

Sakura-Con 2025 Cosplay Contest Official Rules

See your favorite characters come to life on stage! The Sakura-Con Cosplay Contest is a competition showcase of costume construction and stage performance, open to Cosplayers of all levels of experience. This is **NOT** a Popularity Contest or a Look-a-Like Contest.

You may choose to sign up for **Craftsmanship** (Costume Display and Stage Walk) **Performance Only**, or **Performance AND Craftsmanship** (limit one entry per person).

Due to the popularity of this event, we have to be strict about submissions. Sign-ups are processed on a first-come- first-served basis, separated by category. All submissions will be reviewed by the Cosplay Staff in the order they are received. Those not completed fully and correctly according to submission requirements below, will be rejected and asked to re-submit. Please take the time to thoroughly read the rules, and ask any questions before sign-ups are open.

All correspondence for the contest (including initial acceptance and rejection/revision emails) will be coming from cosplay.contests@sakuracon.org

In the past, our emails have been caught in some spam filters, even by those who previously received emails from us without issue. Please make sure to add this email to your 'allowed' address list, and check your spam folders regularly.

We are not responsible for any missed emails due to individual provider's spam filters.

For any questions regarding the rules and sign-up details, please contact the Cosplay Coordinator at cosplay.contests@sakuracon.org

*Cosplay Coordinator and staff have the final say on rules. Failure to comply may result in disqualification. SakuraCon and ANCEA are not responsible for any damage or loss to a prop or costume brought on-site.

Contest Format / Time Requirements

Participating in a Cosplay Contest requires time commitment for the show itself, but also at other times during the convention. Be prepared to devote the necessary time during the weekend to check in on Friday, attend a judging session on Friday (for Craftsmanship entries), and attend

rehearsal on Saturday before the show. Any potential scheduling conflicts must be brought to the coordinator's attention ASAP to see if any accommodations can be made.

General / All Entries Rules

- All contestants must be registered attendees of Sakura-Con and possess a Sakura-Con Convention Badge.
- All costumes and performances must adhere to the [Sakura-Con policies](#). No live steel, no functioning or previously functioning projectile weapons, no indecent exposure, etc... please see Sakura-Con policies for a complete list. Additional rules (listed below) also apply.
- **All sign-ups are Online Only -- No Entries will be accepted for the show or wait-list at the convention.** Applications will be accepted for ONE WEEK, from **January 19th at 12PM PST through January 25th at 11:59PM PST**. If all slots fill before sign-ups close, entries received after hitting the entry cap will be placed on a waiting list. If any confirmed entries drop-out, places will be offered to those on the waitlist in order of who signed up first.
- This is a SC-13/PG-13 event – please keep this in mind when planning your stage presentation. No cursing will be permitted, and any innuendo must have an equally obvious non-suggestive interpretation. If you are unsure whether something is allowed or not, please email cosplay.contests@sakuracon.org
- The use of makeup techniques, bodypaint, and/or bodysocks with the intent to alter your skin/features to resemble a *real human race or equivocal fantasy race/ real human skin tone* different from your own, will not be permitted. This is grounds for *immediate* disqualification. If you have questions, please reach out to the cosplayer coordinator.
- Each contestant may only appear on stage in ONE entry, whether this is a Walk On or performance entry. (More on the differences below)
- You must have some kind of foot covering that is more substantial than socks. Shoes or boots are *required*. **This is a matter of safety**. If your character does not usually wear shoes, the 'inaccuracy' will be forgiven; If you are adamant about the look, consider shoes

that match your flesh-tone, or clear shoes. This is *non-negotiable*.

