



SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

**RULES  
FOR THE  
STC NEWSLETTER COMPETITION**

Copies available from:

**Society for Technical Communication**

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# Rules for the Newsletter Competition

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## Introduction

This document describes the rules for participating in the STC Newsletter Competition. These rules apply to all eligible chapters, student chapters, and Special Interest Groups (SIGs) interested in entering the competition. These rules are also used to evaluate noncompetitive entries.

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## Purpose

The STC Newsletter Competition rewards excellence in chapter, student chapter, and SIG newsletters that communicate news about and develop interest in the Society for Technical Communication (STC) at the chapter, student chapter, SIG, and Society levels among current and potential STC members.

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## Administration and Organization

The STC Newsletter Competition Committee consists of committee members and a competition manager; the manager is appointed by the STC President or the Assistant to the President (AP) for Outreach with the approval of the STC Board of Directors. The Newsletter Competition manager supervises the competition with oversight by the AP for Outreach. The competition manager is responsible for the following:

- Selecting judges and committee members, subject to the approval of the AP for Outreach
- Determining the competition rules. Changes to and interpretations of the rules may be made in consultation with the competition committee.
- Conducting the day-to-day operations, including financial planning and reporting
- Creating and revising most documents.

Distributing entry materials, processing entries, notifying the winners, and managing the plaque and awards brochure processes are the responsibilities of the Society office.

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## Competition Year

The STC Newsletter Competition year is defined as February 1 of the previous Society year to January 31 of the current Society year. For example, the competition year for the 2002–2003 Newsletter Competition begins February 1, 2002 and ends January 31, 2003. Issues published between February 1, 2002 and January 31, 2003 are eligible for entry in the 2002–2003 STC Newsletter Competition. (Note the January 10 final deadline.)

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## Eligibility

**Who Can Enter?** Any officially recognized chapter, student chapter, or SIG of STC is eligible to enter the competition if it publishes a paper or online newsletter that meets or exceeds the publication frequency standards required for the Newsletter Competition:

Category	Frequency (minimum required)
Chapter	6 times per year
Student chapter	4 times per year
SIG	3 times per year

### Other Eligibility Requirements

- Only one newsletter medium—online or paper—is eligible per chapter, student chapter, or SIG.

*Note: Eligible online entries include PDF newsletters on diskettes and HTML or PDF newsletters accessible from a chapter, student chapter, or SIG Web site that includes an archive of back issues.*

- All newsletters must have been published during the competition year.
- Three consecutive issues are required (see the rules below for the number of copies to submit).
- Entrants must follow all submission rules and meet entry deadlines.

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## Noncompetitive Entries

If your newsletter does not meet all the eligibility criteria, you can still get valuable feedback from the judges. You can declare your entry as noncompetitive anytime between the initial entry and the final deadline.

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## Submission of Entries

**General Submission Rules:** Please review and follow all general submission rules, as well as specific requirements for online or paper entries.

- *Send all entry materials and newsletters by First-Class mail or some type of special delivery.*



**Mail Entries To:**

Society for Technical Communication  
Attn: Newsletter Competition  
901 N. Stuart St., Suite 904  
Arlington, VA 22203-1822

**Online Entries:** Please include the URL of your chapter or SIG Web site on your *Entry Form* and *Supplemental Checklists* and note which three consecutive issues (within the current competition year) you want the judges to evaluate (links on the Web site to the issues should be in place by the time of the January deadline). Also, please note:

- An archive of back issues is required for HTML and PDF newsletters that are entered as URLs and evaluated from chapter or SIG Web sites.
- If your PDF newsletters are not available from your Web site, you must supply either diskette or printed copies for evaluation. For a competitive entry, supply six diskettes (with one copy of the issue per diskette) or eight printed copies per issue. For noncompetitive entries, supply five diskettes as above.

**Paper Entries:** Submit eight copies of three consecutive issues (within the current competition year). For noncompetitive entries, submit five copies per issue.

- Please package the copies of an issue together.
- Clearly label, correctly identify, and adequately protect the copies from damage, moisture, and tearing in shipment.

*Note: The judges have only the copies you send; if they are damaged or folded unnecessarily, your score may be affected.*

## **Entry Forms**

At minimum, each chapter, student chapter, or SIG electing to compete in the current competition must submit these items postmarked by October 15:

- One copy of your Entry Form (see enclosure 1-1).

*Note: Your Entry Form must contain accurate and complete information and must be filled out by the chapter or SIG newsletter editor, the chapter president or SIG manager, or the student chapter faculty advisor.*

- The first of three consecutive newsletter issues to be evaluated (please refer to the submission rules for the number of copies required).

