

OCNA General Excellence Criteria

The following criteria will be used to judge all
General Excellence Categories.

Front Page	150
Community News	150
Ed. & Op. Ed Pages	100
Presentation	100
Photography	100
Advertising Content	100
Advertising Design	100
Classified Advertising	25
Local Features	50
Sports Coverage	25
Arts Coverage	25
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Total	925

Judging Criteria:

1. Front Page - (15%)

First impressions are lasting.

2. Community News - (15%)

A good newspaper should provide news content that is relevant to the community and gives a clear reflection of the nature and the people of the area it serves.

Judges should look for:

News stories or articles that are relevant to the community. Leads should be tight and intriguing. Writing must be simple and straightforward. Each story must provide a complete understanding of the event or issue.

Design should be clean and sharp with simple, uncluttered mastheads. Lead stories and pictures should feature prominently. Creative use of spot colour which contributes to a powerful image or front page is an asset.

Photos, black-and-white or colour, must be judged on news or feature content, composition, cropping, quality, size and placement. Static colour photos used only to put colour on the front page do not warrant extra consideration. Deduct points for ads only if they interfere with or overpower news elements.

A powerful headline should easily identify lead story. Heads should be informative and pull readers into stories. Watch for: words in headlines spaced out to fill in space; too much or too little white space; too much or too little variety in headlines.

Judges should look for:

Well-written stories with tight leads. Stories should contain reporter insight, initiative and a complete understanding of the events and issues. Stories should be easy to read and interesting. Look for all sides of the story. A mix of reporter-generated news with some input from sources within the community indicates good community support and interaction. The use of outside sources should be localized. Don't confuse copy generated locally with canned filler. Heads should pull readers into stories and snappy leads should keep them reading. The "5 Ws" must apply--who, what, when, where, and why. Stories should attempt to answer readers' questions. Quotes must be solid and attributed. Long stories should have visual breaks.

Photos should be relevant, sharp, active, well composed, tightly cropped and properly sized. Stand-alones should be designed to clearly identify them as separate news items. News photo essays must include all the elements of a news story.

3. Editorial Page And Op-Ed - (10%)

The editorial page and/or op-ed page are the heart of the newspaper and should be judged as one element.

Judges should look for:

One or more staff-written editorials; an appropriate cartoon or editorial photo that makes a statement, letters to the editor, editorial style columns and/or guest opinions. PLEASE READ EDITORIAL PAGES CAREFULLY--content is the most important element here, but all elements of good layout and design should be present on these pages.

The editorials should score the most points. The best designed page leads to nothing if there is nothing on it worth reading.

Editorials should be written in simple language and have a clear message. Tight and concise writing is paramount to length. Good editorials identify problems and offer reasonable solutions or alternatives. An editorial can be about a local or national topic as long as it has relevance to the local community. Editorials question, inspire thought, and provoke action. Editorials are opinions. They should be judged on the quality and the presentation of the opinion. Editorials can be signed or unsigned.

Good letters attract readership. Reader response can be sparked by an editor's stand on the issues and by controversial opinions.

Quality local opinions score higher than syndicated columns. Look for a balance of opinion.

All elements of good layout should be present on these pages.

Judges should look for:

Crisp design with rationale or continuity of layout of news and advertising. Boxes, screens, sidebars, and graphics should enhance the look of the paper. Font, type and column sizes should make it easy to read. Watch for too much clutter that detracts from the overall design. Look for good use of white space and continuity of style in standing heads and section heads.

Watch out for tombstone headlines, too many one-line heads and heads that are too small or large.

Photos should be well played; well composed, tightly cropped and attractively laid out. Photos should be active. Cutlines must accompany photos to clearly identify subjects.

A good paper is easy to read, consistent in its layout and design, and organized according to topic, such as sports, arts and entertainment.

Judges should look for:

Colour or black-and-white photos which have impact, action, technical quality, good composition and are well cropped. The photos should be properly sized and positioned on the page. Look for effective use of colour where applicable, rather than the presence or absence of it.

Quality is better than quantity. Be aware of: grip and grins; dull, static photos; cheque passings; group shots where nobody can be identified; too many people in too small a picture. Sometimes, these shots are necessary but the photographer should look for creative ways to present the scene. Photos should tell the story.

Cutlines should fill in the significant details and clearly identify all subjects.

4. Presentation - (10%)

Composition and layout contribute to continuity and logical sequence of elements, resulting in an attractive package.

5. Photography - (10%)

A photo is the focal point of the page.

6. Advertising Content - (10%)

Advertising content is important to the bottom line of a newspaper. Also, it is an indication of how well the newspaper and the community work together for the readers.

7. Advertising Design - (10%)

A well-designed ad is a benefit to both the advertiser and the reader.

8. Classified Advertising - (2.5%)

A strong classified advertising section attracts readership.

9. Local Features - (5%)

Local features go beyond the news, providing a more in-depth look at the issues and people of the community.

10. Sports Coverage - (2.5%)

Sports and recreation are a significant part of community life.

11. Arts Coverage – (2.5%)

Arts are a significant part of community life.

Judges should look for:

Innovative ideas by advertising staff that bring additional lineage into the paper. Look for simple promotions which build extra revenue on community interests (i.e. festivals, sporting events, hobbies, seasonal topics or product or customer features). There should be evidence of both traditional advertisers and creative new ideas, such as business and profile features and in-house promotions to support sales staff.

Judges should look for:

Effective advertising. Good ads are laid out attractively and are easy to read. Placement should be conducive to overall design of the paper. Look for effective, uncluttered artwork; effective use of white space; copy that is complete, easy to read and understand, and provides extensive information about the product. Four basic elements of an ad (headline; body copy, graphics or photos; and, signature) must work together to sell the product.

Judges should look for:

Classified advertising that is properly classified (organized and categorized). Layouts should be easy to read and ad categories easy to find with good headings and a wide variety of classifications. Clear and helpful instructions make buying classified ads and using the classified section easier. Display classifieds are well integrated with word classifieds. Volume of classified advertising is a measure of readership and community participation.

Judges should look for:

Interesting topics, accompanied by powerful presentation, creativity, and graphic elements.

Judges should look for:

Sports pages which include different age levels as well as a variety of events and activities which reflect the community.

Staff-generated copy should be active, lively and concisely written. Photos should be featured prominently. Interesting and well-written local sports opinion columns are a definite asset as are local sports features. The page design must be lively and attractive. Headlines should be active. Effective presentation of score stats is an asset.

Judges should look for:

Arts coverage should reflect the diversity of arts and entertainment available within the community and enhance public understanding and interest. Stories and photos should be focused on local groups and events.