



Judge's Handbook

Last updated: 2/28/2026

Basic Philosophy

As the Owner and Producer of the Midwest Master/slave and Midwest Person of Leather Contests, Midwest Leather Kink Alliance is committed to providing the Leather, BDSM, Kink and M/s communities with Midwest ambassadors who will represent the title systems with integrity and competence.

The Midwest Master/slave and Midwest Person of Leather Contests are accessible and ethical. All contestants are treated with kindness and respect. The Owner of the Midwest contest monitors the state contests to be sure that they also have this level of integrity.

These titles are not about a particular “look,” dress, body type, gender or sexual orientation. Contestants are not required to have a formal “platform”; however, questions from the judges during the Interview portion of the contest regarding any specific plans or goals the contestants might have should they win the titles are appropriate.

The holders of the Midwest Master/slave and Midwest Person of Leather titles serve as mentors, educators, role models and spokespeople throughout their title year. As such, one of the most important attributes of the titleholders should be the ability to clearly and effectively communicate about who they are and how they live in community.

The **Midwest Master** and **Midwest slave** will serve as representatives of the Master/slave lifestyle. They will be expected to clearly and effectively communicate—within the BDSM, Leather, and M/s communities—what it means to live and identify as Master/slave or Owner/property, both in personal practice and public presence.

The **Midwest Person of Leather** will be selected based on their ability to articulate their values, passions, and commitments, and to make a meaningful impact within their communities. This title is a celebration of the rich diversity of the Leather world. The Midwest Person of Leather will demonstrate and express what it means to live as a Person of Leather in community.



Midwest Master/slave Contestant Requirements

1. A contestant pair must self-identify as Master and slave or Owner and property. It does not mean they need to use these specific terms to address each other, for example the Owner may be addressed as Sir or Ms or Ma'am, not Master or Owner. These terms are not indicative of any particular sexual orientation or gender presentation.
2. A contestant pair must have been in a self-identified Master/slave or Owner/property relationship with each other for at least 1 year prior to running for the Midwest Master/slave title and individually each must have been in the Leather and/or M/s community for a minimum of 5 years.
3. The contestant pair must have been selected by the State in which they live as the current year's State Master/slave titleholders in order to compete at the Midwest M/s Contest.
4. Contestants must be a minimum of 21 years of age.



Midwest Person of Leather Contestant Requirements

1. A contestant must self-identify as a Person of Leather and have been a member of the Leather Community for a minimum of 5 years.
2. The contestant must have been selected by the State in which they live as the current year's State POL titleholder in order to compete at the Midwest POL Contest.
3. A contestant must be a minimum of 21 years of age.

Requirements of the Midwest Master/slave and Midwest Person of Leather Titleholders

1. Midwest Titleholders must be willing to travel to a minimum of 4 events or M/s, leather/SM group meetings or events to represent the titles. One of the 4 events must be Midwest Leather Kink Alliance the following year.
2. Should an Midwest Titleholder become unable to carry out the requirements of the title, the Owner/ Producer will determine in what manner the title will be represented for the remainder of the year in question.
3. The Midwest Titleholders are strongly encouraged to attend more than the minimum number of groups/events and to seek out every opportunity to speak on Master/slave or Owner/property relationships as Midwest Master/slave and Diversity and Inclusion in the Leather Community as Midwest Person of Leather.
4. The Midwest Titleholders will be provided with a travel fund in an amount determined by the Owner/ Producer.
5. No commercial use may be made of the Midwest titles. The Midwest Titleholders during and following their title year may not financially profit by the direct use of the logo, name of the contest system or name of their title nor may they associate the logo, name of the contest system or name of their title with any monetary based work.
6. The Midwest Titleholders are representatives of the community. As such, the Midwest Titleholders must protect SPLF, the title and community from unfavorable publicity or focus. Titleholders must present themselves in the community with the utmost of ethics and integrity.

