

Training Guide: New Judges



Revised February 2023

AGS New Judge Training Program

Learning Objectives

- Participants will be completely familiar with the AGS Judging Handbook and know where to locate answers to questions regarding procedures and the roles and responsibilities of show chairs, judges, and clerks.
- Participants understand the importance of close examination, impartiality, and objectivity.
- Participants know how to evaluate and score raw and crafted gourds using the AGS Scoring Forms
- Participants understand the post-training activities they need to complete to advance from Apprentice Judge to Certified Judge.

Judging Handbook Review

During this workshop we encourage you to make written notes. Although this training does not include an opportunity to discuss revisions to the AGS Judging Handbook, you may come across things you would like to see considered for changing in the future. Send your ideas and suggestions to the AGS Judging Committee— email americangourdsociety@gmail.com to be considered by a future revisions committee.”

Section 1: Introduction to Judging Guidelines Handbook

Key Take-aways:

- Competitions may choose to follow or not to follow the AGS judging guidelines
- Shows should publish which of the 3 scoring options which will be used for judging
- AGS Judging Guidelines are published in the AGS Magazine and on the AGS website

Section 2: Judges (page 1)

Key Take-aways:

- Judges must be impartial & consistent
- Head Judge is appointed from available AGS certified judges
- Clerks must be able to keep clear and accurate records

Section 3: Competition Facility (page 2)

Key Take-aways:

- Categories in the competition will be clearly marked and divided so the judges and public can see what gourds are entered in the various categories
- Competition area should be isolated during judging

Section 4: Judging Authority (page 2)

Key Take-aways:

- The decision of awards by a judging team is final.
- Once announced, awards and ribbons are final and will not be withdrawn.
- In case of a clear error, duplicate awards (such as another first-place ribbon) may be given at the discretion of the head judge in order to correct errors. Head judge may assign a different team to re-judge the category in question.
- The head judge shall transmit the results of the judging to the chair of the show/event; the chair will accept the results without any modification or change.

Section 5: Prejudging Activities (page 2)

Key Take-aways:

- The head judge will meet with the judges, clerks & show chair in a private area prior to any judging activities.
- If it is very strongly suggested that there be several dry runs judging gourds not in competition to hone their scoring and coordinating the scoring approach.
- Judges should be reasonably available during the show to explain judging procedures.

Section 6: Judging Procedure (page 3)

Key Take-aways:

- Ideal judging team includes a minimum of 3 judges; several teams of judges will be used for competitions with many categories
- Judging teams include a clerk to record decisions and places ribbons with scoring & comment sheets.
- Judges may discuss the category/class with each other on the team, with the head judge, or clerk...but no others.
 - Individual judges score and clerk tallies the numbers and highest total score gets first place, and so on
 - Verbal consensus to rank the entries and clerk records the results. Someone needs to be identified to write feedback to entrant
- Judges should excuse themselves from judging a class if they (or a family member or close friend) have an entry in that class.
- Disqualifications must be discussed with head judge, and moving an entry to the proper class is optional, but recommended. Only Head Judge may move the disqualified entry.
- Judging considerations
 - Open-minded to the unique, unusual, different; appealing?
 - View up-close and from a distance
 - Impact, originality, applicability to category, quality of execution
 - Contribution to natural beauty of the gourd
 - Be fair, consistent and careful
 - Be conscientious and honest

Scoring Options

Key Take-aways:

- CRAFTED GOURDS: Detailed Scoring Form (same Criteria used on Medium and Short)
 - Overall appearance
 - Craftsmanship
 - Difficulty/level of effort
 - Featured Technique or Theme of category
- RAW & CURRENT SEASON GOURDS
 - Cultural perfection
 - Trueness of type
 - Cleanliness
 - Size, shape, color/hue, variety if part of class description
- MANIPULATED GOURD for JIM STORY AWARD
 - Cleanliness
 - Cultural perfection
 - Manipulation
 - Degree of difficulty

Section 7: Awards (page 5)

Key Take-aways:

- Show chair/committee determines & publishes individual categories and classes and maximum number of awards in each class or category
- Clerks tally scores and informs judges of the rank order of the entries; judges will confer in case of tie scores and decide on a tiebreaker
- Ribbons/awards are placed on or with the winning entries
- Names of artists not revealed if there are further awards (Best of Division, Best of Show, etc.) to be selected

Section 8: Combined/Overall Awards (page 5)

Key Take-aways:

- Best of Division: Selected by same or different team of judges from those entries that won Blue ribbons in that division (Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, Masters, and so on)
- Show chair/committee may have established certain awards that are cross-category, such as Best of Show
- Judges will consider all the first-place winners for any combined class awards, using same scoring criteria
- Once combined-class awards are decided, special awards are made. Best newcomer, Best of Show, President's award, Best related to show theme, etc are examples of special awards.
- Special awards are outside the authority of the head judge and judges. Show chair/committee may ask some or all of the judges to determine the winners of these special awards.

