

American Honey Show Training Council

Certified Honey Judge Program Requirements (2024)

There are three levels in the program: A) Honey Judge Candidate, B) Honey Judge, and C) Senior Honey Judge. Below are the requirements for each level, a summary of which can be found in Appendix A.

Candidates for both levels may proceed through the certification process at their own pace. With the exception noted in the Level 1 description below, there is no other time limit for the completion of the program requirements. While it is technically possible to become a certified Honey Judge in as little as one (1) year, most individuals complete their Honey Judge certification in between one (1) and two (2) years. It typically takes at least five (5) additional years to achieve the rank of Senior Honey Judge.

A. HONEY JUDGE CANDIDATE (Level 1)

1) Participate in introductory Honey Judge training.

To become a Honey Judge Candidate, one must attend and participate in an introductory Honey Judge training. The training includes a hands-on workshop on preparing, showing, exhibiting, and judging honey bee produce for the show bench. This training may be offered at any AHSTC approved event, or at such other events as approved by the Training & Certification Standards Committee. **Level 1 candidates who fail to make any further progress toward their Level 2 Certification within two (2) years may be required to repeat the Level 1 Introductory Honey Judge Training.*

B. HONEY JUDGE (Level 2)

Individuals must complete seven steps prior to becoming Honey Judge. Steps one through six *must* be completed before the final exam (Step 7) is taken.

1) Achieve the level of Honey Judge Candidate.

2) Steward three (3) honey shows under three (3) different Honey Judges.

Honey Judge Candidates must document their experience as a honey show steward at a minimum of three (3) honey shows, each under the guidance of a different certified Honey Judge (guidelines for stewards can be found in Appendix B). Opportunities for stewarding may be available at many state, regional, and/or national honey shows. Honey Judge Candidates must notify The Honey Judge Board when stewarding a show that is not officially sanctioned by the AHSTC *prior* to serving as a steward. Honey Judge Candidates additionally may be invited to steward a honey show or may self-initiate a honey show and volunteer to steward. If Candidates elect to do this, they must do it through a recognized organization such as a state or local beekeeping association, or through a sanctioned honey show at a county or state fair. Honey Judges and honey show stewards must wear proper attire (Appendix C). All stewarding activities should be documented in the Candidate's Portfolio of Evidence (see HONEY JUDGE - Step 6).

3) Serve as a Show Secretary for two (2) separate honey shows under two (2) different Honey Judges.

Honey Judge Candidates must document their experience as a honey show secretary at a minimum of two honey shows, each under the guidance of a different Honey Judge. Opportunities for serving as a show secretary may be available at any AHSTC approved honey shows. Honey Judge Candidates must notify the Honey Judge Board when serving as a show secretary for a show that is not officially sanctioned by the AHSTC *prior* to serving as a show secretary. Please note that reservations can be limited for serving as a show secretary at AHSTC approved shows. Honey Judge Candidates additionally may be invited to secretary a honey show or may self-initiate a

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honey show and volunteer to serve as a show secretary. If Candidates elect to do this, they must do it through a recognized organization such as a state or local beekeeping association, or through a sanctioned honey show at a county or state fair. All show secretary activities should be documented in the Candidate's Portfolio of Evidence (see HONEY JUDGE - Step 6).

4) Earn fifty (50) exhibiting points by showing bee exhibits at any AHSTC approved honey show(s).

Honey Judge Candidates must earn a minimum of fifty (50) points which are collected by winning ribbons or prize cards at any honey show (see Appendix D). The exhibits must include at least one entry each from at least five (5) of the categories on the list of honey and hive products shown in Appendix G, thereby demonstrating proficiency and knowledge with a range of hive and bee products across the show bench. All exhibiting activities should be documented in the Candidate's Portfolio of Evidence (see HONEY JUDGE - Step 6).

**Ribbons and awards to be counted toward Level 2 certification may be earned at any honey shows (does not have to be a AHSTC honey show).*

**Only ribbons and awards won after a candidate has completed Level 2 of the program may be counted toward the candidate's Level 3 certification.*

5) Organize and Serve as Show Manager or Committee Chair one (1) local-level honey show.

