



Official 2026
Competition Rules and
Entry Form
January 23-28, 2026
Reno, Nevada

General Rules for Competitions:

1. All competitors and their crew must be registered as full delegates for the 2026 FLOAT Convention and be registered guests at the Grand Sierra Resort and Casino for four (4) nights from January 25 through 28, 2026. The only exception to this rule are those 2026 FLOAT delegates who live within thirty (30) miles of the Grand Sierra Resort and Casino.
2. All registered delegates at FLOAT are eligible to compete in any of official FLOAT competitions as well as the FLOATEE photo submission contests. FLOAT producers, staff, official faculty, sponsors and vendors are ineligible from competing in any of the competitions taking place at the convention; instructors may enter the FLOATEE contests. Bonus class instructors and/or panelists are not considered full faculty and may therefore compete.
3. All competitors are responsible for assembling their own competition teams. While the FLOAT producers are willing to assist with locating able volunteers to help with competition entries, FLOAT's producers, staff, instructors or crew members are not permitted to compete or assist as crew in any of the sanctioned FLOAT competitions.
4. Designer of the Year competitions (Sculpture, Entrance Decor, Live Centerpiece, Column Design and Organic Decor) are limited to no more than ten (10) entries this year due to spacial limitations at the host hotel. Pre-enrollment is required for these competitions. Deadline competitions do not require pre-enrollment.
5. Each competitor is limited to only one (1) entry in any DOTY competition category and is required to work within the specified guidelines, timelines and deadlines provided with each individual competition's rules. Unless otherwise specified, all competitors will be responsible for supplying their own equipment, tools, supplies, balloons, etc, in order to complete their entry. In the event of competition delay due to unforeseen circumstances, such as power outages, media interviews, etc, the Competition Director reserves the right to extend competition deadlines for individual entrants or all competitors as a whole.
6. Competitors who request balloons or supplies from FLOAT sponsors, including balloon providers, are subject to the same rules and expectations as other competitors who are providing their own materials. FLOAT cannot be responsible for lost, delayed or incomplete product requests intended for competition that are promised or provided by sponsors. Ultimately it is the responsibility of the competitor to insure that his or her materials are on hand and ready to go before each competition begins.



Official 2026 Competition Rules Continued

7. All entries remain the property of the competitor once the competitions are over. All entries must remain on display until their specified pick-up or tear down times. Failure to remove your entry by each competition's specified pick-up or tear down times will result in the forfeiture of such entry and will result in a disqualification and nullification of any prizes if applicable.

8. All competitors at FLOAT understand that they are doing so at their own risk to their person as well as possessions. FLOAT, its producers, instructors, crew and sponsors cannot be held responsible for any loss or theft of personal items, equipment, supplies or any other items found in the competition areas during both the competition or display portions of the event. In addition, FLOAT, its producers, instructors, crew and sponsors cannot be held responsible for any harm that may come to a competitor or team member during the competition, display or tear down process, including but not limited to injury, illness or death. Competitors may also be asked to provide proof of business insurance before competing. Please use smart practices and be responsible for your own things.

9. No licensed, trademarked or copyrighted characters, themes or designs may be created in a competition entry without expressed written permission from the owner of said character, theme or design. Those wishing to create any such item must provide documented written permission on or before December 15, 2026, so that the FLOAT Convention can validate said permission.

10. Competitors are expected to represent themselves in a professional manner and celebrate good sportsmanship during each event. A competitor determined to be cheating to better their own entry or one who attempts to or successfully sabotage another competition entry in any way, shape or form will be immediately disqualified from the event in question and may face permanent disqualification from any and all future FLOAT competitions.

11. Failure to follow these and any of the event specific rules may result in disqualification. The Competition Director reserves the right to make any rulings based on issues that may arise that are not covered by the rules of a particular event. Any unforeseen issues will be addressed by the Competition Director as or if they occur.

12. Understand that as the lead designer, you are responsible for the actions of your crew members during all competitions. Any violation of the rules that occurs as a result of one of your crew members will be assessed towards your entry in that given competition.

13. In conjunction with Rule #5, no entry in a design competition may be submitted in more than one category. In addition, designers may not replicate a design already submitted in one competition as their entry in another competition. However, a designer may utilize the same



Official 2026 Competition Rules Continued

theme or similar elements throughout multiple entries without concern of penalty.

14. In competitions where your team has a designated space marked on the floor with tape, you are not permitted to remove any of such markings until instructed to do so by the Competition Director. Removal of the markings may result in disqualification of said entry.

