

## OVERVIEW

Applying leadership and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, participants use computer graphics tools and design processes (e.g., animation) to communicate, inform, analyze and/or illustrate a topic, idea, subject, or concept that focuses on one (1) or more of the STEM (science, technology, engineering, or mathematics) areas. Sound may accompany graphic images. Participants will find the current year's theme posted on the [TSA website](#) under *Themes & Problems* for this information. Semifinalists make a presentation.

## ELIGIBILITY

Three (3) teams of at least two (2) individuals per state may participate.

## TIME LIMITS

### PRELIMINARY ROUND

- A. All components of the chapter's entry (documentation portfolio PDF and animation URL) must be finished, submitted, and accessible via the Internet by 11:59 p.m. EST on a designated date in mid-May.
- B. Entries received or changes made to submitted entries after this deadline will not be judged.
- C. The animation is not to exceed three (3) minutes in length. There is no minimum time requirement.
- D. There will be a three (3)-point deduction for each fifteen (15) seconds, or fraction thereof, over the three (3)-minute length.
- E. The animation time is calculated from the start of the first image or sound to the end of the last image or sound.

### SEMIFINAL ROUND

- A. Ten (10) minutes is allowed to make a presentation to the judges.

## ATTIRE

TSA competition attire is required.

## PROCEDURE

### PRE-CONFERENCE

- A. Participants review the TSA Honor Statement for Competitive Events found in the General Rules and listed in the individual competitive event rules.
- B. Participants access the annual theme posted on the [TSA website](#) under *Themes & Problems*.
- C. Participants design and create a STEM animation video and documentation portfolio.
- D. Participants submit the documentation portfolio PDF and animation URL by 11:59 p.m. EST on a designated date in mid-May.
- E. Submission information will be provided on the [TSA website](#) under *Competition Updates*.

### PRELIMINARY ROUND

- A. A list of twelve (12) semifinalists (in random order) is posted on the first full day of conference.

### SEMIFINAL ROUND

- A. Semifinalist team representative reports at the time and location provided in the conference program to sign-up for a presentation time.
- B. No more than two (2) representatives from each semifinalist team may report to the event area for the presentation at the time and place stated in the conference program.
- C. Each semifinalist team explains its portfolio to the judges, discussing the purpose, value, research and design, and development process of its work.
- D. Ten (10) finalists will be announced during the conference awards ceremony.

## REGULATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

Students will work to develop their leadership and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in the process of preparing for and participating in this TSA competitive event. The development and application of those skills must be evident in their submission, demonstration, and/or communication pertaining to the entry.

**PRELIMINARY ROUND****A. Documentation Portfolio:**

1. Documentation portfolio is required and must be submitted as a single, multi-page PDF document with pages in this order:
  - a. Title page with the event title, the conference city and state, the year, and the team ID number; one (1) page
  - b. Table of contents; pages as needed
  - c. Purpose of animation; one (1) page
  - d. Images of a hand-sketched storyboard (no digital screen captures) that documents the flow and progression of the animation, with written notes; special effects, audio cues, dialogue, transitions, and scene duration should be incorporated into the storyboard; pages as needed
  - e. Written description of what the animation illustrates or demonstrates; one (1) page
  - f. List of references that includes sources for materials, copyrighted and otherwise; the term "Fair Use" and similar terms are not acceptable citations when creating the list of references; pages as needed
  - g. Permission letters for copyrighted material; pages as needed
  - h. List of software and hardware used in the development of the animation; one (1) page
  - i. Work Log that indicates preparation for the event, as noted by date, task, time involved, team member responsible, and comments (see 2026 & 2027 Forms Appendix); pages as needed
  - j. Student Copyright Checklist (see 2026 & 2027 Forms Appendix); one (1) page

