing to the Finals session shall not exceed ten (10) SWD quartets in number unless otherwise directed by the DRCJ in consultation with the Panel Chair.
6. Champions and awards:
 - a. The highest-scoring quartet in the District Quartet Contest shall be designated the Southwestern District Overall Quartet Champion regardless of ensemble classification. The Champion will receive individual awards and custody for one year of a traveling trophy.
 - b. For each ensemble classification, the highest-scoring quartet shall be designated the Southwestern District Quartet Champion for that ensemble classification. If no ensemble for a classification advances to the Finals session, the award will be based on the scores of the Semi-Finals session only. The Champion in each ensemble classification will receive individual awards and custody for one year of a traveling trophy.
 - c. It shall be the responsibility of the District Champion quartet to ensure the traveling trophy is returned before the start of the next District quartet contest.

2. Internationals Quartet Qualifier

1. Per Article II.C.1 of the "Official BHS Quartet Contest Rules," quartets wishing to qualify for the International Quartet Contest are allowed to compete in up to two (2) International Preliminary Contests in a year with no restrictions on the district they can compete in. The Southwestern District shall make every effort to accommodate quartets wishing to try to qualify for Internationals, but the DRCJ may limit the number of competitors at his/her discretion due to time or financial constraints.
2. The Internationals Quartet Qualifier shall be conducted in a Semi-Finals and a Finals sessions. The Finals session shall consist of the highest scoring quartets entered in the International Quartet Qualifier contest from the Semi-Finals session and shall not exceed ten (10) SWD quartets in number unless otherwise directed by the DRCJ in consultation with the CA.

3. District Novice Quartet Award

1. The District Contests shall award a Novice Quartet Champion to the highest-scoring eligible quartet (if any) regardless of ensemble classification. A Novice Quartet is any quartet with two or more members who have never sung in a quartet contest at that or a higher level, including using the "Score For Evaluation Only" option. Singing at a contest in another district of the BHS is included when determining novice status. Singing in a barbershop quartet contest with any

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organization, not just the BHS, is also considered as having sung at a quartet contest and will be considered as having sung at a district level event. This means:

- a. singing in an International Preliminary Quartet Contest is considered, for Novice Quartet eligibility purposes, to have sung at both Division and District levels;
- b. singing in a contest "Score For Evaluation Only" is considered to have sung in that level's quartet contest;
- c. singing in a District Quartet Contest, without having first sung in a Division Quartet Contest (as a substitute, for instance), is considered to have sung at both Division and District levels; and
- d. singing at a non-BHS barbershop contest, including, but not necessarily limited to, Sweet Adelines International, Harmony Incorporated, Mixed Barbershop Harmony Association, BHS recognized Global Alliance organizations, and SPPBSQSUS contest, at any level is considered as having sung at a District level.

4. Next Generation Quartet Award

1. A Southwestern District Next Generation Quartet shall be defined as any quartet with all members of age 25 or lower.
2. Members of Next Generation Quartets do not need to be members of the Society nor of the Southwestern District.
3. Any Next Generation Quartet must be registered with BHS in order to compete for the Southwestern District Next Generation Quartet award. The quartet may be registered as a non-BHS singing community as allowed by BHS. The DRCJ can assist to get the group registered if it is a non-BHS singing community.
4. Members of competing Next Generation Quartets are provided a complimentary SWD Spring Convention registration provided they are competing **only** in the District Next Generation Quartet Contest.
5. The District Next Generation Quartet Contest shall be a single round contest.

5. District Seniors Quartet Award

1. A Southwestern District Seniors Quartet is a Seniors Quartet which has chosen the Southwestern District as its home District in accordance with Article I.A. of the BHS Contest Rules (i.e., at least one member of the quartet is a member of a Chartered Chapter of the Southwestern District); and
 - a. all members of which are at least 55 years of age.
 - b. the cumulative age of the quartet members is least 240 years (average age of 60). These ages must be attained by the time of the Society Senior Quartet Contest at the following Society Mid-Winter Convention.
 - c. The quartet must be registered with the Society Office. Details may be obtained from the Quartet Registry at the Society Office.
 - d. Past District Seniors Quartet Champions are not eligible to compete.
2. The District Seniors Quartet Contest shall be a single round contest.

