



Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association

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BETTER NEWS CONTEST RULES

Who can enter?

All Oregon Newspaper Publisher Association members, Newspaper Association of Idaho members, and all Washington Daily Newspapers

What can be entered?

All issues published during the year 2025 are eligible. Entry content must be produced by full- or part-time employees.

What is the entry deadline?

All entries must be prepared electronically and uploaded & submitted by 5 pm Monday, March 16, 2026, at which time the online system will close.

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 respond to in order to login to the contest system. NOTE - each contest will require a different email to register.

What is the cost for entering?

A general registration fee of \$25 plus \$7 per entry.

How should payment be made?

Credit Card: From the online contest website, click "Entry Billing" to view your total. Credit cards are accepted via PayPal. NOTE - this method includes a 3.5% handling fee calculated at the end. Each contest will require a separate payment.

Check: Make checks payable to "Oregon Newspapers Foundation" or "ONF", indicate "Contest fee" on its face, and mail it to ONPA.

Payment Deadline: March 31, 2026

How are circulation groups defined?

Daily is defined as 4+ days a week published
Multi-weekly is 2-3x a week published
Weekly is 1x a week published.

Division A- Dailies - 9,000+ and up, paid print circulation
Division B- Dailies - 6,000- 8,999, paid print circulation
Division C- Dailies - 1,863-5,824 paid print circulation

Division D- Multi-Weekly - 4,500- 14,500 - paid print circulation
Division E - Multi-Weekly - 1,355-4,499- paid print circulation
Division F- Weekly - 5,001- 13,500 paid print circulation
Division G- Weekly - 3,000-5,000 paid print circulation
Division H - Weekly 2,000-2,999 paid print circulation
Division I - Weekly 1,000-1,999 paid print circulation
Division J- Weekly 500-999 paid print circulation

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.

When will awards be presented?

Judging will be completed by April 30, 2026. ONPA will then notify publishers which of their entries received awards. Awards will be presented at the Annual Convention, time & place TBD.

How should entries be prepared?

This year ALL entries need to be prepared electronically - the only exception being the General Excellence category. 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. 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 (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

Photography entries should include two components: the full-page article that the photo appears on AS WELL AS the individual photo file in JPEG or PNG format. Entries that do not include both 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 several PDF files - in the Frequently Asked Questions page located at the end of this packet.

Register Online: www.newspapercontest.com/onpa



CATEGORY DESCRIPTIONS

All entries need to be prepared electronically.

All specifications are outlined in the category description below.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

Each newspaper may submit up to **five entries per category** unless otherwise noted.

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.

Written complaints ONLY. Any decisions made by the Contest Committee will be final.

101 General: General Excellence

PDF Entries. This category represents the highest award presented to Oregon newspapers, and entries should truly be the best examples of the industry.

Submit three complete issues, selected as follows.

Dailies:

Choose an issue from February 2025, one issue from the week of May 18-24, 2025 **OR** Oct. 5-11 2025 and one issue from October 2025. Do not duplicate any days of publication. For example, if you submit a Sunday issue from February 2025 your other two issues should be from days other than Sunday.

Non-Dailies:

Choose an issue from each of the following months: February 2025, September 2025, and December 2025.

Judging will be based on general and departmental news, reproduction excellence, advertising expertise, editorial comment, general appearance, makeup and style, photos and graphics, and thoroughness of local coverage.

102 General: Best Special Section or Issue

Any progress, historical, building, anniversary, festival, or other special edition may be entered, in any format. Each entry consists of a complete PDF copy of one section or issue.

Judging is based on quality & depth of supporting material, handling of tie-in advertising, makeup, and typography.

201 Editorial: Coverage of Business/Economic issues

This category emphasizes the newspaper's role in covering America's free enterprise system, with emphasis on local activity. Coverage may include local business, agribusiness, employment & labor issues, or general economics.

Each entry may include an individual story, feature, editorial, or series of articles.

Judging in this category will be based on the quality of reporting, originality of the idea, clarity of writing, level of importance of the issue to readers, and the impact of headlines & graphics.

202 Editorial: Best Editorial

Each entry consists of up to three full-page examples (including jump pages) of editorials written by one individual. Combine pages into one file.

Multiple entries by the same writer are **NOT** allowed.

Judging will be based on the quality of writing, originality, imagination, subject matter, and importance to readers.

203 Editorial: Best Editorial Page

This entry consists of three full-page editorial pages published any day or month in 2025.

Note - Dailies:

Each page should be from a different day of the week.

Judging will be based on overall strength and relevance, the editorial leadership, local interest (as shown by letters, guest and staff columns), and the presentation.