**B. Animation:**

1. The animation must be submitted in a common video format suitable for viewing with a VLC player, utilizing a Microsoft Windows operating system.
2. The URL must point to the main page of the team's entry. Entries that require a request for access to be granted will not be judged.
3. Each animation must advance automatically once it has been opened and started by judges.
4. The animation is not to exceed three (3) minutes in length.
5. There will be a three (3)-point deduction for each fifteen (15) seconds, or fraction thereof, over the three (3)-minute maximum length. For example: An animation that runs 37 seconds beyond the three (3)-minute limit will receive a deduction of nine (9) points.
6. Sound may accompany the animation, but it is not required.
7. All graphics, images (including background), and audio clips must be originally created by the participants.
8. Where applicable, all ideas, text, images, and sound from other sources must be cited.
9. If copyrighted material is used, proper written permission must be included in the documentation portfolio (see Student Copyright Checklist in 2026 & 2027 Forms Appendix).
10. Absolutely no purchased content may be used in any part of the animation. (Purchased content includes, but is not limited to, texture, models, and royalty free music.)
11. Purchased items from sites like PowToons and Animaker are not acceptable for this event.

**EVALUATION****PRELIMINARY ROUND**

- A. The quality of the portfolio and the animation

**SEMIFINAL ROUND**

- A. The presentation

Refer to the official rating form for more information.

## RESOURCES

- Khan Academy – Pixar in a Box: Free courses on storytelling, animation basics, and the math / science behind animation. [khanacademy.org](https://www.khanacademy.org)
- AnimateSpace: Free online tutorials for beginners focusing on animation basics. [animate.space](https://animate.space)

In addition, there are multiple free online tools to use to develop your animations, should you choose to use them.

## TSA HONOR STATEMENT

All work must be created and completed by individual competitors or teams. Plagiarism, the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) software, copyright violation, cheating, and falsification of information are prohibited. Participants may NOT use any generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools (e.g. ChatGPT, Google Gemini, GitHub Copilot, etc.). Any attempt to gain an unfair advantage will not be tolerated. Competitors at any level of TSA competition understand and agree to abide by the TSA Honor Statement.

If it is determined that a student violated the TSA Honor Statement, a rules violation of twenty percent (20%) will be incurred.

## STEM INTEGRATION

This event has connections to the STEM areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.

## LEADERSHIP AND 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY SKILLS

This event provides opportunity for students to build and develop leadership and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills including but not limited to – Communication, Collaboration/Social Skills, Initiative, Problem Solving/Risk Taking, Critical Thinking, Perseverance/Grit, Creativity, Relationship Building/Teamwork, Dependability/Integrity, and Flexibility/Adaptability

## CAREERS RELATED TO THIS EVENT

This competition has connections to one (1) or more of the careers below:

- Computer animator
- Game designer
- Instructional technologist
- Software engineer

# STEM ANIMATION

## 2026 & 2027 OFFICIAL RATING FORM

### MIDDLE SCHOOL

Judges: Using minimal (1-4 points), adequate (5-8 points), or exemplary (9-10 points) performance levels as a guideline in the rating form, record the scores earned for the event criteria in the column spaces to the right. The X1 or X2 notation in the criteria column is a multiplier factor for determining the points earned. (Example: an "adequate" score of 7 for an X1 criterion = 7 points; an "adequate" score of 7 for an X2 criterion = 14 points.) A score of zero (0) is acceptable if the minimal performance for any criterion is not met.

#### Go/No Go Specifications

- Before judging the entry, ensure that the items below are present; indicate presence with a check mark in the box.
- If an item is missing, leave the box next to the item blank and place a check mark in the box labeled ENTRY NOT EVALUATED.
- If a check mark is placed in the ENTRY NOT EVALUATED box, the entry is not to be judged.

