

2025 RULES AND CONDITIONS

By entering Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum's National High School Design Competition, you agree to be bound to the following rules and conditions:

Eligibility:

The National High School Design Competition ("Design Competition") is a two-stage competition open to any current high school (grades 9–12) student or homeschooled student who has completed coursework through grade 8 and is working toward a high school degree. At the time of entry, the student must reside in the 50 United States or the District of Columbia. Previous winners of the Design Competition are not eligible to enter.

You may not enter if you are a member of the immediate family or household of a:

- Regent, officer, or director of the Smithsonian Institution ("Smithsonian");
- Smithsonian employee, fellow, intern, research associate, or volunteer directly involved in the planning of the Design Competition;
- Mentor; or
- Judge or an employee of a judge.

Stage One Entries:

Make your entry by following the directions provided on the website at ["2025 DESIGN CHALLENGE"](#) and ["HOW TO ENTER."](#)

You may enter as an individual or as a team of up to three students. You may only enter once. If you enter as a team, you may not also submit an entry as an individual. Only submit a design that is your own original creation, or if entering as a team, the original creation of your team. Each participant is solely responsible for their individual entry or their team's entry and the consequences of making that entry. The Smithsonian reserves the right to disqualify any entry if it determines that it contains design marks, logos, or writing identifying the participant(s), or if the participant(s) sought to communicate with any member of the judges, mentors, Cooper Hewitt, or Smithsonian except as is provided on the website at ["2025 DESIGN CHALLENGE"](#) and ["FAQS & TIMELINE."](#) and if selected as a finalist, as outlined in the Stage Two Brief document, which will be shared only with finalists. Participants are solely responsible for all costs associated with the preparation of an entry.

You must provide a consent form signed by your parent or legal guardian. If submitting a team entry, each participant must provide a consent form signed by a parent or legal Guardian.

Entries received after 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on Monday, February 10, 2025 will be considered late entries, and late entries will be disqualified from the Design Competition.

Stage One Judging:

The Smithsonian shall review all eligible entries using the Design Competition [entry requirements](#) and the Design Competition [selection criteria](#) in order to select the designs that are to proceed to Stage Two. Should the Smithsonian or the judges determine that no eligible designs meet the requirements or satisfy the criteria, the Design Competition will be cancelled.

Finalist and Honorable Mention Notification and Announcement:

Cooper Hewitt will notify all finalists and honorable mentions via the e-mail address or telephone number provided at the time of entry. Finalists and honorable mentions shall refrain from publicly discussing their selection until after Cooper Hewitt has made the official public announcement on its website (anticipated to be on or around April 7, 2025). Those not selected as finalists or honorable mentions will not be notified. If the finalists do not respond to the notification within two business days, another finalist may be chosen. Failure to respond within two business days means the finalist forfeits their position. Finalists and honorable mentions will be listed on the Cooper Hewitt Design Competition website (anticipated to be on or around April 7, 2025).

Stage Two Participation:

Stage Two requires participation in the following activities and events:

- One approximately one-hour-long virtual meeting or phone call with an assigned mentor during April 2025 to prepare for the Mentor Weekend. If proceeding as a virtual meeting, it would be hosted on Zoom (Zoom's privacy policy is available here: <https://zoom.us/educationalprivacy>.)
- Travel to New York, NY to attend the Mentor Weekend on May 3–4, 2025 to learn more about the design process, finalize designs, and review presentations before meeting with the judges. Domestic travel and accommodations will be provided.
- Participate in the virtual Judging Weekend on June 7–8, 2025, to be held on Zoom (“Judging Weekend”).
- Cooperation with the Smithsonian's reasonable requests in connection with the Design Competition.

In addition, the winner shall

- receive a custom design gift package valued at approximately \$500.00 from SHOP Cooper Hewitt; and
- receive a complimentary Family Membership to Cooper Hewitt.

Be reminded that activities are for participant only, unless otherwise noted.

All travel must be chaperoned by one parent or legal guardian. If entering as a team, one parent or legal guardian of a team member must chaperone the entire team's travel. A team's failure to provide one chaperone capable and willing to chaperone the entire team may result in disqualification.

Activities, lodging, and travel are for participant and the designated chaperone use, only. For example, hotel rooms may not be shared by non-participants, including non-chaperone parents.

Failure to attend, participate, or cooperate, as determined by the Smithsonian in its sole discretion, may result in disqualification at any time.

Finalists and honorable mentions also must provide an affidavit of eligibility and finalists must also enter a participation acknowledgment regarding appropriate conduct during Stage Two, and publicity and liability releases. If entering as a team, team parents and legal guardians also must enter a chaperone designation agreement.



Stage Two Judging:

Using the Design Competition [selection criteria](#) and considering the Stage Two Brief Presentation Requirements to be released to the finalists ONLY (anticipated to be on or around March 20, 2025), the judges will select one winning design following presentations by the Stage Two participants.

Winner Announcement:

The winner of the Design Competition will be announced on the Cooper Hewitt Design Competition website, anticipated to be on June 8, 2025, following the Judging Weekend.