### **About the Supplemental Checklist:**

The *Supplemental Checklist* (see enclosures 2-1 and 2-2 for chapters, and 3-1 and 3-2 for SIGs) is designed to assist editors in planning the content of their newsletters. The checklist also assists in the statistical evaluation of issues entered in the STC Newsletter Competition.

Please complete a *Supplemental Checklist* for each issue of your newsletter. It speeds the competition processing also. ***Please do not staple the Supplemental Checklist to your newsletter.***

Although the checklist is not required, it assists in our statistical evaluation of Categories A and B (*Fundamental Elements* and *Recommended Topics*), two of four major categories that determine your final score. Please note that the self-evaluation you provide on your Supplemental Checklists may differ from the competition judges' evaluation of Categories A and B.

## **Entry Fee**

There is no entry fee for the STC Newsletter Competition.

## **Deadlines**

Below are the deadlines for submitting entries to the Newsletter Competition:

- **October 15** (postmark date), submit the following:
  - Entry Form*: accurate and fully completed (enclosure 1-1)
  - Newsletters: at least the first of three consecutive issues\*
    - 8 copies per issue for paper entries
    - 6 diskettes for online entries not available from the Web
    - 5 copies for noncompetitive entries
  - Supplemental Checklist*  
(enclosures 2-1 and 2-2 for chapters, and 3-1 and 3-2 for SIGs)
    - 1 copy for each issue submitted
- **January 10** (postmark date), submit the following:
  - Newsletters: submit the remaining consecutive issues
    - 8 copies per issue for paper entries
    - 6 diskettes for online entries not available from the Web
    - 5 copies for noncompetitive entries
  - Supplemental Checklist*  
(enclosures 2-1 and 2-2 for chapters, and 3-1 and 3-2 for SIGs)
    - 1 copy for each issue submitted

\* **Entrants are encouraged to submit the remaining issues any time between the October 15 and January 10 deadlines.**

*Note: Entrants who fail to submit the required number of issues by the specified deadlines will be disqualified.*

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## **Awards and Classifications**

Online and paper newsletters will be judged within three award classifications:

- *Chapter Newsletters*
- *SIG Newsletters*
- *Student Chapter Newsletters*

## **Awards**

The competition rewards exceptional efforts by chapter, student chapter, and SIG newsletter editors. Awards for paper and online newsletters include:

- *Distinguished Technical Communication*  
for newsletters scoring 94.5 percent or more of the total available points
- *Excellence*  
for newsletters scoring 84.5 to 94.4 percent of the total available points
- *Merit*  
for newsletters scoring 70 to 84.4 percent of the total available points
- *Most Improved*  
See award criteria below.

### **Most Improved Award**

One *Most Improved* newsletter award is possible in each classification:

- *Chapter Newsletters* (several will be awarded)
- *Student Chapter Newsletters*
- *SIG Newsletters*

To qualify for the *Most Improved* award, you must:

- Meet the minimum entry requirements in the current and preceding year's competitions.
- Earn a final score in this year's competition that is greater than or equal to the lowest *Merit* award score earned in the previous year's competition.
- Improve your final score this year over last year, such that the difference in your two Newsletter Competition scores is greater than those differences computed for all other entrants in your classification.

***Chapter Size Classifications.*** Entries within the *Chapter Newsletters* classification will be further classified by the size of the sponsoring chapter, as indicated by STC office records at the beginning of the competition year. These classifications will be used only to determine the most improved award winners. Therefore, more than one Most Improved Award can be awarded to chapters. Classifications with a low number of entries may be combined.

- Fewer than 41+
- 41 to 75 members
- 76 to 150 members
- 151 to 300 members
- 301 to 600 members
- more than 600 members

## **Best of Show Award**

One *Best of Show* award will be presented to a winner chosen from the highest scoring *Distinguished Technical Communication* award winners.

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## **Publication of Results**

Barring complications, award-winning entrants will be notified by the Society office no later than April 10 by the Society office. By the same date, all Society officers and director-sponsors will be notified of the results.

Barring complications, no later than April 20, copies of the applicable judges' evaluations and a list of the winners will be sent to each participating newsletter editor by the Newsletter Competition manager.

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## **Disposition of Entries**

All newsletters submitted for judging become the property of STC and will not be returned. Winning entries will be displayed at the next STC annual conference and later travel to STC chapters for exhibition.

