

Bubonicon 2026 Costume Contest

OVERVIEW / BASICS

- We celebrate diversity! We are committed to creating an inclusive environment for all contestants. Contestants may bring a service animal or one “support” person up to or on to the stage.
- **AWARD CATEGORIES!** Youth (under age 14), Beginner, Intermediate, Master, Best of Show, Best Use of Theme. Other awards will be given at the discretion of the judges.
- **HELP PANEL!** There will be a Contest Information/Help panel 12 Noon Saturday where you can register, give us your sound files, **optionally** share “pre-judging” details with the Coordinator, get help with last-minute design/repairs, and have any questions answered. We will have a costume-themed presentation as well. *THIS IS OPTIONAL. Not attending the panel will NOT COUNT AGAINST ANYONE.*
 - IT IS NOT REQUIRED NOR RECOMMENDED TO WEAR THE COSTUME TO THE PANEL.
 - Each contestant may show the costume’s construction and other details to the Coordinator. This is recommended. The details will be shared by the Coordinator with the Judges.
 - The contestant is *strongly* urged to bring photos/literary descriptions as **HARD COPY** documentation (if design is not original) of the costume to leave with Coordinator. Remember, we are not as familiar with the source material as you are, and we won’t be as “wowed” if we don’t understand your costume.
- **PRE-RECORDED AUDIO!** *ALL SOUND FILES (ONLY on USB/Thumb drive in mp3 format) MUST BE TURNED IN BEFORE 3:00 PM ON SATURDAY.* The Con is open to all ages and there will be children in the Contest and audience. **The audio will be pre-screened for content (race, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender identity...)** If the content is judged unacceptable, it will be rejected. The contestant will be notified either via text to the cell phone number provided on the entry form or in the Green Room if unable to contact contestant prior to 6:00 pm.
- **CHECK IN:** Contestants must be in the Green Room – Santa Fe Room – between 6:00 pm - 6:30 pm. **FOOD AND DRINKS WILL BE PROVIDED IN GREEN ROOM BEFORE CONTEST.**
- **MINIMUM COVERAGE!** “Swimsuit” coverage – PG rating please.
- **RESERVED SEATING:** For contestants to watch the rest of the show after their presentations.
- **STAIRS:** We will have handlers to help contestants navigate the stairs before and after their presentations. **No contestant is required to ascend stairs as part of their presentation.** All abilities are welcomed and the contestant is encouraged to stay on the ground floor as needed.
- **JUDGE BRIBES:** A time-honored tradition at our Con (and highly encouraged by the judges) – be creative and use bribes related to your costume! Ask for ideas at the Saturday noon panel if you cannot think of anything and want to participate. It will not affect your chances of winning. **This is for fun and completely optional.**
- **PHOTOGRAPHY** is allowed during the Contest. Your people are allowed to photograph from anywhere on the ground floor excepting blocking the view of the judges. Our photographer will also be taking pictures during your time on stage.

HOW TO ENTER / RULES

- Each contestant (or one representative for a group presentation) must fill out one entry form. Submit only one form per group presentation (limited to six persons max due to stage size).
 - Please download the form and **LEGIBLY** write your well-thought-out script **PRIOR TO THE CON if possible**. This will improve the MC's ability to enhance your presentation in front of the audience and judges. (Not sure what to write? Come to the help panel on Saturday at noon).
 - Entry forms available at Bubonicon.com; the Saturday panel; or Con Registration desk.
 - Completed forms and optional sound files **MUST** be turned in before Saturday at 3:00 pm (Saturday noon panel; Contest boxes at the Con Registration desk).
 - Due to contestant scheduling, **if you have not turned in your registration by 3:00 pm Saturday, you will not be allowed in the Contest as a contestant.**
 - Non-Contestant entries are **always** welcome if you want to do a performance or try out the process but don't want to actually compete.
- Contestants aged under 14 are welcome to compete in our Youth category. They must have a parent or legal guardian sign their entry form (attendees of Con under age 14 require adult presence at all times).
- We are able to play pre-recorded sound for your presentation.
 - All sound must be pre-edited by you to a maximum of 60 seconds for individual contestants. *THIS IS NOT A CHALLENGE* – use only as much time as you need – it can be shorter! Group entries may have an additional 30 seconds per person up to a maximum of 180 seconds (three minutes). **Practice your entry ahead of time. Use a timer. You will be surprised HOW LONG 60 seconds can be.** You don't want the audience to find out the hard way!
 - Music will begin when entrant steps off the stairs onto the stage unless previously arranged with the Contest Coordinators.
 - Anything that exceeds the time limit will be shortened by our editors – you will not get to choose.
 - Please edit files to mp3 format onto USB (thumb) drive. All other sources will be rejected.
 - Your sound file must be the **only file** on the USB/Thumb drive you provide to the Con.
 - Your name must be in the name of the file or written on the outside of the drive.
 - If you do NOT provide any audio content, our staff *may* select generic sound to play during your presentation. This may not be what you want, so providing audio files is highly recommended.
- **Do not leave anything on-stage.** For safety reasons, things like confetti, fireworks, glitter, flash paper, rose petals, water and animals (except service animals) are strictly forbidden. No open fire is allowed. Any use of drawn edged weapons **MUST** be discussed with Coordinators before Saturday 3:00 pm.
- Presentations should be a delightful surprise for the audience and judges. **However, do not surprise the Costume Contest staff!! Let Coordinators know about anything that may catch us off guard in advance.**
- On-stage is the only time where EVERYONE can see you show off the costume– your chance to be IN CHARACTER. Be confident! Have fun! Your audience wants to be entertained. Remember, “short is good, funny is better, short and funny is best.”
- Make sure the movement across the stage is designed to showcase the front, sides and back of the costumes. This is a costume contest, not a skit contest. Feel free to strike poses for one or two moments each during the time on stage to allow the audience to appreciate the details and design. Remember to practice large, theatrical movements as even the last row of the audience wants to see and understand what is happening. THE STAGE IS 8' x 20'. Feel free to practice at home in a space this size.

