# 2025 Veterans

# Competition Handbook

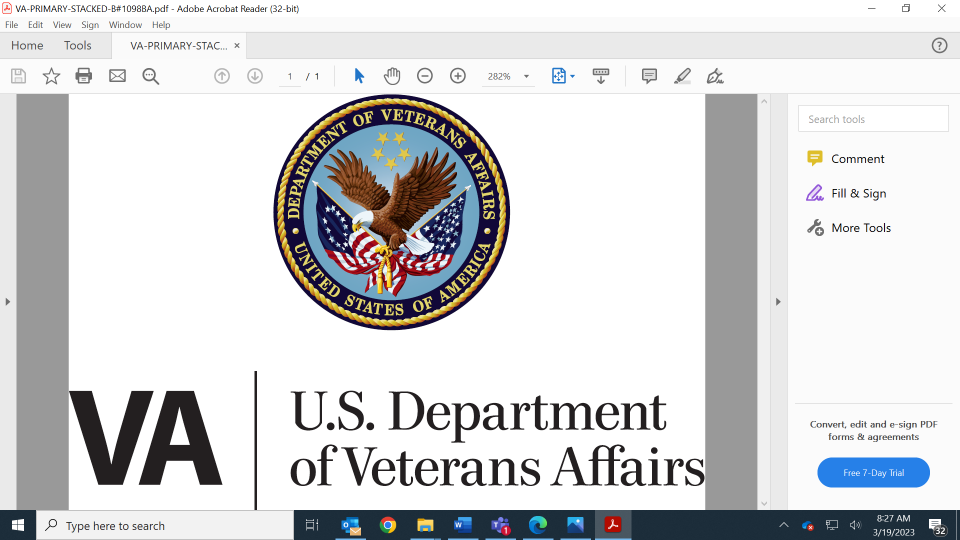
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Table of Contents

National Rules 3-4

Show and Tell Artistic Showcase – New for 2025! 5

**Art Division**

Art Division Rules and Categories 6-16

Entry Submission Information 17

Tips for Taking Better Art Images 18

Judging Criteria & Results Information 19

Entry Forms 20-21

**Creative Writing Division**

Creative Writing Division Rules and Categories 22-24

Entry Submission Information 25

Judging Criteria & Results Information 26

Entry Form 27

**Dance Division**

Dance Division Rules and Categories 28-30

Tips for Taking Better Videos 31

Entry Submission Information 31

Judging Criteria & Results Information 32

Entry Form 33

**Drama Division**

Drama Division Rules and Categories 34-36

Tips for Taking Better Videos 37

Entry Submission Information 37

Judging Criteria & Results Information 38

Entry Form 39

**Music Division**

Music Division Rules and Categories 40-46

Tips for Taking Better Videos 47

Entry Submission Information 47

Judging Criteria & Results Information 48

Entry Form 49

National Rules

1. **ELIGIBILITY:**  Veterans must be eligible for VA health care and enrolled in the VA health care system **PRIOR** to entering the competition. Veterans with a dishonorably discharged status and/or humanitarian status may not participate in the competition.
2. Veterans must work with a VA staff person to submit their entries into the competition. The Veteran may work with the facility where they enrolled for care, are currently receiving care, or closest VA holding a local competition to their current residence.
3. **Veterans may only submit one entry per category.** A Veteran may not have more than one entry in a category moving forward to the national level of the competition.
4. A single entry may not be submitted into two or more categories within the same division. It is acceptable however for an entry to be submitted into multiple divisions if the category definition rules are followed for each division.
5. Veterans may not expand the number of their entries in any one division using a different name (for example: pen names, stage names, different artist names, etc.).
6. Veterans are only permitted to enter through one VA facility competition each year. They may submit an entry in art, creative writing, dance, drama or music categories with a Veteran or group from another VA facility however the group entry may only represent one VA facility’s competition each year.
7. Entries into the competition must be created solely by the Veteran(s). Submissions created with artificial intelligence, including ChatGPT, will not be accepted in the competition.
8. The entry forms in this handbook should be used to gather the necessary information for each entry. Staff should retain the entry forms and the necessary consent forms for reference and verification purposes as needed. Each division has entry forms that are specific for their division.
9. A 10-3203 form (Consent for Production and Use of Verbal or Written Statements, Photographs, Digital Images, and/or Video or Audio Recordings by VA) must be completed and signed by every Veteran entering the local and national level of competition. These forms should not be sent to the Arts4Vets app. VA staff contact persons should safeguard the signed consent forms at their VA facility.
10. Veterans may submit entries in up to three different art categories and one group category in the art division. A Veteran may submit entries in up to three creative writing categories and one group entry in the special recognition category of the creative writing division. A Veteran may submit entries in up to three solo categories and three group categories in the dance, drama, and music divisions.

National Rules (continued)

1. VA facilities may submit their top three finalists in each category to the national level of the competition no later than October 1, 2025. All eligible Veterans should be given the opportunity to participate regardless of degree of talent.
2. Veterans who have received a gold medal in the same category from any of the 5 divisions (art, creative writing, dance, drama, and music) for two consecutive years must enter a different category the third year. Failure to comply with this rule will result in the entry being disqualified.
3. Veterans may not enter the same art, creative writing, dance, drama and music entry again after it has won first-place nationally. Failure to comply with this rule will result in the entry being disqualified.
4. Veterans in national first, second and third place groups of up to five in art, creative writing, dance, drama and music will each be presented a medal. Groups of six or more will be presented a medal if possible or will be provided an award certificate. Non-Veterans and Veterans serving as accompanists, or dance partners, or dramatic readers that enhance an entry will not receive medals or certificates.
5. The VA’s Office of National Veterans Sports Programs & Special Events is committed to providing the best possible care to Veterans. Information collected through participation in the competition helps the office better understand and serve Veteran needs throughout the competition and Festival planning processes. Only information provided by the Veteran is collected. Please take a moment to review the VA Privacy, policies and legal information webpage. <https://www.va.gov/privacy-policy/>
6. Results of the national competition will be sent via E-mail to VA staff contact persons in January. They will be posted to the [www.creativeartsfestival.va.gov](http://www.creativeartsfestival.va.gov) website in February.National **f**irst-place winningVeterans invited to attend the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival will be notified by their VA local staff contact person.
7. Funding support and arrangements for travel to and from the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival for Veterans invited to attend is the responsibility of the Veteran and/or local VA facility.

**PRE-DECISIONAL** - Lodging, meals and ground transportation during the Festival **may** **be** provided through national Festival funds. These expenses may be provided for up to 5 Veterans in any group entry.

1. Veterans who are actively enrolled in the VA health care system and live abroad who win first place at the national level will be required to fund their own travel expenses to/from the Festival location.

Show and Tell Artistic Showcase – New for 2025!

**The Show and Tell Artistic Showcase IS NOT a juried category in the competition.**

**2025 Artistic Showcase Word:**  **JOY**

**SHOW** **US** and **TELL** **US** how engaging in the creative arts brings you **JOY**. Sharing what brings you joy may inspire others to experience joy as well.

This intent of the showcase is to show the therapeutic value of the creative arts and how engaging in the arts is therapeutic to Veteran health and wellbeing.

Veterans participating in the Show and Tell Artistic Showcase ***will not*** receive an invitation to attend the Festival.  Submissions ***will not*** be shipped/sent to the Festival.

Submissions that meet the requirements ***may be*** selected for inclusion in an electronic booklet to be posted on the [www.creativeartsfestival.va.gov](http://www.creativeartsfestival.va.gov) website by April, 2026. (For copyright reasons, it should be expected that only excerpts of creative writing pieces and still images of performance entries will be shown in the booklet. Not all write-ups will be included.)

**SHOW US** what **JOY** means to you **AND** **TELL** **US** how your artistic piece brings you joy.

**Submission Requirements:**

* All entries must be created and completed by Veterans eligible to participate in the 2025 National Veterans Creative Arts (NVCA) Competition. Veterans must be eligible for VA health care andenrolled in the VA health care system PRIOR to entering the 2025 NVCA competition.
* Each entry MUST contain a write-up from the Veteran (25-250 words max) describing what Joy means to them. **Submissions sent without a write-up will not be considered for inclusion in the electronic booklet.**
* May be submitted as an individual/solo or group/ensemble.
* **Veterans may only submit/be a part of one entry in the Show and Tell Artistic Showcase.**
* May contain a combination of creative art forms.
* Entries must be submitted as:
  + Visual Art – JPEG files only
  + Creative Writing - Word documents only (No longer than 1,000 words)
  + Dance/Drama/Music - MP4 or MOV files, or YouTube links (Length of video: approximately 3 minutes or less)
* Show and Tell submissions do not count towards Veteran(s) max. entry competition requirements per division.
* Submit entries and write-ups here: [2025 Show and Tell Entry Link](https://veteransaffairs.ent.box.com/f/2b66a06d4cdf4423b17111ad5464e006)

Art Division Rules

**Veterans should communicate with their local VA facility (as early as January 2025) to find out their local competition deadline date.**

The Art Division rules apply to ALL Visual Art categories, unless noted in a category description.

1. Failure to comply with the Art Division rules and category descriptions may result in the entry being moved to a more appropriate category or the entry being disqualified.
2. All art entries must be created solely by the Veteran and/or Veterans submitting the art entry. Submissions created with artificial intelligence, including ChatGPT, will not be accepted in the competition.
3. All artwork entered (except for the Military Combat Experience) must have been **completed/photographed after October 1, 2024**. Artwork submitted in a prior year in any form of completion may not be entered again.
4. **All visual art entries must be made by hand.** CNC machines, laser engravers and 3D printing are not allowed.
5. No one Veteran will be allowed to enter more than three art categories and one group category in the art division. **Veterans may only submit one entry per category.**
6. A Veteran may not have more than one entry in a category moving forward to the national level of the competition. The same entry may not be entered into two different categories.
7. Veterans who have received a gold medal in the same category for two consecutive years must enter a different category the third year.
8. **File Size/Image Format -** For more detailed information see Art Division-Entry Submission Information (following the Art Division categories pages).

* **File Size:** Optimal image file size is 1 MB or greater but no larger than 10 MB.
* **Image Format Required:** JPG/JPEG

1. GUNS, BLADES, KNIVES or other WEAPONS **will not** be accepted due to VA regulations banning these items from VA facilities.
2. Chess sets, dipped art, and jigsaw puzzles **will not** be accepted.
3. Reproductions of any artist’s original two-dimensional artwork, photographs, or computer-generated art (including inkjet, Giclee and other types of reproduction methods) will not be accepted. The use of Giclee is only acceptable in the following categories: Black and White Photography, Color Photography and Digital Art.
4. Entries that are misplaced in a category may be moved during the national review and judging process. If the Veteran already has an entry in the category it is moving to or the facility already has three entries in that category, the entry being moved will be disqualified.
5. If an entry contains a craft kit, it must go into a craft kit category. All materials needed to complete the project are supplied in the kit. Embellishments may be made to the assembled kit using non-kit items. Entries containing more than one kit will be disqualified (except for the Combined Kit Category).
6. Entries that include personal collections such as spoons, medals, or coins (where the content of the entry is not created by the Veteran) will not be accepted.
7. Sets may contain **no more than three** **pieces, even when arranged into one frame**. The pieces must relate to one another in an obvious way for the judges to classify as a set.

