

COLLEGIATE NEWS CONTEST RULES

Who can enter?

The contest is open to all ONPA Collegiate Press members currently in good standing. It is not open to individual students.

What can be entered?

All issues published from Jan 1st, 2025 to Dec 31st, 2025, are eligible. Entries must be produced by full or part-time staff. You may not submit an entry that was in the 2025 Collegiate Contest.

When is the entry deadline?

All entries must be submitted by 5:00 pm Mon., March 2nd, 2026 - at which time the online system will close. No extensions.

Where is the online registration?

Go to www.newspapercontest.com/onpa. Use the Association Code "orennews". After registering, you will receive an email that you will need to confirm in order to login to the contest system.

What are the costs for entering?

The online registration will compute a flat fee of \$90 per paper. Payment is due upon submission of all entries.

How should payments be made?

Credit Card:

From the online contest website, click "Entry Billing" to view your total. Credit card payments are accepted via PayPal.

NOTE - This method includes a 3.5% processing fee.

Check:

Make checks payable to "Oregon Newspapers Foundation" or "ONF", memo "Contest fee", and mail it to ONPA.

Who will judge the contest?

This year the judges are member of the New Jersey Press Association and other journalists across the country. They will be assigning a 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winner for each competition. . Honorable mentions will be awarded at the judges discretion.

All awards will be presented during the 2026 ONPA Collegiate Day program. Location and date TBD.

How are the groups defined?

Entries in each category will be judged in three groups, sometimes called "Circulation Groups":

Group 1: Four-year college or university, daily newspapers

Group 2: Four-year college or university, non-daily newspapers

Group 3: Two-year college, non-daily newspapers Entries are separated into these groups and each combo of category and group is considered a competition. If the number of entries in a given competition is insufficient, those entries will be judged with those in the next higher group in that category.

What if something goes wrong?

Any entry submitted in violation of these rules may be disqualified. Written complaints regarding disqualifications or alleged rules violations must be submitted to the Contest Committee c/o ONPA within 30 days after award presentation. Only written complaints will be considered, and the decisions of the Contest Committee will be final.

How should entries be prepared?

This year ALL entries need to be prepared electronically. Pay careful attention to the instructions within each category to make sure you are entering the appropriate item(s). Also pay particular attention to the need to combine multiple files into one before submitting. Remember, judges will view your entries online, so make the file sizes as small as possible before combining them.

Accepted Formats

Entries may be submitted as a PDF, URL, or JPEG (for photos). URL submissions must link directly to the item and must include login information in the explanation field if there is a paywall or required registration. Entries will be disqualified if there is a paywall and no login information is provided.

Photography Entries

In addition to uploading full-pages, individual photo files may be uploaded as part of an entry but not as a replacement for a fullpage. Entries that do not include the uploaded full newspaper page will be disqualified.

Additional Information

You can find additional information on preparing entries - such as how to make PDF files smaller, extract particular pages, and how to combine PDF files - in the Frequently Asked Questions section at the end of this packet.

Register Online: www.newspapercontest.com/onpa

CATEGORY DESCRIPTIONS

Categories are grouped into four divisions: 100 General, 200 Editorial, 300 Photography, and 400 Graphics. Entries are to be submitted as PDF files, URL's, or JPEG (for photos/graphics). Up to **three entries** are allowed per publication unless otherwise noted.

101 General: General Excellence

This year the General Excellence category will be based on a point system. The winner of this award will be the publication that earns the highest number of points accumulated from winning other categories.

The first place winner in a category will receive 3 points, Second place receives 2 points, and Third place receives 1 point.

102 General: Best Section

Each entry consists of two examples of the entire section as described below. Any regularly designated section of the paper, such as features, arts and entertainment, sports, or editorial page, is eligible for this category.

Dailies:

Submit two examples of the same section, and do not duplicate the day of publication if the section appears more than once a week. (For example, do not submit two Tuesday sections)

Non-Dailies:

Submit one section from each of two different months within the designated period.

Judging will be based upon writing quality, breadth of content coverage, use of photography, headlines, and layout.

103 General: Best Special Section

Any progress, historical, building, anniversary or other special section may be entered. Each entry must be a complete section.

Judging will be based upon quality and depth of supporting editorial material; skill in handling tie-in advertising; makeup, typography, and overall layout.