- ☐ Portfolio was submitted prior to conference
- ☐ Animation was submitted prior to conference
- ☐ ENTRY NOT EVALUATED

DOCUMENTATION PORTFOLIO (40 points)				Record scores in the column spaces below.
CRITERIA	Minimal performance	Adequate performance	Exemplary performance	
	1-4 points	5-8 points	9-10 points	
<b>Digital Portfolio</b> (X1)	Portfolio is unorganized and/or is missing three (3) or more components.	Portfolio is missing one (1) or two (2) components and/or is loosely organized.	Portfolio has all required components in order and is well organized.	
<b>Purpose and Description</b> (X1)	The purpose and description of the animation idea are unclear.	The purpose and description of the animation are explained appropriately.	The purpose and description of the animation are clear and concisely written.	
<b>Storyboard</b> (X1)	The hand-sketched storyboard is sloppy, seems to have been thrown together after the creation of the animation, and/or it does not correlate with the animation.	The storyboard is drawn appropriately and largely correlates with the completed animation.	The storyboard is of exceptional aesthetic and artistic value and clearly correlates with the animation.	
<b>Work Log</b> (X1)	Log is poorly organized and/or incomplete.	Log is adequately detailed and organized and contains most of the required components.	Log is well documented and contains all the required components.	
<b>DOCUMENTATION PORTFOLIO SUBTOTAL (40 points)</b>				

ANIMATION (50 points)				Record scores in the column spaces below.
CRITERIA	Minimal performance	Adequate performance	Exemplary performance	
	1-4 points	5-8 points	9-10 points	
<b>Communication of Animation</b> (X1)	It is difficult to understand the idea being communicated; an illogical explanation is presented.	The idea is communicated, and thoughts are somewhat organized and/or concise.	The idea is communicated in an organized, clear, and concise manner.	
<b>Creativity</b> (X1)	The animation lacks creativity; no, or very few, design principles are integrated in the animation.	Some elements of creativity are expressed, and essential design principles are used somewhat effectively.	The animation exudes creativity; essential design principles and elements are integrated.	

ANIMATION (50 points) – continued				
<b>Aesthetics and Artisanship</b> (X1)	Unorganized, sloppy work is evident; the animation seems to be an afterthought and/or thrown together.	An organized presentation of essential issues in a logical format is evident.	An exemplary use of layout and design principles to logically communicate important data is evident.	
<b>Graphical Representations</b> (X1)	Graphical representations do not help to clarify the idea, or they are of little significance to the idea.	Graphical representations are appropriate and help supplement the idea by providing some clarity.	Graphical representations are of excellent quality and completely clarify the idea.	
<b>Originality</b> (X1)	The animation lacks imagination, originality, and artistic detail.	The animation is effective and innovative, conveying some depth.	The animation is inspiring, inventive, resourceful, and completely motivating.	
<b>ANIMATION SUBTOTAL (50 points)</b>				

<p>Rules violations (a deduction of 20% of the total possible points for the above sections) must be initialed by the judge, coordinator, and manager of the event. Record the deduction in the space to the right.</p> <p>Indicate the rule violated: _____</p>	
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TIME DEDUCTIONS		
A three (3)-point deduction will be incurred for each fifteen (15) seconds, or fraction thereof, over the three (3)-minute animation maximum length.		Record scores in the column spaces below.
TOTAL ANIMATION TIME		
NUMBER OF TIME INTERVAL DEDUCTIONS		
<b>TOTAL TIME DEDUCTIONS</b>		

<b>PRELIMINARY SUBTOTAL (90 points)</b>	
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SEMIFINAL PRESENTATION (60 points)				
CRITERIA	Minimal performance	Adequate performance	Exemplary performance	Record scores in the column spaces below.
	1-4 points	5-8 points	9-10 points	
<b>Organization</b> (X1)	Participants seem unorganized and unprepared for the presentation; illogical explanation of the idea is presented.	Participants are generally prepared for the presentation; an explanation of idea is communicated and generally organized.	The presentation is logical, well organized, and easy to follow; the idea is communicated in an organized and concise manner.	
<b>Articulation</b> (X1)	The presentation is full of illogical thoughts that lack clarity, and/or there is insufficient information provided describing the project.	The presentation is somewhat logical, easy to follow, and/or there is sufficient information provided describing the project.	The presentation is clear, concise, and there is ample information provided describing the project.	