15. While FLOAT stresses the practice of safe and responsible balloon policies, entries in FLOAT's designer competitions are not required to follow the California laws pertaining to foil balloon use. Because the balloons at FLOAT for competitions are being used in a professional and responsible manner as well as indoors at all times, competitors are not restricted in this manner in conjunction with design competitions.

16. No device that emits a liquid or gas may be used in any competition piece due to the building's smoke detection systems. This includes but is not limited to the use of smoke machines, fog machines, bubble blowers or any CO2 based device.

17. At the end of regulation time for competitions, the designs are either finished or they are not. Entries declared not finished by the designer will be disqualified from entry and they will receive a score of zero (0). Late penalties are no longer in effect.

18. The use of signage or vinyl appliques are permitted in designer competitions. Because of the nature of their creation, signs may be pre-produced and vinyl may be pre-cut prior to competitions. However, no applique may be placed on decor elements prior to competing. Signs may only be used if they fit within the given design space and cannot be hung from above.

19. Pre-made commercial framing kits are permitted in FLOAT competitions, but cannot be pre-assembled, painted or prepped in any way. If you have any concerns over whether or not an element of your entry is valid, you should contact the Competition Director immediately.

20. In conjunction with Rule #4, those wishing to enter FLOAT's competitions that are part of the Designer of the Year Award (Entrance, Table Centerpiece Live, Sculpture, Column Design and Organic Decor) must secure their spot in any given competition with a security deposit payment. Those wishing to qualify for the Designer of the Year Award must hold their spots with a deposit of \$250.00 US. Individual competitions will be held with a deposit of \$50.00 US. These deposits will be refunded to the competitor upon completion of their finished, viable entry in each competition that a deposit has been paid in. It will be up to the Competition Director to determine what is and what is not deemed a viable entry, and that decision is final.



Official 2026 Competition Rules Continued

21. If a competition fills to capacity, then a waiting list will be taken for those wishing to enter if someone withdraws. No payment will be expected from anyone on the waiting list unless a spot opens up for them. They will then be given a fair amount of time to get their payment made, as determined by the Executive Director. If they fail to meet that schedule, then they will be placed at the back of the list and the next eligible person will be offered the spot. Those on the waiting lists cannot be guaranteed complimentary product in those events where product is being supplied.

22. In the event that a competitor chooses to withdraw from Designer of the Year eligibility, the \$250.00 US deposit paid is forfeit. Those who enter individual competitions and have paid the \$50.00 US deposit for each competition will also forfeit any deposits paid if they withdraw from a competition. In the event that a competitor cancels their registration to FLOAT 2026 for any reason, the same rules apply to their deposits as stated in Rules #20 and #21

23. Pre-recorded music, video, sound effects and motorized elements are permitted, but any element involved that comes into contact with balloons cannot be preconstructed in any way. In addition, the Competition Director reserves the right to disengage any audio or visual effect that is considered distracting or disruptive to another entry. **DO NOT USE STROBE EFFECTS IN YOUR DESIGNS.**

24. With regard to sponsored competitions, unless otherwise stated in the individual rules for each competition, entrants are required to **ONLY** use the brands or products that are sponsoring the competition. **NO EXCEPTIONS WILL BE MADE TO THIS RULE.** In other words, if a particular manufacturer is sponsoring balloons for a given event, as a designer you **MUST** use that brand and that brand only in your entry. Affiliations and brand loyalty are not grounds for exceptions in this competition series. If you are unwilling to use a particular brand or product because you are concerned that it will affect your working relationship with a particular company, then you should not enter that corresponding competition.

25. In conjunction with Rule #24, if you have entered a competition with sponsored product and miss the deadline for complimentary supplies from the sponsor, you are still obligated by the rules to use only that manufacturer's products in your entry. Competitors at that point will need to secure said product on their own and at their own expense.

26. Neither FLOAT nor the host hotel can assume liability for the care or containment of live floral elements prior to the competition. The use of live floral elements is at your own risk.

27. Only designated crew members assigned to a particular competition team may be involved in set up or clean up of a work space. Now outside people may assist in that process.



Official 2026 Competition Rules Continued

28. No aerosol based shine products may be used in a competition. Should a competitor need to use an aerosol based shine product, then the decor elements must be removed from the building and sprayed outside.

29. Helium and Hi-FLOAT will be provided for all competitors with the understanding that it is to be used moderately and shared between all competitors. If a design requires a large amount of either element, then the competitor is required to provide their own helium, Hi-FLOAT and appropriate inflation equipment. Please note that helium tanks and Hi-FLOAT dispensers will be in limited quantities, so competitors are expected to share access to resources in a professional manner.