The Structure of the Midwest Master/slave and Midwest Person of Leather Contests

1. The Midwest Master/slave Contest is made up of five judging categories: Interview; Presentation; Speech; Pop Question and M/s Dynamic. Each of these categories is described in greater detail under the “Judging Categories” section of this Handbook.
The Midwest Person of Leather Contest is made up of five judging categories: Interview; Presentation; Speech; Pop Question and Leather Lifestyle. Each of these categories is described in greater detail under the “Judging Categories” section of this Handbook.
2. In addition to their performance in the five judging categories, two other aspects of the contests will impact a contestant’s score:
 - Meeting Contest deadlines/complying with Contest rules: Contestants are required to meet all contest related deadlines. Failure to comply with any Contest rule or deadline will be reported to the judging panel. The judges may use this information as a part of the interview and may factor this information into their scoring at their discretion.
 - Thursday night at Midwest Leather Kink Alliance, the contestants will be given the opportunity to introduce themselves on stage. Contestants will have a maximum of 2 minutes total to make their introduction (MWM/s 2 min per pair combined). The form and content of the introduction is up to the contestants; however, props or sets of any kind are not permitted. While there is no deduction for too short or too long of an introduction, the Contestant’s representation goes to the M/s Dynamic (IMs) or Leather Lifestyle score (MWPOL) with regard to how the contestants presented themselves on stage.
3. There are seven judges for the contests. A format of scoring commonly known as “Olympic scoring” is used, i.e., the high score and low score for the contestant in each judging category is thrown out and the remaining five scores are averaged, giving a composite score for each category. The contestant composite scores for the five categories then are added to give a final overall score. A perfect overall score would be 500. The contestant pair with the highest overall score using Olympic scoring will be the winner.
Judges are encouraged to consider scoring within a range as follows:
Based on a category with 100 possible points

A	95
B	85
C	75
D	65
F	50
4. If a judge becomes incapacitated during the contest, or if for any reason the Owner/Producer in her sole discretion determines a judge is unable or unwilling to carry out their duties as a judge, that judge will be withdrawn from the contests and their scores will be discarded. The remaining 6 judges will

continue to score the contests under the Olympic scoring system, with the high and low scores of the remaining 6 judges dropped from the calculations. The Owner/Producer reserves the right to define the duties of a judge of the contests and to determine if a judge is able and/or willing to carry out those duties. The Owner/Producer further retains the right to remove from the judging panel any judge who in their judgment is unable carry out those duties.

5. Contestants for the Midwest Master/slave Contest will be given a joint score in all categories, as well as a joint overall score, rather than assigning separate scores for the Master and slave. Thus, the points indicated in parentheses following each judging category described in the next section represent the total maximum points a Master/slave pair may be awarded in that category, based on the performance of both the Master and the slave. For example, for the On-Stage Pop Question category, the Master and slave contestant pair will receive a single, joint score of up to 75 points based on their responses to the questions they are asked.
6. In the event of a tie score between two or more contestant pairs, the winning pair will be the one with the highest overall score, without using Olympic scoring. Thus, in the event of a tie, the scores of the tied pairs in each of the 5 contest categories will be recalculated, without dropping the high and low scores. The resulting composite scores for the tied pairs then will be averaged, again without dropping the high and low scores. The pair with the highest overall non-Olympic score will be the winner.
7. If there is only one contestant/pair running for the Midwest Master/slave or Midwest Person of Leather title, they must receive a final overall score equal to at least 70% of the total possible. A perfect overall score would be 500; thus, the contestant/pair must receive a final overall score of 350 in order to be awarded the title.
8. If a contestant is late for any portion of the contest, the contest will not be delayed and the contestant will be awarded zero points for that category. The contestant is provided with a 5 minute leeway before declared late and zero points awarded.

Expectations of the Judges at the Midwest Master slave and Midwest Person of Leather Contests

- Judges will treat the contestants with kindness and respect.
- Judges will arrive on-time and participate fully in each judging component.
- Please observe the contestants before MWLKA out and about at other events as well as social media.
- Do some research! Learn about the contestants before you arrive at MWLKA.
- While discussion is fine, we expect you to make your own decision. Judge collaboration is not permitted. We asked you to judge because we respect your evaluation and your score.
- Confidentiality is of primary importance. We require that Judges hold in confidence all information they receive about the contestants and do not discuss this information outside of Judge deliberations before, during and after the contest including with contestants. Toward this commitment, all Judges are required to sign a confidentiality agreement during the Judges' Meeting at MWLKA.
- Judge scores will be provided to the contestants who request them within 1 month of the contest conclusion. Scores will be anonymous with judge identification redacted.

