aaf american advertising federation



STUDENT RULES & CATEGORIES

2026-2027 COMPETITION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

AMERICAN ADVERTISING AWARDS STUDENT DIVISION

General Information

About 1

About the Competition

- How to Enter 2
- Deadlines 2
- Eligibility Requirements 2
- Student Auto-Forwarding 3
- Judging Procedures 3
- Entry Fees 3
- Entry Requirements 3
- Invoice/Manifest Form 3

The rules, divisions and categories defined here serve as the official policy for the American Advertising Awards competition and replace all others from previous competitions. The name American Advertising Awards, ADDY and the trophy to which this name refers are protected by a registered trademark owned by the American Advertising Federation. The AAF competition rules, category format and the American Advertising Awards competition name should be used at all levels of the competition.

The American Advertising Awards is owned and operated by the American Advertising Federation. All rules and guidelines must be followed entirely by any AAF chapter or district hosting the preliminary stages of the competition. AMERICAN ADVERTISING AWARDS®, ADDY® and NATIONAL ADDY AWARDS® are service marks of the American Advertising Federation, registered with the US Trademark Office. All rights reserved.

Category List

Sales & Marketing

- Sales Promotion. 5
- Collateral Material 5
- Direct Marketing 6

Print Advertising

- Magazine Advertising 7
- Newspaper Advertising 7

Out-of-Home & Ambient Media

- Out-Of-Home 8
- Ambient Media 8

Online/Interactive

- Websites 10
- Social Media 10
- Apps 10
- Advertising & Promotion. 10
- Blogs & Digital Publications 10

Film, Video & Sound

- Audio/Radio Advertising 11
- Television Advertising 11

Cross Platform

- Integrated Campaigns. 12

Elements of Advertising

- Copywriting. 13
- Visual 13
- Film, Video & Sound 13
- Digital Creative Technology. 14
- Artificial Intelligence 14

ABOUT THE AWARDS

The mission of the American Advertising Awards Student Division competition is to recognize and reward creative excellence in the art of advertising.

Conducted annually by the American Advertising Federation (AAF), the local American Advertising Awards Student Division is the first of a three-tier, national competition. Concurrently, across the country, local student entrants vie for recognition as the very best in their markets. At the second tier, local student winners compete with other student winners in one of 15 district competitions. District student winners are then forwarded to the third —national—tier. Entry in your local Student competition is the first step toward winning a national Student ADDY Award.

Entering the American Advertising Awards competition supports our entire industry, because the AAF and its local and district affiliates use the proceeds to enhance advertising through programs such as public service, internships, advocacy groups, advertising education, and consumer awareness.

Selection of the most creative entry is effected by a scoring process in which a panel of judges evaluates all creative dimensions of every entry. A Student Gold ADDY Award is recognition of the highest level of creative excellence and is judged to be superior. Student entries that are also considered outstanding and worthy of recognition receive a Student Silver ADDY Award. The number of awards given in each category is determined by the judges, based on the relative quality of work in that category.

The American Advertising Awards competition honors “The Creative Spirit of Advertising.” It is intended for “original” creative work. Therefore, entries derived from or making use of previously created and/or published pieces by anyone other than the entrant are not permitted. Copyright infringement and/or plagiarism (be it intentional or unintentional) will result in the disqualification and, if applicable, removal of awards from any entry deemed in violation. All entry fees will be forfeited.

ABOUT THE COMPETITION

AMERICAN ADVERTISING AWARDS STUDENT DIVISION

How to Enter

Visit AmericanAdvertisingAwards.com or your local AAF Chapter website. You will be directed to the competition site and login as a student entrant. Review the student category list to find where your work should compete, and follow the simple drop down menus to enter your information. Make sure you credit the members of your creative team, so that they will be recognized properly in press releases and other AAF winner publications. Trophies are engraved based on information submitted at time of entry. Please make sure all fields are accurate. Submission of entries acknowledges the right of the AAF to use them for publication, exhibition, and marketing of the American Advertising Awards competition.

Deadlines

Local deadline information is available from your local AAF Chapter. All AAF Chapters' entry deadlines for this competition year, will occur on or after January 1, 2027. After preparing your entries in the manner outlined in this guide, deliver your entries, before the deadline, to the location indicated. Since you must enter your local American Advertising Awards competition to be eligible for district competition, it is important that you do not miss this deadline.

