



MISS AMERICA

JUDGES ORIENTATION FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

MISS AMERICA ORGANIZATION
LOCAL PAGEANTS 2008
STATE PAGEANTS 2007

REVISED MARCH 15, 2007



Thank you for making the commitment to ensure the integrity of your program by providing your judge's panel the best Judge's Orientation possible.

This facilitator's guide along with its accompanying DVD are designed to allow you to conduct your judges' orientation with uniformity with other Local and State Pageants. However, it is also designed to allow you the flexibility to modify the specifics of the judges' orientation to fit your precise needs.

Prior to conducting the orientation, please take the time to preview the accompanying DVD. The tape runs just less than twenty-five minutes in its entirety. The tape is divided into four sections.

Section 1: Discusses the job responsibilities of a titleholder and allows for you to provide detailed information on your titleholder's job description.

Section 2: Discusses the scoring process and the Interview. This section also allows for time for the facilitator and the judging panel to organize itself and to prepare its questions.

Section 3: Discusses the On-Stage Competitions

Section 4: Discusses Composite Scoring and Top Five Final Ballot. Local Pageants should disregard this section of the Tape.

Prior to meeting with the judging panel, you should meet with all relevant pageant officials and the current titleholder, if applicable, and write a job description. As you discuss the job responsibilities, make a list of appearances she is already scheduled to make as well as appearances you are attempting to work out. List all partnerships. Partnerships include any organizations (both profit and non-profit) with which your organization is associated. This includes Chambers of Commerce, School Programs, Charities, Associations, Churches, etc. Once you have made that list, look at each individual listing and write down the audiences she will have to serve. It is important that you speak with traveling companions, hostesses, etc. While the Executive Director and/or Business Manager may know the actual bookings, those who travel or appear with the titleholder may have a better handle on who is in the audience at these events.

Once you have established the complete list of appearances, partnerships, and audiences, you then must make a list of all of her responsibilities at these appearances. Will she need to perform her talent? Will she need to create a program and how long will it need to last? Will there need to be more than one program for the different audiences she may have to serve? How often will she be expected to make these appearances? Will she be compensated for these appearances? Will she have to book her own appearances or does she have a business manager? Is she expected to take time away from school and/or may she have other outside employment? Will she be expected to travel alone or with a traveling companion on her appearances? Will a car and/or housing be provided for her? Will she be expected to pick up the tab of her own travel costs?

Once you have established the job description as it relates to her appearances, now you must look at the job description as it relates to your specific program. What qualities and attributes are necessary for your specific titleholder? Is the ability to make the appearances more or less important than her success at the next level of competition? If success at the next level of competition is critical, then your judging panel must have a copy of the job description at the next level.

Also, take into consideration your program's needs. Will this titleholder have to meet with potential sponsor or scholarship contributors? Will she assist in building your program on a personal level or will she merely need to prepare for the next level of competition.

You must be realistic in your approach to writing this job description and your expectations of your titleholder. You cannot expect a contestant to take a year off from school, make a small number of unpaid appearances, not allow her to hold a paying job, and expect her to pay her bills and be at your beck and call. You would not want your daughter to be treated that way and neither should you have these unrealistic expectations of your titleholder.

Type a thorough job description and make enough copies for each of your judges to have a copy. Also, if you have any media clippings or scrapbooks from your previous titleholder's year, allow the judges to see them in order to get a better handle on the job that lies ahead for the woman they select.

Section One:

Once the judging panel arrives for your pageant, welcome them. You should introduce each judge and give a short paragraph (verbally) on why each judge has been asked to serve on the panel and brief overview of their credentials. When the time is appropriate show section one of the DVD. At the end of section one, present your job description and be prepared to discuss it fully.

Your judges should place the job description inside their judge's books as a constant reminder of the young woman they are expected to select.