- Size and Mobility of your costume and props should be taken into consideration. For purposes of safety, your costume should conform to the following limitations while worn:
 - Can fit/be maneuvered through a standard ADA doorway (not a double-doorway)
 - Should not significantly inhibit the cosplayer's usual level of ability to navigate safely backstage in dim lighting/getting on-and-off stage, with minimal assistance (Limit 1 handler).
 - Should not significantly inhibit the cosplayer's usual level of ability to navigate the main stage.
 - Any use of height-enhancement equipment (such as stilts or platforms) may not be home-built, and may not raise the cosplayer more than 8 inches off the ground. (lifts/platforms that appear to be more than 6 inches may be subject to measurement confirmation by staff)

- Only contestants appearing on stage (Cosplayers / Ninjas) and approved handlers are allowed to be in the green room/backstage during the show. Entries with very large or unwieldy costumes, or other special circumstances will be allowed to bring one (1) handler with them, but they must be requested directly with the Cosplay Staff, for accurate head-count. Handlers should only be used if you are incapable of using your hands/maneuvering your costume alone, or you have other health needs. If you just need someone to hold your belongings while you're on stage, we will have a staff-monitored space to store your personal belongings if needed.

A Parent/Guardian may accompany participants whose age requires them to be under this supervision according to SakuraCon policy. Entrants must notify the coordinator of any handlers/guardians that will need to be present. This is all for safety/security, to make sure we know everyone who should or should not be allowed backstage, and to make sure the limited space is not overly crowded with extra bodies.

- Any substances that may cause damage or mess to the stage, equipment, or other entrants costumes are **not permitted on stage, in the green room, or anywhere backstage**. This includes but is not limited to anything oily, greasy, or that can stain; liquids, fire, smoke/smoke machines or anything requiring an external power source, dry ice, confetti/powder/small debris. This also includes items made of glass or certain ceramics, which can cause a hazard in the event they are accidentally broken.

If something is not listed here but you are unsure, please ask the cosplay coordinator.

- Surprise the audience, but never surprise the staff/crew -- Any 'surprise elements' must be run by the cosplay coordinator for approval. Absolutely NO jumping on or off stage. No acrobatics/flips/cartwheels will be allowed. Violating this will result in disqualification from the competition, and participation in future SakuraCon cosplay contests. *When in doubt, ask.*
- Prop Weapons brought on stage may not be brandished at the Audience, Judges, or Emcees, and must have been peace-bonded.
- In the sign up form, **all contestants will be required to link to a public file-share folder** containing the appropriate files/documentation for your entry type. Google Drive is preferred, but DropBox or One Drive are also acceptable. At the time of sign-up your folder **MUST** contain the following:
 - A) **Reference Images of your costume**
 - B) **Progress Pictures of your costume so far (for craftsmanship entries)**
 - C) **Additional items as detailed in the rules below, depending on if you are a *Craftsmanship, or Performance* entry.**

Please see the Sample Folders and details in the rules below for clear examples of what your folder should look like for each entry type.

If your folder share link does not work for cosplay staff (example: if we must request permission to view your folder, the link is broken, or link goes to a single file in your folder instead of the main folder), you will be rejected and asked to submit again. We suggest having a friend test that your folder can be viewed by anyone with the link, and that the link is correct, *before* submission!

- All contestants are required to check in at the convention on Friday, and attend tech rehearsal on Saturday. For Craftsmanship entries, your scheduled Friday Judging slot will act as your check-in. Specific times and locations will be announced as the convention approaches and the schedule is finalized. **Failure to comply without communication to the cosplay staff will result in an assumed drop-out, and disqualification.**
- Although there will be awards in both Performance and Craftsmanship, *Best in Show* will

be awarded to an entry that shows excellence in both their selected division of Craftsmanship *AND* in Stage Presentation. For differences between Performance and Walk On entries, see the detailed rules below. (Performance entries without craftsmanship judging will only be eligible for performance awards.)

Craftsmanship

For those entering in Craftsmanship (sometimes known as Construction), there will be (2) portions: the **Prejudging** portion and the **Stage** portion. For Stage, you may choose to enter as a Walk On, or Performance (more on each of those further down).

Craftsmanship will be evaluated on the following criteria:

Execution – How well the costume is constructed and finished.

Fidelity* – How closely the costume resembles the source material and/or how well it interprets and reminds the judges of the design of the source material. (adaptations made with intent/purpose and explained adequately to the judges will never count against you in this area).

Complexity – How wide the range of skills used in the project, and the difficulty level of those techniques.

Creativity – Thoughtful use of materials, ingenuity, personalized embellishments, etc.

*Original Design entries will be evaluated on Thoughtfulness/Appeal of Design, rather than Fidelity. More on Original Design entries below.