Please note: Comps, original photographs, illustrations, etc. all become the property of the AAF and will not be returned.

Any work created for the National Student Advertising Competition (NSAC) competition will be eligible for the next American Advertising Awards Student Division competition following the NSAC finals in June. For example, creative for the NSAC sponsor, the NFL, is now eligible for the 2026-2027 American Advertising Awards Student Division competition.

Eligibility Requirements

- Applicants must be enrolled in an accredited U.S. post-secondary educational institution.
- All worked entered into the competition must have been created between January 1 and December 31, 2026.
- Work may be developed specifically for this competition or submitted from previous projects or competitions.
- Work must be created while entrant is a student not employed in the advertising industry. Student intern work is eligible if it is not used by or paid for by a client. Work developed for paying clients will not be accepted.

- Entries may be entered into only one local American Advertising Awards competition, which is determined by the location of the school at which the work was created. If an affiliated competition does not exist in the CBSA (Core-Based Statistical Area), DMA (Designated Market Area) or MSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area), the district will direct the entrant to the nearest affiliated competition.
- Recent graduates are eligible to enter as long as the entry was created while the entrant was a student during the 2026 calendar year and the entry meets all other requirements.

Student Auto-Forwarding

All Gold winning work will be forwarded to the district and national competition at no additional cost to the student entrant. Silver winning work may be advanced to the district or national competition, but the entrant is responsible for paying the applicable entry fee.

Judging Procedures

Judging will be conducted in accordance with the guidelines found on the AAF website. Decisions of judges and the National American Advertising Awards Committee (N3AC), including eligibility, qualifications, and appropriate category placements, are final.

Entry Fees

Entry fee information is available from your local Professional AAF Chapter. Since there is often a substantial savings in entry fees for AAF members, you should consider joining your local organization.

All Entries Must

- Meet all eligibility and deadline requirements.
- Be entered in the correct category and be correctly identified.
- Conform to defined submission requirements.
- Conform to all copyright laws.

Invoice/Manifest Form

After filling out the entry forms, you will be required to sign a invoice/manifest form, listing all of your entries. This form states that by signing below you:

1. Verify that the above information is accurate.
2. Acknowledge that proper rights were obtained for use of any elements of the entry that were not original.
3. Agree to submit documentation deemed necessary for review.
4. Release the entry for internet, broadcast and/or print (allow reuse of material).
5. Verify that the entry was created within the local market (MSA) of the competition.

CATEGORY LIST

AMERICAN ADVERTISING AWARDS
STUDENT DIVISION

aaf

SALES & MARKETING

AMERICAN ADVERTISING AWARDS STUDENT DIVISION

NOTE: All entries in the Sales & Marketing division are allowed 3-5 digital uploads and one optional video upload.

Sales Promotion

Product or Service Sales Promotion
Printed promotional materials for products and services whose distribution comes from means other than traditional mass media.

S01A **Packaging**
All product packaging: 1–4 pieces may be submitted.

S01B **Point of Purchase**
Promotional advertising or display unit that attends the product or service at the specific sale location.

Collateral Material

S02 **Stationery Package—Single or Multiple Pieces**
Stationery entries in this category may contain one or more pieces of letterhead, envelope and/or business cards.

S03 **Printed Annual Report or Brochure**
An annual report is a yearly communications piece, usually with financial data, intended primarily for stockholders or members as a statement or record of a company's or organization's annual performance or status. A brochure is a multiple page/panel piece (usually bound/folded) that advertises, presents and/or describes the advantages, capabilities, worth and/or reasons to buy a product or service. Digital annual reports or brochures should be entered in category S17–Digital Publications.

S04 **Special Event Materials (Invitations, Announcements, Cards, etc.)**
Promotional and/or informational items, usually relating to a specific event/affair at a given location, date, time, etc.

Publication Design
Layout and design of the interior and/or exterior of a magazine or book.

S05A **Cover**
Layout and design of the front exterior of a magazine or book.

S05B **Editorial Spread or Feature**
One editorial spread or feature per entry. Not intended for submission of entire book or magazine.

S05C **Cover/Editorial Spread or Feature—Series**
2–4 covers pieces may be submitted from work that qualifies in categories S05A and/or S05B .

