

WEBSITE GURUS: SHOWCASE YOUR CREATIVE TALENTS

VFW Hosting Website Competition

VFW Departments, Districts and Posts now have an opportunity to display their design skills in the 2008 VFW Communications Department Website Design Competition. Websites will be evaluated for navigation, load time, design and content. Departments will compete among other Department websites in one category, while Districts and Posts will compete with one another in the second category. Awards will be given to the first- and second-place winner in each category. The VFW Communications team will screen entries for rule compliance and forward the most “competitive” websites to a Chicago-based web design team for final judging.

To enter, submit URL between **May 1 and May 31** to webcontest@vfw.org, along with entry information. **Judging will be during June.** Winners will be announced in late summer.

Who is eligible to participate?

All VFW Departments, Districts and Posts who host a website. (VFW divisions that share space on a website with other groups are not eligible to enter; the website must be a stand alone site.)

What are the contest divisions?

Prizes will be awarded in two divisions: Department and District/Post

What are the prizes?

The two winners in each division will receive national recognition and an appropriate plaque. In addition, judges may chose to recognize individual websites that excel in a particular area mentioned in the judging criteria.

How do we enter?

Submit URL, along with entry information, between **May 1 and May 31**.
to: webcontest@vfw.org.

What are the judging criteria? Navigation (25 percent); Load time (25 percent); Design (25 percent) and Content (25 percent)

The website with the most points will be declared the winner. In the event of a tie, judges will rank entries according to originality.

What are the rules?

Any borrowed work must be appropriately cited and used only with permission. If a site is discovered violating copyright laws, it will automatically be disqualified. (Examples: posting newspaper articles on website without the newspaper’s permission or using a copyrighted song on your website).

The site must not require the installation of any third party plug-ins to function correctly. (For example, embedding a QuickTime movie would not be allowed, but linking to the file would be acceptable.)

Sites requiring a login are not considered public websites, so are not eligible to enter.

All links on your website must be working correctly.

No "under construction" or "coming soon" areas of your website are allowed.

The site must be in "good" taste and not contain any explicit language or offensive material.

How to enter:

1. Submit entry via email only between May 1-May 31 to: webcontest@vfw.org
2. Subject head of email message should say **VFW Website Contest/Contest Category** (Department or District/Post)
3. The body of the email message should contain the following information:
 - Name of Department, District or Post
 - Internet URL address (Should be able to click on link in email)
 - Mailing address of the Department or District/Post
 - Webmaster's name
 - Webmaster's email address
 - Webmaster's address/phone number
 - Department, District or Post commander
 - Any comments about your site

Address any questions/comments about the website competition to webcontest@vfw.org.

Additional information:

- While sites may be viewed before judging, the final judging will take place during June. It is imperative that the site be accessible during this time. If a URL is not accessible then that entry is automatically disqualified.
- While websites will not lose points if they are hosted on a free service try to avoid banner advertisements and popup ads on your site.
- While there is no minimum number of pages for a website, a site with only one or two pages could receive low scores in the "Navigation" judging category since the site-wide navigation structure would not be very complex.

The following information details what each judging category entails:

Navigation:

- *How well are your pages organized?* (Think of your website as a book and your homepage as an index to that book) If visitors cannot find their way around, they will leave. Navigation must be obvious.
- *Do all the links work?*

Load time:

- *Do the pages load quickly?* Remember that Internet connectivity varies from slow dialup modems to fast, dedicated network connections. Over reliance on graphics and animations can cause potential visitors to give up and go elsewhere. If your site is graphics heavy, who is going to be patient enough to wait for the photos to download?

Design

- *Is it aesthetically pleasing?* The overall impression of the site is important. If it looks professional or different visitors may forgive other design problems
- *Keep it simple.* Do not overload it with graphics and design gimmicks – they just add to the load time. Also, do not try cramming anything and everything into a page. Less is always best!!
- *Carefully choose your color scheme* so that your site is visually appealing and your content is easily viewable.
- *Are the graphics and visuals used effectively?* Good design can be accomplished without photographs. In fact, it is really better **NOT** to post a photo than post a very bad photo online.

Content:

- *What will bring people back?* If you do not post information that interests people, it is doubtful they will return to visit your site. Remember your audience: your members, potential members, your local youth groups, your community.
- *Is the information relevant and up to date?* If your website has not been updated in a year, why have one? If information about a meeting for Feb. 14, 2003, is still posted on your website and it is now 2006, you have lost your credibility with potential visitors.
- *Is the text well written?* Good grammar, correct spelling and punctuation are essential.
- *Are the font selection and the placement of text on each page practical and visually appealing?* Be consistent in your fonts and styles.
- *Does the site have a clear message and purpose? Is this message communicated effectively?* Every website should have a purpose. If you are not communicating that purpose to your audience, think about why you have a website.
- *Are you easy to contact?* Contact details must be readily available everywhere for anyone wishing to communicate with your company.

(Tiebreaker only) Originality: *What makes my website stand out from others?*

Helpful hints:

Is it designed for Search Engines: Use meta-tags and key words in title and text to obtain high rankings for various search engines.

Does your site have a privacy policy? If not, you should have one for your own protection.

Do not use fancy fonts. Use common ones such as Times Roman, Arial or Helvetica so all visitors to your site will see the same site. Unusual fonts will spoil a design look because the computer will not recognize it and substitute a font instead.

Don't overdue the use of ALL CAPS because not only do people feel like you are yelling at them, but all caps also are hard to read.

Do not underline text. Use bold or italic instead if you want to emphasize something. Visitors will think that the phrase you underlined can be clicked on as a link since we tend to associate underlined words with links. (Also, it is a good idea to put your links in blue.)

Create a consistent format for your fonts. Use one font and size for your major page titles, one for your sections and one for the body text of your articles. If you want to use bold and italic for emphases, use one or the other but do not use both.

Use subheads to break up paragraphs. This helps the reader know what he/she is reading.

Keep the line length short. Look at your local newspaper. It is much easier to read short paragraphs than ones that stretch across the page. Same with computer screens. Text lines that extend the width of the computer screen are an instant turnoff and are difficult to read. Good rule of thumb: Keep your line count 85 characters or less, with less being better!! Also, keep paragraph length to 5-6 lines each.