



COSPLAY CONTEST HANDBOOK

OTAFEST 2020

MAY 15 - 17, 2020

CALGARY TELUS CONVENTION CENTRE

Cosplay is an incredibly important part of our festival and we love seeing our dedicated cosplayers turn out in style to showcase their latest creations. We appreciate all of you and your efforts, dedication, and passion in bringing your favourite characters to life for everyone to enjoy.

As organisers we strive to bring you the best experience in whichever contest or contests you chose to enter. This comes with an important caveat though; We expect our entrants to read up on the contest you are entering in advance so you are aware of the contest rules, format, entry deadlines, contest times, and any specific entry requirements. This point alone will allow us to have a far better time together!

The information contained in this handbook is subject to change. For up-to-date information please consult <https://otafest.com> or email your questions to cosplay@otafest.com.

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Cosplay Staff Introductions

The majority of cosplay events at our festival are carefully planned, administered, and implemented by our dedicated Cosplay Team. While we'd really like to know all of our entrants by name and recognise you that's not always possible, your costumes are really that great! However it's a much easier task for you to know who we are:

Cosplay and Contest Manager

- Amanda L

Cosplay Staff

- Martyn B
- Heather S
- Karin K

Cosplay Staff

- Heather S
- Launa D
- Karin K

Preparation

The very first thing you should do is to decide on which contests you would like to enter and determine if your cosplay would qualify for entry. Read up on the contest's rules and requirements. If you have any questions at all please, please, please [email us](#).

- **Attend Otafest!** This one is easy, have your ticket to Otafest, and get your wristband or badge before you check in or enter! All entrants in any of our cosplay contests must have proof of valid entry to the convention.
- **Be familiar with your cosplay**, seriously, did you make it, how long did it take you if you did, are you wearing it or do you have a friend modelling for you?
- **Be aware of the contest rules**, does your cosplay qualify, do you have to be the one wearing it? Did you have to make it?
- **Know the day and time of your contest(s)**. If a contest has an audience and starts at 2pm in the afternoon then you must be there well before that time for set up. The exact times will be included in the contest details but it's usually 30 minutes to an hour before show time.
- **Practice**. If you are performing a skit then rehearse it, know your moves, know your lines or pre-record them, the audience will respond favourably to an entertaining well-rehearsed performance.
- If you have music/audio for a skit entry then upload it beforehand! We stopped accepting CDs so make sure you have your MP3 file and upload it when you pre-register.
- **Pre-register!** This saves everyone time and makes sure your information is correct beforehand. If you have problems signing up then email us, we'd be happy to help you with any issues or questions you may have.
- **Check the prop policy** and be sure to have prop check take a look at any prop you may have before you attend the contest.
- **Show up**. We understand things happen, minds change and cosplays don't always get finished on time. If this is the case, please let us know so we can open the spot for someone else!
- **Communicate**. Know that you can contact us at any point for clarification on... well, anything! We're friendly people, talk to us. <3
- **All competitors must abide by all Otafest rules, regulations, and policies at all times**. Failure to do so will result in disqualification from the contests and will be forwarded to Otafest's Policy Enforcement team for

potential further action. Specifically, this pertains to decency of the costume, appropriate footwear and inappropriate clothing. <https://otafest.com/policies/>

Our Contests

We offer four cosplay contests of varying time commitments and skill levels. We hope to provide something for every cosplayer to enter no matter where they are in their cosplay career.

Cosplay Skit Contest

1.5 hour time commitment

This Skit Contest is a performance contest in front of an attendee audience with the important requirement that you be in cosplay.

Requirements

You do not need to make your own costume but you do need to be in cosplay. You are required to perform a short skit, monologue, song, dance, or anything else entertaining! You need to [pre-register](#) and there is no day-of registration as we do not have time to accept day-of entries. You need to provide your music/audio as an MP3 either when you register, or by email before May 1st.

You can enter as an individual or a group, either way there is only one prize per entry.

Time limits for entries will be as follows: Every entry will be given a base time limit of 2 minutes. Every person beyond the first member will be given an additional 30 seconds. For example, a group of 3 people would receive a time limit of 3 minutes (2 minutes + 2 x 30 seconds). If you require an extension to your time limit, please contact the Cosplay Coordinators at cosplay@otafest.com.