**Additional clarification of sets:**

* **No sets are allowed in the kit categories**, unless a single kit contains a set such as a set of suncatcher Christmas ornaments in which case, **no more than three pieces** may be submitted for judging.
* Examples of two-dimensional sets are diptychs, triptychs, or series—no more than three separate pieces of artwork that are clearly intended to be displayed together as ONE PIECE with equal size and framing. Imagery/content must relate to each other in a clear and obvious way.
* Three-dimensional sets must relate to each other in a clear and obvious way and may contain no more than three pieces.

1. **Artwork Size Restrictions**

For an entry to move on to the national level of the competition, it must be able to fit into **one box**. The art piece, including the box can be up to 150 lbs., up to 165 inches in length and girth combined. Length cannot exceed 108 inches.

To measure packages, use the following formula: **length + 2x width + 2x height.**

**Entries that exceed the weight and measurements indicated above may not compete at the national level of the competition.**

**Step 1** Determine Length - Measure the longest side of the package, rounding to the nearest inch. This is your length.

**Step 2** Determine Girth (2x Width + 2x Height) - Measure the width of the package, rounding to the nearest inch. Multiply this number by 2. Measure the height of the package, rounding to the nearest inch. Multiply this number by 2. Add these two numbers together. This is your girth.

**Step 3** Add the length and the girth together. This is your package measurement.

1. Veterans who are invited to the Festival and accept the invitation to attend must commit to participating fully in the Festival week to the best of their ability. The Festival week is structured with daily workshops, seminars, rehearsals and exhibitions. Veterans should not view their attendance at the Festival as a vacation experience. Attendance and participation are required at all scheduled events.

NEW – Art Division Category List

There are changes to categories in the Art Division. Please read the definitions carefully.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **GROUP A** | |
| **Cat. #** | **Category Name** |
| 1 | Acrylic Painting |
| 2 | Oil Painting |
| 3 | Watercolor |
| 4 | Pastels |
| 5 | Monochromatic Drawing |
| 6 | Colored Drawing |
| 7 | Craft Coloring Kit |
| 8 | Color by Number Kit |
| 9 | Suncatcher or  Sand Art Kit |
| 10 | Black & White Photography |
| 11 | Color Photography |
| 12 | Digital Art |
| 13 | Pyrography |
| 14 | Transfer/Engraving Art Kit |
| 15 | Printmaking |
| 16 | Collage |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **GROUP B** | |
| **Cat. #** | **Category Name** |
| 17 | Assemblage |
| 18 | Diorama |
| 19 | Combined Kit |
| 20 | Mixed Media |
| 21 | Sculpture |
| 22 | Pottery |
| 23 | Slip-Cast Ceramics |
| 24 | Stained or Painted Figurines |
| 25 | Figurine Painting Kit |
| 26 | Scroll Saw/Fretwork |
| 27 | Carving |
| 28 | Woodworking/Lathe Work |
| 29 | Wood Building Kit |
| 30 | Model Building Kit |

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| --- | --- |
| **GROUP C** | |
| **Cat. #** | **Category Name** |
| 31 | Metalwork |
| 32 | Jewelry (not beads) |
| 33 | Beadwork |
| 34 | Glasswork |
| 35 | Mosaic |
| 36 | Mosaic Kit |
| 37 | Crocheting/Knitting/Knotting |
| 38 | Fiber Arts Original Design |
| 39 | Fiber Arts Pattern |
| 40 | Fiber Arts Kit |
| 41 | Needlework Original Design |
| 42 | Needlework Pattern |
| 43 | Needlework Kit |
| 44 | Leather Kit |
| 45 | Leather Carving/Tooling/Stamping |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **GROUP D** | |
| **Cat. #** | **Category Name** |
| 46 | Physical Health Recovery |
| 47 | Mental Health Recovery |
| 48 | Combat Experience |
| 49 | Group Art |

Group A – Categories 1-16

1. **Acrylic Painting** - The creation of original work by applying acrylic paint to a surface. The surface is not limited to canvas; paint can be applied to wood, plaster, leather, metal, glass, etc. See Mixed Media Note.
2. **Oil Painting** - The creation of original work by applying oil paint, oil sticks, or oil pastels to a surface. The surface is not limited to canvas; paint can be applied to wood, plaster, leather, metal, etc. Encaustic painting should be entered into this category. See Mixed Media Note.
3. **Watercolor** - The creation of work using pan or liquid watercolor paint or watercolor pencils. Undiluted watercolor pencils should be entered into the appropriate drawing category. The surface is not limited to canvas; paint can be applied to wood, plaster, leather, metal, etc. See Mixed Media Note.
4. **Pastels** - An art medium consisting of pure powder pigment and a binder. It can exist in a variety of forms, including a stick, a square, a pebble, and a pan of color, among other forms. A pastel painting consists of color applied in masses rather than lines. Line drawings should be entered into the appropriate drawing category. Oil pastels should be entered into the Oil Painting category. See Mixed Media Note.
5. **Monochromatic Drawing** - An original monochromatic drawing that consists of lines containing or using a **single color** and shades of that color. **Any** use of additional color should be entered into Colored Drawing. Drawings may be done using pencil, ink, charcoal, etc.
6. **Colored Drawing** - An original-colored drawing that consists of lines of two or more colors and may be done using colored pencils, markers, etc.
7. **Craft Coloring Kit** - A pre-printed design on fabric, paper, wood, canvas, rugs, etc., that the Veteran fills in with colors of their choice using colored pencils, markers, paint, etc.
8. **Color by Number Kit** - A pre-printed design on fabric, paper, wood, canvas, rugs, etc., that comes with instructions on where to apply colors. This involves applying paints, colored pencils, markers, etc., to the outlined numbered areas.
9. **Suncatcher or Sand Art Kit** - Suncatchers involve the application of transparent glass stains or paint on a pre-formed and outlined transparent shape. Sand art involves colored sand applied to pre-shaped areas.
10. **Black & White Photography** - An original monochromatic photograph using black and white and varying shades of grey. Sepia tones, cyanotype or other tonal prints are also entered into this category. Photographs can be printed on any surface but **must be mounted and/or framed and ready to hang for display.** This category includes both film and digital forms of photography. Photographs can be edited using apps.
11. **Color Photography** - An original color photograph. Entries can be printed on any surface but **must be mounted and/or framed and ready to hang for display**. This category includes both film and digital forms of photography. Photographs can be edited using apps.
12. **Digital Art** - Original 2D art that was created entirely through software or applications using digital technology. All original entries must be printed, mounted, and framed to qualify for this competition.

* Digitally enhanced/edited photography should be entered into the appropriate photography categories. Digital photo collages should be entered into the Collage Category.
* 3D printed artwork, animation, and videos are not accepted.
* Entries without detailed information listed in the **"mediums/techniques used" and software** sections will be disqualified.

1. **Pyrography** - An original design burned into a surface by using hand-held wood burning tools. This process is typically done on wood but can also be done on leather and other surfaces. Reference images must be original to the Veteran. Any sourced designs (including photo reference not original to the Veteran) must be entered in Transfer/Engraving Kit.

ALL PIECES MUST BE MADE BY HAND: CNC MACHINES, LASER ENGRAVERS AND 3D PRINTING ARE NOT ALLOWED.

1. **Transfer/Engraving Art Kit** - Entries include copper tooling kits, foil scratch art kits, wood burning kits or incising sourced images/patterns onto a surface. Techniques include rubbing, scratching, burnishing, cutting and/or burning.

ALL PIECES MUST BE MADE BY HAND: CNC MACHINES, LASER ENGRAVERS AND 3D PRINTING ARE NOT ALLOWED.

1. **Printmaking** - Printmaking is the process in which a print is made by any method involving transfer from one surface to another. It consists of an original print or proof from a master plate created by the Veteran through such processes as aquatint, drypoint, lithography, engraving, etching, Intaglio, monoprint, screenprint, woodcut, etc. Computer graphics must be entered into Digital Art category.
2. **Collage** - A 2D (flat) work of art that may include newspaper clippings, ribbons, bits of colored or hand-made papers, portions of other artwork, photographs, etc., glued to a surface. Digital collages are accepted in this category. **3D pieces that extend noticeably beyond the flat surface of the wall should go into assemblage or mixed media depending upon techniques used.** Scrapbooks are not allowed.

Group B – Categories 17-30

1. **Assemblage** - A 3D work of art **(that extends noticeably beyond the flat surface of the wall)** made from combinations of found or purchased objects. Personal collections alone (for example: coin collections, medal collections, etc.) will not be accepted. 3D scenes should be entered into Diorama Category
2. **Diorama** - A 3D art piece that depicts a scene or an event. Kits can be entered in this category. National winning entry will not be shipped to the Festival. National first place winning entry will be displayed via a poster board.
3. **Combined Kit** - The integration of two or more distinctly different kits to create a single work of art that is completely different from the original kits. For example, combined vehicle kits that create another vehicle will not be accepted. 3D scenes should be entered into Diorama Category. A collection of model cars or ornaments, etc. will not be accepted.
4. **Mixed Media** - The use of **two or more** **equally distinct** **categories** in the creation of a single piece of art. They are made up of **equal parts of all techniques used** and must be visually seen on the final product. When additional techniques serve as embellishments (make up less than equal parts of the finished piece) the entry should be submitted into the category where most of the visible technique is seen on the final product.

The entire Mixed Media entry must be the Veteran’s original design. Kits are not allowed. Any parts of a kit, pre-made patterns, coloring pages, etc. are not accepted in Mixed Media.

Entries in this category must include a description detailing the mediums and categories/techniques used.

**Category/Technique combinations that CANNOT be entered into Mixed Media:**

* Acrylic Painting, Oil Painting, Watercolor Painting and Pastel Paintings (Paintings that incorporate different media should be entered into the category that the finished product looks most like.)
* Photography and Digital Art
* Collage and Assemblage
* Assemblage and Diorama
* Crochet/Knitting/Knotting and Fiber Arts
* Beadwork and Jewelry
* Scrollsaw/Fretwork and Carving

A Veteran may choose to enter a Mixed Media piece into either acceptable category; however, the piece will only be judged on the category where it is submitted. (For example: A carving with painting may be placed into carving, however, only the carving will be judged with the painting serving as an embellishment, adding to the total presentation score.)

1. **Sculpture** - Pieces created by shaping, combining, modeling, or casting materials such as plastic, clay, textiles, wax or polymers into a work of art. They may be free standing or relief. Note: Slip-cast clay should be entered into the slip-cast category. Carved sculptures should be entered into the Carving category, metal sculptures should be entered into the Metalwork category, and glass sculptures should be entered in the Glasswork category.
2. **Pottery** - A functional piece of fired ceramic ware (bowl, vase, pot, etc.) created solely by the veteran. The form must be wheel-thrown or hand-built, not slip cast in a mold. Poured ceramics belong in Slip-Cast ceramics categories. Sculptural clay pieces should be entered into the Sculpture category. Porcelain is included in this category.
3. **Slip-Cast Ceramics -** Clay pieces formed by Veteran pouring slip into mold, then fired, glazed, painted and/or stained. Note: Entries that contain premade bisque pieces that are stained, glazed, or painted are to be entered into the painted ceramic category.
4. **Stained, Glazed, or Painted Ceramics/Figurines** - Pre-made 3 dimensional figurines (ceramic, plaster, plastic, metal, wood, etc.) stained, glazed, or painted by the Veteran and did not come with diagrams or instructions. Judging is based solely on application of color.
5. **Figurine Painting Kit** - Pre-made 3 dimensional figurines (ceramic, plaster, plastic, metal, wood, etc.) stained or painted by the Veteran by following a diagram and/or instructions included in the kit.
6. **Scroll Saw/Fretwork** - Decorative open patterns cut out of wood or metal using a scroll saw and/or files. Wood intarsia and marquetry are now included in this category.

