



*The North Dakota Newspaper Association*

# **Better Newspaper Contest**

# **2026 Contest Rules and Categories**

**Opens: December 10, 2025**

**Entry deadline: January 20, 2026**

## **Returning this year: WILDCARD ENTRIES!**

Each newspaper has now been granted **THREE (3) EXTRA ENTRY OPPORTUNITIES** in categories that you are only allowed one entry per individual/team!



- Wildcard entries may be used for one more chance in up to three (3) categories. You are not required to use all your Wildcard entries.
- Your paper must decide which individual/team on staff will use these three (3) entries. They may all be used on the same individual/team, or you may choose to use them on three different individuals/teams. You may use only one Wildcard entry per category.
- Entry fees still apply.
- On entry form, staff credit must be listed as "WILDCARD- (individual/team name)," or entry will be disqualified as a non-qualifying double-entry.

**Reminder:  
CONTEST RULE!**  
Each person or team may enter ONE story, ad, or photo in each category.

You must now choose your **BEST** work!  
Three news categories do indicate "MUST submit 3." That means submit the 3 required stories/pages on one entry form, and you will only be charged one fee for this entry.

# 2026

## North Dakota Newspaper Association Better Newspaper Contest Rules and Information

### ABOUT THE CONTEST

NDNA holds a member newspaper contest each year. Awards are presented at the annual NDNA convention. The purpose of this contest is to recognize excellence in the various aspects of newspaper journalism.

### WHO MAY ENTER

This member contest is open to all staff of active NDNA member newspapers. Freelance writers, freelance photographers, interns and former employees employed during the 2025 calendar year are eligible to enter only with the publishing newspaper's permission, and on behalf of that newspaper.

### DEADLINE

**Tuesday, January 20, 2026.** All entries must be uploaded to the online contest system [www.newspapercontest.com/northdakota](http://www.newspapercontest.com/northdakota) by 8:59pm on Tuesday, January 20, 2026.

After the contest deadline, you'll lose access to the contest site, so save entry files and entry lists for your records in advance of the contest deadline. Time extensions beyond the deadline will not be granted. Categories that require mail-in entry materials must be postmarked on or before the deadline. Entries postmarked later than the deadline will not be accepted. Hand deliveries must make it to the NDNA office by 5:00 p.m. on the deadline day. **HAND DELIVERIES MUST BE SCHEDULED WITH THE NDNA PRIOR TO 1/20/26.**

### TIME PERIOD

Work published between January 1, 2025 through December 31, 2025 is eligible for submission to this contest.

### JUDGING

Experienced newspaper publishers, editors, writers, photographers, ad professionals and web staff from member newspapers of another state's press association will be selected as judges. We reveal the judging state at the convention.

Judges will be asked to (1) not award ties; (2) decide first, second, and third place awards, and if merited, also an honorable mention; (3) make written comments

about each winner; and (4) not award more than one place to any person or team entered in each category with the exception of wild card entries.

### PRESENTATION

Awards will be presented during the 140th Annual NDNA Convention at the North Dakota's Gateway to Science, Bismarck, ND on April 30 - May 1, 2026. Winners will be notified by email in early April.

NDNA will alert you to winners from your newspaper, but will not reveal which awards or places they have won. We'll save that as a surprise to be awarded at convention!

### HOW TO ENTER

The contest has a platform called ACES, it stands for Advance Contest Entry System.

First, please read the rules and accompanying entry guide! We have tried to make them clear.

Each category description also includes upload instructions for that category. These instructions will also appear in the online contest system (ACES) when you select a category. Failure to comply with instructions may disqualify your entry. If you have questions, please contact NDNA's contest coordinator, Laura Niemi, at 612-278-0226 or email [contest@ndna.com](mailto:contest@ndna.com).

### CONTEST ENTRIES

You are required to complete an entry form online for each entry. In most cases, each "entry" allows **ONE** story, ad, or photo per person/team. However, please pay attention to category wording. If it mentions "**MUST** submit 3," it means we are requiring 3 stories uploaded on one entry form, and you only have to pay one fee for this set of stories. Most categories require the submission of an electronic, full-page PDF tearsheet file online, unaltered in any way. The date each entry was published must appear somewhere on the tearsheet you submit. **If no dateline appears, you must supply a notarized proof of publication that states the run date.**

**IMPORTANT:** Two categories still require the hard copy submission **PLUS ELECTRONIC UPLOAD**, of full issues: Overall Design Excellence and General Excellence. An online entry form must also be filled out for each mailed entry. Please label your mail-in entries correctly: print label after entering online and STAPLE the label to the top issue in your bundle. Be sure to bind all issues together securely with a rubber band or binder clip, enclose in an envelope, and mail to NDNA - Contest, c/o 501 E. Main Avenue, Suite 75, Bismarck, ND 58501.

As specified, for most entries a PDF file will be submitted online as your entry. Please make sure your PDF file works, and is the correct file for the category, or your entry could be disqualified. Please try to keep file sizes to 100 MB or less, to aid judges in accessing entry content. If your entry includes more than one page, all pages combined into one PDF file is preferred, but not required. You may upload more than one attachment per entry. For categories that require supporting documents, these other file formats will be allowed: .jpg, .gif, .png, and .doc. *(TIP! If for some reason you don't have a PDF of the tearsheet you wish to submit, it would be easy to snap a high resolution photo and submit the resulting photo file.)*

On the entry form, when asked to provide "Headline or Title of Entry (exactly as it appears on the page)," please enter the title for each entry. If there is not a title on the tearsheet, please enter something that will identify the entry so the judge can easily identify it on the page. On pages with multiple stories, ads, or photos, BE SPECIFIC so judges know which to judge! (Example: "4th of July" as a title on a page with multiple parade photos does not clearly indicate which photo to judge.)

### COMMON STAFF OR COMMON OWNERSHIP

Joint publishing projects can only be entered in one circulation group -- the circulation group of the largest newspaper involved.

A staff member who works for several papers can enter work from both, as long as it is different work entered from each paper. If choosing to submit work that ran the same in several papers, the work must be entered from the paper in the highest circulation group.

### CIRCULATION

Circulation Group is based on the circulation listed on the 2026 NDNA Rate Sheet, which was determined by the 2025 Statements of Ownership. The online contest system (ACES) already has your paper entered into your current circulation group. Circulation Groups are also listed in this packet.

