

Kentucky State Fair Talent Classic CATEGORY DESCRIPTION & GENERAL GUIDELINES

VOCAL

Shall consist of a performance by a vocalist or vocalists. An instrumental accompaniment by the performer or others is allowed, but must assume the pure character of an accompaniment. The test shall be whether the performance would stand alone if the accompaniment were removed. No voice, voices, record or tape with any vocal background may be used for accompaniment. This includes recorded live voices and synthetically produced and recorded voices – i.e., synthesizers or digital sampling. Lip-syncing is not allowed in this competition.

INSTRUMENTAL SOLO OR GROUP

Shall consist of a solo or group instrumental performance without vocal utterance. In instrumental solo, the only accompaniment allowed is a live or taped acoustical piano. If the instrument is piano, no accompaniment is allowed. In the use of electronic keyboard, the contestant must create all sounds live on stage.

DANCE SOLO AND ENSEMBLE CATEGORIES

Shall consist of a performance by a dancer or dancers. Accompanists are permitted on stage, but must not assume visual importance in the performance. Acrobatics or gymnastics will be judged in another category. Vocal performances will not be judged.

ACROBATIC/GYMNASTIC SOLO OR GROUP

Shall consist of a solo or group performance. At least one-third of the performance must be acrobatics or gymnastics, but no more than two-thirds of the performance shall be acrobatic or gymnastic movements. This shall be a choreographed performance.

VARIETY

Shall consist of a performance by one or more persons. This category is intended to provide a proper showcase for those acts which are not listed in any other category, e.g. ventriloquist, juggler or comedian. (A vocalist or vocal group accompanying themselves would not normally meet this test.) All persons assuming visual importance in the acts must meet the age qualification of the Kentucky State Fair Talent Classic. Assignment to this category is at the discretion of the State Fair. Performers who fit the description of another category may not appear in the Variety Category.

The Kentucky State Fair Talent Classic showcases talented youth from across Kentucky in three age divisions: 7-12, 13-21, and 22 and up. This legacy contest began in 1979!

Sanctioned preliminary contests are held throughout the state. The sole purpose of this program is the discovery, development and encouragement of young amateur entertainers. There is no fee for sanction, and the Kentucky State Fair does not organize preliminary events.

The 2026 Kentucky State Fair will award more than \$5,000 in cash prizes and will invite winners to a State Fair showcase performance.



2025 1st Place
Sweepstakes (Ages 13-21)
Lauren McCraith



2025 2nd Place
Sweepstakes (Ages 13-21)
Ella Howton



2025 3rd Place
Sweepstakes (Ages 13-21)
Bongo Rock



2025 4th Place
Sweepstakes (Ages 13-21)
**Drew Ashley &
Channing Rivera**



2025 Grand Award
Winner
(ages 13-21)

**Rand Akers &
Ava Akers**

2026 KENTUCKY STATE FAIR
TALENT CLASSIC
SATURDAY, AUGUST 22
SUNDAY, AUGUST 23



2025 1st Place Winner
(Ages 22+)
**Dustin Scott
Cundiff**



2025 1st Place Winner
(Ages 7-12)
**Ruben
Kvachev**

Now open to all
ages with three
divisions!

**KENTUCKY
STATE FAIR**



KENTUCKY EXPO CENTER
AUGUST 20-30, 2026

GENERAL RULES

READ CAREFULLY! RULES REVISED FOR 2026!

1. All State Fair contestants must be winners from KSF in-person or virtual preliminaries sanctioned for 2026.
2. All contestants must be at least 7 years of age as of August 1, 2026. This includes anyone assuming visual importance except piano accompanists.
3. This contest is not open to professionals. Professional is defined as anyone who is a union member, has a professional manager or booking agent, or whose principal and supporting income is derived from performing.
4. Entries will be accepted in the following solo or group categories: Vocal • Instrumental • Variety • Dance • Acrobatic/Gymnastic
5. Baton twirlers or similar acts using batons or machetes will not be accepted. No fire, smoke, or smoke effect will be allowed on the State Fair stage. Acts must be contained to the stage.
6. For contestants entered in any vocal category, accompaniment tracks with any background vocals are strictly prohibited. This includes recorded live voices and/or synthetically produced voices. Lip syncing is not allowed.
7. There must be no taps or blatant tap effect on a taped recording used by a dancer.
8. In instrumental solo, the only accompaniment allowed is a live or taped acoustical piano. Special exception requests must be filed in writing prior to August 1, 2026. In piano solo, no accompaniment is allowed. In the use of electronic keyboard, the contestant must create all sound live on stage.
9. A contestant shall enter only once in any one category at the Kentucky State Fair and may enter a total of two categories.
10. If a performer has won an invitation to the State Fair from a preliminary, he/she shall not perform the same act or in the same category in another preliminary.
11. If a performer wins a finals invitation in two categories in the State Fair preliminaries, he/she must choose one of the two categories for his/her final performance.
12. Any act may drop a member as listed on the entry form, but **SHALL NOT ADD OR REPLACE** any member listed on the form. An individual cannot be part of an act at the State Fair if they did not perform in the act at the preliminary.
13. **ANY ACT RUNNING MORE THAN 4 MINUTES WILL RECEIVE A 1-POINT SCORING PENALTY FOR EVERY SECOND OVER.** An official timekeeper will be present at all competitions at the State Fair. Timing starts with the first word, note or movement and ends with the last word, note or movement. This includes bows and/or encores.
14. All contestants shall use only the lighting system provided by the Fair.
15. All contestants shall use only the sound system and sound operator as provided by the Kentucky State Fair. You may use your own amps. Pirated music will **NOT** operate in the sound system. All background music must be provided on a CD or USB drive.
16. No teachers, parents, friends, or audience members will be allowed on the stage during the Kentucky State Fair.

