



How to Benefit from Competition

The Texas Taxidermy Association has held competitions and an annual convention since 1979. Competitions are a great opportunity to improve your taxidermy skills. Competitors are not competing with any other competitor, just your mount and your score sheet.

The TTAI works diligently to hire well-qualified and respected judges to assess each mount and then explain how the competitor can improve their mount. It is understood that this process is subjective and truly represents the judge's opinion on that day. Based upon our members' prior successes at the national and world competitions, the TTAI has a track record of growing great taxidermists. We are not just another state show. It is not easy to win blue ribbons and big awards at the Texas competition. Successful competitors are those who have the artistic talent and have put the time and effort into it. Those who successfully compete in several TTAI competitions, learning from various TTAI judges, are well positioned to compete anywhere.

The primary objective of competition is to promote the concept of learning. The structure of the divisions allows anyone at any skill level to enter a mount and feel confident that they will obtain a substantive review of their work.

The TTAI Handbook describes what is expected at each level of competition. Smart competitors take the time to review each section and to understand what is needed to advance to the next level. Competitions are what one makes of them. When approached as a learning tool, one is almost assured satisfaction. Careful consideration of which division to enter will likely promote happiness after the show.

"Artists are not like athletes. We cannot win gold. We cannot beat other creatives. We cannot come first. Sport is objective. Our craft is subjective. Creating to 'be the best' is a waste of energy. Instead, create to connect to the people who need you. Because they're out there. Create in your way, because there is no right way. Take the pressure off and focus on your unique brand of magic." - Author Unknown – provided by Courtney Shaheen (first female winner of the TTAI Master's Challenge in 2023)

"Creativity is allowing oneself to make mistakes. Art is knowing which ones to keep" – Scott Adams

"The artist has one function – to affirm and glorify life." – W. Edward Brown



Amateur Division

The Amateur Division competition is geared toward early beginner taxidermists and hobbyists, artists who may be entering one of their first pieces ever mounted, wishing to have the most basic concepts of taxidermy explained in further detail with a much more relaxed critique.

1. **Who May Compete:** See competition rule #17 for eligibility. Those who have attained two blue ribbons in any category are obligated to compete in the Professional Division in that category. Competitors who attain either two blue ribbons or the Horizon Award in any category in this division must advance to the Professional Division for that category.
2. **Judging:** Mounts in this division are judged separately and independently on a commercial level basis. Judging will be less in depth and more lenient than the Professional and Masters Divisions. Points from this division will not count towards the TTAI Paul Provenzano Award.
3. **Awards:** Multiple first, second, third, and honorable mention ribbons are awarded. A Horizon Award is given to the highest scoring piece. A People's Choice award is also given.
4. **Multiple Entries:** There is no limit to the number of mounts a member can enter in this division.
5. **Individual Work:** All taxidermy procedures must be done by the individual competitor.
6. **Reproductions & Reproduction Parts:** Commercial blanks and parts are allowed if the preparation and painting is done by the competitor.
7. **Freeze Dry:** Only specimens that have been completely skinned and mounted on a manikin prior to any freeze dry preservation are allowed. All finish work and painting must be completed by competitor.



Professional Division

The Professional Division is for the taxidermist who wishes to put their skills to the test. Anatomy, grooming, finishing and composition are key points to be judged and discussed in a more in-depth critique, along with consideration for artistic creativity. Those who successfully compete at this level are well positioned to compete nationally.

