

Planning guide for NSPA Individual Awards

NSPA Individual Awards honor the nation's best scholastic journalism in a wide range of categories.

The awards are presented to individuals and small teams. A new award-management website offers an improved submission experience.

For high schools, there are 49 contests

in 11 categories outlined in detail below, and junior high/middle schools have three categories in which to compete.

2021 entry deadline: June 25, 2021

Check [the NSPA contest rules](#) for the latest information, deadlines and submission information.

KEY LINKS

[NSPA contest rules](#)

[BetterBNC Contest portal to submit individual awards](#)

[NSPA membership](#)

1. Broadcast Story of the Year

Use this interactive PDF to compile notes as you plan entries. Then save the PDF for later reference at the contest deadline.

1A. Broadcast News Story

Reporting on breaking news or an issue of importance to your audience that demonstrates strong news-gathering skills while delivering concise information.

Number of Entries: Two entries per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: Website URL link.

1B. Broadcast Feature Story

Personality profiles or human-interest general features.

Number of Entries: Two entries per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: Website URL link.

1C. Broadcast Sports Story

Coverage of past or present games or a seasonal summary, may also include profiles of sports personalities or human-interest sports features.

Number of Entries: Two entries per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: Website URL link.

1D. Broadcast Commentary

An editorial segment designed to inform and persuade an audience.

Number of Entries: Two entries per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: Website URL link.

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2. Cartoon of the Year

2A. Comics Journalism

A form of journalism that covers news or non-fiction events in comic form — a combination of words and drawn images.

Although visual narrative storytelling has existed for thousands of years, the use of the comics medium to cover real-life events is currently at an all-time peak. Entries might include picto-essay or graphic nonfiction, word balloons, GIFs or multimedia editorial art.

Number of Entries: Two entries per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: Website URL link or PDF file of printed page. Do not submit both.

2B. Comic Strip/Panel

Usually but not always humorous or light-hearted in its message, with a recurring theme or cast of characters. Comics are fictional and for entertainment. Each installment of the comic strip counts as a separate entry.

Number of Entries: Two entries per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: Website URL link or PDF file of printed page. Do not submit both.

2C. Editorial Cartoon

Typically printed on the editorial page or other opinion pages and often communicates an opinion on a subject presented in an accompanying editorial or other timely topic in the news. GIFs or multimedia editorial cartoons are allowed in this category.

Number of Entries: Two entries per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: Website URL link or PDF file of printed page. Do not submit both.

3. Design of the Year

3A. Newspaper Front Page

First page featuring dynamic nameplate and compelling verbal and visual content.

Number of Entries: Two entries per NSPA-member publication.

Submission: PDF file of printed page.

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3B. Newspaper Page/Spread

Single-page or spread entries including news, sports, opinion, feature, photo or entertainment that are intended to be viewed without facing pages or two facing pages that together display a single verbal/visual story or a package of related content.

Number of Entries: Two entries per NSPA-member publication.

Submission: PDF file of printed page(s).

3C. Newsmagazine Cover

First page featuring dynamic nameplate and compelling verbal and visual content.

Number of Entries: Two entries per NSPA-member publication.

Submission: PDF file of cover.

3D. Newsmagazine Page/Spread

Single-page or spread entries including news, sports, opinion, feature, photo or entertainment that are intended to be viewed without facing pages or two facing pages that together display a single verbal/visual story or a package of related content.

Number of Entries: Two entries per NSPA-member publication.

Submission: PDF file of printed page(s).

3E. Literary/Specialty Magazine Cover

First page featuring dynamic nameplate and compelling verbal and visual content.

Number of Entries: Two entries per NSPA-member publication.

Submission: PDF file of cover.

3F. Literary/Specialty Magazine Page/Spread

Single-page or spread entries that display verbal/visual content intended to be viewed without the facing page or two facing pages that together display a single verbal/visual story or a package of related content.

Number of Entries: Two entries per NSPA-member publication.

Submission: PDF file of printed page(s).

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3G. Yearbook Spread

Facing pages, that together display a single verbal/visual story or a collection of related content.

In the case of chronological coverage, the content is from a clearly labeled period of time. Spreads such as opening, closing and dividers must be entered in contest.

Number of Entries: Two entries per NSPA-member publication.

