

The Pentacle Club Competition Rules

1 Entrants

The Pentacle competition is for solo magicians presenting a single act of no less than 8 minutes and no more than 12 minutes to a seated audience containing 3 judges.

Performers must be members of the Pentacle Club.

A table/chairs will be provided/removed from the space as required for each act.

The performance may be close up, parlour or cabaret magic, the only scale requirement being that the performer can carry on and off their own props as they enter and leave the performance area, in full view of the audience.

Acts are advised to aim for 10 minutes as outside of the 8 to 12 minute range an act will be disqualified.

There must be a minimum of 3 acts for the competition to proceed.

The competition should be planned for March to give members time to develop an act and get feedback.

2 The Organiser

At the beginning of each year a request will be sent out to see if anyone wants to run the competition. This will be via email and then at the first or second club meetings. If there are no applications, then a member of the committee will be chosen at the next available committee meeting.

The organiser's responsibilities are

1. Recruit entrants and make sure that they understand the rules. This is by email and via club evenings
2. Check up on entrants to make sure that they are developing and act or have one already. A mentor can be provided if available as part of the "Moving My Magic On" initiative.
3. Recruit a time keeper
4. Recruit a lay judge
5. Report back to the club committee status of the competition
6. Retrieve previously awarded cup in advance of the competition.

3 The Judges

The audience will be made up of any of the following

1. Other club members
2. Their guests for the evening
3. Other magicians who are not members of the club

The target is to have 4 judges, three of whom are magically knowledgeable and one (lay judge) of whom is a complete lay person who knows little to nothing of the craft.

The competition can continue if only 3 judges (as long as 2 are magicians) are available

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but the organiser should avoid this by having a backup judge in attendance.

Acts are judged on three criteria, all of which are marked out of 10:

● Entertainment Value

Most people know what this is but just in case, ask yourself questions like:

- Did the act keep you interested?
- Did the magic amaze you?
- Did you enjoy it?
- Would you want to see more?
- **Would you pay to go and see this act?**

● Thematic Coherence

In previous years the competitors have been judged on "presentation" but this is a very leading criteria. Asking whether a performer is smartly dressed will favour a turn of the century style act over a modern Street performer. Think of Paul Zenon in his leather jacket, Dynamo in his track suit.

Thematic coherence is whether the performance, props, costume and effects, all feel intentional and mesh together well.

Questions to ask yourself:

- Does the appearance match the character?
- Do the props match the act?
- Does the routine flow well together?

● Technical Strength

In previous years lay judges were not given the option of marking technical strength of the magic, based on the flawed assumption that they know nothing. However, previous lay judges have told me that they were given no way of reporting that they could blatantly see how a particular trick was done.

As such this criteria has a double meaning.

- For magically knowledgeable judges, it is assumed that you know roughly how the act is done and you are to report how skilfully the various sleights are performed.
- For lay judges this is where you mark people down for accidentally messing up a trick or revealing how it was done. Please wait to the end of the act before you mark this, as some performers may be getting things wrong intentionally to build up to a clever unexpected finale. If at the end you're just saying "how in the hell did they do that" give them 10.

Each judge adds up these three marks for each performer, giving them a total out of 30.

There is a separate "Guide to Marking Sheet"

4 The Time Keeper

The time keeper's role is to make sure that each performer keeps to the 8-12 minute minimum and maximum.

The time keep should stand at the back of the performance area in clear eyeline of the performer.

At 8 minutes they should display a Green Card (A4 size)

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At 10 & 11 minutes they should display a Yellow Card
At 12 minutes they should display a Green Card

Performers will not be stopped unless the organiser deems that they have gone on far too long past 12 minutes.

The time of each act should be recorded.

The time of an act must be recorded from a digital clock (stopwatch on a computer or Smart Phone) or purpose-built stop watch.

5 Placing Winners

When all the acts are finished the judges will meet to decide a winner using the following algorithm:

Each judge individually picks a 1st 2nd and 3rd place based on scores before seeing the other judges results. If a judge has scores that are equal for two or more performers, that judge may simply apply a personal preference based upon the criteria they think is most important for their own placement.

When all 4 judges have a 1st, 2nd and 3rd, the following happens:

If the judges agree totally, then the 1st second and third are decided easily.

Otherwise we use the trickle down algorithm.

A first place selection of each judge is given a gold chip, second place gets a silver chip and third place gets a copper chip.

First place is given to the performer with the most gold. if all performers have the same amount of gold, the silver chip is considered to be worth half a gold chip.

If this still does not resolve, the copper chips are considered to be worth a quarter gold chip.

If this still does not resolve we take the audience vote into account (see section 4)

After the winner is selected, all their chips are removed, and any gold chips left for other first place picks become two silver chips for that person's second place selection. This process is repeated using silver chips for second place, and copper chips for third.

6 Audience vote & comments

All members of the audience are allowed to pick a favourite and comment on individual acts.

Before the competition begins, everyone in the audience is given a number of slips. Each audience member receives several 'Comments' slips and a single 'Favourite act' slip.

Audience members can, if they choose, use a comments slip to mention things they liked or didn't like about a single act (this is why they get several slips).

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The favourite act slip is filled in by all audience members at the end as a way of breaking tied votes in the winner placement process. The judges do not fill in favourite act slips but they may, if they choose, fill in comments slips for one or more acts.

After the winners are announced, the judges score sheets will be kept for the archive as well as a tally of the audience favourite votes.