The **Prejudging** portion will take place on Friday of the convention, during a time slot that you will sign up for after general contest sign-ups have closed (you will be notified via email when these will open). During judging, contestants will display their costumes to a panel of judges, where they will have a chance to inspect costumes and props from a close distance. Contestants will be evaluated one entry at a time, in privacy with the judges and cosplay coordinator or assistant coordinator present.

Craftsmanship Entries may be entered as either Individual, or a Group.

Individual entries will be judged on the quality and construction of a single costume (including props and accessories) and will have **4 minutes with the judges**.

Group entries may have 2 to 10 cosplayers. They will be judged based on the quality and craftsmanship of the group as a whole -- the entire group will receive a single score, and have **up to 8 minutes with the judges.**

- Costumes must be made by the contestant (or for groups, by someone in your group).
- You may model a costume for someone else/have someone model for you, but the creator of the costume must be in person at prejudging with the model, to answer questions about the costume build.
- Commissioned costumes, Mass-Produced/Second-hand Purchased costumes, or Costumes made entirely from assembling/modifying purchased pieces ("Closet Cosplay") **are not eligible for Craftsmanship evaluation/awards.** These types of costumes are only permitted to participate in Performance entries, and will only qualify for Performance Awards.

Categories

All Craftsmanship entries, Individual or Group, will register under **ONE** of the following categories.

Groups must enter under the category of their *most experienced* group member:

- **Novice:** Sometimes called Beginner. You belong here if you have never won a cosplay contest award*, and have entered three (3) or fewer contests in the past.
- **Journeyman:** Sometimes called Intermediate. You belong here if you or anyone in your group meet any of the following criteria:
 - Won an award* in Novice at any convention -OR- Journeyman at an event smaller than SakuraCon.
 - Have participated in more than three (3) cosplay contests before
 - Have hand-made more than 10 costumes.
- **Masters:** Sometimes called Advanced, this level is open to anyone who would like to compete here, but you **MUST** enter in Masters if you or anyone in your group meet any of the following criteria:
 - Won an award* in Journeyman/Intermediate or higher, at another event of equivalent/larger size (ask coordinator if unsure)
 - Won a first-place Build-Type award (1st Place Needlework/Tailoring, Armor, etc) or placed Top 3 overall in a Build-Type competition.
 - Have hand-crafted 35 or more costumes, regardless of award or competition experience.

- Are employed professionally (either self-employed or under someone else) in a way related to cosplay-making, that provides 50% or more of your income. Examples include:
 - Commission work and/or selling pre-made cosplay accessories, that accounts for 50% or more of your income.
 - Working regularly for industry events/booths in costumes you have made, within the past year.
 - Being a full-time content creator in which at least 50% of your content centers on cosplaying/cosplay building.
 - Being a full-time sewist, tailor, costume fabricator, or other fashion professional.

If you're unsure if your circumstances apply, please email cosplay.contests@sakuracon.org

- **Original Design:** Regardless of your experience, this category is for any and all costumes based on designs by the cosplayer, or someone in their group. *If your costume fits the criteria for Original Design listed below, regardless of your experience/history, you will be entered into Original Design.* This category will be a blend of skill levels, as well as groups and individuals. Group entries including a mix of canon and original designs will be placed into the category of the majority in the group. **Original Design** includes costumes that are:
 - Based on any fanart drawn/imagined by you or someone in your group. *(Fan Art by others does not fall under this category, but is subject to additional requirements. More details below)*
 - Mash-ups of multiple existing fandoms (example: Sailor Princess Zelda, Mario in the style of Borderlands, etc)
 - Style re-interpretations (“Regency” Princess Serenity, “Punk” Tanjiro, “Dior” Belle, etc)
 - Your Home-Brew Style Gijinkas (Anthropomorphized interpretations of non-humanoid characters, such as Pokemon, designed by you)

** for the sake of this competition, Judges Awards / Honorable Mentions do not count towards Award Wins -- Only 1st Place Level (Novice/Journeyman/Masters) or 1st Place Category (Needlework/Armor/Etc) are considered.*

Please Note: These are guidelines. Judges and staff reserve the right to adjust your category

if they deem that you/your cosplay were not entered in the appropriate category according to your skills/experience/design. Entrants will not be bumped to a *lower* category than the one they enter.