17. Only one person other than those visible on the stage will be allowed backstage per act. This includes all parents, teachers and friends.
18. No member of a Grand Award winning act may compete again in the same category. (Applies to Ages 13-21 only.)
19. The decision of the judges is final.
20. The contestant will be disqualified from the competition and forfeit any ribbons and prize money won up to that time for:
 - A. Any discourtesy to a judge or official of the Fair.
 - B. Any contestant, parent, teacher or friend who attempts to communicate with the judges before, during or after their adjudications.
21. All contestants, parents, teachers and friends are expected to abide by all general rules and regulations of the Kentucky State Fair found at kystatefair.org/talent-classic.
22. All questions regarding entries, category, rules or any other issues shall be determined by the Kentucky State Fair Talent Classic staff. Their decision is final.
23. The Kentucky State Fair staff will view and suggest a category for acts by appointment prior to August 1, 2026.

PRELIMINARY CONTEST REQUIREMENTS

- FOR IN-PERSON PRELIMINARIES ONLY -

1. All preliminary contest paperwork and videos must be received by KSF within three days of preliminary to be eligible for competition in the 2026 Kentucky State Fair.
2. All preliminary contests must be sanctioned each year by the Kentucky State Fair. Only talent competitions will be sanctioned, specifically excluding recitals and talent divisions of beauty contests.
3. Any group wishing to produce a preliminary contest should request and **COMPLETELY** fill out the **REQUEST FOR SANCTION FORM INFORMATION SHEET** and all other forms and return them to the Kentucky State Fair at least 2 weeks before their contest and before sanction can be granted. No sanctions will be granted to single person productions.
4. No producer/chairperson may advertise a contest as a sanctioned KSF event until a written **OFFICIAL SANCTION LETTER** is received from the Kentucky State Fair.
5. Each producer/chairperson is responsible for getting the Entry Forms of the top five winning acts of their preliminary to the State Fair office as set forth in Agreement. **DO NOT HAVE THE CONTESTANTS MAIL THESE TO THE FAIR.**
6. Each sanctioned preliminary shall name three overall winners. Fourth and fifth place winners shall be provided as alternates. There shall be no ties.
7. The preliminary producer/chairperson shall mark placement on the top five winners' entry forms and mail them to the Kentucky State Fair within three working days of preliminary contest date.
8. All acts must have been judged in preliminary competition, and special entertainment at the preliminary cannot be considered for State Fair competition.

9. The top 3 winners of sanctioned preliminaries will be guaranteed an invitation to compete in the Kentucky State Fair Talent Classic (providing eligibility).
10. If any of the top 3 winners of a sanctioned preliminary are unable or ineligible to enter the Kentucky State Fair Talent Classic, the Kentucky State Fair agrees to take the fourth place winner (providing eligibility) as an official Fair entry.
11. Each county fair or organization participating in the Talent Classic shall produce only one preliminary contest per age category. If multiple sessions are required to accommodate the number of participants, it is suggested that the organization host one final preliminary event to determine the contestants who will advance to the State Fair. Any exceptions to this rule must be submitted to Kentucky State Fair staff for approval in advance.
12. All contestants must be judged and a minimum of two judges must be present.
13. All judges must be 21 years of age or older and shall not include any State Fair representative, nor shall a State Fair representative be present during deliberation.
14. A State Fair representative, if present, may be consulted for rule clarification only.
15. **THERE WILL BE ABSOLUTELY NO DISCUSSION OF THE CONTEST BETWEEN JUDGES AND CONTESTANTS, TEACHERS, OR PARENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE PRELIMINARY.**
16. No son, daughter, grandchild, step-child or any other relative of any preliminary contest worker may enter the contest in which the relative works.
17. Chairmen must read all rules and give brochures to all contestants noting General Rules #6, #9, #10, #13, and Variety definition.
18. Each chairman shall send a video (DVD, USB drive, or MP4) of their contestant's performance to the State Fair prior to July 31, 2026.

PENALTIES

1. Any chairman or preliminary worker violating any printed rule will result in the Kentucky State Fair revoking sanction and/or disqualifying acts.
2. Failure to submit entry forms or any other required paperwork by designated date will cause denial of future sanction.

LIABILITY

1. The Kentucky State Fair Board, its agents, servants and employees in no way assume liability for any damages incurred in the production of any preliminary.
2. Any Hold Harmless forms used by a preliminary must have prior written permission of the Kentucky State Fair.

FOR MORE INFORMATION,
VISIT KYSTATEFAIR.ORG/TALENT-CLASSIC