



Cosplay Central Crown Championships 2026
Rules for the C2E2 regional qualifier & USA National Final

The Cosplay Central Crown Championships are comprised of a series of competitions held at ReedPop events, selected global Partner Events, and the Championships Final. The USA Final and Cosplay Central Crown Championships Global Final will be hosted at C2E2, Chicago, in calendar year 2026.

This Competition is being held in connection with Chicago Comic & Entertainment Expo ("C2E2") at McCormick Place located at 2301 S. Lake Shore Drive in Chicago, Illinois taking place from March 27, 2026 to March 29, 2026. The C2E2 regional qualifier, USA National Final and the Cosplay Central Crown Championships Final will take place Saturday, March 28, 2026.

There are three (3) stages to the Cosplay Central Crown Championships at C2E2

Stage 1 – C2E2 Regional Qualifier

Entrants will be assessed by the judges in the following categories:

- **Needlework:** Costumes constructed primarily through the use of fabric and sewing, stitching, embroidery, etc.
- **Armor:** Costumes constructed primarily by molding and shaping its outer layers using materials such as acrylic, EVA foam, Worbla, Wonderflex, cardboard, 3D printed PLA etc.
- **FX:** Costumes that focus on less commonly used techniques such as animatronics, optical effects and lighting, mechanical effects, special effects makeup, prosthetics, puppetry techniques and 'larger than life' creations, such as those using stilts or techniques that create 'non-human' silhouettes.

The Judges will select the top entries in each category, and each will receive a medal.

The top 3 overall competitors as determined by the judges, regardless of whether or not such Competitor placed first, second or third in the category awards, will receive the following prizes:

1st Prize

US\$1,000 and Medal

Two (2) weekend passes for C2E2
2027

2nd Prize

US\$500 and Medal

Two (2) weekend tickets to C2E2
2027

3rd Prize

US\$250 and Medal

Two (2) weekend tickets to C2E2
2027



The 1st Prize winner progresses to Stage 2: The USA National Final

Stage 2: USA National Final

The judges will assess the regional winners chosen at Florida Supercon, New York Comic Con, Emerald City Comic Con, and newly selected winner of C2E2.

The winner of this stage will be the selected USA Finalist and progress to Stage 3 (the global Cosplay Central Crown Championships Final). They will also be awarded an invitation to attend MCM London Comic Con as guest judge for such event's competition.

Stage 3: Global Championship Final

The newly selected USA Finalist will be considered against the international Finalists selected around the globe, from countries such as Australia and the UK, to decide the 2026 Cosplay Central Crown Champion.

The top three (3) entries identified by the judges will receive the following prizes:

- First Place US\$5000, Crown & Title of "Crown Champion"
- Second place US\$2000, Medal
- Third place US\$1000, Medal

Rules:

1. All entrants must be 18 or older to compete in the Cosplay Central Crown Championships.
2. Applications are open to registered citizens or permanent residents of the USA, Canada and Mexico
3. Online registration will open from **Monday, January 5, 2026** until **Monday, February 23, 2026 at 11:59 PM CT**. Places in the competition will be confirmed no later than **Monday, March 2, 2026**.
4. At application each entrant must submit a minimum of one (1) reference image, two (2) images of the costume they wish to enter and a written description which may offer details about the design and construction process, materials, and the choice of costume.
 - a. At application the costume being entered should be 70% complete, i.e. all major parts should be present and nearly complete, with allowance for minor unfinished elements and fine decoration.
5. If selected, the costume description and facts provided will be used to create an introduction for the stage presentation. ReedPop reserves the right to edit introduction material for time and content.
6. All selected entrants are responsible for all expenses related to competing in the Championships Qualifier at C2E2 including all lodging and travel to and from the convention center. All contestants must have a badge valid for Saturday at C2E2. Entrants are responsible for their own belongings. ReedPop is unable to provide a secure area for personal items.
7. Entrants may participate in the Crown Championships only once per year. Applicants must not register multiple times with multiple costumes. An entrant can only enter once across all qualifier events in the annual circuit and only wear one costume.



