

**2024-2025 National Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow
Critique & Contest Rules**

Entry Deadline: **May 15, 2025**

Entries must be submitted prior to 11:59 p.m. Central Time.

GENERAL RULES

1. Contestants must be active, dues-paying ACT members. If National ACT dues have not been paid, please email Mrs. Taylor K. Apple at nact.adviser@gmail.com.
2. The National ACT Critique and Contest has six divisions with each division divided into multiple categories.
3. All active members of the National ACT organization are eligible to compete in all categories, i.e., undergraduate students will compete against graduate students.
4. Each contestant is limited to one individual entry and one group/team entry per category. If a contestant enters more than one entry individually in a single category, only the original entry will be judged.
5. All entries must be entirely student produced. Although faculty and professional communicators may advise students on their work, students must complete the actual execution.
6. All entries must be uploaded into Submittable. You will need to create a Submittable account if you do not have one already.
7. National ACT reserves the right to disqualify entries that are incomplete or otherwise do not follow the rules for Critique & Contest, the division, and the category.
8. If the Vice President or Executive Adviser believes an entry is in the wrong category, they may move it to an appropriate category.
9. Judges are professionals with disciplinary expertise in the assigned category. The Vice President has responsibility for coordinating judge invitation and selection with input from the National ACT officer team. Judges are not agricultural communications faculty or ACT chapter advisers.
10. Judges evaluate entries using criteria developed for each division by the National ACT officer team. Judges provide a numerical score and critique comments for each entry. They are asked to highlight the entry's strengths and weaknesses and describe specific changes that could improve its effectiveness. The comments are emailed to the chapter adviser who is asked to share the information with the contestants.
11. The National ACT has the rights to use material submitted into Critique & Contest for sharing winning entries on the website, awards presentation, and for teaching purposes.
12. All entries must be created between May 16, 2023, and May 15, 2024.
13. The **first individual entry** for each member is **FREE**. Each additional individual entry is **\$5 USD per entry**. All group entries are **\$5 USD per entry**. The National ACT organization will invoice each chapter for the number of paid entries that are judged.

RECOGNITION

- Awards will be presented during the National ACT business meeting at Ag Media Summit.
- All winners receive certificates.
- All winners will be listed in the Critique & Contest Awards presentation slides. The presentation slides are published on the National ACT Critique & Contest webpage.
- The work by first place winners for the categories are published on the National ACT Critique & Contest webpage.
- The first place winner for each category receives an engraved award.
- The award of excellence in each division receives a monetary award.

CRITIQUE AND CONTEST DIVISIONS AND CATEGORIES

WRITING DIVISION

Each writing division entry must be submitted online in manuscript form: **Times New Roman, 12-point, double-spaced text with 1-inch margins on letter-size paper saved as a PDF**. An example format is provided on the National ACT's Critique & Contest webpage: <https://nactnow.org/contests-awards/>. Do not submit photographs with an entry. **Entries in published form will be disqualified.** NOTE: The first-place entries in the writing categories will be entered in the Excellence in Writing competition.

Entries will be judged on readability, originality, organization, use of appropriate writing style (re: AP Style), and overall appeal.

1. NEWS STORY

Entries should be written in inverted pyramid style and should address a current issue. Any word count is acceptable.

2. SHORT FEATURE STORY

Short feature stories include technical, how-to, historical, etc., of 1,000 words or less.

3. LONG FEATURE STORY

Long feature stories include technical, how-to, historical, etc., of more than 1,000 words.

4. SHORT PERSONALITY PROFILE

Entries should be 1,000 words or less and should focus on a less time-sensitive topic.

5. LONG PERSONALITY PROFILE

Entries should be more than 1,000 words and should focus on a less time-sensitive topic.

6. RESEARCH-RELATED WRITING

Entries should address a current research area. Any word count is acceptable.

7. EDITORIAL

Entries should be 1,000 words or less and should focus on a less time-sensitive topic.

8. SINGLE BLOG ENTRY

This should be a single blog entry posted between May 16, 2024 and May 15, 2025. Any word count is acceptable.

PUBLICATION DIVISION

Each publication division entry must be submitted online as a PDF. NOTE: The first-place entries in the publication categories will be entered in the Excellence in Publications competition.

Entries will be judged on layout and design, typography, graphics, content, writing quality, and overall appeal.

1. NEWSLETTER OR E-NEWSLETTER

Entries should be a single newsletter or e-newsletter saved as a letter-size PDF. Any length is acceptable. E-newsletter entries cannot be entered in the web design category.

2. BROCHURE OR PAMPHLET

Entries should be a PDF of the completed design. Any size or dimension is acceptable.