Costume Rules

- All costumes and props must be at least 75% made from new or repurposed materials, by the entrant. Found/modified parts or props are allowed, though they must not comprise more than 25% of the whole costume, and must be disclosed at time of judging. (eg: shoes that were painted or covered, tights or simple gloves, a purchased undershirt or pants that were modified in some way, are all types of items that may be permitted, as long as 75% of your total costume is hand-made by you.) -- if you're unsure, ask the coordinator.
- Size and Mobility of your costume should be taken into consideration, and for purposes of safety your costume should conform to the following limitations while worn:
 - Can fit/be maneuvered through a standard ADA compliant doorway without removing major components.
 - Should not significantly inhibit the cosplayer's usual level of ability to navigate safely backstage in dim lighting/getting on-and-off stage, with minimal assistance (Limit 1 handler).
 - Should not significantly inhibit the cosplayer's usual level of ability to navigate the main stage.
 - Any use of height-enhancement equipment (such as stilts or platforms) may not be home-built, and may not raise the cosplayer more than 8 inches off the ground. (lifts/platforms that appear to be more than 6 inches may be subject to measurement confirmation by staff)
- **All costumes must be derived from an existing fandom/published piece of media.** Completely Original Characters such as your own D&D character, Fan-based Original Characters (Example: "Sailor Earth"), a character from an original story you/your friends created, your Fursona, etc, **will not be permitted.**
 - Derivative Work/Fanart re-designs and avatar characters compiled for the player character from MMO/Console Games are all permitted, with appropriate reference

art.

- Costumes made based on non-canon designs (fan art) that were **NOT** designed by you, must be able to source the artist (Sakizou, Hannah Alexander, Zach Fisher, Sunset Dragon, No Flutter, etc) and provide proof of the artist. Examples include: links to or screen-captures of the artwork published on the artists own platform (Patreon, Deviantart, their own website, etc) where their name (and possibly other works) can be seen. **“I found this on instagram/tumblr/pinterest/art-share account” is NOT an acceptable source unless it is the personal account of the artist.**
- Designs commissioned explicitly/exclusively *for you*/not publicly available must include proof of the exchange with the artist, and/or a link/screen-capture of where their other work can be found.
- **Original Designs** must provide your concept art and/or your inspirational materials in place of traditional ‘reference images’ - For example, if you are doing a mash-up design of Mario in the style of Borderlands, but have not created a single ‘completed’ image to reference, you would include images of Mario from his original source(s), as well as images from Borderlands. Historical mashups may include pictures of the character from canon, as well as examples of the types of garments you drew inspiration from. One canon image with no additional references will not be accepted.
- Entrants may *not* enter a costume which falls under any of the following:
 - Has already won any award (including performance, 2nd place, and judges awards) at any previous year of the Sakura-Con cosplay contest.
 - Has won/placed in a main Category Award at a convention where costumes are divided by Build Type rather than Experience Level (ex: Best Armor, Best Needlework, etc.) or placed “Top 3” Overall.
 - Costumes made by someone else, if the maker is *not* present for judging.
 - Has won an award in Masters or Best in Show at **any** major convention. Other award winning costumes may be permitted under the following exceptions:
 - Top awards from single-day events will be permitted as long as additional work has been done on the costume since.
 - Novice and Journeyman award winning costumes from other conventions may be entered, **ONLY** at a level *above* the award received. Example: a Best

Novice/Beginner award winning costume must be entered in Journeyman/Intermediate or above.

- Individual award-winning costumes may be allowed if they are being re-entered as part of a group (or vice-versa), or if they received a performance award without acknowledgement of craftsmanship.

The **Stage** portion of the contest will take place on **Saturday Afternoon**. During the show, entrants will either present as a **Walk On Entry** or **Performance**.

Stage Presentation

All entries will participate in the show portion of the contest as either a **Walk On Entry** or **Performance**. **Walk On** entries (Sometimes referred to as “Display” Or “Showcase” entries) are short presentations of your costume on stage, and usually consist of simple moves, and periodically stopping to pose for pictures. Expressly for showing off the costume/character’s demeanor, Walk On entries are for Craftsmanship entries ONLY.