30. Unless otherwise posted, all entries must remain on display until 6:00 AM on Thursday, January 29th, 2026, and must be removed no later than 12:00 PM that same day. Disregarded entries will be subject to removal by FLOAT staff and no responsibility will be claimed for lost or missing items.

31. When a competitor has determined they have completed their entry, they must announce to the Competition Director that they have completed work on the piece. Once that has been officially confirmed, the entry is considered finished and ready for submission. Once a competitor announces they are finished, that is where the work ends on the design. If a competitor changes their mind and wishes to return working on a competition piece, they do have the right to rescind the completed statement as long as time remains in the competition. By taking this action, however, the competitor surrenders the original timing ranking they were assigned in the competition and are subject to the new ranking based on their new placement of completion.

32. Any competitor who makes changes or repairs to any entry after their competition has ended without expressed permission from the Competition Director is subject to immediate disqualification.

33. FLOAT and the Competition Director reserve the right to make adjustments to any and all rules at any time, including unforeseen circumstances during the competitions themselves.



Competition Rules - Sculpture Sponsored by Gemar USA

Friday, January 23, 2026 - 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM

Location - Nevada Conference Center (Spa Level)

Theme - None - Open to Artist Choice

1. All competitors must adhere to all rules listed under general competitions.
2. This is a timed competition where entrants are expected to create their pieces in front of a security panel within the time frame of twelve (12) hours. Nothing may be preconstructed, painted, glued, cut or otherwise pre-assembled without the prior approval of the Competition Director. Failure to secure such approval may result in the immediate disqualification of your entry.
3. Entries are limited to 10' wide by 10' deep by 10' tall. All elements of decor must fit within the confines of said space, including any supplemental signage a designer may wish to use.
4. Teams are limited to no more than one (1) designer and nine (9) crew members.
5. Sculptures must be made from balloons and traditional industry related materials. Any use of non-traditional building materials not generally used in balloon sculpture construction must be pre-approved by the Competition Director prior to the event. Sculptures should reflect the world of balloon decorating techniques but are not limited to such. With that in mind, at least 90% of the entry must be made from balloons.
6. All competition pieces must be free standing. No overhead or wall-based rigging is permitted. All mechanical elements involved with framing must be found within the footprint of the piece.
7. All competitors are permitted to work only within the designated time allotted: Friday, January 23, 2026, from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM. Teams will be allowed to set up their work station from 7:15 AM until 7:45 AM prior to the start of the competition. All entries must be completed by 8:00 PM. There is an added thirty minute period for clean up so all entries must be cleaned up and free and clear by 8:30 PM that evening.
8. Lighting, video and audio effects may be used in a sculpture entry. However, any effects used as part of an entry cannot distract or detract from other entries. The Competition Director will determine whether or not an effect distracts or detracts from another entry.
9. Competitors will be permitted to spread out and work throughout the event space. However, it should be understood that all competitors must share the space equally and no



Sculpture Design (Continued)

Sponsored by Gemar USA

one team should dominate or take on space at the expense of another competitor.

10. Because there is no theme to this competition, the concept of a sculpture is open to the interpretation of the designer. There is no established definition of what qualifies as a sculpture, but designers should be aware that if they choose to go a non-traditional route, their vision in their design needs to be conveyed to the judges without verbal explanation. Competitors are not allowed to be present during the judging process nor will be given the opportunity to address the judges about their logic, vision or message.

11. Gemar USA is the latex sponsor of this competition. All balloons used in the competition must be those produced by Gemar Balloons. Until further notice, any foil balloons used by competitors are up to the discretion of each competitor.

12. This competition will feature both a judging panel and is part of the Delegates' Choice awards. Please note that the results of Delegates' Choice have no bearing on the Judging Panel's decisions and are not considered as part of the Designer of the Year competition.

