

## 2026 IEEE REGION 3 SOUTHEAST CON

# I. STUDENT WEBSITE COMPETITION RULES

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The goal of a website is to convey information in a manner useful to the reader, similar to the goal in writing a paper. How you convey the information can increase readers' interest as well as their knowledge. For example, a page of text provides useful information but is not visually attractive. The same text with the appropriate colored figures, JavaScript, etc., can deliver significantly more information while motivating the reader to read further. Poorly designed websites either provide no useful content or are hard to use (takes too long, user cannot find the desired information, etc.). Also if you have really good content but you don't set it in a way that makes it easier for the search engines to discover your good content it will be much harder for people to find your website and you won't get new viewers for your site as you expect.

### *Competition Process*

Below is a breakdown of the competition process. The remaining section of this document will address the details needed to complete each step:

1. Register your branch for the competition  
*All IEEE Student Branches and Branch chapters are eligible to participate in the IEEE Student Branch Website contest. Each Student Branch may enter at most one Website, regardless of the number of Branch chapters or affinity group present.*
2. Have website ready to be judge by the time of SoutheastCon  
*Websites will be judged during SoutheastCon. Teams will not know when their website will be judged and so they must be prepared for their website to be judges any time during SoutheastCon. **There is no in person activities for the students with this competition. It is fully virtual.***

## *Grading Criteria*

### **Category 1. Content (0 to 30 points)**

The web was created as an efficient mechanism to deliver information (also known as the “information highway”). Thus, the content of your website is very important. “Cool” JavaScript, graphics, and other features should assist in enhancing the content; they should not be the content as they provide no useful information on their own. The rating of how the content is presented is judged as a separate category. Note that you should make a significant effort to ensure that your site is free of copyright violations.

Your site is an IEEE website and IEEE should be the focus. At a minimum, Student Branch websites should have, somewhere, local contact information for the branch officers, the counselor, and the website administrator. Each page in the website should have contact and date information. A good branch website may have current, past, and future branch activities, information on other IEEE units, how to join as a Student member, and other information relevant to an electrical and computer-engineering or computer-science student audience. Remember that the audience may include prospective students, alumni, faculty, potential employers, and others.

Your website is your professional showing to the rest of the world. Accurate, up-to-date information should be present. Proper grammar, spelling, and composition are important. As English is the primary language used within IEEE, the content will be judged solely using English. If you are planning to enter the contest, please make sure your website is written in English. To encourage international support of websites, the use of multiple languages may be awarded up to two bonus points in this category. Multilingual support means equivalent or near-equivalent presentation of all material in different languages. Websites in English-speaking countries are encouraged to support other languages, perhaps by contacting and working with a branch in another country.

### **Category 2. Navigability (0 to 30 points)**

All links should be up-to-date and working. No “under construction” links should be present. Off-site links will not be evaluated, though a large number of broken off-site links may be a judging consideration (this is not to discourage you from linking off-site, just to encourage you to link to stable sites).

One large page is generally not easy to read and may also take a significant amount of time to load. Breaking the page into a multitude of smaller pages may require significant effort to retrieve the desired information. Thus, the logical structure of the website can result in a pleasant experience or a frustrating experience for your users.

Keywords used for hyperlinks should be logical and tasteful. For example, using an entire paragraph as a hyperlink is a poor design. A good website will have useful hyperlinks for material that should be logically hyperlinked. Excessive use of hyperlinks can be annoying for the reader (for example, hyperlinking every instance of IEEE in a small document with several dozen instances of the term).

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While many large sites have site maps, navigation bars, search engines, etc., to help the user find the appropriate information, it is by no means required. In fact, the use of these elements can backfire and create a website that is not visually pleasing or is highly complex to use. Many websites do well enough without these aids.

Remember to use relative links as much as possible to ensure easy site portability and mirroring. As an exception, use absolute links only when dealing with CGI script calls and the like.

Also, make sure to list any online presence that your branch has in your websites (such as Social media accounts ) in a way that makes it easy for the user to navigate between your online platforms easily.

### **Category 3. Originality (0 to 15 points)**

Originality is somewhat subjective but is an important quality of a superior website. There are two types of originality; the first type is the content presented and the second type is the presentation of the content. Most Student Branch websites typically include information on their officers, IEEE itself, and so forth. This information could be enhanced by adding interesting information about your branch, engineering, IEEE, computer science (or the program of focus at your university), etc. The presentation of “boring” information, such as Student Branch officers, in innovative ways can significantly spice up a website and will receive significant consideration in judging. Clearly, you do not want your branch page to look like every other branch page; your branch and your school are unique, and you should make your page reflect that.

