

A Modeler's Guide to the AMPS Contest Rules

This year AMPS is holding its 22nd International Convention on 7-9 April 2016 at the Sumter County Civic Center, 700 West Liberty Street, Sumter, SC 29150. This is the largest armor modeling event in North America and draws participants from all over the world. All competition entrants must be AMPS members in good standing. If you are not an AMPS member or need to renew your membership you can do so through the AMPS web-site: <http://www.amps-armor.org/ampssite/membership.aspx>. In addition, you can join or renew your membership through our combination show entry/membership special on the show portion of the AMPS web-site.

The armor modeling competition is a part of the International Convention. This competition provides a forum for modelers to discuss techniques, improve their skills, and share information about the real vehicles that are of common interest. AMPS created a unique system which judges both the model and honors the modeler for their artistic achievement and historical accuracy.

The judging system is designed to have each entry viewed and evaluated by a group of fellow modelers. This is "peer evaluation". The AMPS system acknowledges judges are human and many judging calls are subjective, not objective. Thus, each model is evaluated by a team of four judges, with the lowest score eliminated. Our system provides an opportunity to give the entrant's work formal, structured feedback from fellow modelers. The AMPS system is designed to reward the modeler for the good work they accomplish. Each model is reviewed and evaluated on its own merits with no comparison to any other entry. The AMPS system evaluates the model in relation to the ability of the modeler, rather than against acknowledged masters of the hobby or everyone else who enters in the same category.

The following are a few tips you can use as you prepare your entries for this year's competition:

1. **AMPS Judging Philosophy:** Models are not just technical scale miniatures of their prototypes, but also artistic representations of historical, hypothetical, or imaginary subjects. While mechanical precision and fidelity to detail are highly desired, there are few other absolute rights or wrongs with most of the aspects of our builds. There are many different construction and finishing techniques and methods which can be employed to create the artistic representation of our subjects. These combine to create each model-builder's unique "style." Although judges are expected to assess and score the models, these assessments are expected to be done within the context of the individual modeler's style and not those of the judges.
2. **Know the rules.** The AMPS Contest Rules are found on the AMPS web-site: <http://www.amps-armor.org/ampssite/Documents/ContestRules/AMPSRules.pdf>

under Shows and Conventions. A basic knowledge of the criteria used to evaluate the entries is helpful in preparing your models for competition.

3. **Select your skill level.** If you have participated in an AMPS International event before then you will likely know your competition skill level. If you are a first timer, here's some advice – many modelers overestimate their skill level. As a result, they do not always do well in an AMPS competition and walk away disappointed. To address this, the show will have experienced RamRods checking in your models before they are judged. If you are unsure, ask them for help in determining your skill level. These folks are trained in the AMPS Contest Rules and they will guide you in the right direction. Also, for those modelers who received a Gold Medal in the Basic or Intermediate skill levels at last year's AMPS International Convention – you automatically move up to the next higher skill level.
4. **Construction.** Up to five points can be awarded in the construction category. Surprisingly, many modelers miss being awarded points on the basics. Here are a few things to watch:
 - a. Suspension. The area where I see modelers have the most trouble is in the construction of the vehicles suspension system. Military vehicles weigh a lot, but you'd be surprised at the number of entries with floating roadwheels and track or wheels not all touching the ground. While on suspension, check the alignment of track, roadwheels and wheels. Spending a little extra time building the suspension system will pay dividends during judging.
 - b. Those pesky mold seams and injector pin marks. They seem to jump out when you put a coat of paint on the model. Take some time to remove mold seams and fill those pesky injector pin marks.
 - c. Flattened gun barrels. Even with today's slide molding technology, many plastic gun barrels still have mold seams. Go easy - as the tendency is to sometimes use a wood rasp instead of a flexi-file or fine sand paper to remove these seam lines resulting in noticeable flat spots on the barrel.
 - d. Glue schmutz (a technical modeling term). No matter how careful you are in building some excess glue will get on your model. After you've finished your build, take some time to give your model a good look over. If you see a glue spot hit it with a bit of flat coat and it might just disappear.
 - e. Magnetic stowage. AMPS encourages modelers to build personalized models which present the "lived-in" look. However, each year we see models with personal gear and stowage held on with no visible or logical means of attachment (e.g., straps and tie-downs), but appear to be magically stuck on the model. Take a look at military vehicles in the field. A majority of the personal gear and stowage is affixed to the vehicle in

some fashion and in areas which would not endanger the crew or impede the vehicle's usage.

