

# How Many Judges do you Need?

How many judges does a tournament need?

This is one of those things you just sort of intuit your way through. I mean, there's the obvious ratio—one quarter of double-flighted events, one half of single flights—but if all you have is the exactly correct number, the minute one judge goes off to call his Uncle Charlie about how the trout are biting this year, you're in trouble. So how many more than the obvious number do you need?

I say 20% overage is pretty good. More is better. 10% is barely scratching by, and is the absolute minimum. An example: a tournament with 100 LDers requires 25 judges in each round. A tournament that size should have at least 5 extra judges ( $20\% * 25 = 5$ ).

If you're using MJP, the more judges you have, the better the mutuality. That's a fact of life. Another fact of life is that you're probably organizing your break rounds on the assumption of judges obligated one past participation. This means that the number keeps shrinking, and often the usability shrinks even more: if there's only two or three schools left toward the end, they are limited in how much they can judge one another. I have been at tournaments where there were literally no unconflicted judges for the final round. This is bad planning on the part of the tournament, for not hiring (and keeping on the premises) enough extra judges.

Which brings us to hired judges. A lot of tournaments offer hired judges, but the only way hiring really works, and is ethical, is if you sell judges you actually have. Some tournaments sell the arithmetic of the obvious numbers. That is, they tell attendees the ratio is 1 to 3, then sell off the difference because it's really 1 to 4. That's not selling hired judges, that's selling questionable math. It inevitably leads to too few judges, and the next thing you know you're throwing a PF parent into an undefeated LD round. That's the sort of thing that marks a tournament as a low-rent stinker. Even if you do make it to the 20% overage, you're not really selling hired judges. Don't do it.

It is almost inevitable that attendees will want to hire more judges than you have to sell. Hiring out judges is something of an art, sort of like running a waitlist. I negotiate hires for some pretty big tournaments, college affairs where people travel great distances and can really use hired judges because of the expense of transporting and lodging their own. There's never enough hires at a tournament for everybody, so long distance gets you first crack. On the other hand, private schools from down the street? Last crack. Those types are notorious, at every tournament, in not supporting their kids and thinking they can buy anything. They can't. At least not from me. One of the things I do as mentor is convince the colleges that they are under no obligation to honor every single judge hire request. They are, on the other hand, obligated to provide enough judging to insure a great tournament.

It is important that mega-tournaments understand that no number of judges is ever big enough. With MJP, the bigger the pool, the happier the field. The math speaks for itself. With the other divisions, providing rounds off and people who have some decent idea what they're doing is important. Colleges just can't throw in their cousins from Milwaukee—if you just muttered, she's got a voice so squawky, we're kindred spirits—and call it judging. We'll talk about judge qualifications separately.

This stuff about judge numbers is hard to capture in a short essay. A lot of this is simply based on experience and getting a feel. The point is—have I said this enough?—get as many judges as you can. They are the chief measure of the quality of a tournament.