You may not discuss any contestants with the judge's panel. The judges have signed an affidavit that they will contact the Miss America Offices if they feel they have been influenced in anyway. The affidavit provides the judges with the appropriate phone numbers to report any inappropriate behavior.

Once the job description has been presented to the judges and they have had all of their questions answered, please push play on the tape and begin the second section of the DVD.

Section Two:

This section of the orientation DVD deals with the scoring system and the Interview. Please have copies of all ballots available so that the judges may familiarize themselves with them. While the videotape has not dealt with the On-Stage competitions at this time, you may want to allow them to view the On-Stage competitions ballots.

The primary focus of this discussion portion is for you and the judging panel to organize yourselves on the way in which the Interview is going to take place. If the orientation does not take place in the Interview room, the judges should have ample time to familiarize themselves with the room and their surroundings. During this time also familiarize the panel and the timekeeper with each other. Allow the judges to feel comfortable with the way in which the time keeper will signal them. Do not allow the time keeper to dictate the way in which he or she should signal the judges. This should be at the discretion of the judging panel.

Prior to arriving at the orientation, decide who will serve as the head judge. This person should be experienced (not necessarily the most experienced) and capable of handling any issues which arise.

You should designate who will ask the first question and which judge will wrap up the Interview. Typically, the judges rotate who will ask the first question of each contestant. The contestant will enter the room, the judge designated to ask the contestant her first question should begin. Once the first question is asked, it is typically open for all judges to be able to ask questions. Once the time for questioning has elapsed, the head judge will tell the contestant her time is up and will usually introduce the optional 30 second closing by stating: "Our time is up, is there anything we have not discussed that you feel is important for us to know?" Please remind the judging panel that this is optional at the contestant's discretion. There is no such thing as a "penalty" for not using the closing statement. If the contestant feels the Interview went well and there is nothing left to discuss, she may simply decline to make a closing statement and leave the Interview.

Many pageants will allow the judges to participate in a mock interview with the current titleholder. This provides the judges the opportunity to work out any bugs in the process before interviewing the first contestant. If you elect to do a mock interview, please run the Interview just like you will all of the other interviews. This also allows you to see if there are any corrections that you need to be made in your orientation.

The primary focus of this discussion section is to also establish the kinds of questions which will illicit the information needed to assess whether or not the young woman has the skills necessary to perform the job requirements. Allow the judges to discuss these issues. However, do not allow any one judge to "dictate" the way in which the interviews are supposed to transpire. This discussion is designed to allow the judges to glean tips from one another on how to conduct interviews which will benefit everyone involved.

Those who have been around the judging system for many years are familiar with the term "high gain" question. This term means that the judges should not ask questions which will elicit a one

word or short sentence response. Instead of asking “What do you think the role of Miss America is in the United States?” which could produce answers like “To provide role models” or “To provide young women scholarship money”, you may want to ask, “Explain to me the difference the Miss America Pageant can make in this country and why?” That question will more than likely generate more information from the contestant.

Below are lists of kinds of questions which can be asked by the panel:

Behavioral: Remember, past behavior is an indicator of future behavior. How did you handle it when...?

Situational: Give the contestants a situation and ask them how they would handle it.

Role Play Questions: “Pretend we’re a third grade class. What would you tell us about your platform? (Pay close attention to how she handles the material with children. Most contestants ignore your question and tell you what they want you to know)”

Credential Questions: Does she have any and, if she lists them, is it the truth?

Experience Questions: What did you learn from...?

Opinion Questions: Is it valid, well-reasoned, and defensible?

Dumb Questions: Does she think well on her feet?

You should also ask the judges to share with one another how to handle difficult interviews. Allow them to share with one another the way in which they have handled interviews in which contestants answered with a continuous stream of one word answers (this is best handled by rephrasing a question to include “Share with me the steps that you must go through to...” Anything which forces the contestant to give more than one word answers); what to do if a contestant refuses to answer questions and only gives the information she wants you to know (“I’m sorry; I must not have made myself clear. What I wanted to know was...”); how to handle interviews in which you know the contestant is not telling the truth or exaggerating (I want to make sure I understand you correctly. Are you saying...?). It is also good to ask the judges a very open-ended question like “What have you seen take place during an interview in regard to the judges panel that you really liked or really didn’t like the way the judges handled a situation”.