- All Walk On entries MUST be Craftsmanship Entries - All persons who appear on stage during a Walk On must have had their costume judged for Craftsmanship- Stage ninjas, assistants, or handlers will only be permitted if necessary to accommodate accessibility, mobility or safety needs. These must be cleared by either the Cosplay Contest Coordinator or Coordinator Assistant before the convention weekend.
- Strictly Limited to no more than 40 seconds for individuals, and **60 seconds for groups**.
- Does not typically tell a story or contain dialogue, but can showcase the character’s personality or visual appeal. Be creative!. You are limited only by the time limit, and your own imagination.
- NOTE: At this time, we do not know what custom lighting, if any, we will be able to provide. Please be prepared for full lights at all times. If custom lighting becomes a possibility, it will be discussed with accepted entries as the convention approaches.
- **Walk On entries are required to submit the following items in their online shared folder, at time of sign up. *Entries received without all of these items will be rejected,***

and asked to re-submit.

- **Reference Image(s)** of the costume(s) you will be entering. These are to be from the source material, *not* images of yourself. For most, this means 1-3 images from the source material, showing as much detail as possible. For Original Designs, this could mean your own concept art, or a mix of your inspirational materials.
 - **FOR NON-CANON DESIGNS:** proof of digital or hard copy publication, ***by*** the artist. Links, Screenshots, photos of books, etc.
 - **FOR DESIGNS COMMISSIONED** for the cosplayer's use: Proof of exchange with the artist.
- **Progress photos** of your project – This is NOT expected to be a Comprehensive Portfolio. At time of submission, we will require 4 - 8 photos ***per costume***, proving you have committed to the project and completed 25% or more at time of submission.
- **Your Audio** (pre-edited to the appropriate length for your entry) in MP3 Format* - *Our staff will not edit this for you.*

*Revisions may be permitted at a later date, should you need or want to make changes.

Any questions regarding the rules or application process can be directed to cosplay.contests@sakuracon.org

Performance Rules

Performance entries are longer than Walk On entries, and consist of a wider range of presentation including but not limited to short stories/skits, musical numbers, monologues, dancing, and stage/costume tricks. These can involve the use of oversized props/set pieces, and permit the use of your own stage ninjas to assist on stage during the performance.

Those choosing to enter in the performance category may do so with **or** without craftsmanship judging. Performances will be judged based on the qualities of the presentation, including entertainment value, stage presence/polish, and audio quality/clarity.

- Performance is an Open competition -- All entries will be evaluated equally, with awards handed out based on the Genre of the performances (Drama, Comedy, Musical/Dance).

Since many great performances can fall into multiple genres, the judges reserve the right to give awards outside of the declared performance genre.

- There will be a maximum of 20 entries allowed for the Performance Category - Example: 10 groups, and 10 individuals. Once this fills, the rest will be placed on a wait list. If a confirmed entry drops, the space will be offered to those on the waitlist based on the order in which they signed up. If, after signups have closed, there is an uneven number of solo and group entries, wait-listed entries may be offered spots to fill the over-all time.
- **Individual Performances** are limited to **1 minute and 30 seconds**. This is non-negotiable (wobble-room may be given for a few seconds, at the coordinators review/discretion, but you must ASK). You may have ONE stage-ninja and one cosplayer, and still qualify as an Individual performance, as long as the ninja does not fill the role of a Secondary Character (such as via puppetry).
- **Group Performances** are limited to **3 Minutes and 30 seconds** and should be planned with this limit in mind. If your audio exceeds 3:30 while you are working on it, you *must* email cosplay.contests@sakuracon.org prior to the audio deadline/submission, to discuss review/approval of any extensions. Extensions are not guaranteed.
- Setup and Takedown. Setup is allowed up to 30 seconds of time. Takedown must be completed within 15 seconds or the performance will be penalized.
- Any audio submitted with time-overages, that have not been discussed with the cosplay coordinator, may be rejected, and result in your entry being dropped from the show.
- Purchased, Commissioned or "Closet Cosplay" costumes *will* be permitted as part of Performance entries, but are *not* eligible for craftsmanship judging or costume awards.
- Group Performances with craftsmanship judging must be a Group Craftsmanship entry. There will be no mixing of Individual Craftsmanship entries in coordination with a Group Performance. Not every member of your group performance must enter for Craftsmanship (such as if you have some members with purchased costumes), but there must be 2 or more of your group.
- Performance entries without Craftsmanship Judging will *not* be eligible for Best in Show.