13. Prizes are as follows:

First Place - \$300.00 and plaque

Second Place - \$200.00 and plaque

Third Place - \$100.00 and plaque

Delegates' Choice - plaque



Competition Rules - Entrance Decor

Sponsored by Elitex and Anagram Balloons

Saturday, January 24, 2026 - 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM

Location - Tahoe Ballroom

Theme - "A Whole New Dimension"

1. All competitors must adhere to all rules listed under general competitions.
2. This is a timed competition where entrants are expected to create their pieces in front of a security panel within the time frame of four (4) hours. Nothing may be preconstructed, painted, glued, cut or otherwise pre-assembled without the prior approval of the Competition Director. Failure to secure such approval will result in the immediate disqualification of your entry.
3. The design must fit within the designated measurements of 13' wide by 5' deep. There is no restriction on the overall height of the entry, however the design must be free-standing without overhead or wall based rigging. Electrical cords, if necessary, extending beyond the official competition space are permitted and do not penalize the entry, but must be safely secured and not distracting to either the entry in use or other entries around it.
4. Teams may consist of no more than four (4) balloon crew members, with one (1) designer and three (3) crew members.
5. Entries must be made from balloons and traditional industry related materials. Any use of non-traditional building materials not generally used in balloon sculpture construction must be pre-approved by the Competition Director prior to the event. Entries should reflect the world of balloon decorating techniques but are not limited to such. With that in mind, at least 90% of the entry must be made from balloons.
6. The concept of "entrance decor" is open to the interpretation of the designer and is not limited to an archway. Entrance decor is simply that; balloon decor that is used to decorate an entrance to a space. It may consist of any type of balloon design or element that the artist deems pertinent to their design. However, it is important to note that the artist is expected to create a design that is appropriate for the space at hand. Special allowances will not be given to designs that do not take dimensional elements into account.
7. All competitors must focus on the central theme as "a whole new dimension." This involves aspects of outer space, alien life forms and similar science fiction style elements. Please note that trademarked intellectual properties related to science fiction and space are off limits.
8. All competitors are permitted to work only within the designated times allotted: Saturday, January 24, from 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM. Teams will be permitted a staging and set up period



Entrance Decor (Continued)

Sponsored by Elitex Anagram Balloons

from 7:15 AM until 7:45 AM where they may set up their work stations and organize product. No construction of any kind may take place during this period. All entries should be completed by 12:00 PM. In addition, all teams must have their work space cleaned and cleared from debris and equipment by 12:30 PM that same day.

9. Competitors must use Elitex Balloons in their design, creation and presentation of their entries. In addition, all entries must use at least one Anagram foil balloon in their design. By entering in this competition, you are allowing sponsors of the competition the right to use photos of your entry in their marketing platforms as part of their sponsorship of this event.

10. This competition will feature both a judging panel and is part of the Delegates' Choice awards. Please note that the results of Delegates' Choice have no bearing on the Judging Panel's decisions and are not considered as part of the Designer of the Year competition.

11. Prizes are as follows:

First Place - \$300.00 and plaque

Second Place - \$200.00 and plaque

Third Place - \$100.00 and plaque

Delegates' Choice - plaque



Competition Rules - Column Design

Sponsored by Gemar USA

Saturday, January 24, 2026 - 2:30 PM to 6:30 PM

Location - Tahoe Ballroom

Theme - "The Enchanted Garden"

1. All competitors must adhere to all rules listed under general competitions.
2. This is a timed competition where entrants are expected to create their pieces in front of a security panel within the time frame of four (4) hours. Nothing may be preconstructed, painted, glued, cut or otherwise pre-assembled without the prior approval of the Competition Director. Failure to secure such approval will result in the immediate disqualification of your entry.
3. The footprint of each entry must completely fit within a 5' wide by 5' deep square space. Once the entry reaches a height of 5', it may expand beyond the 5' by 5' box footprint. While there is no specific height restriction, all pieces must be free-standing and are limited to the ceiling height in the space. Electrical cords, if necessary, extending beyond the official competition space are permitted and do not penalize the entry, but must be safely secured and not distracting to either the entry in use or other entries around it.
4. Teams may consist of no more than (3) balloon crew members, including the designer(s). It should be noted that this is a restriction of three crew members total, not three at any one given time. In other words, you may not sub out crew members during the competition. Lead designers must submit a team roster prior to the start of the competition.
5. Entries must be made from balloons and traditional industry related materials. Any use of non-traditional building materials not generally used in balloon sculpture construction must be pre-approved by the Competition Director prior to the event. Entries should reflect the world of balloon decorating techniques but are not limited to such. With that in mind, at least 90% of the entry must be made from balloons.
6. All competitors are permitted to work only within the designated times allotted: Saturday, January 24, from 2:30 PM to 6:30 PM. Teams will be allowed to set up their work station from 1:45 PM until 2:15 AM prior to the start of the competition. In addition, a clean up period of 30 minutes will be allotted until 7:00 PM. However, no construction of any design can take place during that period.
7. Even though the concept of "column design" is entirely open to the artist's interpretation, essentially the entry must be supported by one singular internal support and one floor-centric base structure in order to qualify in this competition. Secondary structural elements may be involved in the design, but in the end they must come off of the singular structural support.



