

I.P.M.S.-L.I. - Long Island Scale Model Society

WHAT I.P.M.S.-L.I. and RepLIcon JUDGES LOOK FOR

compiled from sources including IPMS and LISMS, and enhanced May 2006 by Howie Belkin

I. General

1. Read the Rules! How can you win a contest, any contest, without knowing the rules? For example, in our contests we have “no sweeps.” This means that if you have more than one model entered in a category, only one of your models can win an award. Also, LISMS & IPMS do not require that models be made primarily from plastic but some other contests do. Don’t assume - read the rules.

Know that whomever is hosting a contest made their own rules. While the rules for LISMS Quarterly Club Contests remain pretty much the same from contest to contest, as does RepLIcon from year to year and the IPMS Nationals from year to year, they may be totally different than the rules another chapter uses for their club or show contests. While IPMS Region I rules remain basically the same year to year, a different chapter hosts it each year and usually makes changes. Region II or other IPMS Regions, much less AMPS, Figure or Auto clubs, can have similar or totally different rules and biases.

2. Get involved. We’re always looking for more people to judge. Usually, first time judges are part of a team with “experienced” judges. There is probably no better way to know what judges look for than to become one and see for yourself! Because there is a vast difference between what “the general public” sees vs what judges see when they get down to really eyeball a model. If you walk away from contests mad, or don’t participate any more, it’s nobody’s fault but your own. If you build models you can judge.

3. In our LISMS Quarterly Club Contest categories using 1st, 2nd, 3rd Places (123), your model is judged against whatever models entered in your category and skill level, with consideration to overall appeal, modeling skills and degree of difficulty. *Unless there is “stiff competition,” judges may be able to choose what-model-wins-which-award, without fine scrutiny.* Judges shouldn’t waste time when simple “eyeballing” shows pretty clearly which models should place. Where there is competition, the criteria below will be weighed. If two or more models are very close to equals, ties may be awarded. In fact we recommend ties rather than having to find the flimsiest of flaws to choose one model over another. Our Armor, Diorama and Figure categories will award multiple gold, silver and bronze (GSB) to reward models that show those levels of competence.

4. Above all else, judges should *use common sense and not throw out the model with the bath water!* A minor flaw or a few minor flaws should not totally disqualify a model unless other models in its category are done as well with fewer, less important or no flaws.

5. At times where there is extreme competition and only one model will be first, oft times the judges must reach for a really minute flaw (or reason) to choose the winner. You’re probably not going to see the flaw unless one of the judges points it out to you! Judges are subjective no matter how impartial they try to be, and can make the difference in results from one contest to another.

6. Put in writing any extra work you did. Don’t assume the judges know what you started out with and how you got to the finished product. Especially bring attention to and explain anything that is out of the ordinary and would attract the judges’ attention. Judges should note that if a model is done fairly well but has a marked “attention getter,” it probably has reason to be there. For example, an almost perfect C-47 with a star on upside down, may be true to the real aircraft. A seam on a T-34’s fuel tanks belongs there. Grumman F6F’s had a red attachment bracket for their pitot tubes... There is no such thing as “experten” modelers or what the public would call “know it alls.” Modelers don’t have to know the minutest trivial detail – whenever such criteria has been used, the expert has almost always been proven to be wrong – too late for the damage to be undone. Use common sense and artistic license.

7. All judging is done by the team method. Each team will consist of at least two experienced judges. At RepLIcon and other such shows that we may host, each judging team will be made up of members of different model clubs/chapters, whenever possible.

8. The Contest Chairman and Head Judges will choose and assign judges. No judge will judge his own models; nor should the modeler be near his model while it is being judged unless called over for clarification. Don't talk to judges during judges or it may be construed as trying to influence their decision which will cause your reputation irreparable harm.

9. Head Judges may be chosen by the Contest Chairman, and assigned responsibility for a segment of the contest (i.e. Aircraft Head Judge). Head Judges, and the Contest Chairman are responsible to see that models are in the correct categories (providing that the modeler has given appropriate information), that all models are considered, and that there is merit to the decisions made.

10. Models should not be picked up unless being moved into another category. Therefor, indicate AS OBVIOUSLY AS POSSIBLE if your model is not attached to the base, or the fuselage is not glued to the wings, or hull isn't glued down.

