



2026 SPJ San Diego Area Journalism Competition

The contest opens on Monday, Feb. 9, 2026.

Early Bird Contest entries will be accepted until **Monday, March 2, at 9 p.m. PST**. Entry fees are per entry, regardless of the number of journalists on the entry. SPJ San Diego Pro Chapter members pay \$15 per entry, non-members pay \$35 per entry and students pay \$5. Between March 3 and the final deadline of **Monday, March 9, at 9 p.m. PST**, professionals pay an additional \$15 per entry and students pay an additional \$5 per entry, making them \$30 for SPJ members, \$50 for nonmembers and \$10 for students. (NOTE: Top awards have a different entry fee amount.)

There is also a different entry fee for entries in the Spanish division. They are \$10 per entry, regardless of SPJ membership status, until March 2. Starting March 3, the fee will be \$20 per entry.

At least one journalist per entry must be an active SPJ San Diego Pro Chapter member to qualify for the member rate. If you need to renew your membership or wish to join SPJ to take advantage of the discounted member entry fee, visit spj.org/join.asp. Be sure to add the \$10 dues for the San Diego Pro Chapter when paying online. **Only joining SPJ National does not qualify an entrant for the member rate. Chapter dues must also be paid.**

To qualify for the early bird rate payment must be made online via PayPal no later than 11:59 p.m. Monday, March 2, 2026. Otherwise, the regular rate applies. If paying the early bird rate by check, payments must be postmarked by Tuesday, March 3, 2026. Final deadline payments must be made online by 11:59 p.m. Monday, March 9 or if paying by check, postmarked by Tuesday, March 10, 2026.

If payments are submitted for less than the correct amount (i.e. member/non-member rate and/or early bird/regular fee), the correct balance due must be paid before entries are forwarded to the judges or they will be disqualified from the competition.

Submit your entries using the [BetterBNC Media Awards platform](#). If you have entered other contests on this platform before, either for last year's contest or for the San Diego Press Club, you are already in the system. You just have to log in and ask to enter the **2026 SPJ San Diego Area Journalism Competition**.

All contest entries must be submitted online (except for entries in the College Media Best Newspaper category, which must be mailed and postmarked by the contest deadline to SPJ to P.O. Box 880482, San Diego, CA 92168). All entries must be entered by or on behalf of the individuals who produced the work and must identify those individuals.

To submit entries, open betterbnc.com in a new browser window or tab. Keep this window open to refer to as you submit your awards.

CONFIRM YOUR MEMBERSHIP STATUS:

You may confirm your membership status by contacting Jennifer Kastner at sdspjcontest@gmail.com.

Please ensure that your national and chapter membership dues are paid prior to submitting your contest entries. Getting your fee adjusted to the membership rate in the BetterBNC system takes time. Please allow at least 48 hours for the adjustment, so it is highly advised to not wait until the contest deadline to join. If joining or renewing during the contest entry period, contact Jennifer Kastner with proof of membership dues payment with SPJ National by emailing receipt to her at sdspjcontest@gmail.com.

HOW TO ENTER:

If you have entered and used the BetterBNC platform in the past:

- Go to www.betterbnc.com and click on “Open Call log-in.”
- If you don’t remember your password, it will be sent to you.
- From the drop-down menu, choose “My Contests.”
- Click on “2026 SPJ San Diego Area Journalism Competition.”
- You can then start submitting entries.

If this is your first time, you must create your account:

- Go to www.betterbnc.com.
- Click “Open Call Login.”
- Click “Create your Open Call Account.”
- Fill in all information.
- You will see a message that a verification link has been sent to your email.

Present your credentials:

- Once you receive the verification link message, click on the link or copy into your browser.
- Complete the credentials portion.
- Once you see the “Credentials Updated” message, click on “Available Contests.”
- Select the “2026 SPJ San Diego Area Journalism Competition.”

Submit entries:

- On the “Manage Entries” page, click “Submit Entry.”
- Select the appropriate division.
- Select the appropriate media outlet from the drop-down menu.
- If your publication, website or station is not on the list, you may add it.
- Select the appropriate category. If you need guidance, read the corresponding Category Note (directly below the Category selection box), describing what is expected for the category’s entry content.
 - Complete the Headline/Title field.
 - Based on the type of entry, add content:
 - ✓ To add URL links to content, copy and paste the content’s web address into the provided field
 - ✓ To upload digital file attachments (other than audio/video), click Choose File, navigate to the desired file, select Open, and click Upload. Allowed file types are PDF, DOC, TXT, JPG, GIF, and PNG.
 - ✓ If more than one attachment or URL are desired for this entry, repeat these steps, up to five.
 - ✓ To host your audio or video content online, either upload it to a free streaming content website (e.g., YouTube) or talk to your IT person about adding it to your station’s website. Make sure the content will be accessible online throughout the contest and awards process.

IMPORTANT: Please ensure that items are not behind a paywall or a password-protected area. If they are, you must provide username/password info in the Comments section of your entry. Judges may disqualify your entry if work samples are inaccessible.

- Click “Next”
- Add Credits for those responsible for the entry content. Be sure to add your own name, if appropriate.
- Add Comments (if applicable), but keep them brief (e.g., 100 words).
- Click Submit. This is your account — you can come back to it at any time until Monday, March 9 at 9 p.m. PST.

Once you have completed all your entries, click on “Entry Fee Calculator” and check to be sure all your entries are included. We prefer that you pay for your entries online. Click on the PayPal button to pay immediately (insert the amount due on the PayPal page).

IMPORTANT: Once all entries are made, please EMAIL an itemized list containing the entry name(s), contestant name(s) and name as it appears on the form of payment (credit card or check) to sdspjcontest@gmail.com. This will greatly help us with the payment reconciliation process. Please put “SPJ Contest” in the subject field. This requirement is aimed at helping us efficiently process your entry.

You may also pay by check. Simply print off an invoice showing the total due and enclose that with your check. Be sure to indicate the name(s) of the registered user(s) who submitted the entries, if not shown on the invoice. Checks should be made payable to "San Diego Society of Professional Journalists."

To qualify for the early bird rate payment must be made online via PayPal no later than 11:59 p.m. Monday, March 2, 2026. Otherwise, the regular rate applies. If paying the early bird rate by check, payments must be postmarked by Tuesday, March 3, 2026. Final deadline payments must be made online by 11:59 p.m. Monday, March 9 or if paying by check, postmarked by Tuesday, March 10, 2025.

Mail to:
SPJ San Diego Journalism Competition
P.O. Box 880482
San Diego, CA 92168

For College Media Best Newspaper entries:

- Submit and save the entry, per the instructions above.
- Go to the View Entries page.
- At the very far right you'll see a column labeled "Print," which will bring up a screen with all pertinent information.
- Print this out as your entry form.
- Mail the entry form, your payment, and three issues of your college newspaper to SPJ San Diego Journalism Competition, P.O. Box 880482, San Diego, CA 92168.
- Submit three complete editions of the newspapers published in 2025.

Need help?

Many of your questions about the 2026 SPJ San Diego Area Journalism Contest can be answered on our website. Please review the contest information, including Guidelines, How to Enter, Categories, and FAQs there. If you still have questions, contact Jennifer Kastner at sdspjcontest@gmail.com. Put "SPJ Contest" in the subject field.