### FEES

The contest fee is \$8.00 per entry for all categories except the Special Awards categories; there are no fees for these. **A-Mark Investigative Journalism entry fee is \$25.00**

The online contest system will help you figure your total amount due: Click on "Calculate Entry Fee" from the "Manage Entries" page to determine your total fee. If paying by check, select the "Pay by Check" option, then print a copy of your entry list and mail it along with a check to NDNA c/o BNC to complete payment. You may also pay by credit card or PayPal. Select "Pay Now with Card" to enter credit card information at the bottom of the "Entry Fee Calculation" page, or select "Check out

with PayPal" to be taken to the PayPal site to login and pay with your PayPal account.

Be sure to print your Credit Card or PayPal payment confirmation page and mail or fax (612-342-2958) to NDNA so we have proof of your payment on file. Please send your check payments with entry list or Credit Card/PayPal confirmation page to:

**NDNA - Contest (Make check payable to NDNA)  
501 E. Main Avenue, Suite 75  
Bismarck, ND 58501**

### TIPS

1. Please review ALL contest materials before getting started! Contest materials were emailed to each newspaper by early December, and are also available at [www.ndna.com/contest](http://www.ndna.com/contest).
2. See the "FAQ" section at the end of this packet for answers to common questions.
3. Regarding using the online contest system: we suggest setting up a Contestant Manager to handle all contest entries for your whole paper. The system allows only one Contestant Manager per paper. The Contestant Manager will be able to enter for multiple people, and see all entries made for their paper.
4. **Watch your dates.** Judges will eliminate the entries if they don't match the rule requirements.
5. For contest purposes, weeks run Sunday through Saturday.
6. Don't pass by a category because you think you aren't good enough. Each year we have winners from newspapers that have never before won an award.
7. **Don't forget to utilize your WILDCARD ENTRIES for three (3) extra chances! (See cover for details.)**
8. Check out Page 16 for A-Mark Prize for Investigative Journalism in North Dakota
9. Make sure your links are working and passwords to bypass paywalls are provided.

This contest is under the supervision of NDNA. We will return no entries and judges' decisions will be final.

**GOOD LUCK in the contest,  
and hope to see you all  
at the convention!**

Register at:  
<http://portal.newspapercontest.com/northdakota/newspaper/register.php>

ENTRIES KEY

 <p><b>Submit Online</b> <small>(Must submit online only. Tearsheets are uploaded with entry form.)</small></p>	 <p><b>AND Mail-in</b> <small>(Must mail actual issues along with label acquired from entering category online)</small></p>
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# Category Divisions

## General rules for all categories:

1. An item can only be entered in one category and one circulation division. Exclusions: a) An item may be entered in one or several of the following categories: Standing News Fronts, Special News Section, Section/Feature Fronts Design Excellence, and Special Advertising Section. b) If an item was entered as part of series, separately, it can also be entered in a non-series category.
2. Series: Two or more stories or ads (no limit unless specified) on the same topic. One series equals one entry.
3. In the majority of the categories, one entry = **ONE** story, ad, or photo per person or team. It is possible that the same person could enter, for example, one story, ad, or photo under their own name in a category, and also be included with a team that enters one additional story, ad, or photo in the same category.
4. PDF: For most categories, a full page electronic "tearsheet" file from the newspaper, showing publication date is required for upload with an entry form. In the News and Photo categories, you may also submit a PDF or JPEG of a story or photo from any digital platform containing the member newspaper name.
5. **ALL** entries must be from a **PRINT** edition (except Digital Categories #54 thru #56.) and be created by local staff.

## NEWS

Cat. #/Category Name	Page #
1. Reporting .....	6
2. Reporting Series .....	6
3. Feature Reporting .....	6
4. Feature Reporting Series .....	6
5. Government Reporting .....	6
6. Government Reporting Series .....	6
7. Spot News .....	6
8. Business News Reporting .....	6
9. Sports Page/Section .....	6
10. Sports Reporting .....	7
11. Sports Reporting Series .....	7
12. Sports Feature .....	7
13. Sports Column .....	7
14. Editorial .....	7
15. Editorial Page .....	7
16. Standing News Fronts (MULTI-DAY ONLY) .....	7
17. Agricultural Coverage .....	7
18. Personal Column - Serious .....	8
19. Personal Column - Humorous .....	8
20. Special News Section .....	8
21. Section Feature Fronts Design Excellence .....	8
22. Front Page Design Excellence .....	8
23. Headline .....	8
52. Informational Graphics .....	8
53. Best Web Site .....	9

**Rules for News Categories:** Each person/team can enter once per category. One entry consists of **ONE** story, or one series, and will be indicated in the category description. An online entry form must be completed for each story or series, along with the entry's uploaded file. A PDF from a newspaper page or from any digital

platform containing member newspaper name is required.

## ADVERTISING

Cat. #/Category Name	Page #
24. Food Ad .....	9
25. Entertainment/Liquor Ad .....	9
26. Vehicle Ad .....	9
27. Category eliminated	
28. Home/Gardening Ad .....	9
29. Outdoors/Sports Ad .....	9
30. Single Ad .....	9
31. Ad Series .....	9
32. Small Space Ad .....	10
33. Financial Ad .....	10
34. Health Care Ad .....	10
35. Political Ad .....	10
36. Agricultural Ad .....	10
37. Use of Color .....	10
38. Promotion of the Newspaper - Advertising .....	10
39. Promotion of the Newspaper - Readership .....	10
40. Promotion of the Community .....	10
41. Special Advertising Section .....	11
42. Signature Page .....	11

**Rules for Advertising Categories:** Each person/team can enter once per category. One entry consists of **ONE** ad, or one series, and will be indicated in the category description. An online entry form must be completed for each ad or series, along with the entry's uploaded file. Only a PDF from a newspaper page will be accepted for advertising categories. Digital ads are not currently allowed in categories 24-42 (please see category 55 for digital ad entry). Advertisements from advertising agencies (including NDNA) or chain retailer advertisements will not be accepted. Clip art may be used as a portion of an original ad.

## PHOTOGRAPHY

Cat. #/Category Name	Page #
43. News Photo .....	11
44. Spot News Photo .....	11
45. Feature Photo .....	11
46. Sports Photo .....	11
47. Picture Story .....	12
48. Pictorial Photo .....	12
49. Portrait Photo .....	12
50. Agricultural Photo .....	12
51. Outdoor Recreation Photo .....	12

**Rules for Photography Categories:** Each person/team can enter once per category. One entry consists of **ONE** photo, or one photo story, and will be indicated in the category description. An online entry form must be completed for each photo or photo story, along with the entry's uploaded file. A PDF from a newspaper page or from any digital platform containing member newspaper name is required. In addition, you may also submit the original photo file, but it is not required.