This is also the time to cover judging etiquette. Make sure all judges know that all cell phone and pagers must be turned off. While that is common sense, you would be surprised at the number of times a judge’s or timekeeper’s cell phone rings during the middle of the interview. Also cover the way in which you expect the judge’s to behave when in public. Make sure the judges know if parents and/or contestants will be anywhere the judges may be. This includes meals as well as hotels. Please inform the judges that any discussion of a contestant’s performance, in any category, and/or the scores which the individual judges gave them is inappropriate. You should remind them of the way in which they will be viewed by the audience and that conversations at the judge’s table should be limited. There should also be discretion

used in the way in which judges mingle with audience members, parents, etc. They should not applaud for any contestant. However, they may choose as a panel (not as individuals) to applaud production numbers, introduction of guests, and the contestants as a group.

Once these issues have been covered and all judges' questions have been answered you should start the tape again and cover the On-Stage Competitions.

Section Three:

Once this section of the tape has been viewed by the judges, it is important for the judges to share with each other their personal knowledge of the Talent phase of competition. Allow an expert in the field of dance, voice, baton, instrumental, or other Talent category to share with the other judges what they would encourage them to look for when judging that phase of competition. Allow the judges to learn from each other. However, remind them that once the competition starts they cannot share their views on this information. You must also cover the production numbers and tell the judges what the contestants have been told to do. Sometimes on the first night, one or two judges may have a problem with the way the contestants have been instructed to walk, dance, or model in production numbers. Go over the staging and choreography that the contestants have been instructed to do so that the contestants will not be penalized, if a judge does not like it.

The judging DVD includes a section on "casual wear." However, the Casual Wear competition has been eliminated for the areas of competition. Do not be concerned about showing the judges this section of the video. The DVD script simply states: "Some pageants MAY include a casual wear competition..." At the conclusion of viewing this section of the tape, simply tell the judges that you will not have a casual wear competition in this pageant.

Review again the list of qualities and attributes that are required of your titleholder. A general list includes:

- Beautiful
- Well-spoken
- Intelligent
- Talented
- Able to Relate to Young People
- Reflective of women her age (She should not be a 35-year-old trapped inside a 20-year-old body)
- Charismatic
- Dynamic/Energetic
- Mature enough to handle the job and all of its responsibilities
- Manageable
- Punctual
- Flexible

You should also remind the judges of the serious events which have transpired with some of your titleholders. Some titleholders have been faced with handling teenage girls asking them to help inform their parents that they are pregnant, being confronted by someone who despises the Miss

America Organization, having inappropriate comments made to them, or having the maturity to visit with those who are terminally ill.

It can be wise to end the orientation by asking each judge to share what he/she believes the panel should be looking for during the judging process. Write down the key words they discuss. This allows you to discover if a judge is off base and still allows you time to correct it (“That’s true, that is important; but, remember she must possess all of the qualities we have discussed such as...”). Review these key words with the panel one more time.

Section Four:

This section of the Orientation DVD has been updated to include the references to the “Final Ballot”

Composite scoring **is required** of all Multi-Night State Pageants.

This section of the DVD is designed to be shown following the final preliminary competition and prior to the final night of scoring. The section on composite scoring is self-explanatory.

Multi-Night State Pageants may, at their discretion, conduct a structure judges’ review of the semi-finalists competing in the final night competition. The rules for this structured discussion are included in the Mechanics of Judging and **MUST BE FOLLOWED IN THEIR ENTIRETY**. *This discussion MAY NOT take place until after the composite scoring has been completed.* Please read the materials on this discussion directly to the judges from the Mechanics of Judging.

