

Entering Doll Competitions – What’s in it for me?

Doll shows and competitions are held at regular intervals all over the world and are well attended by doll makers and enthusiasts alike.



As doll makers the opportunity to enter our dolls in competition can fill us both with excited anticipation and dread. We try to do our best work painting the doll, labour for many hours to complete the underwear on a Bebe or lady doll, then to sew the outer garments, not to mention making the shoes and socks, the hat and accessories! Next we entrust our wonderful creation to the critical scrutiny of a judge. The thought of it alone can be overwhelming, but the benefits which can be derived from entering competition are well worth the undertaking. Every comment left by a judge can lead to better understanding and further enhance both your knowledge and skill as a doll maker. Even if you do not agree with a judge’s comment(s), it can still lead to growth.

Many of my students and fellow doll makers ask me why they should compete in doll shows. After all, they are reasonably happy with their dolls and they say they don’t really care what other people think of them. My answer to that is that there is so much to be learned in doll making that the experience of entering doll shows can teach you. And who doesn’t want to be a better doll maker? Besides, it’s when you continually strive to attain more skills and produce better dolls that you remain passionate about your craft.

By entering competitions you will receive an impartial opinion of your doll making achievement, given by an experienced and informed judge. It allows the judge an opportunity to give you personalised feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of your doll making. This alone is invaluable. Being exposed to new and different ideas can only be beneficial. You might not agree with what the judge says on your critique sheet, but at least you have another opinion, which you can use to perfect your skills. Remember that if you don’t agree with some or all of the judge’s comments, you can always enter your doll in another competition and then you will have yet another judge’s opinion.

There are many doll shows and competitions held around Australia each year. Many Doll/Doll & Bear Clubs hold shows annually and even if you don’t belong to a club

the shows provide a wonderful opportunity for you to enter a doll when one is held in your local area. The shows are also a wonderful opportunity to meet other enthusiasts and to be exposed to what other people are doing with their doll making.

Before entering competitions you may like to know firstly, how they work; secondly, how to prepare you entry and finally, what the judges will be looking for.



So how does one go about preparing a doll for competition? Are there procedures or checklists that we can follow to ensure that our doll has the best chance of success? I am pleased to say that there are guidelines available which if used will ensure that entrants are more likely to do well in competition. Firstly, it is

imperative that there is good communication between studios/teachers and organisers of doll competitions. The starting point should always be the entry form. Read it through very carefully, especially the ‘Conditions of Entry’, and follow the directions and specifications given. Be sure that you are clear about whether you are entering as a *professional*, *non-professional* or *novice*. Some competitions divide the non-professional section into two sections – *non-professional* and *advanced non-professional*. If in doubt, ask questions. Contact the competition organiser (their contact details are usually on the entry form) and ask them to explain matters about which you are not certain.

The Australasian Doll Association, which was originally formed to help doll makers when entering competitions, have worked very hard, in consultation with some of Australia’s leading teachers and judges, to come up with a set of very useful checklists to follow when entering competitions. The following guidelines are courtesy of the Australasian Doll Association and are also used by judges to evaluate antique reproduction dolls:

- Is the doll on the correct body?
- Are there firing imperfections?
- Are the seams cleaned properly?
- Should ears be pierced?

- Are eyes cut out correctly?
- Are the eyes bevelled correctly?
- Are the eyes set so that they are focused?
- Are the eyes clean with no wax or plaster showing?
- Is the mouth cut out correctly?
- Are the eyelids, nostrils or lip crease defined?
- Are fingers and toenails to be outlined in red?
- Is the head attached well?
- Is the doll strung correctly?
- Is the body stuffed firmly enough?
- Are porcelain joints lined?

- Is the skin tone the correct colour?
- Is the cheek blush well blended?
- Is the mouth the correct shape and colour?
- Are the lip accent lines correctly placed?
- Are the lashes the right slant, colour and length?
- Are the brows correctly placed, and are they the correct style and colour?
- Is the blush and detailing (including the fingernails, toenails and finger separation lines, if appropriate) correct?
- If the doll has painted hair, is it the correct colour and smoothness?

