BILL RILEY'S IOWA STATE FAIR TALENT SEARCH

Jackson County Fairgrounds Pearson Memorial Center
Saturday, August 1, 2026 at 5pm

Chairperson: Mary Lou Johnson

Iowa State Fair Talent Search rules prevail for this talent show. The rules following are those of the Iowa State Fair.

1. Show is open to legal residents of the state of Iowa only. Acts must appear in a locally sponsored show somewhere in the state of Iowa and win to be eligible to compete at the Iowa State Fair. Judges' decisions are final.

2. Sprouts: 2 through12 years
   Seniors:13 through 21 years
   A person's age for the Iowa State Fair competition is determined at the time they win a local show. A 12-year-old who wins a local show could turn (or a 21-year-old) could turn 13 (or 22) by State Fair and still be eligible in the Sprout (or Senior) division, as they met age requirements at the time of qualification.

3. Sprout acts must be 12 or younger. 13-year old are not allowed in the Sprout Competition no matter the circumstance. If there is a group with a 13-year-old and the rest of the group are younger, they are still seniors.

4. Acts are required to keep the performance at three minutes or less. Acts running longer than three minutes are subject to disqualification or point deduction. This will be at the judge's discretion. Keep the act at three minutes please. Set-up time is not included. Please try to limit set-up time to one minute.

5. No more than five (5) persons are allowed in an act. Piano accompanist is NOT included in an act and may be any age. No more than three accompanists permitted per act. Drums, amps, etc. are discouraged due to the one minute set up time. No combos, rock bands or similar musical groups are permitted.

6. Acts are asked to not dance onto or off the stage. After introductions, you may take any position you wish to begin your performance.

7. Vocalists can perform with an accompanist or CD/ipod. Prerecorded tracks should be instrumental only. Any prerecorded tract with backing vocals is not allowed, and the act will be disqualified.
8. Looping (typically seen in vocal or instrumental performances) is allowed as part of an act as long as each loop is performed live on stage. Previously recorded loops will not be allowed. Looping equipment must be provided by the contestant.
9. Foul language is not allowed in the Bill Riley Talent Search. Acts performing to or singing pieces with inappropriate lyrics will be disqualified.
10. Contestants may only appear once in any given show. This applies to qualifying shows as well as the competition at the Iowa State Fair. They may not perform "solo" and then return in the same show in a duet or trio. Contestants are allowed to perform in different acts in different shows, but they may only qualify for the State Fair with one act. Once a performer has qualified for the State Fair they must not perform in local shows as part of another act. They may keep competing in local shows with the qualifying performance.
11. Professionals are NOT permitted to compete. This includes Union musicians and anyone whose principle source of income is from their talent. Compensation for performing at weddings, etc. does not constitute principle sources of income.
12. Competition at the State Fair: *Preliminary rounds: First 7 days *Semi-Finals: Days 8, 9, and 10 *Championship Show: Day 11
13. Semi Finalists from 2025 year's Iowa State Talent Search are automatically qualified for the 2026 State Fair competition. You do not have to re-qualify for next year's show by winning at the local level show, but you are encouraged to compete at local shows. If you win a local level show, you are entitled to the prize money, but you must inform the Master of Ceremonies that you have already qualified for the State Fair. The second-place winner will then be able to advance to the State Fair competition. Remember, you are entitled to the first-place prize money.
14. Birthdays and Semi-Finalists: 2025 Semi-finalists returning in 2026 will perform in the division for their current age as of the 2026 Iowa State Fair. Example, if a 12-year-old makes the semi-finals in the Sprout division and they turn 13 by the next State Fair they will be placed in the Senior division.
15. Sprout Division Champions there will be 6 Sprout Champions showcased in the Championship Show. All Sprout Champions in the Sprout division must sit out one year

of competition. *They also must re-qualify when returning after the one-year absence and be 12 years old or less.

16. Senior Division Championship: There will be 9 finalists in the competition. All finalists in the Senior division must sit out one year. They cannot perform as an individual or in a group during the next year. They also must re-qualify when returning after the one- year absence and be 21 years old or less. The “Grand Champion” of the Senior division is no longer allowed to compete in the Bill Riley Talent Search at the local or State Fair level.
17. The only exception to the one-year absence will be for Sprout division champions who were 12 years old when they won. They do not have to sit out a year and are automatically qualified for the next State Fair as a senior. It is highly recommended that they compete at the local level as a senior to get a feel for the older division.
18. All divisions must qualify within the age requirement. For example, if you are 21 and don’t qualify before you are 22, you are ineligible, or if you are a sprout and don’t qualify before you are 12 you will compete in the Senior division.
19. Acts will need name, complete address, birth date, age, phone number (include area code, email address), and type of talent. Multiple acts need one member to act as a contact person with all information going through them. Additional members of the act need only name. birth date, age, and town.

JACKSON COUNTY FAIR INFORMATION:

1. A stage, PA System, and concert-ready piano will be provided. Please provide a quality flash drive or phone to enhance the performance. CDs are preferred.
2. Localtalentacts(thosewithintheMaquoketaTradearea)willbegivenfirstpreference with others from around the state permitted to compete as space allows.
3. If the 1st place winner from the Iowa State Fair Talent Search in Jackson County has qualified for the State Fair competition in an earlier show, the second-place winner (or third-place winner, etc.) will be sent to the State Fair Competition. However, the 1st place act will receive the cash award.
4. Winners in each division will be awarded cash prizes.
   Spouts $75, $50, and $25
   Seniors $100, $75, and $25
5. Several other awards maybe presented:
   (1) Outstanding Area Act in Sprout division
   (2) Outstanding Area Act in Senior Division.
   These awards are presented at the judge's discretion.
6. Contestants MUST stay in costume until winners are announced.
7. More information can be obtained from Mary Lou Johnson at 563-357-5798 or jacksoncountyfairtalent@gmail.com show coordinator. Messages may also be left. Entries can be made over the phone, email or by obtaining an entry form from the Jackson County Fair Office in Maquoketa and mailing it back to 1212 East Quarry Street, Maquoketa, Iowa 52060. All Entries must be received by July 24th.
8. After all entry forms have been received and the program line-up determined, each contestant will receive program information, order of appearance and free fair admission tickets. This is a 'tight window' and information will be mailed ASAP!