International Society of Family History Writers and Editors Excellence in Writing Competition

ISFHWE Judges' Grading Guidelines

Judges will not be influenced in any way by the size or status of the medium in which any entry might have been published. Judging is strictly based upon the entry's merits as listed below. Note: Judges do not know the names of the other judges for this contest, and the names of the judges are not released until after this year's contest winner have been announced.

Here's How Entries are Judged

1. **Clarity** (1-15 points). No reader should ever have to read a sentence twice because of the way it's put together.
2. **Lean writing** (1-10 points) Deduct for unnecessary words and repetition. Give points for strong active verbs and deduct for overuse of adjectives and adverbs.
3. **Style, Sparkle, and Presentation** (1-20 points) Give points for uniqueness, drama, and creativeness in telling of the story or reporting the facts.
4. **Accuracy** (1-15 points) Pertains to facts in general, but watch out for genealogical and historical errors, and/or misleading information, and deduct for same. This includes typographical errors and transpositions, even though they may or may not be the author's fault (obviously you have no way of knowing who made the error when grading published material).
5. **Language** (1-20 points) Watch the grammar, spelling (but allow for variant spellings—do not deduct for non-American spelling), punctuation, and word usage. Deduct for clichés, qualifiers, platitudes and overused words, such as "very." Deduct for excessive and unnecessary punctuation, particularly the use of exclamation points.
6. **Overall quality of the entry** (1-20 points) Did the piece move you?   Did you like it a lot?   Does it stand out from the others?
7. **Content** [Category III only] (1-10 points) The newsletter contains a variety of articles relevant to the theme of the organization.
8. **Layout** [Category III only] (1-10 points) The entire publication is visually appealing and has a consistent flow.

DEFINITIONS

Article – a one-time featured genealogical piece printed as an independent element in a print or online publication.

Column – a regularly occurring feature in a print or online publication.

Published – publicly distributed as part of a print or online publication.

Unpublished – never distributed to the public in any medium.

Newsletter – a recurring publication containing information of genealogical/family history interest. The individual articles are not to be judged, but rather the overall composition, content and editing.