6. Internationals Seniors Quartet Qualifier

1. The International Preliminary Seniors Quartet Contest shall qualify the District Representative to the International Seniors Quartet Contest held at the next Society Mid-Winter Convention.
2. Qualification for the Internationals Seniors Quartet contest shall be based on current BHS contest rules.

C. District Chorus Awards and Qualifiers

1. District Chorus Award

1. The Southwestern District shall annually conduct a contest for a Men's, Mixed Harmony, and Women's District Chorus award.
2. In addition to the gender-based awards, the Southwestern District shall annually conduct a contest for an Overall Chorus award.
3. Choruses can enter both a gender-based contest and the overall contest.
4. The District Chorus Contests shall be a single round contest.
5. Champions and awards:
 - a. The highest-scoring chorus in the District Chorus Contest shall be designated the Southwestern District Overall Chorus Champion regardless of ensemble classification. The Champion will receive custody for one year of a traveling trophy.
 - b. For each ensemble classification, the highest-scoring chorus shall be designated the Southwestern District Chorus Champion for that ensemble classification.
 - c. It shall be the responsibility of the District Champion chorus to ensure the traveling trophy is returned before the start of the next District quartet contest.

2. Internationals Chorus Qualifier

1. The District's International Chorus Qualifier shall be open to any chorus who desires to compete in this contest, regardless of ensemble classification.
2. Internationals Chorus Qualification shall be determined based on current BHS rules.

3. District Most Improved Chorus Award

1. Each chorus that competed a District Championship Contest, regardless of ensemble classification, during the last District Chorus contest cycle held by the Southwestern District (typically the previous year) is eligible for the District Most Improved Chorus award.
2. The chorus improving the most with a positive increase in score from the preceding cycle's District Chorus Contest, based on raw score comparison, shall be declared the District Most Improved Chorus.

4. District Chorus Audience Choice Entertainment Award

1. The Audience Choice Entertainment Award will be determined by audience vote for a performance package lasting not more than 12 minutes. The performance package will include a minimum of two (2) songs, one of which shall not be included as a contestable song for those choruses entered in other District Chorus contests. This performance package may include any songs of the competing choruses choosing provided they are in good taste. Audience vote will be tallied via a method determined by the DRCJ and the Events Team.
 - a. The performance (time) starts when the chorus is announced and stops when the audience applause begins after the final song.
 - b. Should a competing choruses exceed the allowable 12 minutes, a penalty of:
 - i) 2% of the audience vote for exceeding the time limit up to and including one (1) minute.
 - ii) 5% of the audience vote for exceeding the time limit up to and including two (2) minutes.
 - iii) 10% of the audience vote for exceeding the time limit up to and including three (3) minutes.
 - iv) Forfeit of the opportunity to win the Audience Choice Entertainment award for exceeding the time limit in excess of three (3) minutes.

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2. Choruses choosing to enter the Audience Choice Entertainment Award in addition to any other District Chorus award will perform a maximum 12-minute performance package, which shall include 2 contestable Barbershop arrangements as well as one song not included in their contest set as described above. The chorus shall advise the DRCJ which the songs titles are to be used as the contestable arrangements not later than 2 weeks prior to the contest. Any time penalty will NOT affect the score of the contestable songs.

D. Division Quartet Awards

1. Division Quartet Award

1. Each Division shall have an award for the Division Quartet Champion. The Division Quartet Championship is awarded to the highest scoring quartet entered in the Division Quartet contest regardless of ensemble classification.
2. No quartet may compete in more than one Division Contest each year.
3. Quartets may compete in a Division Contest provided at least one member of the quartet is a member of a Chartered chapter in the selected Division.
4. A quartet may repeat as a Division Quartet Champion.

2. Division Novice Quartet Award

1. Each Division shall have an award for the Division Novice Quartet Champion. The Division Novice Quartet Championship is awarded to the highest-scoring eligible quartet entered in the Division Novice Quartet contest regardless of ensemble classification. A Novice Quartet is any quartet with two or more members who have never sung in a quartet contest at that or a higher level, including using the “Score For Evaluation Only” option. Singing at a contest in another district of the BHS is included when determining novice status. Singing in a barbershop quartet contest with any organization, not just the BHS, is also considered as having sung at a quartet contest and will be considered as having sung at a district level event. This means:
 - a. singing in an International Preliminary Quartet Contest is considered, for Novice Quartet eligibility purposes, to have sung at both Division and District levels;
 - b. singing in a contest “Score For Evaluation Only” is considered to have sung in that level’s quartet contest; and
 - c. singing in a District Quartet Contest, without having first sung in a Division Quartet Contest (as a substitute, for instance), is considered to have sung at both Division and District levels; and
 - d. singing at a non-BHS barbershop contest, including, but not necessarily limited to, Sweet Adelines International, Harmony Incorporated, Mixed Barbershop Harmony Association, BHS recognized Global Alliance organizations, and SPPBSQSUS contest, at any level is considered as having sung at a District level.