Column Design Continued

Sponsored by Gemar USA

8. All entries must conform to the theme of “The Enchanted Garden.” While this theme is open to some interpretation, designers must include aspects of both “enchanted” and “garden.”

9. Gemar USA is the latex sponsor of this competition. All balloons used in the competition must be those produced by Gemar Balloons. Until further notice, any foil balloons used by competitors are up to the discretion of each competitor.

10. This competition will feature both a judging panel and is part of the Delegates’ Choice awards. Please note that the results of Delegates’ Choice have no bearing on the Judging Panel’s decisions and are not considered as part of the Designer of the Year competition.

11. Prizes are as follows:

First Place - \$300.00 and plaque

Second Place - \$200.00 and plaque

Third Place - \$100.00 and plaque

Delegates’ Choice - plaque



Competition Rules - Organic Decor

Sponsored by Betallic

Sunday, January 25, 2026 - 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM

Location - Tahoe Ballroom

Theme - "Monochromatic"

1. All competitors must adhere to all rules listed under general competitions.
2. This is a timed competition where entrants are expected to create their pieces in front of a security panel within the time frame of four (4) hours. Nothing may be preconstructed, painted, glued, cut or otherwise pre-assembled without the prior approval of the Competition Director. Failure to secure such approval may result in the immediate disqualification of your entry.
3. Entries are limited to a size of 12' wide by 6' deep and spaces will be marked as such. Height is limited to the ceiling of the space.
4. Teams are limited in this competition to one (1) designer and three (3) crew members.
5. Designs must be made from balloons and traditional industry related materials. Any use of non-traditional building materials not generally used in balloon sculpture construction must be pre-approved by the Competition Director prior to the event. Sculptures should reflect the world of balloon decorating techniques but are not limited to such. Given the nature of this competition, at least 90% of the design must consist of balloons in one form or another.
6. All competition pieces must be free standing. No overhead or wall-based rigging is permitted. Any framework must fit within the confines of the designated competition space.
7. All competitors are permitted to work only within the designated times allotted: Sunday, January 25, 2026, from 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM. Teams will be allowed to set up their work station from 7:15 AM until 7:45 AM prior to the start of the competition. In addition, a clean up period of 30 minutes will be allotted until 12:30 PM. However, no construction of any design can take place during those pre or post competition periods.
8. While there is no official definition of exactly what "organic decor" is, for the purposes of this competition, balloon elements involved should create the appearance of randomness with regard to placement and sizing as opposed to techniques used in what is considered classic or standard balloon decor styles. Randomness in this case, however, does not apply to color placement of balloons, in the case of using organic style to create an ombre effect within your piece.



Organic Decor Continued

Sponsored by Betallic

9. Foam-based letter templates or metal frames that balloons may be placed inside must be assembled on site during the competition. Foam-based letter templates are not allowed to be pre-traced, cut or prepared in any way. Refer to general rules #19 regarding pre-made framing kits. Anything else that a designer may wish to place balloons inside of or use in their design that is not considered standard balloon decor must be pre-approved by the Competition Director prior to the event.

10. In order to adhere to the theme “Monochromatic” competitors should plan to create a design that is uses only primary color and then variations of that same color within an acceptable color range. Any other aspect of the design is entirely up to the designer. In addition, the design may include any props or accent pieces as long as they primarily adhere to the color selection chosen by the artist.

11. All balloons used in this competition, both latex and foil, must be produced or distributed through Betallic. As sponsors of the event, no exceptions will be permitted. By entering in this competition, you are allowing Betallic the right to use photos of your entry in their marketing platforms as part of their sponsorship of this event.

12. This competition will feature both a judging panel and is part of the Delegates’ Choice awards. Please note that the results of Delegates’ Choice have no bearing on the Judging Panel’s decisions and are not considered as part of the Designer of the Year competition.

