



2026 Battle of the Bands Handbook

Thank you for your interest in competing in the first official Arizona State Fair Battle of the Bands at the 2026 Fair! The Arizona State Fair is thrilled to offer this competition as a way to showcase and celebrate the exceptional musical talent from across the state and provide a professional platform for emerging artists to perform at a premier event.

The Battle of the Bands is a live music competition produced by the Arizona State Fair to showcase Arizona musical talent while providing a professional, safe, and entertaining experience for competitors and guests. By submitting an application, each band and its members agree to abide by all rules and policies contained in this handbook. Failure to comply may result in penalties, loss of points, disqualification, or removal from the event.

1. Application Guidelines

Submission Policy: Submission of an application does not guarantee selection to proceed into the preliminary rounds.

Entry Limit: Only one application per band is permitted, and multiple submissions under one name will be disqualified.

Completeness Requirement: All applications MUST be completely filled out online with no missing information in order to be accepted.

Submission Deadline: The final deadline to submit an application is **August 31, 2026**. An automatic confirmation will be sent upon successful online submission.

Mandatory Submission Method: NO FAXES, WALK-INS, MAILED, OR EMAILED APPLICATIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED. All submissions must be made through the designated online portal.

2. Band Eligibility and Contest Requirements

2.1 Roster and Personnel Requirements

Musician Exclusivity: Musicians may only be registered in one competing band.

Residency Requirement: In order to qualify for participation, at least fifty percent (50%) of the registered band members must be Arizona residents OR the band must maintain its primary home base within Arizona.

Band Size: Bands require a minimum of two (2) members and a maximum of eight (8) members.



Support Passes: Each competing band will receive admission credentials for registered members plus two (2) backstage support credentials for approved crew members assisting with load-in and load-out.

2.2 Technical and Performance Requirements

Backing Tracks: Use of pre-recorded backing tracks is strictly prohibited.

Submission Materials: Bands must submit a high-quality photograph, a short 150-word biography, and links to their music as part of the application.

Original Material: Sets must consist of at least 50% original material. A set composed of 100% cover songs is not permitted and will be disqualified.

2.3 Safety and Liability Requirements

Equipment Security:

- Bands are solely responsible for the security of all instruments, equipment, personal belongings, and merchandise. The Arizona State Fair assumes no responsibility for loss, theft, or damage.
- Bands may not explicitly incite moshing, stage-diving, or crowd-surfing. Doing so puts audience safety at risk and is grounds for immediate set termination and disqualification.

Equipment Liability:

- Bands will be financially responsible for all cost of damages caused by the band to the space used as the green room.
- The Band authorizes the Arizona State Fair to retain any payment amounts due as is reasonably estimated for cost of repair.

Vehicle Liability:

- The Arizona State Fair and Exposition is not responsible for fire, theft, damage to, or loss of vehicles, or articles left therein, on the premises.
- Persons parking in non-designated areas do so at their own risk, and are subject to towing and storage fees.

3. Tournament Structure and Timeline

The competition is structured as a 5-week series of competitive showcases designed to determine the Grand Finalists.

Qualifying Rounds (Weeks 1-4)

- **Format:** Four (4) bands will perform each week on Thursday.
- **Set Length:** 20 minutes.
- **Advancement:** Only one (1) winning band from each night will advance to the Grand Finale.



- **Results:** Winners will be announced live on stage at the conclusion of each night once all audience votes are tallied.

Grand Finale (Week 5)

- **Format:** The four (4) winners from the Qualifying Rounds will face off head-to-head inside of the Coliseum.
- **Set Length:** 20 minutes.
- **The “Fresh Set” Rule:** To ensure a varied and exciting experience for returning fans, advancing bands must replace at least one (1) song in their setlist from their Qualifying Round performance.

Availability and Commitment

By participating, your band guarantees full availability for your assigned qualifying date (October 1st, 8th, 15th, or 22nd) and the Grand Finale on Thursday, October 29th. Should a weekly winner be unable to perform at the finals, the runner-up from that week will advance in their place.

- **Withdrawal:** Should a selected band withdraw prior to its scheduled performance, the Arizona State Fair reserved the right to invite an alternative band selected during the application process.

4. Event Day Logistics

Scheduling requires strict precision due to the four-band nightly format. Bands are expected to adhere to all published schedules and instructions. Failure to do so may result in penalties, point deductions where applicable, or disqualification in accordance with these rules.

