NZAMRC Model Competitions

Guidelines for Judges

Judging in the model shop ...

The idea of being a judge can be bewildering. What do I know about judging is a common reaction to being asked?

More than you may think, actually. We're all experienced judges. We do it every time we shop, whether for groceries or clothes, or products in the local model shop.

There we find nice looking models of everything from four wheeled wagons to articulated steam locos to big modern diesels to buildings, trees, scenic materials, paints, metal sheet and shapes, plastic sheet and shapes, and so on.

Some things strike us as bargains, some as being really nice to have. Some as better than expected, others not.

What's happening here? We're judging that's what. And on a range of different attributes.

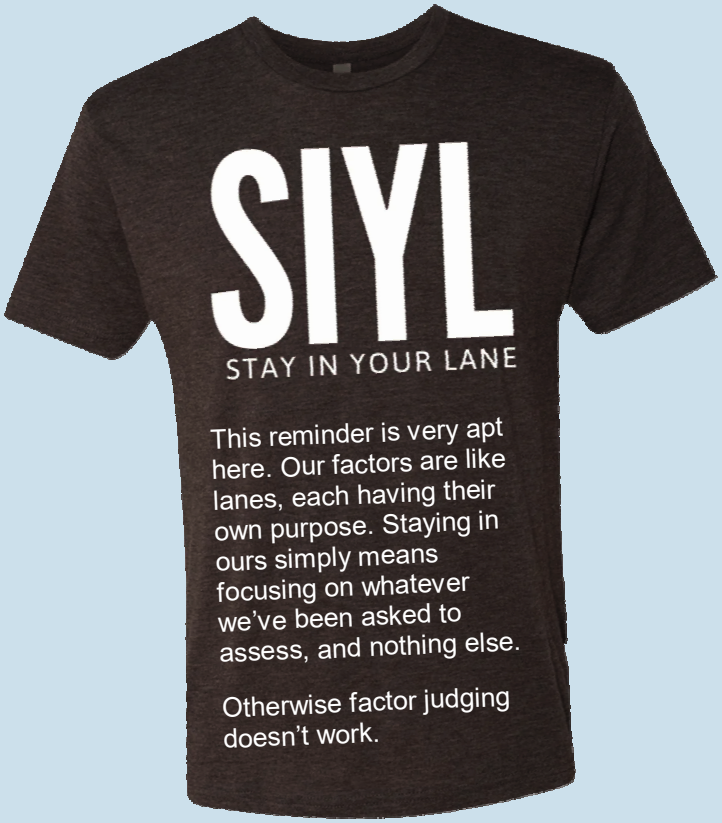
How well made? How much bang for buck? How accurate and detailed? How well finished?

We can assess competition entries in the same way. How well made = what we call the **Skill/Workmanship** factor.

How much bang for buck is what we call **Complexity/ Difficulty**.

We think of accuracy and detail as **Conformity/Fidelity**, **Conformity** being how closely the model resembles the real thing, and **Fidelity** how well the kit/s have been constructed, and how prototypical are any additions or modifications.

It all comes together in the **Finish** factor where we look at how well the entry matches the entrant's intentions.



This reminder is very apt here. Our factors are like lanes, each having their own purpose. Staying in ours simply means focusing on whatever we've been asked to assess, and nothing else.

Otherwise factor judging doesn't work.

Judges may confer but on no account should they discuss their marks, or in any way try to influence each other.

LEARN THE LINGO

We call the factors to be judged:

- **Skill/Workmanship,** ie, the quality of the work
- **Complexity/Difficulty,** ie, the amount of work entailed
- **Conformity/Fidelity: ie,** how closely the entry matches the real thing
- **Finish,** ie, how well the intended finish has been achieved
- **Scratchbuilt,** ie how much was made from basic materials
- **Runability,** ie, how well self-propelled entries run under power

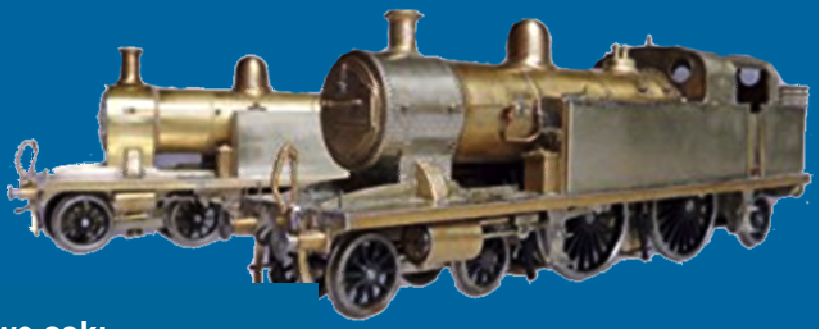
Skill/Workmanship – 100 marks

(Scratchbuilt, Kit Built/Modified RTR, and Computer assisted entries).