Submission: PDF file of printed page(s).

3H. Yearbook Theme Package

This package includes cover, endsheets, title page, opening, closing, divider and final/parting page presented together as a portfolio and compiled into a single file.

Number of Entries: One entry per NSPA-member publication.

Submission: PDF file of the portfolio.

3I. Informational graphic

Combines illustration and information in an easy-to-read presentation.

Popular formats include factoids, lists, quizzes, bar charts, line charts, pie charts, tables, ratings, timelines, step-by-step guides, diagrams and maps.

Number of Entries: Two entries per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: Website URL link or PDF file of printed page. Do not submit both.

3J. Illustration

Art or photography used to illustrate a story.

All elements must be the original work of the photographer/artists. If appropriate for accuracy, must be labeled as an illustration when published.

Number of Entries: Two entries per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: Website URL link or PDF file of printed page. Do not submit both.

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4. Digital Story of the Year

4A. Multimedia News Story

Reporting on breaking news or an issue of importance to your audience that demonstrates strong news-gathering skills and delivers concise information.

In addition to text and images, entry must include audio, video, slideshows, interactive content (maps, timelines, etc.) or animation.

Number of Entries: Two entries per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: Website URL link.

4B. Multimedia Feature Story

Personality profiles, trend stories or human-interest stories; not news or sports. In addition to text and images, entry must include audio, video, slideshows, interactive content (maps, timelines, etc.) or animation.

Number of Entries: Two entries per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: Website URL link.

4C. Multimedia Sports Story

Coverage of games or seasonal summary, may also include profiles of sports personalities or human-interest sports features. In addition to text and images, entry must include audio, video, slideshows, interactive content (maps, timelines, etc.) or animation.

Number of Entries: Two entries per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: Website URL link.

4D. Photo Slideshow

A photo story on a single subject with each photo communicating a different angle. Captions must be included for every image.

Number of Entries: Two entries per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: Website URL link.

4E. Interactive Graphic

Allows reader to navigate through an informational graphic to engage with the information.

Popular formats include factoids, lists, quizzes, bar charts, line charts, pie charts, tables, ratings, timelines, step-by-step guides, diagrams and maps.

Number of Entries: Two entries per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: Website URL link.

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4F. Podcast

Delivers relevant content through engaging audio storytelling and should appear on your media outlet's NSPA-member website.

Number of Entries: Two entries per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: Website URL link.

4G. Blog

Must reflect journalistic standards in topics, coverage and writing and should appear on your media outlet's NSPA-member website.

Number of Entries: Two entries per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: Website URL link.

5. Photo of the Year

5A. News Photo

Captures a timely visual story and displays news value and evidence of on-the-spot coverage.

Number of Entries: Two entries per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: An image file (JPG, TIF, PNG) is required along with a caption. Do not submit URL link or PDF file.

5B. Feature Photo

Delivers a human-interest story with the emphasis on people in their environment.

Number of Entries: Two entries per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: An image file (JPG, TIF, PNG) is required along with a caption. Do not submit URL link or PDF file.

5C. Sports Game/Action Photo

Captures the competitive action and emotion of athletes on school teams competing in games, matches and meets or in personal, non-team sports.

Number of Entries: Two entries per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: An image file (JPG, TIF, PNG) is required along with a caption. Do not submit URL link or PDF file.

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5D. Sports Feature Photo

Images communicate a story other than direct action on the playing field including human-interest sports stories such as profiles of sports figures.

Number of Entries: Two entries per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: An image file (JPG, TIF, PNG) is required along with a caption. Do not submit URL link or PDF file.

5E. Environmental Portrait

Posed images of one or more individuals taken in their natural surroundings to provide insight into their work, interests or personality.

Number of Entries: Two entries per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: An image file (JPG, TIF, PNG) is required along with a caption. Do not submit URL link or PDF file.

6. Story of the Year

6A. News Story

Reporting on breaking news or an issue of importance to your audience that demonstrates strong news-gathering skills and delivers concise information. The first-place winner in this category competes for the \$1,000 Brasler Prize.

Number of Entries: Two entries per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: Website URL link or PDF file of printed page(s). Do not submit both.

6B. Feature Story

Personality profiles or human-interest general features. The first-place winner in this category competes for the \$1,000 Brasler Prize.

