

# How to Perform in Solo Competitions

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The solo competition is one of the important ways to develop as a piper. Much of what we do is competitive and it should be understood that the competitive nature of piping is one of the reasons that piping has remained considerably unaltered over the years. A solo competition is a great goal to aim for as a piper and also a great way to monitor your standard.

The judge's views are personal opinion and only relate to your performance on that day. Prizes are nice, but the thought that you have attempted to play at your best and maybe improved since your last contest is far more important in my view. If you always play for a first prize, you will frequently be disappointed. That is not to say you shouldn't aim at winning, but you should put the whole effort into perspective. Look at how many prizes the World's best players miss out on, because someone else performed better on the day.

The judge's role is to select whom they thought played best on the day. They try to select the most musical performance, being as objective as possible, but flawed technique, a poor instrument or too many errors may detract from the performance. Not every judge will give the same weight to the various facets of a performance.

Let me highlight that it is important to be a good winner, congratulate the other prize winners and do not gloat afterwards. Just as important is not to be a bad loser. Congratulate the winner. Thank the judge, and ask about your performance, but remember it is the judge's role to select the places in the competition, not to give a lesson. Do not under any circumstances criticise or contradict the judges, this is very bad form.

Here are some points that I think are important:

- Prepare well in advance of a competition.
- Be capable of performing the pieces at your best. Practising two or three times through the sets rather than just once through is a good idea.
- Follow the instructions of the marshals or officials on the day.
- Present yourself well, in appropriate uniform. Some organisers insist on a jacket and hat.
- Ensure that your instrument is well prepared and ready to go when you walk onto the boards.
- Acknowledge the judge and advise him/her of the tunes you are to play. Some places insist that the judge be saluted.
- Do not over tune for lengthy periods and keep tuning routines musical. It is usual to play the first variation and doubling from a Piobaireachd to settle your instrument at higher levels.
- Give the judge a good indication that you are starting, setting yourself in position, and meeting his eye, and an obvious step off when marching would be appropriate.

- If you break down, thank the judge, acknowledge the audience and walk away gracefully.
- Do not turn your back on the judge or the audience for lengthy periods.
- Remember to position yourself where you will present the best sound from your instrument. Do not stand too close to the judges table.
- Try always to appear confident and relaxed.
- When you have finished your tunes, again acknowledge and thank the judge. Acknowledge the audience. Usually a slight bow or nod and a thank you are sufficient.
- Remember to appear in appropriate uniform for the presentation ceremony. Many organisers want photographs and non-uniformed or semi-uniformed competitors are not appropriate.



Last point of all, remember to enjoy the experience. You will meet many nice people, hear some great performances and have a good time if you attend to the points raised.

More information about competing can be found in "The Complete Pipers Handbook" available from: <http://www.schoolofpiping.com/handbook.html>



## The Complete Pipers Handbook

Is a must for every serious piper. Never before has a more comprehensive guide been published. Maintenance, set up, refinement, tuning, setting up bands, performance psychology and much more!

Available from: [www.schoolofpiping.com](http://www.schoolofpiping.com) selected stockists.