Midwest Master slave Contest - Judging Categories

1. Interview with Judges (150 points) 30 minutes per contestant pair, callback maximum 5 minutes
 - Questions should be directed to both the Master and the slave. A single judge does not have to ask both the Master and slave a question, but the judging panel as a whole should endeavor to ensure that both contestants are being asked and are answering questions.
 - Given the nature of this title, questions are likely to focus on Master/slave relationships and issues in these relationships. However, questions addressing broader Leather/BDSM topics or history are also appropriate.
 - Questions about sex or play in general or with any of the judges are inappropriate; do not ask them. Also avoid asking contestants to name something about each judge.
 - Suggested criteria for judging include:
 - Are the contestants able to think on their feet and give a responsive answer to the question asked?
 - Are the answers clear and understandable?
 - Are the answers factually correct? (If applicable.)
 - Does the body language of the contestants reinforce the answer or does it detract from the message?
 - Do the contestants seem reasonably relaxed and engaged in responding to the questions?
 - Do the contestants' answers evidence passion and enthusiasm about the possibility of representing the Master/slave community as titleholders?
 - Do the contestants' answers demonstrate that they self-identify as a Master/Owner or a slave/property?
 - Remember: a good answer is not necessarily an answer you agree with.
 - The Contestant Interviews are open to all attendees registered for Midwest Leather Kink Alliance. However, handlers, support persons, etc. for contestants may only attend their own contestant's interview.
2. Speech (100 points)
 - Both the Master and the slave are required to give a short speech (with each speech being 2 minutes or less) on the topic(s) of their choice. The Master and the slave are not required to speak on the same topic or any specific topic.
 - If a contestant's speech exceeds 2 minutes, the contestant will be allowed to continue with a live mic and the tallymasters will be notified that the contestant went over time. The judges will not penalize

the contestants for going over and will judge them on the quality and content of the speech only. The deduction will be made by the Tallymaster to the final composite speech score as follows:

Overtime by 1 seconds to 15 seconds	No penalty
Overtime by 16 seconds to 60 seconds	5 points deducted per contestant going over
Overtime by 61 seconds or more	10 points deducted per contestant going over

- No props or sets may be used during a contestant's speech.
- The contestants are permitted to have helpers in the audience indicating time markers during the speeches. The judges will not penalize the contestants in any way for making use of timekeepers.
- Suggested criteria for judging include:
 - Do the contestants speak clearly?
 - Do the contestants use appropriate gestures and body language that help communicate the message of their speeches?
 - Are the speeches well organized and understandable?
 - Do the contestants demonstrate through their speeches passion and enthusiasm about the possibility of representing the Master/slave community as titleholders?
 - Was the content of the speech relevant to living at Master and slave or Owner and property?

3. Presentation (100 points)

- The presentation category is designed to judge the contestants' ability to speak in a seminar type format on Master/slave relationships. The contestants are required to make a brief (no more than 10 minute) presentation on any topic relating to Master/slave relationships. Both the Master and the slave must speak during the presentation.
- The contestant pair is permitted to use a device to aid them in keeping time during their presentation and will not be penalized in any way for doing so.
- Contestants are permitted to use props or visual aids in their presentations but are not required to do so. The Midwest M/s Contest will provide a flip chart and markers. Contestants must provide any and all other handouts, props or visual aids, at their expense.
- Contestant pairs are permitted to use handouts but are not required to do so. If a contestant pair chooses to use handouts, it is the responsibility of the contestant pair to bring enough copies for at least the judges of the Contest. If a contestant pair chooses to use props or other visual aids, the contestant pair is responsible for obtaining and bringing those items, including any equipment necessary to present the visual aid such as an easel, flip chart, projector, screen, etc. The cost of all handouts, props and other visual aids will be the responsibility of the contestant pairs. Contestants will be given 5 minutes to setup prior to the start of their presentation.

- At the end of a contestant pair’s presentation, the contestants will call for questions from the audience and manage the room recognizing audience members to ask their questions. Before beginning the Q&A session, the Contest Director will remind the audience that questions should relate to the topic of a contestant pair’s presentation.
- Questions must relate to the presentation topic.
- Judges will not ask questions of the contestant pairs in this judging category unless there are no questions from the audience. Contestants handlers and support team are not permitted to ask questions.
- The Contest Director will monitor the question-and-answer time, and their decision on the propriety of a question from the audience or judges is final. The time for questions and answers will not exceed 5 minutes for any contestant pair.
- The purpose of allowing audience questions during the Presentation Category is to allow the judges to evaluate the contestants’ ability to think on their feet and respond to the kind of questions likely to be asked of the titleholders when they speak on Master/slave relationships to community leather/BDSM groups. It is not intended as an opportunity for the audience to “sandbag” any contestant pair or to attempt to help out one contestant pair at the expense of another.