In judging this factor we assess the quality of the entrant's own work, their choice of materials, tools and other processes, and how well they have used these.

This is not one entry versus another. That would be comparing apples with kiwi fruit.

The benchmark here is … how well could this entry have been made?



In doing this we ask:

- Do the various parts fit neatly and precisely?
- Are any angles and uprights as they should be?
- Are the outlines generally clean and sharp
- Was this a good choice of materials?
- Was this entry prepared well before the finishing work was done?

Kit Built entries

In judging these entries we look at the quality of the assembly work and of any additional work such as modifications and the addition of details.

RTR entries

Modifications to RTRs, including any parts made from scratch are eligible for marks based on the same criteria.

Coming up with a mark

It may help when deciding on a mark out of 100 to imagine how this entry would have looked if built by a really good modeller from your experience.

- If equal to that it may warrant a full 100.
- If not why not?

Looking only at the workmanship*:

- Where is it not up to scratch?
- How critical are these points?
- How many things are wrong?

Make deductions accordingly.

* Disregard how simple or difficult or how accurate, those are other factors; this one is Skill/Workmanship.

Complexity/Difficulty – 100 marks

(Scratchbuilt, Kit Built/Modified RTR, and Computer assisted entries).

In judging Complexity/Difficulty what are we looking for?

What is complexity and what is difficulty? And why do they matter?

'Complexity' means 'intricate or complicated', and 'difficult' means 'hard to accomplish'.

Different entries are almost always different in this respect. . A colour light signal versus an articulated locomotive, for example.

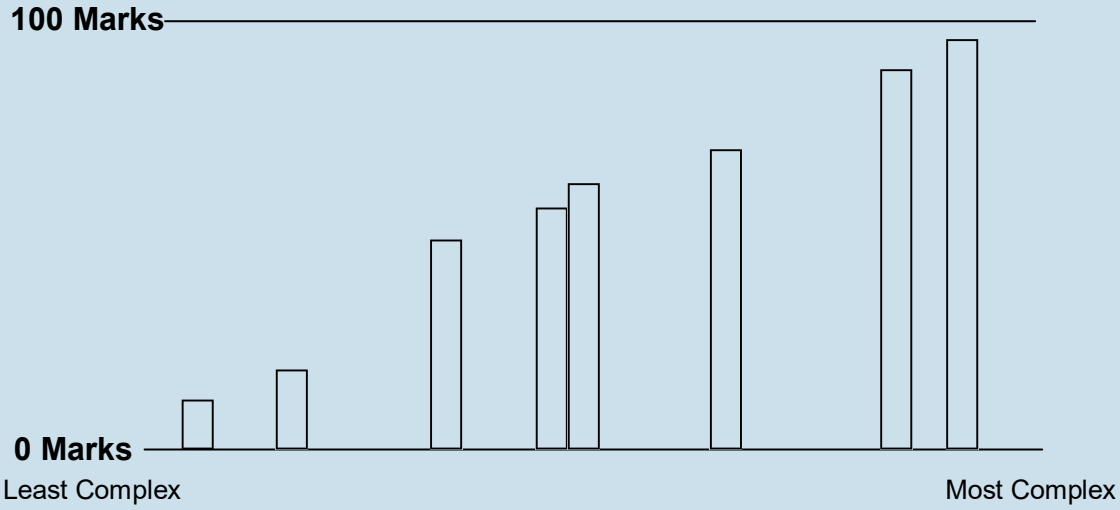
This factor makes up for those differences.

Judging Complexity/Difficulty

We can't know exactly how much effort went into each entry, so we must make an estimate.

A way to simplify doing this is to begin with one of the biggest categories. Make a mental appraisal and choose the least and most complex entries. That gives us a framework within which to place the others in order of apparent complexity.

While doing this we must also be mindful of how much is the entrant's own work. Is it all or did it start as a kit or an existing model? Model for model we can assume the latter to be less complex and difficult.



