



Southwest Person of Leather | Judges Handbook, 2026

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Person of Leather: One title, one community.

As the producer of the Southwest Person of Leather Contest, SWeLL is committed to providing the Leather/BDSM/Kink communities with a Southwest Person of Leather who will represent the Leather lifestyle with integrity and competence.

The Southwest Person of Leather (SWPOL) Contest is a celebration of diversity in the Leather community. The title of Person of Leather is a community service and education title that exists to promote that diversity.

This title is not about a particular "look," dress, body type, gender, or sexual orientation. Contestants are not required to have a formal platform; however, questions from the judges during the interview portion of the contest regarding any specific plans or goals the contestants might have should they win the title are appropriate.

The holder of the Southwest Person of Leather title will be expected to act as mentor, educator, role model, and spokesperson throughout their title year; and as such, one of the most important attributes of the titleholder should be the ability to clearly and effectively communicate what it means to them to live and identify as Leather. The Southwest Person of Leather will be therefore selected based on their ability to articulate their views, passions, and dedications and to make an impact in their communities, irrespective of their gender identity, sexual orientation, race, physical appearance, age, or disability.

SWeLL is committed to presenting a contest that is accessible, ethical, and in which all contestants are treated with kindness and respect.

Contest Rules

Contestant Eligibility Requirements

The Southwest Person of Leather Contest is open to any person who identifies as Leather, has been a member of the Leather community for a minimum of five (5) years, and is at least 21 years old, irrespective of gender, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

All contestants electing to run for the Southwest Person of Leather contest must be able and willing to meet the requirements of the International Person of Leather title in 2027. See all current documents for IPOL [here](https://www.southplainsleatherfest.com/IPOL-documents.html) (<https://www.southplainsleatherfest.com/IPOL-documents.html>)

Contestants may not be sponsors of the contest or the event hosting the contest.

Contestants may not have an active role in producing or running the contest or the event holding the contest.

Regional Eligibility

To participate in the Southwest Person of Leather Contest, contestants must live within the Southwest region at the time of the competition. Winners of the Southwest Person of Leather competition must maintain residency throughout their title year. This contest serves the states of California (South of Fresno), Hawaii, Nevada (excluding the cities of Reno, Sparks, and Carson City), Texas, Oklahoma, Arizona, New Mexico. Members of the current SWell Board and/or SWell committee may not run for the Southwest Person of Leather title.

If a state in the Southwest Region has an approved state POL contest, a contestant who lives in that state must have been selected as the winner of the state contest as the current titleholder of that contest.

Certain local contests within the Southwest Region may have been approved to offer their titleholders the opportunity to run at the SWPOL contest during their title year. For those contestants, the requirement to hold no other Leather or BDSM titles during their Regional title year is waived, and other contestants from that year's contest will be ineligible to enter into the SWPOL contest that year.

Southwest Person of Leather Expectations and Requirements

1. Should the SWPOL titleholder become unable to carry out the requirements of the title, the Producer will determine in what manner the title will be represented for the remainder of the year in question.
2. The SWPOL titleholder is strongly encouraged to attend groups/events and to seek out every opportunity to speak on Leather and Diversity. The SWPOL titleholder must be willing to speak about Leather to all segments of the leather/BDSM community. The holder of the SWPOL Title must be articulate, be an educator, serve their respective community, and speak about current issues in the leather community.
3. The SWPOL titleholder will be provided with a travel fund in an amount determined by the Producer.
4. The SWPOL titleholder is required to run for the 2027 International Person of Leather title at Southplains Leatherfest in Dallas, TX, in 2027.
5. No commercial use may be made of the Southwest POL title. The Southwest Titleholders during and following their title year may not financially profit by the direct use of the logo, name of the contest system or name of their title nor may they associate the logo, name of the contest system or name of their title with any monetary based work.
6. The Southwest POL titleholders are representatives of the entire Leather community. As such, the titleholders must protect the title and community from unfavorable publicity or focus.

