



**SO, YOU WANT TO COMPETE?**

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## INDIVIDUAL COMPETITION

### **Registration**

#### **1. How do I register as a member of the EUSPBA?**

Complete a membership application and forward to: EUSPBA, Suite 560 Peoples Plaza-316, Newark, DE 19702. You can get an application from your teacher, pipe major, a current member, or from the Recording Secretary or Executive Secretary of the Association. The membership application is also available on the EUSPBA Web page ([http://euspba.org/resource/form/application\\_individual.pdf](http://euspba.org/resource/form/application_individual.pdf)). Applications received after September 1 will be applied toward the following calendar year.

Once you are a member, you will receive a renewal email notice each fall. The fastest way to renew is the express renewal form located under the membership tab on the website.

#### **2. How does the competition grading system work?**

The grading system from beginning to professional levels of proficiency is as follows:

**Piping:** Amateur Grades 5 (practice chanter\*), Grade 4 (Jr and Sr), Grade 3, 2, 1 and Professional.

For pipers, once you are playing the bagpipe, your first level of competition is Grade 4. If you are 17 or under, you will be in Grade 4Jr. If you are 18 or over, you will be in Grade 4Sr. Age is determined on March 1 of the competition season.

**Snare Drumming:** Amateur Grades 5 (practice pad\*), 4Jr (John Murray Juvenile Grade, ages 17 & under), 4Sr, 3, 2, 1 and Professional.

For snare drummers, Grade 4Jr is a juvenile grade for ages 17 and under (age determined as of March 1 of the competition season). Grade 4Sr is the entry-level grade for 18 and over.

**Bass Drum:** Entry-level grade is Amateur for Bass Drum.

**Drum Major:** Entry-level grade is Amateur for Drum Major.

**Tenor Drum :** Entry-level grade is Novice\* for Tenor Drum.

***\*EUSPBA membership is not required to play in the Practice Chanter, Drum Pad and Novice Tenor competition.***

#### **Can I register above Entry-Level?**

EUSPBA policy is that if you have not been a member of the EUSPBA before, you will automatically be entered in the entry-level grade for your instrument. If you are a member of another association with which the EUSPBA has reciprocity, or if you live in the geographical area of another association, the EUSPBA will honor the grade assigned by your home association. If you are moving to the EUSPBA and have a higher level of proficiency than beginner, letters from your teacher, pipe major, etc. should be sent along with your application.

As you progress, regrading is handled by the EUSPBA's grading committee based on performance in sanctioned contests, year-end standings and recommendations by teachers and judges. If you wish to apply for regrading at the end of the season, you must submit a Grade Change Request Form. This form is available on the web page. This form must be submitted along with a letter from you stating why you feel you should be upgraded, and any supporting documentation (recommendation from a teacher, judge, etc. - copies of score sheets are not necessary as we have that information). All of this material must be submitted to the Executive Secretary and postmarked no later than November 1st. The grading committee will consider the request, but upgrading is not automatic - it depends on your performance at EUSPBA-sanctioned contests throughout the season. Your grading may be changed based on your competition record whether you have requested it or not.

**3. What is the difference between a “sanctioned” and a “non-sanctioned” contest?**

A “sanctioned” games or contest has agreed to abide by EUSPBA rules and regulations and hire EUSPBA adjudicators (or approved guest judges). Additionally, results of contests are compiled from sanctioned contests and tabulated during the season to determine the overall aggregate winners in each grade at the end of the season (year-end standings).

Non-sanctioned contests do not always follow EUSPBA rules, may have different playing requirements, may or may not hire EUSPBA judges, and are not tabulated for the year-end standings.

**4. How does the EUSPBA determine how I’m doing in comparison to someone else?**

Points are earned at each sanctioned contest and tabulated to award aggregate prizes at the end of the season. The competition season runs from January to November. For first through sixth place, points are awarded based on the number of competitors defeated plus one. For example, in a contest with ten players, first prize would have defeated nine players, so the points would be 9+1, or 10. Second place would receive 9 points, third place 8 points, fourth place 7 points, and so on. These results are periodically posted on the web page, are in the Voice, and prizes for the top places for the year are awarded annually.

