



CATEGORY GUIDELINES

Section I

ACT-SO Program Overview

ACT-SO Mission

ACT-SO is a major youth initiative of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Founded in 1978, by renowned author and journalist, Vernon Jarrett, ACT-SO provides a forum through which youth of African descent demonstrate academic, artistic, and scientific prowess and expertise, thereby gaining the same recognition often only reserved for entertainers and athletes.

ACT-SO is rooted in the firm conviction that African-Americans can succeed and compete at the same or superior levels as their counterparts in classrooms, boardrooms, and laboratories across this nation and abroad. The mission of ACT-SO is to prepare, recognize, and reward youth of African descent who exemplify scholastic and artistic excellence. ACT-SO goals are:

- To mobilize the adult community for the promotion of academic and artistic excellence among students of African descent.
- To recognize academic and artistic achievement among students of African descent.
- To provide and assist students with the necessary skills to establish goals and acquire the confidence and training to make a successful contribution to society.

ACT-SO Fact Sheet

WHAT IS ACT-SO?

ACT-SO is a yearlong youth achievement enrichment program designed to recruit, stimulate, improve and encourage high academic and cultural achievement among high school students of African descent. The ACT-SO program centers on the dedication and commitment of community volunteers and business leaders to serve as mentors and coaches to promote academic and artistic excellence. There are 27 categories of competition in the sciences, humanities, performing arts, visual arts and business.

WHO SPONSORS ACT-SO?

ACT-SO is sponsored by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), which is the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization. ACT-SO receives support from schools, community organizations, churches, foundations, private corporations, and individuals.

WHO FOUNDED ACT-SO?

Vernon Jarrett, a renowned author and journalist, initiated the idea of a program that would promote and reward academic achievers the same way sports heroes are honored. The first national ACT-SO competition was held in 1978 in Portland, Oregon.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE?

High school students of African descent, who are citizens of the United States, enrolled in grades 9-12 and are amateurs in the categories of competition are able to participate.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATING IN ACT-SO?

The ACT-SO program is intended to be a learning experience, first and foremost. The focus of a viable and effective local ACT-SO program is on enrichment and mentorship. Students work with ACT-SO mentors who help them develop projects throughout the year. Local ACT-SO programs also provide ACT-SO students with enrichment opportunities, such as workshops, tutorials, and field trips.

The benefits ACT-SO students receive from the enrichment and mentorship components include substantial assistance toward the development of their ACT-SO projects and valuable tools to assist them throughout their education.

Each ACT-SO program conducts a local competition. The local competition serves to showcase the hard work students have put in all year long. Students receive medals and prizes provided by the local and regional sponsors and contributors. ACT-SO Students who receive gold medals on the local level then compete at the National Competition where they receive scholarships and other rewards provided by national sponsors.

Section II:

ACT-SO Category Descriptions

List of Categories

Business

- Entrepreneurship
- Culinary Arts

Humanities

- Music Composition
- Playwriting
- Poetry
- Short Story

Performing Arts

- Dance
- Dramatics
- Music: Instrumental (Classical)
- Music: Instrumental (Contemporary)
- Music: Vocal (Classical)
- Music: Vocal (Contemporary)
- Oratory

Sciences

- Biology/Microbiology
- Chemistry/Biochemistry
- Computer Science
- Earth and Space Sciences
- Engineering
- Mathematics
- Medicine and Health
- Physics

Visual Arts

- Architecture
- Drawing
- Filmmaking
- Painting
- Photography
- Sculpture

The Performing Arts

DANCE

To perform a series of rhythmic and patterned bodily movements usually performed to music.

DRAMATICS

The art of staging or acting plays.

MUSIC INSTRUMENTAL/CLASSICAL

The art of performing with a device used to produce music with tones of the late 18th and 19th centuries characterized by an emphasis on balance, clarity, and moderation.

MUSIC INSTRUMENTAL/CONTEMPORARY

The art of performing with a device used to produce music with the tones of the present.

MUSIC VOCAL/CLASSICAL

The art of performing with the human voice rhythmic tones or sounds of the late 18th and 19th centuries characterized by an emphasis on balance, clarity, and moderation.

MUSIC VOCAL/CONTEMPORARY

The art of performing with the human voice rhythmic tones or sounds to produce music with the tones of the present.

ORATORY

The art of speaking in public eloquently and effectively. (This is not a dramatic presentation.)

Dance

To perform a series of rhythmic and patterned bodily movements usually performed to music.

