

General Rules for All Contests

National Flat Picking Championships

Winfield, Kansas

September 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 2024

******* Contest coordinators may ask you to wear masks backstage. If you wear a mask backstage, you may choose to remove your mask while on stage and replace your mask on your face before leaving the stage. *******

Please note this policy may change as conditions allow.

Contests are open to anyone except those who are performing as a billed or paid entertainer or workshop leader at the 2024 Walnut Valley Festival. Those who have been the First Place Winner within the past **five years** - specifically the years 2019 through 2023 are not eligible to compete in 2024. However, previous winners may enter and win contests which they have not won within the last five years. For example, a First Place Winner in the National Bluegrass Banjo Championship in the last five years may enter and win any or all of the other championships.

Only 40 contestants may compete in each of the International Autoharp, the National Mountain Dulcimer, the National Mandolin, the Walnut Valley Old Time Fiddle, the National Hammer Dulcimer, and the National Bluegrass Banjo Championships. This is the first 40 who answer when their names are called from the chronological registration lists, one-half hour before the contest begins.

Only 50 contestants may enter in each of the International Finger Style Guitar and the National Flat Pick Guitar Championships. This is the first 50 who answer when their names are called from the chronological registration lists, one-half hour before the contests begins.

Contestants **MUST HAVE A VALID / PURCHASED FESTIVAL TICKET** for the day of the contest.

Contestants must play instruments acoustically into a microphone. An instrument's electrical capability cannot be used. You may retune your instrument between instrumental numbers using a portable electronic tuner. BE AWARE that time spent retuning your instrument on stage will be included as part of the recommended Maximum Total Playing time of 5 minutes per round.

Contestants may have one rhythm instrument for accompaniment. It is WVA policy that billed or paid entertainers or workshop leaders NOT ACCOMPANY CONTESTANTS. Contestants will not be allowed to take two instruments on stage. A MEDLEY OF TUNES IS NOT ACCEPTABLE.

In an effort to judge the contest objectively and equally, the following criteria will be considered by the judges and assigned point value in each area (except for fiddle):

40 points – Arrangements & Composition Judges will be listening for the quality of the arrangement, in terms of its difficulty, originality and overall musicality. The same holds true if the contestant is playing his or her own composition.

40 points -- Execution Judges will be listening for how cleanly and fluidly the music is performed. The tempo should be steady and constant. Any tempo changes should be appropriate to the tune. Tuning Counts. Is the instrument in tune with itself and relatively close to concert pitch of A=440?

10 points – Show Value Contestants should also keep in mind how their music might be received by both the general audience and the judges. Exhibit a variety of styles between the two pieces played.

10 points -- Overall Impression Judges want to hear a depth of musical understanding and a mastery of the instrument.

Specific rules for each contest follow. Contestants may register online for the contests or by calling 620-221-3250 and using a credit card. All registered contestants must confirm their registration at the Contest Trailer prior to the time registration closes. WE WILL ACCEPT CONTEST REGISTRATIONS ON GROUNDS UNTIL ONE HOUR BEFORE THE SCHEDULED CONTEST TIME. Order of appearance will be determined by drawing a number one-half hour before the contest begins.

If there are nine (9) or fewer registered, contestants will play three (3) tunes in the first round with a recommended maximum total time limit of eight (8) minutes except fiddle, which will play their three tunes in their recommended seven (7) minute time limit. Judges will place winners without the additional tunes of a second round.

Score cards will NOT be given out.

PLEASE NOTE: The judging room only hears the competing instrument and receives no mix or sound coming from accompaniment or rhythm instrument.

By being on a WVF stage you are giving your permission to have your performance and image livestreamed or recorded (audio, video & still photography) by authorized WVF personnel and contractors. Any appearance or performance on any WVF stage is included. WVA retains the right to use any livestream, recorded audio, video or image to promote the Walnut Valley Festival.

>>> Contestants are not allowed to speak on stage. <<<

Early Registration will close Friday, Sept. 13, 2024 at 5pm CDT.

Registration will Re-Open on Festival Grounds Thursday, Sept. 19, 2024 at 7:00am

International Autoharp Championship

New Start Time!

Thursday, September 19, 2024, 10:00 a.m. Stage IV. Entry Fee is \$20.

MAXIMUM Recommended TOTAL PLAYING TIME of 5 MINUTES per round of competition.

Contestants will be prepared to play four instrumental numbers. No vocals will be allowed. Two numbers will be played in the first round of competition, and the other two in the final round should the contestant be selected as a finalist. Contestants may have one rhythm instrument for accompaniment, but not another autoharp. Tunes may be traditional, bluegrass, folk, classical or old-time country. Special tunings will be allowed (e.g. the diatonic just tuning, etc.); however, the contestant will not be allowed to take 2 instruments on stage. Fingerpicks, flat picks, or bare fingers are all acceptable. Lap-style or Appalachian style playing is acceptable. However, a player is not limited to only these techniques. All brands of chorded zithers will be allowed, including custom-made harps. Any custom-made harp must be within the size of the standard (36-37 string) model acoustic autoharp. Contestants must be registered before 9:00 a.m. September 19, 2024, at the Contest Registration Trailer. Contestants must be present behind the contest stage at 9:30 a.m. to draw for order of appearance and receive final instructions. Winners will be announced and will receive their awards immediately after the contest on Stage IV. The Top Three Winners will play an encore tune during the awards presentations. (See [general rules](#).)