# Category Divisions

## DIGITAL

Cat. #/Category Name	Page #
54. Online Coverage of Breaking News.....	13
55. Best Digital Ad.....	13
56. Best Use of Social Media.....	13

## SPECIAL AWARDS

Cat. #/Category Name	Page #
57. First Amendment.....	13
58. Community Service.....	13
59. Public Notice Journalism.....	14
60. "Rookie" Reporter of the Year.....	14
61. Overall Design Excellence.....	15
62. General Excellence.....	15
63. A-Mark Investigative Journalism Award.....	16

## SPECIAL AWARDS: AUTOMATIC ENTRY (AE)

Cat. #/Category Name	Page #
AE. Photo of the Year (Circ: up to 4999).....	17
AE. Photo of the Year (Circ: over 5000).....	17
AE. Headliner (Overall Best Headline).....	17
AE. Sweepstakes.....	17

**Rules for Digital Categories:** Each person/team can enter once per category. An online entry form must be completed for each entry, along with the entry's uploaded screenshots and/or URL's.

**Rules for Special Awards Categories:** See category descriptions for more details. An online entry form must be completed for each Special Awards entry, along with the entry's uploaded file(s) including all supporting documents.

**Exceptions: Overall Design Excellence and General Excellence are the only two mail-in AND upload categories required.** Mail-in entries also require an online entry UPLOAD to be completed and must be received at the NDNA office.

# Circulation Groups

### Under 900 (35)

Ashley Tribune  
 Beach, Golden Valley News  
 Bowbells, Burke County Tribune  
 Bowman County Pioneer  
 Cando, Towner County Record-Herald  
 Carson Press  
 Center Republican  
 Central McLean News-Journal  
 Cooperstown, Griggs County Courier  
 Devils Lake Journal  
 Drayton, Valley News & Views  
 Elgin, Grant County News  
 Ellendale, Dickey County Leader  
 Enderlin Independent  
 Finley, Steele County Press  
 Gackle, Tri-County News  
 Glen Ullin Times  
 Hankinson, News Monitor  
 Hebron Herald  
 Hettinger, Adams County Record  
 Lakota American  
 LaMoure Chronicle  
 Litchville Bulletin  
 Mandan News  
 McClusky Gazette  
 Medora, Billings County Pioneer  
 Mohall, Renville County Farmer  
 New England, Hettinger County Herald  
 Northwood Gleaner  
 Oakes Times  
 Park River, Walsh County Press  
 Towner, Mouse River Journal  
 Valley City Times-Record  
 Velva Area Voice  
 Westhope Standard

### 901 - 1650 (23)

Belcourt, Turtle Mountain Times  
 Beulah, The Beacon  
 Carrington, Foster County Independent  
 Cavalier Chronicle  
 Harvey, The Herald Press  
 Hazen Star  
 Hillsboro Banner  
 Kenmare News  
 Langdon, Borderland Press  
 Lisbon, Ransom County Gazette  
 Milnor, The Sargent County Teller  
 Napoleon, Homestead  
 New Rockford Transcript  
 New Salem Journal  
 New Town, MHA Times  
 Rolla, Turtle Mountain Star  
 Rugby, Pierce County Tribune  
 Stanley, Mountrail Co. Promoter  
 Steele Ozone & Kidder County Press  
 Wahpeton Daily News  
 Washburn, The Leader-News  
 Watford City, McKenzie County Farmer  
 Williston Herald

### 1651 - 4999 (9)

Bottineau Courant  
 Casselton, Cass County Reporter  
 Crosby, The Journal  
 Dickinson Press  
 Garrison, McLean County Independent  
 Grafton, Walsh County Record  
 Jamestown Sun  
 Linton, Emmons County Record  
 Minnewaukan, Benson County Farmers  
 Press

### Above 5000 (5)

Bismarck Tribune  
 Fargo, The Forum  
 Grand Forks Herald  
 Minot Daily News  
 North Dakota Monitor

\*\*Other digital outlets contact NDNA to have your name added\*\*

### Circulation Groups

- > Under 900
- > 901 - 1650
- > 1651 - 4999
- > Above 5000

*Circulation Group is based on the circulation listed on the 2026 NDNA Rate Sheet, which was determined by the 2026 Statements of Ownership. The online contest system (BetterBNC) already has your paper entered into your current circulation group.*

# Category Descriptions

## NEWS

### 1. Reporting

**ONE** story may be submitted. This category is for a straight or hard news story.

*Each individual/team may submit **ONE** story for this category. A PDF of the entire page showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) or from any digital platform containing the member newspaper name must be submitted online with entry form.*



### 2. Reporting Series

**ONE** series constitutes one entry. This category is for a straight news series.

*You may upload your series as one PDF or several, but be sure to include on one entry form so you only pay one fee.*



### 3. Feature Reporting

**ONE** story may be submitted. This category is for soft news, i.e. life-style, hobbies, interviews.

*Each individual/team may submit **ONE** story for this category. A PDF of the entire page showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) or from any digital platform containing the member newspaper name must be submitted online with entry form.*



### 4. Feature Reporting Series

**ONE** series constitutes one entry. This category is for a soft news series.

*You may upload your series as one PDF or several, but be sure to include on one entry form so you only pay one fee.*



### 5. Government Reporting

**ONE** story on some aspect of local or state government may be submitted.

*Each individual/team may submit **ONE** story for this category. A PDF of the entire page showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) or from any digital platform containing the member newspaper name must be submitted online with entry form.*



### 6. Government Reporting Series

**ONE** series constitutes one entry. This category is for a government series, local or state coverage may be submitted.

*You may upload your series as one PDF or several, but be sure to include on one entry form so you only pay one fee.*



### 7. Spot News

This is a special category exclusively for a single story that tests a newspaper's capabilities under deadline pressure. Judges will take into consideration subject matter, literacy quality and the deadline circumstances. If key facts in the story are contained in a sidebar, also mark and include the sidebar. Emphasis will be placed on the main story designated.

*Each individual/team may submit **ONE** story for this category. A PDF of the entire page showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) or from any digital platform containing the member newspaper name must be submitted online with entry form.*



### 8. Business News Reporting

**ONE** story relating to industry, retail business, consumer interest, the energy industry and economic sectors within the community.

*Each individual/team may submit **ONE** story for this category. A PDF of the entire page showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) or from any digital platform containing the member newspaper name must be submitted online with entry form.*



### 9. Sports Page/Section

**MUST** submit **three** pages/sections of your choice. Judging will be based on the breadth of the coverage, range of subject matter, use of pictures and special features and columns. If your sports page overflows into two pages, please submit both pages.

*You may upload your "3 tears **REQUIRED**" as one PDF or several, but be sure to include on one entry form so you only pay one fee.*



# Category Descriptions

## 10. Sports Reporting

Submit **ONE** sports story.

