

Convention Contests General Information and Rules 2026

The I.B.M. contests are recognized as the gold standard for well-organized, high-quality, and non-political convention competitions. The I.B.M. Gold Medal International Award of Excellence in Stage Performance and the I.B.M. Gold Cups International Award of Excellence in Close-Up Performance are among the most prestigious honors in the world of magic.

This year's in-person contest will take place during the I.B.M. Convention from **July 22 – 25 2026**, at the Marriott St. Louis Hotel Airport.

How to Enter Contests

Stage 1: Application

To apply for either contest, please submit the following by **May 1, 2026**, to **IBMMagicContest@gmail.com**:

1. A completed contest application form.
2. A link to an online video (YouTube Link or similar). Note - Any significant changes to your act after submission must be approved by the Contest Chairs prior to the convention.
3. A headshot. (High res for poster and promotions).

Stage 2: Selection

1. All video submissions will be reviewed by a panel of judges.
2. The top **8 competitors** in each category (Close-Up and Stage) will be selected to perform live during the convention finals.
3. The **8 finalists** and **1 reserve** for each contest will be notified by **May 31, 2026**.

Performers who are not selected are encouraged to participate in the **Open Mic Show** during the convention.

Contest Schedule (subject to change)

- **Close-Up Contest Finals:**
 - Held on Thursday afternoon, performed on stage before the judges and a select audience who will be seated on the stage. The remainder of the audience will view the performances on large screens.

- **Stage Contest Finals:**
 - Held during the **Friday evening International Stage Championship and Gala Show**.
 - Awards for both contests will be announced on Saturday evening at the beginning of the final Gala Show.

Important Guidelines

1. **Prohibited Items:**
 - **No pyrotechnics, candles, or sustained open flames** are allowed in either contest.
 - The use of **large amounts (more than a small handful) of confetti** (or similar materials) is restricted as it interferes with hotel AC systems. This is a hotel rule.
 - **USE OF CONFETTI, FIRE EFFECTS, OR SPARKS MUST BE AGREED BY THE CONTEST CHAIRS AND HAVE PERMISSION IN WRITING BEFORE THE CONVENTION. ANY UNAUTHORISED USE MAY RESULT IN DISQUALIFICATION.**
 - **Glitter and mylar confetti are strictly prohibited.**
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2. **Gold Prizes:**
 - The Gold Medal and Gold Cups awards are given at the judges' discretion and are not guaranteed every year.
 - At least **3 contestants** per category are required for a Gold Prize to be awarded. Otherwise, judges may opt to award only the **1st Place or Award of Merit** trophies.
 - Gold prizes can be given to either youth or adults.

Close-Up Contest

1. Contestants must attend all contest meetings and check in with the Contest Chairs at the designated location at least **30 minutes before** the contest begins.
2. A preparation/waiting area will be provided.
3. The performance area will include:
 - A cloth-covered table (size and shape dependent on availability).
 - Chairs, an electrical outlet, and an audience, from which up to **two spectators** may be pre-selected and sat at the performers table.
4. Contestants are allowed:
 - **Two minutes** to set up their equipment before performing.
 - **One minute** to remove their equipment after their performance.

Stage Contest

1. Contestants must attend all contest meetings, rehearsals as requested, and check in with the Contest Chairperson at the designated location at least **30 minutes before** the contest begins.
2. A preparation/waiting area will be provided.
3. Only convention-registered performers and assistants appearing on stage are allowed backstage.
4. Contestants are allowed:
 - o **Two minutes** to set up their equipment before performing.
 - o **Two minutes** to remove their equipment after their performance.
5. To maintain cleanliness and safety:
 - o If the act involves dropping many cards, confetti, or other items on stage contestants **MUST** provide and use a **drop cloth**
 - o The performance area must be left clean for the next act.
6. Limited technical rehearsal time will be allocated at the **pre-contest briefing**.
Contestants must submit their tech requirements by **July 1, 2026**.

Judges' Procedures

1. Video submissions will be judged by a panel of experienced judges, who are members of the I.B.M. and do not receive monetary compensation for their time.
2. Finals at the convention will be judged by I.B.M. members who are experienced judges and registered for the event.
3. After the finals, judges will deliberate privately to determine award recipients, including whether to elevate performances to the Gold Medal or Gold Cups level.

Rules and Procedures

1. Contestants (magicians and assistants) must be **members in good standing** of the I.B.M. and registered for the Annual Convention.
2. Applications for youth contests must be signed by a legal guardian and they must have a legal guardian with them at the convention.
3. Contestants may not include unauthorized use of intellectual property in their performances.
4. Paid performers or lecturers at the convention are not eligible to compete.
5. No inappropriate or offensive material (“blue material”) is allowed.
6. Contestants must attend the **pre-contest briefing** or notify the Contest Chairman in advance.
7. Performances are limited to **10 minutes**. Time penalties or disqualification may apply for exceeding the limit.

8. Judges' decisions are final.
9. Unsportsmanlike behavior will result in disqualification.