Once the composite scoring and the Judges’ Review of the Semi-finalists is complete for Multi-Night State Pageants or during the initial judges orientation for Single Night pageants (both Local and State), you **MUST** explain how the Final Ballot will work during the final night of competition. You must also review this with your auditors. After the final On-Stage Competition of the final night of all pageants (Single or Multi-Night), the auditors will determine the five contestants with the highest total points. The contestants’ names, numbers, and titles (if appropriate) will then be indicated at the bottom of the Final Ballot. Each judge is then to **RANK** the contestants in the order in which he/she believes the contestants should finish – from first place to fifth place. The points for each place are pre-set: 1st place – 10 points; 2nd place – 5 points; 3rd place – 3 points, 4th place – 2 points, and 5th place – 1 point. The high and low scores for each contestant **WILL NOT** be dropped and all judges’ ballots will count.

The Final Ballot concept is designed to allow each judge to reflect on the job description, responsibilities, and necessary attributes of the titleholder he/she must select and to then examine how each of the Top Five Contestants are able to meet those needs. The judge then places the names of the contestants **IN ORDER FROM 1ST THROUGH 5TH** on the Final Ballot.

Judges also need to be reminded that the **Final Night On-Stage competitions are judged on a scale of 6 to 10, with each contestant’s high and low score discarded**. Because of the Final Ballot, judges should award points in each phase of competition as the contestant deserves them.

There is no reason to manipulate points to assure the outcome of the pageant. Once the Top Five contestants are named, all previous points will be discarded. **The final outcome of the pageant is based solely on the Final Ballot points.** Judges must be instructed that any attempt to manipulate the outcome by placing contestants in an order not truly reflective of their beliefs (to attempt to secure “his/her contestant” places higher) does and will result in an outcome that no one wants.

In most State Pageants (not in those with less than 10 to 12 contestants and not in ANY Local competition), the Top Five Contestants will be named on-stage and compete in a Top Five Interview Competition. The judges need to be instructed on the way in which the Top Five Competition will be staged and the number of questions each contestant will be asked. Remind the judges that the Top Five Interview Competition is held to assist them in placing the names on the Final Ballot. It is NOT used to solely determine the outcome (you are not “judging” the Top Five Interview Competition). Please review how this will be handled with the judges and the auditors *at the same time*.

In State Pageants with less than 10 -12 contestants and in all Local competitions, the names of the Top Five contestants will be written on individual pieces of paper for each judge and handed to the judges along with the Final Ballot. Each judge will place the names of the contestants on the Final Ballot as described above without any form of “Top Five Interview Competition.” The same rules apply regarding the pageant outcome being solely based on these points and that the high and low scores for each contestant WILL NOT be dropped.

Prior to the start of the final night competition, please review with the judges what will transpire immediately following the crowning, where they will go, who will escort them etc.

If there is an event following the pageant, please instruct the judges who will be with them to protect them from overzealous contestants, parents, and audience members who are filled with sincere questions. Please remind the judges that the affidavit signed earlier by the judges states they will not discuss anything that transpires during the judging process. This prevents them from responding to these questions. They should also be advised that there is the potential that they may receive E-mails and/or letters following the pageant requesting advice on how to improve. It is best that the judges simply reply with “I am sorry. I signed an affidavit which prevents me from discussing anything which took place during the judging process. Good luck with your pageant experience”.

If there is a critique of the winner following the pageant, it is recommended that the winner not be present during this process. The executive director or other designated pageant personnel should take notes and when the time is appropriate provide this information, in a positive manner, to help the contestant improve for the next level of competition.

All judges should be reminded that the Miss America experience should be a positive experience for all contestants regardless of where they finish in the competition.

The Contestant paperwork given to the judges should not include any references to personal information including Social Security numbers, telephone numbers, and/or addresses. Please