All performers must be registered as part of your group. No member of the audience or unregistered person will be allowed on stage during the contest. You are not permitted to throw anything into the audience. Personal recording devices are not allowed on stage. You may have a friend come up to the photography area in front of the stage to record your performance if you like. Alternatively, Otafest will be recording the entirety of the contest and the footage will be posted for public viewing at a later date. Your performance will only be posted for public viewing if any music included in your entry is verified to be royalty free and available for free usage on social media, otherwise your performance may be modified or not included in our public postings. Please contact the cosplay team if you have questions about this policy.

All performances must be at least 80% self choreographed. You may take inspiration from existing routines or performances (e.g. using recognisable dance moves or re-enacting similar movements for the character) however the majority of your performance must be self designed and choreographed. If you have questions about this rule, please contact us in advance of the contest.

Audio

All audio you wish to use must be submitted via the registration form or email (cosplay@otafest.com) **PRIOR TO MAY 1st 2020**. No day of audio will be accepted, **no exceptions**.

Format

We will meet you at the main events room 45 minutes before the scheduled show time in order to confirm entry, set up, and get everyone in performance order. Similar to a traditional cosplay contest, entrants will line up off stage in performance order and wait their turn. You will be called up to perform in front of the audience and judges and then you will leave the stage and the next entrant will perform. Seating will be provided at the front of the room for you to watch the rest of the show. Once all entrants have performed, our judges will leave the room to deliberate, and when they've made their decision, will return and present the awards right away.

Awards

- Best in Show.
- Fan Favourite.
- Judges' Choice (x3).

Important Points

- Be in cosplay, you don't need to have made it.
- Be entertaining, engage the audience.
- Pre-register using the online form. **No day-of registration!**
- As always, please be on time! We have to start on time with or without you.
- Awards announced at the end of the contest.
- Provide any music/audio you require beforehand as **MP3** files.
- Audio must be submitted by May 1st 2020 - **NO EXCEPTIONS!**

Cosplay Fashion Show

1.5 hour time commitment

We replaced the walk-on aspect of the traditional cosplay contest with the Fashion Show. You simply need to walk out on to the stage and strike a pose, you do not need to make your own costume. This contest is all about presentation, how much do you look like the character, how well do you pose, own it!

Requirements

You need to be in cosplay and strike a pose at our posing points on the stage, it's a good idea to practice your poses. There will be no performances, you don't need to make your own cosplay. You'll be able to sign up day-of but please be aware of the cut-off time (12:00 noon); we will not be able to accept new entrants afterwards. We may also have to cap entry if we reach capacity so turn up early if taking part is important to you.

Format

We will meet you at the main events room 45 minutes before the scheduled show time to check you in and get everyone in order before the show starts. You'll need to come to the registration room before the contest to register and get your category and entry number. At call time, you'll be put in order within your category group and will come on stage in that order once the show begins. On stage, you'll be announced by the host with your name and character. Then you'll have about 30 seconds to strike a pose for photos on the posing points marked on the stage. That's 30 seconds in total, not on each point! When finished, you'll leave the stage and return to the waiting line in the same order as before. Once all the beginners have had their individual time on the stage the whole beginners group will parade on to the stage in order and the judges will present their awards. The group will then leave the stage and the process will be repeated for the Intermediate and Advanced category groups.

Awards

- Advanced (x3)
- Intermediate (x3)
- Beginner (x3)

Important Points

- Be in cosplay, you don't need to have made it.
- Practice your poses for maximum effect!
- Be on time! If you're late you will lose your spot in the contest.

Cosplay Showcase Contest

2 hour time commitment

This is a contest specifically for craftsmanship, there is no audience and no performance. Many of our talented cosplayers are excellent craftsmen but are less inclined to show off their work in front of an audience and we completely understand. The Cosplay Showcase is a non-spectator event, usually the only people in the room (aside from staff and judges) will be your fellow entrants and those waiting with them.

Requirements

You have to have made 80% or more of your cosplay yourself. You don't have to wear your cosplay, you can have a friend model it for you if that's your preference. There are no performance requirements and no audience. **We highly recommend that you pre-register**, it saves us time and you'll be called up before the day-of registrants. Pre-registering also guarantees you a spot- we do fill up regularly and are forced to turn some day-of entrants away!

Format

The contest will run over three hours during which we will check in, judge, and photograph our entrants. Once the contest starts we will call any pre-registered entrants to the sign up table first to check them in, once all pre-registered entrants have been checked in we will then ask everyone else to form a line and sign up if there are still places available!

