



Indiana Program Guide

2025-2026

International Thespian Excellence Awards (Thespys™ for short) is an educational program that offers Thespians the opportunity to receive constructive feedback on prepared theatrical performances, technical presentations, and other areas of theatrical expertise in order for them to improve their prepared theatrical materials, expand their performance and technical competence, and develop their professional and presentation skills. The program honors high achieving students by advancing them from regional to international levels of adjudication in 21 official categories spanning performance, technical theatre, filmmaking, and writing. Students are adjudicated by theatre educators and professionals on rubrics that reflect national standards in theatre education.

Important Information You Need to Know

The following rules are overarching and apply to all Thespy categories. It is **imperative** that participants read and understand all rules in order to be successfully adjudicated at a Thespy Awards event. Failure to follow any of the guidelines in this document may result in a disqualification. In this guide, you will find all the dates, rules, and regulations specific to participation in Thespys at the Indiana State Conference, a qualifying event for participation in Thespys at the International Thespian Festival. If this guide and the national guide conflict, this guide takes precedence for all Thespy entries at the Indiana State Conference. Indiana Thespians complies with all the individual category event rules and rubrics as found on the EdTA Thespy website found at <https://schooltheatre.org/thespys/rules-and-rubrics/>.

Rule 1: Submission Requirements

Students must be registered for the entirety of State Conference. Students must be in attendance for competition all day Saturday, Jan 24th and the morning of Sunday, Jan 25th. Titles of pieces must be submitted with each entry, with the exception of playwriting and film categories, and cannot be changed once the registration deadline has passed.

Middle School Entries: Students in middle school can enter in either a middle school only room designed to adjudicate students at a middle school level or in the high school rooms with the understanding that they will be judged at the same caliber as the high school participants. Students adjudicated in the middle school only rooms are NOT eligible to advance to ITF even if they receive a superior rating.

Entry Limits: Each entrant is permitted to participate in no more than **two** different categories. Entrants may not enter twice in the same category. Since film and playwriting are adjudicated virtually prior to state, they do not count as one of the two allowed categories per entrant. Due to scheduling conflicts, Tech Challenge DOES count as a Thespy .

All entrants **not** registering for the Middle School Only room wishing to enter a solo category - Monologue, Contrasting Monologue, and Solo Musical Theatre - MUST submit their entry virtually via OpenWater by November 21 in order to participate at State Conference.

-Only students receiving a 16 or above in the virtual prescreening round will be allowed to register to perform at state conference.

-Entrants MUST use the same piece(s) and cutting presented in the prescreening when performing at state.

Students entering in the Middle School Only room do NOT need to submit a virtual prescreen in any category.

Registering for the Thespian Excellence Awards

1. Students must be registered for Indiana State Conference and for Thespys by **December 12, 2025** to participate in the Thespys program.
2. All Thespy entrants must be affiliated with an active Thespian troupe and be registered for the full weekend of state conference.
 - a. Students do not need to be inducted Thespians at the time of state conference to participate.
 - b. If they receive a Superior for their entry and are moving on to ITF, they must be inducted prior to ITF to participate there.
3. Thespy entries must be registered no later than the **December 12, 2025** deadline in Open Water - a separate form from the state conference registration form.
 - a. No changes other than drops will be accepted after this date.
 - b. Troupes will be charged for all Thespys registered.
 - c. No refunds will be made for entries dropped after the registration deadline.
4. Indiana Thespians will validate eligibility and disqualify incomplete and ineligible entries.
 - a. No Thespy registrations or changes in Thespy registrations will be accepted after the registration deadline.
 - b. No refunds will be issued for disqualified or incomplete entries.

Rule 2: Slating

For all categories except Playwriting and Short Film, Thespians must begin their presentation with an introduction known as a slate. The slate must include only the following information:

1. The Thespian's name (or names, for group categories)
2. Troupe number
3. Title of selection being performed or work being showcased (e.g., "'Don't Rain on My Parade' from Funny Girl" for a Solo Musical Theatre Performance entry or "Belle's ballgown from Beauty and the Beast" for a Costume Construction entry)
4. Name of the playwright(s) and/or composer(s)

A slate might sound like this: "Hello. My name is John Smith from Troupe 561, and I'll be performing 'Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'" from Oklahoma! by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II." Or this: "Hi. My name is Jennifer Johnson representing Troupe 1101, and I'm going to share my lighting design for A Midsummer Night's Dream by William Shakespeare."

Rule 3: Time Limits

After the slate, time begins with the first word, musical note, or acting beat (if it precedes the first word or note) of the presentation. At the end of the time limit, the room monitor will raise their hand. At this point, the Thespian must stop or risk being disqualified. After ten (10) seconds, the room monitor will say, "Time." After twenty (20) seconds, the room monitor will say, "Stop." Any Thespian who exceeds the time limits below may be disqualified.

- Solo Acting (both Monologue & Contrasting Monologue): 3 minutes
- Two-Person Scene, Ensemble Acting, all Musical Theatre and Musical Theatre Dance: 5 minutes
- Short Film: 5 minutes + 1 minutes for credits
- All technical categories: 8 minutes + 4 minutes Q&A with adjudicators

Rule 4: Approved Material and Performance Rights:

All participants must follow the official policies agreed upon by EdTA the licensing agencies listed on the Rights and Licensing page. All entries in any performance category must find their title in the search engine located at <https://schooltheatre.org/thespys/approved-material/>. No other titles will be allowed.