**5. Should I send for applications to competitions, or will someone automatically send me applications to upcoming events?**

The best way is to check the EUSPBA home page <http://www.euspba.org> on the web often. The “Calendar of Events” is located on that page and all sanctioned events are listed. In addition, as a new competitor, you may receive some brochures automatically; games do request mailing labels from the EUSPBA, but they have generally selected a specific geographical area, often by branch. Some contests maintain their own mailing lists, and once you are on their list (by requesting or competing), they may continue to send you brochures each year. If there are particular games you are interested in, you should contact them to make sure you get their material. Contact names for the games are on the Web page in the “Calendar of Events”.

**6. How far in advance should I enter a contest if no cut-off date is listed in a flyer or advertisement?**

As soon as possible. Most, if not all, contests have a registration deadline which is not usually listed on the games website which is usually in the “Calendar of Events”, and will be in their contest brochure. Depending on the contest, this can range from one to four weeks. Usually, the larger contests have an earlier deadline. While it is not an EUSPBA rule, most games follow a standard practice whereby the first application received is the last person to play, and the last received is the first to play, so the later you send in your application, the earlier you will have to play on the morning of the games. There may be adjustments for each actual event on the contest day.

### **ARRIVAL AT THE GAMES**

#### **1. What is the routine when I arrive at the Games? Where should I go first?**

Go to the piping and drumming registration desk, which may be in a tent or building. This is the headquarters for the day and all the paperwork is handled there.

#### **2. Will people at the registration area need to see all of my paperwork and my EUSPBA membership card?**

Piping and drumming directors usually send out materials prior to the event (games admission tickets, competitor numbers, information letters, event confirmation and start times) but what they send varies from contest to contest. Always have your EUSPBA number in case there is a question. An EUSPBA monitor who has an updated membership list will be at the games.

#### **3. Will the locations and times of my events be posted somewhere? How do I find where I am supposed to play?**

There is usually a map of the games site with the location of each event area (often several events will take place consecutively in the same area). There is also (usually) a posting of each event with the event name, adjudicator name, area location and competitor list. If you don't see this information, ask. Always check in with the steward at each event so both the steward and the judge know you're there and can find you. However, it is ultimately your responsibility to be ready to play in the right place at the right time.

#### **4. How should I select a location to warm up? How much should I play before competition? How close is too close to another piper or drummer, especially when I'm indoors or near a competition area?**

Be considerate of other competitors and try to keep a distance (the further the better). Some contests have specified areas and don't allow warming up too close to event areas. Sometimes this is plainly difficult, so try your best. If you've arrived early or have time to wait, you may want to go over your material. Select a location far enough away from other competitors that you can hear your instrument and not be distracted. At indoor competitions there are usually tuning rooms that you may have to share.

Be aware of how the weather will affect your instrument. If the weather is cool and wet, be careful not to overplay your pipes, and if it is hot and dry, make sure that you keep enough moisture in them. Snare, bass and tenor drums are not as drastically affected by the weather, but be sure to check with your instructor for specific advice. You should know your own instrument and how to keep it sounding its best.

#### **5. Should I display my competitor's number as soon as I get it? Where do I place my number on my uniform?**

Place your competitor number on your kilt below the kilt pin (edge of the apron on the right) as soon as you receive it at the Piping and Drumming Registration area. They will usually provide you with safety pins. This number is to assist stewards in locating you and in making sure the contest runs smoothly. Drummers should also place their number on their kilt, not on their drum.

#### **6. What happens if I lose my competitor's number?**

Ask at the secretary's desk for a replacement or make sure that the stewards at your events know who you are and where you are.

