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National Magazine Awards

CELEBRATING CANADIAN CREATORS

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JUDGING GUIDE





NATIONAL MAGAZINE AWARDS

Judging Guide 2021: **Investigative Reporting**

Welcome

The National Media Awards Foundation strives above all to represent and support the work of Canada's creators. It's why, for over forty years now, we have facilitated an awards program that celebrates the excellence, determination, and innovation that characterize the best of our country's journalism. On behalf of the Board of Directors, we offer our sincere thanks to our judges, and we hope you enjoy the judging process!

Important!

The scoring is done on a 30-point scale (and not a 100-point scale).

Overview

The judging process for Writing Awards consists of three stages:

- 1. Reading Period:** You have 3-4 weeks, depending on the size of your category, to review the articles and enter your scores on your Online Judging Scorecard, according to the criteria provided.
- 2. Conference Call:** The NMAF will moderate a conference call with all 3 judges so that the judges have an opportunity to discuss their favourite entries and see where there is some agreement.
- 3. Final Scores:** After the conference call, each judge will have an opportunity to revisit any of the articles discussed during the conference call, and to modify their scores, as they wish, before the final deadline. Once the final deadline passes, the NMAF will tally the scores, and these will determine the Gold and Silver medal winners.

Judging Portal

Instructions to access the Judging Portal have been emailed to the judges.

A Note About Editorial Mandates

Each publication has submitted an **Editorial Mandate**, which is accessible in the Judging Portal. The mandate should provide summary information about the magazine's editorial and creative vision, as well as who its readers are. We ask that all judges keep each magazine's Editorial Mandate in mind when making their evaluations. How successfully a magazine story, visual work or entire issue engages and serves the needs of its readers is a key criterion of the judging process.

Criteria & Scoring

For the Writing Awards each entry must be judged on a **30-point numerical scale**, with a maximum of 10 points for each of the 3 criteria. It is important to remember that the scores ultimately determine the results of the judging. At the conclusion of the judging process, the highest score will be named the Gold Medal winner and the second-highest score will be named the Silver Medal winner. For most awards there can be a maximum of 10 nominees on the shortlist. All nominees who do not win Gold or Silver will receive Honourable Mention.

Three criteria

1. Style & Creativity (1-10 pts)	2. Content (1-10 pts)	3. Impact (1-10 pts)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Is the writing style vivid, clear and original?· Is the use of language fresh, surprising and free of cliché or tired phrasing?· Has the writer used a thoughtful and appropriate structure?· Has the writer displayed a unique vision or approach to the material that helps bring it to life?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Is there originally sourced research and content, with minimal reliance on second-hand sources?· Are the sources high quality?· Does the author deliver a thoughtful, balanced article?· Is the subject matter surprising, revealing, exciting and/or freshly engaging to the reader?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Does the article hold the interest of the intended reader?· Does the article have the power—via its style, subject matter, research, etc.—to make an impact on the reader, whether to inspire or move to action?

Total: 30 points

Once you've evaluated the entry according to the three criteria and guidelines, you must arrive at a final score to enter into your online scorecard. Please use this table as a guide in calculating your final score.

28-30	An outstanding piece of magazine journalism, exemplary of the medium and the craft, and deserving of strong consideration for Gold or Silver.
24-27	A meritorious piece of magazine journalism that may deserve consideration for Gold or Silver, and deserves strong consideration for Honourable Mention.
20-23	A worthy piece of magazine journalism that may be worth discussing for Honourable Mention.

15-20	A decent piece of magazine journalism but not enough to be in consideration for Honourable Mention.
0-15	Not worthy of consideration.

Other notes on judging:

Category Definition: Please consult the list of categories on Page 7 to refer to the specific definition of the category you are judging.

Wrong Category? If you determine an entry does not match the definition of the category in which it's entered, please notify the NMAF or bring it up during the conference call. In most cases, you may simply enter a lower score to remove the piece from contention. Please note that the category of entry is chosen by the submitter, not by the NMAF, and that entries cannot be moved to a different category during the judging process.

Large Category? If you are judging a large category (more than 45 entries) and you feel some entries are definitely substandard, it is not necessary to read every word of those articles. If, after having given the article legitimate consideration, you determine it will not be worthy of a score of at least 20, you may score it accordingly low and move on. (*Legitimate consideration* is open to interpretation, but a judge should read enough of the article to be able to describe its content and style.)

Sponsorship: If an entry was sponsored in part or in whole by a third party, the context of the sponsorship will be indicated on the online scorecard.

B2B Entries: Your category may include entries from Business-to-Business (B2B) publications as well as consumer publications. Judges should consider the intended audience of a publication when making their evaluations.