ALL PIECES MUST BE MADE BY HAND: CNC MACHINES, LASER ENGRAVERS AND 3D PRINTING ARE NOT ALLOWED.

1. **Carving** - Carving is a handheld technique that involves shaping a solid material into a desired form by removing pieces from it. Lathework should be entered into Woodworking Category, regardless of materials used. Carved pieces that are embellished with paint or other materials will be judged on the quality of the carving only. Submit artwork in which embellishment is 50% or more of the design into the Mixed Media Category.

ALL PIECES MUST BE MADE BY HAND: CNC MACHINES, LASER ENGRAVERS AND 3D PRINTING ARE NOT ALLOWED.

1. **Woodworking/Lathework** - Pieces constructed of wood that have a functional/useful purpose, such as a jewelry box, a clock, etc. Decorative items should be entered into Sculpture. Carved items should be entered into the Carving Category. Pieces that come with all materials including instructions should be entered into the kit category. ALL lathe work or wood turning is included in this category, regardless of materials turned.

ALL PIECES MUST BE MADE BY HAND: CNC MACHINE AND/OR LASER PRINTER ARE NOT ALLOWED

1. **Wood Building Kit***-* A kit made of wood that comes with all materials including instructions; can be decorative or functional. Pen kits that involve wood turning should be entered into Woodworking/Lathe Work Category. Wood kits that are a scaled replica of a real-life object (models) should be entered into the MODEL KIT Category.
2. **Model Building Kit** - Models made from a kit that includes pieces and instructions for assembling a scaled replica of a real-life object, such as a car, bike, aircraft, ships, etc. Model kits can be made from a variety of materials, including plastic, metal, wood, etc. that snap together, glue together, etc. Models depicting three-dimensional representation of a display or scene should be entered into the Diorama Category.

Group C – Categories 31-45

1. **Metalwork** - Original designs created primarily using metal. Copper tooling should be entered into Transfer/Engraving Art Kit category.

ALL PIECES MUST BE MADE BY HAND: CNC MACHINE AND/OR LASER PRINTER IS NOT ALLOWED

1. **Jewelry (not beads)** - Jewelry pieces made through casting, channeling, lost-wax, wire wrapping, etc. Jewelry incorporating ANY use of beads should be entered in the Beadwork category.
2. **Beadwork** - Original design created using beads of any kind. Examples include **jewelry that incorporates beads** and other items made on a beading loom, hand-woven, etc. Beaded embroidery should be entered into one of the Needlework Categories. Mosaics made of beads should go in the Mosaic Category.
3. **Glasswork** - Original designs created primarily using glass. Examples include stained glass, hand-blown glass, fused glass and glass etching, and enameling. Commercially shaped glass items that have been painted should be entered into Figurine Painting category. Mosaics made of glass should be entered into the Mosaic Category.
4. **Mosaic** - An original design created by arranging together small pieces of hard materials such as stone, tile, glass, beads, etc. This category also includes quilling.
5. **Mosaic Kit** - A design created by arranging together small pieces of hard materials such as stone, tile, glass, etc., by following a diagram and/or instructions included in the kit. Woodscapes, Diamond Painting, and Pixel Art are included in this category.
6. **Crocheting/Knitting/Knotting** - A design created by interlocking fibers using a variety of techniques including, tatting, fly tying, macrame, dreamcatchers, etc., to create 2D or 3D pieces. All dreamcatchers, original or kits, should be placed in this category.
7. **Fiber Arts Original Design** - Original artwork created solely by the Veteran, **NOT using a sourced pattern or materials provided by a manufacturer**, utilizing a substance that can be separated into threadlike parts to create a design. This includes felting, latch hook, rug punching, string art, basketry, or weaving. Pieces that are created using stitching/sewing with needle and thread should be entered into the appropriate Needlework Category. Dreamcatchers should be entered in the Crochet/Knitting/Knotting Category.
8. **Fiber Arts Pattern** - Artwork made by following a sourced pattern or instructions **while incorporating original design choices,** utilizing a substance that can be separated into threadlike parts to create a design. This includes felting, latch hook, rug punching, string art, basketry, or weaving. Pieces that are created using stitching/sewing with needle and thread should be entered into the appropriate Needlework Category. Dreamcatchers should be entered in the Crochet/Knitting/Knotting Category.
9. **Fiber Arts Kit** - Artwork made by following a sourced pattern with materials included in a kit or outlined in the instructions, utilizing a substance that can be separated into threadlike parts to create a design. This includes felting, latch hook, rug punching, string art, basketry, or weaving. Pieces that are created using stitching/sewing with needle and thread should be entered into the appropriate Needlework Category. Dreamcatcher kits should be entered in the Crochet/Knitting/Knotting Category.
10. **Needlework Original Design** - Original artwork created solely by the Veteran, **NOT using a sourced pattern or materials provided by a manufacturer**. This includes stitchery, needlepoint, quilting, hand-sewn soft sculpture, embroidery, cross stitch, beaded embroidery, crewelwork, etc. **QUILTING NOTES: Judges will not consider machine-arm designs. Quilts incorporating traditional quilting block patterns or layouts should be entered into NEEDLEWORK PATTERN even if no paper pattern was utilized.**
11. **Needlework Pattern** - Artwork made by following a sourced pattern or instructions **while incorporating original design choices** utilizing needle and thread. This includes stitchery, needlepoint, quilting, hand-sewn soft sculpture, embroidery, cross stitch, beaded embroidery, crewelwork, etc. **QUILTING NOTES: Judges will not consider machine-arm designs. Quilts incorporating traditional quilting block patterns or layouts should still be entered into this category even if no paper pattern was utilized.**
12. **Needlework Kit** - Artwork made by following a sourced pattern with materials included in a kit or outlined in the instructions utilizing needle and thread. This includes stitchery, needlepoint, quilting, hand-sewn soft sculpture, embroidery, cross stitch, beaded embroidery, crewelwork, etc. Leather kits using needlework should be entered into Leather Kit Category. **QUILTING NOTE: Judges will not consider machine-arm designs.**
13. **Leather Kit** - Any leather kit that comes pre-cut, pre-punched, pre-embossed and ready to finish, stain and/or lace. Kits in which the Veteran adds Carving/Tooling/Stamping will be judged in the Leather Carving/Tooling/Stamping category.
14. **Leather Carving/Tooling/Stamping** -Designs created using shaped implements (stamps) or other leather carving tools, examples include Swivel knife, veiner, beveler, pear shader, etc. Pre-cut leather pieces may be used. Kits are not accepted in this category.

Group D – Categories 46-49

### Art Division Special Recognition Categories

The intent of these categories is to reinforce the concept of the arts as therapy, where an individual uses artistic expression to facilitate successful treatment outcomes. Entries and their accompanying written statement/narrative should focus on how the arts are used by the individual(s) to rise above limitations.  **Judging for the categories below equally take into consideration the written narrative as well as the skill involved in the artwork.**

Entries into the Special Recognition Categories listed below must meet one of this competition’s Art Division category definitions.

Entries in all four of the categories below **MUST** also include:

* **A typed statement/narrative** (50 to 250 words) composed by the Veteran and/or their VA staff contact person explaining how art relates to the Veteran(s)’ experience. **Entries submitted without a write-up will not be judged.**
* Consent forms 10-3203 **and** 10-5345 must be signed and dated by the Veteran. The local staff contact person submitting the entry for the Veteran should retain and safeguard the signed consent forms at their VA facility.

1. **Physical Health Recovery -** Entries that recognize individuals who exhibit creative expression through the visual arts while possessing significant physical challenges.
2. **Mental Health Recovery -** Entries that recognize individuals who exhibit creative expression through the visual arts while possessing significant emotional or mental health challenges.
3. **Combat Experience** - The Veteran must have experienced combat duty during World War II, Korean War, Vietnam, Gulf War, Grenada, Panama, Kosovo, Somalia and other recognized combats or current combat operations. The artwork and narrative must relate to the Veteran’s personal experience in that war or conflict but does not need to be a graphic representation of that combat experience.

Unlike the other art categories, there are NO restrictions as to when the Combat Experience artwork was created however entries submitted previously into this category are not eligible to compete again. Kits are not accepted.

1. **Group Art** - A single art entry created by a group of Veterans. Entries must meet one of this competitions Art Division category definitions. **Entry submission photos must include at least one image of the piece in its entirety.** The submitted statement/narrative should explain the creative process and goals of the group.

Group size is not restricted however, only up to 5 eligible Veterans from the winning entry **may be** funded by the Festival. Veterans from multiple VA medical facilities can work together but the entry must be submitted by only one VA local staff contact person. All size and weight restrictions must be followed.

Art Division – Entry Submission Information

* **File Size:** Optimal image file size is 1 MB or greater but no larger than 10 MB.
* **Image Format Required:** JPG/JPEG

\*Note: HEIC files cannot be opened on most VA computers. Be sure that photos taken with Apple devices are sent as JPG/JPEG images.

* + **2D Artwork** - Two electronic JPEG images may be submitted for each 2D (flat art) entry.
    - One image of the artwork entry in its entirety.
    - One image of the artwork entry in more detail.
  + **3D Artwork** - Three electronic JPEG images for each 3D entry will be accepted.
    - One image from the front of the art entry in its entirety
    - One image from the back or side of the art entry in its entirety.
    - One image of the art entry up close in more detail.
* All two-dimensional (2D) artwork must be exhibition ready (ready to hang for display).
* **Complete the Art Entry form with detail about the mediums and techniques used.** This information is crucial to the judging process and is shared with the judges. Stick to just the mediums and techniques used. Do not tell a story.
* References to diagnosis and explanations of emotional or personal content related to the Veteran will not be read or communicated to the national judges. The exception to this rule is an entry submitted into a category that requires a write-up.
* Supplemental documents (newspaper clippings, awards, articles, etc.) submitted to the national level will not be seen by the judges.
* Veterans will not be able to submit their own entries through to the national level of competition or directly into the Arts4Vets App. They must work with the VA facility where they are enrolled and meet the local competition deadline dates.
* **Required Veteran Consent Forms for Participation**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **VA FORM 10-3203**  CONSENT FOR PRODUCTION AND USE OF VERBAL OR WRITTEN STATEMENTS, PHOTOGRAPHS, DIGITAL IMAGES, AND/OR VIDEO OR AUDIO RECORDINGS BY VA | **Required to be signed by each Veteran to participate** in the local and national level creative arts competition and Festival event. | Link to a form fillable  VA Form 10-3203:  [VA Form 10-3203 Fill.pdf](https://www.va.gov/vaforms/medical/pdf/VA%20Form%2010-3203%20Fill.pdf) |
| **VA FORM 10-5345**  REQUEST FOR AND AUTHORIZATION TO  RELEASE HEALTH INFORMATION | **This form is only necessary to be completed for Veteran entries that require a write-up:**  Special Recognition categories  Combat Experience  Group Art | Link to a form fillable  VA Form 10-5345:  [VA\_Form\_10-5345\_Fillable.pdf](https://www.va.gov/vaforms/medical/pdf/VA_Form_10-5345_Fillable.pdf) |

Tips for Taking Better Art Images

* **Two-dimensional pieces may submit two images**. One image must show the total presentation (including frame) and one image showing more detail.
* **Three-dimensional pieces may submit three images.** One image from the front, one image from the back or side and one in more detail. \*Sets/diptychs/triptychs and Group entries must include one image of the entire piece/set.
* If using a smartphone to take artwork photos be sure the **national competition** **acceptable file type (JPG, JPEG)** is selected in your settings.
* **Do not include the title card, show exhibit card, art award ribbon, Veteran’s name, category, facility information, etc. in the photo.**
* **The art piece should fill the photo**. Shoot as close as possible so the piece fills the viewfinder of the camera; crop out background items.
* **Include the framing and matting of pictures**. These items are part of the total presentation. Pedestals or bases that are part of the artwork should also be included in the digital image.
* **Frame the piece using a neutral background.** Colorful backgrounds can alter the color of your piece by reflecting color onto it. The art entry should be the only item in the submission photo.
* **Watch for shadows on the background**. Move the item being photographed away from the background to eliminate shadows.
* **Be alert for glare**. Try changing the direction and location of the lighting or soften the light by bouncing it off a wall or screen. You can also try removing the protective layer to reduce glare.