Number of Entries: Two entries per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: Website URL link or PDF file of printed page(s). Do not submit both.

6C. Sports Story

Coverage of past or present games or a seasonal summary, may also include profiles of sports personalities or human-interest sports features. The first-place winner in this category competes for the \$1,000 Brasler Prize.

Number of Entries: Two entries per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: Website URL link or PDF file of printed page(s). Do not submit both.

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6D. Editorial

The statement of the publication's opinion supported by fact. Editorials generally do not have bylines. The first-place winner in this category competes for the \$1,000 Brasler Prize.

Number of Entries: Two entries per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: Website URL link or PDF file of printed page(s). Do not submit both.

6E. Opinion

Columns or bylined opinion pieces providing research and personal insights and anecdotes. The first-place winner in this category competes for the \$1,000 Brasler Prize.

Number of Entries: Two entries per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: Website URL link or PDF file of printed page(s). Do not submit both.

7. Social Justice Reporting

7A. Social Justice Reporting

With a focus on equity and inclusion, news stories in this special category are welcome from all media platforms (print, broadcast, online).

A statement explaining why this coverage was included in the publication and any outcomes or effect the coverage had within the school community is required.

The first-place winner in this category competes for the \$1,000 Brasler Prize.

Number of Entries: Two entries per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: Website URL link or PDF file of printed page(s). Do not submit both.

8. Local Climate Change Reporting

8A. Local Climate Change Reporting

Climate change is one of the most important stories of our generation. This contest, in partnership with the George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication, encourages local climate change reporting by student media.

Long-form news stories, published in print or online, should be accompanied by sidebars, graphics and data. Broadcast news stories may also be entered.

All student journalists who are interested in reporting on climate change as a local story are

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encouraged to use the Climate Matters reporting resources, science-based reporting materials that are funded, in part, by the National Science Foundation. These materials can be used in award submissions.

The first-place winner earns \$500 and the second- and third- place winners \$300 and \$200 respectively. Team reporting is permitted, and the cash prize will be divided among the names on the entry form.

Number of Entries: Unlimited entries per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: Website URL link or PDF file of printed page(s). Do not submit both.

9. Portfolio of the Year

9A. Artist of the Year

Each member media outlet may nominate one person. Portfolio includes a one-page statement from the nominee explaining contributions and what was learned.

Portfolio features five original pieces of print, digital or multi-media art including editorial cartoons and comic strips featuring the nominee's talents published this year along with one to three sentences describing each piece.

Number of Entries: One entry per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: Website URL link or PDF file of portfolio. Do not submit both.

9B. Broadcast Journalist of the Year

Each member media outlet may nominate one person. Portfolio includes a one-page statement from the nominee explaining contributions and what was learned.

Portfolio features five original broadcast stories featuring the nominee's talents published this year along with one to three sentences describing each piece.

Number of Entries: One entry per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: Website URL link or PDF file of portfolio. Do not submit both.

9C. Designer of the Year

Each member media outline may nominate one person. Portfolio includes a one-page statement from the nominee explaining contributions and what was learned. Portfolio features five original designs featuring the nominee's talents published this school year along with

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one to three sentences describing each piece. Entries may include complete spreads, pages, advertisements, covers, informational graphics, sidebars, etc., from print, web or video.

Number of Entries: One entry per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: Website URL link or PDF file of portfolio. Do not submit both.

9D. Marketer of the Year

Each member media outlet may nominate one person. Portfolio includes a one-page statement from the nominee explaining contributions and what was learned.

Portfolio features a detailed marketing plan that was implemented this year with results documented.

Number of Entries: One entry per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: Website URL link or PDF file of portfolio. Do not submit both.

9E. Multimedia Journalist of the Year

Each member media outlet may nominate one person. Portfolio includes a one-page statement from the nominee explaining contributions and what was learned.

Portfolio features five stories featuring the nominee's talents published this school year along with one to three sentences describing each piece. In addition to text and images, multimedia entries must include audio, video, slideshows, interactive content (maps, timelines, etc.) and animation as part of each robust story package.

Number of Entries: One entry per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: Website URL link or PDF file of portfolio. Do not submit both.