In our mind's eye we place the entries in order of complexity from least to most difficult.

Some useful hints

When judging **Complexity/Difficulty:**

1. Judge within one category at a time -- don't try to compare locomotives with bridges
2. Look over all the entries in that particular category
3. Ask, which would seem to have been the **most** complex or difficult to make?
4. Ask, which would have involved the **least** time and effort?

Now that we have the two ends of a spectrum or scale, we can mentally place the other entries within those limits by asking:

- Which is the **next** most difficult?
- What comes after it? And so on.

RTR marks

With RTR entries only the modifications qualify for Complexity/Difficulty marks. These might be given for fitting details and making any alterations, depending on their significance.

Add marks for parts the entrant actually made rather than using commercial ones.

Assigning marks

To put numbers against the placings we can ask:

1. Is this as difficult as it gets, ie, worth 100 marks or can we imagine something quite a bit more difficult, so less than 100?
2. Is the least difficult entry really quite simple, worth say only 5 or 10 marks? Or is it actually reasonably complex or difficult and so worth more?

Bonus Kit Built marks

Any corrections to Kit Built entries qualify for bonus marks on top of those for the difficulty of building the kit/s, based on what was involved.

Conformity/Fidelity – 100 marks

(Scratchbuilt, Kit Built/Modified RTR, and Computer assisted entries).

Firstly, if judging this factor, be mindful that the only thing that matters is accuracy compared to the original.

It's critical to compare the entry with the photos, diagrams and other information provided on the entry form.

Only if there is no or insufficient information should we make our own call on whether something is correct or not. But are we sure? If we know something is wrong we must deduct marks – but only if we're sure. The builder probably got to know the prototype better than we do and may deserve the benefit of any doubt.

... compare the entry with the photos, diagrams and other information provided on the entry form.

We can think of a target or the diagram below

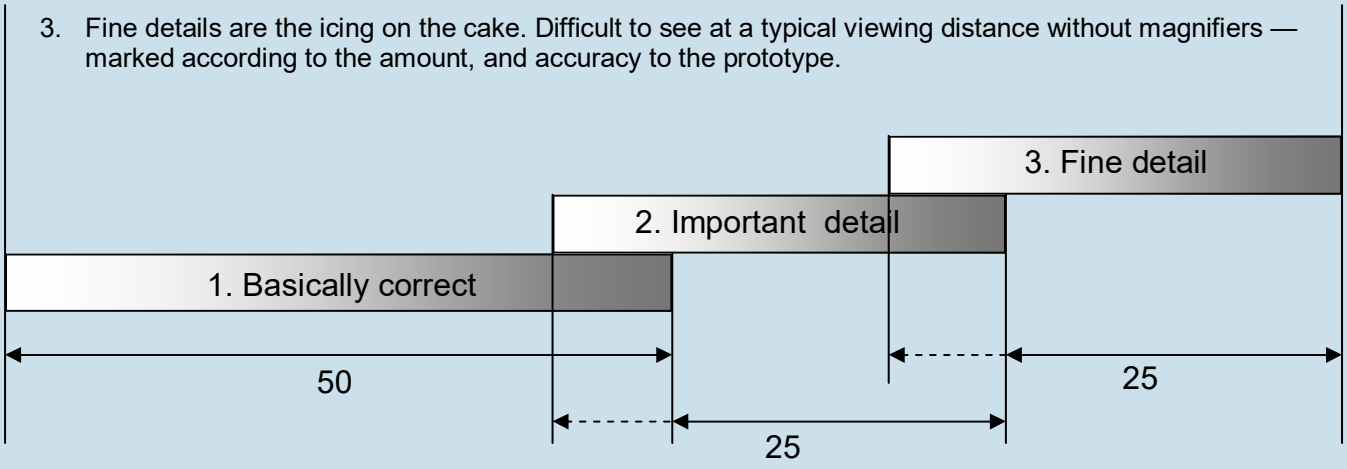
A target has an outer ring that can represent the must-haves, like a recognisable resemblance to the original.

