



Judging Basics

To Rank and To Rate

Our primary responsibility is to rank the units. This determines a winner. For your caption, you must choose the order of who wins, who is second, who is third, and so on.

The second responsibility is to rate the units. This determines the spread between units in your caption. The meaning of a tenth applies here along with the goal of your contest (choose the semifinalists, rate accurately across rounds or contests that seed units later, accurately determine the finalist spreads and rankings).

Ranking Takes Priority Over Rating

Putting a unit in the proper place relative to others in the contest is the priority at all times.

A few examples:

Ranking Properly Takes Precedence Over Box Integrity – If you find that you must push yourself into a higher box to keep a unit ranked where they need to be (or a lower box), then you must do that to maintain the integrity of your rankings.

Ties May Be Required – If you find that a unit deserves a bottom line 14 and you have used all of those numbers, you must give the unit a proper score in the 14s rather than arbitrarily giving them a 13 or 15 which throws off an accurate ranking.

The Meaning of a Number is Arbitrary

The numbers only have value in relation to other units that are judged in the same contest. And, the numbers only have value for that moment. Once the contest is complete, throw those numbers and start anew each time with the criteria reference and your caption philosophy.

Be Careful Starting Numbers Near Box Cusps

Given our primary responsibility to rank units, be careful starting out your contests on the cusps of boxes. Give yourself some room to compare and place units over time.

The Second Number is Most Important

Often times we think that first number is challenging. While it is imperative to start in a good place, it is even more important to establish the correct ranking and rating (spread) between the first two teams. This will set you up for success as the contest progresses.

Use Anchor Points and Neighborhoods

In conjunction with your purpose for the contest, establish “anchor” groups and “neighborhoods” to aid your decision-making throughout the contest. As you complete your commentary for a group, you will have an impression for their quality. Then, you go to your anchor groups and determine relative rankings and ratings relative to those anchor points and within those neighborhoods.



There is a Difference Between Prelims and Finals

Know the purpose of your contest. Is it to choose the eight finalists, or to match scores across rounds to seed groups for later? This will determine your focus on numbers management.

In general, give yourself more room between groups during prelims. You don't know what you will see and where you will need to fit in units later. Remember the purpose of your contest. Even with larger spreads, your goal will be met for a prelims contest.

For finals, you must be accurate with your spreads and the rankings.

Impression, Analysis, Comparison

It is a three-stage process for you to determine where a unit will rank and ultimately score. You form an impression based on your commentary during the performance. You analyze that impression against the caption philosophy and determine a range for scoring potential. You compare the unit to anchor groups and determine an ultimate ranking and rating.

Accountability

Judges are accountable to every competitive group, every performer, fellow judges, the judging system, and their caption philosophy.

Subcaption Integrity and Profiling

Depending on your score sheet, you have a minimum of three decisions to make with each group. (Some sheets have four decisions.) Your primary responsibility is to choose the final ranking for the group (the total score for your caption). However, you must arrive at this decision by working through the subcaptions on your score sheet.

Accurately reflect the strengths and weaknesses and the overall achievement of the group through each "what" and "how" subcaption. This may drive out a different "total" score than you might expect. After you have the subcaptions correctly ranking and rated, decide if the total is where you wish it to finish. If need be, adjust the subcaptions to get the total result correct. You must make all three or four decisions for each and every team.

It is appropriate at times to put an excellence, or "how", score above the "what" score. Please give yourself permission to reflect the strengths of the unit and of the performers appropriately.