SEMIFINAL PRESENTATION (60 points) – continued			
<b>Delivery</b> (X1)	The team is verbose and/or uncertain in its presentation; participants' posture, gestures, and lack of eye contact diminish the presentation.	The team is somewhat well-spoken and clear in its presentation; participants' posture, gestures, and eye contact are acceptable in the presentation.	The team is well-spoken and distinct in its presentation; participants' posture, gestures, and eye contact result in a polished, natural, and effective presentation.
<b>Knowledge</b> (X2)	Participants seem to have little understanding of the concepts in their project.	Participants exhibit an understanding of the concepts in their project.	Participants show clear evidence of a thorough understanding of their project.
<b>Team Participation</b> (X1)	The majority of the delivery is made by one member of the team; the partner may be disengaged from the presentation.	Both team members generally are engaged in the process, though one member may take on more responsibility than the other.	Both team members are actively involved in the presentation and responses to any questions; there is shared responsibility between team members.
<b>SEMIFINAL PRESENTATION SUBTOTAL (60 points)</b>			
<p>Rules violations (a deduction of 20% of the total possible points for the above sections) must be initialed by the judge, coordinator, and manager of the event. Record the deduction in the space to the right.</p> <p>Indicate the rule violated: _____</p>			
<b>SEMIFINAL SUBTOTAL (60 points)</b>			
<p>To arrive at the <b>TOTAL</b> score, add any subtotals and subtract rules violation points, as necessary. <b>TOTAL (150 points)</b></p>			

Comments:

I certify these results to be true and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

**JUDGE**

Printed name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

# STEM ANIMATION

## EVENT COORDINATOR INSTRUCTIONS

### PERSONNEL

- A. Event coordinator
- B. Judges:
  - 1. Preliminary round, two (2) or more
  - 2. Semifinal round, two (2) or more

### MATERIALS

- A. Coordinator's packet, containing:
  - 1. Event guidelines, one (1) copy for the coordinator and for each judge
  - 2. TSA Event Coordinator Report
- B. Tables and chairs for event coordinator, judges, and participants

### RESPONSIBILITIES

#### PRE-CONFERENCE/PRELIMINARY ROUND

- A. National TSA will collect entries until 11:59 p.m. ET on a designated date in mid-May. The results are shared with the CRC manager, event coordinator, and assigned judges.
- B. Review entries as they are submitted to the designated online storage utility.
- C. Manage communication and pre-conference evaluation (at least two [2] or more judges should be recruited earlier in the year). Coordinate with the Judge Manager.

#### AT THE CONFERENCE

- A. Attend the mandatory event coordinator's meeting at the designated time and location.
- B. Report to the CRC room and check the contents of the coordinator's packet.
- C. Review the event guidelines and check to see that enough personnel have been scheduled.
- D. Inspect the area(s) in which the event is being held for appropriate set-up, including room size, chairs, tables, outlets, etc. Notify the event manager of any potential problems.

- E. At least one (1) hour before the evaluation of entries is to begin, meet with your judges and check in personnel to review time limits, procedures, regulations, evaluation, and all other details related to the event. If questions arise that cannot be answered, speak to the CRC event manager before the evaluation begins.
- F. Ensure the judges have access to the online judging system.

#### SEMIFINAL ROUND

- A. Semifinalists report to the event area at the time and place stated in the conference program.
- B. Each semifinalist team signs up for a time to present its presentation.
- C. During the presentation, semifinalist team representatives will explain their work and answer any questions the judges may ask.
- D. Judges independently assess the twelve (12) semifinalist teams.
- E. Decisions about rules violations must be discussed and verified with the judges, event coordinator, and CRC manager to determine either
  - 1. To deduct twenty percent (20%) of the total possible points in this round
  - 2. To disqualify the entry
 The event coordinator, judges, and CRC manager must initial either of these actions on the rating form.
- F. If necessary, manage security and the removal of equipment and materials from the area.