Contest Expectations

By submitting an application form, each contestant agrees to participate in all categories of the Southwest Person of Leather Contest, including: Interview, Leather Lifestyle, Speech, Pop Questions, Presentation, and Basket Auction. They also agree to participate in Southwest Person of Leather Weekend fundraising activities.

Meeting Contest deadlines/complying with Contest rules: Contestants are required to meet all Contest deadlines, including but not limited to timely submission of the Contest Application and information on the item the contestants are required to submit for the Silent Auction, and attendance at all required Contest rehearsals and meetings. Failure to comply with any Contest rule or deadline will be reported to the judging panel by the Producer. The judges may use this information as a part of the interview of the contestant and may factor this information into their scoring of the contestant at their discretion.

Accessibility

The Southwest Person of Leather Contest aims to meet all accessibility needs within our power. If you have a need for an accessibility accommodation, please reach out to the contest producers at producer@SouthwestLeatherLegacy.com so we can plan ahead for your needs as much as we can. While we may not be able to meet every need due to forces outside our control, we will try to work with you to make sure the contest is accessible as possible. We do not guarantee the same accommodations can be made at the International Person of Leather contest.

About the Contest Weekend

The main object of the different stages of the contest is for the judges to try to determine which of the contestants will best represent the title in the coming year. The contest includes five different categories: Leather Lifestyle, Interview, Speech, Pop Questions, and Presentation. There is also an unscored Silent Auction Basket. Proceeds from all contestant baskets go directly toward the travel fund.

Expectations of Judges at the Southwest Person of Leather Contest

- Judges are expected to treat the contestants with kindness and respect. We do not tolerate discrimination of any kind at SWeLL.
- Judges will arrive on-time and participate fully in each judging component.
- Judges will observe the contestants before SWeLL out and about at other events as well as social media.
- Judges will research contestants and learn about them prior to arrival at SWeLL.
- Confidentiality is of primary importance. We require that Judges hold in confidence all information they receive about the contestants and do not discuss this information outside of Judge deliberations before, during and after the contest including with contestants.
- Toward this commitment, all Judges are required to sign a written agreement to not share information regarding the contest or the contestants outside of the judging process.
- Judge scores will be provided to the contestants who request them within 1 month of the contest conclusion. Scores will be anonymous with judge identification redacted.

The Structure of the Southwest Person of Leather Contest

1. The Southwest Person of Leather Contest is made up of five judging categories: Interview; Presentation; Speech; Pop Question; and Leather Lifestyle. Each of these categories is described in greater detail under the "Judging Categories" section of this Handbook.
2. There are seven judges for the Southwest Person of Leather Contest. The high score and low score for the contestants in each judging category will be thrown out and the remaining five scores will be averaged, giving a single score per contestant for each category. The contestants' scores for the five categories then will be added to give a final overall score. A perfect score would be 500. The contestant with the highest overall score is the winner.

Judges are encouraged to consider judging within a range as follows:

Based on a category with 100 possible points:

A	95
B	85
C	75
D	65
F	50

3. In addition to their performance in the judging categories, two other aspects of the SWPOL Contest will impact a contestant's score: Meeting Contest deadlines/complying with Contest rules:
 - a. Contestants are required to meet all Contest deadlines, including but not limited to timely submittal of the Contest Application, complete information on Contest Application, submission of references, information on the item the contestants are required to submit for the Silent Auction, and attendance at all required Contest rehearsals and meetings. Failure to comply with any Contest rule or deadline will be reported to the judging panel. The judges may use this information as a part of the interview of the contestant and may factor this information into their scoring at their discretion
 - b. During the Friday night Meet and Greet, each contestant will be given the opportunity to introduce themselves. Each contestant will have a maximum of 1 minute to make their introduction. The form and content of the introduction is up to the contestant; however, props or sets of any kind are not permitted. While there is no deduction for too short or too long of

an introduction, the contestant's representation goes to the Leather Lifestyle with regard to how the contestant presented themselves on stage.