The inner ring can represent details that add to the general accuracy

The bullseye is a great deal of fine hard-to-see-except-very-close-up, detail

Allocating points for Conformity:

1. A model that is recognisable as what it is supposed to be could be worth as much as half the marks. Make deductions for defect/s in the range of not quite right to reasonably serious.
2. Add up to another 25 marks according to the amount and accuracy of important features of the prototype — finer points that you would generally expect to see without looking too hard.
3. Fine details are the icing on the cake. Difficult to see at a typical viewing distance without magnifiers — marked according to the amount, and accuracy to the prototype.



Marks ranges are indicative only, how to allot marks up to 100 is for the judge to decide.

For Kit Built entries it's Fidelity

When assessing the prototype accuracy and detail of a Kit Built entry it would be wrong to mark down errors in the kit parts themselves. Instead we look at how faithfully the maker's intentions have been followed.

Corrections made to errors in the original kit/s are however eligible for marks based on how well these conform.

For RTR it's still Conformity

For RTRs we disregard any discrepancies in the original RTR model and focus our marking on how well the modifications conform, as verified from the accompanying information or from the judge's own knowledge.

Finish – 100 marks

(all entry sections)

A reminder to those judging Finish, only judge the merits of the finishing work (not the model itself), and only what the entrants have done themselves.

In view of the trend towards greater skill and effort being put into finishing models, the Finishing factor has come to embrace more than just a quick coat of paint. For example electroplating and other methods of producing the look of highly polished metal are not uncommon, and we've been seeing some really painstaking weathering and other effects.

Finish should ... be judged against what was being aimed for ...

Finish should rightly be judged against what was being aimed for — as stated on the entry form and in any accompanying information — provided that aim is believable.

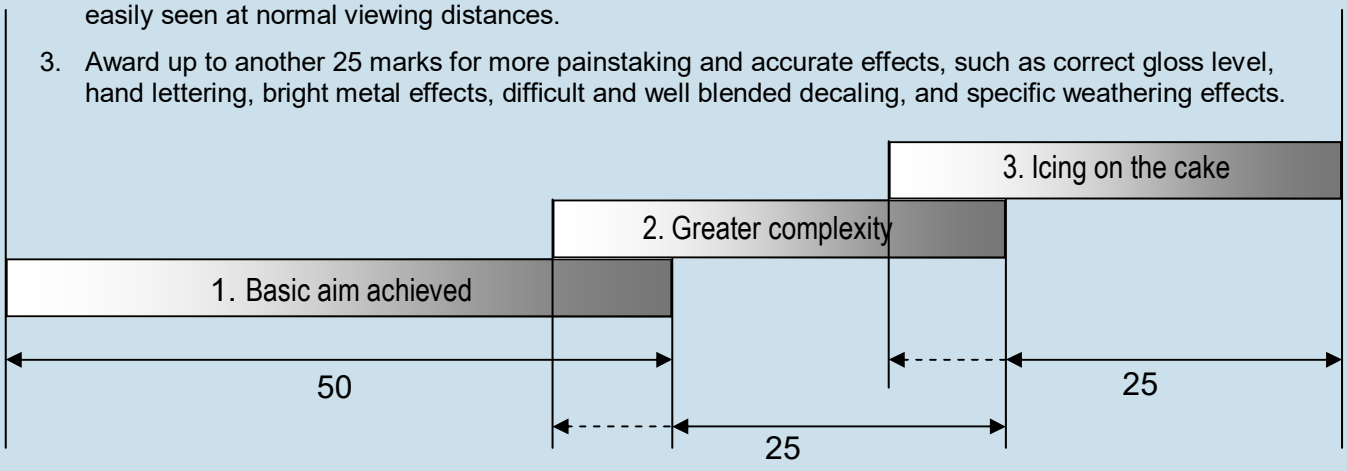
Some of the key characteristics of good finishing are an absence of brush marks, accurate colours and gloss levels, clean borders between colours, well blended decals, and credible weathering (***if*** a weathered effect is the aim).

Compare the entry with photos, diagrams and other information provided on the entry form.

It's important to only mark work the entrant/s have done themselves.

Allocating points for Finish:

1. A finished effect that is close to what the entrant was aiming for so long as it also has a basic resemblance to the prototype being modelled, could be worth as much as half the Finish marks. Make deductions for any noticeable defects in the surface finish or other unrealistic blemishes.
2. Add up to another 25 marks according to the complexity of the finishing — multiple colours, good colour separation, competent decaling, and generic rather than specific weathering effects — things that are easily seen at normal viewing distances.
3. Award up to another 25 marks for more painstaking and accurate effects, such as correct gloss level, hand lettering, bright metal effects, difficult and well blended decaling, and specific weathering effects.