3. MAGAZINE - **UPDATED, 2025**

The **Magazine** category will be judged based on print publications. **All entries must be submitted in two formats:**

1. **Online Submission** – A **PDF version** of a single issue must be uploaded.

- 2. Mailed Submission – Six physical copies** of the same issue submitted as a PDF must be mailed to the National ACT adviser.

The PDF and mailed copies must be identical in content and format.

All mailed entries **must be postmarked no later than May 15, 2025** to allow adequate time for distribution to judges.

Magazine category entries should be mailed to:

National ACT Adviser – Taylor K. Apple

C/O Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications

Texas A&M University

2116 TAMU

College Station, TX 77843-2116

ELECTRONIC MEDIA DIVISION

All video submissions must be submitted as a YouTube link. The audio entries are uploaded as .mp3 files.

NOTE: The first-place entries in the electronic media categories will be entered in the Excellence in Electronic Media competition.

Entries will be judged on creativity, organization, effectiveness, quality of work, overall appeal.

1. AUDIO PACKAGE

Entries must be between 30 seconds and 5 minutes in duration. Newscasts, PSAs, podcasts, interviews, documentaries or editorials are eligible to be entered. Entries must be more than a market report.

2. AUDIO ADVERTISEMENT

Entries must be between 15 seconds and 60 seconds in duration.

3. SHORT VIDEO PRODUCTION

Entries must be less than 2 minutes in duration.

4. LONG VIDEO PRODUCTION

Entries must be more than 2 minutes in duration.

5. VIDEO ADVERTISEMENT PRODUCTION

Entries must be between 15 seconds and 60 seconds in duration.

PHOTOGRAPHY DIVISION

Each photo entry must be 5 megabytes or smaller and must be saved in JPEG or JPG format. Photo correction or manipulation is allowed. NOTE: The first-place entries in the photography categories will be entered in the Excellence in Photography competition.

Entries will be judged on subject matter, effectiveness, photo quality, and composition.

1. SCENIC PHOTO

2. PEOPLE PHOTO

3. ANIMAL PHOTO

4. PLANT PHOTO

5. FOOD PHOTO

6. OTHER PHOTO

7. BLACK AND WHITE PHOTO

Entries in this category are eligible to be entered into other photo categories, excluding photo series.

8. PHOTO SERIES

Entries must include three to five images. Photo series is not able to contain pictures from other categories. The JPEG- or JPG-formatted images in the series must be entered into the “Photo Series Files” category of file uploads on the submission site.

DESIGN AND LAYOUT DIVISION

The entries for page layout, poster, flyer, logo, infographic, and advertisement are submitted online as a PDF. The blog and web design entries are submitted as URL addresses. NOTE: The first-place entries in the design and layout categories will be entered in the Excellence in Design and Layout competition.

Entries will be judged on layout and design, color, illustration, typography, usability, and overall effectiveness.

1. PAGE LAYOUT

Entries can include single- or multi-page magazine or newspaper spreads. The spread should look as close to the printed form as possible.

2. POSTER OR FLYER

3. LOGO

4. INFOGRAPHIC

5. ADVERTISEMENT

Entries can be any size and can include banner ads, print ads, etc.

6. BLOG

Submit the URL to the blog. Ensure your blog will be online and available for judging.

7. WEB DESIGN

Submit the URL for the website. Ensure your website will be online and available for judging.

PUBLIC RELATIONS DIVISION

The entries for public relations campaign, press/news release, social media campaign, and single social media post are submitted as PDF files. Please submit a photo of your public relations single item. The first-place entries in the categories will be automatically entered into the Excellence in Public Relations competition.

Entries will be judged on appropriateness for the audience, readability, creativity, and organization.

1. PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGN

Submit one copy in final draft or published form.

2. PRESS/NEWS RELEASE

3. SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

Submit one copy in final draft or published form.

4. SINGLE SOCIAL MEDIA POST

Materials submitted should document an individual social media post that is not part of an overall campaign. It can be from any social media platforms (i.e. Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Snapchat, X, etc.). Describe how and why this post was created, social media platform, goals and audience(s). Provide analytics including engagement for the post. If the post was boosted or promoted at all, include the amount and length of time.

5. PUBLIC RELATIONS SINGLE ITEM

Submit one finished item or drafts should look as close to finished as possible. Entries in this category cannot be entered in any other category. Entries can be anything applicable to public relations, including displays and specialty advertising items, such as coffee mugs, pens or buttons, etc. Please submit a photo of your item. The photo must be 5 megabytes or smaller and must be saved in JPEG or JPG format.