4. If a judge becomes incapacitated during the Southwest Person of Leather Contest, or if for any reason the Owner/Producer in their sole discretion determines a judge is unable or unwilling to carry out their duties as a judge, that judge will be withdrawn from the Contest and their scores will be discarded. The remaining 6 judges will continue to score the Contest under the Olympic scoring system, with the high and low scores of the remaining 6 judges dropped from the calculations. The Producer reserves the right to define the duties of a judge of the Southwest Person of Leather Contest and to determine if a judge is able and/or willing to carry out those duties. The Producer further retains the right to remove from the judging panel any judge who, in their judgment, is unable carry out those duties.
5. In the event of a tie score between two or more contestants, the winner will be the one with the highest overall score, without using Olympic scoring. Thus, in the event of a tie, the scores of the tied contestants in each of the 5 contest categories will be recalculated, without dropping the high and low scores. The resulting composite scores for the tied contestants then will be averaged, again without dropping the high and low scores. The contestant with the highest overall non-Olympic score will be the winner, provided that score is at least 70% of the total possible score.
6. For a contestant to win the SWPOL title, they must receive a final overall score equal to at least 70% of the total possible. A perfect overall score would be 500; thus, the winning contestant must receive a final overall score of 350 or higher in order to be awarded the title.

Judging Categories

- *Interview with Judges (150 points)*

(limited to 30 minutes, max callback 5 minutes) Questions should focus on community contribution, leather history and personal history. However, questions addressing broader leather/BDSM topics are also appropriate.

Questions about sex or play with any of the judges are inappropriate; do not ask them. Also avoid asking contestants to name something about each judge.

Judges should ask hard questions when appropriate, however delivery should be

with kindness and curiosity. Judges should think of the interview as a job interview, not an opportunity for hazing. It is not a place for shame or rude behavior.

Questions about the experience of a contestant as a member of a marginalized group are not permitted. Examples are asking a person of color to speak about their experience as a person of color in the Leather community. Another example is to ask a contestant to explain their gender or for you as a judge to comment on their gender. Questions such as these are hurtful and are not permitted.

If a judge's behavior is determined to be outside of the guidelines of kindness and respect, the contest will be immediately paused to address the issue directly.

Remember: a good answer is not necessarily an answer you agree with.

Suggested criteria for judging include:

- Is the contestant able to think quickly and give a responsive answer to the question asked?
- Is the answer clear and understandable?
- Is the answer factually correct? (If applicable)
- Does the body language of the contestant reinforce the answer or does it detract from the message?
- Does the contestant seem reasonably relaxed and engaged in responding to the questions?
- Do the contestant's answers demonstrate that they self-identify as a person of leather?
- Do the contestant's answers evidence passion and enthusiasm about the possibility of representing the community as Southwest Person of Leather?

The Contestant Interviews are open to all persons attending SWeLL. However, handlers, support persons, etc. for contestants may only attend their own contestant's interview.

- *Speech (100 points)*

Each contestant is required to give a short speech (2 minutes or less) on the topic of their choice from the stage during the evening portion of the contest.

If a contestant's speech exceeds 2 minutes, the contestant will be allowed to continue with a live mic and the judges will be notified that the contestant went over time. The judges will not penalize the contestants for going over and will judge them on the quality and content of the speech only. The deduction will be made by the Tallymaster to the final composite speech score as follows:

- Overtime by 1 seconds to 15 seconds No penalty
- Overtime by 16 seconds to 60 seconds 5 points deducted
- Overtime by 61 seconds or more 10 points deducted

The contestants are permitted to have helpers in the audience indicating time markers during the speeches. The judges will not penalize the contestants in any way for making use of timekeepers

Suggested criteria for judging include:

- Does the contestant speak clearly?
- Does the contestant use appropriate gestures and body language that help communicate the message of their speech?
- Is the speech well organized and understandable?
- Does the contestant demonstrate through the speech passion and enthusiasm about the possibility of representing the community as Southwest Person of Leather?