- Is the wig suitable for the doll?
- Is it neat and well styled?
- Does the colour enhance the doll?

- Does the costume fit well?
- Are the style and the fabric choice suitable for the era?
- Are the trims and laces of suitable types and proportions?
- Are the seams well finished?
- Is the underwear appropriate?
- Do stockings/socks fit well?
- Are the shoes well-constructed and do they fit well?



By working through the guidelines listed above you will be concentrating on all the aspects that the judges will be focussing on, giving your doll the best chance of success. Membership of the Australasian Doll Association can also provide assistance, through the Association's newsletter and contact with judges who can

answer questions and give advice about entering dolls in competition. Judges attend meetings and ADA social gathering where you can talk to them and ask questions about reproduction doll making and costuming.

Different doll competitions use different evaluation or critique forms. The example below is one that is used by judges for the evaluation of antique reproduction dolls in competitions which are affiliate with the Australasian Doll Association (ADA). It was developed in consultation with Australia's most experienced judges and teachers, and continues to be appraised and re-assessed as the need arises.

This form is designed to provide the entrant with as much constructive criticism as possible. After all, we can't improve our work if we don't have someone to point out where we need to concentrate our efforts. Each entrant's doll begins with 100 points. As the judge identifies errors or faults in each of the subsections listed, points are deducted – usually one point per error. The scoring system is designed to help the entrant identify problems and there is space provided for the judge to make suggestions on how to rectify these.

Obviously the bulk of the points in the evaluation of a doll are for workmanship, painting and costuming. The last subsection on the evaluation form is for bonus points. A maximum of five bonus points may be awarded by judges for extra effort. These are awarded to entrants whose dolls have handmade shoes, socks, hat and/or wig. Points may also be awarded for a considerable amount of handwork or embroidery on the doll's costume. A doll which has sleep and/or flirty eyes may also be awarded some bonus points. The reason for this is to reward those entrants who are making the extra effort to enhance their dolls. The amount of points awarded depends on the discretion of the judges and of course the quality of the work presented by the entrant.

Remember that entering doll competitions makes us all better doll makers and promotes our wonderful hobby. So, let's keep competing, refining our skills and becoming better at what we love to do!

(If you would like some more information regarding the critique sheets/ evaluation forms used by ADA, or you are interested in becoming a member, please contact the Secretary, Ros McKissock at rmckisso@bigpond.net.au or by mail: at 15 Devonshire Rd., Robertson NSW 2577)

ANTIQUE REPRODUCTION DOLL

Name of Doll.....	Category	Section no.....	Entrant no.....
		TOTAL POINTS	PNTS AWARDED
APPRORIATE BODY		5 POINTS	
WORKMANSHIP		15 POINTS	
CLEANING			
EYE CUTTING			
EYE SIZE & SETTING			
MOUTH CUTTING, TEETH SETTING			
PAINTING		35 POINTS	
LASHES			
BROWS			
BLUSH: OVERALL & CHEEKS			
LIPS, NOSE DOTS, EYE DOTS			
TEETH			
WIG, PAINTED HAIR, HEAD DECORATION		5 POINTS	
COSTUMING		35 POINTS	
FIT & CONSTRUCTION			
FABRIC CHOICE & STYLE			
UNDERWEAR			
SHOES, SOCKS, HAT, ETC.			
EXTRA EFFORT		5 POINTS	
TOTAL POINTS		=	

Judge's Signature

Date

Points 95 - 100

Points 90 - 94

Points 85 - 89

Points 75 - 84

Points 60 - 74

The Judge's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.

* Sanctioned by The Australasian Doll Association *

Please use this Competition as a means of feedback on your work and as a guide to improving your doll making skills.

THANK YOU FOR ENTERING OUR SHOW - WE APPRECIATE YOUR ENTRY