AFMS Webmasters Contest 2009 Score Sheet Guidelines

The club Web site serves several functions. Three of the major functions of the Web site are:
(1) Attract new members
(2) Information for members
(3) Public advertising of club activities such as shows

Therefore most of the items in this contest are emphasizing these items. ***This contest attempts to determine the effectiveness of the club's Web site in providing information for these goals, not to determine the quality or capabilities of the club.*** An effective Web site can be created without requiring weekly or even monthly updates. However, a Web site that is updated frequently might score more points in the Outstanding Features category. This contest does not demand that Web sites be formatted to a specific format or template, but it tries to give as much freedom as possible for freedom of expression. Hopefully in the future as we share more information, we will learn how and why some things work better for some Web sites, and we will learn from the trials of our fellow clubs. The Internet is constantly evolving, and the contest is not intended to limit this process.

These guidelines attempt to give a better explanation of each item being judged. The guidelines should also give the judges better uniformity as they score the Web sites.

The following prerequisite items should always be present in a truly functional Web site. Therefore if any of the items are missing, there is a heavy penalty for their absence. No points are added to the total score for their presence in this section.

1. **Prerequisites on Home Page**
   A. **Club Name**
      The club's name should be displayed prominently on the home page.
   B. **Club City and State**
      The city and state of the club should be obvious to visitors. Simply listing the city or regional description for the location of the club without also identifying the state is not acceptable. The country might also be listed, but that is not a requirement.
2. **Prerequisites on the Home Page, Contact, About or similar page**
   A. **Contact information of at least an e-mail address plus a telephone number or mailing address**
      Contact information so people may contact the club is essential. If the information is not on the Home Page, then it should be on a page easily accessed from the Home Page such a Contact Us, About page, or something similar. There should be at least one e-mail address available plus either a telephone number or mailing address for those who do not have Internet access. The person desiring to contact the club may not have personal Internet or e-mail capability, so they need a way to contact the club. These requirements should be easy to fulfill and yet allow club members to maintain their privacy.

The following remaining items award points for their presence. The Score Sheet lists the maximum possible points for each item. A good Web site should be awarded most of the maximum possible points. A few items require a judgment to determine the actual points awarded, and this may have a huge determination on which sites receive the most points. In some cases, partial points may be used when necessary. The score sheet has a field for any point deductions. The listed items should be found in reasonable areas of the Web site. Listed items that are found only in newsletters or similar types of articles are not considered to be in a valid location for the information; therefore these locations do not count as having the information on the Web site.

3. **Regional Federation Information**
   A. **Affiliation Mentioned**
      Mentioning the club's affiliation with the Federations not only builds the Federations but also provides visitors with some basic information about the club.
   B. **Regional Federation Name Listed**
      The full name of the Federation should be listed rather than just listing an acronym or abbreviated name; for instance SFMS and Eastern Federation are not acceptable. Visitors may have no knowledge of the Federations.
   C. **Regional Federation Logo**
      Federation logos are readily available, and their use provides visual name recognition.

D. Regional Federation Link

A link to the regional Federation should be included, and it should function. Links are an important part of building a Web site's ranking with the search engines.

4. American Federation Information

The guidelines for the American Federation information are the same as for the *Regional Federation Information—A. through D*.

5. Vital Information

A. Club Mission or purpose statement

This information helps visitors learn quickly what the club is about. Even though not required, this usually includes information such as not-for-profit status, educational organization, areas of interest, etc.

B. Regular meeting(s) date, time, and location

A specific date is not required as long as it is clear on which day of the month the club meets. The location should be a specific address which includes the city and state. If the meeting is in some facility such as a school, directions to the meeting room should be provided. A map and pictures are a big plus, but no points should be deducted if they are not included. If not all the meeting information (date, time, location) is provided, then a visitor will be unable to attend the meeting without getting the information from other sources. Therefore no points should be awarded. Small points could be subtracted if obvious information such as meeting room is not given in obvious situations where it would be needed (schools, etc). Points may be also subtracted for information that is not clear or is incomplete.

C. Statement concerning whether visitors are welcome at meetings

Even though most if not all of our clubs encourage visitors to attend meetings, some may not operate this way. Therefore it should be stated that visitors are welcome at the meetings. If visitors are not welcome, then it should be obvious to the potential visitor that nonmembers are not allowed. The Contest Entry Form can be referenced to determine whether visitors are allowed at the club's meetings.

D. Youth programs, or participation

Most if not all of our clubs encourage youth to attend meetings. It is also possible that the club has activities designed just for kids. The goal of this item is to allow visitors to easily determine whether children can participate in club activities but not to determine the quality or quantity of these programs.