Section 9: Entries (page 6)

Key Take-aways:

- Entry rules are set by the show
- Entry tags are to be folded so that the name of the submitter is not visible to the judges during the judging portion of the show
- Late entries are not a reason to re-judge a class or category
- A gourd may be entered into only one category or class per show

Section 10: What Is Not Covered by These Guidelines (page 6)

Key Take-aways:

- Show chair/committee are to establish the classes, categories & qualification guidelines for entries; who may enter the competition, acceptance time, place and procedures; award types and quantities; entry fees; requirements for vendors/other to enter competition
- Show chair/committee are responsible for choosing winners of awards other than individual categories and best of category/class; establishing how and when entries are to be picked-up after the judging is complete

Section 11: Photography (page 6)

Key Take-aways:

- Gourds entered in competition are available for photography or sketching by anyone or any organization
- Photographs of gourds in competition may not be used by anyone for any income or profit producing activity.
- Fair use of photographs of gourds in competition includes newsletters & chapter websites.
- AGS recommends obtaining written permission from entrants for Chapter to take and use photographs of entries for future training or publicity purposes.

Section 12: Judging Crafted Gourds (page 7)

Key Take-aways:

- Unless otherwise state in a category description, the entry must be the sole work of the entrant
- Divisions by skill and experience vary by show; commonly Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, Master and Grand Master. Grand Master is often a non-judged display category for artists who have won numerous awards.
- Criteria for crafted entries include overall appearance, craftsmanship, difficulty/effort, & technique-specific/category-specific factors are the major aspects for evaluation.

Section 13: Judging Raw and Current Season Gourds (page 7)

Key Take-aways:

- Unless otherwise state in a category description, the entry must have been grown by the entrant

- Criteria for evaluation include cultural perfection, trueness of type, cleanliness & size, shape & color for the variety being entered.
- Show may specify different scoring criteria when the AGS criteria are not appropriate for a given category.

Section 14: Measuring Gourds (pages 8-9)

Key Take-aways:

- Length: measure from blossom end to, but not including, the stem.
- Height: measured in 2 ways and the longest measurement applies; from blossom end to beginning of stem, following the curvature of the gourd; from the highest point the gourd reaches when the gourds sits upright (stem not included in measurement)
- Circumference: measure around the widest part of the gourd when standing upright; Width: measured from the widest point when sitting upright
- Straight gourds include those with a curve of less than 4" from an imaginary straight line

Section 15: Judging Manipulated Gourds (page 10)

Key Take-aways:

- Unless otherwise state in a category description, the entry must have been grown by the entrant.
- There are two categories for Jim Story Award Manipulated Gourd Awards. (1) Single and (2) Multiple gourds
- In addition to evaluating the entries for cultural perfection & cleanliness, manipulation is evaluated for degree of difficulty, innovation, uniqueness and originality.
- A manipulated gourd may have more than one manipulation technique
- A multiple manipulation entry has 2 or more gourds that are manipulated and inseparable. Gourds may have been grown in the same or different years.

Section 16: Natural Materials (page 11)

Ask your students to glance over this section on page 11 and offer any observations. Point out things that are important to remember or things that might be controversial.

Key Take-aways:

- Examples of natural materials: linen or cotton cord, pine needles, animal or plant parts, and flowers
- Examples of non-natural materials: paints, dyes, glass, plastic, wire
- Show chair/committee may state exceptions (such as a plastic stand, artificial sinew to bind pine needles)
- If the category states "substantially" or "predominantly" natural materials, then the piece should be at least 90% natural materials.