CONTEST JUDGING CATEGORIES

Contest entries will compete in multiple categories. Each category will have up to three Awards. These awards are not monetary but include a Ribbon and of course, Bragging Rights.

Youth Costume: for anyone under age 14.

Beginner Costume: for beginning costumers. A Contestant may ***not*** enter in the Beginner level if they have won a major prize in a Costume Contest before or are a Costuming Professional.

Intermediate Costume: for those who are no longer Beginners, but are still honing their skills. Contestants may ***not*** enter at this level if they have ever won Best of Show or are a Costuming Professional.

Master Costume: Anyone may enter and compete at this level. A contestant ***must*** enter at this level if they are not eligible to enter as a Beginner or Intermediate, and are age 14 or older.

Best Use of Theme, Best of Show and one **Judge's Choice** per Judge *may* also be awarded, based on number of entries received by 3:00 pm Saturday.

The Contest Coordinators reserve the right to alter, rescind or transform the categories on-the-spot based on the number or type of entries. All contestants will be informed in the Green Room prior to the Contest if this occurs.

TIMELINE

For Those Not Familiar With The Contest, This Is What To Expect (Chronologically)

- Contestants download and print forms from the Bubonicon.com website prior to the Con, or starting Friday, pick up forms from the metal basket at the right side of the Registration desk. The forms are also available at the Saturday noon panel.
- On Saturday, contestants may attend the panel (you do NOT NEED to wear your costume!) for advice, finishing help, script writing, repair work or pre-judging. We will also have a costume-themed presentation. If you are having trouble with sound files, we *MIGHT* be able to help you then. We don't promise any results. Bring a thumb drive. A laptop will be available with internet access.
- Contestants submit entry forms and sound files (if any) prior to 3:00 pm on Saturday at either the noon panel OR in the boxes on the Registration Desk.
- Contestants report *IN COSTUME* to Green Room (Santa Fe) from 6:00 pm to 6:30 pm (if not present by 6:30 pm, entrants will be disqualified). Please inform the Contest Coordinators (privately) of any special needs that require accommodation by 6:30 pm (anytime earlier is better – text Geneva on Saturday 50-8-517 1855).
- Contestants are:
 - Urged to eat and drink from provided green room charcuterie-type foods (with water)
 - Digitally photographed for Judges' reference and for your memories
 - Shown the path into the (empty) Main Room with Stage (6:40 pm to 6:45 pm)
 - Returned to Green Room
 - Urged to consider bathroom breaks
- Audience is admitted to Main Room at 6:55 pm.
- Contest begins at 7:15 pm. **Green Room will be empty and unlocked so leave items at your own discretion. We are not responsible for lost or stolen items.** Please plan accordingly. You may leave items at the awards table adjacent to the stage during the 6:40 pm walk-through with staff.
- When you end your presentation on stage, please **GO TO THE JUDGES' TABLE** so they may ask you any questions, (optional: you can present your only-for-fun bribes) and you can point out specific important things you want them to know.
- Youth category presents first.
- Beginner, Intermediate and then Master categories present.
- After adult presentations end, the Green Slime Awards entertainment show occurs on stage while the Judges deliberate in private. Green Slime/Judge Deliberations last approximately 23-30 minutes, so if necessary, this is a good time to attend to personal matters like taking off an overheated costume component or using the restroom (again). Water bottles will be provided to you at your seats.
- After the Green Slime Awards are finished and the Judges complete deliberations, the ribbons will be presented in the same order as the presentations. Ribbon recipients will be called up to the front and photographed. All entrants will be asked to stay and be photographed together in a group after the ribbons are awarded. All participants are winners in our eyes!