E. Division Chorus Awards

1. Division Chorus Award

1. Each division shall have an award for the Division Chorus Champion. The Division Chorus Championship is awarded to the highest scoring quartet entered in the Division Chorus contest regardless of ensemble classification.
2. No chorus may compete outside of its assigned division.

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3. A chorus may repeat as a Division Chorus Champion.

IV. DISTRICT CONTESTS

A. Conventions

1. The Southwestern District shall conduct all contests during the Spring and Fall District Conventions.
 - a. At the request of the DRCJ, the Southwestern District may conduct contests at an event not associated with the Spring or Fall District Convention. Such request must be approved by both the Southwestern District Board of Directors and the SCJC.
2. Each convention will consist of one or more sessions, with each session having contests for one or more awards and or qualifiers. Typically, a convention will have a Quartet Semifinals Session, Chorus Finals Session (or Chorus Coaching Session), and Quartet Finals Session.
3. The Spring Convention shall be held on or about the first weekend in May each year and shall include, but is not limited to, the following awards and qualifiers:
 - a. International Quartet Preliminary Qualifier
 - b. Seniors International Quartet Preliminary Qualifier
 - c. District Seniors Quartet Award
 - d. District Next Generation (Youth) Quartet Champion Award
 - e. Division Novice Quartet Award
 - i) Northeast Division Novice Quartet Award
 - ii) Northwest Division Novice Quartet Award
 - iii) Southeast Division Novice Quartet Award
 - iv) Southwest Division Novice Quartet Award
 - f. Mixed Harmony Quartet BinG Qualifier
 - i) Held as need as a qualifier for the BinG Mixed Harmony contest
4. In addition to the quartet awards and qualifiers, the Spring Convention shall include a chorus coaching Session. The Chorus Coaching Session shall have a performance opportunity either before or after the Chorus Coaching Session, the timing being at the DRCJ's discretion.
5. The Fall Convention shall be held on or about the first weekend in October each year and shall include, but is not limited to, the following awards and qualifiers:
 - a. District Overall Quartet Award
 - b. District Men's Quartet Award
 - c. District Mixed Harmony Quartet Award
 - d. District Women's Quartet Award
 - e. District Novice Quartet Award
 - f. Division Quartet Awards
 - i) Northeast Division Quartet Award
 - ii) Northwest Division Quartet Award
 - iii) Southeast Division Quartet Award
 - iv) Southwest Division Quartet Award
 - g. International Chorus Preliminary Qualifier
 - h. District Overall Chorus Award

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- i. District Men's Chorus Award
- j. District Mixed Harmony Chorus Award
- k. District Women's Chorus Award
- l. District Most Improved Chorus
- m. District Audience Choice Entertainment Award
- n. Division Chorus awards
 - i) Northeast Division Chorus Award
 - ii) Northwest Division Chorus Award
 - iii) Southeast Division Chorus Award
 - iv) Southwest Division Chorus Award
6. The size of the official panel of judges for all district Quartet and Chorus Sessions shall be determined by the DRCJ for each convention. The panel will typically be either a double panel (two scoring judges per category) or a triple panel (three scoring judges per category). The DRCJ shall base the decision on history and expectations of the number of contest entries.
7. Any session including an International Preliminary Quartet Qualifier, Seniors International Quartet Preliminary Qualifier, or International Preliminary Chorus Qualifier requires a minimum of a double panel.
8. The DRCJ shall make a request to the SCJC for the panel size for each convention. The SCJC makes the final determination of the panel size and shall appoint the panel from available qualified personnel.
9. A District Contest recording may be produced if approved by the District Board of Directors.
10. Quartet and Chorus Evaluation and Coaching sessions shall be offered as specified by the DRCJ and/or Administrative Judges. Every possible effort will be made to accommodate competitors sharing members.