13. Prizes are as follows:

First Place - \$300.00 and plaque

Second Place - \$200.00 and plaque

Third Place - \$100.00 and plaque

Delegates’ Choice - plaque



Competition Rules - Live Centerpiece

Sponsored by FLOAT

Sunday, January 25, 2026 - 2:30 PM to 4:00 PM

Location - Tahoe Ballroom

Theme - "A Celebration of Life"

1. All competitors must adhere to all rules listed under general competitions.
2. This is a timed competition where entrants are expected to create their pieces in front of a security panel within the time frame of ninety (90) minutes. Nothing may be preconstructed, painted, glued, cut or otherwise pre-assembled without the prior approval of the Competition Director. Failure to secure such approval may result in the immediate disqualification of your entry.
3. With regard to sizing in this competition, there are two primary concerns. First, the base of the centerpiece may not exceed an overall size of a 22" CIRCLE for any element of the design up to and including 36" from the table surface. Once the design passes the 36" point from the surface of the table, the design may then expand beyond the 22" restriction. There is no restriction on overall height for this contest, but the ceiling height is 18'. Failure to conform to size restrictions will result in a disqualification.
4. Teams may consist of no more than one (1) primary designer and one (1) assistant.
5. Entries must be made from balloons and traditional industry related materials. Any use of non-traditional building materials not generally used in balloon sculpture construction must be pre-approved by the Competition Director prior to the event. Entries should reflect the world of balloon decorating techniques but are not limited to such. With that in mind, at least 50% of the entry must be made from balloons.
6. Once the competition has begun, only the individual competitor and one (1) assistant is permitted to work on their design. No persons other than the competitor and assistant are allowed to be involved in any way, shape or form with the completion of the entry once the competition has begun. Any competitor who receives assistance from anyone not officially sanctioned by the FLOAT Competition Director during the competition will result in the immediate disqualification of their design. This includes non-participants locating or delivering items to competitors during the active competition.
7. The concept of "table centerpiece", while open to the interpretation of the designer, is different from that of a buffet style centerpiece. As such, it should absolutely adhere to the "14 Inch Rule" in conjunction to centerpiece design.



Live Centerpiece (Continued)

Sponsored by FLOAT

8. All entries must adhere to the theme “A Celebration of Life,” which refers to honoring the memory of someone who has passed away. As an added element to this event, competitors are encouraged to showcase someone who has passed away in their own lives that they would like to pay tribute to. This competition is not limited to human beings; it may center around a beloved pet or even a fictitious character as long as the intellectual property rules as listed in the general rules are not violated.

9. For the sake of this competition, one (1) additional element will be allowed in conjunction with the theme. Competitors are allowed to submit a .pdf file measuring no more than 7” wide by 10 1/2” wide that may include text and one (1) photo related to the individual

9. Competitors are allowed to use any brand of balloon they like for this competition, as long as said balloons fit within the parameters of the theme and requirements.

10. All competitors are permitted to work only within the designated times allotted: Sunday, January, 2026, from 2:30 PM to 4:00 PM. Teams will be permitted a staging and set up period from 1:45 PM until 2:15 PM where they may set up their work stations and organize product. No construction of any kind may take place during this period. In addition, all teams must have their work space cleaned and cleared from debris and equipment by 4:30 PM that same day.

11. This competition will feature both a judging panel and is part of the Delegates’ Choice awards. Please note that the results of Delegates’ Choice have no bearing on the Judging Panel’s decisions and are not considered as part of the Designer of the Year competition.

12. Prizes are as follows:

First Place - \$200.00 and plaque

Second Place - \$100.00 and plaque

Third Place - \$50.00 and plaque

Delegates’ Choice - plaque



Official Judging Criteria

It is important for you as a competitor to know how you are being evaluated when preparing for a competition. Please review the following information to better prepare yourself for competing at the 2026 FLOAT Convention.

Entries in each of the design competitions will be scored based on the following criteria:

A. Structural Elements: Does your design appear to be solidly constructed? Are your mechanics showing, or have you hidden them all? If they are showing, are they done so in a manner that is conducive to the overall design?

B. Originality and Creativity: Is your entry significant in its own right, or does it draw too much from existing designs already common to the market? If it does borrow from established sculpture designs, what have you done to make it new and refreshing? Have you incorporated a new technique in the design, or possibly found a new way to use an older technique?

C. Visual Elements: Does your entry abide by the various elements of design? Is it balanced? Is your use of color appropriate for the message and tone you wish to send to the viewer? Is your eye lead throughout the piece, or are you focused on a central point? In either case, does that benefit or hinder the design?

D. Range of Skill: Does the design incorporate complex techniques or is it based on simpler applications? Does the piece show a range of talent or are there multiple applications involved?

E. Overall Impact: When all is said and done, how does the entry make you feel? Is there an emotional connection made between the viewer and the piece? If so, is that intended? Do you feel that the design tells a story or sends a message? Is this something you're going to want to remember or feel encouraged to duplicate later?

Scoring: Each entry in each competition will be scored by five (5) different judges. Judges will award between 0 and 10 points for each of the five categories listed above, giving a final score between 0 and 50 points by each judge for each entry. This means initially each entry can score as much as 250 total points.

