

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP



OLD-TIME
piano playing
CONTEST AND FESTIVAL

2026 OFFICIAL CONTEST RULES

These are the Official Rules for the 2026 edition of the World Championship Old-time Piano Playing Contest and Festival. The “Piano Contest” rules below have been revised, so please read them carefully.

Note: On Saturday, May 23, 2026 Senior & Regular Division contestants must draw for playing order at 8:00 a.m. in Rm. #153 of the Music Building.

ADDITIONAL PROVISIONS FOR THE SENIOR DIVISION

* Note: Senior contestants should also read all of the Regular Division rules, as many apply to both divisions! Senior contestants may NOT enter both the Regular Division AND senior Contest. Beginning in 2026, the “theme” selection also applies to Senior Division competitors.

ELIGIBILITY: Senior contestants are defined as those 60-years-of-age or older on the day of competition. Any contestant winning the Senior Division a total of three (3) times (not necessarily in consecutive years) may no longer be declared champion in the Senior Division. However, the contestant may continue to perform in any other eligible contest.

FORMAT: A total of eight (8) Senior Division contestants may play two selections each on Saturday. Up to four (4) contestants may be chosen to advance to perform two selections each on Sunday’s Semi-finals, after which the champion will be selected.

REPERTOIRE: Contestants need to prepare four (4) different selections written no later than 1939 (no medleys allowed), one of which must be a ballad or standard popular song, and not considered “ragtime.” **Senior competitors must also include one selection that adheres to the 2026 theme “food or drink.”(see sample list of possible works)** The music must be memorized. Two selections are played in the PE’s, and each player who advances into the Semi-Finals on Sunday afternoon will play two more selections that meet contest requirements. Contestants are not required to reveal repertoire for specific rounds, rather, each contestant may choose their repertoire from their “pool” list provided. Contestants may play their selections in any order from their list within each round as long as selections are not repeated.

2026 PRIZES: The Senior Champion will be awarded a prize of \$300 and a permanent trophy. A second-place prize of \$200 and third-place prize of \$100 will also be awarded.

TIME LIMIT: A total of eight (8) minutes playing time is allowed for each contestant’s performance of both their tunes (not including time for audience applause, interview time with the emcee, etc.). The penalty for playing in excess of the time limit prescribed is five (5) points for each 30 seconds, or fraction thereof, of overtime.

ENTRY FEE: The entry fee for the Senior Division is \$50 with a penalty fee for late entry past May 1 of \$25. This entry fee is not refundable unless the contest is canceled. The Contest Coordinator, Bobby van Deusen, will answer any questions regarding rules or repertoire at this address: mrpiano@cox.net. No entry will be considered official until the appropriate fee is received.