8. Group entries are not permitted.
9. Entrants must comply with the ReedPop costume, weapons and props rules and will be subject to security checks on entry to C2E2.
10. Costumes for the Crown Championships must represent an existing or recognizable character or element from the pop culture realm, including comic books, movies and television, video games, anime, manga, theatre or fantasy. Characters or elements from bands, musicians and drag acts are not eligible.
11. Entrants must have made the costume they are using in selection events and the Final by themselves.
 - a. All significant visible costume elements that can safely be made without assistance must have been constructed entirely by the entrant; If it is impossible or unsafe for a single person to make a costume element, assistance for simple tasks such as holding things in place is acceptable.
 - b. It is acceptable to use bought wigs, shoes, and accessories such as spectacles etc. Simple, largely insignificant base layers such as a leotard or pantyhose are similarly permitted. Any customization such as styling a wig or modifying shoes must be the sole work of the entrant.
12. Costumes used for the Championships Qualifier or Final must not have been used for any previous international cosplay or costume contest final. Additionally, costumes that have previously participated in a Championship Qualifier at a ReedPop event are not eligible to participate unless there have been significant modifications to the original costume.
13. The costume should not exceed 2.5m/8ft in any one dimension, and the entrant should be able to safely move in the costume with limited assistance and the costume must not impede the entrant's ability to get on and off stage. The ReedPop team reserve the right to intervene should they believe a costume is not safe to participate on stage.
14. All costumes should provide enough coverage to be worn in public and should be in good taste and appropriate for a family-friendly show.
15. Costumes cannot be obscene or offensive, including insensitive or unnecessary use of makeup, nor endorse any form of hate or any hate group. Gore, graphic violence, or other objectionable elements may also be grounds for disqualification as determined by the judges or ReedPop.
16. Costumes cannot promote alcohol, illegal drugs, tobacco, firearms/weapons (or the use of any of the foregoing), any activities that may appear unsafe or dangerous or any particular political agenda or message.
17. Costumes must not defame, misrepresent or contain disparaging remarks about Cosplay Central, ReedPop and their products, or other people, products or companies, or communicate messages or images inconsistent with the positive images and/or goodwill with which Cosplay Central and/or ReedPop intends to associate the Competition; Costumes cannot depict, and cannot themselves, be in violation of any law.
18. Entrants are not restricted from accepting sponsorship for the creation of the costume provided that it places no obligations on ReedPop. Such sponsor cannot be included in the stage description or included in any promotional activity by ReedPop relating to the competition.
19. All accepted entrants must check in to sign a waiver and attend craftsmanship judging on the contest day. If accepted, ReedPop will notify entrants when and where check in and the craftsmanship judging will take place.



