



2026 CONTEST RULES

GENERAL REGISTRATION & CONTEST RULES

1. Registration opens at 8:00 AM. Registration for each category closes 10 minutes before that category begins.
2. The contest schedule is flexible and may be adjusted based on the number of competitors. Contestants are responsible for following the progress of the competition and being ready when their category is called.
3. A minimum of two contestants is required for any category to be held.
4. Contestants will perform in the order in which they register unless otherwise directed by contest officials.
5. Contestants may enter as many categories as they wish, subject to the Youth/Adult division rules.
6. The entry fee is \$15 per contestant, per category.
7. Contestants must present their entry number to the emcee when called and have the number visibly displayed during their respective performance(s).
8. Judges will remain unidentified. Lobbying, approaching, or attempting to influence judges is prohibited.
9. Sheet music may not be used during competition performances.
10. Prize checks will be issued in the name of the individual contestant or designated band representative.

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PERFORMANCE RULES

1. Contestants should be prepared to perform two songs or tunes in each category.
2. Based on the number of competitors and time available, MCFC reserves the right to limit any category to one song or tune per contestant. Any change will be announced before that category begins.
3. Selections should reflect the traditional character of the Mountain City Fiddlers' Convention and its old-time and bluegrass music heritage.
4. Each song or tune must be three minutes or less.
5. No medleys are permitted.
6. Song or tune selections should be provided to the emcee before the contestant performs.
7. Individual contestants may be accompanied by no more than two rhythm instruments.
8. Electric or electronic instruments, wind instruments, and percussion are not permitted.
9. If an instrument string breaks during a performance, the contestant will be permitted to restring the instrument and replay that song or tune without penalty.

Youth & ADULT DIVISIONS

1. Youth categories are open to contestants 16 years of age and younger.
2. Youth Bands must consist entirely of contestants age 16 or younger.
3. A Youth contestant may elect to compete in an Adult category. However, the contestant may not compete in both the Youth and Adult divisions of the same category.

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BAND COMPETITION

1. Bluegrass and Old-Time bands will compete together in the Band category.
2. Bands must have at least four and no more than six members.
3. All band members must be registered contestants in at least one individual category.
4. A contestant may compete as a member of only one band.
5. There is no separate genre designation within the Band category.
6. Bands should be prepared to perform two songs: one instrumental and one vocal.
7. Based on the number of competing bands and time available, MCFC reserves the right to limit the Band category to one song per band. Contest officials will announce the performance requirement before the category begins.
8. Individual and Band judging are separate. A contestant performing as part of a band will not also be judged individually during the band's performance.

GRAND CHAMPION FIDDLE-OFF

1. The top five finalists from the Youth Fiddle and Adult Fiddle competitions will advance to the Grand Champion Fiddle-Off.
2. Each finalist will perform one tune of their choice and may be accompanied by no more than two accompanists.
3. The Fiddle-Off is a separate round of competition. Scores from the Youth and Adult Fiddle competitions will not carry forward or be combined with Fiddle-Off scores.
4. The Grand Champion will be determined solely by the judges' scores in the Fiddle-Off.
5. The 2026 Grand Champion Fiddler will receive a custom Jason Barie fiddle valued at approximately \$5,000.
6. The Grand Champion Fiddle-Off and awards presentation will take place following the featured band performance.

Judging Criteria

ALL CATEGORIES EXCEPT BASS

Instrumental and vocal performances will be judged on:
Timing • Tuning • Selection • Presentation

Bass Category

Bass contestants will be judged on:
Timing • Tuning • Approach • Presentation

◆ IMPORTANT 2026 INFORMATION ◆

◆ Spectator admission to the Mountain City Fiddlers' Convention is FREE. ◆

Competitor Entry Fee: \$15 per contestant, per category.

Only same-day registration is available beginning at 8:00am in the board conference room of the Heritage Hall building. Please use the side entrance for immediate access.

Competition categories and awards can be reviewed at:
<https://www.mountaincityfc.com/competition>