Technical Categories

Technical presentations of theoretical or realized production elements and designs for published plays and musicals are not subject to approval from licensing agencies and therefore considered fair use for Thespy adjudication. Thespians must prepare technical presentations for published plays or musicals; designs and presentations for original works or for non-theatrical works (e.g., poetry, works of fiction, screenplays, television, concerts, or any other medium) are not permitted.

In their presentation, Thespian should address questions such as:

- What are some of your responsibilities in your field?
- How did the director's concept influence your designs?
- How did the style of the play affect your designs?
- If the production was realized, what challenges did you face in unifying the director's concept across all areas of your work?
- If you had more time or resources, what would you change?
- What would you be willing to compromise in your design if you had to?
- What was your inspiration and how did you research it?

The Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

As AI continues to evolve and become a regular part of creative processes, it is recommended that educational programs put in place policies and procedures as needed to ensure the responsible, ethical, and transparent use of AI generative tools. Educators, coaches, advisors, and directors should work to balance the opportunities of generative AI

with the need for preservation of the student's original voice. While further exploration of AI's role in the performing arts can offer exciting new possibilities, it is essential for all involved to remain mindful of the boundaries and responsibilities that come with this powerful technology. In Thespy adjudications, AI may be used as a collaborative or starting tool as long as the processes and tools are clearly declared in the presentation of the work. AI-generated images, video, and audio must avoid the use of copyrighted material. The final creative products and the processes by which the participants arrived at those products should be completed by the participants themselves, with all choices justified if questioned by the adjudicators in the Q&A portion of the presentation.

Rule 5: Dress Code

For all categories (performance and technical), Thespians will present themselves at adjudication as a blank slate, refraining from wearing clothing and/or accessories that distract from the performance or presentation. The goal is to level the playing field and allow the focus to remain on the work, not the aesthetics of the presenting Thespian.

Thespians should follow these guidelines:

- Dress in simple, modest attire suitable for a professional interview or audition, in black or dark colors. Clothing should be appropriate for the situation so as not to limit or restrict movement or affect the performance. For technical categories, Thespians may choose to follow the guideline above or wear the black/dark-colored clothing traditionally worn by technicians.
- Acceptable footwear is neutral, not distracting, and may include character shoes and dance shoes (if category appropriate), dress shoes, sneakers, or boots.
- Theatrical makeup, costumes, and props are not permitted.
- Avoid wearing distracting items such as large, dangling jewelry, light-up footwear, or fashionably distressed clothing.

Rule 6: Props & Set Pieces in Performance

The use of set pieces, props (including stationary and handheld), or other personal items is not permitted in Thespy adjudication and will result in disqualification.

Exceptions

- Solo Acting, Solo Musical Theatre Performance, and Solo Musical Theatre Dance: One (1) chair may be safely used.
- Two-Person Scenes, Duet Musical Theatre Performance, and Duet Musical Theater Dance: Two (2) chairs may be safely used.
- Ensemble Acting, Ensemble Musical Theatre Performance, and Ensemble Musical Theatre Dance: One (1) table and up to six (6) chairs may be safely used.

“Safely” means that items may be used in a safe manner but should not be used as props (e.g., pushed over, lifted, etc.). Sitting on, laying across, and/or standing upon a chair(s) is usually acceptable so long as safety is the priority (i.e., if a chair or table has wheels, it would not be considered safe to stand upon).

Rule 7: Filming

No performance or technical category may be filmed for rebroadcast or other use without prior written approval from the publisher. Filming is a violation of copyright law unless otherwise negotiated with the publisher.

Rule 8: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

Race, ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, body type, and/or disability should not influence an adjudicator's evaluation of a Thespian. Thespians are encouraged to choose material that speaks to them as long as all copyright rules are followed. For example, a Thespian may play a role of any gender, regardless of the gender with which the student identifies. However, it is important to note that all copyright rules are to be enforced. The Thespian cannot change pronouns without the express written consent from the publisher.

Deaf and hard of hearing Thespians may use a conductor (adult or student) in Musical Theatre Performance and Dance categories to guide tempo. View the revised rubric [here](#) for this instance.

Rule 9: Disqualification

The International Thespian Excellence Awards program is meant to challenge, inspire, and educate Thespians. As noted throughout this document, there are very clear rules to ensure equity among all participants. Violations of these rules can lead to disqualification at any level of adjudication. Disqualifications in the final round of adjudication will be ruled on by a member of the Indiana Chapter Board and require unanimous recommendation from the adjudication panel and the Chapter Board member. Direct all appeals, questions, and requests for clarification to creed@indianathespians.org. Please include all relevant details including the name of the student, their school's name, their troupe number, the room number of the adjudication, and detailed information about the issue that led to disqualification.

Rule 10: Scoring

A performance-based assessment rubric is used for all categories. Rubrics can be found here: <https://schooltheatre.org/thespys/rules-and-rubrics/#rules-and-rubrics-by-category>

- All scoring will be done within the OpenWater program. Be sure you have followed the registration instructions **precisely** so that both the director and student(s) can access the scores after the adjudication.

Rule 11: International Thespian Excellence Awards Winners

The students or groups achieving the highest scores in each category will be honored as Thespy Award Winners. Students must achieve a Superior score to become a Thespy Award Winner. If no qualifiers earn a Superior score in a given category, there will be no Thespy Award Winner in that category. There is no cap on the number of winners. All entries in the high school level rooms receiving a Superior score at the state conference qualify to enter the International Thespian Excellence Awards at International Thespian Festival in June as long as they meet all eligibility requirements as put forth by EdTA here: [Thespys - Educational Theatre Association \(schooltheatre.org\)](https://schooltheatre.org).