Section 17: Definitions (page 11)

Key Take-aways:

- Raw gourd: hollow, dried shell of a fruit in the Curcubitaceae family

- Current season gourd: a recently harvested gourd which still contains the green coloring and water weight
- Cleaned: surface dirt and membrane removed
- Carving: removing outer shell of a gourd
- Woodburning: marking the surface of a gourd by a heat tool
- Cut: cut completely through the shell, can be partially cut or cut into two or more pieces

Sections 18-21: AGS Apprentice, Certified Judges & Requirements (pages 12-13)

Key Take-aways:

- Apprentice judges are AGS members who have attended a new judge training program, completed a Quiz and notifies AGS when they have been a judge or clerk within 2 years of training
- Certified judges have judged or clerked at least x1 every 3 years, participates in a continuing ed class at least x1 every 3 years, notifies AGS when they have clerked or judged & maintains AGS membership
- Continuing education can be led by any AGS certified judge; participants can be apprentice judges, certified judges or entrants/gourd artists who want to learn how gourds are evaluated.

Verbal Quiz

1. If a competition uses the AGS standards, must a blue first-place ribbon be awarded?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No, if announced ahead of time, a first-place ribbon may be withheld *7.3.
2. Are clerks involved in selecting the award winners?
 - a. Yes, they have a vote as do the judges on the team
 - b. No, and they may not participate in deliberations
 - c. No, unless the judges ask them a question *6.5
3. Once an award is announced, may it later be withdrawn?
 - a. No, but the head judge may award a duplicate in case of error *4.4
 - b. Yes, upon joint approval of head judge and show chair
 - c. Yes, but only in the case of a clear error
4. How are entries disqualified by the judges?
 - a. Judges are not allowed to disqualify entries
 - b. Judging teams may disqualify entries on their own
 - c. Judging teams may disqualify entries after approval of the head judge, who may or may not choose to make the decision *6.6.1 & 6.6.2
5. If a gourd considered for disqualification is instead moved to another category that has already been judged, can the category be re-judged, or are the awards already final?
 - a. The new gourd can only be considered for duplicate awards, since awards are final
 - b. Since awards have not yet been announced, they are not final, and the entire category should be re-judged. *6.6.3

6. Scoring is numerically based. In case of ties, what happens?
 - a. Duplicate prizes are automatically awarded
 - b. The clerk will determine which gourd received more high grades
 - c. The judging team will break the tie by a discussion; duplicate place awards may be given *7.3

7. How is the height of a gourd measured?
 - a. From the blossom end to the stem protrusion, following the gourd's curvature
 - b. To the highest point when the gourd sits on a surface, stem not included
 - c. Measure as in both a & b, then the longest measurement applies *14.5

8. If a category specifies "only natural materials may be used," must 100% of the materials be natural?
 - a. Yes
 - b. At least 90% natural materials would fulfill that description, unless otherwise stated in the Show Book. *16.5

9. May a gourd be entered in competition if it has been entered in the past?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Only if it has been published that decision in the Show Book.

10. How are decisions on major awards (such as Best in Division and Best of Show)?
 - a. It must be made by the same judging teams that judged that division
 - b. It must be made by a different judging team than the team that judged that division
 - c. The show committee or Head Judge decided how these awards are to be determined, and has the option of asking the the same or different judging team(s) to participate and make the decision *8.1

11. When measuring the height or length of a gourd, is the stem ever included in the measurement?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No *14.2

12. May a visitor to the gourd competition take photos or sketches of the entries?
 - a. Yes, for any purpose
 - b. No
 - c. Yes, but not for a profit-producing activity *11.2

13. What is required for the awarding of an AGS-sponsored award?
 - a. An AGS Certified Judge or AGS officer to be part of the decision process *8.4
 - b. An AGS Certified Judge or AGS officer to be present
 - c. Both a and b

14. Which are qualities of a good judge? Choose all that apply.
 - a. Ability to remain impartial and fair
 - b. Willingness to keep the judging deliberations confidential
 - c. Ability to work graciously with other judges and consider differing opinions
 - d. Willingness to eat a raw gourd
 - e. Only a, b, and c *6.7

15. According to the AGS Judging Handbook what is the recommended size of a judging team?
 - a. A minimum of 3 judges and 1 clerk *6.1

- b. One judge and 1 clerk
- c. The handbook does not state a recommended size of a judging team

Judging by Category - Review

The points below are the core/universal judging considerations, that when combined with the technique-specific observations should help artists recognize the strengths and weaknesses of the art brought for a mock judging activity.

- It should be remembered that unconventional methods can often achieve extraordinary results.
- Be open minded and don't let personal preference overly influence your judging.
- Every judge's opinion is valued; don't be intimidated by someone with a different opinion.