You will be assigned a number badge and a category (Prop/Beginner/Intermediate/Advanced). Your number is your judging call number, your category is decided based on your previous cosplay experience. The judges may move you into a different category at their discretion based on the information you provide. You will then wait for the judges to call your number. Be aware of those before you so you know roughly when to expect to be called. We strongly suggest you remain in the room while you wait so you don't miss your turn. Unfortunately it can be a long wait so bring something to occupy the time. If you want to minimise the wait then pre-register and turn up promptly.

Once your number is called head to the judging table, our judges will ask you questions about your cosplay, they are experienced costumers and in some cases professional guest judges. Be very honest about your work as they'll know if you're fibbing ;) You will get 3 minutes of time with the judges, we have a timer so it's fair to everyone. Once you have been judged we'll take your photo and you are free to leave the room.

Awards will be announced and presented after the judges have finished their deliberations. You don't have to be on hand to receive your award if you win one but it is preferred.

Awards

- Advanced Winner + Runner Up
- Intermediate Winner + Runner Up
- Beginner Winner + Runner Up
- Photographers Choice
- Prop/Armor or Judges' Choice x 2*

*If we don't have any prop-only entries then we will assign the awards as Judges' Choice Awards.

Important Points

- You must have made at least 80% of your cosplay.
- Pre-register to save time and ensure entry.
- Pre-registered entrants are judged first.
- We may cap entry!
- Show up early to ensure you have time to be judged.
- Bring someone/something to entertain you while you wait to be judged.
- Be ready to explain your cosplay to the judges and be honest!
- You have 3 minutes, use them wisely!

- Awards are announced at the end of the contest.

Stars of Cosplay (Formerly Mr. and Miss. Otafest)

10 minute time commitment

Our Popularity Contest! Also our easiest contest to enter, simply sign up, have your photo taken for our slide show, and wear an entry sign so people know you're in the contest. Wander around the festival and people will know to vote for you. Harassing other attendees for votes is not allowed and **you will be disqualified if you do so. Make sure your costume or outfit is appropriate in accordance with Otafest's clothing policies.** <https://otafest.com/policies/>

Requirements

Be in cosplay, have your photo taken, wear a sign. You do not have to have made your cosplay. Otafest staff and volunteers are not allowed to enter. Inanimate objects, such as plush, drawings, or objects, cannot be entered into the contest. Animals, including service animals, are also not allowed to enter the contest.

Format

Come to the sign up desk on Sunday from 9:00 am to 12:00 noon and let us know your name, character, and which team/group you wish to enter. We'll give you a sign with your number on it and take your photo for the slide show, then you're done! Voting will take place from 12:00 noon to 5:00 pm at the sign up desk. People can watch the slide show, see their favourite in person or choose them from the voting list. We'd encourage people to see their favourite cosplay in person before committing to vote for them but it's entirely up to each voter. At the end of the voting period the votes will be tallied and the top 5 entries from each category will be posted at the voting desk, in the cosplay headquarters room, and in the cosplay repair room. Winners will be announced at Closing Ceremonies.

Awards

- Stars of Cosplay Winner x2
- 1st Runner Up x2
- 2nd Runner Up x2

Important Points

- Choose a cosplay with good popular appeal. Obscure subjects may not capture the imagination of voters but more importantly: Have fun!
- Do not harass voters! You will be disqualified.
- Have fun and be a good sport.
- Try and attend Closing Ceremonies (or have a representative attend) in case you win a prize!

Contest Comparison Table

	Skit	Showcase	Fashion	Stars of Cosplay
Contest day	Saturday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Must make your own cosplay?	x	✓	x	x
Appear in front of an audience	✓	x	✓	x
Performance required	✓	x	x	x
Wear your own cosplay	✓	x	✓	✓
Pre-registration	Required	Recommended but not mandatory	x	x
Approximate time commitment	2.5 hr	2 hr	1.5 hr	10 min
Awards presented	Immediately following the contest	Immediately following the contest	Immediately following the contest	At Closing Ceremonies
Categories	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Beginner ● Intermediate ● Advanced ● Prop/Armor* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Beginner ● Intermediate ● Advanced 	Visit our booth on Sunday to find out!
Prizes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Best in Show ● Fan Favourite ● Judges' Choice (x3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Advanced <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Winner ○ Runner Up ● Intermediate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Winner ○ Runner Up ● Beginner <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Winner ○ Runner Up ● Prop/Armor or Judges' Choice* (x2) ● Photographers Choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Advanced (x3) ● Intermediate (x3) ● Beginner (x3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Star of Cosplay x2 ● 1st Runner Up x2 ● 2nd Runner Up x2

*If we don't have any prop/armor entries then we will assign the awards as Judges' Choice Awards.