Reminder: **NO GLASS PROTECTIVE LAYER (on flat art) may be used when shipping national first place artwork to the Festival.**

Art Division Judging Criteria & Results Information

Veterans should communicate with their local VA facility (as early as January 2025) to find out their local competition deadline date.

**Visual Art judging criteria:**

* **Creativity/Originality** – Exhibits originality and creative expression in the design.

1. **Skill** – Use of techniques, materials, and artistry.
2. **Total Presentation** – Consider the elements of art: line, space, color, form, media, texture, composition, balance, and unity. Also consider title, mounting, and framing.

**National Judging and Results** - The national judging will occur in October-December via the digital image judging process with results being announced in January. VA Local Staff Contacts at each facility will be notified of the competition results and asked to inform the Veterans competing from their VA facility. All first-place winners from the national level of the competition will be invited to attend the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival.

**Shipping National 1st Place Artwork** –Most first-place artwork from each art division category should be shipped to the Festival hosting VA facility location. Entries that are fragile/delicate and dioramas should not be shipped and will instead be displayed in the Festival art exhibit as a posterboard image. Entries must be fully assembled when shipped.

**NO GLASS PROTECTIVE LAYER (on flat art) may be used when shipping national first place artwork to the Festival.** If a protective layer is needed, PLEXIGLASS can be used. Artwork placed under protective glass and shipped to the NVCAF host VA facility **will forfeit their placement in the national competition**. This requirement is in place due to the risk of potential damage to the artwork and for the safety of those who will be unpacking the artwork.

**1st Place National Winning Veterans** **Invited to the Festival** - Veterans who accept the invitation to attend the Festival must commit to participating fully in the week to the best of their ability. The Festival week is structured with daily workshops, seminars, rehearsals, exhibitions, and performances. Veterans should not view their attendance at the Festival as a vacation experience. Attendance and participation are required at all scheduled events.

**Veteran Artists, Writers, Performers who are also VA Employees** - VA employees who are also Veterans eligible to compete in the competition and if invited to attend the Festival event, must use annual leave (AL), compensatory time off (CT), sick leave (SL) or disabled veteran leave (DVL) (SL and DVL are only appropriate when the individual’s participation is part of their required medical treatment/ordered by their provider), travel CT, or, leave without pay (LWOP). Normal leave approval procedures and rules, as outlined in VA Handbook 5017 and applicable labor agreements, apply.

Art Division Entry Form (Categories 1-48)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Group A-B-C-D: | Group A (1-17) Group B (18-30) Group C (31-45) Group D (46-48) |
| Category # and Name: |  |
| Title of Artwork: |  |
| Size of artwork in inches: | Length: Width: Height: |
| Select One: Artwork is an original design  Artwork was created using a pre-printed pattern or kit pieces | |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Veteran Name: |  | Male/Female: | *Used only for national*  *data collection.* |
| Email: |  | Phone #: |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Mediums and Techniques Used**  **Reminders:**   * **Digital Art entries** – Indicate software used * **Kit entries** – Describe enhancements and embellishments used * **Combat Experience entries** – Indicate **the competition category** as well as the mediums/techniques used * **Special Recognition entries** – Indicate the **competition** **category** as well as the mediums/techniques used | **Indicate mediums and techniques for all entries submitted into the competition.** This information is crucial to the judging process and is shared with the judges. Stick to just the mediums and techniques used. Do not tell a story. |

*Do not include medical diagnosis information in this section. It will not be shared with the judges. Do not include additional attachments unrelated to mediums/techniques in this section. They will not be shared with the judges.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Mixed Media Entries** – List the two or more distinct categories used. Example: Glasswork and Woodworking. Kits are not allowed in this category. | 1.  2.  3. |

**Veterans:** By entering and signing the entry form, you acknowledge that your name, email, phone number, entry, and entry detail information may be uploaded into the VA Arts4Vets/Salesforce Application for the purpose of collecting and organizing competition entries.

*By signing,**I confirm this entry was completed entirely by me after October 1, 2024. I have read all the rules and additional information for the division in which I am entering and confirm that if my artwork places first, it will be exhibition ready when it is shipped to the Festival host site. I have signed the required Consent for Picture/Voice form (VA form 10-3203).*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Veteran Signature:* | *Date Signed:* |

Art Division - Group Art Entry Form (Category 49)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Category # and Name: | **49 – GROUP ART** |
| Title of Artwork: |  |
| Size of artwork in inches: | Length: Width: Height: |
| Select One: Artwork is an original design  Artwork was created using a pre-printed pattern or kit pieces | |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Group Name: |  | # of Veterans in the Group: |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1.Veteran Name |  | Male/Female: | *Used only for national*  *data collection.* |
| Email: |  | Phone #: |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2.Veteran Name |  | Male/Female: | *Used only for national*  *data collection.* |
| Email: |  | Phone #: |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 3.Veteran Name |  | Male/Female: | *Used only for national*  *data collection.* |
| Email: |  | Phone #: |  |

|  |
| --- |
| **Indicate mediums and techniques for all entries submitted into the competition.** This information is crucial to the judging process and is shared with the judges. Stick to just the mediums and techniques used. Do not tell a story. |

**Veterans:** By entering and signing the entry form, you acknowledge that your name, email, phone number, entry, and entry detail information may be uploaded into the VA Arts4Vets/Salesforce Application for the purpose of collecting and organizing competition entries.

*By signing, we confirm this entry was completed entirely by us after October 1, 2024. We have read all the rules for the division in which we are entering and confirm that if our artwork is chosen as the national first-place winning entry, it will be exhibition ready when it is shipped to the Festival host site. We have signed the required VA Consent forms (10-3203 and 10-5345).*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Veteran Signatures:* | *Date Signed:* |

Creative Writing Division Rules

**Veterans should communicate with their local VA facility (as early as January 2025) to find out their local competition deadline date.**

The Creative Writing Division rules apply to ALL Creative Writing categories, unless noted in a category description.

1. Failure to comply with the Creative Writing Division rules and category descriptions may result in the entry being moved to a more appropriate category or the entry being disqualified.
2. All entries submitted into the Creative Writing Division must be original works written entirely by the eligible Veteran submitting the entry. Submissions created with artificial intelligence, including ChatGPT, will not be accepted in the competition.
3. Entries in the creative writing division must have been completed after October 1, 2024.
4. Veterans may submit an entry (singular) in up to three creative writing categories and one group entry in the special recognition category.
5. **Veterans may only submit one entry per category.** A Veteran may not have more than one entry in a category moving forward to the national level of the competition.
6. Veterans who have received a gold medal in the same category from any of the 5 divisions (art, creative writing, dance, drama, and music) for two consecutive years must enter a different category the third year. Failure to comply with this rule will result in the entry being disqualified.
7. The National Veterans Creative Arts Festival is not liable for any copyright infringement on the part of the entrant and will not become involved in copyright disputes.
8. Entries **must be** submitted as Microsoft Word documents in 12-point font. Do not send PDF attachments. **Entries submitted as file types other than Word documents will be disqualified.**
9. Creative Writing entries must be submitted as text only. Do not send documents with pictures or graphics. Only the text of the entry will be judged.
10. Judges reserve the right to move an entry to the appropriate category or disqualify the entry if rules are not followed.
11. Collections of poems, essays, stories, etc. submitted as one entry will not be allowed.
12. Prior to submitting entries in the competition, eligible Veterans who are also VA employees should discuss leave options/restrictions with their supervisor in the event they might be invited to attend the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival.
13. Veterans who are invited to the Festival and accept the invitation to attend must commit to participating fully in the Festival week to the best of their ability. The Festival week is structured with daily workshops, seminars, rehearsals and exhibitions. Veterans should not view their attendance at the Festival as a vacation experience. Attendance and participation are required at all scheduled events.

Creative Writing Categories

**Important Reminders:**

* Entries **must be** submitted in 12-point font.
* Entries **must be** submitted as **Microsoft Word** documents**.** Do not send PDF attachments.
* **Entries submitted as file types other than Word documents will be disqualified. No exceptions.**

**POETRY CATEGORIES**

A verse composition that sometimes uses rhythmic qualities.

1. **Rhyming Poetry-Military Experience** – A verse composition related to military experience, **no longer than 48 text lines**.
2. **Rhyming Poetry-Inspirational** – An inspirational verse composition, **no longer than 48 text lines**.
3. **Rhyming Poetry-General Topic –** A general topic verse composition, **no longer than 48 text lines**.
4. **Non-Rhyming Poetry-Military Experience** – A composition related to military experience, **no longer than 48 text lines**.
5. **Non-Rhyming Poetry-Inspirational** – An inspirational composition, **no longer than 48 text lines**.
6. **Non-Rhyming Poetry-General Topic** – A general topic composition, **no longer than 48 text lines**.

**SHORT STORY CATEGORIES**

A short story is a brief written piece with a fully developed theme. The story should have a beginning, middle, and an end.

1. **Short, Short Story-Military Experience** – A short story related to military experience, **no longer than 1,000 words**.
2. **Short, Short Story-Inspirational** – An inspirational short story, **no longer than 1,000 words**.
3. **Short, Short Story-General Topic** – A short story about a general topic, **no longer than 1,000 words**.

**ESSAY CATEGORY**

An essay is a concise piece of nonfiction writing that aims to either inform the reader about a topic or argue a particular perspective. Short stories should be entered into the Short Story categories.

1. **Personal Essay** – An essay, **no longer than 850 words,** written in ordinary speech or writing (not poetry) by one eligible Veteran from the author’s personal point of view **that is written to inform the reader on a certain topic or argue a particular perspective.** Short stories should be entered into the Short Story categories.