E. Webmaster contact information (Including functional e-mailing capability)

Web site users need to be able to contact the webmaster for any concerns about the Web site. An e-mail address or a submit form (i.e. Web page where the information is typed on the page and then submitted by pressing a button on the page) is the most desirable medium for this type of contact. An e-mail address does not need to be in the form of a working link. With all the problems of spider programs harvesting e-mail address from Web sites, it is perfectly fine to defeat these spiders through various means as long as the e-mail address can be easily determined or contact via a submit form is available. Contacting the webmaster should be tested. Deduct 1 point if a response is not received by 10 days. No points should be awarded if the contact is not functional (the e-mail bounces, or there is no response after 2 weeks).

F. Working e-mail to main club contact with reasonable response time

There normally should be a contact for club information. If there is no specific contact listed for the club information, then use the following list in order for a contact: President, Vice President(s), Editor, Past President, Secretary, Treasurer, Webmaster, others. The main contact for club information should normally be fairly responsive. Since it is not normally the job of the officers to answer club questions from the Web site, it is recommended to try two different people. Deduct 1 point if there is no response from either within 5 days. Deduct 3 points if there is no response within 10 days. No points should be awarded if the contacts are not functional (the e-mail bounces or no response after two weeks)

G. Show information completeness (No deductions if No Show specified on the application)

Show information should include location, dates, times, and entrance fees. The show location must include a city and state (deduct a total of 2 points if either is missing). The show listing should be for a future show unless the last show was within the past 3 months. This is advertising for the show, and it should include all the vital information for the announcement in a presentable form. Normally it is a Web page dedicated to the show, a dedicated section of the home page, a downloadable show flyer, or similar.

6. Membership

A. Membership application

A membership application form should be available. Complete costs and a full mailing address should be included on the form. If information is provided to apply for membership but there is no application form, allow a maximum of 50% of the available points.

B. **Membership benefits**

The Web site should list the benefits provided to its membership. This can take many forms and is limited by what the club can provide. Points are based upon the information provided, not on the quality or number of benefits available to members.

C. **Information for Members (shop information, newsletters, etc)**

In many cases, information can be considered information for visitors such as meeting dates and times. This item gives a range of freedom for the information actually provided. For instance, many clubs prohibit publication of newsletters, recent newsletters, field trip locations, etc. Some clubs might provide a private section on the Web site for members only or another site such as Yahoo Groups for members only. The goal of this item is that there should be a reason why members would visit the Web site. Some examples include newsletters, shop information, constitution and bylaws, board and committee listing, a members only section or site, library listing, ordering of club materials such as vests, name badges, etc.

D. **Community Service (presentations, demonstrations, scouts, scholarships, donations, etc.)**

Most if not all clubs are Not-For-Profit organizations or educational organizations (or both), and they should illustrate this by providing examples of their community services. This could be an extensive amount of information, or it might simply be a line or two on the home page.

7. **Functionality**

A. **Web site menu links function properly**

There should be some type of menu system to navigate between pages on the Web site. Navigating the Web site should not end up at a dead end with no navigation to other pages unless it is a PDF document or similar. All links to other pages on the club's Web site should function.

B. **Ease of navigating Web site**

How to navigate the Web site should be relatively obvious. Finding most of the information required for this contest also should be relatively obvious. Navigation should allow the visitors to navigate back to the home page in a reasonable manner.

C. **Loading speed of Home Page**

The home page of the Web site is normally the front door to visitors of the Web site. Many people now have high speed Internet access, but the Web site should not demand high speed Internet access for a reasonable home page load time. Some sites may use an introductory page in addition to a home page. The introductory page should not be used for this evaluation. Use the amount of data downloaded to determine the relative load speed of the home page. There is balance between download size and content. In some cases, point deductions for a large download size may gain extra points in other categories. The following Web site could be used to determine the amount of data downloaded:

> http://www.Websiteoptimization.com/services/analyze/

Recommended Point Deductions:

> Download bytes < 150 k – 0 points deducted.
> Download bytes 150 k to 400 k – 1 point deducted
> Download bytes > 400 k – 2 points deducted

D. **Links to relevant Web sites**

The Internet is a mesh of Web sites interlinked via links. There should be at least a limited number of links to external relevant Web sites. These links might be distributed throughout the site on pages that have information that relate to the link, or the links might be a list of links on a links page or similar.