*Each individual/team may submit **ONE** story for this category. A PDF of the entire page showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) or from any digital platform containing the member newspaper name must be submitted online with entry form.*



## 11. Sports Reporting Series

**ONE** series constitutes one entry. This is for related sports stories, i.e. following a team through the playoffs.

*You may upload your series as one PDF or several, but be sure to include on one entry form so you only pay one fee.*



## 12. Sports Feature

Submit **ONE** single human interest sports story.

*Each individual/team may submit **ONE** story for this category. A PDF of the entire page showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) or from any digital platform containing the member newspaper name must be submitted online with entry form.*



## 13. Sports Column

Submit **ONE** sports column. Column must be a regular feature, original, & written by a member of the staff.

*Each individual/team may submit **ONE** column for this category. A PDF of the entire page showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) or from any digital platform containing the member newspaper name must be submitted online with entry form.*



## 14. Editorial

Submit **ONE** editorial. Full tearsheet is to be submitted for each. Editorials should be labeled as such and be on the Opinion Page. Personal columns will not be considered editorials.

*Each individual/team may submit **ONE** editorial for this category. A PDF of the entire page showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) or from any digital platform containing the member newspaper name must be submitted online with entry form.*



## 15. Editorial Page

**MUST** submit **three** Editorial Pages of your choice. Purpose of this category is to promote the use of the editorial page and to recognize the excellence of the entire editorial page as distinguished from a particular editorial.

*You may upload your "3 tears REQUIRED" as one PDF or several, but be sure to include on one entry form so you only pay one fee.*



## 16. Standing News Fronts (MULTI-DAY ONLY)

**ONE** standing news front may be submitted in this category. Examples include entertainment front, business news front, or anything that is typically a regular news front. Fronts will be judged on quality and style of writing, makeup and layout, originality and overall impact in relation to news front subject.

*Each individual/team may submit **ONE** front for this category. A PDF of the entire page showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) or from any digital platform containing the member newspaper name must be submitted online with entry form.*



## 17. Agricultural Coverage

**ONE** article or **ONE** series may be submitted. Purpose of this category is to promote consistent farm news. Judging will be based on the content's significance to the farm community, quality and impact of the writing and diversity of material on the page.

*Each individual/team may submit **ONE** story or series for this category. A PDF of the entire page showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) or from any digital platform containing the member newspaper name must be submitted online with entry form.*



# Category Descriptions

## 18. Personal Column - Serious

**ONE** column may be submitted in this category. Judges will consider what appears to be the purpose of the column, local interest, nature of material and skill of the writer.

*Each individual/team may submit **ONE** column for this category. A PDF of the entire page showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) or from any digital platform containing the member newspaper name must be submitted online with entry form.*



## 19. Personal Column - Humorous

**ONE** column may be submitted in this category. Judges will consider what appears to be the purpose of the column, local interest, nature of material and skill of the writer.

*Each individual/team may submit **ONE** column for this category. A PDF of the entire page showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) or from any digital platform containing the member newspaper name must be submitted online with entry form.*



## 20. Special News Section

Submit **ONE** section. Special section may be on any subject, such as bridal, outdoor, centennial, grand opening, community event, open house, anniversary, etc. Judges will give major consideration to editorial content, including quality and style of writing, makeup and layout, photographic and artwork skills. Minor consideration will be given to advertising design and creativity. You may also submit this entry under the Special Advertising Section Category.

*Each individual/team may submit **ONE** section for this category. A PDF of the entire section showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) or from any digital platform containing the member newspaper name must be submitted online with entry form.*



## 21. Section/Feature Fronts Design Excellence

Submit **ONE** section/feature front. Entries will be judged on layout, use of photos, headlines and body type, reproduction quality, and overall appearance and imagination. This specific category judges section fronts other than the front page.

*Each individual/team may submit **ONE** front for this category. A PDF of the entire page showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) or from any digital platform containing the member newspaper name must be submitted online with entry form.*



## 22. Front Page Design Excellence

**MUST** submit **three** front pages of your choice. Entries will be judged on layout, use of photos, headlines and body type, reproduction quality and overall appearance and imagination.

*You may upload your "3 tears REQUIRED" as one PDF or several, but be sure to include on one entry form so you only pay one fee.*



## 23. Headline

Submit **ONE** full-page tearsheet file with one headline clearly marked or noted. Judging will include accuracy, originality, creativity, appropriateness, impact, and attention-getting quality.

*Each individual/team may submit **ONE** headline for this category. A PDF of the entire page showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) or from any digital platform containing the member newspaper name must be submitted online with entry form.*



## 52. Informational Graphics

Submit **ONE** chart or graphic or other visual device used to convey information. Must be original.

*Each individual/team may submit **ONE** informational graphic for this category. A PDF of the entire page showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) or from any digital platform containing the member newspaper name must be submitted online with entry form.*



# Category Descriptions

## 53. Best Web Site

Entrants must submit a URL of their newspaper's home page. This category will recognize excellence in newspaper websites based on content, navigation, visual design, advertising, and community.



*Each individual/team may submit one URL (web site address) for this category. The URL must be submitted online with entry form.*

## 28. Home/Gardening Ad

Submit **ONE** ad featuring items for the home such as furnishings, building and remodeling and maintenance or outdoors such as gardening.



*Each individual/team may submit ONE ad for this category. A PDF of the entire page showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) must be submitted online with entry form. Digital ads are not currently allowed for the advertising categories.*

## ADVERTISING

## 24. Food Ad

Submit **ONE** ad featuring food, dairy products, liquor or other beverages.

*Each individual/team may submit ONE ad for this category. A PDF of the entire page showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) must be submitted online with entry form. Digital ads are not currently allowed for the advertising categories.*



## 29. Outdoors/Sports Ad

Submit **ONE** ad featuring items for the outdoors such as hunting, fishing, camping, etc. or sporting events.

*Each individual/team may submit ONE ad for this category. A PDF of the entire page showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) must be submitted online with entry form. Digital ads are not currently allowed for the advertising categories.*



## 25. Entertainment/Liquor Ad

Submit **ONE** ad featuring any type of entertainment or liquor.

*Each individual/team may submit ONE ad for this category. A PDF of the entire page showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) must be submitted online with entry form. Digital ads are not currently allowed for the advertising categories.*



## 30. Single Ad

**ONE** ad may be submitted here. Judges will take into consideration the general and overall appearance, typography, design, theme and quality of copy.