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## **Judging Criteria**

This section explains the judging criteria used in the Newsletter Competition. Newsletters are evaluated using criteria described in four categories:

- Category A. Fundamental Elements
- Category B. Recommended Topics
- Category C. Editorial Quality
- Category D. Design and Delivery

Categories A and B are statistical categories. That is, scores are determined by their presence or absence. Categories B and C are qualitative categories. The scores in these areas are judged on a scale of 1 to 5.

## **Category A. Fundamental Elements**

A fundamental element constitutes a basic, essential part of a quality newsletter that excels in communicating news about and developing interest in STC among current and potential STC members.

Category A consists of thirteen fundamental elements. All elements are required to earn the maximum points in this category.

However, if you do not have all the fundamental elements in a newsletter issue, this does **not** disqualify the issue or the entry. If you do not have a fundamental element, your issue just loses some points.

The following items are fundamental elements of an STC newsletter. The judging process ranks newsletters that include all these elements higher than others.

1. **Publication Frequency:** At least six times per year for chapters, four times per year for student chapters, three times per year for SIGs.
2. **Society Contact Information:** At a minimum, online newsletters must include the Society's Web site address (URL) and provide a link to the Society's Web site. Paper newsletters must include the Society's mailing address, phone number, and e-mail address (or URL).

The following elements must appear on the first page and must be situated for clear association:

3. **Newsletter Title and Chapter or SIG Name.**
4. **STC Symbol:** Please see *Guidelines for Use of the STC Logo and Logotype*, AD-13-2002.
5. **Society Logotype:** Use the official logotype (designated typeface) to spell out *Society for Technical Communication* (see the *Guidelines* above).
6. **Publication Date:** Include the publication date (at least month or quarter and year). *Note: You do not need to include the volume number and issue number. However, these are recommended, especially for chapters that publish irregularly and risk disqualification.*

The following elements must appear, as a single masthead or as a masthead with a separate list of officers, in the body of the newsletter:

7. **Editor's Name and Contact Information:** Include the editor's name, title (e.g., *Managing Editor*), and contact information (phone number or e-mail address). Online newsletters must include a linked e-mail address.
8. **Newsletter Mailing Address:** The newsletter mailing address may appear in the self-mailer area of a paper newsletter with no points lost.

9. **Publication Policies:** Include brief, complete publication policies (e.g., publication frequency, deadlines, and submissions information).
10. **Reprint Policies:** Include complete reprint policies.
11. **Copyright Statement:** The STC office suggests that each issue of your chapter newsletter run the following statement: *This newsletter invites writers to submit articles that they wish to be considered for publication. Note: By submitting an article, you implicitly grant a license to this newsletter to run the article and for other STC publications to reprint it without permission. Copyright is held by the writer. In your cover letter, please let the editor know if this article has run elsewhere, and if it has been submitted for consideration to other publications.*

Note: *The statement above is a suggested statement. If you use a copyright statement other than the one above you will still meet the copyright requirement.*

- **Senior Officers’ Names and Contact Information:** The names, titles, and contact information (phone numbers and/or e-mail addresses) of at least two senior officers (e.g., president and vice president) for chapter and student chapter newsletters, or the SIG manager for SIG newsletters.
- **Society’s Mission Statement:** Include the mission statement, “Designing the future of technical communication.” in an appropriate and consistent location (such as with the masthead) in every issue.

## **Category B. Recommended Topics**

These topics are recommended because they help editors achieve the primary purposes of an STC newsletter. Please note:

- A newsletter item cannot count as more than one recommended topic.
- All recommended topics need not be presented in article form (e.g., meeting notices might best appear as display ads).
- It’s rarely possible to include all topics in all issues. Thus, perfect scores in *Category B* permit the omission of two to four topics per entry type.

<b>Newsletter Category and Media</b>	<b>Minimum No. of Topics per Issue for a Perfect Score</b>
Chapters and student chapters, paper	10 of 14
Chapters and student chapters, online	12 of 14
SIGs, paper	8 of 12
SIGs, online	10 of 12