Honey Judge Candidates must document their experience organizing and administering at least one local-level honey show. The Honey Judge Candidate must serve as the Honey Show Committee Chairperson and/or the Honey Show Manager for the show contemplated under this paragraph. Honey Judge Candidates must notify the Honey Judge Board prior to undertaking the organization of the show to get credit for this requirement. To receive full credit under this requirement Honey Judge Candidates must demonstrate the ability to plan, organize, and administer a local-level honey show from start to finish. All activities pursuant to this requirement should be documented in the Candidate's Portfolio of Evidence (see HONEY JUDGE - Step 6).

6) Develop a Portfolio of Evidence.

As a Honey Judge Candidate, individuals are encouraged to participate in as many organized honey shows as possible, as a steward, a show secretary, and as an exhibitor. This participation should include exhibiting honey and hive products, judging small local shows, stewarding larger shows, etc.

Documentation of all honey show activities should be displayed professionally in a Honey Judge Portfolio of Evidence (e.g. organized by date in a three-ring binder with associated pieces of evidence). Activities should be documented with 1) completed Documentation of Participation forms (Appendix E), and 2) one additional Documentation of Evidence (e.g. an invitation from the honey show secretary, copies of prize cards, ribbons awarded, photographs of the Candidate at an event, sign up list, article about the show in a local paper, etc.). All evidence must carry a signature of authenticity from the show secretary or any show officer.

The first page of the Honey Judge Portfolio of Evidence should be a Portfolio of Evidence Cover Page (Appendix F) which is a compiled list of the Candidate's achievements and activities. The Honey Judge Portfolio of Evidence will be collected and reviewed during the Oral Exam process (see HONEY JUDGE - Step 8a).

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Although not required, it is strongly suggested that Candidates begin assembling their Honey Judge Portfolio of Evidence early to document participation in honey shows as stewards and exhibitors.

7) Assemble a Honey Judge Judging Kit.

All Candidates must assemble a Honey Judge Judging Kit. The kit must include certain items (Appendix G) that are important for judging honey. The Candidate must present the kit to the Honey Judge Board during his/her Oral Exam (see HONEY JUDGE – Step 8).

8) Take and pass the final examination.

Candidates who have completed steps 1-6 of the Honey Judge level will be eligible to take the Honey Judge final examination. The final exam is made up of two (2) parts:

- a. **Oral Exam:** A Senior Honey Judge will question the Candidate who must exhibit competency and understanding of the principals of honey judging. During this exam the Candidate will present their Honey Judge Judging Kit and must be able to state when and how each item is to be used in a honey show. Candidates will be penalized if any items (Appendix G) are missing from their Honey Judge Judging Kit at this time.
- b. **Practical Training Assessment (PTA):** The Candidate will be required to prepare and submit to the exam committee three different exhibits from those listed in the current, or alternatively most recent, honey show managed by the AHSTC at the time of his/her final exam. These exhibits include: (1) one piece of beeswax or candle, (2) one jar of extracted honey, chunk honey, or creamed honey, and (3) one exhibit of the Candidate's own choice. The Candidate's choice exhibit can be selected from the honey show schedule (i.e. what classes are available at that particular show) via the respective show's website. All three exhibits must be produced by the Candidate. The products will be discussed with the Candidate and a Honey Judge during the PTA and Oral Exam. Feedback will be provided to the Candidate on their exhibits. **The Black Jar Class cannot be one of the Candidate's exhibits in the PTA.*

Candidates must register for the final exam and this may incur additional fees. The oral exams are offered only at AHSTC approved events. Candidates successfully completing all of the required steps will become certified Honey Judges. New Honey Judges will be awarded a White Trilby Hat, Honey Judge Badge, and an official certificate commemorating their certification.

C. SENIOR HONEY JUDGE (Level 3)

Individuals must complete eight steps prior to becoming a Senior Honey Judge. Steps one through seven *must* be completed before the final exam (Step 10) is taken.

1) Achieve the level of Honey Judge.

2) Participate in a minimum of four (4) advanced Honey Judge training classes.

To become a Senior Honey Judge, one must attend and participate in no less than four (4) advanced Honey Judge training classes of the AHSTC. Each training class must cover a unique and different subject or topic. The training can only be given and accepted by a Senior Honey Judge, and has been developed to refine the skills of experienced Honey Judges. All training

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classes should be documented in the Candidate's Portfolio of Evidence (see Senior HONEY JUDGE - Step 8).