Conference Call, Nominees & Winners

Judges are requested to participate in a conference call, typically one hour, moderated by a staff or board member of the NMAF. The conference call takes place following the scores deadline, and is arranged by the NMAF at a date and time convenient for each judge. Before the call, the moderator will circulate a list of the top 10 entries according to the average of submitted scores. The purpose of the conference call is not to come to a consensus on finalists but to give each judge the opportunity to discuss his/her top pieces and ensure that no worthy entry is overlooked by the other judges.

Judges are reminded that, even with their particular field of expertise playing a role, they should be evaluating each entry holistically and realistically—employing the full and relevant extent of their particular expertise while not overreaching at the expense of a constructive discussion and evaluation.

Remember: In all written categories, the scores ultimately determine the finalists and winners. After the call, each judge will have the opportunity to re-evaluate the entries and modify scores up to the deadline.

Entries in written categories must have a minimum average score of 24 or higher to be considered for nomination.

The highest overall score will win Gold. The second-highest overall score will win Silver. All other finalists will receive Honourable Mention.

Conflict of Interest

You may NOT serve as a judge for a category if:

- You are the writer of a piece entered in your category;
- You served as the handling editor of a piece entered in your category;
- You are (or were, during the awards year) a staff member of a magazine entered in your category.

If any of the above applies to you, please contact the NMAF immediately so that we may arrange an alternate judge and, if possible, move you to a different jury.

You may potentially serve as a judge for a category if:

- You are the subject of a piece entered in your category;
- You have a close association with the writer of a piece entered in your category;
- You are a freelance contributor to a magazine entered in the category.

If any of the above applies to you, please alert the NMAF. In most cases, you may abstain from evaluating only that entry for which you have a conflict, by entering a 'C' on your scorecard instead of a number. We will request that if this piece comes up during the conference call, that you refrain from discussing it.

Remember: To indicate a conflict of interest with a particular entry, or to recuse yourself in any way, please enter a 'C' on your online scorecard instead of a number. This will factor you out of the scoring.

Confidentiality & Media

The NMAF does not release information on submissions, scoring results, conference calls or other deliberations in the judging process. These are kept confidential and we request that judges do the same.

Judges are welcome to celebrate their participation as a National Magazine Awards judge on social media. We ask that you do so in such a way that does not compromise the integrity of the judging process, including commenting on scores, entries, categories, other jurors, or other facets of judging while the judging is in progress.

In certain cases, the NMAF may contact judges to provide comments on award winners, for promotional use only. Judges will not be quoted or named individually but rather collectively as a jury.

After the gala, judges may be contacted by nominees, winners or the media to comment on the results of judging. Judges are free to discuss their own individual evaluations of an entry, but are requested to qualify their opinions as individual and not necessarily representative of their fellow jurors or the NMAF.

The NMAF will not release the contact information of judges to any third party without permission.

Feedback

The NMAF is committed to an inclusive and responsive awards program. We welcome your feedback on our judging process at any time. We'll also be in touch with you after the judging process is complete and request your participation in a survey so we can continue to provide the best service to our judges and all participants in the National Magazine Awards. Thank you!

Contact us at staff@magazine-awards.com with any questions.

Appendix: List of Written Categories & Definitions

01 Long-Form Feature Writing: 6000+

Honours outstanding feature writing of a magazine story of minimum 6001 words in length, in any field or subject.

02 Long-Form Feature Writing

Honours outstanding feature writing of a magazine story between 3500-6000 words in length, in any field or subject.

03 Feature Writing

Honours outstanding feature writing of a magazine story between 2000-3500 words in length, in any field or subject.

04 Short Feature Writing

Honours outstanding feature writing of a magazine story of maximum 2000 words in length, in any field or subject.

05 Columns

Honours outstanding magazine writing by a regular columnist.

Entries consist of any three columns by a single author in single publication.

06 Essays

Honours outstanding magazine writing in which the writer's perspective is paramount and offers an argument or an intellectual point of view. *The regular columns of columnists are not eligible in Essays.*

07 Fiction

Honours a work of short fiction first published by the magazine.

08 Investigative Reporting

Honours outstanding magazine writing based on original fact-finding, enterprising newsgathering, and/or news reporting in any field or subject.

09 Personal Journalism

Honours outstanding magazine writing that focuses on the personal experiences of the writer.

10 Poetry

Honours a work of poetry first published by the magazine.

Entries may consist of a single poem or a series of up to three poems by the same author from a single issue.

11 Profiles

Honours outstanding magazine writing that focuses on one person or a group.

12 Service Journalism

Honours outstanding magazine writing that is driven by informational or instructional content in any field or subject.

13 Best Emerging Writer

Honours a writer whose early work in magazines shows the highest degree of craft and promise. This category is open to students and writers with a maximum 3 years experience in professional journalism, and who have never been nominated for a National Magazine Award, Digital Publishing Award or National Magazine Awards: B2B.

18 One of a Kind Storytelling

Honours outstanding magazine storytelling whose content or style is so unique that it does not fit the definition of any other category.