REQUIREMENTS:

1. The solo performance must not exceed five (5) minutes. (Contestants not adhering to the maximum time requirement are subject to point deduction and/or disqualification.)
2. Costumes are optional, but should be appropriate to the choreography performed.
3. Musical accompaniment must be provided by the contestant on a CD player clearly marked with the student's name and branch. The CD must contain only the music for the performance. It is recommended that the contestant provide a backup CD.
4. The theme and the dance form (ballet, modern, jazz, ethnic, hip hop, etc.) of the performance must be identified to the judges prior to the presentation.
5. Aerobic exercises, street dancing, cheerleading and drill team routines may not be used.

NOTE: The deadline for submission of National registration documents is the first Friday in May. No materials or copies will be accepted at the National Competition.

Contestants Will Be Judged By The Following Criteria:

- Technical Proficiency/Skill (25 pts)
 - alignment, strength, endurance, flexibility , coordination
- Clarity and Consistency in Style (25 pts)
- Phrasing/Dynamics/Musicality (25 pts)
- Clarity of Intent/Interpretation of Choreography (25 pts)

Dramatics

The art of staging or acting plays.

REQUIREMENTS:

1. The performance must be a minimum of three (3) minutes and maximum of five (5) minutes. (Contestants not adhering to the minimum and maximum time requirements are subject to point deduction and/or disqualification.)
2. The selection must be of literate quality.
3. The material must be memorized.
4. Costumes, makeup, and props are optional, but not required.

NOTE: The deadline for submission of National registration documents is the first Friday in May. No materials or copies will be accepted at the National Competition.

Contestants Will Be Judged By The Following Criteria:

- **Projection** (10 pts)
- **Structure** (10pts): Does the performance have transitions/beats and a clear beginning, middle, climax, and end?
- **Memorization** (10 pts)
- **Movement** (10 pts): Is the blocking clear and does the actor commit to and follow through with his/her movements and gestures?
- **Emotional Connection and Honesty** (10pts): Are you really "selling" that you are becoming this character or are you simply "play-acting"?
- **Imagination and Creativity** (15pts): Are you bringing something different to the piece or are you just reciting lines?
- **Stage Presence** (10pts)
- **Character Work** (10pts)
- **Specificity of Acting Choices** (10pts): Clear pursuit of Actions/Objectives
- **Creation of the Space** (5pts)

Music: Instrumental (Classical)

The art of performing with a device used to produce music with tones of the late 18th and 19th centuries characterized by an emphasis on balance, clarity, and moderation.

REQUIREMENTS:

1. The musical selection must be one specifically written for solo performances. The performance may be an excerpt and may not exceed five (5) minutes. (*Contestants not adhering to the maximum time requirements are subject to point deduction.*)
2. Contestants must **PRESENT** six (6) copies of the sheet music to the judges at the time of competition.
3. If the selection chosen is written with piano accompaniment, it must be performed in that manner. Contestants must provide their own accompaniment
4. The composition to be performed must be consistent with the nature of the instrument and the level of musical proficiency of the performer.
5. The selection of music and instrument is solely the decision of the contestant.
6. The only instrument provided for the performance will be a piano.

NOTE: The deadline for submission of National registration documents is the first Friday in May. No materials or copies will be accepted at the National Competition.

Contestants Will Be Judged By The Following Criteria:

- Interpretation, Expression, Tempo, Phrasing, and Historically appropriate style (20 pts)
- Intonation and touch (piano) (20 pts)
- Stage presence, choice of music (20 pts)
- Technique, articulation, Breathing, Rhythm, Facility and Accuracy (20 pts)
- Tone quality, Beauty, Control, Characteristic timbre (20 pts)

Music: Instrumental (Contemporary)

The art of performing with a device used to produce music with the tones of the present.

REQUIREMENTS:

1. The musical selection must be one specifically written for solo performances and may not exceed five (5) minutes. (Contestants not adhering to the maximum time requirement are subject to point deduction.)
2. The selection performed should feature a solo performance. If other players are needed (as in a jazz selection), they must be provided by the contestant.
3. The only instrument provided for performance will be a piano. Any additional instruments or equipment needed must be provided by the contestant.
4. The selection of music and instrument is solely the decision of the contestant.
5. Examples of contemporary music are R&B, Broadway, Jazz, Gospel, Blues, etc.

NOTE: The deadline for submission of National registration documents is the first Friday in May. No materials or copies will be accepted at the National Competition.