- *Presentation (100 points)*

The presentation category is designed to judge the contestant's ability to speak in a seminar type format on Leather and BDSM. The contestant is required to make a brief (no more than 10 minute) presentation on any topic relating to Leather or BDSM.

The contestant is permitted to use a device to aid them in keeping time during their presentation and will not be penalized in any way for doing so.

The Contestant is permitted to use props or visual aids in their presentation but are not required to do so. The SWPOL Contest will provide a flip chart and markers. The Contestant must provide handouts, props or visual aids, at their expense. Contestants are provided with 5 minutes to set up prior to the start of their presentation.

The Contestant is permitted to use handouts but are not required to do so. If a

contestant chooses to use handouts, it is the responsibility of the contestant to bring enough copies for at least the judges of the Contest. If a contestant chooses to use props or other visual aids, the contestant is responsible for obtaining and bringing those items, including any equipment necessary to present the visual aid such as a projector, screen, etc.

At the end of a contestant's presentation, the contestant will call for questions from the audience and manage the room recognizing audience members to ask their questions. Before beginning the Q&A session, the Contest Director will remind the audience that questions should relate to the topic of a contestant's presentation.

Handlers and support team are not permitted to ask questions.

Judges will not ask questions of the contestant in this judging category unless there are no questions from the audience.

The Contest Director will monitor the question-and-answer time, and their decision on the propriety of a question from the audience or judges is final. The time for questions and answers will not exceed 5 minutes for any contestant.

The purpose of allowing audience questions during the Presentation Category is to allow the judges to evaluate the contestant's ability to think on their feet and respond to the kind of questions likely to be asked of the titleholders when they speak on Leather and BDSM to the community in an educational setting. It is not intended as an opportunity for the audience to "sandbag" any contestant or to attempt to help out one contestant at the expense of another.

If the presentation exceeds 10 minutes, the contestant will be allowed to continue and the tallymasters will be notified that the contestants went over time. The presentation will not be interrupted. The judges will not penalize the contestant for going over and will judge them on the quality and content of the presentation only. The deduction will be made by the Tallymaster to the final composite presentation score as follows:

- Overtime by 1 seconds to 15 seconds No Penalty
- Overtime by 16 seconds to 60 seconds 5 points deducted
- Overtime by 61 seconds or more 10 points deducted

Suggested criteria for judging include:

- Is the presentation organized and understandable?

- Does the contestant speak clearly and use appropriate gestures and body language to communicate their message?
- Does the content of the presentation demonstrate that the contestant has given some thought to the message they are trying to communicate?
- Is the contestant comfortable with answering audience questions, and do they give organized and understandable responses?

The Contestant Presentations are open to all persons attending SWeLL and the SWPOL Contest. However, handlers, support persons, etc. for contestants may only attend their own contestant's presentation.

- *Pop Questions (75 points)*

The Southwest Person of Leather needs to be able to think quickly and answer questions off the cuff, when interacting with other people. Each contestant will draw a pop question, which they must answer during the Saturday night contest. The questions will be written and provided by the producer of the Southwest Person of Leather Contest, with input from the judging panel.

Suggested criteria for judging include:

- Does the contestant speak clearly?
- Does the contestant look comfortable being asked to respond to a question without time to prepare?
- Do the answers given demonstrate a quality or characteristic that would be an asset to the titleholder, such as humor, logical thinking, knowledge in a particular subject area, etc.?

- *Leather Lifestyle (75 points)*

Contestants will be observed by the judges throughout the weekend, both in and out of formal contest events, and will be judged on how they present themselves and interact with the public, how they interact with their fellow contestants, and how they represent themselves as a Person of Leather.

Judging in this category begins Friday evening when the contestants introduce themselves and draw their numbers at the Meet & Greet.

The judging sheet for this category will be turned in at the end of the contest on Saturday night, to be tallied with the scores for the other categories.

Suggested criteria for judging include:

- Does the contestant appear to be comfortable speaking about themselves?
- Does the contestant interact well with the public?
- With the other contestants?
- Does their representation of leather appear to be natural or does it appear to be something created for the contest?