3) Judge twenty-four (24) honey shows, including shows meeting the following criteria:

Senior Honey Judge Candidates must document their experience as a honey show judge at a minimum of twenty-four (24) separate honey shows. The following particulars must also be met in the completing of this requirement: a) Four (4) of these honey shows must be under the supervision of a different Senior Honey Judge; b) Six (6) of these honey shows must be at the state, national, or international-level; c) The Candidate must serve as the Presiding Judge at three (3) state, national, or international-level honey shows; and d) Four (4) of these honey shows must be outside of the Candidate's home state. *A given honey show may satisfy more than one of the requirements herein; however, the Candidate must judge at least twenty-four (24) separate honey shows to fulfill the requirements of this section. Opportunities for judging may be available at any AHSTC approved honey shows. Honey Judges must wear proper Honey Judge attire (Appendix C). All judging activities should be documented in the Candidate's Portfolio of Evidence (see Senior HONEY JUDGE - Step 8).

4) Serve as a Show Secretary for two (2) separate honey shows under two (2) different Honey Judges.

Senior Honey Judge Candidates must document their experience as a honey show secretary at a minimum of two (2) honey shows, each under the guidance of a different Senior Honey Judge. Opportunities for serving as a show secretary may be available at any AHSTC approved honey shows. Honey Judge Candidates must notify the Honey Judge board when serving as a show secretary for a show that is not officially sanctioned by the AHSTC *prior* to serving as a show secretary. Please note that reservations can be limited for serving as a show secretary at AHSTC approved shows. Senior Honey Judge Candidates additionally may be invited to secretary a honey show or may self-initiate a honey show and volunteer to serve as a show secretary. If Candidates elect to do this, they must do it through a recognized organization such as a state or local beekeeping association, or through a sanctioned honey show at a county or state fair. All show secretary activities should be documented in the candidate's Portfolio of Evidence (see HONEY JUDGE - Step 8).

5) Earn 150 exhibiting points by showing items in a honey show(s).

Senior Honey Judge Candidates must achieve a minimum of one hundred fifty (150) exhibiting points which are collected by winning ribbons or prize cards at any honey show (Appendix D). These points can not include the fifty (50) points required to become a certified Honey Judge. Only First (1st), Second (2nd), and Third (3rd) Place awards shall count toward the 150 points required herein; lesser awards shall not be counted toward the 100 point total. The exhibits must include at least one entry from each category on the list of honey and hive products shown in Appendix H, thereby demonstrating proficiency and knowledge with a wide range of hive and bee products across the show bench. All exhibiting activities should be documented in the Candidate's Portfolio of Evidence (see Senior HONEY JUDGE - Step 8).

**All ribbons and awards to be counted toward a candidate's Level 3 certification must come from -AHSTC-sanctioned honey shows. Ribbons and awards from non-AHSTC honey shows will not be counted toward Level 3 certifications.*

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6) Organize and Serve as Show Manager or Committee Chair two (2) state, national, or international-level honey shows.

Senior Honey Judge Candidates must document their experience organizing and administering at least two (2) state, national, or international-level honey shows. The Senior Honey Judge Candidate must serve as the Honey Show Committee Chairperson and/or the Honey Show Manager for the honey shows contemplated under this paragraph. Senior Honey Judge Candidates must notify the Honey Judge Board prior to undertaking the organization of the show to get credit for this requirement. To receive full credit under this requirement Senior Honey Judge Candidates must demonstrate the ability to plan, organize, and administer a state, national, or international-level honey show from start to finish. All activities pursuant to this requirement should be documented in the Candidate's Portfolio of Evidence (see SENIOR HONEY JUDGE - Step 8).

7) Serve as a Honey Judge Instructor.

Senior Honey Judge Candidates must demonstrate competency as instructors. Senior Honey Judge Candidates must prepare and present four (4) educational classes, presentations, or workshops as part of either an approved Level 1 Introductory Training or an approved Advanced Training class. Senior Honey Judge Candidates must prepare and submit an outline of their proposed course subject matter, as well as any visual aids, exhibits, presentations, handouts, or other materials they intend to use as part of each class to the Honey Judge Board at least ten (10) days prior to the holding of any class, presentation, or workshop. All activities pursuant to this requirement should be documented in the Candidate's Portfolio of Evidence (see SENIOR HONEY JUDGE - Step 8).