1. **Who May Compete:** See competition rule #17 for eligibility. Those who receive 2 blue ribbons in any category may elect to move from Professional to Masters division in the same category (Once a competitor enters the Masters in a particular category, they may not move back to professional division for the category going forward.) 3 blue ribbons in any category with at least one winning best of category/winner's ribbon across a minimum of two years of competition requires competitor's move from Professional to Masters.
2. **Judging:** Mounts in this division must be technically correct, artistically oriented as well as creative. Points earned in this division will count towards the Paul Provenzano Award.
3. **Awards:** Multiple Winners: First, Second, Third, and Honorable Mention ribbons are larger than those given in the Amateur Division. An award for "Best of Category" may be given in all nine categories. A first-place ribbon is required to be considered for "Best of Category." Best of Category must be the highest scoring competition piece in that category. In the event of a tie, the TTAI President will determine the winner. There is an award for Best of Professional. This is a judge's choice award (not necessarily the highest score.).
4. **Multiple Entries:** There is no limit to the number of entries a member may enter in this division.
5. **Individual Work:** All taxidermy procedures must be done by the individual competitor.



6. **Reproductions & Reproduction Parts:** Commercial blanks and parts are allowed if the preparation and painting is done by the competitor.
7. **Freeze Dry:** Only specimens that have been completely skinned and mounted on a manikin prior to any freeze dry preservation are allowed. All finish work and painting must be completed by competitor.

Masters Division

*The Masters Division is the most elite division in the TTAI competition. The competitor knows what is expected of a world-class mount. Building upon all skills mastered in the Professional Division, the Masters Division has a strong focus on artistic composition and creativity. Some competitors create replica parts from scratch. You must compete in this division to earn the title "**Texas State Champion**".*

1. **Who May Compete:** See competition rule #17 for eligibility. A minimum of two blue ribbons in the same category in the Professional division is required for competitors who choose to advance to this division. Competitors that have attained Masters classification in any state, national, or world competition in one category, may enter pieces in the Masters division in any category. However, once the competitor enters a piece in the Masters division for a given category, they may not move back to the professional division. If a piece has been entered in the Masters division in another competition prior to the TTAI competition, it must be placed in the Masters division. (Be aware once a competitor has entered in the Masters division in Texas you may not move back to another division in that category.)
2. **Judging:** Judging in this division is the most intense of all the divisions. Painstaking attention to detail and artistic craftsmanship is required in the division.



3. **Awards:** Multiple Winners; First, Second, and Third place ribbons will be larger than the ones given in the Professional division. An award for "Texas State Champion" may be given in all nine categories. A first-place ribbon is required to be considered for "Texas State Champion." Texas State Champion is the highest scoring competition piece in that category. All other mounts will be given Masters Division Ribbons based on their numerical score. In the event of a tie, the TTAI President will determine the winner. There will be a Judges Choice Award given in the division, separate from the Professional division.
4. **Multiple Entries:** There is no limit to the number of entries a member may enter in the division.
5. **Individual Work:** All taxidermy procedures must be done by the individual competitor.
6. **Reproductions & Reproduction Parts:** Commercial blanks and parts are allowed if all the preparation and painting is done by competitor.
7. **Freeze Dry:** Only specimens that have been completely skinned and mounted on a manikin prior to any freeze dry preservation are allowed. All finish work and painting must be completed by the competitor.

Youth Division

1. **Who May Compete:** No one over the age of 18 may compete in this division. Paid TTAI membership is not required. Youth competitors register and compete under their own TTAI ID number.
2. **Judging:** Judges for this division will be qualified and predetermined. Competitors may get a critique from the judge, only if time constraints allow for one.
3. **Entry Fees:** There is no entry fee to compete in this division.
4. **Awards:** All youth competing will receive a ribbon and a proper score sheet.
5. **Youth Age Groups:**
 - Children up to age 8
 - Youth age 9 through age 14



- Youth age 15 through age 17
6. The age of the competitor is placed on the mount entry card. Designated awards and/or prizes are given for the highest score in each age group. The judge will choose a "Best of Division" for a predetermined prize. There is a separate People's Choice award for youth.
 7. **Multiple Entries:** Multiple entries are allowed.
 8. **Individual Work:** All work must be done **solely** by the competitor. Adult supervision and help is allowed but must be in a strictly "**Hands Off**" manner.