

Griffin Needle Challenge Event Guideline

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Description:

The Griffin Needle Challenge is an overnight sewing competition wherein teams of up to six members attempt to create a full ensemble, from the skin out, including undergarments and accessories. Specific rules regarding patterns, pre-made items, and the use of machines vary by division. The resultant outfits are presented as part of a fashion show at the end, the entries are judged, and winners of each division are announced at the end.

Site requirements:

- Competition Hall
 - This is the hall where all the sewing takes place.
 - Budget at least a 15'x15' space for each team
 - Tables and chairs
 - One or preferably Two 8' tables for each team
 - Six chairs for each team
 - A few additional tables (~5) and chairs (~25) for spectators and for eating away from the competition area
 - Additional tables for serving food, depending on site layout
 - Hard floors are desirable for easy clean-up
 - Evenly distributed power outlets
- Kitchen
 - *Food throughout the night and day is a critical part of the Griffin Needle Challenge.*
 - The requirements of the kitchen will depend in part on the feast steward's menu
 - Coffee pots and hot water pots for tea as well as a water cooler for ice water are obligatory
- Sleeping Room
 - *Some competitors will sleep, others will not. Some will curl up at their team's station, but others prefer a dark room in which to do so.*
 - Room with enough space for at least 15% of the competitors to put down a bedroll at a time.
 - The room should have no windows or have blackout curtains to block sunlight
- Judge's Room
- Ironing Station
- Optional:
 - Royalty Room

Staff Requirements:

- Site Steward
- Set Up Crew
- Gatekeeper

- Judges (including head judge or judging coordinator)
- Food Coordinator
- Kitchen Staff
- Clean Up Coordinator (I cannot stress this strongly enough!)
- Webminister

Practical considerations:

- Take photographs of each room's set-up so it can be properly returned to that state at the end of the event. You will not remember this after 30 hours with no sleep.
- Know location of:
 - Fuse boxes (sewing machines + irons + roasters = potential disaster)
 - Janitorial supplies
 - Paper goods (restroom paper towels, toilet paper)
 - Trash bags, dumpster, recycling facilities
 - Site keys
 - WiFi passwords (if available)
 - Phone number of site contact (for disaster/overnight alarms, etc)
- Judges: Should be people knowledgeable about costuming or an experienced A&S judge. Judges familiar with the time frame/culture of their assigned teams are preferable. At least two judges should be assigned to each team, ideally not more than three teams judged by any specific judge.
- Do not try to jam in more teams than you have space for. Set a maximum and stick to it. If you reliably run out of room, look for a larger site. Too many people in too close of quarters is stressful, particularly as people become more frazzled and tired.
- Designate parking spaces near the door as loading/unloading
- A Clean-up Coordinator is essential. There will be a lot of people waiting and milling about while the judges are deliberating. They can be put to work, but only if there is someone with three brain cells left who is able to tell them what needs to be done. It is ideal for the Clean-up Coordinator to be someone who knows the plan for clean up and arrives before the judging on Saturday but who has NOT been awake the whole event.
- Site fees generally have been higher for competitors and those coming both Friday and Saturday, and a day trip rate for spectators on Saturday only, and an additional fee for the meal plan. (Remember to adjust appropriately to account for the member discount.)
- We host this event in the autumn, September or October, after the busy summer season but before travel gets dicey. This way, people can shop at Pennsic and other major summer events to make their entries that much more fabulous.

Facilities to Have on Hand:

- Cart for loading/unloading (Useful, but optional)
- Ironing board/Iron/Distilled water
- Extension cords and power strips
- First aid kit

Sample Schedule:

Friday:

5:00 PM - Site opens to staff
7:00 PM - Site opens to attendees
9:45 PM - Competition Begins

Saturday:

12:00 AM - Midnight snack
3:00 AM - Snack time
6:00 AM – Breakfast
9:00 AM - Snack time
12:00 PM – Lunch
3:00 PM - Snack time
6:00 PM - Needles down! Competition Ends and Dinner is served
6:30 PM - Fashion show and judging
9:00 PM (approximate) - Judges' Report/Awards
10:00 PM - Site Closes

Meal Plan Notes:

The meal plan should be focused on foods that can be put out for a period of time (about one hour) so people can come by when they reach an appropriate time to pause. Foods should be non-greasy and non-staining. Finger foods that can be popped in the mouth between stitches are ideal. Provide disposable plates and cups for all meals – people will not have time to do dishes and won't want dirty dishes posing a potential tragedy in their sewing space.

Snack ideas: cheese, crackers, ham, turkey, cookies, fresh fruits, fresh vegetables, non-staining dips, unbuttered popcorn, pita bread, hummus, etc.

Meal ideas: build-your-own sandwich bar, yogurt and granola, oatmeal, quiche, salad, roast chicken, etc.

Basic rules:

- ***Goals***
 - To have an amazing time!
 - To create a complete outfit, from the skin out, and so an ideal entry will include undergarments, the outfit, shoes, a hat, and key accessories.

- ***The Team***
 - Teams may consist of as few as one member and as many as six, which may or may not include the model. Anyone who does any work on the project at the competition must be counted as part of the team.