*Each individual/team may submit ONE ad for this category. A PDF of the entire page showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) must be submitted online with entry form. Digital ads are not currently allowed for the advertising categories.*



## 26. Vehicle Ad

Submit **ONE** ad featuring automotive, boats,

aircraft, tires, gasoline, repair services or other related products/services. *Each individual/team may submit ONE ad for this category. A PDF of the entire page showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) must be submitted online with entry form. Digital ads are not currently allowed for the advertising categories.*



## 31. Ad Series

**ONE** ad series with up to three related ads may be submitted in this category. A series is considered ads carrying the same theme. (Ads for the same store and merely carrying the same logo do not constitute a series.) Judges will take into consideration the general overall appearance, typography, design, theme and quality of the copy.

*You may upload your series as one PDF or several, but be sure to include on one entry form so you only pay one fee. PDF's of the entire pages showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) must be submitted online with entry form. Digital ads are not currently allowed for the advertising categories.*



## 27. N/A

# Category Descriptions

## 32. Small Space Ad

**ONE** ad 10 inches or less may be submitted for this category.

*Each individual/team may submit **ONE** ad for this category. A PDF of the entire page showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) must be submitted online with entry form. Digital ads are not currently allowed for the advertising categories.*



## 33. Financial Ad

Submit **ONE** ad featuring personal services from a bank, financial institution or insurance company.

*Each individual/team may submit **ONE** ad for this category. A PDF of the entire page showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) must be submitted online with entry form. Digital ads are not currently allowed for the advertising categories.*



## 34. Health Care Ad

Submit **ONE** ad featuring hospitals, nursing homes, clinics, doctors, dentists, laboratories or any other provider of health care.

*Each individual/team may submit **ONE** ad for this category. A PDF of the entire page showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) must be submitted online with entry form. Digital ads are not currently allowed for the advertising categories.*



## 35. Political Ad

Submit **ONE** ad for a political candidate/issue.

*Each individual/team may submit **ONE** ad for this category. A PDF of the entire page showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) must be submitted online with entry form. Digital ads are not currently allowed for the advertising categories.*



## 36. Agricultural Ad

Submit **ONE** ad featuring a product or service related to agriculture.

*Each individual/team may submit **ONE** ad for this category. A PDF of the entire page showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) must be submitted online with entry form. Digital ads are not currently allowed for the advertising categories.*



## 37. Use of Color

Submit **ONE** ad with color in this category. Judges will take into consideration the general overall appearance, use of color and quality of copy. Reminder: use of color must be original design, although clip art may be used.

*Each individual/team may submit **ONE** ad for this category. A PDF of the entire page showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) must be submitted online with entry form. Digital ads are not currently allowed for the advertising categories.*



## 38. Promotion of the Newspaper - Advertising

Submit **ONE** ad or **ONE** ad series promoting the newspaper or any part of the newspaper—classifieds, newspaper sponsored events, house ads for ad services.

*Each individual/team may submit **ONE** ad or ad series for this category. PDF's of the entire pages showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) must be submitted online with entry form. Digital ads are not currently allowed for the advertising categories.*



## 39. Promotion of the Newspaper - Readership

Submit **ONE** ad or **ONE** ad series promoting the newspaper or any part of the newspaper—circulation, carrier recruitment, classifieds, Newspaper In Education, etc.

*Each individual/team may submit **ONE** ad or ad series for this category. PDF's of the entire pages showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) must be submitted online with entry form. Digital ads are not currently allowed for the advertising categories.*



## 40. Promotion of the Community

Submit **ONE** ad or **ONE** ad series promoting your local community, downtown or community event.

*Each individual/team may submit **ONE** ad or ad series for this category. PDF's of the entire pages showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) must be submitted online with entry form. Digital ads are not currently allowed for the advertising categories.*



# Category Descriptions

## 41. Special Advertising Section

Submit **ONE** section. Special section may be on any subject, such as bridal, outdoor, centennial, grand opening, community event, open house, anniversary, etc. Judges will give major consideration to advertising design and creativity. Minor consideration will be given to subject matter of editorial content, literary quality, typography and layout of both editorial matter and advertisements, and design and theme of supplement. You may also submit this entry under Special News Section.

*Each individual/team may submit **ONE** section for this category. A PDF of the entire section showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) must be submitted online with entry form. Digital ads are not currently allowed for the advertising categories.*



## 42. Signature Page

Submit **ONE** signature page to be judged on creativity, layout and content. Full tearsheet file should be submitted.

*Each individual/team may submit **ONE** page for this category. A PDF of the entire page showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) must be submitted online with entry form. Digital ads are not currently allowed for the advertising categories.*



## PHOTOGRAPHY

## 43. News Photo

Submit **ONE** photo tearsheet file. Photo of straight or hard news. Any photo entry may have run as a stand-alone photo or with a story. Tearsheet file of each photo submission required. May also submit original print, but not required. Judges are asked to judge the photo on the quality of the original print, if submitted.

*Each individual/team may submit **ONE** photo for this category. A PDF of the entire page showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) or from any digital platform containing the member newspaper name must be submitted online with entry form.*



## 44. Spot News Photo

Submit **ONE** photo tearsheet file. Photo of unplanned news events- tornadoes, accidents, fires, quick action items. Any photo entry may have run as a stand-alone photo or with a story. Tearsheet file of each photo submission required. May also submit original print, but not required. Judges are asked to judge the photo on the quality of the original print, if submitted.

*Each individual/team may submit **ONE** photo for this category. A PDF of the entire page showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) or from any digital platform containing the member newspaper name must be submitted online with entry form.*



## 45. Feature Photo

Submit **ONE** photo tearsheet file. "Slice of Life" photos of planned or unplanned events or activities. Any photo entry may have run as a stand-alone photo or with a story. Tearsheet file of each photo submission required. May also submit original print, but not required. Judges are asked to judge the photo on the quality of the original print, if submitted.

*Each individual/team may submit **ONE** photo for this category. A PDF of the entire page showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) or from any digital platform containing the member newspaper name must be submitted online with entry form.*



## 46. Sports Photo

Submit **ONE** photo tearsheet file. Sports action or sports feature photos qualify. Any photo entry may have run as a stand-alone photo or with a story. Tearsheet file of each photo submission required. May also submit original print, but not required. Judges are asked to judge the photo on the quality of the original print, if submitted.

*Each individual/team may submit **ONE** photo for this category. A PDF of the entire page showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) or from any digital platform containing the member newspaper name must be submitted online with entry form.*



# Category Descriptions

## 47. Picture Story

Group of photos on one page or section with a cohesive storyline. Any photo entry may have run as a stand-alone photo or with a story. Tearsheet file of each picture story required. May also submit original print, but not required. Judges are asked to judge the photo on the quality of the original print, if submitted.

