



VFW Announces 2011 WebAward Competition

It's that time of year again! Now, VFW Departments, Districts and Posts have the opportunity to show off their creative talent in the **2011 VFW WebAward Competition**.

- VFW Websites will be evaluated based on easy navigation, quick load time, overall content and creative design.
- Judging will be done by the VFW Communications Department in two categories: "Department Websites," and "District/ Post Websites." Awards will be given to the first- and second-place winner in each category.

How to Enter:

1. Submit entry via email before midnight April 20 to: communications@vfw.org.
2. Subject line of the email message should read **2011 VFW WebAwards/Contest Category** (Department or District/Post)
3. The body of the email message should contain the following information:
 - A. Name of Department, District or Post.
 - B. Internet address (complete url)
 - C. Mailing address of the Department or District/Post.
 - D. Webmaster's name and complete contact information.
 - E. Department, District or Post commander.
 - F. Any comments about your site.

Judging Categories:

I. Navigation:

- *25% of score*
- *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 easy.
- *Do all of the links work?*

II. Load time:

- *25% of score*
- *Do the pages, graphics, and videos load quickly?* Remember that Internet connectivity varies from slow dialup modems to fast, dedicated network connections.

III. Design:

- *25% of score*

- *Is it aesthetically pleasing?* The overall impression of the site is important.
- *Keep it simple.* Do not overload it with graphics and design gimmicks – they just add to the load time. Also, don't try cramming anything and everything into a page. Less is 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 to post a very bad photo online.

IV. Content:

- *25% of score*
- *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, and 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 an “upcoming” meeting for Jan. 14, 2008, is still posted on your website, you have lost your credibility with potential visitors.
- *Is the text well written?* Good grammar, correct spelling and punctuation are essential.
- *Is the font selection and 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.

Additional Information:

Who is eligible?

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 prizes?

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

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). 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.

Additional information:

- If a URL is not accessible; the entry is automatically disqualified.
- Failure to provide correct subject line in submission; the 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.

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

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 over use 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.