METRO COSPLAY CHAMPIONSHIP 2026

The METRO Cosplay Championship will be a performance + craftsmanship contest. Contestants will be pre-judged on their craftsmanship the morning before the contest, and then present their performance during the show. Contestants will be judged with 50% consideration to performance and 50% consideration to craftsmanship. Awards will be presented at the end of the show.

RULES AND REGULATIONS

The METRO cosplay championship will take place on **Sunday, Aug 2** at the Tampa Bay Convention Center.

All contestants must have a valid pass for **Sunday** of METROCON.

All entrants must fill out an online application form on the METROCON website to be considered. You must use your legal name and information on the application (preferred name will be used onstage). There will be NO onsite applications available at the convention.

Contestants must be age 13+ (please refer to the Junior Cosplay Showcase for entrants 12 and under). Contestants under 18 must be accompanied to the show by a legal adult that is their responsible party (Parent, Guardian, Sibling, Cousin, Teacher, Friend etc.).

Applications will close **May 15, 2026 at 11:59pm.** Applications are not "first come, first served" but reviewed by a juried process and contestants are notified of acceptance or denial by **May 30, 2026.** At this time, applications may reopen if there is still room.

Contest will be limited to 10 participants.

Applications will be accepted based on whether contestants adhere to the rules, costume has been proven to either exist or will exist (to prevent drop-outs) and proven quality for competition.

Costumes and Performance material may not exceed a PG13 rating (at the discretion of the cosplay leadership). Costumes may not be historically or culturally offensive. Please reach out to cosplay@metroconventions.com with questions regarding this policy.

All props must comply with METROCON prop policy and must be checked for safety prior to entering the convention.

Contestants may not throw anything into the audience or enter the audience during the contest.

All contestants must arrive at check-in **90 minutes** prior to the contest start for a brief rehearsal and technical checks. Contestants must arrive in costume and ready to perform.

If a contestant requires assistance getting on a stage with stairs, please notify cosplay staff in the application so that reasonable accommodations may be made.

While cosplay performances will be pre-screened by our METROCON cosplay staff, they will not be seen by our Cosplay Special Guest judges until performance.

The results of our judges are binding and final. Harassment of Judges or Cosplay Staff over disagreement of awards will not be tolerated and may result in being banned from future METROCON costume contests. If feedback is desired from judges, please request this after the contest via email to cosplay@metroconventions.com.

METROCON staff reserves the right to disqualify a contestant for misconduct or any reason at their sole discretion.

By submitting an entry, contestants confirm that they have read and agree to all of the rules and regulations of the METRO Cosplay Championship, which can be modified until the day of the contest according to the needs of the organization.

CRAFTSMANSHIP

Contestants must fill out an application and submit supplemental material as required on the application. Contestants are not required to have finished the costume at time of application.

Example of supplemental material for the application: Photos of the completed costume, OR work-in-progress photos OR reference photos with a detailed build plan and examples of previous work. Contestants MUST provide adequate reference photos of the character/design including but not limited to: front of character, back of character, and any prop references.

A build book is required and must be submitted to cosplay@metroconventions.com by **Sunday July 19, 2026, 11:59pm**, prior to the contest. Build books must NOT exceed 15 pages for individuals, 20 pages for groups, must be in PDF format, and must include reference photos and work in progress photos that include contestants actively participating in the build. Build books may NOT include links and must NOT exceed 5MB in size. **You MUST use the following naming convention for your file: stagename.buildbook.championship26.**

Groups will be allowed up to 4 participants. Groups will have a singular award and prizes for the entire group. Costumes need to be from the same series.

Contestants will be assigned a prejudging time slot on **Sunday, Aug 2, 2026 starting at 9am at the convention center.** Contestants will have 5 minutes to present their cosplay to guest

judges and exchange questions. Late arrivals will be pushed to the back of the line, and may not be judged if time does not allow. No-show contestants may be disqualified from winning awards.

Please arrive at pre-judging in full costume and makeup.

75% of the costume must be hand-made. Generally this means some base materials do not need to be fabricated from scratch such as wigs, shoes, and common accessories. Sourcing premade print files, embroidery files, and otherwise premade patterns is allowed, but will count against your hand-made percentage. More consideration will be given to those that create their own files.

Original designs will be accepted if based on existing source material. Please provide references of the source material and references of the full intended design.

Each contestant may participate in only one entry into the contest.

Costumes that have won any 'Best of' awards in any previous contests at any convention are not permitted, regardless of upgrades or modifications. Contestants MUST compete in the costume chosen by the jury at application UNLESS it has won a Best in Show award after acceptance into the contest and prior to the convention, or there are other extenuating circumstances evaluated by the Cosplay Department.

CRAFTSMANSHIP JUDGING CRITERIA

- Cleanliness
- Creativity
- Accuracy to reference material
- Technical skills
- Overall look and presentation

PERFORMANCE

Contestants are not required to have finished their skit (costumes, props, recording) at the time of application, but will be required to submit supplemental materials to be considered. Materials may include: photos of costumes or references of costumes to be made, written scripts, photos/references/explanations of props or set pieces to be used, recorded audio or music selections, recorded videos of the performance out of costume, videos or photos of previous work.

Performance skits must be between 30 seconds and 2:30 minutes in run length. Up to 30 seconds will be given for stage set-up and 30 seconds for clearing.

Performers may have assistance setting up and clearing, but no stage hand may be allowed onstage during the performance.

Contestants may submit basic lighting cues to be used during the performance tech (on/off cues, blackout, fade to black, lights up, etc.)

It is prohibited to have the following onstage: fire/pyrotechnics, water or other liquids, food of any kind, anything that creates a big mess or will otherwise be difficult to clean up, may impede other contestants, or may affect other contestants' costumes (confetti, glitter, silly string etc.) Physical movement such as acrobatics and stage combat which may pose a safety concern will be evaluated during application screening.

ALL music, dialogue, lighting cues, and sound effects must be pre-recorded and submitted to cosplay@metroconventions.com by **July 5, 2026 by 11:59 PM.**

Video or still backgrounds will be allowed, materials must be submitted by **July 5, 2026 by 11:59 PM. You MUST adhere to the following guidelines for file submission:**

Video: MP4 (h.264 or h.256 codec), 1920x1080 pixels, standard 16:9 aspect ratio (**PLEASE NOTE:** due to our main events setup, the bottom 20% of your video will NOT be viewable. Please do not put anything important in that area of your video).

Audio: MP3 or WAV, at least 44.1 hz sample rate. For MP3's, 192 kbps bitrate or higher.

If you have a still image background and audio, please combine into a video file.

Audio/dialogue must not contain inappropriate or offensive language.

You MUST use the following naming convention for your file: stagename.video.championship26

PERFORMANCE JUDGING CRITERIA

- Cleanliness - Is it well rehearsed?
- Composition - Does it tell a whole story and make sense to someone who doesn't know the source material?
- Movement - Is it interesting, emotional, dynamic, and well performed?
- Sound and Visual - Does the movement and/or lip synching match up to the sound? Do the additional visuals enhance the performance? Do the props and/or scenic elements enhance the performance?
- Overall Presentation

AWARDS

Prizes for awards **can** include but are **not guaranteed to be or limited to**: cash prizes, medals, trophies, METROCON merch, METROCON weekend passes for 2026, vendors room swag, professional photoshoots, and donations of gift cards by sponsors for wigs, makeup, cosplay supplies, and more!

- Best In Show
- First Runner Up
- Second Runner Up