201 Editorial: Best Headline Writing

Each entry must include four headlines by the same headline writer, along with their accompanying stories, including any jump pages (if print). Each newspaper may submit up to two entries. Judging will be based on clarity, aptness and creativity, versatility, and consistent quality among entries.

202 Editorial: Best Writing

This category's emphasis is exclusively on writing; entries should represent the best writing in the Oregon collegiate press.

The nature of the event covered should not dictate the value of the writing. Any type of story or feature may be submitted. Each entry consists of three examples of a single writer's work.

Judging will be based on craftsmanship & writing excellence.

203 Editorial: Best News Story

Each entry consists of a single news story that appeared in only one issue, including jump pages. It may be an example of spot, investigative, or enterprise reporting.

Each newspaper may submit up to two entries.

Judging will be based on the quality of reporting, significance of information, effectiveness of quotes, clarity of writing, importance of story to readers, timeliness, and impact of headline & lead.

204 Editorial: Best Series

Submit your best examples of investigative, enterprise, analytic, or news feature reporting, or continuing coverage of a sport news event, that extended over at least 2 issues of your paper. Each entry should include your complete coverage, including jump pages, of one event or subject during the contest period.

Each newspaper may submit up to two entries.

Judging will be based on quality of reporting, clarity of writing, importance of story to reader, timeliness, & impact of headlines, lead and graphics.

205 Editorial: Best Feature Story

Each entry consists of a single feature story, including jump pages, that appeared in one issue of your newspaper.

Judging will be based on the quality of writing, content, original thinking, imagination, amount and quality of research, and emphasis on display including heads, art, and photos.

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CATEGORY DESCRIPTIONS

206 Editorial: Best Editorial

Editorials should reflect the opinion of the paper and are normally unsigned. The editor or adviser may submit a short statement of conditions explaining the context of the editorial. Each entry consists of a single editorial, plus jump pages.

Judging will be based on the subject matter, significance & importance to readers, quality of writing, originality, imagination, and impact or effectiveness of editorial overall.

207 Editorial: Best Sports Story

Each entry consists of a single sports story, with jump pages, that appeared in one issue.

Judging will be based on the quality of reporting, significance of information, effectiveness of quotes, clarity of writing, importance of the story to readers, timeliness, and impact of headline and lead.

208 Editorial: Best Review

This broad category may include reviews of music, movies, restaurants, theatrical performances, or any other cultural experience typical of campus life. Each entry consists of a single review, including jump pages.

Judging will be based on clarity of opinion, selection of significant features, and engaging writing.

209 Editorial: Best Columnist

Each entry represents a single columnist's work on any of a variety of topics (i.e. sports, politics, student life, etc.). Columnist must be a regular staff member of the paper, and each column must be a regular feature of the paper. Columns should reflect the opinion of the columnist and are normally signed. Each entry consists of two columns by a single columnist, with jump pages.

Each paper may submit up to two entries.

Judging will be based on the quality of writing & information, level of thoughtfulness, imagination, and overall originality.

301 Photography: Best Spot News Photo

The subject must be unposed for this category, as this is a competition for spot news photos. No commercial photos are eligible. Each entry consists of one photo on the full page which it was published. Each newspaper may submit up to two entries.

Judging will be based on news value, originality, imagination, as well as technical quality.

302 Photography: Best Sports Photo

No commercial photos are eligible in this category. Each entry consists of one sports photo on the complete page on which it was published. Each newspaper may submit up to two entries.

Judging will be based on news value, originality, imagination, as well as technical quality.

303 Photography: Best Feature Photo

This is the category for posed or unusual photos, including photo collages. No commercial photos are eligible. Each entry consists of one feature photo on the complete page on which it was published. Each newspaper may submit up to two entries.

Judging will be based on news value or human interest quality, originality, level of imagination, as well as technical quality.

304 Photography: Best Photography

The emphasis in this category is exclusively on photography. Any type of photo may be submitted. The nature of the event covered will not dictate the value or quality of the photography. Entries should represent the best photography in the collegiate press. Each entry consists of three examples of a single photographer's work on the full pages (or webpages) which the photos were published.

Judging based on craftsmanship and photographic excellence.

401 Graphics: Best Design

The single entry in this category consists of two complete issues, one published in two completely different months.