S05D **Magazine Design**
Entire magazine design from cover-to-cover.

S05E **Book Design**
Entire book design from
cover-to-cover.

Direct Marketing

S06 **Direct Marketing**
Anything that is created to be mailed via USPS or delivered via special courier (private, FedEx, etc.) with the purpose of eliciting, provoking or effecting a consumer reaction (response card, phone number to call, order form, sale/event dates, etc.). Category includes Specialty Marketing (promotional products with advertising messages that are created to promote a company, corporate image brand or event) and Apparel (clothing and/ or promotional apparel with an advertising message such as shirts, caps and jackets).

PRINT ADVERTISING

AMERICAN ADVERTISING AWARDS STUDENT DIVISION

NOTE: All entries in the Print Advertising division are allowed 3-5 digital uploads and one optional video upload.

Magazine Advertising

Advertising created to appear in periodic (annually, bi-annually, quarterly, monthly, weekly etc.) publications.

Magazine Advertising

S07A Single (Full Page or Less)

S07B Campaign

2-4 of the above

Newspaper Advertising

Advertising created to run in publications whose primary purpose is to inform the public about current events or issues on a daily or weekly schedule.

Newspaper Advertising

S08A Single (Full Page or Less)

S08B Campaign

2-4 of the above

OUT-OF-HOME & AMBIENT MEDIA

NOTE: All entries in the Out-of-Home & Ambient Media division are allowed 3-5 digital uploads and one optional video upload.

Out-Of-Home

Poster
A single sheet, advertising or promotional piece intended for mounting and display for a product, service or event. Does not include point-of-purchase materials, nor any outdoor signage.

S09A **Single**
S09B **Campaign**
2-4 of the above

Outdoor & Transit Advertising
A single sheet, advertising or promotional piece intended for mounting and display for a product, service or event.

S10A **Outdoor Board (Flat or 3D)**
The outdoor display of advertising messages, notices or events, commonly associated with standardized wooden or metal structures, that are delivered to mass (outdoor) audiences on sidewalks, streets, roadways, etc.

S10B **Mass Transit (Interior or Exterior)**
Advertising placed on the interior or exterior surface of any vehicle, including public transit, corporate vehicles etc. Bus wraps, and all other exterior vehicle signage, as well as bus shelter ads should be entered here.

S10C **Site**
Interior or exterior signage that is restricted to public venues such as malls, airports, train/bus stations, places of business, stadiums, arenas, etc. Does not include posters described in category 09, or signage in the outdoor or transit categories but would include murals.

S10D **Campaign**
2–4 of the above

Ambient Media

Guerilla Marketing, Installations and Events

Formerly known as a form of "non-traditional advertising" guerrilla marketing is an unconventional way of performing advertising and/or promotional activities. Guerrilla Marketing entries must be accompanied by proof of usage. Installations are the design and build-out of temporary or permanent branded environment. Examples might include kiosk, art exhibition, trade show exhibit or retail store. Events: event execution (not architecture—see Installation). Entries in this category should be accompanied by a written or digital (video) summary not to exceed 250 words (written) or 3 minutes (video). Digital summaries must be submitted by uploading the video file via the American Advertising Awards online entry software.

S11A **Single Occurrence or Installation**

S11B **Campaign**

2–4 of the above

ONLINE/INTERACTIVE

AMERICAN ADVERTISING AWARDS STUDENT DIVISION

NOTE: Judging of website entries will be done online, using the digital content provided via URL during the online entry process. You may upload JPEG screenshots for Social Media categories.

Websites

S12 **Website (Desktop or Mobile)**

Social Media

S13A **Single Execution**
Creative execution of brand advertising, marketing and/or promotion that appeared in social media. The same execution may have appeared on one or multiple platforms or in carousel, but only one entry is required.

S13B **Multiple Platforms—Campaign**
2-4 of the above

Apps

Apps must advertise a product or service. A digital summary of 3 minutes or less which demonstrates the functionality and design of the app must be provided. This should be entered as a digital (video) upload and will be used to judge the entry.

S14 **App (Mobile or Web-Based)**

Advertising & Promotion

S15A **Web Banner Ads or Website Takeovers**
Static or Animated web banner ads regardless of size.

S15B **Campaign**
2-4 of the above

Blogs & Digital Publications

S16 **Blogs**
Eligible blog content must support a brand or advertise a product or service.