204 Editorial: Best Educational Coverage

This category is for your best examples of education-related reporting. The subject can be hard news or feature. Each entry may consist of an individual article or short series reflecting coverage.

Judging will be based on importance to readers; originality; clarity of writing; and thoroughness of reporting.

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CATEGORY DESCRIPTIONS

205 Editorial: Best Enterprise Reporting

This category is for your best examples of enterprise and investigative reporting. Keep the subject to "hard news." If the story carries to subsequent issues, include the continuation(s) as part of the entry.

Judging will be based on quality of reporting, clarity of writing, depth of research, timeliness, importance of story to readers, and impact of headline.

206 Editorial: Best Feature Story - General

Each entry consists of all pages of a single general feature story (including sports), and sidebars may be included.

Judging will be based on quality of writing; content, originality, imagination, amount & quality of research, and display quality including heads, art, & photos.

207 Editorial: Best Feature - Personality

Each entry consists of a single feature story involving a personality (including sports), and sidebars may be included.

Judging will be based on quality of writing; content, originality, imagination, amount & quality of research, and display quality including heads, art, & photos.

208 Editorial: Best Headline Writing

Each entry consists of six headlines by one headline writer. Include the full page containing each headline, plus all story jump pages.

Judging will be based on clarity, aptness & creativity, versatility, and consistent quality.

209 Editorial: Best Lifestyle Coverage

Each entry consists of an individual article or a series on a single topic. Stories may originate from any section and should analyze or examine trends in the community or society.

Judging will be based on thoroughness, use of artwork and/or photographs, and relevance to a community.

210 Editorial: Best Local Column

Columns may be on a single topic or a variety of topics, including sports, business, general, music, the arts, etc. They must be written by a regular staff member and be a regular feature of your paper. Each entry consists of three columns highlighting the work of a single columnist.

Judging is based on quality of writing, originality, & imagination.

211 Editorial: Best Sports Story

Each entry consists of the best single sports story (with jump pages) published in one issue.

Judging will be based on quality of reporting, clarity of writing, importance to reader, and impact of headline & lead.

212 Editorial: Best Spot News Coverage

Entries in this category will consist of one or more stories related to a single news topic and appearing in a single issue of the paper or on a web page posted on a single date. Entry consists of full published page(s) and URL(s) where judges can access the entry.

Judging will be based on quality of reporting, clarity of writing, timeliness, importance of story to readers, effective quotes, and impact of headlines.

213 Editorial: Best Writing

The emphasis of this category is exclusively on writing, and entries should represent the best writing in the industry. The nature of the event covered should not dictate the quality or value of the writing. There are no limitations on the types of stories or features - but all must be written by a regular staff member. Each entry consists of three examples (with jump pages) of a single writer's work.

Judging will be based on craftsmanship and writing excellence.

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CATEGORY DESCRIPTIONS

214 Editorial: Baker Family Public Service Journalism

This prestigious award will be one that can only be entered this year by Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association and Newspaper Association of Idaho Newspapers. (Washington State info to come from WNPA) There will be 1st, 2nd and 3rd place awards for Oregon newspapers as well as a 1st, 2nd and 3rd place for Idaho Newspapers. This is the only award that won't be a joint competition. It also can be entered by any members of the ONPA or NAI. Public Service Journalism is journalism that achieves a positive result. This can include raising awareness of critical issues, sparking public dialogue, influencing policy or providing practical solutions that lead to tangible changes. Results also encompasses how the reporting benefits the community or advances public understanding in meaningful ways. This might be a focus on a problem or project that prompted government or community action to correct or accomplish it.

***Up to five supporting pieces may be submitted per entry along with a written paragraph about how the story came to be, what was done to cover the story, and the specific impact/results it made.**

Judging will be based on significance of the results, research put into the story, creativity, force & clarity of effort shown by the reporter/paper. Up to five supporting pieces may be submitted per entry.

A-Mark Foundation Prize Details:

First Place \$5,000 for the journalist(s), plus \$2,500 for news outlet

Second Place \$3,000 for journalist(s), \$1,500 for news outlet

Third Place: \$2,000 for journalist(s), \$1,000 for the news outlet



215 Editorial: Best Story of the Year

The emphasis in this category is on pure journalistic excellence: writing, information gathering, and being in the right place at the right time.

It is open to both General and Associate Members in three groups: Daily, Multi-Weekly, and Weekly. It recognizes one story as the most outstanding based on both presentation and topic. Entries must be a single story, but maybe one of a series. These stories may be entered in other categories as well.