<b>Chapter and Student Chapter Newsletters</b>	<b>SIG Newsletters</b>
1. Chapter meeting notice	1. Society SIG meeting notice
2. Chapter meeting report	2. Society SIG meeting report
3. Chapter president's message (or message from another board member)	3. SIG manager's message (or message from another SIG leader)
4. At least one report or announcement of other chapter activities (e.g., committee meetings, public relations efforts, involvement with local educational community)	4. At least one report or announcement of other SIG activities (e.g., meetings, public relations efforts)
5. Chapter membership news (e.g., new members list, biographical sketches, job changes)	5. SIG membership news (e.g., new members or membership totals, biographical sketches, job changes)
6. Feature article pertaining to technical communication (e.g., how to, new hardware or software)	6. Feature article pertaining to a SIG topic
7. Employment news, trends, or opportunities (e.g., help wanted and services offered)	7. Employment news, trends, or opportunities (e.g., help wanted and services offered)
8. Editor's column or letter from the editor	8. Editor's column or letter from the editor
9. Letters to the editor or similar forum demonstrating communication between members	9. Letters to the editor or similar forum demonstrating communication between members
10. Reviews of books, software, or equipment pertinent to technical communication	10. Reviews of books, software, or equipment pertinent to SIG interests
11. Networking information (e.g., news and activities, such as meetings, offered by nearby STC chapters, local SIGs, and other organizations with similar interests, such as IABC, PRSA, AMWA, or WICI)	11. Networking information (e.g., news and activities, such as meetings, offered by nearby STC chapters, Society-level SIGs, and other organizations with similar interests, such as IABC, PRSA, AMWA, or WICI)
12. Educational news, trends, or opportunities (e.g., courses, workshops, or conferences pertaining to technical communication, offered by professional organizations, businesses, colleges, or universities)	12. Educational news, trends, or opportunities (e.g., courses, workshops, or conferences pertaining to SIG interests, offered by professional organizations, businesses, colleges, or universities)
13. The director-sponsor report (if no report is received, the report of a director-sponsor from another region may be substituted)	
14. At least one report or announcement of Society-level activities (in addition to the director-sponsor's report)	

## **Category C. Editorial Quality**

*Note: Enclosures (such as meeting flyers or other inserts) that are submitted with paper newsletters will be evaluated for editorial quality.*

Judges will evaluate editorial quality using five criteria:

### **1. Usage**

- Copy reflects accepted rules of grammar (e.g., agreement, parallelism, punctuation), correct spelling, and proper syntax (e.g., avoids awkward constructions, misplaced or faulty modifiers, long noun strings).
- Acronyms are spelled out on first reference.
- Text is edited for correct, consistent capitalization and number style.
- Words are hyphenated properly; excessive hyphenation is avoided.

### **2. Style**

- Writing style demonstrates careful consideration of audience and the purposes of an STC newsletter:
  - *To communicate chapter or SIG and Society news*
  - *To provide meaningful services to members*
- Typically, active voice is preferred; passive voice is used if appropriate.
- Sentence structure is varied and not overly complex.
- Words are well chosen and used properly.

### **3. Craftsmanship**

- Articles are written and edited with skill in use of journalistic or narrative techniques (as appropriate) such as the hook, pyramid structure, point of view, or question-and-answer format.
- Text is complete, well organized, cohesive, and coherent.

### **4. Originality**

- Most articles are original, as opposed to press releases and reprints; however, please note that reprinting an exceptional article from another STC newsletter is encouraged.
- The newsletter is professional and uses a creative approach to topics.

### **5. Overall Impression**

- Articles selected for publication are appropriate to the audiences and purposes of an STC newsletter.
- Text is accurate, complete, and well organized.
- Copy is free of typographical and grammatical errors.

- The organization, selection of material, and style of presentation create a balanced, cohesive, and cogent impression. In general, when an editor creates a theme issue through the careful selection, organization, and presentation of related material, a better overall impression results.

## **Category D. Design and Delivery**

*Note: Enclosures (such as meeting flyers or other inserts) that are submitted with paper newsletters will be evaluated for design and delivery quality.*

Judges will evaluate the quality of design and delivery using five criteria:

### **1. Professional Presentation**

- The layout is neat, attractive, and inviting to the reader.
- Margins, rules, headers, footers, and borders of illustrations or display ads are correctly positioned, straight, and uniform.
- Use of Color:

*Online newsletters* use color consistently and effectively to attract the reader’s attention and to improve information design.

*Paper newsletters* are not evaluated for additional ink colors because the cost of color printing is beyond the budgets of most STC chapters, student chapters, and SIGs.

### **2. Page Design**

- Composition is well balanced—either formal (symmetrical) or informal (asymmetrical).
- Column widths are appropriate, such that line length is neither so long that the text is hard to read, nor so short that sentences are chopped up or words are hyphenated excessively.
- To aid readability, the alignment of body text is ragged right (left justified) to prevent “rivers” of white space (the excessive spacing between words that results when text is fully justified).
- Design aids readability; e.g., white space and rules (also color elements in online newsletters) are used effectively to delineate, group, and sequence text and design elements.
- Graphic cues and devices (e.g., drop caps, end-of-story marks, bulleted lists, subheadings; also color elements in online newsletters) are used to differentiate information and to aid skimming and information access.