20. Entrants must appear in costume at the time of their judging. Reference, construction or progress pictures should be brought by the entrant to their judging session; not supplied electronically. Failure to appear for judging will result in disqualification
21. Each entrant will present their costume on stage. Music will be provided by the ReedPop Team. Stage dressing is not permitted.
22. The safety of the audience, staff, and other participants must not be compromised. This means that pyrotechnics, fireworks or any other methods of creating or causing a naked flame or explosion are forbidden; anything that may litter the stage (e.g., glitter or confetti) or make it slippery or sticky is similarly banned. The use of lasers, regardless of strength, is not permitted by the venue. Self-generated vapor as part of a costume may be permitted for use on stage following assessment by the ReedPop team.
23. Costumes in the qualifier will be judged on Accuracy or Design and Ambition (30% weighting) and its Construction (70% weighting). The stage presentation will not be scored directly but may be taken into consideration if the stage presentation reveals flaws or benefits of the costume's construction.
24. The judges will assess all entries and make the following designations:
 - a. The top entry as determined by the judges in the Needlework, Armor or FX categories. ReedPop reserves the right to adjust the categories or number of category awards given at any time in its sole discretion based on entries received.
 - b. The top three (3) overall entrants of the C2E2 Regional Qualifier as determined by the judges regardless of whether or not such Entrant was the chosen winner for their category. The First place overall winner will move forward to the USA National Final as the selected C2E2 Regional Winner.
 - c. One (1) winner selected from each of the four (4) regional winners chosen at Florida Supercon, New York Comic Con, Emerald City Comic Con and newly selected winner of C2E2 will be the selected USA Finalist and progress to the Global Final.
 - d. One (1) winner will be selected from the National Finalists as the '2026 Crown Champion of Cosplay'
25. The judges' decisions are final, and no further negotiation is permitted. There is no obligation on ReedPop or the judges to provide feedback.
26. The selected USA National Champion will receive an invitation to MCM London Comic Con in October 2026 as a guest judge of that event's competition. This will include Travel expenses, organized by the ReedPop Team, with the following stipulations:
 - a. This will cover one round trip for the winner only, to be reimbursed by ReedPop with a maximum budget of US\$900 following receipts for travel expenditure being provided to the ReedPop Team. This budget can be used for an economy flight and the cost of one checked bag.
 - i. They will also receive a reimbursement of up to US\$180 for ground transportation from the London airport to the Event site and from the Event site back to the airport.
 - b. One hotel room for up to two people will be arranged and provided by ReedPop. Checking in Thursday and departing on Monday (4 Nights). ReedPop will make best efforts to accommodate room type preferences but this may be restricted by hotel availability.
 - c. Any other costs relating to travel are also the responsibility of the selected winner, including insurance, transport to and from departure airport, and any visa/ESTA related costs.
 - d. In the event the winner is not able to attend MCM London Comic Con, there will be no cash alternative, however the Reedpop team may transfer the offer to attend as guest judge at a ReedPop event in the



USA within 12 months.

27. Each entrant grants to Reed Exhibitions, a division of RELX Inc. ("Management" or "ReedPop" or "RX"), its employees, agents, and assignees, the absolute and irrevocable right and permission to photograph, film, reproduce, portray and/or otherwise exploit the name, voice, appearance, photograph, image and/or likeness of such entrant at any of ReedPop's events and/or in the Competition (collectively, "Likeness"), and to use the results and proceeds, without limitation, in materials produced by Management in any and all media, in perpetuity. Entrant hereby waives any claim to compensation for use of such Likeness. Entrant agrees that Management owns the images and all rights related to them. The images may be used by Management in any manner or media without notifying Entrant, such as the Cosplay Central website, publications, promotions, broadcasts, advertisements, and posters, for advertising or other related purposes. Entrant waives any right to inspect or approve the finished images or any printed or electronic matter that may be used with them.
28. Release: By accepting a prize, each winner agrees to release and hold harmless ReedPop and its direct and indirect subsidiaries, suppliers, distributors, advertising/promotion agencies, and prize suppliers (if any), and each of their respective parent companies and each such company's officers, directors, employees and agents, from and against any claim or cause of action, including, but not limited to, personal injury, death, or damage to or loss of property, arising out of participation in the Cosplay Central Crown Championship or receipt or use or misuse of any prize.
29. ReedPop reserves the right to cancel, suspend and/or modify the Cosplay Central Crown Championship, or any part of it, if any fraud or technical failures or any other factor beyond ReedPop's reasonable control impairs the integrity or proper functioning of the Cosplay Central Crown Championship, as determined by ReedPop in its sole discretion. ReedPop reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to disqualify any individual it finds to be tampering with the entry process or the operation of the Crown Championships or to be acting in violation of the Rules or in an unsportsmanlike or disruptive manner. Any attempt by any person to deliberately undermine the legitimate operation of the ReedPop Comic Con Championships of Cosplay may be a violation of criminal and civil law, and should such an attempt be made, ReedPop reserves the right to seek damages from any such person to the fullest extent permitted by law. ReedPop's failure to enforce any term of these Rules shall not constitute a waiver of that provision.
30. Limitation of Liability: ReedPop is not responsible for: (1) any incorrect or inaccurate information, whether caused by entrants, typographical errors, printing errors or by any of the equipment or programming associated with or utilized in the Contest; (2) technical failures of any kind, including but not limited to malfunctions, interruptions, or disconnections in phone lines or network hardware or software; (3) unauthorized human intervention in any part of the entry process or Crown Championships; (4) technical or human error which may occur in the administration of the Crown Championships or the processing of entries; or (5) any injury or damage to persons or property which may be caused, directly or indirectly, in whole or in part, from an entrant's participation in the Crown Championships or receipt or use or misuse of any prize (provided always that ReedPop or its employees or contractors are not negligent in any way in relation to such injury or damage). If, for any reason, an entrant's entry is confirmed to have been erroneously deleted, lost or otherwise destroyed or corrupted, that entrant's sole remedy is another entry in the Crown Championships, if feasible. If the Cosplay Central Crown Championships, or any part of it, is discontinued for any reason, ReedPop, in its sole discretion, may elect to hold a random draw from among all eligible entries received up to the date of discontinuance for the prize(s) offered herein.
31. Employees, staff, crew or guests of ReedPop or any associated company and their immediate families, and persons connected with the Championships e.g., prize sponsors or judges and their agents are not eligible to enter the Cosplay Central Crown Championship.