Each newspaper is limited to a **single entry**.

Judging will be based on the compelling qualities of the story, how well it holds the reader's interest, quality of reporting, clarity, quality of writing, and the story's impact.

216 Editorial: Best Government Coverage

Each entry consists of a single story (plus any pertinent sidebars) that report(s) on actions of a state, county or city/local legislative elected or appointed body. One entry per newspaper.

Judging based on clarity of writing & thoroughness of reporting, including any enterprise by the reporter in providing information not included in government handouts. A brief explanation of the situation (setting the context and explaining any obstacles encountered) may be included to help judges evaluate the entry.

301 Graphic Arts: Best Page One Design

Each newspaper should submit one entry containing the front page from each of three issues published any three days during the contest period.

Judging will be based on use of headlines, use of photography, content, makeup, and typography.

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CATEGORY DESCRIPTIONS

302 Graphic Arts: Best Graphics

Entries should exemplify the best use of locally produced hand or digitally-generated graphics. Each entry consists of a full page (plus jump pages) containing a color or black & white illustration, chart, graph, or other supporting art by one artist.

Judging will be based on impact, attractiveness, and relevance.

303 Graphic Arts - Best Feature Photo

This is the category for "artsy" and unusual photos. No commercial photos are eligible. Each entry consists of a full published page containing the entered photo in context and may include an original of the photo in baseline JPEG format for judges' review.

Judging will be based on news value or human-interest quality, originality & imagination, and photo technical quality.

304 Graphic Arts: Best News Photo

Subjects must be un-posed for this category: this competition is for news photos only. Photo must be a breaking news photo. No commercial photographs are eligible. Each entry consists of a full published page with the entered photo in context & an original of the photo in JPEG format.

Judging will be based on news value, originality & imagination, and photo technical quality.

305 Graphic Arts: Best Photo Essay

Each entry may be made via PDF's of the newspaper page or web page. Online slide shows and commercial photos are not eligible. PDF entry consists of full published pages containing one example of a single story told through multiple photos, with or without text. Entries may also include JPEGs originals of photos for baseline review for judges.

Judging will be based on news value or human-interest quality, originality & imagination, and photo technical quality.

306 Graphic Arts: Best Sports Photo

Each entry consists of a PDF of one full published page containing a single photo or up to three photos in a continuous series. Please be sure to include the original(s) of the photo(s) in baseline JPEG format. No commercial photos are eligible.

Judging will be based on news value, originality & imagination, and photo technical quality.

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ONLINE CATEGORIES

Each of these entries must consist of a single web address (URL) from which the judge can access the material. Please note that if your site has paywall or requires registration you must include login information in the explanation field for the judges. Entries without will be disqualified.

For each entry in categories 402, 403, and 404, create a presentation with a link you will provide for the judge. Place copies of all materials to a temporary area on your newspaper's website. They must remain in place until after the convention. If those copies span more than one web page, create another page that links to each page of materials. Judging will be based on the criteria given for the category, and not on the quality of the entry presentation itself.

Only one entry is allowed in each online category. No entry can be submitted in more than one category.

401 Best Overall Web Site

The entry in this category should be the address of your newspaper's home page. The judge will be allowed to go through and view the entire site at an unspecified time during the judging period.

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

402 Best Web Project

This entry consists of your online presentation of a single topic. Projects should be innovative, visually appealing, and sufficiently interactive to engage readers.

The entry presentation may include a short verbal description of the project and a description or images of any related promotion done in print.

Judging in this category will be based on innovation, visual quality, interactivity, and effectiveness.

403 Best Online Multimedia Element

This entry is a single online element - such as a slideshow, video, or audio, used to tell a story that serves the community. It may be part of a larger project or stand on its own. The entry presentation may include a short verbal description.

Judging will be based on visitor experience & engagement, and on creative use of technology.

404 Best Online Coverage of Breaking News

This entry presents online coverage of a single news event within a 24-hour news cycle. This may include the first online news bulletin, any multimedia or social media elements through which the story was developed, and the ultimate web presentation of the story. The entry presentation may include video, audio, photos or photo galleries, partial or full web pages, or screenshots of presentations (including Twitter or Facebook updates).

Judging will be based on quality of coverage, interactivity, and creative use of technology & resources.

Sweepstakes Award

3 Groups: Daily (A & B), Multi-Weekly (D), and Weekly (E - H)

This award is based on a point system: 3 points per first-place award, 2 points per second-place award, and 1 point per third-place award. General Excellence and Best Story of the Year are not counted toward this Award.

There is no fee for this category.

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Frequently Asked Questions

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 questions 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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