- No Original Characters. This means that completely Original Characters such as your own D&D character, Fan-based Original Characters (Like “Sailor Earth”), a character from an original story you/your friends created, your Fursona, etc, **will not be permitted**. In the case of Performance entries, nameless stand-in characters (such as a narrator) or representation of a Real Life Person (example: Matthew Mercer as the DM in a Critical Role skit), or other such examples, may be permitted on case-by-case basis, as long as it serves a purpose to the performance.
- Groups in 2025 are limited to 10 persons, *not including* stage ninjas. We should have staff to help you get props/sets on and off stage before/after your performance, but if you need assistance during your performance, you will need to provide your own help.
- All Performances must be screened for general content. You will be expected to provide a ‘script’ in your digital file-share folder at the time of sign up! A script should include any/all spoken dialogue or song lyrics, general blocking (IE: Character A sword fights with Character B), any style of dance (IE: Belly Dancing, Ballet, etc) or if you are doing a dance cover, a link to video of the original choreography. The Cosplay Coordinator may ask for additional information or clarification. If there is anything questionably against the rules or deemed inappropriate, you may be rejected, or asked to make changes and given a window of time to re-submit your entry. Don’t be afraid to ask questions before submitting! If you decide to make revisions after you’ve been accepted to the show, you will need to notify the coordinator of these changes, so they can also be reviewed for approval.
- All Audio for your performance must be pre-recorded – No Live Microphones will be permitted. The audio files will be due AFTER final approval of your script, and does NOT have to be included at time of sign-up. It will be submitted by uploading into the same shared folder you provided us with in your original sign-up.
- Any individual set piece must be capable of being carried by no more than 2 people, and capable of fitting through a standard interior doorway (like in your home, NOT the double doorways sometimes seen in the convention center)
- At this time, we do not know what custom lighting, if any, we will be able to provide. Please be prepared for full lights at all times. If custom lighting becomes a possibility, it will be discussed in communication with accepted entries as the convention approaches.

- **Performance entries are required to have the following items in their online shared folder, at time of sign up:**
 - **Your Script**, to be reviewed for content and approval.
 - **Reference Images** of the costumes(s) you will be presenting, regardless of whether you are participating in the Craftsmanship portion. If you are entering for Craftsmanship, this means 1-3 images from the source material, showing as much detail as possible. For Original Designs, this could mean your own concept art, or a mix of your inspirational materials.
 - If you are entering for Craftsmanship, you will *also* need:
 - **Progress photos** of your costumes (This is NOT expected to be a Comprehensive Portfolio at time of submission. Proof of investment is required. 4 - 8 photos **per costume**, proving you have committed/completed a base level of your project is required. Photos of fabrics purchased, sets mid construction, mid process costumes or props are all acceptable.)
 - **FOR NON-CANON DESIGNS:** proof of digital or hard copy publication, **by** the artist. Links, Screenshotures, photos of books, etc.
 - **FOR DESIGNS COMMISSIONED** for the cosplayer's use: Proof of exchange with the artist.

Policy

It is up to the **contestant** to state any possible conflicts of interest they may have. Such conflicts will be evaluated by the cosplay coordinator, and appropriate action will be taken **at the discretion of the cosplay coordinator and Sakura Con staff.**

All awards are final with the exception of those who are found with indisputable evidence to have been in violation of the rules. Any claims of rule-breaking brought to the cosplay staff's attention will be investigated to determine if an award should be revoked.

All contestants are expected to follow Sakura Con convention policies and codes of conduct. This includes not engaging in Harassment of judges / staff / other contestants, poor sportsmanship,

misrepresenting this contest, or otherwise spreading misinformation. These may result in disqualification and/or barring from future Sakura Con contests. Further action may be taken at the discretion of programming staff.

And remember, have fun!

Link to last years event video: [SakuraCon 2024 Cosplay Contest](#)