Awards and Prizes and Taxes:

The awards and prizes are listed at ["2025 DESIGN CHALLENGE."](#) No substitutions will be allowed. The winner is responsible for all taxes on awards and prizes, if any.

Ownership and Permissions:

Participants retain the rights to their entry or, in the case of a team entry, their contributions to their team's entry, and if selected for Stage Two participation, their design or contribution to that design as further developed in this Design Competition. Entries and Stage Two designs and presentation materials are collectively referred to as the "Designs".

All Participants hereby grant the Smithsonian and those authorized by the Smithsonian, permission to copy, publish, distribute, publicly display, and otherwise use the Designs in whole or in part for any educational, promotional, or other standard museum purpose, in any media now known or later developed, without compensation to the participant. This includes but is not limited to archives, educational programs, exhibitions, fundraising, promotions (including on social media), research, and publications. This permission is irrevocable and perpetual.

This permission does not include commercial uses of any Designs. Commercial use requires additional permissions.

The Smithsonian may photograph, video and otherwise document participation in any of the Design Competition-related programs and activities, and to use any such documentation (which may include your likeness, statements, name, or actions) for any educational, promotional, or standard museum purpose, in any media now known or later developed, without compensation to you.

Retention of Entries or Designs:

The Design Competition is an educational program and the Smithsonian will not be accessioning any entries or Designs into its collections. Moreover, the Smithsonian is under no obligation to use or retain any entries or Designs and likely will not retain digital or physical copies of entries after the competition concludes (nonetheless an entry might be depicted on a website or in some other format consistent with the permissions granted by each participant). Should the Smithsonian decide to retain your entry, it will do so in accordance with its applicable document retention policies.

IMPORTANT ADDITIONAL PARTICIPATION RULES AND CONDITIONS

Smithsonian decisions are final and binding.

Participants represent and warrant that their Designs shall: comply with these rules, contain only the participant's (or in the case of team entries, the participant's team's) own original material, be lawful, true, and accurate, not violate the rights of any third party, and contain no harmful code (e.g. viruses) or otherwise damaging materials.

Participants agree and acknowledge that participants must disclose the use of any generative artificial intelligence tools (“GenAI tools”) in the creation of their (or their team’s) Designs. This includes, without limitation, the use of artificial intelligence-based text generators, image creators, and any other artificial intelligence assisted technologies.

Participants must provide a detailed description of their (or their team’s) use of GenAI tools, including:

- the name of the GenAI tools used,
- the specific tasks or elements of the Designs that was created or modified by GenAI tools, and
- any other modifications made to the Designs with GenAI tools.

The manner and extent of the use of GenAI tools in creating the Designs will be considered in the overall evaluation of the Designs in accordance with the selection criteria. Participants may be required to provide additional documentation or evidence upon the Smithsonian’s request to verify the accuracy of a participant or their team’s disclosure of the use of GenAI tools. Failure to disclose the use of GenAI tools or providing false information regarding the usage of GenAI tools may result in disqualification.

Do not submit anything that is off-topic, partisan-political, or advertising, or contains personal attacks or expletives.

The Smithsonian reserves the right in its sole discretion to disqualify any participant whose entry or conduct appears in any way to: inhibit the enjoyment of others; tamper with the Design Competition; violate these rules; infringe on the rights of third parties; or act in an unsportsmanlike or disruptive manner.

Disclaimers:

The Smithsonian is not responsible for incomplete or misdirected entries, technical or network malfunctions or failures, or causes beyond its control.

Nothing in this agreement or the Design Competition commits the Smithsonian to enter into a contract or award with any participant or for any services related to this Design Competition.

The Smithsonian reserves the right to cancel the Design Competition or modify these rules at any time for any reason at its discretion. As an example, in the event of a dispute regarding the finalists or winner, the Smithsonian reserves the right to award or not award the prizes in its sole discretion.

Release:

All participants hold the Smithsonian, its regents, officers, agents, employees, fellows, interns, research associates, volunteers, mentors, judges, and guest speakers and their affiliated organizations, harmless from and against all claims of any nature arising in connection with a participant’s participation in the Design Competition, or participant’s acceptance or use of awards and prizes. The Smithsonian and its regents, officers, agents, employees, fellows, interns, research associates, volunteers, mentors, judges, and guest speakers, its subsidiaries and affiliated companies, are not liable for any costs, damages, injuries, or other claims incurred as a result of anyone’s participation in the Design Competition or finalists’ or winner’s acceptance and usage of the awards and prizes.

Privacy:

All participants waive any privacy expectations they may have with regard to their entries. Participants must not submit any content or information that they do not want made public (online or on premises). Be aware that if your entry is selected:

- As an honorable mention, finalist, and/or winner, your name, age, grade, school, and city and state where you live may be displayed on the Cooper Hewitt Design Competition website and promotional materials, but street addresses, emails, and phone numbers will not be posted.
- If your content is selected by the Smithsonian for posting, website visitors may share your content via social media websites such as Facebook, YouTube, X, Instagram, LinkedIn and applications such as “Po.st” and “Add This.” These sites operate independently of the Smithsonian and have their own privacy policies. In addition, comments with which you disagree may become associated with the content you submit.