However, to prevent the possibilities of favoritism, the highest and lowest scores are thrown out, leaving the three middle scores and the highest possibility of 150 points in a competition.



Judging Criteria Continued

Disqualifications: The Competition Director may disqualify a competition piece for the following reasons:

- A. Violating any of FLOAT's General Rules for competing
- B. Violating deadline restrictions
- C. Violating specific rules aimed at sponsorship support
- D. Cheating, being dishonest or anything deemed unsportsmanlike or unprofessional in a competition atmosphere

Judges: Judges are selected along the following criteria:

- A. Must be deemed an authority in the particular field they are judging by the Competition Director
- B. Cannot be a salaried full-time employee for a balloon manufacturer.
- C. Be familiar with the process of competing in a timed design competition, been a former competitor or award winner.

Judges only score based on the five criteria listed at the top of the sheet. They are not to share scores or opinions with each other while they are judging, and they are not allowed to issue deductions deemed the responsibility of the Competition Director.

In the event that a judge is discovered to have violated any of these rules, his or her scores will be removed and a new judge will be chosen to replace them.

Awards: In all of FLOAT's deadline competitions, prizes will be awarded for First, Second and Third Places. These awards will be presented based upon the judging panel's final scores.

The Delegates' Choice awards are not eligible as part of the deadline competitions.



FLOAT's Designer of the Year

If a designer enters at least three (3) of FLOAT's five live designer competitions, that person is then eligible for the title of our 2026 Designer of the Year.

Designer of the Year will be determined through the following process:

A. Competitor is deemed eligible by completing one (1) entry in at least three (3) of the following competitions: Entrance Decor, Live Table Centerpiece, Sculpture, Column Design and Organic Decor. Please note that deadline contests are not part of the Designer of the Year eligibility as they are not considered a live competition.

B. Should a competitor enter four (4) or five (5) of the eligible competitions, then their highest three (3) event scores will be used to determine their official final score.

C. The total sum of all points from each of the three designated event scores will be tallied to give each artist a final score.

D. The competitor with the highest final score will be declared Designer of the Year.

E. No competitor shall receive special consideration or "bonus points" for competing in more than three (3) categories. The benefit to competing in more than three categories is that you have more options to achieve higher scores than another competitor who chooses not to enter more than three categories.

F. In the unlikely event of a tie between two or more artists in total points for Designer of the Year, the tie will be broken by reviewing the following steps:

1. Head to head points - If the artists in question were involved in the same design competition(s), then their points for that (or those) competition(s) will be tallied and the winner declared by whoever has the highest points strictly from those competitions.

2. Penalty points - If a tie remains, then any penalty points assessed to the artists in question will be tallied and the artist with the fewest penalties against them will be declared the winner.

3. Delegates' Choice - If a tie still remains, then the artists' overall "Delegates' Choice" points will be tallied and the winner declared based on those figures.

4. Executive Decision - In the extremely remote possibility that a tie still remains after these other steps have been taken, then the Competition Director will choose the winner.



Hanging Decor Contest Rules

Sponsored by Klik-Klik

Monday, January 26, 2026 - 12:00 PM to 1:00 PM deadline

Location - Reno Salon / the FLOAT Flop Zone

Theme - "The Beauty of Flight"

1. All competitors must adhere to all rules listed under general competitions.
2. This is a deadline based competition where designers must submit a finished decor piece design between 12:00 PM and 1:00 PM on Monday, January 26, 2026. As such any and all construction must be completed on the design by that time and must be submitted by the deadline in order to qualify.
3. With regard to sizing, the ceiling height in this space is 14' and your design itself must be at least nine (9) feet off the floor. In addition, you are limited to no more than two (2) rig points on the ceiling to support your piece as rig points in the space are limited.
4. There is no limit to the number of people who may be involved in the design. However, only one person will be credited as the designer.
5. Sculptures must be made from balloons and traditional industry related materials. Any use of non-traditional building materials not generally used in balloon sculpture construction must be pre-approved by the Competition Director prior to the event. Sculptures should reflect the world of balloon decorating techniques but are not limited to such. With that in mind, at least 75% of the entry must be made from balloons.
6. Please note that Klik Klik products will be provided for this competition. Please connect with the Competition Director prior to January 10th if you wish to discuss a specific need you have regarding this competition.
7. All entries **MUST** use Klik Klik products and equipment to place and rig their designs.
8. All competition pieces must be hanging from the ceiling with no support from anywhere else in the room, including the floor. All rigging must be achieved using Klik Klik products; no mechanical lift equipment will be accessible or permitted. Competitors must do their own rigging, or have someone on their team do it.
9. Competitors may enter multiple designs in this category.
10. All entries must create a design that is appropriate to the theme. Failure to adhere to the theme will result in a twenty five (25) point penalty off their score.