**OTHER WRITING CATEGORIES**

1. **Short Script** – Part of a script for one or more characters. Scripts should document the movement, scene descriptions, acting style instructions, and dialogue of the characters and should be written in a screenplay format and resemble the blueprint for a play, television show, or film. Short Script entries written in prose format (written language that follows the natural flow of speech, with words and phrases that build full sentences and paragraphs) will not be accepted. Entries in this category **must not exceed 850 words**.
2. **Humor** – All types of works which employ humor as the primary component should be submitted in this category. **Poetry entries should be no longer than 48 lines and prose entries must not exceed 850 words.**
3. **Special Recognition** -Individual or group. Entries by Veterans who exhibit creative expression through use of creative writing while possessing significant physical or psychological limitations. The intent of this category is to reinforce the concept of the arts as therapy, where individuals use artistic expression to facilitate successful treatment outcomes. **Poetry entries should be no longer than 48 lines and prose entries must not exceed 1,000 words.**

Entries in this category **MUST** also include:

* **A Word document containing a typed statement/narrative** (50 to 250 words) composed by a VA staff person or the Veteran explaining why the Veteran is deserving of special recognition. **Entries submitted without a write-up will not be judged.**
* Consent form 10-3203 and 10-5345 (links included in this handbook) must be signed and dated by the Veteran. The staff contact person submitting the entry for the Veteran should safeguard the signed consent forms at their VA facility.

Creative Writing Division – Entry Submission Information

* **Font Size:** 12-pt font.
* **File Type:** Microsoft Word documents only.
  + Do not send PDF attachments. **Entries submitted as file types other than Word documents will be disqualified. No exceptions.**
* Creative Writing entries must be submitted as text only**. Do not send documents with pictures or graphics.** Only the text of the entry will be judged.
* Do not include headers/footers with identifying Veteran information on the entry (ex. Veteran name, title of entry, facility information, etc.). This information is removed for the national judging process.
* References to diagnosis and explanations of emotional or personal content related to the Veteran will not be read or communicated to the national judges. The exception to this rule is an entry submitted into a category that requires a write-up.
* Supplemental documents (newspaper clippings, awards, articles, etc.) submitted to the national level will not be seen by the judges.
* Veterans will not be able to submit their own entries through to the national level of competition or directly into the Arts4Vets App. They must work with the VA facility where they are enrolled and meet the local competition deadline dates.
* **Required Veteran Consent Forms for Participation**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **VA FORM 10-3203** | **VA FORM 10-5345** |
| CONSENT FOR PRODUCTION AND USE OF  VERBAL OR WRITTEN STATEMENTS,  PHOTOGRAPHS, DIGITAL IMAGES, AND/OR  VIDEO OR AUDIO RECORDINGS BY VA | REQUEST FOR AND AUTHORIZATION TO  RELEASE HEALTH INFORMATION |
| **Required to be signed by each Veteran to participate** in the local and national level creative arts competition and Festival event. | **This form is only necessary to be completed for Veteran entries that require a write-up:**   * Special Recognition category |
| Link to a form fillable VA 10-3203 form:  [VA Form 10-3203 Fill.pdf](https://www.va.gov/vaforms/medical/pdf/VA%20Form%2010-3203%20Fill.pdf) | Link to a form fillable VA 10-5345 form:  [VA\_Form\_10-5345\_Fillable.pdf](https://www.va.gov/vaforms/medical/pdf/VA_Form_10-5345_Fillable.pdf) |

Creative Writing Division Judging Criteria &

Results Information

Veterans should communicate with their local VA facility (as early as January 2025) to find out their local competition deadline date.

**Creative writing judging criteria:**

* Creative Content
* Message Clarity
* Use of Language
* Originality of Topic or Idea
* Overall Strength of Composition

**Drama Entry vs. Creative Writing Entry -** Veterans who choose for their original work to be judged by **performance criteria** (stage presence, expressiveness, and interpretation) should submit the entry into the **DRAMA** division. Veterans who choose for their **original work** to be judged based upon the **merit of the composition** (creative content, message clarity, use of language, and originality of topic or idea) should submit the entry into the **CREATIVE WRITING** division.

**National Judging and Results -** The national judging will occur in October-December via the Word document judging process with results being announced in January. VA Local Staff Contacts at each facility will be notified of the competition results via E-mail and through Microsoft Teams channel: NVCA Competition-Local Staff Contacts. All first-place winners from the national level of the competition will be invited to attend the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival.

**Creative Writing Booklet -** First-place winning writing entries at the national level of the competition will be printed one-time in a 2026 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival Creative Writing Booklet and Festival attendees will have an excerpt of the piece printed one-time onto a banner for use during the Festival Writing Exhibition. This banner, excluding the display stand, will become the property of the Veteran post-event.

**First-Place National Winning Veterans** **Invited to the Festival** - Veterans invited to the Festival and who accept the invitation to attend must commit to participating fully in the Festival week to the best of their ability. The Festival week is structured with daily workshops, seminars, rehearsals, exhibitions, and the stage show performance. Veterans should not view their attendance at the Festival as a vacation experience. Attendance and participation are required at all scheduled events.

## Veteran Artists, Writers, Performers who are also VA Employees - VA employees who are also Veterans eligible to compete in the competition and if invited to attend the Festival event, must use annual leave (AL), compensatory time off (CT), sick leave (SL) or disabled veteran leave (DVL) (SL and DVL are only appropriate when the individual’s participation is part of their required medical treatment/ordered by their provider), travel CT, or, leave without pay (LWOP). Normal leave approval procedures and rules, as outlined in VA Handbook 5017 and applicable labor agreements, apply.

Creative Writing Division Entry Form

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Category # and Name: |  | |
| Title of Piece: |  | |
| Line count (for poetry entries only): |  | |
| Word count (for prose entries only): |  | |
| Veteran(s) give(s) permission for the entry to be included in a booklet if the entry wins first place at the national level of the competition. | | Veteran Initials: |

**Individual Entry – For an entry submitted by one Veteran**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Veteran Name: |  | Male/Female: | *Used only for national*  *data collection.* |
| Email: |  | Phone #: |  |

**Group Entry in the Special Recognition Category Only**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1.Veteran Name |  | Male/Female: | *Used only for national*  *data collection.* |
| Email: |  | Phone #: |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2.Veteran Name |  | Male/Female: | *Used only for national*  *data collection.* |
| Email: |  | Phone #: |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 3.Veteran Name |  | Male/Female: | *Used only for national*  *data collection.* |
| Email: |  | Phone #: |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Group Name: |  | # of Veterans in the Group: |  |

**Veterans:** By entering and signing the entry form, you acknowledge that your name, email, phone number, entry, and entry detail information may be uploaded into the VA Arts4Vets/Salesforce Application for the purpose of collecting and organizing competition entries.

*By signing,**I/we confirm this entry was completed entirely by me after October 1, 2024. I/we have read all the rules and additional information for the division in which I/we am/are entering. If the entry places first at the national level, I/we give permission for this writing piece to be printed in a compilation booklet and distributed at the at the 2026 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. I/we have signed the required VA Consent form(s)s (10-3203 and if necessary, 10-5345).*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Veteran Signature(s):* | *Date Signed:* |

Dance Division Rules

**Veterans should communicate with their local VA facility (as early as January 2025) to find out their local competition deadline date.**

The Dance Division rules apply to ALL Dance categories, unless noted in a category description.

1. Failure to comply with the Dance Division rules and category descriptions may result in the entry being moved to a more appropriate category or the entry being disqualified.
2. All entries in the dance, drama and music divisions must be recorded after October 1, 2024.
3. Veterans may submit entries in up to three solo categories and three group categories in the dance, drama, and music divisions, however they may only submit/be a part of one entry per category. Each entry must be different. The same entry cannot be submitted into two categories within a division.
4. **Veterans may only submit one entry per category.** A Veteran may not have more than one entry in a category moving forward to the national level of the competition.
5. Veterans who have received a gold medal in the same category from any of the 5 divisions (art, creative writing, dance, drama, and music) for two consecutive years must enter a different category the third year. Failure to comply with this rule will result in the entry being disqualified.
6. Dance entries will be judged based on the style of dance and steps incorporated in the performance as opposed to the style/genre of music selected.
7. Judges reserve the right to move an entry to the appropriate category or disqualify the entry if rules are not followed.
8. It is considered a solo when one Veteran dances with a non-Veteran partner.
9. **Entries MAY NOT be expanded with non-eligible Veterans or any other individual unless it is a partner dance where the partner is necessary to perform the dance movements.**  Although the National Veterans Creative Arts program recognizes the therapeutic value of participation of staff, volunteers, and ineligible Veterans in groups, it is essential in keeping with the fairness of the competition that **only eligible Veterans** are competing against each other.
10. **Audio files** of the dance division entries are **NOT** **required to be sent to the dance chairperson**. However, should the entry place first in the national competition and the Veteran(s) be invited to perform their entry in the Festival stage show, the audio file must be sent to the NVCAF show planning team.
11. Veterans who are invited to the Festival and accept the invitation to attend must commit to participating fully in the Festival week to the best of their ability. The Festival week is structured with daily workshops, seminars, rehearsals and exhibitions. Veterans should not view their attendance at the Festival as a vacation experience. Attendance and participation are required at all scheduled events.

Dance Categories

All categories include solo and group performances and are inclusive for Veterans who are ambulatory or use assistive devices for movement (i.e. wheelchair, crutches, walkers, etc.).

1. **Ballroom** - Pattern of movement in a choreographed routine. Structured ballroom dances such as the waltz, jitterbug/swing, hustle, disco, polka, lindy hop, fox-trot, quick step. Veteran(s) should maintain physical contact with partner for greater part of dance.
2. **Latin Ballroom** - Latin style structured ballroom dances such as samba, cha-cha, salsa, Meringue, Machida, rumba, tango, etc. Veteran(s) should maintain physical contact with partner for greater part of dance.
3. **Country/Western/Folk/Ethnic/Cultural** - Country/western dances such as: Two-step, cowboy or traveling cha-cha, polka, schottische, promenade dances, square dance. Choreographed wheelchair dances associated with various cultures or countries. Examples may include: Clogging, Jewish Hora, Jig, May Pole, Mexican Hat, etc.
4. **Modern/Contemporary** –Expressive dance that combines elements of several dance genres. Contemporary dance stresses versatility and improvisation.
5. **Tap, Jazz or Ballet** - Traditional tap, jazz, or ballet patterns of movement choreographed to music in a routine.
6. **Line Dance** - Set pattern of movements where the individuals end up facing 2 or 4 walls. Suggest a minimum number of 3 to form the line. **All group members must be Veterans unless the line dance requires a partner where the partner is necessary to perform the dance.**
7. **Interpretive Movement** - The movements tell a story or interpret feelings through hand movements or gestures. Wheelchair does not need to move**.** Examples may include sign language or other hand movement and dance meditation. Stretching to music does not qualify entry into this category.
8. **Freestyle/Hip-Hop** - Non-choreographed/non-patterned movements that can involve any style of dance.  Movements are spontaneous/improvisational. Entries into this category may contain many diverse steps and movements allowing dancers to use freedom of expression to enhance their dance style. Example: Freestyle, hip-hop, popping, breaking, etc.
9. **Novelty** - A routine consisting of original, imaginative, or innovative dance movements that incorporate a theme concept or characterization throughout the entire performance.