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Scratchbuilding – 100 marks

(Scratchbuilt section)

This factor recognises the hands-on efforts of entrants themselves using all or mostly basic parts.

While judgment is still required, this factor is the easiest to judge because it only considers what proportion of the entry was built from parts and materials exempted under Clause 18 Definitions.

Anything built entirely from those basic materials receives the full 100 marks.

Anything built entirely from those basic materials receives the full 100 marks.

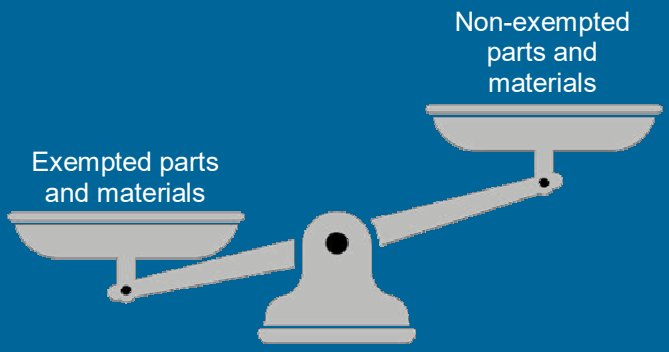
A judgment is required whenever the builder has used things that are not exempted, such as parts from one or more kitsets, an RTR model, and/or commercial parts of any kind.

Marks are only available to Kit Built/Modified RTR entries for any modifications to the original kit or model. Such entries will not usually be entered in the Scratchbuilt section*.

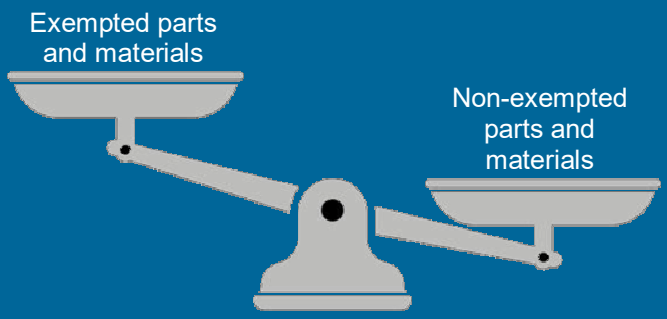
When an entry is mostly scratchbuilt but includes non-exempted parts or materials, the judges' task is to assess what proportion of the finished entry these make up..

The approach to this is to estimate how much time and difficulty may have been saved in that way and reduce the marks accordingly

*Because of the way percentages work, any entry less than about 50% scratchbuilt will probably be worse off if entered in the Scratchbuilt section.



Likely to do well from the Scratchbuilt factor marks



Not likely to do well from Scratchbuilt factor marks

Allotting Scratchbuilding marks is not just a matter of counting non exempted parts.

A complex model like a locomotive, a scene or diorama might have quite a high non exempted parts count, but the proportion of the whole entry will vary:

- The goods shed on a layout module may have 20 oil drums on the ground nearby, but that would only be a small percentage of the whole scene, so work out that percentage (roughly) and take off that number of marks.
- On a track gang diorama, 20 plastic figures might amount to 20% of the whole thing, so a deduction of 20 marks.

Percent = Marks

100 90 80 70 60 50 40 30 20 10 0

Try using this scale to help allot marks:

For example, 80% scratchbuilt = 80 marks, 67% = 67 marks, etc.

Runability – 100 marks

(Entry categories 8.1 and 8.2, ie, self propelled)

Judging how motorised models run under test

Generally there are five aspects to consider:

- Quality of slow starting
- Quality of slow running
- Smoothness of running
- Ability to reach an appropriate speed for that prototype
- Level of noise

Low noise, smooth starting, steady running at all speeds and steadiness on the track are the desired traits and an experienced judge will have a pretty good idea of how well a good model should perform.

Likewise how many marks to deduct if there problems

If an entry in Category 8.1 or 8.2 does not run under its own power it scores no runability points.

It's a worrying time for judges in this factor when entries don't perform as expected. They may not run at all, or may jerk, stop and start, or generally behave in such a way as to suggest that some little gremlin has crept in. If they have time judges may attempt to rectify any little faults in order to see the model run well but they don't have to and can't spend a lot time on it.