9F. Photojournalist of the Year

Each member media outlet may nominate one person. Portfolio includes a one-page statement from the nominee explaining contributions and what was learned.

Portfolio features five images featuring the nominee's talents published this school year along with one to three sentences describing each piece. Captions must be published with the images and included as part of the entry.

Number of Entries: One entry per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: Website URL link or PDF file of portfolio. Do not submit both.

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9G. Writer of the Year

Each member media outlet may nominate one person. Portfolio includes a one-page statement from the nominee explaining contributions and what was learned.

Portfolio features five pieces of journalistic writing featuring the nominee's talents published this school year.

Number of Entries: One entry per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: Website URL link or PDF file of portfolio. Do not submit both.

10. Best Use of Social Media

10A. Social Media Reporting

Coverage using social media platforms for reporting, updating and engaging with the school community.

Collect social-media examples using an online content-curation tool or by capturing screen shots with links to create a portfolio.

Number of Entries: One entry per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: Website URL link to portfolio or PDF portfolio. Do not submit both.

10B. Social Media Promotion

Use of social media platforms for promoting traffic to an online site, broadcast or print news publication or to promote the sale of the yearbook.

Collect social media examples using an online content-curation tool or by capturing screen shots with links to create a portfolio.

Number of Entries: One entry per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: Website URL link to portfolio or PDF portfolio. Do not submit both.

11. COVID-19 Coverage

11A. Broadcast: News or Features

Broadcast news or features reporting on the effect of COVID-19 on your student audience.

The student press has a distinct perspective and role in covering the broad effects upon schools while confronting the challenge of school closures and remote interviewing.

Please do not put yourself or others in jeopardy

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of being infected with COVID-19 through your reporting.

Number of Entries: One entry per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: Website URL link.

11B. Online: News or Features

Online news or features reporting on the effect of COVID-19 on your student audience/readership.

The student press has a distinct perspective and role in covering the broad effects upon schools while confronting the challenge of school closures and remote interviewing.

Please do not put yourself or others in jeopardy of being infected with COVID-19 through your reporting. Images must be properly sourced and credited, and possible copyright violations will be disqualified.

Number of Entries: One entry per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: Website URL link.

11C. Print: News or Features

Print news or features reporting on the effect of COVID-19 on your student readership.

The student press has a distinct perspective and role in covering the broad effects upon schools while confronting the challenge of school closures and remote interviewing.

Please do not put yourself or others in jeopardy of being infected with COVID-19 through your reporting. Images must be properly sourced and credited, and possible copyright violations will be disqualified.

Number of Entries: One entry per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: PDF file of printed page(s).

11D. Yearbook: Spread

A yearbook spread reporting on the effect of COVID-19 on your student readership.

The student press has a distinct perspective and role in covering the broad effects upon schools while confronting the challenge of school closures and remote interviewing.

Please do not put yourself or others in jeopardy of being infected with COVID-19 through your reporting. Images must be properly sourced and credited, and possible copyright violations will be disqualified.

Number of Entries: One entry per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: PDF file of printed page(s).

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Junior High/Middle School Individual Awards

NSPA Individual Awards honor the nation's best scholastic journalism — in a wide range of categories. The awards are presented to individuals and small teams.

This year, a new award management website offers an improved submission experience. For middle schools and junior high schools, there are three contests outlined below that follow the same rules and guidelines as the high school category.

HOW TO ENTER: Visit the new BetterBNC award platform to submit, track and manage Individual Award entries. Creating an Open Call account is required and takes only a few minutes for one-time set-up.

12A. Design of the Year

A single page or spread from literary magazine, newspaper/newsmagazine or yearbook.

Number of Entries: Five entries per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: PDF file of printed page(s).

12B. Story of the Year

A news story, feature story or broadcast story appearing in a broadcast, literary magazine, newspaper/newsmagazine, website or yearbook.

Number of Entries: Five entries per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: Website URL link or PDF file of printed page(s). Do not submit both.

12C. Photo of the Year

News, feature or sports photo appearing in a literary magazine, newspaper/newsmagazine, website or yearbook. A caption is required.

Number of Entries: Five entries per NSPA-member media outlet.

Submission: An image file (JPG, TIF, PNG) is required along with a caption; do not submit URL link or PDF file.