- If the presentation exceeds 10 minutes, the contestants will be allowed to continue and the tallymasters will be notified that the contestants went over time. The presentation will not be interrupted.

The judges will not penalize the contestants for going over and will judge them on the quality and content of the presentation only. The deduction will be made by the Tallymaster to the final composite presentation score as follows:

Overtime by 1 seconds to 15 seconds	No penalty
Overtime by 16 seconds to 60 seconds	5 points deducted per contestant going over
Overtime by 61 seconds or more	10 points deducted per contestant going over

- The Contestant Presentations are open to all registered attendees for Midwest Leather Kink Alliance. However, handlers, support persons, etc. for contestants may only attend their own contestant’s presentation.
- Suggested criteria for judging include:
 - Is the presentation organized and understandable?
 - Do the contestants speak clearly and use appropriate gestures and body language to communicate their message?
 - Does the content of the presentation demonstrate that the contestants have given some thought to the message they are trying to communicate?
 - Are the contestants comfortable with answering audience questions and do they give organized and understandable responses?

4. On-stage (“Pop”) Question (75 points)

- Both the Master and the slave will be asked an on-stage or “pop” question. The kinds of questions often tends to evoke humorous responses from contestants.
- The questions will be provided by the judges and/or Owner/Producer of the Midwest Master/slave Contest.
- Suggested criteria for judging include:
 - Do the contestants speak clearly?
 - Do the contestants look comfortable being asked to respond to a question without time to prepare?
 - Do the answers given demonstrate a quality or characteristic that would be an asset to the titleholders, such as humor, logical thinking, knowledge in a particular subject area, etc.?

5. Dynamic (75 points)

- Contestants will be observed by the judges throughout the weekend, both in and out of formal contest events, and will be judged on how they interact and present themselves as Master and slave or Owner and property to the public.
- Judging in this category begins Thursday evening, when the contestant pairs introduce onstage at the Opening Ceremonies.
- No particular protocol or form of dress is considered to be “correct” or “incorrect.”
- The judging sheet for this category will be turned in at the beginning of the contest on Saturday night, to be tallied with the scores for the other categories.
- Suggested criteria for judging include:
 - Do the contestants appear to be comfortable interacting with each other and the public as Master and slave?
 - Does the dynamic appear to be natural for the contestants, or does it appear to be something created for the contest?

Midwest Person of Leather Contest - Judging Categories

1. Speech (100 points)

- Each contestant is required to give a short speech (2 minutes or less) on the topic of their choice from the stage.
- If a contestant's speech exceeds 2 minutes, the contestant will be allowed to continue with a live mic and the tallymasters will be notified that the contestant went over time. The judges will not penalize the contestant for going over and will judge them on the quality and content of the speech only. The deduction will be made by the Tallymaster to the final composite speech score as follows:

Overtime by 1 seconds to 15 seconds	No penalty
Overtime by 16 seconds to 60 seconds	5 points deducted
Overtime by 61 seconds or more	10 points deducted

- The contestant is permitted to have helpers in the audience indicating time markers during the speeches. The judges will not penalize the contestant in any way for making use of timekeepers.
- Suggested criteria for judging include:
 - Does the contestant speak clearly?
 - Does the contestant use appropriate gestures and body language that help communicate the message of their speech?
 - Is the speech well organized and understandable?
 - Does the contestant demonstrate through the speech passion and enthusiasm about the possibility of representing the community as Midwest Person of Leather?

2. Interview with Judges (150 points) Limited to 30 minutes, callback maximum 5 minutes

- Questions should focus on community contribution, information about the Midwest Person of Leather title, leather history and personal history. However, questions addressing broader leather/BDSM topics are also appropriate.
- Judges are encouraged to ask questions relating to the goal of the Midwest Person of Leather title which is promoting diversity within the Leather Community.
- Questions about sex or play in general or with any of the judges are inappropriate; do not ask them. Also avoid asking contestants to name something about each judge.
- Remember: a good answer is not necessarily an answer you agree with.