*Each individual/team may submit **ONE** picture story for this category. A PDF of the entire page showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) or from any digital platform containing the member newspaper name must be submitted online with entry form.*



## 48. Pictorial Photo

Submit **ONE** photo tearsheet file. A graphically interesting or pretty photo. Any photo entry may have run as a stand-alone photo or with a story. Tearsheet file of each photo submission required. May also submit original print, but not required. Judges are asked to judge the photo on the quality of the original print, if submitted.

*Each individual/team may submit **ONE** photo for this category. A PDF of the entire page showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) or from any digital platform containing the member newspaper name must be submitted online with entry form.*



## 49. Portrait Photo

Submit **ONE** photo tearsheet file. Photo for which planning may have been available. Category encompasses photos that are larger than mug shots and may be of an individual or small group of people. Any photo entry may have run as a stand-alone photo or with a story. Tearsheet file of each photo submission required. May also submit original print, but not required. Judges are asked to judge the photo on the quality of the original print, if submitted.

*Each individual/team may submit **ONE** photo for this category. A PDF of the entire page showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) or from any digital platform containing the member newspaper name must be submitted online with entry form.*



## 50. Agricultural Photo

Submit **ONE** photo tearsheet file. Photos including some aspect of production agriculture in North Dakota, i.e. farming, ranching, ag research. Any photo entry may have run as a stand-alone photo or with a story. Tearsheet file of each photo submission required. May also submit original print, but not required. Judges are asked to judge the photo on the quality of the original print, if submitted.

*Each individual/team may submit **ONE** photo for this category. A PDF of the entire page showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) or from any digital platform containing the member newspaper name must be submitted online with entry form.*



## 51. Outdoor Recreation Photo

Submit **ONE** photo tearsheet file. Photos that may not fit into the sports photo category but do portray outdoor recreational activities. Any photo entry may have run as a stand-alone photo or with a story. Tearsheet file of each photo submission required. May also submit original print, but not required. Judges are asked to judge the photo on the quality of the original print, if submitted.

*Each individual/team may submit **ONE** photo for this category. A PDF of the entire page showing publication date (electronic tearsheet file) or from any digital platform containing the member newspaper name must be submitted online with entry form.*



# Category Descriptions

## DIGITAL

### 54. Online Coverage of Breaking News

Submit coverage of a single breaking news event within a 24-hour news cycle. May include content from the newspaper's website and/or social media pages that incorporates text, photos, photo galleries, live video streams, pre-recorded videos, social media stories or other elements.

*(Each individual/team may submit **ONE** online coverage of breaking news example for this category. Entries must be submitted online and include screenshots in a jpg, gif, or PDF format, and/or URL's accessible to judges and not behind a paywall.)*



### 55. Best Digital Ad

This award will recognize excellence for a single online advertisement including, but not limited to a button ad, banner, video or flash animation. Judging will be based on creativity, effectiveness, and impact. Must be designed by member of newspaper staff. Can be paid or house ad.

*(Each individual/team may submit **ONE** digital ad for this category. Entries must be submitted online and include a screenshot in a jpg, gif, or PDF format, and/or a URL accessible to judges and not behind a paywall.)*



### 56. Best Use of Social Media

This category recognizes newspapers that have utilized social media in an innovative way to expand coverage beyond traditional print. Judges will consider your use of social media to engage with the community, increase readership and drive revenue. Entry shall consist of a cover letter of 300 words or less describing a single news event in which your newspaper creatively used social media to inform and interact with readers. Entry should include up to three examples (screen shots of Facebook posts, tweets, etc.).

*(Each individual/team may submit **ONE** social media example for this category. Entries must be submitted online and include the 300-word cover letter, screenshots in a jpg, gif, or PDF format, and/or URL's accessible to judges and not behind a paywall.)*



## SPECIAL AWARDS

### 57. First Amendment

The nominee will have made significant contributions to First Amendment and Freedom of Information issues; should demonstrate an active commitment to Freedom of Information; and should show how the nominee contributed to the preservation of First Amendment in their community or state. If several typed documents and/or copies of stories are required to explain First Amendment efforts, please try to combine into one file to upload. You may do several attachments if necessary, but one file is easier for the judges. There are no entry fees for the Special Awards categories.

*(Each individual/team may submit one **First Amendment** effort for this category. All supporting documents in an attachment(s) must be submitted online.)*



### 58. Community Service

Entries should demonstrate leadership by the newspaper in a project or promotion which has, as its purpose, the improvement of the quality of life in the community or state. If several typed documents and/or copies of stories are required to explain Community Service efforts, please try to combine into one file to upload. You may do several attachments if necessary, but one file is easier for the judges. There are no entry fees for the Special Awards categories.

*(Each individual/team may submit one **Community Service** effort for this category. All supporting documents in an attachment(s) must be submitted online.)*



# Category Descriptions

## 59. Public Notice Journalism

A news or feature story that was generated because of a public notice that drew attention to the subject, or because a public notice or the omission of the public notice figured heavily into the subject. Stories must reference and/or provide a link to an actual public notice. If the public notice requirement was not met or was deficient, the story must describe the deficiency. The winning entry will be automatically entered into a national competition to vie for the national award of \$500. If several typed documents and/or copies of stories are required to explain Public Notice Journalism efforts, please try to combine into one file to upload. You may do several attachments if necessary, but one file is easier for the judges. There are no entry fees for the Special Awards categories.



***(Each individual/team may submit one Public Notice Journalism effort for this category. All supporting documents in an attachment(s) must be submitted online.)***

## 60. "Rookie" Reporter of the Year

This award is to honor an entry-level staff person who has been employed by the newspaper for eighteen months or less as of December 31st of the contest year, and who has had no previous employment in the newspaper industry. Submit copies of five examples of the reporter's work, along with a cover letter specifying when the reporter joined the newspaper and what his or her responsibilities have been during that time. Entries must be accompanied by a sworn statement certifying the reporter has less than eighteen months of professional experience. Please include a photo of the nominee. If several typed documents, copies of stories, and/or photos are required to explain Rookie Reporter efforts, please try to combine into one file to upload. You may do several attachments if necessary, but one file is easier for the judges. There are no entry fees for the Special Awards categories.



***(Each individual may be submitted as a Rookie Reporter once in this category. All supporting documents in an attachment(s) must be submitted online.)***

# Category Descriptions

## 61. Overall Design Excellence

Newspapers will be judged on the basis of layout, design, use of photos, headlines and body type, reproduction quality, overall appearance and imagination.

Weeklies: Please submit entire issues from **two** of the weeks listed on the calendar below, **and also one issue of your choice from the 2025 calendar year.** Multi-Days:

Submit entire issues from **two** if the exact dates listed on the calendar below, **and also one issue of your choice from the 2025 calendar year.** If your newspaper does not submit three issues, you will not be judged for Overall Design Excellence! There are no entry fees for the Special Awards categories.