The Gourd

- Appropriateness for the project (thickness matters for some techniques)
- Are the stem, body and blossom end all clean?
- Inside clean and finished?
- Does it sit steady?

Neatness

- Holes, use of clay, pyrography, etc. is neat & sharp or does it have ragged edges?
- Technique is uniform (versus overlapping or has uneven gaps)
- Finish is neat and has a smooth finish

Presentation & Design

- Proportional; is perspective correct?
- Complexity
- Created with technical soundness?
- Does the technique (per category) predominate?

Details Matter

- Color done well (even or patchy?)
- Does glue/adhesive show in the finished piece?
- Finish compliments the design (no runs or fingerprints?)

Skill & Artistry

- Degree of difficulty
- Originality



Note: The above judging considerations will be applied to each of the techniques and are also relevant when scoring an entry during a competition. You will see that they will apply primarily to the criteria of Craftsmanship and Difficulty/level of effort on the Scoring Forms



Judging Carving on Gourds

- Basic relief carving is removing the background around a focal subject. The removed area can be smooth or stippled
- Advanced relief carving includes carving of the main subject and will give an illusion of depth
- Fretwork, Filigree, Cutwork are gourds with the predominant carving to be all the way through the surface of the gourd
- Chip carving is hand carved with gouges
- Examine quality of the cuts or carving (errors, tool marks)
- Examine the smoothness of the cut edges and borders
- Evaluate the appeal of the overall design (are the proportions and perspective correct?)
- Note the stability and quality of the gourd itself for the carving
- Note if the gourd been finished neatly both inside and outside
- Determine the degree of difficulty and originality



Judging Clay on Gourds

- Basic clay work may include use of molds or stamped out with a cookie cutter and simple designs
- Advanced clay work are clearly hand-sculpted and dimensional pieces
- Examine the edges of the clay for smoothness; joints are smooth and neat; no unintentional cracks
- Look for fingerprints or debris is stuck in the clay; can you see any parts of the armature?
- Evaluate the appeal of the overall design (are the proportions and perspective, correct?)
- Note neatness vs. sloppiness for painting, finishes, glue
- Note the stability (does it want to tip over?) and quality of the gourd itself for clay
- Note if the gourd been finished neatly both inside and outside;
- Determine the degree of difficulty and originality



Judging Coiling on Gourds

- Open coiling is when you can see the material that is being coiled, such as pine needles, horsehair, Danish cord
- Closed coiling is when the core is completely covered by waxed linen or other thread
- Floating coils are possible for both open and closed coiling and are coils that float/not attached to the previous coil
- Examine the stitches for uniformity, tightness and being evenly spaced
- Do you see knots? Are the stitches as neat on the inside as they are on the outside?
- Do you see evidence of wax on the gourd surface or excess wax on the coils (that should have been cleaned up)
- Examine the coils for uniformity in size, neatness of the coiled material (pine needles should not be twisted, tips neat)
- Do you see the core material in closed coil?
- Evaluate overall appeal and design, quality and neatness of finish (inside and outside)
- Determine the degree of difficulty and originality



Judging Use of Dyes, Inks and Finishes on Gourds

- Beginner Division – One or two spots of uneven application or smudge may be forgiven.
- Intermediate and Advanced Divisions – By this level the artist should not have any uneven applications of color or color application out of a designated area.

Dyes & Inks Used as a Solid Color

- Is the color uniform with no overlapping marks or runs?
- Are brush or applicator marks showing?

Dyes & Inks Used to Paint a Design

- Is the dye or ink contained within wood burned lines*? (wood burned lines are not a requirement, but when woodburning and dyes/inks used together the color should stay within the lines for a neat appearance)
- Are areas not dyed free of any smudges or spots of dye?

Clear Finishes – Water, Alcohol and Oil Based

- Is the finish smooth and neat with no sagging of finish or runs?
- Is there lint, dust specks or grit on the finish?
- Does the glossy or satin finish complement the style of the gourd?
- Was the finish evenly applied with no missed areas?
- Does the surface feel very smooth?



Judging Painting with Acrylic Paints or Colored Pencil on Gourds

- **Beginner** – Artist generally use the “colored book” technique. This is where the artist will use only one color for one area and another color for other areas. There is no shading or highlighting to add interest to their piece. The colored pencil lines will be noticeable.
- **Intermediate** – Artist adds shading and highlighting (where appropriate) but not at an advanced level. The colored pencil piece should appear painted. The pieces are nice, but do not have the detail of the advanced level
- **Advanced** – Artist adds several levels of shading and highlighting (where appropriate). The colors should be blended into the adjoining color. Their piece should have interest, focal point(s), and illusion of depth. The colored pencil piece should appear painted.