**DANCE CHALLENGE CATEGORY – NEW FOR 2025**

Watch the choreography in the YouTube link provided and replicate the dance. Show us your creativity to make the dance moves your own. In your performance, you may use the song from the recording or choose your own backing music.

*A special thanks to the 610 Stompers for their time and creativity in the choreography of this dance challenge video.*

1. **Dance Challenge** - [https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=rb7fEOOF84s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rb7fEOOF84s)

**SPECIAL RECOGNITION**

Entries that recognize individuals who exhibit creative expression through use of dance while possessing significant physical or psychological limitations. The intent of this category is to reinforce the concept of the arts as therapy, where an individual uses artistic expression to facilitate successful treatment outcomes.

1. **Special Recognition**

Entries in this special recognition category **MUST** also include:

* **A Word document containing a typed statement/narrative** (50 to 250 words) composed by a VA staff person or the Veteran explaining why the Veteran is deserving of special recognition. **Entries submitted without a write-up will not be judged.**
* Consent form 10-3203 and 10-5345 (links included in this handbook) must be signed and dated by the Veteran. The staff contact person submitting the entry for the Veteran should safeguard the signed consent forms at their VA facility.

Tips for Taking Better Video Recordings

* **Be sure to check that all videos play with video and audio before submission.**
* **Focus on the performer**. Avoid taping from the back of the room. Stage presence cannot be judged if you cannot clearly see the performer.
* When video recording dance acts, it is necessary to include the whole-body in the entire recording, including the feet.
* **Sound control** is important! Clear audio makes a performance much easier (and enjoyable) to judge. Make sure your sound is good and balanced.
* **Be aware of the accompaniment being positioned too close to the recording device.**
* **Dance, drama, and music entries** will be accepted digitally (MP4, MOV, Unlisted YouTube link) through the Arts4Vets App. Entries may only be submitted to the Arts4Vet app by VA staff.

Dance Division – Entry Submission Information

* **File Type:** MP4, MOV, Unlisted YouTube link
* **Length of performance**: Approximately 3 minutes or less
* References to diagnosis and explanations of emotional or personal content related to the Veteran will not be read or communicated to the national judges. The exception to this rule is an entry submitted into a category that requires a write-up.
* Supplemental documents (newspaper clippings, awards, articles, etc.) submitted to the national level will not be seen by the judges.
* Veterans will not be able to submit their own entries through to the national level of competition or directly into the Arts4Vets App. They must work with the VA facility where they are enrolled and meet the local competition deadline dates.
* **Required Veteran Consent Forms for Participation**

|  |  |  |
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| **VA FORM 10-3203**  CONSENT FOR PRODUCTION AND USE OF VERBAL OR WRITTEN STATEMENTS, PHOTOGRAPHS, DIGITAL IMAGES, AND/OR VIDEO OR AUDIO RECORDINGS BY VA | **Required to be signed by each Veteran to participate** in the local and national level creative arts competition and Festival event. | Link to a form fillable  VA Form 10-3203:  [VA Form 10-3203 Fill.pdf](https://www.va.gov/vaforms/medical/pdf/VA%20Form%2010-3203%20Fill.pdf) |
| **VA FORM 10-5345**  REQUEST FOR AND AUTHORIZATION TO  RELEASE HEALTH INFORMATION | **This form is only necessary to be completed for Veteran entries that require a write-up:**  Special Recognition category | Link to a form fillable  VA Form 10-5345:  [VA\_Form\_10-5345\_Fillable.pdf](https://www.va.gov/vaforms/medical/pdf/VA_Form_10-5345_Fillable.pdf) |

Dance Division Judging Criteria & Results Information

Veterans should communicate with their local VA facility (as early as January 2025) to find out their local competition deadline date.

**Dance judging criteria:**

* **Technical Skills** - body placement, quality of movements
* **Musicality** - rhythm, timing/phrasing, movement related to music
* **Stage Presence** - confidence, focus, artistic expression, mastery of choreography

**National Judging and Results -** The national judging will occur in October-December via the digital video judging process with results being announced in January. VA Local Staff Contacts at each facility will be notified of the competition results via E-mail and through Microsoft Teams channel: NVCA Competition-Local Staff Contacts. All first-place winners from the national level of the competition will be invited to attend the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival.

**Note:** Not all first-place winners are selected to perform their solo/group entry in the show. Due to time constraints, the Festival show directors will choose approximately 25 dance, drama, and music first-place entries to perform in the show. The remaining first-place attendees will be invited to participate in the Festival chorus.

Veterans who are invited to the Festival must be prepared (either themselves or through their VA staff contact person) to send an E-mail including the lyrics for music and dance and words/narration for drama entries for this text to be placed in the show script.

**Performance costumes are the Veteran’s responsibility.**

**First-Place National Winning Veterans** **Invited to the Festival**

Veterans invited to the Festival and who accept the invitation to attend must commit to participating fully in the Festival week to the best of their ability. The Festival week is structured with daily workshops, seminars, rehearsals, exhibitions, and the stage show performance. Veterans should not view their attendance at the Festival as a vacation experience. Attendance and participation are required at all scheduled events.

## Veteran Artists, Writers, Performers who are also VA Employees

VA employees who are also Veterans eligible to compete in the competition and if invited to attend the Festival event, must use annual leave (AL), compensatory time off (CT), sick leave (SL) or disabled veteran leave (DVL) (SL and DVL are only appropriate when the individual’s participation is part of their required medical treatment/ordered by their provider), travel CT, or, leave without pay (LWOP). Normal leave approval procedures and rules, as outlined in VA Handbook 5017 and applicable labor agreements, apply.

Dance Division Entry Form

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Category Number and Name: |  | |
| Title of Entry: |  | |
| Title of Music Selection *(if different from Title of Entry):* | |  |
| Non-Veteran dance partner name(s): | |  |
| Was the entry choreographed by the Veteran(s)? | | **YES or NO** |

**Solo Entry**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Veteran Name: |  | Male/Female: | *Used only for national*  *data collection.* |
| Email: |  | Phone #: |  |

**Group Entry**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1.Veteran Name |  | Male/Female: | *Used only for national*  *data collection.* |
| Email: |  | Phone #: |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2.Veteran Name |  | Male/Female: | *Used only for national*  *data collection.* |
| Email: |  | Phone #: |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 3.Veteran Name |  | Male/Female: | *Used only for national*  *data collection.* |
| Email: |  | Phone #: |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Group Name: |  | # of Veterans in the Group: |  |

**Veterans:** By entering and signing the entry form, you acknowledge that your name, email, phone number, entry, and entry detail information may be uploaded into the VA Arts4Vets/Salesforce Application for the purpose of collecting and organizing competition entries.

*By signing,**I/we confirm I/we have read all the rules for the division in which I/we am/are entering. If the entry places first at the national level, I/we understand that I/we will be invited to attend the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. I/we have signed the required VA Consent form(s)s (10-3203 and if necessary, 10-5345).*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Veteran Signature(s):* | *Date Signed:* |

Drama Division Rules

**Veterans should communicate with their local VA facility (as early as January 2025) to find out their local competition deadline date.**

The Drama Division rules apply to ALL Drama categories, unless noted in a category description.

1. Failure to comply with the Drama Division rules and category descriptions may result in the entry being moved to a more appropriate category or the entry being disqualified.
2. All entries in the dance, drama and music divisions must be recorded after October 1, 2024.
3. Veterans may submit entries in up to three solo categories and three group categories in the dance, drama and music divisions, however they may only submit/be a part of one entry per category. Each entry must be different. The same entry cannot be submitted into two categories within a division.
4. **Veterans may only submit one entry per category.** A Veteran may not have more than one entry in a category moving forward to the national level of the competition.
5. Veterans who have received a gold medal in the same category from any of the 5 divisions (art, creative writing, dance, drama, and music) for two consecutive years must enter a different category the third year. Failure to comply with this rule will result in the entry being disqualified.
6. Judges reserve the right to move an entry to the appropriate category or disqualify the entry if rules are not followed.
7. The **addition of staff, volunteer(s), and/or Veterans who are not eligible Veterans to any entry will result in disqualification.** However, if a drama entry requires a female character and no eligible female Veterans are available, the part may be read by a female volunteer or staff member. Although the National Veterans Creative Arts Program recognizes the therapeutic value of participation of staff, volunteers, and ineligible Veterans in groups, it is essential in keeping with the fairness of the competition that **only eligible Veterans** are competing against each other.
8. All Veterans must contribute significantly to the presentation in a dramatic way **and be seen on the video** for an entry to be submitted into a group category.
9. Veterans who are invited to the Festival and accept the invitation to attend must commit to participating fully in the Festival week to the best of their ability. The Festival week is structured with daily workshops, seminars, rehearsals and exhibitions. Veterans should not view their attendance at the Festival as a vacation experience. Attendance and participation are required at all scheduled events.

Drama Categories

All categories include monologue (solo) and ensemble (2 or more group member) performances. Veterans may only submit one entry per category.

\*Reminder: Entries in the drama division are judged on stage presence, expressiveness, creativity, and interpretation. Entries may be read from paper however the Veteran should be aware that the criteria for judging are: stage presence, expressiveness, creativity, and interpretation.

1. **Dramatic Prose** - A monologue or ensemble in ordinary speech or writing (not poetry). For example: A reading or excerpt from a speech, theatrical play, or movie.
2. **Patriotic Prose** - A monologue or ensemble in ordinary speech or writing (not poetry) with content that relates to American patriotism.
3. **Inspirational Prose** - A monologue or ensemble in ordinary speech or writing (not poetry) with content that is of spiritual nature.
4. **Comedy Prose** – A monologue or ensemble in ordinary speech or writing (not poetry) of light and amusing character.
5. **Dramatic Poetry** - A verse composition performed by one or more Veterans.
6. **Patriotic Poetry** - A verse composition with content that relates to American patriotism performed by one or more Veterans.
7. **Inspirational Poetry** - A verse composition with content that is of an inspirational nature performed by one or more Veterans.
8. **Comedy Poetry** - A verse composition of light and amusing character performed by one or more Veterans.
9. **Interpretive Performance-Dramatic** - A presentation that involves acting, movement, and props performed by one or more Veterans.
10. **Interpretive Performance-Novelty** - A presentation that is of light and amusing character involving acting, movement, and props performed by one or more Veterans. Mime, juggling, magic, puppetry and ventriloquism should be submitted into this category.
11. **Short Video-Military Theme** -A video presentation related to military theme using a combination of different content forms such as [text/writing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Text_(literary_theory)), images, audio, video, and animation. Videos should be no longer than approximately 3 minutes in length.
12. **Short Video-General Theme** -A video presentation related to a general theme using a combination of different content forms such as [text/writing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Text_(literary_theory)), images, audio, video, and animation. (Videos with military themes must be entered into Cat. 11-Short Video-Military Theme.) Videos should be no longer than approximately 3 minutes in length.
13. **Special Recognition** - Entries that recognize individuals who exhibit creative expression through use of drama while possessing significant physical or psychological limitations. The intent of this category is to reinforce the concept of the arts as therapy, where an individual uses artistic expression to facilitate successful treatment outcomes.