*(This is one of two categories in the contest that still require you submit the actual newspapers, in addition to uploading online. Please bind the three issues together securely with a rubber band or binder clip, print and STAPLE the overall design excellence category label to the top issue, enclosed in an envelope and mail to: NDNA-Contest, 501 E Main Avenue, Suite 75, Bismarck ND 58501. You must first enter this category online to copy your entry for mail-in.)*



## 62. General Excellence

Newspapers will be judged news coverage, feature stories, news editing, photography and cutlines, headlines and makeup, editorial page, advertising, typography and design and overall product.

Weeklies: Please submit entire issues from **two** of the weeks listed on the calendar below, **and also one issue of your choice from the 2025 calendar year.** Multi-Days:

Submit entire issues from **two** if the exact dates listed on the calendar below, **and also one issue of your choice from the 2025 calendar year.** If your newspaper does not submit three issues, you will not be judged for General Excellence! There are no entry fees for the Special Awards categories.



*(This is one of two categories in the contest that still require you submit the actual newspapers, in addition to uploading online. Please bind the three issues together securely with a rubber band or binder clip, print and STAPLE the overall design excellence category label to the top issue, enclosed in an envelope and mail to: NDNA-Contest, 501 E Main Avenue, Suite 75, Bismarck ND 58501. You must first enter this category online to copy your entry for mail-in.)*



### OVERALL DESIGN EXCELLENCE

Weeklies: Please choose **two** of the weeks indicated.

Multi-Days: Please choose **two** of the days indicated.

Weeklies & Multi-Days: Please also choose a **third** issue of your choice from the 2025 calendar year!

	Su	M	T	W	Th	F	S
FEB 2025	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
APR 2025	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
JUNE 2025	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
AUG 2025	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
OCT 2025	19	20	21	22	23	24	25

### GENERAL EXCELLENCE

Weeklies: Please choose **two** of the weeks indicated.

Multi-Days: Please choose **two** of the days indicated.

Weeklies & Multi-Days: Please also choose a **third** issue of your choice from the 2025 calendar year!

MAR 2025	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
MAY 2025	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
JULY 2025	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
SEPT 2025	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
NOV 2025	23	24	25	26	27	28	29

# CASH PRIZE!

## 63. A-Mark Prize for INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM in North Dakota

North Dakota Newspaper Association and the A-Mark Foundation have teamed up to create the A-Mark Prize for Investigative Journalism in North Dakota with cash awards totaling **\$15,000!**

**First Place: \$5,000 - Journalist and \$2,500 to the news organization**

**Second Place: \$3,000 - Journalist and \$1,500 to the news organization**

**Third Place: \$2,000 - Journalist and \$1,000 to the news organization**

The contest for the A-Mark Prize for Investigative Journalism will be open to all narrative journalists and non-broadcast news organizations in North Dakota.

The North Dakota Newspaper Association was founded in 1885 to support and advocate for all North Dakota newspapers.

The A-Mark Foundation ([amarkfoundation.org](http://amarkfoundation.org)) is a nonpartisan 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization incorporated in 1997.

### 2025 Contest Criteria

This award will recognize excellence in investigative reporting. For this contest, investigative reporting will be defined as the development of information about government, organizations, businesses, institutions or individuals that is not readily available to the public and required exceptional skill and effort by the journalist. In many cases, the subjects of the reporting wish the matters under scrutiny to remain undisclosed. Information should be presented in a way that gives readers understanding and insight into subject matter that is not generally known to the public.

### Entries will be judged on the following criteria:

- > Substantially the work product of the journalist's own initiative and effort.
- > Uncovers facts that someone or some agency may have tried to keep from public scrutiny.
- > Be about issues of public importance to the readers.
- > Shows enterprise and excellence in documentation, data, storytelling, and reader involvement where appropriate.
- > Results.

This contest is open to all narrative journalists and non-broadcast news media organizations based in North Dakota and their staff members and includes newspaper and digital-only platforms. Freelance journalists based in North Dakota whose reporting is published by North Dakota print news media organizations are also eligible to enter. Contestants who are not staff members of a newspaper must contact Cecile Wehrman, [director@ndna.com](mailto:director@ndna.com) or call 701-223-6397 for credentials to sign in to the contest.

Entries must have been published in 2025 between January 1 and December 31. Entries must also include a written statement (500 words or less) outlining the background and scope of the entry and any potential outcomes resulting from the reporting. There is no fee to enter this category. Entries are limited to one per individual or team. An individual who is part of a team may also enter their own stand-alone entry.

**ENTRY FEE for this category is \$25.00**

**DEADLINE TO ENTER: 8:59 pm Central: Tuesday, January 20, 2026**

# Category Descriptions

## SPECIAL AWARDS: AUTO-ENTRY

### Photo of the Year - Circulation Divisions

First place photographs from all the photography categories will be considered for this award, which will be presented in two separate divisions: Circulation under 4,999 and over 5000.



*(NDNA will enter all first place photography category winners automatically, and no entry fee is required.)*

### “Headliner” - Overall Best Headline

First place headlines from all the headline categories will be considered for this award. One overall winner will be selected.



*(NDNA will enter all first place headline category winners automatically, and no entry fee is required.)*

### Sweepstakes

One award (first place only) given to the newspaper in each circulation division who accumulates the most points in contest judging, based on the following point system. General Excellence: 1st - 200 points, 2nd - 150 points, 3rd - 100 points, Honorable Mention - 50 points. All other categories: 1st - 100 points, 2nd - 75 points, 3rd - 50 points, Honorable Mention - 25 points.



*(This category will be automatically calculated, and no entry fee is required.)*

**Entry Deadline is  
Monday,  
January 19, 2026**

## 140th NDNA Convention

**North Dakota's  
Gateway to Science  
Bismarck, ND  
April 30 - May 1, 2026**

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

## Which browser should I use?

ACES is optimized for the Google Chrome Browser for PC and Macintosh computers, and will be fully supported by customer support. Other browsers may work, but support may be limited.

## What is my Association Code and Password?

As this is the first time you'll log into the system, the default Association Code is "NDNA" (password is case sensitive). You will need this when registering. Your user name will be your email and you create your own password.

## How do I determine my circulation group?

NDNA has pre-determined your circulation group, based on your circulation from the most current Statement of Ownerships.

## Do I have to fill out an entry form online for entries that I mail to NDNA?

Yes. You must fill out an entry form online for every single entry. The online entry process will provide you with the label you need for mail-in entries. Print a copy of your entry after entering online and STAPLE the label to the top issue in your bundle. Be sure to bind all issues together securely with a rubber band or binder clip, enclose in an envelope, and mail to NDNA-Contest, c/o 501 E. Main Avenue, Suite 75, Bismarck, ND 58501.