Event Schedule



Time	Activity
4:00 PM	Band Check-in & Load-In Begins
5:00 PM	Load-in and Soundcheck Period Begins
6:30 PM	Competition Begins
6:40 PM - 7:00 PM	Performance Set 1 (20 minutes)
7:00 PM - 7:05 PM	Change Over (5 minutes)
7:05 PM - 7:25 PM	Performance Set 2 (20 minutes)
7:25 PM - 7:30 PM	Change Over (5 minutes)
7:30 PM - 7:50 PM	Performance Set 3 (20 minutes)
7:50 PM - 7:55 PM	Change Over (5 minutes)
7:55 PM - 8:15 PM	Performance Set 4 (20 minutes)
8:25 PM	Audience Voting Closes
8:40 PM	Winner Announcement
9:00 PM	Band Load-Out Begins

Strict Timekeeping Rules

- **Late Arrival and Soundcheck Protocol:** Bands must check in no later than 3:30 PM. Bands arriving after 3:30 PM may forfeit part or all of their scheduled soundcheck. Bands arriving after 4:00 PM may be disqualified at the discretion of competition management.
- **Performance Time Adherence:** Bands must begin performing immediately upon receiving clearance from the stage manager/sound technician. Performance times begin when the first note is played or at the stage manager/sound technician's signal, whichever occurs first.
- **Set Overtime Penalties:** Performances exceeding the twenty (20) minute limit will be subject to the following:
 - Up to one minute over: warning.
 - One to three minutes over: five-point deduction.
 - More than three minutes over: performance may be stopped and the band may be disqualified.



Transition Procedures

To ensure that the competition remains on schedule, each band will be allotted a maximum of fifteen (15) minutes to complete all stage handover activities between performances. During transition periods, bands are expected to:

- Remove all personal instruments, equipment, and stage items from the performance area in a timely manner.
- Coordinate with stage hands and production staff during load-out and load-in.
- Utilize the venue-provided shared backline whenever possible to minimize setup time.
- Complete all equipment connections, line checks, and final preparations within the allotted transition period.

Required Band Equipment

Bands are responsible for supplying all instruments, pedals, cables, adapters, specialty equipment, and accessories not included in the shared backline. Equipment must be in safe working condition.

Provided Shared Backline

Drum Kit:

- 1 DW 22" x 18" Collectors Bass Drum, Black Lacquer
- 1 DW 12" x 8" Collectors Rack Tom, Black Lacquer
- 1 DW 10" x 8" Collectors Rack Tom, Black Lacquer
- 1 DW 16" x 16" Collectors Floor Tom, Black Lacquer
- 1 Ludwig 14" x 6.5" Black Beauty Snare Drum
- 1 Zildjian 14" A New Beat Hi Hats, Pair
- 1 Zildjian 18" K Custom Dark Crash Cymbal
- 1 Zildjian 20" K Custom Medium Ride Cymbal
- 1 DW 5000 Single Bass Drum Pedal
- 1 Drum/Perc, Roc N Soc Hydraulic Throne (Bicycle)
- 1 Carpet, Drum Rug, 8' x 8'
- 1 LP Percussion Table w/Rack

Technical Failure Policy

If a performance is interrupted due to failure of venue-provided equipment or production systems, management may pause the performance clock and determine an appropriate remedy, which may include additional performance time if authorized by the stage manager.



Bands are responsible for ensuring their own equipment is in proper working condition. Technical issues involving participant-provided equipment will not result in additional performance time unless otherwise authorized by the stage manager.

Weather and Inclement Weather Procedures

Competition management may delay, suspend, modify, or cancel performances due to severe weather or hazardous conditions. If a performance is affected by weather, competition management will determine whether it will resume, restart, be rescheduled, or be judged based on the completed portion of the performance.

5. Competition Scoring

The Battle of the Bands competition is scored on a 100-point system, with the final score divided equally between the Judging Panel (50 pts) and the Audience Vote (50 pts).

Judging Panel (50 points total)

A panel of local music industry professionals will evaluate each performance based on the following criteria:

Category	Points
Musicality	15
Stage Presence & Audience Engagement	15
Songwriting & Arrangement	10
Professionalism	10
Total	50

Judges will score each category independently, with a maximum possible judges' score of **50 points**.

Judges' decisions are final. No appeals regarding scoring or placements will be considered.

Audience Vote (50 points total)

Audience voting accounts for **50% of each band's final competition score**.



Voting Process: Guests attending the competition may vote for their favorite band by scanning the official Battle of the Bands QR code displayed throughout the venue.

Voting Timeline: Audience voting will open immediately following the introduction of the first competing band and will remain open until **ten (10) minutes after the conclusion of the final performance**.