32. These rules shall be governed by the laws of the state of New York, including, sections 5-1401 and 5-1402 of the New York general obligations law but excluding to the maximum extent permitted by law all other conflict of law provisions, and the obligations, rights and remedies of the parties hereunder shall be determined in accordance with such law.

APPENDIX A - Judging Criteria

The competition will be judged by three independent guest judges who interview and closely assess the entrant's costumes in addition to assessing how the Entrants display their costume on stage.

The assessment of the entrants is as follows:

- Costume judging will take place before the stage presentation and assess the accuracy or design of the costume against provided source images and the quality and complexity of the construction. Each Entrant is given equal time with the judges.
- The Stage presentation will not be scored directly but may be taken into consideration if the presentation reveals flaws or benefits of the costume's construction.
- The weighting for each of the judging criteria is as follows:
 - Accuracy or Design and Ambition: 30%
 - Construction: 70%
 - Further detailed guidance on this weighting can be found in the appendix of [The Rules for Finalists](#)

Note that in recognition of the wide variety of costumes possible and the judge's knowledge and experience, the elements considered within each category are not intended to be exhaustive and the weighting among the elements of the scores is left to the discretion of the judges on a costume-by-costume basis. Ultimately ReedPop, Partner events, entrants and Entrants must respect the judges' decision, the judges' interpretation of the rules and guidance and the judges' assessment of the costume.

Accuracy or Design & Ambition

This is an assessment of how closely the costume matches the source material (accuracy) OR the design and interpretation skill employed by the Entrant to create original costume designs inspired by pop culture icons. Judges will also consider the ambition or complexity of the design.

It is the responsibility of the Entrant to provide high quality reference images which clearly depict as much of the character they are representing as possible, at a suitable resolution that detail is clearly visible. Original designs should also be supported by concept sketches and inspiration references.

If an entrant with an original concept has commissioned a professional artist to render their design, this will be judged under the Design category, providing the Entrant is able to discuss in detail the background research and concept choices to arrive at the final design. Where there has been a more intensive collaboration and input from the commissioned artist, this may be judged on accuracy or a blend of the two categories, at ReedPop and the judges' discretion.

Entrants are expected to make use of makeup and shaping for their costumes where appropriate, but it is not a modelling contest, accuracy extends to the costume itself not the physical traits of the cosplayer wearing it. The spirit of the competition allows people to choose who or what they want to portray, according to their cosplay skills.