S17 **Digital Publications**
Online publication (single or multiple occurrence) in support of a brand, such as annual reports, magazines, newsletters or books.

FILM, VIDEO & SOUND

AMERICAN ADVERTISING AWARDS STUDENT DIVISION

NOTE: Judging of these entries will be done using the digital content provided via URL or uploaded during the online entry process.

Audio/Radio Advertising

Audio/Radio advertising is defined as commercial audio (only) messages conveyed to the prospective/target consumer public by the seller of a product or service via mass media transmission.

S18A **Single**
S18B **Campaign**
2-4 of the above

Television Advertising

S19A **Single**
S19B **Campaign**
2-4 of the above

CROSS PLATFORM

AMERICAN ADVERTISING AWARDS STUDENT DIVISION

Integrated Campaigns

An integrated campaign is defined as a campaign or series of ads, commercials or executions that utilize more than one medium. The American Advertising Awards allows entries in all Integrated Campaign categories to submit up to 10 executions for judging. Integrated Campaign entries may be accompanied by a written or digital (video) summary not to exceed 250 words (written) or 3 minutes or less (digital). Digital summaries must be submitted by uploading the video file during the online entry process.

Failure to adhere to these limitations may result in a portion or all of the offending entry to be removed from judging.

Integrated Advertising Campaign

S20 **B-to-B Campaign**

S21 **Consumer Campaign**

Integrated Brand Identity Campaign

S22A **Single**

S22B **Campaign**

2-4 of the above

ELEMENTS OF ADVERTISING

AMERICAN ADVERTISING AWARDS STUDENT DIVISION

Copywriting

S23 Copywriting
Copywriting for any advertising medium.

Visual

S24A Logo Design
An icon, symbol, or trademark designed to represent a product, service, or organization. Entrant may submit a brief description of the client company and its purpose (max. 50 words) to help the judges understand the logo design objective.

S24B Typeface Design
Designs that reflect exceptional use of new original typeface, calligraphy, hand-lettering, etc. as the primary element of advertising.

Illustration
Flat, dimensional, or animated illustration, any number of colors

S25A Single
S25B Campaign
2-4 of the above

Still Photography
S26A Black & White, Single
S26B Color, Single
S26C Digitally Enhanced, Single
Photographic images whose content has been digitally altered to create a new image (often creating an image not possible using traditional photo techniques). Utilitarian photo retouching, color correcting or photo editing alone does not qualify an image for this category. A sample of the original photo(s) MUST be supplied for proper judging.

S26D Campaign
2-4 of the above

Art Direction
Art direction for any advertising medium.

S27A Single
S27B Campaign
2-4 of the above

Film, Video & Sound

Cinematography
Cinematography is defined as the art and process of creating motion picture images including considerations of lighting, photography, camera movement and angle. Cinematography for any motion picture project that qualifies as advertising may be considered eligible, regardless of the method of distribution.

S28A **Single**
S28B **Campaign**
2-4 of the above

S29 **Animation or Special Effects**
2D or 3D visual effects, regardless of the creative method for any motion picture project that qualifies as advertising may be considered eligible, regardless of the method of distribution.

Music and Sound Design
Music only: Any original musical score with lyrics which was recorded primarily for use in any advertising. Does not include music intended for purchase including music in music videos. Music with Lyrics: any original music with sung or spoken lyrics, created/composed expressly for advertising. Syndicated materials, including "re-sing" jingles and library music, are not eligible for entry. **Sound design:** Any combination of non-musical elements, sound effects, ambience and other sonic devices incorporated into a film or video presentation, television commercial or radio commercial to enhance the mood and/or message.

S30A **Single**
S30B **Campaign**
2-4 of the above

Digital Creative Technology

S31 **Digital Creative Technology**
This category recognizes achievement in the creative use of tools, features, technology and overall design of websites, games and apps in the areas of user navigation, responsive design, location technology, augmented reality, mobile interaction and user experience.

Artificial Intelligence

Use of AI as a creative tool for copywriting and other creative elements of an advertisement.

S32A **Copywriting Single**
S32B **Copywriting Campaign**
S32C **Creative Element Single**
032D **Creative Elements Campaign**

Additional Local Only Categories may be added at the discretion of the local organization.