Contestants Will Be Judged By The Following Criteria:

- Effectiveness of style, Improvisation (20 pts)
- Intonation, Touch (piano) (20 pts)
- Stage presence, Choice of music (20 pts)
- Technique, Articulation, Breathing, Tonality, Rhythm, Facility (20 pts)
- Tone quality, Beauty, Control, Characteristic timbre (20 pts)

Music: Vocal (Classical)

The art of performing with the human voice rhythmic tones or sounds of the late 18th and 19th centuries characterized by an emphasis on balance, clarity, and moderation.

REQUIREMENTS:

1. Only one (1) song is to be performed, and it must not exceed five (5) minutes. (Contestants not adhering to the maximum time requirement are subject to disqualification.)
2. Musical accompaniment must be provided by the competitor. Competitors should not perform to a CD. Contestants requesting accompaniment must submit sheet music with their registration packet.
3. Contestants must **PRESENT** six copies (6) of the sheet music to the judges at the time of competition.
4. The material must be memorized.
5. Costumes are not required.

***NOTE:** The deadline for submission of National registration documents is the first Friday in May. No materials or copies will be accepted at the National Competition.*

Contestants Will Be Judged By The Following Criteria:

- Choice of Music (10 pts)
- Diction (25 pts)
 - Correctness of pronunciation
- Interpretation (10 pts)
 - Expression
 - Phrasing
 - Historically appropriate style
 - Tempo
- Intonation (10 pts)
- Stage presence (10 pts)
- Technique (10 pts)
 - Breathing
 - Posture
 - Rhythm
 - Accuracy
- Tone quality (25 pts)
 - Beauty of sound
 - Control

Music: Vocal (Contemporary)

The art of performing with the human voice rhythmic tones or sounds to produce music with the tones of the present.

REQUIREMENTS:

1. Only one (1) song is to be performed, and it must not exceed five (5) minutes. (Contestants not adhering to the maximum time requirement are subject to point deduction.)
2. Musical accompaniment must be provided by the contestant either live or using a standard CD. The CD should contain only the instrumental version of the song. Contestants are encouraged to provide a backup CD.
3. Contestant must provide piano accompaniment. The material must be memorized.
4. Costumes are not permitted.
5. Examples of contemporary music are R&B, Broadway, Jazz, R&B, Gospel, Blues, etc

NOTE: The deadline for submission of National registration documents is the first Friday in May. No materials or copies will be accepted at the National Competition.

Contestants Will Be Judged By The Following Criteria:

- Choice of Music (15 pts)
 - Matched to vocal ability
- Interpretation (20 pts)
 - Expression, Phrasing, Style
 - Tempo
 - Arrangement
- Stage Presence (15 pts)
 - Comfort on and control of stage, posture
 - Rapport with audience
- Technique (25 pts):
 - Breathing
 - Posture
 - Rhythm
 - Accuracy
- Tone Quality (25 pts):
 - Beauty of sound
 - Control
 - Intonation and Diction

Oratory

The art of speaking in public eloquently and effectively. (This is not a dramatic presentation.)

REQUIREMENTS:

1. Only one (1) speech is to be presented, and it must not exceed five (5) minutes.
2. The selection of the speech is the decision of the contestant; it should either be an original (written by the contestant) or an excerpt from a speech written by a famous individual or historical figure.
3. The speech is not to be presented as a dramatic presentation.
4. Costumes and props are not permitted.
5. The material must be completely memorized.
6. Contestants are encouraged to prepare and deliver original selections. However, if the contestant decides to present a selection already published, we recommend that they not limit their selection to speeches delivered by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. There are many great speeches by famous people, such as Frederick Douglas, Sojourner Truth, Malcolm X, etc.

NOTE: The deadline for submission of National registration documents is the first Friday in May. No materials or copies will be accepted at the National Competition.

Contestants Will Be Judged By The Following Criteria:

- Delivery (25 pts)
 1. Voice
 2. Diction,
 3. Pronunciation
 4. Enunciation
 5. Gestures,
 6. Emphasis
- Interpretation (25 pts)
 1. Content
 2. Subject Adherence,
 3. Theme,
 4. Logic and Color
- Platform Presence (25 pts)
 1. Poise,
 2. Appeal,
 3. Impression,
 4. Attitude and Effect

- Projection (25 pts)
 1. Voice
 2. Emphasis
 3. Tone
 4. Pitch
 5. Volume