- Laurels in costuming, textile arts, related fields, or "ringers" (i.e. people whose Laurel is in some other field but are known costumers) count as two people on Intermediate, Advanced, and Pyxis teams.
 - Judges and other attendees, including Laurels, may offer teams advice and minor temporary assistance without being counted as part of a team.
- ***The Preparation***
 - Patterns may be pre-drafted (This is a variance from the other similar competitions. After the first year when drafting on site took a lot of time and inaccuracies due to poor fit left people dissatisfied, I decided I preferred a good experience to forcing teams to demonstrate their drafting skills on site.)
 - Fabric should be whole and unmarked at the beginning of the competition. Pre-washing of washable fabrics is **STRONGLY** recommended.
 - As a note – some people have severe allergies to smoke, pet dander, or furs used in the costuming. Ask teams to try to wash materials and then protect them from allergens. Ask entrants if anyone has severe allergies that need to be accommodated.
 - Some documentation is expected at each level, to at least include some information about the choice of garments and materials. Expectations for documentation will vary based on team division.
 - Structured undergarments (corsets, hoop skirts, etc) as well as accessories like socks and gloves may be prepared or purchased in advance.
 - Non-textile accessories and garment components may be made in advance or purchased. Extra points will be given for accessories that were made by a team member rather than purchased.
- ***On Site***
 - Teams should bring all fabrics and materials to site. Once the competition begins, trips to the fabric store for additional materials should be disclosed during judging. You are also allowed to beg or borrow from other teams. (Some similar competitions do not allow begging or shopping trips. Again, in the interests of people enjoying the experience, I allow teams to obtain needed elements.)
 - Teams must bring their own power strip and extension cords.
 - There will be an "ironing station" available with ironing boards and irons. Teams may bring their own iron, but it may not be used anywhere other than at the ironing station. This measure is for safety and power management. (Tired people with hot irons and tippy ironing boards scattered throughout the site? BAD idea. Have a designated space. Teams hate this. Tough.)
 - This event is at least in part a learning experience. Consider bringing business cards with your contact information on them so you may follow up with other teams or judges after the event when you will be better able to retain useful information.
 - Teams will be responsible for cleaning up your work station at the end of the night. They should consider bringing a magnet and broom/dust pan to facilitate clean up.

- ***The Judging***
 - Usually, teams start with a dressed model and then have them strip down to their comfort level to show the layers. Try to get a fully dressed picture of the entrants, including a “Class Photo” before the judging starts.
 - Scoring will be scaled appropriate to the division (i.e. the level of skill required to obtain a 10 in the advanced class is significantly higher than in the novice class).
 - Generally, a 5 on this scale is considered a “good” score – equivalent to a B in school. Excellent work would deserve a 7 and only really truly spectacular entries would deserve a 9 or 10.

Sample Divisions:

Novice

Only basic documentation needed, may use prepared or commercial patterns, no Laurels in costuming, textile arts, or related fields allowed on team.

Intermediate

More complete documentation expected, to include a bibliography, may not use commercial patterns, teams may not include more than two Laurels in any field.

Advanced

Considerable documentation expected, to include a bibliography, may not use commercial patterns, All textile accessories should be made on site.

Pyxis' Pleasure

Northshield has a proud tradition of highly valuing those who make a consistent effort to present a period appearance and has the Order of the Pyxis for the purpose of recognizing those who succeed in that endeavor. In order to encourage such endeavors as part of the Griffin's Needle Challenge, there will be a fourth category which will be judged more strictly, with an expectation of advanced research and/or documentation and with an eye on authenticity in all aspects of the garment and its construction. Baroness Eithni will provide a special prize for entrants into this division.

Extensive documentation expected and sources should be made available on site when possible, period materials and methods used insofar as possible, and the use of modern materials, methods, colors, etc must be explained and adequately justified, absolutely no visible machine stitching on completed garments, with a goal of no machine stitching whatsoever. Should aim to produce a complete outfit, including textile and non-textile accessories as well as key accoutrements, which may be made off-site and in advance, if necessary.

Sample Judge's Scoring Sheet

Team Name	
Entry Level	
Culture and Time Period	
Judge's Name	
Judge's Contact Info	

Category	Score
<p>Documentation <i>Historical information about the garments and accessories, including justification of departures from the norm. (1-10 points)</i></p>	
<p>Materials <i>Use of appropriate materials in the construction of the garments and accessories or justifications of substitutions. (1-10 points)</i></p>	
<p>Methods <i>Use of appropriate techniques in the construction of the garments and accessories or rationale for methods chosen. (1-10 points)</i></p>	
<p>Workmanship <i>The overall quality of the techniques used in construction of both garments and accessories. (1-10 points)</i></p>	

<p>Fit <i>How well the completed garments fit the chosen model. (1-10 points)</i></p>	
<p>Completeness of Outfit <i>The degree that the chosen garments and accessories represent a complete outfit typical of the period and culture. (1-10 points)</i></p>	
<p>Degree of Completion <i>How much of the attempted outfit is completed within the allotted time frame. (1-10 points)</i></p>	
<p>Judge's Discretion <i>Points to be awarded at the judge's discretion for exceptional work and general "wow!" factor of the entry. These "bonus points" are on a 0-5 scale and are for work above and beyond expectation in some manner.</i></p>	

Categories 1-7 are judged on a ten point scale where:

- 1 = No or minimal work
- 3 = Needs work
- 5 = Meets expectations
- 7 = Above Average
- 9 = Excellent
- 10 = Masterwork level