### **Category 4. Overall Presentation (0 to 15 points)**

Presentation will be judged not on its originality but on how well it “works” with the content to provide the user with a pleasant viewing experience. Use of good presentation elements, such as color, fonts, tables, etc., can enhance raw information on a website. Overuse of these elements (or improper use of elements, such as blink) can result in a website being an eyesore. Presentation reflects your style. Group information with heading tags, use bulleted lists, and use tables for data representations of content.

#### [Learn more about branding and visual elements](#)

Graphics should be relative to the page and text. Header, footer, and other navigation images should be small. Typically, high-quality images (large files) for icons are not required. Unless the image (video, script, etc.) is an important part of the page, you may wish to keep the image at a small size and allow the user to select it as they desire.

#### [Learn more about images and multimedia](#)

Backgrounds should be small (using the lowest possible resolution that looks nice) and should be neat and readable. Uniqueness is always a plus. Backgrounds should be used intelligently. They can either demonstrate the author’s savvy or bad taste. Make sure the backgrounds do not fall into the “bad taste” category. Backgrounds that are “loud” make it extremely difficult to read the text on top of them. The same ideas apply to scripts, video, audio, and other multimedia elements. They should all be the smallest possible size and, most importantly, useful. Like backgrounds, these elements can make your

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site positively outstanding or a site to avoid. When possible, the users should be given the option to load multimedia elements and not be forced to view or hear something they do not want to.

#### **Category 5. Portability (0 to 5 points)**

Unfortunately, there is no “standard” web browser. Even the same web browser on different computers may result in significantly differing renderings of the same page. You should attempt to make your web pages relatively portable across different browsers, including both text and graphical browsers, and different screen sizes. The use of [alternative text elements](#) is encouraged, as this provides some amount of portability for images.

One of the browser types of Safari, Firefox, Chrome, Microsoft Internet Explorer, Microsoft edge, Opera, Brave may be used by the judges to evaluate your website.

Keep the graphics within a small window width. Designing for the lowest common denominator is a must when it comes to website design. Creating graphics that fit on all users’ default screen widths is therefore a good idea. A good common denominator is the VGA screen (640 x 480 pixels). Fixed image locations, fixed tables, etc., are not portable and defeat the goal of HTML. These should be avoided if at all possible.

[Learn more about images and multimedia](#)

Portability will be primarily tested by resizing the screen and probably using different browsers to access the site.

#### **Category 6. Load time (0 to 5 points)**

Your site should take account of the fact that Internet connectivity ranges from slow dialup modems to fast, dedicated network connections. You are not responsible for your institution’s network performance, but you should try to ensure that your website loads within a reasonable amount of time. Your server should be up and reachable during the evaluation period. Server load can affect load time, and you should make an effort to use a reasonably fast server that has a reasonable load. Judges will be instructed not to consider server load.

Load time will be judged using local access to the mirrored pages when possible, and taking into account that some sites are worse linked than others for online browsing.

As load time is typically a function of file size, using smaller images and pages results in faster loading. Remember that the use of JavaScript and other multimedia elements can also affect load time. A large amount of images, scripts, etc., on a page can also increase the load time. Load time is part of the experience of viewing your page; however, content, presentation, and navigability are generally more important factors. Thus, load time is only worth five points. Note that judges may consider script execution time.

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Using height and width elements can significantly enhance the way the pages load. If you use height and width elements, graphical browsers will know exactly how big of a “hole” to leave for the graphic before it loads and will continue displaying the text down the screen. This gives the appearance of the page loading faster, when in reality it still takes just as much time to load the entire page.

This is not to discourage larger pictures and high-intensity graphics; however, if you choose to use them, separate websites with the same content could be a consideration.

Important note: To speed up the judging procedure, your websites will be mirrored if possible and browsed locally, so all your links must be relative, except for those pages using CGI scripts and other similar non-portable characteristics. Jury members will access the pages online if necessary and/or applicable. Please check that mirrored pages work reasonably when accessed locally, regardless of where the mirror process is done (tools such as wget in the Unix<sup>TM</sup> world or HTTRACK in the Windows<sup>TM</sup> case are examples of programs for doing the mirroring). Internal (private, password-protected) websites, while encouraged, will not be judged.

You are permitted, as well as encouraged, to look at other Student Branch websites. For IEEE GIF and JPG images, go to the IEEE [Master Brand](#) page.