### **3. Art Quality and Appropriateness**

- Images are meaningful and appropriate to the topic, purpose, and audience.
- Original photographs and line art (e.g., figures and tables) are scored higher than clip art; when clip art is used, it is tasteful and appropriate.

*Note: Art that is part of an advertisement is not considered in the scoring.*

- Captions and cutlines are visually related to illustrations they accompany, and those illustrations to the associated text.

#### 4. **Typography**

- Styles are employed to ensure the consistency of typographic elements.

*Note: To prevent improper font substitution, fonts should be embedded in PDF newsletters. To facilitate control over the reader's browser and to maintain the developer's styles, cascading style sheets should be used in HTML newsletters.*

- Typefaces are appropriate and readable.
- Size and leading of body type and display type (e.g., headlines and subheadings) are correct, consistent, and proportional to the page size.  
*Note: Point sizes used for body text, subheads, and headlines cue the reader to the organization of the text and make the information easier to read and access. Depending on the typeface and page size, type that is 9–12 points is generally used for body text, with smaller point sizes more appropriate with narrower columns. Type that is 14–18 points or larger is generally used for display type.*
- Bold and italic font styles are used sparingly for emphasis.

#### 5. **Delivery (Navigational Aids and Production Quality)**

- Navigational Aids

##### ***Paper newsletters***

- Include a table of contents and page numbers to aid navigation.
- Limit jumps (i.e., continuing an article on multiple pages).
- Include a table of contents with links to aid navigation.

##### ***Online newsletters***

- Include a table of contents with links to aid navigation.
- Limit scrolling and “drilling down” (excessive linking required to access a particular topic or subtopic).
- Limit the size of design elements (e.g., photos, animated art) so that speed of delivery (e.g., loading a page or downloading a file) is not adversely affected.

- Production Quality

Text and graphics in online and paper newsletters are of high quality and reproduce clearly. For example, characters are clear and sharp; halftones are crisp and of correct density.

***Paper newsletters***

- Double-sided, facing pages are scored higher than single-sided, corner-stapled newsletters.
- Paper is selected in an appropriate weight, texture, and color (e.g., white, pale yellow, light tan, very light gray); ink is dark and readable (black is preferable, or dark blue).
- All pages are free of unnecessary creases, smudges, and tears.
- Design elements are appropriate to the method of production; for example, large areas of black shading are avoided in a newsletter that is photocopied.

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## Scoring System

The competition manager assigns one judging team to each newsletter. Each judging team typically includes four judges: one judge who evaluates quantitative elements in Categories A and B, and three judges who evaluate qualitative elements in Categories C and D.

### **Category A. Fundamental Elements**

***Maximum score possible—20 points per issue***

Begin with 20 points and deduct 4 points for each missing element. For example, if an issue is missing one element, the score is 16; if two elements are missing, the score is 12; if five or more elements are missing, the score is 0.

### **Category B. Recommended Topics**

***Maximum score possible—20 points per issue***

***Chapter and Student Chapter Newsletters***

- ***Paper newsletters:*** Count the number of recommended topics present in an issue (up to 10 topics), and multiply this number by 2.
- ***Online newsletters:*** Count the number of recommended topics present in an issue (up to 12 topics), and multiply this number by 1.667.

***SIG Newsletters***

- ***Paper newsletters:*** Count the number of recommended topics present in an issue (up to 8 topics), and multiply this number by 2.5.
- ***Online newsletters:*** Count the number of recommended topics present in an issue (up to 10 topics), and multiply this number by 2.

### **Category C. Editorial Quality**

*Maximum score possible—30 points per issue*

Use a scale of 1 to 4 (where 1 = Poor, 2 = Fair, 3 = Good, and 4 = Excellent) to rate each issue according to the five criteria established for Category C. Total the raw score (maximum raw score per issue is 20 points), and multiply by 1.5.

### **Category D. Design and Delivery**

*Maximum score possible—30 points per issue*

- Use a scale of 1 to 4 (where 1 = Poor, 2 = Fair, 3 = Good, and 4 = Excellent) to rate each issue according to the five criteria established for Category D.
- Total the raw score (maximum raw score per issue is 20 points) and multiply by 1.5.

### **Final Score**

The competition manager computes an entrant's final score as follows:

1. Using the judging forms for Categories A, B, C, and D, add the three issue scores to arrive at a total score for each category.
2. Determine the average total score for each category, based on the number of participating judges.
3. Add the average scores earned in Categories A, B, C, and D to arrive at a final score in points (maximum final score for three issues is 300 points).
4. Divide the final score in points by 300 points to determine the final score, expressed as a percentage of points earned.
5. Determine if the final percentage earned is an award-winning score.