Entries in this category **MUST** also include:

* **A Word document containing a typed statement/narrative** (50 to 250 words) composed by a VA staff person or the Veteran explaining why the Veteran is deserving of special recognition. **Entries submitted without a write-up will not be judged.**
* Consent form 10-3203 and 10-5345 (links included in this handbook) must be signed and dated by the Veteran. The staff contact person submitting the entry for the Veteran should safeguard the signed consent forms at their VA facility.

Tips for Taking Better Video Recordings

* **Be sure to check that all videos play with video and audio before submission.**
* **Focus on the performer**. Avoid taping from the back of the room. Stage presence cannot be judged if you cannot clearly see the performer.
* When video recording dance acts, it is necessary to include the whole-body in the entire recording, including the feet.
* **Sound control** is important! Clear audio makes a performance much easier (and enjoyable) to judge. Make sure your sound is good and balanced.
* **Be aware of the accompaniment being positioned too close to the recording device.**
* **Dance, drama, and music entries** will be accepted digitally (MP4, MOV, Unlisted YouTube link) through the Arts4Vets App. Entries may only be submitted to the Arts4Vet app by VA staff.

Drama Division – Entry Submission Information

* **File Type:** MP4, MOV, Unlisted YouTube link
* **Length of performance**: Approximately 3 minutes or less
* References to diagnosis and explanations of emotional or personal content related to the Veteran will not be read or communicated to the national judges. The exception to this rule is an entry submitted into a category that requires a write-up.
* Supplemental documents (newspaper clippings, awards, articles, etc.) submitted to the national level will not be seen by the judges.
* Veterans will not be able to submit their own entries through to the national level of competition or directly into the Arts4Vets App. They must work with the VA facility where they are enrolled and meet the local competition deadline dates.
* **Required Veteran Consent Forms for Participation**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **VA FORM 10-3203**  CONSENT FOR PRODUCTION AND USE OF VERBAL OR WRITTEN STATEMENTS, PHOTOGRAPHS, DIGITAL IMAGES, AND/OR VIDEO OR AUDIO RECORDINGS BY VA | **Required to be signed by each Veteran to participate** in the local and national level creative arts competition and Festival event. | Link to a form fillable  VA Form 10-3203:  [VA Form 10-3203 Fill.pdf](https://www.va.gov/vaforms/medical/pdf/VA%20Form%2010-3203%20Fill.pdf) |
| **VA FORM 10-5345**  REQUEST FOR AND AUTHORIZATION TO  RELEASE HEALTH INFORMATION | **This form is only necessary to be completed for Veteran entries that require a write-up:**  Special Recognition category | Link to a form fillable  VA Form 10-5345:  [VA\_Form\_10-5345\_Fillable.pdf](https://www.va.gov/vaforms/medical/pdf/VA_Form_10-5345_Fillable.pdf) |

Drama Division Judging Criteria & Results Information

Veterans should communicate with their local VA facility (as early as January 2025) to find out their local competition deadline date.

**Drama judging criteria:** Stage Presence, Expressiveness, Creativity, Interpretation

**Short Video judging criteria:** Structure & Organization, Originality & Creativity, Total Presentation

**Drama Entry vs. Creative Writing Entry -** Veterans who choose for their original work judged by **performance criteria** (stage presence, expressiveness, and interpretation) should submit the entry into the **DRAMA** division. Veterans who choose their **original work** to be judged based upon the **merit of the composition** (creative content, message clarity, use of language, and originality of topic or idea) should submit the entry into the **CREATIVE WRITING** division.

**National Judging and Results -** The national judging will occur in October-December via the digital image judging process with results being announced in January. VA Local Staff Contacts at each facility will be notified of the competition results via E-mail and through Microsoft Teams channel: NVCA Competition-Local Staff Contacts. All first-place winners from the national level of the competition will be invited to attend and participate as chorus members in the live stage show performance at the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival.

**\*Note:** Not all first-place winners will be selected to perform their solo/group entry in the show. Due to time constraints, the Festival show directors will choose approximately 25 dance, drama, and music first-place entries to perform in the show. The remaining first-place attendees will be invited to participate in the Festival chorus.

Veterans who are invited to the Festival must be prepared (either themselves or through their VA staff contact person) to send an E-mail including the lyrics for music and dance and words/narration for drama entries for this text to be placed in the show script.

**Performance costumes are the Veteran’s responsibility.**

**First-Place National Winning Veterans** **Invited to the Festival** - Veterans invited to the Festival and who accept the invitation to attend must commit to participating fully in the Festival week to the best of their ability. The Festival week is structured with daily workshops, seminars, rehearsals, exhibitions, and the stage show performance. Veterans should not view their attendance at the Festival as a vacation experience. Attendance and participation are required at all scheduled events.

## Veteran Artists, Writers, Performers who are also VA Employees

VA employees who are also Veterans eligible to compete in the competition and if invited to attend the Festival event, must use annual leave (AL), compensatory time off (CT), sick leave (SL) or disabled veteran leave (DVL) (SL and DVL are only appropriate when the individual’s participation is part of their required medical treatment/ordered by their provider), travel CT, or, leave without pay (LWOP). Normal leave approval procedures and rules, as outlined in VA Handbook 5017 and applicable labor agreements, apply.

Drama Division Entry Form

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Category # and Name: |  | |
| Title of Entry: |  | |
| Is the entry an original script written the Veteran(s)? | | **YES or NO** |

**Individual Entry**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Veteran Name: |  | Male/Female: | *Used only for national*  *data collection.* |
| Email: |  | Phone #: |  |

**Group/Ensemble Entry**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1.Veteran Name |  | Male/Female: | *Used only for national*  *data collection.* |
| Email: |  | Phone #: |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2.Veteran Name |  | Male/Female: | *Used only for national*  *data collection.* |
| Email: |  | Phone #: |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 3.Veteran Name |  | Male/Female: | *Used only for national*  *data collection.* |
| Email: |  | Phone #: |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Group Name: |  | # of Veterans in the Group: |  |

**Veterans:** By entering and signing the entry form, you acknowledge that your name, email, phone number, entry, and entry detail information may be uploaded into the VA Arts4Vets/Salesforce Application for the purpose of collecting and organizing competition entries.

*By signing,**I/we confirm I/we have read all the rules and additional information for the division in which I/we am/are entering. If the entry places first at the national level, I/we understand that I/we will be invited to attend the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. I/we have signed the required VA Consent form(s)s (10-3203 and if necessary, 10-5345).*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Veteran Signature(s):* | *Date Signed:* |

Music Division Rules

**Veterans should communicate with their local VA facility (as early as January 2025) to find out their local competition deadline date.**

The Music Division rules apply to ALL Music categories, unless noted in a category description.

1. Failure to comply with the Music Division rules and category descriptions may result in the entry being moved to a more appropriate category or the entry being disqualified.
2. All entries in the dance, drama and music divisions must be recorded after October 1, 2024.
3. **Music entries must be video recorded live.** No voice-over dubbing will be allowed. No lip syncing to a pre-recorded track will be allowed. **MP3 files (audio recordings without video) will not be accepted.**
4. Submissions created with artificial intelligence, including ChatGPT, will not be accepted in the competition.
5. Veterans may submit entries in up to three solo categories and three group categories in the dance, drama, and music divisions, however they may only submit/be a part of one entry per category. Each entry must be different. The same entry cannot be submitted into two categories within a division.
6. **Veterans may only submit one entry per category.** A Veteran may not have more than one entry in a category moving forward to the national level of the competition.
7. Veterans who have received a gold medal in the same category from any of the 5 divisions (art, creative writing, dance, drama, and music) for two consecutive years must enter a different category the third year. Failure to comply with this rule will result in the entry being disqualified.
8. Judges reserve the right to move an entry to the appropriate category or disqualify the entry if rules are not followed.
9. A medley of songs in an entry must be continuous/overlapping. Editing video compilations or starting/stopping songs to combine multiple songs as one entry will not be allowed.
10. Once an entry has placed first in the music division at the national level of competition, it is not eligible to be entered again. (Example: If a Veteran or group places first with a music selection in a category one year at the national level, the Veteran or group may not enter that specific music selection again in the competition, but he may enter that category again with a different music selection.) Music entries that have not placed first at the national level of competition should not be entered more than two consecutive years.
11. If an accompanist is needed for an entry, they may only provide background accompaniment and not take instrumental leads or solos. (Example: An instrumental group entry may consist of eligible Veterans taking leads on saxophone, trumpet and guitar accompanied by VA staff or volunteers on piano, drums, and bass. The VA staff or volunteer accompanying the entry may not take a lead or solo.)
12. An original composition may be placed in categories other than original.
13. Entries submitted into the original vocal categories must include the typed lyrics. **Entries submitted without a copy of the lyrics will be disqualified.**
14. Only one voice may be present to be considered a solo. Once a second voice is added the **entry becomes a group entry and singers must meet eligibility requirements.** If back-up voices are present, they must be eligible Veterans and their inclusion would make the entry a **Vocal Group.** Back-up singing by VA staff, volunteers, and ineligible Veterans will result in disqualification. **Back-up tracks that have the Veteran’s voice dubbed in, vocalizers, and harmonizers are not allowed.**
15. The presence of any vocalizations in an instrumental entry will eliminate that entry from competing in the instrumental category except for Instrumental Drums/Percussion and the Band/Ensemble categories.
16. Veterans who are invited to the Festival and accept the invitation to attend must commit to participating fully in the Festival week to the best of their ability. The Festival week is structured with daily workshops, seminars, rehearsals and exhibitions. Veterans should not view their attendance at the Festival as a vacation experience. Attendance and participation are required at all scheduled events.

Vocal Music Categories

* **Vocal Solo:** One Veteran singing.
* **Vocal Group:** To meet the intent of the categories for **Vocal Group**, the group must have **more than one eligible Veteran singing.** (Example: One eligible Veteran being accompanied on instruments by other eligible Veterans does not meet the definition of a vocal group. Instead, this type of entry would be a vocal solo with accompanists.)

**VOCAL SOLO**

1. **Vocal Solo Country/Folk/Bluegrass**
2. **Vocal Solo Pop**
3. **Vocal Solo Rock/Blues** - Example: Eagles, Rolling Stones, Elvis Presley, Queen, BB King, Buddy Guy, etc.

**VOCAL GROUP**

1. **Vocal Group Country/Folk/Bluegrass**
2. **Vocal Group Pop**
3. **Vocal Group Rock/Blues**

**VOCAL SOLO OR GROUP**

1. **Vocal Rap/Hip Hop** - Solo or group.
2. **Vocal Classical/World/Ethnic** - Solo or group. A vocal selection that reflects the music characteristics of a specific ethnicity, culture, or country. The selection should be from a culture other than that of English-speaking North America. Use of ethnic instruments as accompaniment is encouraged. This category does NOT include popular music.
3. **Vocal Jazz** - Solo or group. Example: Louis Armstrong, Billy Holliday, Fred Astaire, Tony Bennett, Norah Jones, Diana Krall, etc.
4. **Vocal R&B/Soul/Funk** - Solo or group. Example: Motown, Sam Cooke, John Legend,

Al Green, James Brown, etc.