Comprehensive Cosplay Award

After much feedback from our attendees we are proud to introduce the Comprehensive Cosplay Award! This award encourages cosplayers to compete in multiple contests as well as develop the skills to compete in a more traditional cosplay competition like those at the majority of other conventions.

This award will be presented to the cosplayer who exhibits and excels at all of the core components of cosplaying: costume creation, creativity, stage presence, and personal interaction.

To qualify, all you need to do is enter Otafest's various cosplay contests, scores are calculated automatically. You will earn a base number of points simply by entering a contest, and will earn even more if you win an award (see the table below for details).

You will earn points towards the Comprehensive Cosplay Award by simply entering any or all of the Cosplay Showcase (craftsmanship), Skit Contest (stage presence), Fashion Show (stage presence), Stars of Cosplay (personal interaction) as well as our other cosplay prizes such as Hall Cosplay!

Here is how scoring works:

	Entry	Runner Up	Winner
Cosplay Showcase	10 Points	20 Points Photographers Choice: 20 Points	30 Points
Fashion Show	5 Points	N/A	20 Points
Skit Contest	10 Points	Judges' Choice: 20 Points	Best in Show / Fan Favourite: 30 points
Stars of Cosplay	5 Points	10 Points	15 Points
Hall Cosplay	N/A	N/A	5 Points

*Hall Cosplay Awards are typically not awarded to winners of other cosplay contests as the judge is made aware of the contest winners as the events happen.

The winner of the Comprehensive Cosplay Award will be announced at Closing Ceremonies.

Frequently Asked Questions

What about the traditional Cosplay Contest?

We've listened to your feedback and noticed that cosplayers really want a simple contest that is fun and doesn't take all day. We've spent close to a year researching and developing the new multiple-contest approach. However, there is now the Comprehensive Cosplay Award, so we are still trying to encourage cosplayers to participate in all aspects of cosplaying!

Why so many contests?

Our festival is growing and so are our cosplayers' time demands and skill levels. We want to provide a wide range of events with reasonable time commitments for our attendees.

Why do I have to be there earlier than the time in the schedule?

When you see a cosplay contest in the schedule, that means the **show** starts at that time. This means that we need time beforehand to get you and everyone else ready to begin the performance on time! If you don't turn up early then we can't set up on time and the contest is delayed. Since there are events following our contests in the same room we're forced to start at the scheduled time. Unfortunately this means if contestants are late we will start without them. We don't like turning people away so please don't put us in that position. Pay attention to our instructions and arrive at the time given for set up.

Is it a good idea to pre-register?

YES! Pre-registering allows you to fill out your own information without us asking "How do you spell that again?", it saves time on the day, and it ensures you have a place in the contest (but you still need to show up on time!).

Are there any entry caps?

There's always the chance we'll have to limit entry numbers. While this could happen at any contest it is most likely we will have to cap entry for the Showcase Contest specifically.

What if my pre-registration details are incorrect or I changed my entry?

[Email us](#), we'll update your information. Don't submit another entry.

Who decides who wins an award?

We appoint judges for each contest. As organisers we have no say in who wins unless the judges' decision is against the contest rules. The one exception is the Stars of Cosplay contest in which the attendees vote for their favourites.

How will I be placed in a category (Skit/Showcase/Fashion)

When you sign up for a contest you answer a short series of questions about your past cosplaying experience, we use these answers to place you in the categories. Be honest when answering these questions. The judges may move you between the categories at their discretion based on their conversations with you.

Can staff enter a contest?

Usually the answer is no except at the Cosplay Director's discretion. No staff who has any part in organising and implementing any of the contests can enter under any circumstances.

How can I be a judge?

Demonstrate to us that you are a very experienced and talented cosplayer. Ideally you will have been a winner in our previous contests at the Advanced (formally Expert) level. Usually our judges are retired or semi-retired multiple contest winners or cosplay guests.

How many contests can I enter?

You can enter any and all of them as long as you meet the requirements!

Why do I have to wait so long to be judged for the Showcase Contest?

The same reason you have to wait to see a doctor. There are people ahead of you, they most likely pre-registered and got there before you. Save time by pre-registering yourself!

I didn't do my research or check the times, I missed out, what can I do?

We're sorry about that, we'd love everyone who wants to participate to have their chance but in this situation you can only learn from the mistake and be better prepared next time.

I have questions, who should I ask?

Feel free to email us at cosplay@otafest.com. Please allow a couple of days for us to reply as we do receive a lot of emails.