Judging Pyrography on a Gourd

- Burning techniques consist of three basic styles; line, shading and stippling.
- Examine the burning for it being done cleanly without obvious errors such as hot spots, scorch marks, uneven thickness of lines, uneven shading and color?
- Is the pyrography placed on the gourd in an attractive manner?
- Has the artist used lights, darks and mid-tones, combined with soft and hard edges to create the illusion of depth and perspective and overall composition?

- If color has been added, does it add to the pyrography or take away from the overall appearance?
- Has the artist used a fresh approach or is the piece lacking in originality?



Judging Weaving on Gourds

- Basic weaving is often a simple over/under pattern regardless of the variety of materials being used
 - Advanced weaving involves a definite design with the placement of colors to create the design, the use of a varied pattern of weaving such as a Twill where the weavers go over and under different numbers of spokes resulting in a pattern.
 - Teneriffe weaving is created in a circular manner where the warp and weft are fibers on the surface of the gourd or around an opening on the gourd. There are recognizable designs, like a 4-leaf clover, and freestyle which is random.
- Examine the proportions of the gourd and weaving – top heavy or disproportionately small? Are the spokes neat and evenly spaced?
 - Are there obvious errors in weaving, spokes come through the sides of the gourd, or did the gourd need to be repaired?
 - Do the stitches in Teneriffe appear neat and have an even tension; are any knots visible?
 - Does the tension of the weaving seem too tight or too loose? Is it level or wavy?
 - Are stray materials that need to be trimmed on the inside or outside?
 - Evaluate overall appeal and design, quality and neatness of finish (inside and outside)
 - Determine the degree of difficulty and originality



Verbal Quiz

1. Which of the following are examples of workmanship defects? Choose all that apply.
 - a. Pencil marks are visible
 - b. Excess glue is visible
 - c. Varnish or color runs are evident
 - d. All of the above *
2. All of the following are examples of poor use of the gourd, EXCEPT?
 - a. Design is positioned low on the gourd
 - b. Inside of gourd is painted, but not cleaned
 - c. Repairs have been made to the gourd*
 - d. A stand is needed to stabilize the gourd
3. Which of the following are evidence of a degree of difficulty for pyrography?
 - a. No hot spots
 - b. Shading with light, mid and dark tones *
 - c. Larger pieces are more difficult than a small gourd
 - d. Followed a pattern perfectly
4. When you look at an entry for evidence of Craftsmanship, which is NOT one of them?
 - a. Attention to detail
 - b. All techniques applied with equal quality of work
 - c. Inside and outside are neatly finished
 - d. Artistic design *
5. If an entry is placed in a multimedia Halloween category which of the following meet that requirement?

- a. A wood burned witch is on a gourd birdhouse
- b. Carving, clay and color are a used on a warty gourd witch*

Apprentice Judge – Next Steps

- A. Why an “Apprentice Period?”
 - a. One 4-hour class is insufficient, in most cases, to make a fully-qualified judge
 - b. Listening to other judges, seeing what they see, learning from their expertise can enhance your skills
 - c. Confidence in your own observations will increase with experience
- B. Steps Apprentice Judges must take to advance to the Certified Judge level
 - a. You have up to 2 years to complete these requirements
 - b. Participate as a Clerk or Judge in a Gourd Show (We recommend being a clerk before being a judge, unless the person has prior judging experience)
 - c. Successfully complete a Final Exam
 - d. Participate in any refresher, practice judging, or continuing education sessions that may be offered by the chapter.
- C. How to get these experiences
 - a. Certified and Apprentice judges need to participate in Practice Judging Sessions—they can be arranged practice sessions at chapter or patch meetings, or prior to a gourd show.
 - b. You may travel to any gourd show to obtain clerking & judging experience.
- D. Recordkeeping of completion of these requirements
 - a. As each experience requirement has been completed, you need to notify the Judging Coordinator with the details so that your record will be updated
 - b. Details needed: date, location, name of leader &/or other participants or head judge’s name
 - c. Judging Coordinator’s contact information: Terry Noxel (noxelts@aol.com) 100 Barton Rd, Windsor, NY 13865; 607-655-1159/home or 610-304-4419/cell
 - d. Notify Judging Coordinator of changes in your contact information (email/phone/address)