International Finger Style Guitar Championship

Thursday, September 19, 2024, 3:00 p.m. Stage IV. Entry fee is \$20

MAXIMUM Recommended TOTAL PLAYING TIME of 5 MINUTES per round of competition.

PLEASE NOTE: The Walnut Valley Association will be accepting fifty (50) registrations for the International Finger Style Guitar Championship. We Will Accept an Additional Thirty (30) Registrations for a STANDBY LIST in case of cancellations or no-shows. You may register for the Standby list if the primary list is full, on-line or by calling the office at (620) 221-3250 and paying registration fees with a credit card. You may still sign up at the Festival, to be added to the end of the standby list at the Contest Registration Trailer which opens Thursday, September 19, 2024, at 7:00 a.m.

Contestants will be prepared to play four instrumental numbers. Two numbers will be played in the first round of competition, and the other two in the final round should the contestant be selected as a finalist. FLAT PICK AND SLIDE TECHNIQUES ARE **NOT** ALLOWED. HOWEVER, CONTESTANTS MAY PLAY ANY OTHER STYLE OF MUSIC. Contestants may use thumb and finger picks. NO FLAT PICK.

Standard / traditional acoustic 6-string or standard / traditional 12-string arch top or flat top guitars with either steel or nylon strings are allowed. Special tunings will be allowed. However, the contestant will NOT be allowed to take two instruments on stage. Up to One Capo may be used but is not required. It may be applied to any, or all of the strings on the guitar. Contestants must be registered before 2:00 p.m. Thursday, September 19, 2024 at the Contest Registration Trailer, and be present behind the contest stage at 2:30 p.m. to draw for order of appearance and receive final instructions. Winners will be announced and will receive their awards immediately after the contest on Stage IV. **The Top Three Winners will be required to play in a Friday night performance on Stage I.** (See [general rules.](#))

National Mountain Dulcimer Championship

Friday, September 20, 2024, 9:00 a.m. Stage IV. Entry Fee is \$20

MAXIMUM Recommended TOTAL PLAYING TIME of 5 MINUTES per round of competition.

Contestants will be prepared to play four instrumental numbers. Two numbers will be played in the first round of competition, and the other two in the final round should the contestant be selected as a finalist. All 3-string, 4-string or 6-string mountain dulcimers either hourglass, teardrop, or rectangular shaped are allowed. Contestants may have one rhythm instrument for accompaniment but not another mountain dulcimer. Contestants must be registered before 8:00 a.m., Friday, September 20, 2024, at the Contest Registration Trailer and be present behind the contest stage at 8:30 a.m. to draw for order of appearance and receive final instructions. Winners will be announced and will receive their awards immediately after the contest on Stage IV. The Top Three Winners will play an encore tune during the awards presentations. (See [general rules.](#))

National Mandolin Championship

Friday, September 20, 2024, 1:00 p.m. Stage IV. Entry Fee is \$20.

MAXIMUM Recommended TOTAL PLAYING TIME of 5 MINUTES per round of competition.

Contestants will be prepared to play four instrumental numbers. Two numbers will be played in the first round of competition, and the other two in the final round should the contestant be selected as a finalist. Contestants must be registered before noon Friday, September 20, 2024, at the Contest Registration Trailer and be present behind the contest stage at 12:30 p.m. to draw for order of appearance and receive final instructions. Winners will be announced and will receive their awards immediately after the contest on Stage IV. The Top Three Winners will play an encore tune during the awards presentations. (See [general rules.](#))

Walnut Valley Old Time Fiddle Championship

New Start Time!

Friday, September 20, 2024, 6:15 p.m. Stage IV. Entry fee is \$20.

MAXIMUM Recommended TOTAL PLAYING TIME of 7 MINUTES for the First Round of competition.

TOTAL PLAYING TIME of 5 MINUTES for the Second Round.

This contest will be judged as follows:

25 points Authenticity – Tunes must have an Old Time / Traditional sound and feel.

25 points Rhythm & Timing – Tunes must have an Old Time/Traditional rhythm with a steady, danceable timing.

25 points Execution – Notes should be clear, distinct and in tune. Tone quality will be considered.

25 points Expression – Tunes should be lively yet maintain that Old Timey Sound and feel.

Contestants will be judged on Authenticity, Rhythm & Timing, Execution, and Expression with highest scores going to traditional Old-Time tunes/songs played in a traditional Old-Time style.

Each contestant will play a hoedown, a waltz, and a tune of his/her choice **in that order** for the first round. If selected for the second round, a contestant will play a hoedown and a waltz **in that order**.