Suggested criteria for judging include:

- Is the contestant able to think quickly and give a responsive answer to the question asked?
 - Is the answer clear and understandable?
 - Is the answer factually correct? (If applicable)
 - Does the body language of the contestant reinforce the answer or does it detract from the message?
 - Does the contestant seem reasonably relaxed and engaged in responding to the questions?
 - Do the contestant's answers demonstrate that they self-identify as a person of leather?
 - Do the contestant's answers evidence passion and enthusiasm about the possibility of representing the community as Midwest Person of Leather?
- The Contestant Interviews are open to all persons registered for Midwest Leather Kink Alliance. However, handlers, support persons, etc. for contestants may only attend their own contestant's interview.

3. Presentation (100 points)

- The presentation category is designed to judge the contestant's ability to speak in a seminar type format on Leather and BDSM. The contestant is required to make a brief (no more than 10 minute) presentation on any topic relating to Leather or BDSM.
- The contestant is permitted to use a device to aid them in keeping time during their presentation and will not be penalized in any way for doing so.
- The Contestant is permitted to use props or visual aids in their presentation but are not required to do so. The Midwest Contest will provide a flip chart and markers. The Contestant must provide any and all other handouts, props or visual aids, at their expense. The Contestant will have 5 minutes to setup prior to the start of the presentation.
- The Contestant is permitted to use handouts but are not required to do so. If a contestant chooses to use handouts, it is the responsibility of the contestant to bring enough copies for at least the judges of the Contest. If a contestant chooses to use props or other visual aids, the contestant is responsible for obtaining and bringing those items, including any equipment necessary to present the visual aid such as a projector, screen, etc. The cost of all handouts, props and other visual aids will be the responsibility of the contestant.
- At the end of a contestant's presentation, the contestant will call for questions from the audience and manage the room recognizing audience members to ask their questions. Before beginning the Q&A session, the Contest Director will remind the audience that questions should relate to the topic of a contestant's presentation. Contestants Handler and support staff are not permitted to ask questions.
- Questions must relate to the presentation topic.
- Judges will not ask questions of the contestant in this judging category unless there are no questions from the audience.
- The Contest Director will monitor the question-and-answer time, and their decision on the propriety of a question from the audience or judges is final. The time for questions and answers will not exceed 5 minutes for any contestant.
- The purpose of allowing audience questions during the Presentation Category is to allow the judges to evaluate the contestant's ability to think on their feet and respond to the kind of questions likely to be asked of the titleholders when they speak on Leather and BDSM to the community in an educational setting. It is not intended as an opportunity for the audience to "sandbag" any contestant or to attempt to help out one contestant at the expense of another.
- If the presentation exceeds 10 minutes, the contestant will be allowed to continue and the tallymasters will be notified that the contestants went over time. The presentation will not be interrupted.

The judges will not penalize the contestant for going over and will judge them on the quality and content of the presentation only. The deduction will be made by the Tallymaster to the final composite presentation score as follows:

Overtime by 1 seconds to 15 seconds	No penalty
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- The Contestant Presentations are open to all registered attendees for Midwest Leather Kink Alliance. However, handlers, support persons, etc. for contestants may only attend their own contestant's presentation.
- Suggested criteria for judging include:
 - Is the presentation organized and understandable?
 - Does the contestant speak clearly and use appropriate gestures and body language to communicate their message?
 - Does the content of the presentation demonstrate that the contestant has given some thought to the message they are trying to communicate?
 - Is the contestant comfortable with answering audience questions and do they give organized and understandable responses?

4. On-stage ("Pop") Questions (75 points)

- Each contestant will draw a pop question which they will answer onstage. The kinds of questions often tends to evoke humorous responses from contestant.
- The questions will be provided by the producer of the Midwest Person of Leather Contest, with input from the judging panel.
- Suggested criteria for judging include:
 - Does the contestant speak clearly?
 - Does the contestant look comfortable being asked to respond to a question without time to prepare?
 - Do the answers given demonstrate a quality or characteristic that would be an asset to the titleholder, such as humor, logical thinking, knowledge in a particular subject area, etc.?

5. Leather Lifestyle (75 points)

- Contestants will be observed by the judges throughout the weekend, both in and out of formal contest events, and will be judged on how they present themselves and interact with the public, how they interact with their fellow contestants, and how they represent themselves as a Person of Leather.
- Judging in this category begins at Thursday evening meet and greet. The judging sheet for this category will be turned in at the beginning of the contest on Saturday night, to be tallied with the scores for the other categories.
- Suggested criteria for judging include:
 - Does the contestant appear to be comfortable speaking about themselves?
 - Does the contestant interact well with the public? With the other contestants?
 - Does their representation of leather appear to be natural or does it appear to be something created for the contest?