II. Judging Criteria

1. Flash, lumps from sprue trees, ejection marks, sink holes, copyrights, should be removed.

Seams, gaps and joints where a "model's" parts join are to look somewhat like a scale representation of what the "real thing" might look like. Armor kits that come with individual track links may need each and every link to be cleaned up. Ordinarily seams would be filled in smoothly with no traces of any joint lines, or that joint lines which belong, are "to scale." As you get into more competitive situations, know that the "bottom" of your model must be done well too.

2. Parts should be aligned. Wings should have the same dihedral (anhedral); fins/rudders, engine pods/cowlings, landing gear, wheels (especially if flattened), ship funnels and masts, rifles and bayonets, etc should line up properly... Tank wheels should sit on the tracks and the tracks should be flush to the ground and not bowed, they should sag where they should sag, should have no gap or overlap where links join... Car wheels also must line up, and should be clear of the fenders and body.

3. Paint. Judges usually look for brushmarks, paint that's too thin and transparent, too thick, too much overspray, orange peel, running, spotty or blotchy - and fingerprints - where they're not supposed to be... The finish should be consistently either gloss, semi or matte - unless depicting a model that is wet (rain, mud, a ship in water...) or the finish is consistent with the "real" thing. Well done, difficult paint jobs including natural metal, burnt metal or sparkling chrome should be noted.

Judges shouldn't nit-pick colors. You can debate "the real O.D." or "scale color" or a kaleidoscope of other points of light 'til you turn blue - but not at our contest. But modelers should be document particularly peculiar paint schemes.

4. Decals should be aligned properly, should conform to the surface of the model, and should appear as if painted on without bubbles or silvering. Clear film should be trimmed away, or eliminated by use of a "Future-floor-wax" or other method.

5. Canopies, AFV periscopes, windshields and clear parts should be clear or dirty to represent "glass," fit properly and be scratch free. Frames should be straight and crisp.

6. Judges shouldn't be able to see through your model unless it was that way on the real thing. e.g. wheel wells, jet intakes or cockpit floors should be sealed... AFV sponsons should be sealed; if you can see into the tank through hatches or the engine deck, close them, blank them off or insert figures, engines or details. The bottom of the model should be finished if it can be seen. Molded screens may be improved with actual screening...

7. Sanding Marks and Glue Stains should not appear. If a glue spot appears because of damage to a model transporting it to the contest, it should be noted and highlighted on the entry form – judges should cut you slack. Restore removed details (i.e. rescribe...)

8. Thin parts for scale effect (i.e. fins on bombs, rockets and missiles; sand shields and fenders on tanks...), gun barrels, exhausts and rocket thrusters should be drilled out, lights given a lens effect... Correct kit errors or contours... improve or remove and replace poorly molded on details...

9. Whether or not you weather is your choice, but avoid extremes of over-or-under-done unless you provide references. Look out for showing a pristine vet of 100 missions unless it's a model of one in a museum. Beware of showing metal beneath chipped off paint when the real thing was made of a woodlaminated. Some judges have preconceived preferences, especially when it comes to weathering. If you really want to win you should research and learn what the judges of shows you go to prefer.

10. Added details, aftermarket parts like resin, white metal and photo etched, should be precisely shaped or formed and abide by the same criteria the model itself adheres to. You should indicate if you used resin pop-in parts or created the details from scratch. Adding "stores" on a tank requires that they be tied down (not with a brand new looking "rope") and bedrolls and tarps should drape naturally conforming to the vehicle's shape rather than sitting there stiff as a board; adding missiles on a plane requires that seams be removed... add brake, cable, and electric lines, antennae, rigging... gas, brake and clutch controls but do so perfectly or risk losing the extra credit this work could have gained...

11. Interiors and/or cockpits that can be seen should be detailed, including instrument panels and dashboards.

12. Figures should not influence judges when judging a model *unless the figure is the entry, or part of a diorama*. When being judged, the basic criteria as appropriate is considered, plus how well their skin, eyes, hair and uniform has been done. Attention should be made to ranks, chevrons, epaulets, replacing poorly molded-on straps and equipment and replacing them with more realistic representation...