### **APPROPRIATE APPAREL**

#### **1. What is considered appropriate apparel for competition? What about inclement or hot weather?**

Highland dress includes a kilt, dress shirt, tie if you choose, kilt hose, flashes, ghillie brogues or dress shoes, jacket or vest (optional if it is very hot), rain cape or coat if raining, and balmoral or glengarry (women may omit in the States; a hat is required in Ontario). Use common sense and look neat; it gives a good impression.

## **THE COMPETITION**

### **1. How do I check in for my events?**

Ask when you arrive in the morning where your events will be played. Locate them first thing and report to the steward. They often have a nametag and clipboard and will be sitting with or near the judge, and they will be looking for you. The steward is in charge of running the competition, not the judge. While they sometimes consult with the judge, the judge is there to evaluate the competition.

### **2. How do I identify myself? Do I wait until the steward leaves the defined area, or do I catch his/her attention?**

Don't interrupt an event to contact the steward. Stand off to the side or behind the area and try to catch the attention of the steward or wait until the competitor has finished. The steward is constantly looking around for competitors so it shouldn't be difficult. Inform the steward of your name and competition number.

### **3. Where do I wait after I check in with the steward?**

Discuss with the steward the approximate time until it is your turn to play. Don't wander off; it is not the steward's job to look around for you; it is your job to be in the right place at the right time to play. Find a place to warm up that is near and within sight of the competition area. Let the steward know where you will be and keep an eye on the area and the steward as it gets closer to your turn.

### **4. Could my playing time ever be changed from my listed time? How will I know?**

Yes, it could change due to players either not showing up or breaking down. The steward will inform you, but you must ask and keep an eye on things. Again, you are responsible for being in the right place at the right time.

### **5. When it is actually my turn to compete, what is the proper procedure? What do I say? How do I begin? What happens when I finish?**

Approach the judge and introduce yourself. Tell the judge the name of your tune. He or she will usually welcome you. Some judges will do little more than say hello. Different judges have different personalities and some will be friendlier than others. Don't be put off or intimidated if a judge doesn't make you feel good (that's not their job, after all). Keep your mind on your performance.

It's a good idea to have print outs of your tunes, both light music and piobaireachd, in case there is a question of how something is played, or if there are multiple settings particularly in piobaireachd competition. Please note that this is an option for both the competitor as well as the judge. If both the competitor and the judge utilize this option, it will allow the judge to more closely identify possible problem areas in the tune. Of course, competitors will need to make sure they are playing the same grace notes and notes as are printed in the submitted score!

The judge would much rather have you take an extra minute and play a well-tuned instrument than start quickly on a bad instrument. Training yourself to listen to your instrument before you begin is something that you should start with from day one.

The judge may be finishing a score sheet from the player before you or talking to the steward. Make sure that he/she is ready to hear your tune before you start playing it, though you can and should tune while he's finishing. When your instrument is ready, look at the judge and play an extended "E" to let him/her know you are ready to play, and begin. When you have finished your tune, thank or salute the judge.

### **6. How long should I take to tune up?**

The tune-up period is primarily to settle yourself and your pipes (both are equally important). If someone else has tuned your pipes and you aren't proficient yet, then play the first part of a slow air to calm yourself. Your pipes may have gone slightly out of tune and this short period of playing should bring them in. If you can tune your own pipes, play a slow air and then give your pipes a final nudge. Most of your tuning should have taken place prior to entering the competition area; some contests have tuning limits and enforce them (a tap on the shoulder, a red card).

**7. Is it okay to ask someone else to tune my pipes for me?**

Absolutely (but not once you have addressed the judge unless you are in Grade 4). But don't expect them to make miracles. Essentially, you are asking a more experienced player to tune your drones. Only if you think a note is very poor on the chanter should you ask for this assistance. Make sure to thank them. And don't be put off if someone says no. They may not be comfortable tuning a stranger or they may be in the middle of preparing for their own competition. While the sound of the pipes is not given the same priority in the lower grades as in the higher ones, they should have an acceptable quality, and a well-tuned instrument will usually place ahead of a poorly tuned one, for the simple reason that it is difficult to hear good execution and expression on a poor instrument.