1. **Vocal Broadway -** Solo or group. Show Tunes, **not movies**. (Example: “People” would be acceptable as it is **also** from a Broadway show, not because it is from a movie. “New York, New York” would not be acceptable as it is from a 1977 Liza Minnelli movie.) *Specify the Broadway show after the title.*
2. **Vocal Patriotic** - Solo or group.
3. **Vocal Spiritual** - Solo or group.

**ORIGINAL VOCAL**

Original vocal compositions composed by one or more eligible Veterans judged solely on the merits of the composition. Lyrics and music must be composed entirely by an eligible Veteran/s and that Veteran/s will be the one entered in this category. A performer or group other than the composer may perform the work, but the composer(s) should be shown on the video**.**

A copy of the typed lyrics must be attached to the entry form. **Entries submitted without a copy of the lyrics will be disqualified.**

1. **Original Vocal - General Topic -** Solo or group.
2. **Original Vocal - Military Experience** - Solo or group.

Instrumental Music, Band/Ensemble, and

Special Recognition Categories

* **Instrumental Solo:** One Veteran playing
* **Instrumental Group:** To meet the intent of the categories for **Instrumental Group**, the group must have **more than one eligible Veteran performing instrumental solos/leads or making other essential contributions musically to the entry other than just accompanying.** There are no limits to the number of accompanists in the group but care should be taken that non-eligible Veterans (i.e. staff, volunteers, Veterans who are not eligible to compete) are not performing solos/leads.

**NOTE:** The presence of any singing in an instrumental entry will eliminate that entry from competing in the instrumental category, except for entries in the Instrumental Drums/Percussion and Band/Ensemble Categories.

**INSTRUMENTAL SOLO**

1. **Instrumental Solo Pop**
2. **Instrumental Solo Jazz/R&B/Soul**
3. **Instrumental Solo Spiritual**
4. **Instrumental Solo World/Ethnic** - An instrumental selection that reflects the music characteristics of a specific ethnicity, culture, or country. The selection should be from a culture other than that of English-speaking North America. Use of ethnic instruments is encouraged. This category does NOT include classical or popular music.
5. **Instrumental Solo Drums/Percussion** - It is the intent of this category to showcase non-melodic percussion instruments, i.e. trap set, congas, bongos, spoons, rhythm instruments, etc. This category would exclude percussion instruments that can produce an obvious melody line, i.e. xylophone, vibraphone, marimba, etc. Accompaniment may be present as desired and may include melody line OR VOCALS, but ONLY the percussionist will be judged. **Vocal percussion beat boxing should be entered into this category.**

**INSTRUMENTAL GROUP**

1. **Instrumental Group Pop/Jazz/R&B/Soul**
2. **Instrumental Group Spiritual/World/Ethnic/Drums/Percussion –** Same definitions as respective solo categories.

**INSTRUMENTAL SOLO OR GROUP**

1. **Instrumental Country/Folk/Bluegrass** – Solo or group.
2. **Instrumental Rock/Blues** – Solo or group.
3. **Instrumental Broadway** - Solo or group. Show Tunes, **not movies**. (Example: “People” would be acceptable as it is **also** from a Broadway show, not because it is from a movie. “New York, New York” would not be acceptable as it is from a 1977 Liza Minnelli movie.) *Specify the Broadway show after the title.*
4. **Instrumental Patriotic** - Solo or group.
5. **Instrumental Classical** -Solo or group. Conventional music following long-established principles other than a folk, jazz, or popular tradition (mid 1400s – late 1800s). Examples include symphonies, concertos, oratorios, operas, sonatas, fugues or any combination of dance movements such as suites. New age music may be submitted into this category.

**ORIGINAL INSTRUMENTAL**

New score of music. A new song entirely, not an interpretation of an existing song**.** Original instrumental compositions composed by one or more eligible Veterans judged solely on the merits of the composition. Music must contain a distinct melody line and must be composed entirely by an eligible Veteran/s and that Veteran/s will be the one entered in this category. A performer or group other than the composer may perform the work, but the composer(s) should be shown on the video. Lead sheets and chord progressions are helpful to the judging process but are not required.

1. **Original Instrumental** - Solo or group.

**BAND/ENSEMBLE CATEGORIES**

To meet the criteria for the Band/Ensemble categories, the group must consist entirely of eligible Veterans and must include **at least 2 members (at least one must be a singer and at least one must be an instrumentalist)**.  All group members must be shown on the video. **The presence of non-Veterans (including non-Veteran VA staff) will result in the entry being disqualified.** Accompanists are not allowed in this category.

1. **Band/Ensemble – Country/Folk/Bluegrass/Pop**
2. **Band/Ensemble – Jazz/R&B/Soul/Rock/Blues**

**SPECIAL RECOGNITION SOLO OR GROUP**

This category is for vocal or instrumental music entries that recognize individuals who exhibit creative expression through use of music while possessing significant physical or psychological limitations. The intent of this category is to reinforce the concept of the arts as therapy, where an individual uses artistic expression to facilitate successful treatment outcomes. **VA staff may accompany and vocally cue or assist Veterans with entries in this category.**

1. **Special Recognition** – Solo or group.

Entries in this special recognition categories **MUST** also include:

* **A Word document containing a typed statement/narrative** (50 to 250 words) composed by a VA staff person or the Veteran explaining why the Veteran is deserving of special recognition. **Entries submitted without a write-up will not be judged.**
* Consent form 10-3203 and 10-5345 (links included in this handbook) must be signed and dated by the Veteran. The staff contact person submitting the entry for the Veteran should safeguard the signed consent forms at their VA facility.

Tips for Taking Better Video Recordings

* **Be sure to check that all videos play with video and audio before submission.**
* **Focus on the performer**. Avoid taping from the back of the room. Stage presence cannot be judged if you cannot clearly see the performer.
* When video recording dance acts, it is necessary to include the whole-body in the entire recording, including the feet.
* **Sound control** is important! Clear audio makes a performance much easier (and enjoyable) to judge. Make sure your sound is good and balanced.
* **Be aware of the accompaniment being positioned too close to the recording device.**
* **Dance, drama, and music entries** will be accepted digitally (MP4, MOV, Unlisted YouTube link) through the Arts4Vets App. Entries may only be submitted to the Arts4Vet app by VA staff.

Music Division – Entry Submission Information

* **File Type:** MP4, MOV, Unlisted YouTube link
* **Length of performance**: Approximately 3 minutes or less
* References to diagnosis and explanations of emotional or personal content related to the Veteran will not be read or communicated to the national judges. The exception to this rule is an entry submitted into a category that requires a write-up.
* Supplemental documents (newspaper clippings, awards, articles, etc.) submitted to the national level will not be seen by the judges.
* Veterans will not be able to submit their own entries through to the national level of competition or directly into the Arts4Vets App. They must work with the VA facility where they are enrolled and meet the local competition deadline dates.
* **Required Veteran Consent Forms for Participation**

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| **VA FORM 10-3203**  CONSENT FOR PRODUCTION AND USE OF VERBAL OR WRITTEN STATEMENTS, PHOTOGRAPHS, DIGITAL IMAGES, AND/OR VIDEO OR AUDIO RECORDINGS BY VA | **Required to be signed by each Veteran to participate** in the local and national level creative arts competition and Festival event. | Link to a form fillable  VA Form 10-3203:  [VA Form 10-3203 Fill.pdf](https://www.va.gov/vaforms/medical/pdf/VA%20Form%2010-3203%20Fill.pdf) |
| **VA FORM 10-5345**  REQUEST FOR AND AUTHORIZATION TO  RELEASE HEALTH INFORMATION | **This form is only necessary to be completed for Veteran entries that require a write-up:**  Special Recognition category | Link to a form fillable  VA Form 10-5345:  [VA\_Form\_10-5345\_Fillable.pdf](https://www.va.gov/vaforms/medical/pdf/VA_Form_10-5345_Fillable.pdf) |

Music Division Judging Criteria & Results Information

Veterans should communicate with their local VA facility (as early as January 2025) to find out their local competition deadline date.

**Music judging criteria:**

* All categories EXCEPT originals: Intonation (unless piano), Rhythm, Interpretation, Stage Presence, Blend & Cohesiveness (if group)
* Original categories: Melody Line, Rhythm, Style, Lyrics (if vocal)

**National Judging and Results -** The national judging will occur in October-December via the digital image judging process with results being announced in January. VA Local Staff Contacts at each facility will be notified of the competition results via E-mail and through Microsoft Teams channel: NVCA Competition-Local Staff Contacts. All first-place winners from the national level of the competition will be invited to attend and participate as chorus members in the live stage show performance at the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival.

**\*Note:** Not all first-place winners will be selected to perform their solo/group entry in the show. Due to time constraints, the Festival show directors will choose approximately 25 dance, drama, and music first-place entries to perform in the show. The remaining first-place attendees will be invited to participate in the Festival chorus.

Veterans who are invited to the Festival must be prepared (either themselves or through their VA staff contact person) to send an E-mail including the lyrics for music and dance and words/narration for drama entries for this text to be placed in the show script.

**Performance costumes are the Veteran’s responsibility.**

**First-Place National Winning Veterans** **Invited to the Festival** - Veterans invited to the Festival and who accept the invitation to attend must commit to participating fully in the Festival week to the best of their ability. The Festival week is structured with daily workshops, seminars, rehearsals, exhibitions, and the stage show performance. Veterans should not view their attendance at the Festival as a vacation experience. Attendance and participation are required at all scheduled events.

## Veteran Artists, Writers, Performers who are also VA Employees

VA employees who are also Veterans eligible to compete in the competition and if invited to attend the Festival event, must use annual leave (AL), compensatory time off (CT), sick leave (SL) or disabled veteran leave (DVL) (SL and DVL are only appropriate when the individual’s participation is part of their required medical treatment/ordered by their provider), travel CT, or, leave without pay (LWOP). Normal leave approval procedures and rules, as outlined in VA Handbook 5017 and applicable labor agreements, apply.

Music Division Entry Form

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Category # and Name: |  | |
| Title of Entry: |  | |
| Categories 11 & 25, specify from what Broadway show: |  | |
| If entering an instrumental category,  what instrument is the Veteran playing: |  | |
| List all accompanists – Everyone that is visible or heard on the video must be identified as an accompanist or eligible Veteran. | | Accompanist’s name: |

**Solo Entry**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Veteran Name: |  | Male/Female: | *Used only for national*  *data collection.* |
| Email: |  | Phone #: |  |

**Group Entry**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1.Veteran Name |  | Male/Female: | *Used only for national*  *data collection.* |
| Email: |  | Phone #: |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2.Veteran Name |  | Male/Female: | *Used only for national*  *data collection.* |
| Email: |  | Phone #: |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 3.Veteran Name |  | Male/Female: | *Used only for national*  *data collection.* |
| Email: |  | Phone #: |  |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Group Name: |  | # of Veterans in the Group: |  |

**Veterans:** By entering and signing the entry form, you acknowledge that your name, email, phone number, entry, and entry detail information may be uploaded into the VA Arts4Vets/Salesforce Application for the purpose of collecting and organizing competition entries.

*By signing,**I/we confirm I/we have read all the rules and additional information for the division in which I/we am/are entering. If the entry places first at the national level, I/we understand that I/we will be invited to attend the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. I/we have signed the required VA Consent form(s)s (10-3203 and if necessary, 10-5345).*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Veteran Signature(s):* | *Date Signed:* |