## Which categories must be submitted by mail AND UPLOADED?

- 61. Overall Design Excellence
- 62. General Excellence

Mailed entries must be postmarked on or before the contest deadline to be accepted.

All other categories, including all Special Awards categories (First Amendment, Community Service, Public Notice Journalism, and Rookie Reporter of the Year) are entered online only, and each must include an electronic file upload of a PDF tearsheet(s) (unless otherwise specified), or in the case of the Special Awards, an attachment of all supporting documents/photos.

## There is no specific title for my entry (or there are multiple titles). What should I put here?

On the entry form, when asked to provide "Headline or Title of Entry (exactly as it appears on the page)" - please enter the title for each entry. If there is not a title on the tearsheet, please enter something that will identify the entry so the judge can easily identify it on the page. On pages with multiple stories, ads, or photos, BE SPECIFIC so judges know which to judge! (Example: "4th of July" on a page with multiple parade photos does not clearly indicate which photo to judge.)

## How do I make changes to an entry that I've already submitted?

On the "Manage Entries" page of the online contest system, identify the entry you'd like to update or change. In the "Actions" column, you can click "Label" to print a label to affix to mail-in entries. Click "Edit" to update or change an entry. You can delete uploaded files and upload new or additional files here as well. Click "Disable" if you'd like to remove the entry from view of the contest administrator and judges. Click "Delete" if you'd like to remove the entry. This action is permanent.

## What file formats are accepted for uploading?

File formats accepted by the system include .pdf, .jpg, .gif, and .png (and .doc in applicable categories). If for some reason you don't have a PDF of the tearsheet you wish to submit, it would be easy to snap a photo and submit the resulting photo file.

## What is the maximum file size?

100MB is the maximum file size allowed by the contest system.

## How can I make my PDF files smaller?

Most newspaper PDFs include high-resolution (200-300dpi) grayscale or CMYK images for printing. However, PDF contest entries will be viewed and judged on a computer monitor, which displays at low resolution (72-96dpi) in RGB color.

Changes in the resolution and color mode of images are the most effective ways to reduce file size without sacrificing quality.

1. Resolution. In PDFs, text is usually clear regardless of resolution. Resolution relates only to photos and rasterized graphics. Reducing resolution by half reduces image file size by 75%. The recommended maximum resolution of 96dpi can be enforced by Distiller settings.

2. Color mode. Converting from CMYK to RGB color will reduce image file size by another 25%. This color conversion can again be enforced by Distiller settings.

If you reduce image resolution and/or convert color mode in your entry PDFs with a PDF editor (e.g., Enfocus Pitstop or Quite A Box Of Tricks) or use the native profiling/editing tools in Acrobat 6 or later, YOU WILL NOT GAIN THE EXPECTED REDUCTION IN FILE SIZE unless you redistill the PDF afterward.

## What is the most efficient way to collect entry files to be ready for the next contest?

Save copies of all PDF files that contain entry-related pages into one place (e.g., create a folder on your server to save all the files for the next contest entry period). These may be full-issue, full-section, or individual-page PDFs that you sent to your printer or that you saved from your page layout program for other reasons. The sizes,

resolutions, color modes, and other characteristics of those PDF files can be ignored at this point.

Extract entry-related pages from any multi-page PDFs, or delete non-entry pages. Give each resulting file a clearly descriptive name. Combine into a single PDF file the pages that comprise each entry. Instructions for extracting and combining PDFs are provided below.

Once you've created all your entry PDFs, redistill each one as explained above to reduce it to the smallest practical size. It is not productive to try to reduce the sizes of individual files before combining them into complete entries. Like all changes, combining pages can increase overall PDF file size.

### **How do I extract pages from a full-issue or full section PDF?**

In Acrobat, open the PDF file, then choose "Extract Pages..." from the Document menu and follow the instructions. This will allow you to save individual or sequential pages in separate files anywhere on your system.

### **Should I combine PDF pages or files into a single file to upload, and how do I do that?**

First, please pay attention to category wording. In most cases, there will be only one story, ad, or photo allowed per person/team, so that will be just one file to upload. If it mentions "**MUST** submit 3," it means we are requiring 3 stories uploaded on one entry form, and you only have to pay one fee for this set of stories. Of course, if you have a series or a jump, these should be uploaded on one entry form also, and following are instructions if you'd like to combine the pages into one file to upload: Open the PDF file in Acrobat that is to appear first in the entry, choose "Save As..." from the File menu, and save that file with the name you'd like to give the final PDF entry. Choose "Insert Pages..." from the Document menu, choose the file that is to appear next in the entry, then specify where that file should be inserted. When all insertions have been made, save and close the PDF file. You'll need to re-save the final PDFs.

### **How do I submit payment for my entries?**

The online contest system will help you figure your total amount due: Click on "Calculate Entry Fee" from the "Manage Entries" page to determine your total fee. If paying by check, select the "Pay by Check" option, then print a copy of your entry list and mail it along with a check to NDNA to complete payment. You may also pay by credit card or PayPal. Select "Pay Now with Card" to enter credit card information at the bottom of the "Entry Fee Calculation" page, or select "Check out with PayPal" to be taken to the PayPal site to login and pay with your PayPal account.

Be sure to print your Credit Card or PayPal payment confirmation page and mail or fax (612-352-2958) to NDNA so we have proof of your payment on file. Please send your check payments with entry list or Credit Card/PayPal confirmation page to:

**NDNA - Contest  
501 E. Main Avenue, Suite 75  
Bismarck, ND 58501**

### **What is the deadline for submitting contest entries?**

**Monday, January 19, 2026** All entries must be uploaded to the online contest system ("BetterBNC" at [www.betterbnc.com](http://www.betterbnc.com)) by 8:59 p.m. CT. After the contest deadline, you'll lose access to the contest site, so save any entry files or entry lists for your records in advance of the contest deadline. Time extensions beyond the deadline will not be granted, as the site closes for judging at that time. Categories that require mail-in entry materials must be postmarked on or before the deadline. Entries postmarked later than the deadline will not be accepted. Hand deliveries must be scheduled - **IN ADVANCE**. Contact the NDNA office.

### **Where can I get more help for anything I can't find here?**

Questions? We are here to help! Please contact our contest coordinator, Laura Niemi, by phone (612-278-0226) or e-mail ([contest@ndna.com](mailto:contest@ndna.com)).

**Awards will be presented during the 140th Annual  
NDNA Convention  
April 30- May 1, 2026  
North Dakota's Gateway to Science  
Bismarck, ND**