Judging will be based on the quality of page design, makeup, typography, the relationship of design to content, and how effective the use of photography and illustrations is.

402 Graphics: Best Graphic

Entries consist of locally produced hand-drawn or digital graphics, color or black & white, including any illustrations, photo illustrations, charts/graphs, or supporting art (not including cartoons) designed to help explain the news, feature, or story it accompanies. Each entry consists of one graphic, with the story's jump pages.

Judging will be based on impact, attractiveness and relevance.

403 Graphics: Best Cartooning

Cartoons may be editorial or entertainment oriented, or a combination, but they must appear as a regular feature of the newspaper. Each individual entry includes three examples of the work of a single cartoonist.

Judging will be based on the quality and thoughtfulness of ideas expressed, craftsmanship, imagination, and originality.

404 Graphics: Best House Ad

This category represents the best of the ads you ran on your paper's behalf, regardless of what part of your operation you are promoting. You may submit any size ad, single or series, black & white or color. Each entry consists of one ad on the complete page on which it was published.

Judging will be based on originality and execution of the idea.

405 Graphics: Best Website

The single entry in this category is the address of your paper's home page.

Judging will be based on design, content, interactivity, ease of use, and connection with the school community.

Register Online: www.newspapercontest.com/onpa

How does registration work?

This year we have switched to a new online contest platform – www.newspapercontest.com/onpa. Here you will find a link to register along with specific instructions for registration. It is important to note that each contest is completely separate and will require a separate registration and email address. You will not be able to use the same email for say the general contest AND the Best Ad Idea Contest.

What file formats are accepted for uploading?

Acceptable formats include PDFs, URL links, and JPEG (for photos and graphics). Note that a PDF or JPEG ensures our judges will be able to view your entries. A URL bringing the judge directly to the item, without paywalls or registration required, is also accepted. If your site does have a paywall or required registration, you must include login information in the explanation field when submitting the entry. Entries will be disqualified if there is a paywall and no login information is provided.

How can I make my PDF smaller?

For categories not pertaining to photography, graphics, or design we recommend optimizing the PDF through the PDF editor settings/tools - there is usually an "Optimize" option under File or Tools. There are also a number of online PDF compressors that allow you to quickly reduce the size of your PDF. We suggest www.pdfcompressor.com. This method will effect photos and graphics so do not use where those elements are being judged. Most newspaper PDFs include high-resolution grayscale or CMYK images for printing. However, PDF contest entries will be viewed and judged on a computer monitor, which displays at low resolution (72-96 dpi) in RGB color. Changes in resolution and color mode of images are the most effective ways to reduce file size without sacrificing quality.

In PDFs, the text is always clear regardless of resolution. The resolution only relates to photos and graphics. Reducing resolution by half reduces image file size by 75%. The recommended max. resolution of 96 dpi can be changed via the PDF editors settings/preferences.

Color Mode: Converting from CMYK to RGB color will reduce the image file size by another 25%. This can be done in the editor settings.

Before submitting be sure to check the final entry PDF against the original (prior to compressing or changing resolution/color) to make sure are satisfied with the results. If you have questins or need assistance please email onpa@orennews.com.

What is the most efficient way to collect entry files?

Extract entry-related pages from any multi-page PDFs or delete non-entry pages. Give each resulting file a clearly descriptive name. Combine into a single PDF file the pages that compose each article. See below for instructions on extracting/combining PDFs.

Once you've created all your entry PDFs, redistill each one as explained above to reduce it to the smallest practical size. It is not productive to try to reduce the sizes of individual files before combining them into complete entries. Like all changes, combining pages can increase the overall file size. You may also upload a URL link to your entry as an extra precaution. How do I extract pages from full-issue or full-section PDFs?

Open the PDF file in Acrobat and choose "Extract Pages..." from the Document menu. This will allow you to save individual or sequential pages in separate files anywhere on your computer.

Alternatively, you can extract certain pages by going to File > Print and select Print to PDF under the printer option. Simply select the pages/page range to print to PDF.

How do I combine PDFs into a single file?

Open the PDF that you want to appear first in the entry. Choose "Save As..." from the File menu and give it the name of the final entry. Choose "Insert Pages..." from the Document menu, choose the file that you want to appear next in the entry, then specify where that file should be inserted. When all insertions have been made, save & close the PDF. Make sure the final PDF is optimized for size/resolution.

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