13. Bases and model presentations should only be taken into account in the diorama category. Even though a model ship is sitting in water, lack of working bilge pumps or lack of rust does not matter unless it's in a diorama category. Similarly, the base should be ignored if a soldier or vehicles depicted in snow, mud, desert sand, etc. unless entered as a diorama.

14. LISMS defines dioramas as when the base has had a *significant* amount of work done to it and/or suggests a *significant* story. For example an airplane on a pre-printed Verlinden carrier deck base is not a diorama, but by adding significant ground crew, an elevator, tow or armament vehicles, makes it a diorama. A waterline ship in water becomes a diorama if there are extremely rough seas or it is in a dock. Unfortunately the point where a base crosses the line to become a diorama is arguable. It is my contention that *every* model on a natural environment base tells a story if you use your imagination, and adding 1, 2, or ten figures does not a diorama make. So I stress the *significant* part of the definition/evaluation.

Dioramas are judged by basic criteria (all of the above) of the figure(s), model(s), groundwork - and how well they set together. And they're judged by the strength of the story. I apply the "don't throw the model out with the bath water" rule but not everyone else does. I would favor a diorama that is exquisitely executed, but has a couple of flaws and perhaps a weak story, over one that has a powerful story but the quality of workmanship isn't up to snuff. I would also favor a diorama that is quite simple, perfectly executed, but blows you away with its story. A good example of the latter was one of a ko'ed Russian KV-II, with Germans prying open the commander's hatch. I don't remember if you only saw his eyes or his entire face, but you could see the Russian crewman's fear inside the turret. The last word on dioramas: do the best you can on the basics and on presenting a powerful story.

15. "Collections" are defined by each show's host chapter. RepLICon '99 simply states that it consists of five or more models. Generally, a collection is judged by the quality of workmanship and how strong the relationship is among the models that defines it as a collection. For example, I could enter five models I built last year and call it "A collection of five models that Howie built." Workmanship being equal, someone else's collection of five Sikorsky helicopters from the R-4 to the Blackhawk represents a stronger theme and should win. Whether workmanship has more weight than "strength of theme" gets into arguable grey area that varies even from judge to judge.

16. Do working parts work, and did the modeler make it so from scratch? Judges should ask, what did the modeler begin with and what did it take to get to this finished level? You should provide the answers in photos and text.

17. It's my contention that if you build the model the way the model company provided it, or you used a reference that was incorrect, that you should not be knocked down or out. For example, if you built the original Italeri M-24 Chaffee in WWII markings, you shouldn't be penalized because Italeri provided post-war tracks. On the other hand, if you're going to "accurize" a model you could go on and on and correct everything - but do it well or you lose because your basic model skills were weak! If someone else brought in a Chaffee and "did it all" to perfection and you didn't, you lose!

Remember - this is only a hobby. Lighten up, whether you're a contestant or a judge. If you can't, and you need to win and win big all the time, then do "all of the above" perfectly and you *may* clean up, most of the time. The rest of us will enjoy looking at some pretty good models, share our tips with each other, be pleasantly surprised with an award from time to time and enjoy our hobby a heck of a lot more.

If you've been to enough shows you've seen the same model do well one time, not so well another time. It's not supposed to happen but in the real world, often it depends upon the very set of judges judging that model in that show, their mood that moment and who knows what else?! I can't stress too strongly that you should take the stress out, relax and enjoy - and know that if you abide by most of what was said here and try to get other judges to as well, then you'll begin to see more consistent results.

We are awarding GSB in Armor, Diorama and Figure categories which has become the standard in those categories. The other categories, particularly Aircraft, don't seem ready to leave the 123 system and by its very nature that generally, only one model can win 1st, one 2nd and one 3rd (though we offer ties). If ties are not awarded then there will be times when one model beats another for the flimsiest reason. Accept it or push for change to the GSB system!

And a last word - I recommend that if you feel a mistake was made, you should bring it to the Contest Chairman or someone in authority's attention. They may very well explain to your satisfaction that what happened was correct - or you may correct a wrong! Participate in the judging, speak up - and know that it takes a lot more than "luck."

Howie Belkin 5/06