

## 2026 Louisiana State Fiddle Championship Official Rules

Statement of Purpose: The purpose of the Louisiana State Fiddle Championship (LSFC) is to perpetuate the traditional music and styles of fiddling integral to many kinds of Louisiana music, to help develop an appreciation and understanding of traditional music, to encourage young fiddlers to pursue musical endeavors, and to encourage jam sessions and contests as a way to promote creativity and the continuation of the fiddle tradition.

### Section 1: Contestant Qualifications

1. **Contest is open only to Louisiana residents.** Contestants may be asked to show proof of residence.
2. Grand Champions will not be allowed to compete the year following their win and are asked to judge in the year following their win.

### Section 2: Registration, Entry, and Playing Order

1. Pre-registration is the preferred method of entering. **By pre-registering, contestants avoid having to pay admission to the Natchitoches-NSU Folk Festival.** Accompanists and one guest per stage performer are allowed on the pass list. If you pre-register, please fill out the form and either email it to [folklife@nsula.edu](mailto:folklife@nsula.edu) or mail it to Northwestern State University, Louisiana Folklife Center, Natchitoches, LA, 71497. Pre-registrations must arrive at the Louisiana Folklife Center by **July 10, 2026**. Note that this is not a post-mark date, it is a **delivery date**. Order of play will be determined by a lottery system. Pre-registered contestants will then be mailed a list showing their order of play and their packet containing check-in information and other material.

2. Walk-in registration is permitted; however, walk-in contestants will pay Natchitoches-NSU Folk Festival admission for him/herself, accompanists, and guests. **Walk-in entrants must register no later than 12:45 pm** on Saturday July 18, 2026, at the Magale Recital Hall in Creative and Performing Arts Addition Building at 140 Central Avenue on the NSU Campus. **Once the contest begins at 1:00 pm, no entries will be accepted.** Walk-in contestants will play first (numbers will be drawn to determine playing order for the walk-in contestants); pre-registered contestants will follow.

### Section 3: The Contest

1. Once fiddlers and accompanists have checked in, they will be directed to either a dressing room/preparation area where they may practice and warm-up, or they may be seated in the contestants' area near the Main Stage. Regardless of where fiddlers choose to wait, they are responsible for knowing when their turn to play is and should make themselves aware of order of play. Musicians may play and hold informal jam sessions in the preparation area but not in the audience area. Please pay attention to the Contest Steward, for s/he will call your name/number only three times when your time to play is nearing. When you are the next person to play, you should proceed to the on-deck area where you will remain until you are escorted to the stage to play. Once you play, you should remain in the Main Stage Area in case you are called to play in a fiddle-off or are called to the stage in order to receive a prize. Again, you will be called **only three times** to play in a fiddle-off or to receive a prize. Please listen for your name and/or number.

2. Contestants may play alone or with up to **two** accompanists. Please take care to enter and exit the stage promptly. Any contestant and accompanists who take more than two minutes to enter or exit will be penalized by the judges.

3. If a contestant or accompanist breaks a string or a peg slips, then s/he will exit the stage and will be given up to fifteen minutes to make the repair. The fiddler may then play the piece one more time.

4. In the case of a tie, the judges will call for a fiddle-off.

5. Three judges will assess the contest. Judges will be fiddlers and will make every effort to objectively evaluate fiddle contestants. The identity of the judges will be announced prior to the Championship. Fiddlers are encouraged to avoid talking or mingling with judges prior to the contest.

6. Judges will recuse themselves from judging if a conflict of interest appears to be imminent. In this case, an alternate will judge the division.

7. Fiddlers will be judged according to tone, timing, clarity, rhythm, and skill. Audience applause will not be a factor in judging.

8. No tunes may be repeated during the contest.

## Section 4: Divisions

There are two divisions of play, non-championship and championship. A fiddler cannot enter both the non-championship and championship divisions **with the sole exception of the twin fiddles category (which is a non-championship category)**. **Except** for the twin fiddles category, a fiddler can only enter either the non-championship or the championship divisions.

### Non-Championship Division

These divisions cannot compete for the Grand Championship. They play two tunes of their choice, and **the winners will each receive a ribbon.**

- 12 and under
- 13-18
- 19-59
- 60 and above

**New category of play: Twin Fiddles** (there are **no** age divisions in the Twin Fiddles contest). Each pair of players plays two tunes of their choice. Prizes will then be awarded to **each** of the **Twin Fiddles** winners as follows: 1<sup>st</sup> \$150.00; 2<sup>nd</sup> \$125.00; 3<sup>rd</sup> \$100.00

**NOTE:** 1) The Twin Fiddles contest is the **only** portion of the non-championship division in which participants in the championship division may also compete. 2) Contestants in the general non-championship division **may also** compete in the Twin Fiddles contest, but **not** in the championship division.

**A contestant may compete in the general non-championship division as well as the Twin Fiddles contest.**

### Championship Division

These divisions compete for the Grand Championship. Anyone from any age group can compete in the championship divisions.

#### First Rounds

Fiddlers compete in the following age divisions, 0-21, 22-59, 60-above. All contestants must play three tunes: one waltz, one breakdown or two-step, and one tune of choice. Prizes will then be awarded as follows: 1<sup>st</sup> \$200.00; 2<sup>nd</sup> \$100.00; 3<sup>rd</sup> \$50.00

#### Championship Rounds

The top two fiddlers (6 in all) from each of the championship division categories will compete; each will play two tunes: one from each of the following possible categories: breakdown, waltz, two-step, or tune of choice of fiddler. Prizes will be awarded as follows: 1<sup>st</sup> \$250.00; 2<sup>nd</sup> \$150.00; 3<sup>rd</sup> \$100.00

## Section 5: Miscellaneous requirements

1. The Grand Champion Fiddler will perform a 10-15 minute set on the Main Stage at the Natchitoches-NSU Folk Festival on Saturday afternoon.
2. By signing the entry form, the contestant or his/her legal guardian agrees that any photographic images and sound recordings from the contest will be property of the Louisiana State Fiddle Championship and the Natchitoches-NSU Folk Festival. Images may be used for advertising or educational purposes.
3. Judges' decisions are final. This contest will be judged in an impartial manner, and every effort will be made to hold a fair contest which allows all participants to have an equal playing field. Judges will make their decisions based upon the aforementioned criteria. However, once they tabulate their scores and make their final decisions, the contest will be concluded. There is no appeal process.
4. **The Natchitoches-NSU Folk Festival is a family event; no alcoholic beverages, ice chests, or outside food and drinks are allowed on-site. Additionally, we reserve the right to escort unruly or inappropriately behaved visitors or contestants from the premises.**