Each judge will provide a total score out of 20 for either ACCURACY or DESIGN; this score has a weighting of 20% for the



final score.

Each judge will provide a score out of 10 for AMBITION; Ambition has a weighting of 10% for the final score.

Construction

The construction score reflects how well made the costume is. The variety and difficulty of the techniques used to craft the costume and the mastery of those skills thereof is key to this score. Appropriate use of materials and how the Entrant takes advantage of their characteristics should also be considered, as should their resourcefulness. It is also important that the costume can withstand being worn and moved around in- this is not to say it cannot be delicate.

Each judge will provide a Construction score out of 70; Construction has a weighting of 70% for the final score.

Stage Presentation

The stage presentation not only creates an incredible show for the audience but also allows the judges to properly assess the durability and movement of the costume in motion. All entrants must present their costume on stage while the host reads facts about the costume. The presentation will not be scored directly but may be taken into consideration if the presentation reveals flaws or benefits of the costume's construction.

While not directly scored, we encourage the entrants to consider how to make use of the whole stage, showcase all of the costumes features and bring some characterization to their presentation for the audience.

APPENDIX B – Other costume considerations

3D Printing and other automated production tools

The use of 3D Print and other automated production tools is becoming increasingly accessible for cosplayers. These notes provide guidance for entrants and judges on how to approach these technologies uses in the Crown Championships.

All automated manufacture is accepted but significant costume pieces created in this way **will only be judged on the steps that the entrant takes themselves.**

- e.g. if the entrant presented a significant part of their costume that was a purchased and finished 3D print with no additional work done by themselves, this would be treated as a purchased item and not considered for scoring by the judges

If the model has been created by the entrant they should include details of the modelling process in their progress book for the judges to review and verify. These items will score more highly than purchased models due to the additional work carried out by the entrant.

Much like the use of commercial sewing patterns, it is permitted to use models created by someone else provided the original creator is disclosed and credited. It is also accepted that the creation of the item might be completed by an individual that owns the relevant tool (or in a maker space or similar). The finishing and final construction of such pieces must be completed by the entrant and they must be able to detail how this was done in order for the piece to be eligible for judging.

Passing off other creator's work as the entrant's own will be grounds for disqualification.



Notes on costume 'Accuracy'

With the explosion of pop culture in our everyday lives, the growth of social media and competitions such as the Cosplay Central Crown Championships existing on a very global scene it is important for prospective Entrants, and Partner Event organizers, to consider that the costumes will likely be seen by people from a vast range of cultures, both inside and outside the pop culture community. This appendix aims to help advise where difficulties can arise.

As outlined in Appendix A: "Entrants are expected to make use of makeup and shaping for their costumes where appropriate, but it is not a modelling contest, accuracy extends to the costume itself not the physical traits of the cosplayer wearing it. The spirit of the competition allows people to choose who or what they want to portray, according to their cosplay skills."

Judges are considering the craftsmanship put into the costume, not how much the Entrant looks like their chosen character. So, for example, it is not acceptable to penalize a Entrant if their body shape is different from their chosen character but they could be rewarded for sensible choices made in costume design and construction to better emulate the proportions of the character e.g. the use of padding underlayers or clever tailoring. Similarly, good use of makeup for age or gender transformations can be rewarded but not penalized if these techniques are not employed.

The use of makeup, including prosthetics, to change your natural skin tone or features to that of another realistic race has been a contentious topic for a number of years in the global cosplay community. While not usually intended to cause offence, using makeup in this way carries connotations of historical practices that were inherently racist and it contributes to an environment where people of color are made to feel uncomfortable to portray characters outside their race, and it is not appropriate for the competition.

By understanding that costume accuracy does not include skin color, age, gender or body shape, we include and invite everyone to portray any character that they love. Prospective Entrants are invited to seek advice at the earliest moment from the ReedPop team if they are at all concerned that their choice of character or costume design could be considered offensive in any way.