**8. If I make mistakes, or miss a part, or a drone goes out, should I stop playing?**

NO. Keep going. Breaking down is a very bad habit; maintain your concentration and finish the tune.

***AND AFTERWARDS, THE RESULTS***

**1. Where do I find out the results of my competition?**

At the Secretary's Desk, in the same location where you checked in when you arrived. Once the paperwork has been processed, the games will provide you with a copy of your score sheet with the judge's comments on your performance.

**2. What do I do with the score sheet once I get it?**

Review it with your teacher or pipe major. If it isn't legible, ask a more experienced competitor to interpret (remember, the adjudicator has a lot of score sheets to finish quickly). If it's a good one, hang it on the refrigerator when you get home!

**3. Are score sheets different for each event?**

Piping score sheets are different between light music and Piobaireachd. Drumming score sheets are the same. All score sheets are modified periodically and some games may have old ones left over from last year.

**4. If I want to ask questions about my competition, to whom may I direct my concerns?**

If it is a question for the judge (something you don't understand or would like clarification on), make sure to show him/her the score sheet and wait until the end of the day or a break period. Remember, judges often have heard seventy or eighty tunes that day, and may have heard yours a dozen times, so you should not expect them to remember specific details of your particular performance. If you have a question, show them the score sheet.

If your question concerns the management of the competition or event, then address your concerns to the Piping and Drumming Director.

If it is about EUSPBA rules and regulations, you should address your concerns to the EUSPBA monitor. EUSPBA rules cover playing requirements: tune type, number of tunes to submit, type of events, etc. If you think rules have been violated, then you may file a protest with the monitor.

**5. What does Piper of the Day or Drummer of the Day mean?**

Many contests recognize the individual who received the most points based on all events possible for that grade for that day. Sometimes they only recognize the professional grade; sometime each amateur grade is recognized. Whether and how this is done varies from contest to contest.

## **BAND COMPETITION**

### ***Registration and Before-Season Details***

#### **1. What is the form we have to fill out for band members and who should we include?**

The band roster must be completed and returned to the Recording Secretary as early as possible, preferably by January 1. Competing members of the band ONLY should be included on this form. If the band has an instructor, this person must be registered as instructor. If there are any players who qualify as dual musicians (playing pipes in one band and any type of drums in another band of a different grade), these must be noted as well. If new members are added, this must be done at least ten days prior to the competition in which that new member will first compete. See the rulebook for full details.

#### **2. We just got a new member who played with another band earlier in the season. Are there any restrictions?**

Yes. Anyone who has played with another band previously in the season must be registered onto the new band's roster with the Recording Secretary at least thirty days prior to competing with the new band for the first time. The only exception to this is that school band members may transfer from their school band to another band and back to the school band in the fall. All roster additions and deletions must be submitted to the Recording Secretary in writing whether by email or by letter.

#### **3. We lost our bass drummer at the last minute. Can one of our drummers or pipers play bass drum?**

In the event that a bass or tenor drummer is unable to compete with his band, that band may choose a bass or tenor drummer from another band of the same grade or a lower grade, if that bass or tenor drummer is so willing, or, the band may select any member that appears on their band roster, with the exception of instructors and dual musicians in the lower grade band, to perform as a substitute bass or tenor drummer. Just remember that the bass drummer is the heartbeat of the band, so choose a substitute wisely.

#### **4. What is the minimum number of competitors, and what happens if we don't have enough?**

For Grades 5 and 4, the requirements are 5 pipers, 2 snare drummers and a bass drummer. A minimum of one tenor drummer is also required in Grade 4. See the rulebook for other grades. If there are players missing and you cannot meet this minimum, ask the Piping and Drumming Director if you may play for comments only. In this case, the band is usually asked to play first or last in that grade.