Scoring: After voting has closed, all valid audience votes will be totaled. Each band's percentage of the total audience vote will then be converted into an audience score worth a maximum of **50 points** using the following formula:

Tie Scores

In the event of a tie in total competition points, the band receiving the higher score from the Audience Vote will be declared the winner. If a tie still exists, the band with the higher Musicality score will prevail. If the tie remains unresolved, the Head Judge, in consultation with Arizona State Fair competition management, will make the final determination.

6. Code of Conduct

All participating bands and personnel must adhere to the following professional standards:

- **Respect for Event Personnel:** Bands, crew members, and guests must treat all Fair staff, volunteers, security personnel, judges, contractors, and fellow competitors respectfully. Harassment, abusive language, threatening behavior, discrimination, or refusal to follow staff instructions may result in immediate disqualification.
- **Performance Content Guidelines:** Performances must be suitable for a general audience attending a family-oriented event. Excessively sexual content, simulated violence, hate speech, illegal activity, or material intended to incite unsafe audience behavior is prohibited.
- **Band Attire:** Clothing must be appropriate for a family-friendly public event. Excessive nudity, offensive images, or profane language displayed on clothing is prohibited.
- **Profanity and Explicit Language:** The Arizona State Fair is a family-friendly event. Profane, obscene, vulgar, or sexually explicit language is prohibited in all performances, including song lyrics, spoken comments, introductions, and interactions with the audience. The use of prohibited language may result in point deductions, immediate termination of the performance, and/or disqualification.
- **Professional Demeanor:** Bands are expected to conduct themselves professionally before, during, and after performances. This includes cooperating with event staff, following production schedules, respecting fellow competitors, and maintaining appropriate behavior backstage and on stage.



7. Additional Rules and Disqualification

- **Band Size Requirements:** Bands require a minimum of two (2) members and a maximum of eight (8) members.
- **Age Restrictions:** All participants must be eighteen (18) years of age or older at the time of the competition. By submitting an application, the designated band representative certifies that all participating band members meet this age requirement.
- **Non-Performing Personnel:** Each band may have no more than two (2) approved support personnel backstage.
- **On-Stage Personnel Limits:** Only registered band members may appear or perform on stage during competition performances unless prior written approval has been granted.
- **Promotional Authorization:** Bands agree to grant the event organizers the right to use their name, music clips, photos, and video recordings for promotional purposes without financial compensation (as further detailed in Section 9).
- **Judges' Rights and Final Authority:** Judges' decisions are final. The Arizona State Fair reserves the right to interpret, modify, or enforce competition rules as necessary to ensure fairness, safety, and the integrity of the competition.
- **Rule Modifications:** The Arizona State Fair reserves the right to amend these rules at any time. Participants will be notified of significant changes prior to competition whenever practicable.
- **Mandatory Check-In:** All bands must check in between **3:00 PM** and **3:30 PM** on the day of their competition. Bands that fail to check in by 3:30 PM may forfeit their scheduled soundcheck and are subject to disqualification at the discretion of the Arizona State Fair.
- **Merchandise Sales:** Bands may not sell or offer for sale any merchandise without prior written approval from the Board. Due to the structure of the competition, bands agree to share the designated merchandise space with other bands also selling merchandise. If requested, each band will be provided with one (1) 8 ft folding table and a maximum of two (2) chairs. Bands are solely responsible for monitoring and managing their merchandise vending. Bands are permitted to sell merchandise only during the official Battle of the Bands competition. Merchandise sales may begin when the competition opens to guests and must conclude immediately following the completion of the competition. Early set-up, pre-event sales, and post-event sales are not permitted.
- **Tip Jars:** Tip jars, digital payment QR codes, fundraising, or solicitation of monetary donations are prohibited during the competition unless specifically authorized by Arizona State Fair management.



8. Awards and Prizes

1st Place Grand Champion

- **Cash Prize Amount:** \$3,000.00
- **Additional Prize Details:**
 - \$1,000 Marketing Grant with SMSBlast.io
 - \$500 Gift Certificate from Hello Merch

2nd Place Runner-Up

- **Runner-Up Prize Details:** \$500 Gift Card to Zia Records

3rd and 4th Place

- **Prize Details:** \$250 Gift Card to Zia Records

9. Acknowledgement and Media Release

By participating in the competition, each band member grants the Arizona State Fair, its partners, sponsors, and media representatives the irrevocable right to photograph, record, livestream, broadcast, reproduce, publish, and otherwise use their name, likeness, voice, performance, and biographical information for promotional, educational, archival, and commercial purposes without additional notice or compensation.