E. **Links to club Web site from other relevant Web sites**

The ability of visitors to find a club's Web site may be dependent upon functional external links to the club's Web site. Only a little work is necessary to get links established, and it is the responsibility of the club to establish these links. It is acceptable for the link to have only the URL listed rather than a functional link since the publishing of the link is provided by others. A new Web site, or a Web site that changes its URL may have some difficulties obtaining the maximum number of points—unfortunately, that is the nature of this item. This item is also limited by the ability of the judge to locate external links to the Web site. The ability of the judges to find the links is part of the grading process. Therefore difficult-to-find links may not be given credit. The following is a suggested grading scale:

1 point – A link to the club exists on the AFMS Web site on page http://www.amfed.org/club.htm
1 point – A link to the club exists on the club's Regional Federation Web site.
1 point – 1 link exists on other similar external Web sites (excluding the club's and Federation Web sites).
1 point – Links exist on at least 3 other external similar Web sites (excluding the club's and Federation Web sites). Multiple links on one Web site count as only 1 link. These links should be on relevant Web sites, not on a link exchange Web site, on blogs, etc.

How to determine links to a Web site:
It is suggested that Google and Yahoo search engines be used to locate external links to the club's Web site. Enter the Web site URL in Google's Search as shown below. Leaving off the www portion of the URL may give better results.

amfed.org	Search

Yahoo's Site Explorer also provides a good tool for determining links to a Web site: http://siteexplorer.search.yahoo.com/

F. **Relevant links from an external Web site to the club Web site should not be a dead end page**
The visitor should have obvious ways to navigate the Web site. Documents such as a PDF file or an image file are not included in this requirement.

8. **Completeness and quality**
   A. **Telephone numbers include area codes**
   The Web site is on the World Wide Web, and the telephone number should at least include the area code. There is no penalty for omitting the country code.
   B. **Information on the main pages appear up-to-date**
   Including historical information is perfectly valid, but if the information is presented as current data, it should appear to be current data. For example, a listing of offices should be for the current time period. A show page should be for the upcoming show if it has been more than three months since the last show. There is a certain period of time required to change advertising from one year's show to the next, and three months should be more than enough time to make this change. Another example would be a listing of the next month's meeting agenda, not a listing for a meeting that has already happened. If the webmaster is updating the Web site often enough for this type of announcement, it should not be out of date. Again, a reasonable turnaround time is required for updating this information, and it should be updated within one week of the information becoming outdated. The maximum deduction should only be deducted for serious issues. Similar judging criteria should be used for other information on the Web site.
   C. **Use of club logo**
   The club logo should be displayed on the Web site. The logo is normally displayed on the home page, but that is not required. The logo at least should be on a prominent page.
   D. **Common information on pages (Club Name, URL, etc.)**
   Some types of identifying information should be available on all normal Web pages to identify the origin of the page. This could be the club logo, club name, URL, etc. Note: Many other items such as last updated, copyright, contact information, etc. are often also included on all pages, but these are not included in the judging.
   E. **Appropriate use of links**
   Links on the Web pages should be relevant. Links should not be obvious link swaps with unrelated sites. Unless the page is a designated link page, a page full of link banners is also considered inappropriate.
   F. **No apparent copyright violations**
   Copyright violations can be very difficult to determine, so this item will be limited by the judge being able to make this determination. The key word in this item is **apparent**, so the judge is able use this deduction if something obvious is observed.
   G. **Readability (including font size and contrast of the text with its background)**
   Text should be able to be read by the average person. Very low contrast between the text and its background, or bold and poor backgrounds generate common readability problems.
   H. **Good use of graphics (including size)**
   Graphics can add more visual appeal to Web pages. The overuse of graphics not only causes visual issues, but their size can cause slowly loading pages. In general, most images should be less than 50 k. Very large images observed on Web pages may be considered an inappropriate use if the image size obviously should be reduced.

Deductions for this item should be limited to obvious problems. Note: Resolutions greater than 72 DPI are not rendered in the Web browser, and higher resolutions can cause excessively large file sizes.

I. Limited or no commercial advertising

Commercial advertising should be limited. Deductions for this item should be limited to obvious problems.

J. Information fulfills needs of Web site visitors

This is a very broad item. Information on the Web site should be of interest to visitors. This could include meeting information, local points of interest related to club activities, newsletters, articles of interest, etc. The judge should consider the question, "Would a visitor find anything of interest on the Web site?"

K. Overall appearances and attractiveness

This is a highly judgmental item. Remember that this item is judged as a deduction, so there should be a lot of freedom in the design of the Web site.

L. Lack of other obvious problems (specify)

Other Web site problems not covered by the judged items should have points deducted. If there are any such deductions, the reason for the deduction should be described.

M. Outstanding features (specify)

This item gives the opportunity for truly outstanding Web sites to rank above other Web sites that only meet the stated requirements. The baseline for this item should be 0 points (5 points deducted), and points should be awarded for outstanding features of the Web site. Few if any of the Web sites should be awarded the maximum points for this item. Any points awarded for this item should include a description of why the points were awarded.