#### **5. What kind of music should we select?**

See the Rule Book for playing requirements for each grade. The music selected, especially for a band competing for their first season, should be material that all members can handle technically. For lower grade bands, you will score higher with simple music played well than with more complex music which is not played well by some of the members. For variety's sake, use different time signatures and different keys to provide interesting contrasts in your medley. Get an experienced pipe major's opinion and an experienced drummer's assistance with score selection or writing.

#### **6. Are they strict about the time limits?**

Yes. There is a steward or monitor timing the contests and you may be disqualified if you are over or under the limits. The timing starts with the FIRST sound of either the pipes or the drums and ends with the LAST sound of either the pipes or the drums.

## **Contest Day**

### **1. What is the draw, and what happens there?**

Most contests now do the draw in advance of the competition. At the draw, the order of play for each grade is selected. Playing times are also given out at the draw. EUSPBA rules indicate that the draw will take place no less than two hours prior to the competition; it is usually held at either 10:00 or 11:00 am the morning of the games, but is occasionally held earlier in the week than that, in the presence of the contest committee. The time of the draw should be noted on the entry form.

### **2. Will the steward know where we are warming up?**

Maybe, but maybe not. It is your responsibility to be in the right place at the right time. Make sure you have a runner checking on how quickly (or slowly) the contest is progressing as well as updating the pipe major on when the band is expected to play. Some games have an "on deck" spot; some don't. Either way, the band should be "on deck" a full five to ten minutes before they are expected to play. A final tuning of the drones and the "pep talk" happens here.

### **3. Do we have an option as to how to start our medley either marching or standing?**

Only Grade 5 bands have the option of marching into the circle to a drum tap, starting and finishing the medley in that circle. All other grades must begin marching at the beginning of the roll-off, form a circle while playing, and finish their selection in that circle.

### **4. What if a piper doesn't get their pipes up in time?**

While all members are expected to play the introduction (drum roll) and start together (drones together, E's together), if someone is early or late, just keep going as though it didn't happen. Depending upon the rest of the performance and the rest of the contest, this may hurt your score in a major way or not much at all. The important thing is for players to know their instruments, have practiced attacks, and then CONCENTRATE when it counts.

### **5. What if a drone roars?**

Again, while not a desirable occurrence, if the player cannot shut the drone off by a sudden burst of pressure on the bag, he should reach up and cut it off. The judges will probably see and hear this happen, but it is better than letting it continue and detract from the rest of your performance. Remember that mistakes are weighed in the overall context of the performance, and a roaring drone ruins the band sound for as long as it's happening.

### **6. What if a player gets confused about where to go or what to do when marching into the circle?**

The player should find any spot in the circle and keep playing. While it is not stated in the rules, a player should never leave the field of competition. This will seriously affect your band's placing.

### **7. How do we get off the field?**

The piping and drumming director should tell you at the draw whether you can play off or whether you should simply march off. This is usually dependent upon the size and timing of the contest.



**GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

**Games:** The name of highland games or feis; includes all activities (piping, drumming, dancing, athletics, clans, etc).

**Contest:** The piping and drumming portion of the games; may also be an event that offers only piping and drumming competitions.

**EUSPBA:** Eastern United States Pipe Band Association

**PPBSO:** Pipers and Pipe Band Society of Ontario

**Games Monitor/EUSPBA Monitor:** A representative from the EUSPBA; ensures that EUSPBA rules and regulations are followed; reviews the points tabulation for accuracy; answers questions; takes EUSPBA memberships.

**Steward:** Games staff member who ensures that each event is run smoothly.

**Piping and Drumming Director:** Person in charge of piping and drumming events; takes competition entry applications, fills out paperwork, hands out competitor's numbers, coordinates stewards, answers questions.

**Breakdown:** Stop playing

**Scratch:** No show; either decided not to come to the competition or was not in the right place at the right time.

**Adjudicator/Judge:** Individual who evaluates competition and determines placing; has passed the Graduate Certificate, the Adjudication Exam, successfully completed an apprenticeship and has been certified by the EUSPBA.

**The VOICE:** Quarterly EUSPBA publication.