8) Develop a Portfolio of Evidence.

Senior Honey Judge Candidates must document all honey show activities in a Senior Honey Judge Portfolio of Evidence. Activities should be documented with 1) completed Documentation of Participation forms (Appendix E), and 2) one additional Documentation of Evidence (e.g. an invitation from the honey show secretary, copies of prize cards, ribbons awarded, photographs of the Honey Judge at an event, sign up list, article about the show in a local paper, etc.). All evidence must carry a signature of authenticity from the show secretary or any show officer. All portfolios are expected to be assembled and presented in a professional manner (e.g. organized by date, in a 3-ring binder with associated pieces of evidence).

The first page of the Senior Honey Judge Portfolio of Evidence should be a Portfolio of Evidence Cover Page (Appendix F) which is a compiled list of the Honey Judge's achievements and activities. The Senior Honey Judge Portfolio of Evidence will be collected and reviewed during the Oral Exam process (see HONEY JUDGE - Step 10).

9) Critique five personal exhibits.

Senior Honey Judge Candidates must assemble five honey and hive product exhibits (produced by the Honey Judge) chosen from the list in Appendix H without repeats (e.g. two of the five items cannot be liquid honey). The Honey Judge must then write a critique (maximum of one page per critique) of each exhibit. These critiques must note any faults or problems that the Honey Judge observes with their own exhibits. Each critique will be worth 100 points and individuals will lose points for any faults that the Honey Judge does not recognize in their written critiques. The individual must send their critiques by post or e-mail to the Chief Examiner at least one-week prior to the examination. Contact the hosting organization of the honey show to reach the Chief

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Examiner. These five exhibits and critiques will be examined and discussed during the Senior Honey Judge Oral Exam (see Senior HONEY JUDGE - Step 10).

10) Take and pass the final examination.

Honey Judges who have completed steps 1-8 of the Senior Honey Judge level will be eligible to take the Senior Honey Judge final examination. Honey Judges testing for the Senior Honey Judge level will be examined by two (2) or more certified Senior Honey Judge examiners at an AHSTC approved event. Individuals testing for the Senior level must wear the official Honey Judge attire (Appendix C). The final exam is made up of three parts:

- a. **Submission of exhibits:** Individuals who are taking the final exam for the Senior Honey Judge, must submit three of the five exhibits for which they wrote critiques (see Senior HONEY JUDGE–Step 9) to the exam committee for inspection and review.
- b. **Oral Exam:** A Senior Honey Judge will question the Honey Judge who must exhibit competency and understanding of the principals of honey judging. During this exam, the Honey Judge will present their Honey Judge Judging Kit and must be able to state when and how each item is to be used in a honey show. Individuals will be penalized if any items are missing from their Honey Judge Judging Kit (Appendix G) at this time or if they are not wearing the complete Honey Judge attire (Appendix C). Additionally, the Honey Judge's five critiqued exhibits will be reviewed and discussed. A cross-section of topics will be covered during the Oral Exam to confirm the Honey Judge's knowledge of the whole range of bee products and bee related exhibits from across the show bench.
- c. **Practical Training Assessment (PTA):** During the PTA, individuals testing to become a Senior Honey Judge will be asked to judge honey and hive products; these exhibits may include, but are not limited to, the exhibits listed in Appendix H. Furthermore, individuals may be asked to explain any faults, provide any positive remarks, and complete the judging process for any submitted exhibit. The examiners are free to ask questions related to judging honey shows and about honey and hive products in general.

Candidates must register for the final exam and this may incur additional fees. The oral exams are offered only at the annual or semi-annual honey shows held at AHSTC approved events.

These nine steps can be completed at the candidate's own pace. Upon successful completion, the candidates will be certified as a Senior Honey Judge by the AHSTC, and they will receive a certificate commemorating their certification. Senior Honey Judges hold the highest rank and are expected to serve as leaders, educators, and standard bearers for judging honey and hive products in the USA.