Hanging Decor (Continued)

Sponsored by Clik-Clik

11. Competitors may be asked to provide a copy of their business insurance upon installation of their piece if the design is considered a safety risk when it is presented and placed.

12. When a competitor has presented and rigged their entry, the entry is to be considered complete at that point. No additional work may be completed on a design at that point. Once a competitor has rigged their entry, that is where the work ends on the design and the piece cannot be taken back down in order to make changes or repairs until after judging.

13. No powered elements may be used in this competition, including battery based elements.

14. After judging has been completed, competitors may ask to repair their pieces. This will need to be coordinated through the Competition Director and at a time with minimal activity in the space.

15. This is a judged competition only; no Delegates' Choice Award will be issued. This design competition is not part of the Designer of the Year designation at FLOAT. In addition, there is no financial deposit required for this competition.

16. Prizes are as follows:

First Place - \$150.00 and plaque

Second Place - \$100.00 and plaque

Third Place - \$50.00 and plaque



Competition Rules - Delivery Piece

Sponsored by Hi-FLOAT and Hi-SHINE

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 - 12:00 PM to 1:00 PM deadline

Location - Registration Desk

Theme - "Graduation"

1. All competitors must adhere to all rules listed under general competitions.
2. This is a deadline based competition where designers must submit a finished delivery piece design between 12:00 PM and 1:00 PM on Tuesday, January 27, 2026. As such any and all construction must be completed on the design by that time and must be submitted by the deadline in order to qualify.
3. With regard to sizing in this competition, the footprint of the delivery piece should fit within a 36" by 36" square space and must remain within that space upwards to a height of 48". After the design has reached a height of 48" it may expand beyond the 36" by 36" confines, but may not exceed a height of 96" (or eight feet).
4. There is no limit to the number of people who may be involved in the design. However, only one person will be credited as the designer.
5. Entries must be made from balloons and traditional industry related materials. Any use of non-traditional building materials not generally used in balloon sculpture construction must be pre-approved by the Competition Director prior to the event. Entries should reflect the world of balloon decorating techniques but are not limited to such. With that in mind, at least 75% of the entry must be made from balloons.
6. Please note that helium and Hi-FLOAT will be provided for this competition. All competitors should check in with the FLOAT registration desk to inquire about the use of both.
7. All entries MUST use Hi-FLOAT extender in some form or another and be prepared to show how the product was used in their design. Helium balloons are NOT required to be used with this competition, but Hi-FLOAT is. In addition, Hi-SHINE MUST be used as a shine agent if you wish to do so before completing your entry.
8. All competition pieces must be free standing. No overhead or wall based rigging is permitted. The design should also be easily transportable as if a non-balloon person could handle it.
9. Competitors may enter multiple designs in this category.



Delivery Piece (Continued)

Sponsored by Hi-FLOAT and Hi-SHINE

10. All entries must create a design that is appropriate to the theme. Failure to adhere to the theme will result in a twenty five (25) point penalty off their score.

11. When a competitor has presented their design to the registration desk, the entry is to be considered complete at that point. The competitor will then be instructed by the competition director where to place their entry. At that time, the competitor will be responsible for relocating the piece as directed. While minor tweaking will be permitted due to the movement of the piece, no additional work may be completed on a design at that point. Once a competitor announces they are finished, that is where the work ends on the design.

12. Once a designer has announced that their piece is completed, they cannot undo the action. In other words, they do not have the ability to change their mind and ask to continue work on the piece after it has been turned in.

13. Anything used in the delivery design that requires electricity must be battery powered. No wires or extension cords may extend outside of the designated space of the entry. Given the short nature of the display period for this competition, competitors will not be allowed to change out batteries or replace single-use products should the need arise.

14. By entering in this competition, you are allowing both Hi-FLOAT and Hi-SHINE the right to use photos of your entry in their marketing platforms as part of their sponsorship of this event.

15. This design competition is not part of the Designer of the Year designation at FLOAT.

16. This is a judged competition only; no Delegates' Choice Award will be issued.

17. Prizes are as follows:

First Place - \$150.00 and plaque

Second Place - \$100.00 and plaque

Third Place - \$50.00 and plaque