The comment slips will be collated by act and given to the performer if the performer wants them. If not, these slips are destroyed.

7 Tie Breakers

So, I'm sure you're all thinking, what happens if there is a tied vote from the judges AND they have an equal tally with the audience?

In this situation and only in this situation, two completely tied candidates will be judged by their official time.

The time keeper will start a stopwatch at the moment a performer walks into the performance space and will hit stop the moment they step out. This time is recorded and in the case of an absolute tie, the decision is based on how close to exactly 10 minutes the act is. To the millisecond if need be (admittedly, if it gets down to that point it might be down to the time keeper's own reactions, in which case the chaos involved is the equivalent of flipping a coin, which we would have to do anyway.

This should be considered good practise for performing in a Pentacle club show, where keeping on-time is of the essence.

8 Placement Examples

These examples use names Alice, Bob, Carol and Dan, as they are both the standard names used in cryptography examples, and at the time of writing, we have no members by these names.

Example 1	Alice	Bob	Carol	Dan
Judge 1	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	
Judge 2	1 st	3 rd	2 nd	
Judge 3	1 st	2 nd		3 rd

For Example 1 there is a clear winner, in the form of Alice. Also there is no gold carried over to the second round.

For the second round Bob is a majority second with two silver points from Judge 1 and 3. Bobs 3rd place nomination doesn't count towards anything.

For the third round Carol has a silver point left over, meaning her vote for 2nd counts as two votes for 3rd, totalling three votes for 3rd place over Dan's single vote for 3rd.

Example 2	Alice	Bob	Carol	Dan
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Judge 1	1 st	2 nd		3 rd
Judge 2	1 st	3 rd	2 nd	
Judge 3	1 st	2 nd		3 rd

For Example 2 the first and second rounds will play out the same as Example 1 but in the third round things change. Carol's 2nd place vote counts as two 3rd place votes, which match Dan's two 3rd place votes, and the decision for 3rd place goes to the audience favourite of the two.

Example 3	Alice	Bob	Carol	Dan
Judge 1	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	
Judge 2	3 rd	1 st	2 nd	
Judge 3	2 nd		1 st	3 rd

For Example 3 we have a close deadlock. Alice Bob and Carol have equal 1st and 2nd place votes. The audience favourite will decide 1st place in this instance. If the audience tally is in favour of Carol, Carol would take 1st, allowing Alice to win the second round and Bob to win the 3rd. If the audience tally is in favour of Alice, Alice takes 1st, Carol 2nd and Bob again gets 3rd.

Example 4	Alice	Bob	Carol	Dan
Judge 1	3 rd	2 nd		1 st
Judge 2	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	
Judge 3	2 nd	1 st	3 rd	

For Example 4 Bob wins the first round as his votes for 1st are equal to Alice's, but he has twice as many votes for 2nd. In the second round Alice and Dan's 1st place votes trickle down to give them each two additional 2nd place votes, but Alice's actual 2nd place nomination wins 2nd for her. In the third round, Dan's 1st is worth four votes for 3rd, and he takes the 3rd place.

Example 5	Alice	Bob	Carol	Dan
Judge 1	3 rd		2 nd	1 st
Judge 2	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	
Judge 3		1 st	2 nd	

For Example 5 we have a similar situation, but here after Bob takes 1st, Alice and Carol both have a pair of 2nd place votes, from a trickled down 1st and two Judges respectively. In this scenario, the audience tally makes the decision between Alice and Carol. As a result of this however, whichever one doesn't take 2nd is left with five 3rd place votes, and will defeat Dan's four.

Note that this means a consistently liked 2nd or 3rd place contestant can defeat an outlier given 1st by one judge but disliked by the other two.

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9 Awards

Only one trophy is awarded for this competition, although there are two trophies available:

- **The Sylvia Lawrence Memorial Trophy**
for table and close up acts
- **The Eric Widger Cup**
for stage and cabaret acts

The decision of which trophy is to be awarded is made based upon the nature of the act. Acts will be considered close up or table magic if either the magician or volunteers from the audience are seated at the table during performance, otherwise it is considered a stage or cabaret act.

If the table is used but no one sits at it (such as Tommy Coopers multiplying bottles act), or if the performer or volunteers are seated but without a table (such as Mark Raffle's linking rings or Slydini's paper balls over the head, respectively) it is still considered a stage act.

If there is argument within the judges about the type of act and a simple majority cannot be reached then the organiser has the final say.

The member with the highest marks get a certificate stating that they won the competition. If the average mark is 60% then the trophy is also awarded and their name engraved on the cup. The 60% grade has been chosen because that is the same as the magic circle entrance exam criteria for MMC (Member of the Magic Circle).

If the trophy is awarded in the previous year's competition will be retrieved from the past winner regardless of which award is granted on the night.

10 Periphery

On the following two pages are templates for judges score sheets, audience voting slips and comment slips. Be sure to bring plenty.

Act	Act Name	Ent.	Thm.	Tech	Total	Place	Notes
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							

Act	Act Name	Ent.	Thm.	Tech	Total	Place	Notes
1							
2							
3							
4							
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6							
7							
8							

Act	Act Name	Ent.	Thm.	Tech	Total	Place	Notes
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							

For calculating winners:

Acts	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Judge 1								
Judge 2								
Judge 3								
Audience								
Time								
Place								

Act:	
Comments:	

Act:	
Comments:	

Act:	
Comments:	

Act:	
Comments:	

Act:	
Comments:	

Favourite Performer	
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Favourite Performer	
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