D. Maintaining Certifications (Level 2 & Level 3)

- 1) Every twenty-four (24) months, each judge or senior judge must accrue a total of 20 additional points to maintain their current certification. These points may be accrued by any of the following means:
 - a) Judging a honey show (5 points);
 - b) Serving as a show secretary at a honey show (5 points);
 - c) Attaining prize cards through exhibition in a honey show (point value of prize cards);

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- d) Attending any approved continuing education class(es) through the AHSTC at a state or regional beekeeping association or conference (3 points);
 - e) Teaching any approved continuing education class(es) through the AHSTC or through a state or regional beekeeping association or conference (5 points);
 - f) Organizing an approved honey show with a minimum of five (5) exhibition classes for any non-beekeeping group, club, or organization (5 points).
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- 2) It is the responsibility of the individual judge to submit documentation of accrued points to the program administrator for their certifying authority. Judges and senior judges should retain evidence of any points they have accrued for a period of no less than 24 months.
 - 3) In the event a judge or senior judge fails to accrue the required points, that individual will be placed on "inactive" status. While on "inactive" status that individual will not be eligible to serve as a judge or senior judge at any recognized honey show.
 - 4) Any individual placed on "inactive" status may, at any time, have their full credentials reinstated, upon the submission of evidence of the accrual of 20 points within the twenty-four (24) months prior to said request for reinstatement.

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Appendix A: Summary of Program Requirements

Program Level	Level Requirements	Minimum time to complete level
Honey Judge Candidate (Level 1)	1) Participate in introductory Honey Judge training.	n/a
Honey Judge (Level 2)	1) Achieve the level of Honey Judge Candidate. 2) Steward 3 honey shows under 3 different Honey Judges. 3) Serve as Show Secretary at 2 different honey shows. 4) Earn 50 exhibiting points by showing items in honey shows. 5) Organize and Serve as Show Manager or Committee Chair one (1) local-level honey show. 6) Develop a Honey Judge Portfolio of Evidence. 7) Assemble and present a Judging Kit. 8) Take and pass the Honey Judge Final Examination.	1 year
Senior Honey Judge (Level 3)	1) Achieve the level of certified Honey Judge (Level 2). 2) Participate in at least 4 advanced training classes. 3) Judge 24 honey shows under 3 different Honey Judges. 4) Serve as Show Secretary at 2 different honey shows. 5) Earn 150 exhibiting points by showing items in honey shows. 6) Organize and Serve as Show Manager or Committee Chair two (2) state, national, or international-level honey shows. 7) Serve as a Honey Judge Instructor 8) Develop a Senior Honey Judge Portfolio of Evidence. 9) Critique five personal exhibits. 10) Take and pass the Senior Honey Judge Final Examination.	3-5 years beyond Level 2 Certification

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Appendix B: Advice and Guidelines for Honey Show Stewards

Stewarding duties at any honey show must be performed with utmost care and attention. The steward should be available at all times during the show and be in complete contact with the honey show manager and secretary. The honey show manager will assign each steward to a judge for the show.

The main responsibility of a honey show steward is to facilitate and support his/her assigned judge throughout the show. This is accomplished through the following tasks:

1. Help the honey show manager set up the honey show.
2. Accept exhibitors' entrants and place them on the correct show bench for showing.
3. Ensure that each exhibit is placed in the correct class for judging.
4. Make sure the judge has a stable table with a chair, one tumbler half filled with warm water, and a small bowl with warm water in which the judge can clean his/her fingers after tasting honey.
5. Make the judge aware of double entries (i.e. exhibitors with multiple entries in one class) before he/she judges the class.
6. When the judge is judging honey for taste, make sure that his/her tasting rods are cleaned, wiped dry, and placed in the judge's clean tumbler.
7. If the judge is embarking on a class in which you personally have entered an exhibit, make sure that this is known to the judge. Ask the judge if he/she would like you to step back until the judging of that class is completed.
8. Ensure that all cake exhibits are covered and placed in the correct position on the show bench.
9. Make sure that the items needed for judging are available (e.g. food gloves, scales, and cling film if required).
10. As the judge calls out winning numbers, write them down on the judge's feedback sheet. Hand the sheet and prize cards to the judge for signing only.
11. Collect and return the judge's signed feedback sheet and prize cards to the class envelope. Return the envelope to the show secretary.
12. Make sure that winning exhibits, after being judged, are returned to the show bench and are displayed in the correct order with their prize cards.
13. When judging is completed, make sure that the show benches are clean and that all equipment is returned to the show secretary.