Hoedown: A tune that is full-length, or 8 bars, repeated for both A and B parts. Unequal part lengths and three-part tunes are not acceptable as a hoedown.

Waltz: A tune in $\frac{3}{4}$ timing with A and B parts.

Tune of Fiddler's Choice: Tune may be more than 2 parts, may be crooked with irregular phrase lengths, or a different feel from a hoedown, as in fiddle blues (Example: East Tennessee Blues.) Highest scores will be given to traditional Old Time tunes played in an Old Time style.

No trick or fancy fiddling will be allowed. Contestants will be disqualified for playing Mockingbird, Black Mountain Rag, or Orange Blossom Special. All treble clef instruments in the violin family, not classified as a viola, cello or double bass, are allowed in this competition. One rhythm instrument may be used as an accompanist. A double bass may be used as a rhythm instrument but is not required.

If there are nine (9) or fewer registered, the contestants will play a hoedown, a waltz, and a tune of their choice in the recommended seven (7) minute time limit of the first round. Judges will place winners without the additional tunes of a second round.

Contestants must be registered before 5:15pm Friday, September 20, 2024 at the Contest Registration Trailer and be present behind the contest stage at 5:45pm to draw for order of appearance and receive final instructions. Winners will be announced and will receive their awards immediately after the contest on Stage IV. The Top Three Winners will play an encore tune during the awards presentations. (See [general rules](#).)

National Flat Pick Guitar Championship

Saturday, September 21, 2024, 9:00 a.m. Stage IV. Entry fee is \$20.

MAXIMUM Recommended TOTAL PLAYING TIME of 5 MINUTES per round of competition.

* Walnut Valley Association will accept fifty (50) registrations for the National Flat Pick Guitar Championship plus an additional thirty (30) registrations for a standby list in case of cancellations or no-shows. When the fifty (50) registrations have been received, you may register for the standby list online at wvfest.com/register or by calling the office at (620) 221-3250, and paying registration fees with a credit card. You may still sign up at the Festival to be added to the end of the standby list at the Contest Registration Trailer which opens Thursday, September 19, 2024 at 7:00 a.m.

Contestants will be prepared to play four instrumental numbers in traditional fiddle tune or bluegrass style. Two numbers will be played in the first round and the other two in the final round should the contestant be selected as a finalist. All contestants must play with a FLAT PICK. NO FINGER PICKING WILL BE ALLOWED. NO COMBINATION OF FLAT PICKING AND FINGER PICKING WILL BE ALLOWED. Standard / Traditional acoustic 6-string or standard / traditional acoustic 12-string guitars may be played in this competition. The alteration or tuning of the low E (6th) string will be permitted. The low E (6th) string can be changed to any note desired, not limiting the tuning of the 6th string to "Drop D" or a low D note but to any desired pitch. No other string tuning or variance from the standard E (1), B (2), G (3), D (4), A (5) will be permitted.

Some slight, overall variance from concert pitch A=440 will be tolerated. (See #2 in the general rules.) Up to one capo may be used but is not required. If a capo is used, it must be applied across all strings on the same fret of the instrument to ensure all other rules regarding tuning are followed. Contestants must be registered before 8:00 a.m. Saturday, September 21, 2024, at the Contest Registration Trailer and be present behind the contest stage at 8:30 a.m. to draw for order of appearance and receive final instructions. Winners will be announced and will receive their awards immediately after the contest on Stage IV. The Top Three Winners will play an encore tune during the awards presentations. (See [general rules](#).) **The Top Three Winners will be required to play in a Saturday night performance on Stage I.**

National Hammer Dulcimer Championship

Saturday, September 21, 2024, 3:30 p.m. Stage IV. Entry fee is \$20.

MAXIMUM Recommended TOTAL PLAYING TIME of 5 MINUTES per round of competition

Contestants will be prepared to play four instrumental numbers. Two numbers will be played in the first round of competition and the other two will be played in the second round should the contestant be selected as a finalist. Originality is encouraged. It is permissible to pluck one tune, but not necessary. Contestants must be registered before 2:30 p.m. Saturday, September 21, 2024, at the Contest Registration Trailer and be present behind the contest stage at 3:00 p.m. to draw for order of appearance and receive final instructions. Winners will be announced and receive their awards immediately after the contest on Stage IV. The Top Three Winners will play an encore tune during the awards presentations. (See [general rules](#).)

National Bluegrass Banjo Championship

Sunday, September 22, 2024, 10:00 a.m. Stage IV. Entry fee is \$20.

MAXIMUM Recommended TOTAL PLAYING TIME of 5 MINUTES per round of competition

Contestants will be prepared to play four instrumental numbers. Two numbers will be played in the first round of competition and the other two will be played in the final round should the contestant be selected as a finalist. Contestants must be registered before 9:00 a.m. Sunday, September 22, 2024, at the Contest Registration Trailer and be present behind the contest stage at 9:30 a.m. to draw for order of appearance and receive final instructions. Winners will be announced and receive their awards immediately after the contest on Stage IV. The Top Three Winners will play an encore tune during the awards presentations. (See [general rules](#).)