- f. What's in the hatch? We get questions about the closed versus open hatch categories. Simple answer – if the hatches are open with or without interiors the model is placed in the category VI (Open top/open hatch vehicles) and judged accordingly. If you use figures to fill the hatches, the model may be placed in categories I, II, III, IV or V at your option.
5. **Finishing and Weathering.** Up to four points can be awarded in the painting and weathering category. This is where the modeler gets to apply some artistic techniques. Here are a few hints:
- a. Is it the right color of OD? Please! What matters is that your paint should be applied in a smooth, even coat with no drips, splashes or uneven areas. If you apply markings and decals look for edge lifting or silvering. Some modelers hand-apply markings. If you do, the markings should be viewed "in scale," not be too heavy-handed or thickly applied.
 - b. Artistic versus natural weathering. Artistic weathering is applied by the modeler to enhance the finish. This does not necessarily mean action-related mud, peeling paint, and the like. Weathering should be logical for the scene presented by the modeler. On the other hand, natural weathering is household dust, cob-webs, animal hair and assorted other stuff which accumulates on models as they sit on the shelf. Please look your model over and give it a quick dusting before the competition.
6. **Degree of Difficulty.** "If it's from Tamiya it's not a difficult build." Let's debunk this urban legend! While Tamiya provides us with some well engineered and generally well detailed kits there's always room for additional detailing. Up to one point can be awarded for the effort a modeler puts forth to add additional detailing to create a model that is something special. Degree of Difficulty is a combination of complexity, extent of the work, and the amount of labor required of the modeler to create a realistic scale model of the original. Judges should evaluate the *difficulty* of all the techniques used by the modeler not *how well* any of these techniques are applied. *How well* these techniques are applied is covered under the Construction and Finish/Weathering Groups. Judges should also consider the skill level of the modeler in assigning a Degree of Difficulty score. For example, some tasks are more difficult for a lower skill level modeler to perform.

Please note it's the responsibility of the modeler to provide the judges with a description of the kit(s) and various techniques they used to create a realistic scale model of the original. This is where photos of the work "in progress" would help the modeler document the degree of difficulty involved in building the model.

Judges are not obligated to provide a score for this element if the modeler does not provide a description of their work or only indicates the model is built out of the box.

7. **Optional Research Bonus.** The judging teams may award an additional 0.5 point bonus for documented research. While most modelers do research for their builds, historically only about 15 percent of entrants provide the judges with research documentation. The submitted documentation should link the research performed and the finished model. Examples of documentation formats are provided in the AMPS contest rules.

8. **What's new in the Contest Rules for 2016.** This year we've made two revisions to the AMPS Contest Rules. The following is a summary of these revisions including where they can be found in the Contest rules :

- a. Pages 3 and 4 – Added to and revised the Competition Categories: Roughly three years ago there was a push from within the membership to split Category III, Closed Top Tracked and Semi-tracked Vehicles Post 1945 (based on markings) into two categories based on Cold War vs post-Cold War. At that time, we decided not to make the split. Over the ensuing years conditions in the hobby have changed so we decided to revisit this decision and also consider the addition of another category which would encompass the lead up to World War I through the interwar years end as well.

The following are the Category revisions:

- a. Closed Top Tracked and Semi-tracked Vehicles 1899 to 1934 (based on markings)
 - b. Closed Top Tracked and Semi-tracked Vehicles 1935 to 1945, Axis (based on markings)
 - c. Closed Top Tracked and Semi-tracked Vehicles 1935 to 1945, Allied (based on markings)
 - d. Closed Top Tracked and Semi-tracked Vehicles 1946 to 1991 (based on markings)
 - e. Closed Top Tracked and Semi-tracked Vehicles 1992 to Present (based on markings)
- b. Page 7 – Closed the loop hole in the Contest Rules which allowed a Figure, Diorama or Vignette to be considered in multiple Best of categories as AMPS already has specific Best of awards for these categories.

9. **Other points to consider.**

- a. Road warriors. Most of us will be traveling over some distances to get to this year's convention. Traveling can take a toll on our models. We'll have a first aid station set up at registration for you to make minor repairs. However, if there is travel damage you can't repair add a note on your

entry form that the model was damaged during travel. The judges will take this into consideration.

- b. Flying tanks. Each year we have a few models damaged because the show staff was not warned the models were not attached to the base. Please note on your registration forms if your model is not attached to the base.
- c. That darn paperwork. Each entrant will complete one registration form for each entry and one Master Administration form. I encourage you to pre-register through the AMPS web-site. On-line pre-registration closes 31 March 2016. If you do not pre-register, forms will be available when you register at the convention.

A final thought - It's no secret the AMPS judging system needs a large numbers of judges to evaluate the entries during the show. Whether you are visiting the convention for the first time or the twenty-second, I personally invite you to "donate" some of your time to be a judge. Your experiences at judging models (which will range from basic to advanced skill level) will make you a better modeler. You will also leave the convention with a highly coveted AMPS Crew T-shirt, suitable for creating jealousy among your modeling buddies.

Mike Petty
AMPS
Chief Judge