Additional advice for honey show stewards:

1. Study the rules and regulations before the show.
2. Arrive at the show in advance of the show and be aware of the classes in the show. This will enable you to show the judge where the products are being staged.
3. Have a show schedule available and be aware of which classes your assigned judge is responsible for in the show, particularly if there is more than one judge.
4. Always carry a pencil and a pen with you at all times.
5. When the judge is judging an exhibit, under no circumstance should the steward make any remark unless asked to by the judge.
6. Treat all remarks made by the judge and other stewards during judging as purely confidential.

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Appendix C: *Official Honey Judge Attire*

Senior Honey Judges, Honey Judges, and Honey Judge Candidates must wear a white food trilby style hat (Figure 1) and a white food coat (Figure 2). All should take care to dress in a professional manner under the official judge's attire.



Figure 1: All Honey Judge's wear a white trilby hat.



Figure 2: New Honey Judge Candidates and Honey Judges wear white food coats.

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Appendix D: *Exhibition Points for Honey Show Exhibits*

Table 1: Honey Judges and Honey Judge Candidates receive exhibition points for winning exhibits in a honey show.	
Place Card or Ribbon	Exhibition Points
First	6 points
Second	5 points
Third	4 points
Fourth (Very Highly Commended)	3 points
Fifth (Highly Commended)	2 points
Sixth (Commendable)	1 point

**Best in Show honors will receive an additional 6 points in addition to the points awarded for First Place.*

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Appendix E: Documentation of Participation

Turn in completed forms on the day of your Honey Judge or Senior Honey Judge Final Examination. This form is to be completed with assistance from the Honey Judge or Honey Judge Candidate listed below and signed by a representative from the organization sponsoring/hosting the event.

First Name

Last Name

Email Address

Program level for which you are testing (circle one):

____ Honey Judge

____ Senior Honey Judge

On this date(s): _____, (name) _____ a candidate for advancement in the Honey Judge Program, participated in a Honey Show.

Show name: _____

Sponsoring institution: _____

Total number of exhibitors present: _____

Total number of exhibits entered: _____

Candidate's role in honey show: (circle all that apply)

steward judge senior judge presiding judge show manager secretary exhibitor

Candidate exhibition tally

Class entered (no. & description)	prize won	points earned

Printed name and title of representative/witness: _____

Signature of representative/witness: _____

Signee contact information: Phone _____

Email _____

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Appendix F: Portfolio of Evidence Cover Page

Turn in this completed form on the day of your Honey Judge or Senior Honey Judge Final Examination.

First Name

Last Name

Email Address

Program level for which you are testing (circle one):

Honey Judge

Senior Honey Judge

Date of Honey Judge training (for this level): _____

Location/event of Honey Judge training: _____

Number of honey shows served as a steward	
Number of honey shows served as show secretary	
Number of honey shows judged	
Number of points collected from honey show entries	

Other evidence gathered: _____

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Appendix G: *Honey Judge Judging Kit Items*

Below is a list of items needed to complete the Honey Judge Judging Kit. Items should be organized in a doctor's bag or a small carrying case.

For Judging Mead

- At least three goblet glasses for tasting
- A corkscrew
- A hydrometer

For Judging Bee Products

- Standardized Grading Glasses
- A torch (aka high-lumen light)
- five honey tasting rods
- two tumblers (flat-bottomed drinking glasses)
- finger bowl
- lint/powder-free gloves (fabric or synthetic)
- notebook
- pencil and pen
- magnifying glass
- A small hand towel
- A damp cloth in plastic bag
- 6-inch rule
- tape measure at least 72 inches long
- cake knife
- penknife (small folding pocket knife)
- scissors
- box of matches
- tissues and bacterial wipes
- honey refractometer (to measure moisture)
- flat table scale
- small spring scale
- piece of string (3ft long)
- an apple
- dry crackers

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Appendix H: *Exhibit Class Choices for Senior Honey Judge Level*

Below is a list of the exhibit classes for exhibiting points and exhibit critiques from which Honey Judges can choose when testing for the Senior Honey Judge level:

- Liquid/Extracted Honey
- Granulated, Soft Set or Creamed Honey
- Comb Honey (including Chunk, Section, Cut Comb, Full Frame, etc.)
- Beeswax Items & Candles
- Meads, Beers, & Beverages
- Cookery & Food Items made with Honey
- Artisan Items Related to Beekeeping
- Craft Items Related to Beekeeping
- Photography Related to Beekeeping