

Information for judges, high school newspaper staffs and their advisers



Newspaper Evaluation Guidebook

School name: _____

Newspaper name: _____

School year: _____

Editor(s) in chief: _____

Faculty adviser: _____

Evaluation category

- Division I: **High school enrollment of 800 students or fewer**
- Division II: **High school enrollment from 801 to 1,300**
- Division III: **High school enrollment of 1,301 students or greater**

Indiana High School Press Association

Pulliam School of Journalism

Shirk Hall

Franklin College

Franklin, Indiana 46131

About distinctions, Hoosier Star

- Judges may also award “Special Distinction” status to any section deemed to be innovative.
- All “superior” and “excellent” ranked newspapers are exceptionally well done. These newspapers are entered into the Hoosier Star competition, the IHSPA’s annual program which awards Indiana’s very best student newspapers. Judges other than those who conduct the initial evaluation determine Hoosier Star winners.

Note: Newspaper staffs should complete Page 14 to supply background information for the judge.

The Indiana High School Press Association hopes staffs will use this guidebook and the resulting judge’s critique to enhance the overall quality of their newspapers. Judges rate the newspapers in two main categories. They then are asked to make appropriate comments and suggestions to assist staffs in improving readability and appearance of their newspapers. Staffs are encouraged to use this critique as a guideline when organizing, editing, designing and producing future newspapers.

Judges may recognize specific sections or ideas as special distinctions. If a judge chooses such a distinction, comments will be written under the evaluation in each section. (Judges are asked to review this entire guidebook before beginning the evaluation process.)

Additionally, judges are instructed to critique newspapers in such a way to encourage staffs to improve their newspapers using the guidelines. The IHSPA strongly encourages that comments be written in a constructive manner and not in a way that is deemed overly critical or unrealistic. Judges also are encouraged to make additional comments within each publication.

The IHSPA newspaper rating is established by an evaluation of superior, good, average or in need of improvement. Newspapers are judged against established standards of excellence and criteria that are included in this guidebook, and then are compared to other newspapers in respective enrollment divisions for IHSPA awards and honors. Judges use this form in critiquing your newspaper. Newspaper staffs also are encouraged to use it during the school year, especially after each issue is produced, to set standards for their publication.

All student newspapers should:

1. Combine pertinent features, news stories, sports articles and editorials, news briefs, columns and reviews to give readers a well rounded insight into the school and the community;
2. Enhance the appearance of the paper with graphics, photographs and other visuals, incorporating current design trends;
3. Include clear, concise stories and briefs and complete, in-depth cutlines;
4. Coordinate the overall coverage and content of the publication so a consistent, attractive and reader-friendly appearance is established and maintained from issue to issue throughout the school year.

**Sports
special distinction**

- No special distinction in the sports category
- Special distinction for sports as follows:
-
-
-

Sports

- Superior
- Excellent
- Good
- Average
- In need of improvement

**In-depth
special distinction**

- No special distinction in the in-depth category
- Special distinction for in-depth as follows:
-
-
-

In-depth

- Superior
- Excellent
- Good
- Average
- In need of improvement

Content and Coverage: Sports Writing

Sports coverage is complete and include boys' and girls' teams, junior varsity, freshmen, intramurals and individual athletic endeavors.

Never Sometimes Usually Frequently Always

Focus is on upcoming games rather than those that have been played.

Never Sometimes Usually Frequently Always

A full range of sources — athletes, coaches (including those from other schools), athletics directors, etc. have been interviewed.

Never Sometimes Usually Frequently Always

Writers avoid editorializing and cheerleading.

Never Sometimes Usually Frequently Always

Briefs, summaries or a scoreboard are used to expand sports coverage.

Never Sometimes Usually Frequently Always

Content and Coverage: In-Depth Writing

Story subject and angle are worthy of an in-depth story.

Never Sometimes Usually Frequently Always

Stories are reader-driven, often use a narrative focus and avoid reading like a term paper for an English class.

Never Sometimes Usually Frequently Always

Readers are drawn to stories that use a local angle specific only to their own school and have all their questions answered.

Never Sometimes Usually Frequently Always

A variety of sources are fully quoted, and transition devices smoothly guide the readers through the in-depth story.

Never Sometimes Usually Frequently Always

Conclusions extend the story angle but do not contain reporter opinion.

Never Sometimes Usually Frequently Always

Judge's comments: Content and coverage/sports and in-depth

Critical review special distinction

- No special distinction in the critical review category
- Special distinction for critical reviews as follows:

Critical review overall rating

- Superior
- Excellent
- Good
- Average
- In need of improvement

Cutline/credits special distinction

- No special distinction for cutlines
- Special distinction for cutlines as follows:

Cutline/credits rating

- Superior
- Excellent
- Good
- Average
- In need of improvement

Content and Coverage: Critical Reviews

A variety of media (movies, CDs, books, reviews) is reviewed.

Never Sometimes Usually Frequently Always

First person pronouns are avoided.

Never Sometimes Usually Frequently Always

Reviewers focus on the needs of the readers, analyzing and evaluating the medium but not, for example, revealing how a movie ends.

Never Sometimes Usually Frequently Always

There is evidence that the reviewer has conducted background research and is knowledgeable about the medium, artist, author, band, etc.

Never Sometimes Usually Frequently Always

Proper style is followed (movie titles appear in double quotation marks, not italics)

Never Sometimes Usually Frequently Always

Judge's comments: Content and coverage/critical reviews

Content and Coverage: Cutlines and credit lines

Cutlines add information for the reader, doing more than stating what is obvious in the photo.

Never Sometimes Usually Frequently Always

Cutlines fully identified all major subjects in the photo, including individuals not affiliated with the school.

Never Sometimes Usually Frequently Always

Judge's comments: Cutlines and credit lines



Newspaper evaluation guidebook
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managing editor during the 1999-2000
school year.

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Information for judges

(Below is a summary of suggestions and recommendations by the IHSPA executive board to all Hoosier Star judges)

- Please study this guidebook prior to evaluating any publication so that Indiana standards and the overall concept are established.
- Annotate the publication in red so that the staff can easily recognize the remarks.
- Be tastefully candid yet careful in the wording of your annotated comments so that no comment can be interpreted as sarcasm.
- In your annotations cite any item (photo, lead, head, cutline, copy, layout, etc.) that is well done as well as criticize items that need work.
- Keep in mind that much of the publication was prepared (planned, written, designed and photographed) several months ago and that the newest trends might not have been known to the staff. Please indicate in the comments sections what the latest trends are, but don't necessarily hold schools accountable for such. However, do indicate if a staff has not used journalistic concepts that should be known.
- Many of our judges in the past have annotated each newspaper even if to say "ditto" or "same" to indicate repetitive weakness or strength. By starting with the newspapers themselves, judges often can move through the rating book more quickly. Marking the papers first also allows judges to refer to specific newspaper page numbers as they work through the critique book. Such effort proves extremely valuable to the staff.

Verification of enrollment information

Division I: **High school enrollment of 800 students or fewer**

Division II: **High school enrollment from 801 to 1,300**

Division III: **High school enrollment of 1,301 students or greater**

Please check the appropriate enrollment category above (and also do so on the front cover of this guidebook).

Signature of principal: _____

Signature of editor in chief: _____

Signature of faculty adviser: _____